A Buddhist Reading of T. S. Eliot's Poetry

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In memory of Michael O'Neill (1953-2018)

In vain you hide

In so many incarnations

——‘Buddha, Christ’ by Ryszard Krynicki

Abstract

This thesis, while revealing connections and affinities between T. S. Eliot's poetry and Buddhism, reads Eliot's major poems from the perspective of Buddhism. It provides an up-to-date Buddhist reading of Eliot's poetry, by drawing on unpublished poems, essays, letters, and lecture notes by Eliot. The introduction discusses the place of Buddhism in Eliot's poetry, especially in relation to Christianity. It also reviews existing scholarship on the relationship between Eliot and Buddhism and clarifies the methodology of this thesis accordingly. The introduction then offers a brief history of Eliot's Buddhist learning as well as a summary of each chapter. Chapter 1 tackles the first major poem by Eliot, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', comparing it with Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*. By doing so, Chapter 1 presents Prufrock's struggle as a preparation for a spiritual journey towards salvation. Chapter 2 explores four major poems in Eliot's first collection *Prufrock and Other Observations*, namely 'Portrait of a Lady', 'Preludes', 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', and 'La Figlia Che Piange'. It explores how these poems respond to the dichotomy of the body and the soul, by referring to Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and modern Buddhist theory of reincarnation. Chapter 3 analyses *The Waste Land* by focusing on the reincarnation of the inner waste land in humanity. Chapter 4 focuses on the relationship between worldly phenomena and the timeless reality in Eliot's religious poetry. It also clarifies the place of Buddhism in Eliot's religious scheme of salvation. From Chapter 5 to Chapter 8, each poem in Eliot's *Four Quartets* is examined, in order to present in detail the significance of Buddhism to Eliot's spiritual quest and how a Buddhist perspective may assist in understanding Eliot's poetic sensibility in his later poetry. The conclusion offers suggestions for further research which this thesis may lead to, especially on potential connections between Eliot's dramatic works and Buddhism, and on the reincarnation of Eliot's poetic spirit in later poets.

Declaration

No material in this thesis has been previously submitted for a degree at this or any other university. The work is solely that of the author, Chutian Xiao, under the supervision of Professor Stephen Regan and the late Professor Michael O'Neill. The following materials appear in revised form in this thesis:

'The Stillness in Movement: A Buddhist Reading of "Ash-Wednesday"', *Exchanges: the Warwick Research Journal* 5 (2017), 27-40.

'Survival beyond Life and Death: The Buddhist Transcendence of Dichotomy in *The Waste Land*', *Antae* 5 (2018), 182-94.

Statement of Copyright

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Contents

Introduction

T. S. Eliot's admiration for Buddhism, to a reader much used to his sarcasm, iconoclastic gesture, and his air of punditry, may come out of unexpected corners, in the form of small outbursts of positive claims. For example, one may find in a note to *The Waste Land* a simple remark that carries significant implications: 'The complete text of the Buddha's Fire Sermon (which corresponds in importance to the Sermon on the Mount) from which these words are taken'.[1] In the next note, which is supposed to be on St Augustine's *Confession*, he adds a comment that, in its reference to Buddhism, seems to be his own personal reading of the poem or an essential clue to disentangling it, rather than anything supplementary: 'The collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, as the culmination of this part of the poem, is not an accident.'[2] He may, in his post-conversion essay on Christian Revelation, catch admirers of his championship of orthodoxy off guard by deviating into a lengthy critique of Irving Babbitt's ideas of Buddhism.[3] Figuratively speaking, he hijacks the reader and makes it impossible in those moments to ignore the Buddhist elements. It reflects the indispensability of the Buddhist inspiration, even when he is regarded as either very modernist or very Catholic. This thesis is devoted to the study of the influence of Buddhism on Eliot's poetry and, based on the study, a Buddhist reading of it.

Scholars have, on various scales, attempted to read T. S. Eliot's poetry from a Buddhist perspective, but most attempts suffer from either a lack of evidence of Eliot's knowledge of Buddhism or the excess of personal speculation. On the one hand, scholarly works that carefully and painstakingly map out the intellectual footprints of Eliot's study of Buddhism, such as Cleo

[1] T. S. Eliot, *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, ed. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue (London: Faber and Faber, 2015), p. 75.
[2] Ibid.
[3] T. S. Eliot, 'Introduction to *Revelation*', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Tradition and Orthodoxy, 1934-1939*, last accessed 9 September 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>.

McNelly Kearns's *T. S. Eliot and Indic Studies*, Damayanti Bose Ghosh's *Indian Thought in T. S. Eliot*, and Paul Murray's *T. S. Eliot and Mysticism*, achieve the cartography as they at the same time explore other areas parallel to Buddhism, albeit at times too many. Not enough attention is given to the affinity between Buddhism and Eliot's poetry and how the latter benefits from the former. On the other hand, some critics lean towards textual interpretation of Eliot's poems from a Buddhist perspective, which yields illuminating results, but the selection of texts and the application of Buddhist materials are at times in need of a clear methodology. Works of this kind include P. S. Sri's *T. S. Eliot, Vedanta, and Buddhism* and Paul Foster's *The Golden Lotus*. As Eliot's poems in different periods show different characteristics, and Buddhism within its own boundary is dauntingly complex, awareness of Eliot's formal study of Buddhism and his personal understanding of Buddhism is vital to a well-organised Buddhist reading of his poetry. A. D. Moody's concise introduction to the Eastern elements in Eliot's poetry offers valuable advice on a critic's attitude towards this side of Eliot's poetic legacy which is unfamiliar to most readers in the West: one should avoid making Eliot's poetry 'appear almost wholly Indian in its inspiration, thought and vision', but one should also bear in mind that Eliot 'had not merely studied [Eastern scriptures], but had passionately experienced them, so that they possessed him and penetrated to the realm below consciousness from which his poetry issued.'[4] It is the aim of this thesis to combine existing scholarship on the connection between Eliot and Buddhism with contextual analysis of his major work throughout his poetic career. Apart from some journal articles, among which Harold E. McCarthy's 'T. S. Eliot and Buddhism' and Beryl Rosay McLeod's 'Buddhism, T. S. Eliot, and the *Four Quartets*' are arguably the most lucid and insightful, analysis of Eliot's poetry primarily from the Buddhist perspective is still rare.

Despite the efforts made by aforementioned scholars, major academic works on Eliot's spiritual and intellectual development still pay little attention to the Buddhist element. By contrast, the towering presence of Christianity in Eliot seems always to demand the largest share, if one attempts to give a comprehensive survey of Eliot's spiritual journey. In *Religion and Myth in T.*

[4] A. D. Moody, *Tracing T. S. Eliot's Spirit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 19; p. 21.

S. Eliot's Poetry edited by Scott Freer and Michael Bell and *T. S. Eliot's Dialectical Imagination* by Jewel Spears Brooker – both of which are ambitious and comprehensive works published in recent years – the element of Buddhism occupies no more than two sentences in each. This contrast suggests that the Buddhist part in Eliot's spiritual and intellectual landscape can still be more sufficiently attended to. Besides, in both these two books, Buddhism is mentioned in relation to Christianity and is put within the larger context of Eliot's spiritual journey.[5]

Given that Christianity is dominant in Eliot's work, it can be tempting to play down the influence of Eastern philosophy and try to deny its contribution, as is reflected in Helen Gardner's famous case against Krishna in 'The Dry Salvages': 'It might be objected, and it is an objection I feel strongly myself, that to introduce Krishna at this point is an error and destroys the poem's imaginative harmony.'[6] However, Eliot's lasting interest in the field, the heavy efforts he invested in it during his formative years, and his acute self-consciousness as a poet confident in his craft, suggest that a more cautious and observational approach is called for to examine the unfamiliar tissue which cannot be cut away from the body. Even Gardner, despite her instinctive doubt about the Hindu element – at least not the Buddhist – in Eliot's vision of salvation, allows reservations out of her trust in the poet's art: 'But I feel I may be misunderstanding the intention of the poet in making the objection […] he has owned that two years' study of Sanskrit'.[7] The more one looks into Eliot's remarks and allusions, as well as archival materials related to knowledge of the East, especially Buddhism, the more one may feel that its influence on him is anything but negligible. Eliot's understanding of Buddhism, as it is argued in this thesis, is comprehensive,

[5] '[Eliot's] poetry draws out the beauty and truths found in other faiths, notably Hinduism and Buddhism. For Eliot, whose genius was inextricably linked with his acute sensitivity to the pointlessness and futility of life, a religion that acknowledges human pain and imbues it with a higher purpose would have particular salience.' Lynda Kong, '"Dust in a Shaft of Sunlight": T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Religious Conversion in a Secular Age', in *Religion and Myth in T.S. Eliot's Poetry*, ed. Scott Freer and Michael Bell (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), p. 177. '[His] corpus as a whole […] begins with the infernal tongues of flame in "Prufrock," proceeds to the purgative flames of Buddha and Augustine in *The Waste Land*, and returns to the tongues of flame of Pentecost and German bombers in *Little Gidding*.' Jewel Spears Brooker, *T. S. Eliot's Dialectical Imagination* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), p. 5.

[6] Helen Gardner, '*Four Quartets*: A Commentary', in *T. S. Eliot, A Study of His Writings by Several Hands*, ed. Balachandra Rajan (London: Denis Dobson, 1947), p. 69.

[7] Ibid., p. 70.

insightful, and highly relevant to the major themes of his poetry. It weaves into the poetry a dimension that, in numerous cases, refreshes and strengthens what is being conveyed without stealing its thunder. Besides, because of the pervasive existence of this dimension, to read Eliot's major poems from the perspective of Buddhism helps the reader access his poetic sensibility which can be elusive and obscure. This thesis tries to demonstrate that such a reading is feasible.

The contributions to scholarship that this thesis claims to make also include its responses to two issues that in the past were not fully addressed in Eliot scholarship related to Buddhism. First, Eliot's early poetry up to *The Waste Land* has seldom been touched upon from the Buddhist perspective, despite the fact that his warm relationship with Buddhism started in his early youth. Second, although Eliot made copious notes during a series of lectures on Buddhism, they have not been collectively applied to analysis of his poetry except in fragments. This thesis also claims to be a renewal of the field of Eliot scholarship which examines the connection between Eliot's poetry and Buddhism, by drawing on new materials published in recent years, including Eliot's uncollected poems (especially those in *The Poems of T. S. Eliot* edited and annotated by Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue), new volumes of prose (up to volume 7 of *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition* published by Johns Hopkins University Press), and new volumes of letters (up to volume 8 of *The Letters of T. S. Eliot* published by Faber & Faber).

Here follows a brief history of Eliot's intellectual journey in Buddhism. In his early youth, Eliot encountered, with enthusiasm, both Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* and Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. The former is a biography of the Buddha as well as a poetic interpretation of the basic doctrines of Buddhism, while the latter unfolds around a Buddhist adventure towards Nirvana. From 1911 to 1913, Eliot took five courses in Indic Philology at Harvard. Three of them were focused on Sanskrit and two on Pali. Eliot was more intensively exposed to Buddhism when learning Pali in the year 1912 to 1913, as, judging from the information on the course list, the texts used for learning Pali were more exclusively Buddhist texts than those used for learning

Sanskrit.[8] Notable Buddhist scriptures that Eliot used include the *Jataka Tales*, which consist of stories of the Buddha's previous births, and the *Anguttara Nikaya*, which contains the Buddha's essential teaching. In the year 1913 to 1914, Eliot attended a series of lectures on Buddhism by the Japanese scholar Masaharu Anesaki, 'Schools of the Religious and Philosophical Thought of Japan, as compared with those of India and China'.[9] He made numerous notes, which cover major periods of Buddhism from the early Hinayana to the later Mahayana. Mahayana Buddhism, especially the schools of Tendai, Shingon, and Nichiren, occupy the majority of his notes. On a doctrinal level, the notes are primarily concerned with epistemological exploration of the nature of reality, the spiritual communion of the Buddha and all sentient beings, and the synthetic approach towards different phenomena. It is worth mentioning that Eliot was aware of the difference between Hinayana Buddhism (which means the 'lesser vehicle') and Mahayana Buddhism (which means the 'great vehicle'), and his own understanding of the difference can be taken as a summary of the parts of Buddhism that persistently galvanised his poetic sensibility.[10] On the one hand, 'The Hinayanists see only the meritorious works accumulated by Buddha, and his physical appearance'; on the other, 'All the Mahayana school loses, more or less, sight of personal Buddha, in identifying his qualities with our own qualities. Every virtue in him is found in our souls and in the universe as a whole.'[11] Of both sides, Eliot concerned himself with the problem of a possible integration: 'How can we keep the person of Buddha as our leader? The person, the historical master; and yet not abandon his ultimate identity with the cosmos and with our mind?'[12]

Kearns took Irving Babbitt as a source of Buddhist influence on Eliot as well, suggesting that 'Eliot's attraction to Buddhism was deepened and refined by Babbitt, whose "Buddha and

[8] List of the courses that T.S. Eliot attended while at Harvard, King's College Archive Centre, Cambridge, The Papers of the Hayward Bequest of T. S. Eliot Material, HB.
[9] Introduction to *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905–1918*, last accessed 11 May 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. xxxvii.
[10] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, ed. R. E. J. Buswell, and D. S. J. Lopez (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), last accessed 9 September 2019 <ezphost.dur.ac.uk>.
[11] MS Am 1691.14 (12), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lectures on 7 and 14 November 1913.
[12] Ibid., Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 7 November 1913.

the Occident" is an excellent introduction to Indic thought as Eliot encountered it.'[13] This argument is problematic. Since 'Buddha and the Occident' was written in 1927 and Babbitt never published it during his lifetime – and he mainly taught Eliot French literary criticism in the year 1909 to 1910 – the Buddhist influence from him during Eliot's Harvard years is questionable and hard to measure.[14] Nevertheless, Babbitt 'frequently touched upon Buddhism' in those lectures, and the mixture of French literary criticism and Buddhism may have led Eliot to the similarities shared by them.[15] After he left Harvard and continued his study at Oxford, Eliot did not stop exploring Buddhism. As his letter dated 4th April 1915 reveals, he attended 'a meeting of the Buddhist Society'.[16] Furthermore, Stephen Spender recalled that 'at the time when he was writing *The Waste Land*, he seriously considered becoming a Buddhist.'[17] His praise for Henry Clarke Warren's *Buddhism in Translations* in the notes to *The Waste Land* is clear evidence of his broad knowledge of Buddhism, as Warren's book covers major Buddhist scriptures from the Pali canon which was introduced to Eliot in his Harvard courses. His persistent interest in Buddhism after university education is also reflected in a letter to Ezra Pound on 22 December 1936, in which he quoted from the *Digha Nikaya*, a central part of the Buddhist canon alongside the *Anguttara Nikaya* aforementioned.[18] In addition, Buddhist elements are scattered throughout Eliot's essays and book reviews. This dialogue with Buddhism was resumed over and over again, in relation to other areas, including Christianity (in most cases), comparative religion, prose style, and even dance.

In order to offer the reader a comprehensive Buddhist reading of Eliot's poetry, the eight chapters of this thesis cover his major poems from 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' to *Four Quartets*. Besides Buddhist materials related to Eliot's learning, extra information is supplied

[13] Cleo McNelly Kearns, *T. S. Eliot and Indic Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 68.
[14] Irving Babbitt, 'Buddha and the Occident', *The American Review* 6 (1936), 513.
[15] T. S. Eliot, 'Memoir on Irving Babbitt', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The War Years, 1940–1946*, last accessed 9 September 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 186.
[16] T. S. Eliot, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1, 1898-1922*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 93.
[17] Stephen Spender, 'Remembering Eliot', *The Sewanee Review* 74 (1966), 60.
[18] T. S. Eliot, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 8: 1936-1938*, ed. Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (London: Faber and Faber, 2019), p. 417.

when it is necessary to clarify potential allusions to or Eliot's own knowledge of Buddhism. It should be pointed out that the reading of the poems is by no means intended to be merely an exegesis, quarrying from them fragments that can be labelled with Buddhist jargon. Rather, the use of Buddhism is meant to offer a new perspective that may illuminate Eliot's poetic sensibility in such a way that the reader can find fresh insights into the same lines and relish the beauty of them with, in Eliot's own words, 'intensified, because more conscious, enjoyment'.[19] Also, if one regards the analysis of poetry as a dynamic conversation between the critic and the poet, the critic's tool itself is subject to continual testing by the poet's poetic self in the poetry. As Eliot, who was himself both a poet and a critic, observes,

> It is important, in an undertaking of this kind, that we should scrutinise narrowly our method at every possible moment; that we should keep reminding ourselves of our aim; that we should keep testing our tools, knowing what to expect of each, not too much or too little; that we should ask ourselves at every moment whether we are using the right tools, neither too many nor too few.'[20]

The spirit shown in the above admonishment is also that which this thesis strives to reflect, and reincarnate.

Below is a summary of each chapter.

Since Eliot had not yet undertaken his formal study of Buddhism when 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' was composed, an analysis of the poem with the lens of Buddhism, which the first chapter provides, naturally turns to earlier sources of influence such as Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*. While keeping an eye on elements which show Buddhist temperament and evolve further in Eliot's later poems, Chapter 1 tries to reveal the affinity shared by the poem and Arnold's work. Besides *The Light of Asia*, possible Buddhist influence through the work of Jules Laforgue is also discussed. The chapter then moves on to compare Prufrock's aversion to

[19] T. S. Eliot, 'The Perfect Critic', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, last accessed 9 June 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 268.
[20] T. S. Eliot, 'Clark Lecture I: Introduction', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, last accessed 9 June 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 619.

sensuous digressions with the Buddha's awakening from maya, or the illusion of the world.[21] For Prufrock, it signifies the dawning of the moment of crisis, and in his spiritual crisis Prufrock seems to move towards renouncing worldly life for a more spiritual life. Such a great renunciation, in Arnold's narration, is what happens to the young Siddhartha, who later becomes the Buddha, when he is in the same situation. However, as the poem shows, Prufrock does not make the crucial breakthrough as Siddhartha did. He reveals the emptiness of his life, which, in its endless repetition, can be compared with the Buddhist reincarnation. In Buddhism, to be aware of the emptiness of worldly life is potentially enlightening, and this idea sheds light upon Prufrock's moment of crisis. He struggles to see through the conventions and the presumptions in which his life is immersed, and the struggle is similar to Siddhartha's struggle against the wheel of reincarnation. In this process, Prufrock's failure to embody his wandering soul that questions old presumptions leads him to the vision of the unconscious which threatens to reduce his soul to fragments. By referring to Lazarus and St John the Baptist, Eliot seems to suggest that Prufrock is like a messenger who claims to have come from the dead and is eager to convey some significant information to the living. However, unlike Siddhartha, who successfully comes out of his spiritual crisis and realises Nirvana, Prufrock is incapable of conveying whatever he intends to impart to the world – which, to make the situation worse, is not ready to listen to him. From the perspective of Buddhism, suffering itself is the starting point of the journey towards ultimate salvation, and in this sense, Prufrock's suffering may be taken as an initiation. Moreover, the end of the poem offers hope, which lies in the vision of the mermaids. The vision that transcends Prufrock's reality is reminiscent of the epigraph to the poem, in which love is posed against vanity. The Buddhist idea of compassionate love is borrowed to reveal the significance of the antithesis between love and vanity.

Chapter 2 discusses four poems from *Prufrock and Other Observations*, namely 'Portrait of a Lady', 'Preludes', 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', and 'La Figlia Che Piange'. If 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' can be regarded as a spiritual initiation that suggests a pending

[21] 'Siddhartha' is the secular name of the Buddha before he realised Nirvana.

journey towards salvation, these four poems explore how that journey starts, with a focus on the troubled relationship between the protagonist, who breaks from the old world, and the modern world, which tends to assimilate him. The spiritual journey as shown in Kipling's *Kim* is introduced as a point of reference. The experience of breaking away from the old world is represented by 'Portrait of a Lady' and 'La Figlia Che Piange', while the spiritual struggle to settle down in the modern world is shown in 'Preludes' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night'. Both sets of poems are permeated by the tension between the subjective and the objective, or the impersonal and the personal. The tension is analysed with the assistance of Herman Oldenberg's interpretation of Buddhist reincarnation. This chapter argues that the perspective of reincarnation highlights what is at the heart of the poems: the interaction between the individual and the outer world which significantly influences interpersonal relationship.

The first part of Chapter 2 begins by showing that the lady in 'Portrait of a Lady' is an incarnation of the old world that the speaker is growing out of. He needs a new world to embody his soul. Although the lady may appear old-fashioned, fastidious, and artificial, she is at least consistent. By contrast, the speaker is struggling for a balance between his buried life and his façade of polite smiles. His own journey towards a new balance also implies an inevitable end of his spiritual connection with the lady. Breaking away from the lady's world in this way is similar to the Buddhist renunciation of the secular world. 'La Figlia Che Piange' is also about such a renunciation. The speaker is prepared to sacrifice his love for the girl, and the centre of the poem is a vision of the abandonment. However, the end of the poem shows that the renunciation is incomplete, for the speaker is still vexed by his memory as well as his imagination of her. The second part of this chapter, turning to 'Preludes' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', focuses on the interaction between individuals and the urban environment. The impersonal existence of the city subordinates individual lives, and the vista is similar to the encompassing vision of the human world in *Kim*. The vista, as presented in 'Preludes', generates a sense of non-self. 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' further explores the possibility of an external standard, as suggested in the recurrent mentioning of memory, which may prevent personal existence from falling into chaos.

The Buddhist idea of the mind is introduced in comparison with Henri Bergson's idea of pure memory. The comparison comes to the conclusion that the poem hints at the importance of order for maintaining the balance between the inner world and the outer world.

Chapter 3 offers a close reading of *The Waste Land*, which directly uses the Buddhist 'Fire Sermon' and also shows acute Buddhist sensibility. The sense of wandering without embodiment, as shown in Chapter 2, is intensified here. The old world and the new are brought together in a timeless vision of suffering. It reveals the inner waste land of humanity, in which the emptiness of worldly endeavour is reincarnated endlessly. The first section, 'Burial of the Dead', shows that death is not the end of the influence of those once alive. The Buddhist ideas of karma and reincarnation are used to explain the connection between the dead and the living, and suggest that the inhabitants of the waste land are, to some extent, also its reincarnations. In Section II, 'A Game of Chess', the emptiness of the waste land is reincarnated in the three female voices across history. The sense of emptiness is most intensified in Section III 'The Fire Sermon', which refers to the Buddhist 'Fire Sermon' to express the idea that all kinds of sensuous indulgence are on fire and in the end will only bring suffering. Tiresias's vision that transcends time and space further confirms the emptiness of desire fulfilment, for in his vision he sees no salvation but endless and repetitive human misery. The integration of St Augustine's idea of burning and that of the Buddha implies the synthesis of the Christian and the Buddhist understandings of suffering. In this way, Eliot integrates the pessimistic Buddhist worldview with Christian hope. Section IV presents, as its title suggests, a spiritual ceremony of 'Death by Water' that brings the various voices of human suffering in the previous sections into the unifying silence in the whirlpool of the sea. The whirlpool breaks down the boundary between being and non-being, and in this sense it is similar to the Buddhist middle path. The serenity of this section suggests the pacification of the voices of those who suffer on the wheel of reincarnation. As a result, the egotistic self is dissolved in the whirlpool. The burning down of the cities in the last section, 'What the Thunder Said', implies a Real City beyond all the unreal cities. The journey towards the Real City is also the journey out of the waste land where all cities are destined to fall. The destination of the journey

is represented by the voice of 'Shantih', which cannot be incarnated by any intellectual understanding. However, the three Indian admonishments that emanate from the same voice suggest that the realm of the real can, to some extent, be accessed, through self-surrender to an impersonal order of morality. Such self-surrender as a medium can be explained by the Buddhist idea that truth is intimately related to the following of ethical codes. The poem leads to a vision of integration, in which universal truth cannot be separated from personal existence.

Chapter 4 argues that in Eliot's religious poetry, especially 'Ash-Wednesday', the savage element in humanity is tamed by the introduction of the divine. The sense of hollowness that gnaws at the heart of *The Waste Land* is reduced to such an extent that it reminds the speaker of the emptiness of worldly pursuit but does not eclipse the intense joy of surrendering oneself to a divine Other. The vision of the integration of the human and the divine leads to the reorganisation of human sensibility which is also spiritual renewal. Even with the recognition of Christianity as the higher truth to which the speaker willingly surrenders his private self, Buddhism still has a place in Eliot's scheme of spiritual salvation, especially its doctrines of non-attachment and non-self. The mind of non-attachment is reflected in the seemingly shocking gesture of renouncing the personal vision of the divine. From the perspective of Buddhism, it means the renunciation of egotistic striving after the blesséd face. The idea of non-self is combined with willing surrender to a higher truth, represented by the Lady. The experience of self-surrender in this poem is presented as the experience of turning from worldly temptations and finally turning to God. Such an experience of turning into a new being can be interpreted from the perspective of reincarnation, as it involves the soul's journey from the old body to a new one. Before the final turning, the soul may have to wander endlessly in the cycle of reincarnation, until it finds the source of vitality that empowers it to move towards the final turning. That spiritual source is symbolised by the Lady. The union of the individual who turns to God and the Lady echoes Eliot's concern over the relationship between sentient beings and the Buddha, as recorded in his Buddhist notes. In other words, Eliot's scheme of salvation, though a very Christian one, also has a Buddhist pattern underneath, which is highly compatible with the more obvious Christian one.

Chapter 5 is focused on 'Burnt Norton', the first poem in *Four Quartets*, and it sets out to elucidate, by introducing the Buddhist concept of suchness, the spiritual experience of communing with the divine in the here and now. Suchness implies that in the current of time one sees the emptiness of worldly phenomena but is not attached to the awareness of that emptiness. When the mind is in the state of suchness, it rests in the eternal self-renewing moment of the present. The present is the frontier of the timeless experience of spiritual communion with the divine, for the redemption of time lies in the reincarnation of the timeless experience in the present. In 'Burnt Norton', the spiritual communion with the divine is embodied in the connection between the speaker and the invisible children of the rose garden. They cannot be seen, and only their laugher can be heard. To hear the laughter is to rejoice without attachment. Unlike the laugher that resonates in the rose garden, the vision of the lotos is evanescent. The symbol of lotos, or lotus, is highly regarded in Buddhism and is also detailedly described in Eliot's Buddhist notes. In Buddhism, it represents the oneness of the realm of truth and the realm of appearance. The ephemerality of the image of the lotos indicates that the mind should not be attached to the image and be blinded to what is real behind the appearance. This balance can be realised when the mind rests in the state of suchness. After the lotos, the image of the axle-tree is also reminiscent of Eliot's Buddhist learning. In representing the order of cosmic evolution, the axle-tree can be compared with the Buddhist wheel of universal laws, which integrates the existence of all beings in different realms. The idea of the Buddhist wheel enriches the abstract oneness that the poet proposes, of the turning world and its still point. The dynamic relationship between the turning world and the still point is further demonstrated in the idea of dance. It echoes the sacrificial dance in Eastern religions, especially the ritualistic use of hand gestures in Tantric Buddhism, which is meant to realise the communion with the cosmic spirit, or the true nature of the Buddha. Such a kind of cosmic dance transcends time and space, and brings the dancer into the timeless moment of the here and now. The last part of the poem elaborates the union of the personal and the impersonal with the use of language, or the communication between the author and the reader via the written word. A similar emphasis on the significance of words can be found in Eliot's Buddhist note on achieving Nirvana through studying the words left by the Buddha.

The communication through the written word demonstrates how words can reach spiritual stillness, and also reflects a harmonious relationship between the essence and the body which the poem strives to present.

Unlike ‘Burnt Norton’ in which the eternal present is the gateway to the still point of the turning world, ‘East Coker’ presents a vision that encompasses all time, and the world is seen as simultaneously revolving and still. Chapter 6, in reading ‘East Coker’, argues that such a vision reflects an essentially Buddhist viewpoint which is egoless and impersonal. It is achieved, not through annihilation of the personal, but through amalgamation of the personal into the impersonal. The private self can see both its beginning and its end through the eyes of the universal self. The journey towards unification, which is in line with the Buddhist teaching of non-self, is also a journey of spiritual purgation. The speaker’s visions of the country mirth and the houses that rise and fall show that he sees through temporary phenomena and feels the flow of time beyond life and death. From that feeling emerges the sense of emptiness and non-self, as the beginning and end of all personal endeavours are foreseen in the time-transcending visions. Succeeding the visions is the darkness of God as presented in Movement III. The spiritual progress into the darkness of God, from the perspective of Buddhism, means that the protagonist shifts from visionary imagination to critical negation of all forms of truth subject to the flow of time. This requires spiritual humility, which means to surrender oneself to the unconditioned. The nature of the darkness of God can be illuminated by the concept of the mirror-mind in Buddhism, as such a mind stays still and is unattached to any passing image of the world. The spiritual darkness can also be compared with Nirvana in Buddhism, which refers to the extinguishing of the flame of desire and fascination. The experience of entering the darkness of God is inseparable from the experience of purgation, which is the main theme of Movement IV. The aversion to worldly phenomena evolves into hostility against the human body and the wish to join communion with the substantial, or the real. This kind of communion is strikingly similar to the Buddhist communion depicted in Eliot’s Buddhist notes, especially in the emphasis on the substantial that is shared by all beings. The last part of the poem offers the poet’s understanding

of the middle path, in all time connected with the past and the future. It is in line with the Buddhist middle way, in the sense that it emphases the continuity, or persistent existence, of the divine in eternal changes.

If 'East Coker' can be taken as a record of an individual journey through the darkness of God, 'The Dry Salvages' is a more impersonal account of that journey, as it expands experience of individual existence to that of humanity as a whole. The focus shifts from non-self in spiritual communion to deliverance from the current of eternal changes with the help of divine grace. Chapter 7, by putting together the Christian prayer of the Annunciation and the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation, argues that the poem presents a vision of salvation in which freedom from the cycle of reincarnation is made possible through timeless prayer. The poem begins with a time-transcending view of the world seen from the eyes of the river god, which intensifies the separateness of individual lives and the limitedness of the individual mind. The Buddhist case of remembering one's previous lives is used, in order to show that to see beyond solipsistic reality means freedom from the cycle of reincarnation. In doing so, one may experience two different kinds of time at once: the time of the secular world and the time of the realm of impersonal existence. In Eliot's scheme of salvation, one cannot go beyond the world of secular time and achieve the state of non-self without the help of divine grace. Guidance from outside is called for, and is symbolised by the Annunciation. However, the Buddhist worldview of human existence as wandering in the cycle of reincarnation is not abandoned, for it forms a background to the basic human condition, upon which is reflected the significance of prayer. Movement II presents a Buddhist view of the world, in which all secular activities are essentially hollow. Prayer becomes a medium for the individual to connect with the realm of the perpetual angelus. The use of Krishna's admonishment to Arjuna in Movement III asserts the importance of abandoning worldly attachments in following the voice of God. It combines Buddhist non-self and Christian prayer. In devoting oneself to the divine and shifting the focus of personal effort from secular affairs to selfless prayer, one can be truly free from the cycle of reincarnation. The result of this change of focus is a life of self-discipline and compassion. It can be seen as at once a Buddhist

and a Christian life. Even the egotistic desire for redemption is pacified, for the mind is wholly merged in devotion and is not troubled by any form of craving.

The last chapter of this thesis shows that the final poem of *Four Quartets*, 'Little Gidding', demonstrates a positive form of reincarnation which corresponds to Eliot's idea of the relationship between the individual artist and tradition. This kind of reincarnation stresses the renewal of the manifestation of the divine in the changing world. Its core can still be regarded as Buddhist, in that the timeless is revealed in its various incarnations throughout history; but the poem does not lose sight of the personal. The timeless gains its significance in the new frontier of time through the personal, and the delicate balance is embodied in the interlocution between the speaker and the compound ghost. The poet speaks through the compound ghost, but to some extent the poet shares kinship with the compound ghost; he himself is perhaps one of its incarnations. The scene of midwinter spring at the beginning of the poem fuses worldly reality and the otherworldly. It is a suspension in time that points to the end of the secular world and the beginning of the realm of the timeless. The idea of 'the world's end' can find support in Buddhism, as the Buddha encouraged spiritual pursuit that leads to the end of earthly life. In Eliot's scheme of salvation, the suspension of time that points to the world's end keeps returning, and offers glimpses of the otherworldly: that is to say, the Buddhist end of the world is integrated with the Christian divine world which has no end. The encounter with the compound ghost occurs in one of those suspensions of time. To be able to see the compound ghost suggests that the speaker has cleansed spiritual hindrances from his mind. It can be compared with the idea of the clearing of sight in Buddhism; as a result, the mind sees the timeless reality behind appearances. The compound ghost's admonishments are also concerned with a process of purgation, which is motivated by love beyond desire. In expanding itself beyond desire, such love also enables the individual soul to expand beyond the difference between the personal and the impersonal; in other words, it helps one realise the Buddhist goals of non-attachment and non-self. Put in the Christian context, the selfless love becomes the divine love that ignites the pentecostal fire. It purifies one's language so that one can spread messages from God by using that purified language. The encounter with

the compound ghost gives the purification of language a new meaning – the purification may enable young poets to express with new diction the significant messages conveyed in poetry of the past. This process can be seen as the reincarnation of tradition in the new artist. In this way, consistency between different generations is maintained: the younger generation becomes the new frontier of the old wisdom.

Chapter 1: The Spiritual Crisis of Prufrock and *The Light of Asia*

According to Damayanti Bose Ghosh, Eliot took up Indian studies after he returned from Paris to Harvard, during the years 1911 to 1914.[22] Although 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' was composed before the autumn of 1911, Eliot's interest in Buddhism can be traced back to his boyhood when he was obsessed with Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, a long poem about the life of Gautama Siddhartha who became the Buddha.[23] Eliot's encounter with Arnold's book was not totally accidental. J. Jeffrey Franklin points out that *The Light of Asia* and other similar books on the life of the Buddha 'represent the culmination of a trend of swelling interest in the West in Buddhism, which commenced in the 1830s, matured as the study of Comparative Religion in the 1860s'.[24] Moreover, *The Light of Asia* 'not only was a bestseller but a cultural phenomenon in England, as well as in America'.[25] In other words, before Eliot was born in 1888, the cultural attitude in the West towards Buddhism had turned favourable, and the Buddha's image as a cultural icon had become fashionable. Eliot's early interest in the Buddhism of Edwin Arnold may have fed into his poetic quest for salvation. He highly praised Arnold's work even decades after writing 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', in 1944: 'I came across, as a boy, a poem for which I have preserved a warm affection: *The Light of Asia* […] I must have had a latent sympathy for the subject-matter, for I read it through with gusto, and more than once. […] to this day it seems to me a good poem'.[26] Therefore, it may not be a mere accident that a parallel can be drawn between the young Siddhartha's spiritual journey towards the renunciation of secular life and Prufrock's inner struggle.

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[22] Damayanti Bose Ghosh, *Indian Thought in T. S. Eliot*, last accessed 9 September 2019 <search.proquest.com>, p.32.
[23] T. S. Eliot, *Inventions of the March Hare: Poems 1909-1917 by T. S. Eliot*, ed. Christopher Ricks (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), p. xxxix; Ghosh, p. 26.
[24] J. Jeffrey Franklin, 'The Life of the Buddha in Victorian England', *ELH* 72 (2005), 941.
[25] Ibid.
[26] T. S. Eliot, 'What is Minor Poetry?', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The War Years, 1940−1946* last accessed 14 June 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 569.

Besides Edwin Arnold, Buddhism also indirectly influenced Eliot's early poetry via Jules Laforgue, to whom Eliot openly acknowledged his debt.[27] Eliot points out that the 'feeling of "the absolute," "the unconscious," and the other abstractions […] aroused Laforgue's passion'.[28] Among them is the Buddhist ideal of renunciation as presented by Schopenhauer. As Patricia Terry observes,

> To fill the vacuum left by departing God, Laforgue turned to a subjective idealism derived from Schopenhauer which led him through a period of ascetic renunciations and a 'Buddhic' suffering 'for all Nature, ...meticulously, with all my nerves'.[29]

Laforgue's attention to the clashes between the intuitive self and the conventional society suggests a Buddhist attitude which is antagonistic towards earthly life and bodily desire. Such antagonism serves as a starting point from which Eliot's poetry strives to explore new experiences that lie beyond.

Ghosh argues that 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' is mainly about 'the idea of the double self', the material and the transcendental, and that in Eliot's later poems it develops 'a spiritual affiliation which brings it close to the Indian concept of "two selves" […] one being active and worldly, the other passive and contemplative.'[30] Ghosh quotes from the *Maitri Upanishad*, an ancient Indian scripture, to clarify the nature of the passive self: 'desireless, fixed like a spectator'.[31] In this sense, one may say that the poem, as indicated in the title of Eliot's first collection of poems, *Prufrock and Other Observations*, is an observation of Prufrock the partygoer by Prufrock the observer. The partygoer as Prufrock's individual self is the self that is

[27] 'I can say that [Laforgue] was the first to teach me how to speak, to teach me the poetic possibilities of my own idiom of speech.' T. S, Eliot, 'What Dante means to me', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: A European Society, 1947-1953*, last accessed 14 June 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 482.
[28] T. S. Eliot, 'Clark Lecture VIII: The Nineteenth Century: Summary and Comparison', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, last accessed 9 June 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 746.
[29] Jules Laforgue, *Poems of Jules Laforgue*, trans. Patricia Terry (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958), p. 3.
[30] Ghosh, p. 126.
[31] Ibid.

trapped in social circumstances. Nevertheless, the two selves are by no means separated and living in two bodies. The experience of the self as persistently presented in the poem is, to be more precise, the phenomenon of the double self, or 'dédoublement'.[32] It does not point to an absolute divine being that transcends the worldly self, but represents a paradoxical state of existence, at once personal and impersonal, or neither totally independent nor absolutely predestined. In other words, Prufrock is stuck between these two states of mind, which Cleo McNelly Kearns describes, from the perspective of Buddhism, as 'an intermediate zone in which the soul was destined either to wake to full freedom and immortality or to be reborn in some form'.[33] Such an intermediate zone, as a matter of interest, corresponds with the Buddhist concept of 'antarabhava', which means an intermediate state between death and rebirth in which the subject is 'searching for the appropriate place and parents for its next existence'.[34] On the one hand, Prufrock is desperate to escape the endless repetition of daily boredom, but on the other hand, he is unsure about the unknown state beyond his consciousness of daily life or beyond the phenomenal world. The self that craves is the discontented self, which is bored by what it is offered. It is offered the same kind of life again and again, until that life becomes almost a nightmare. Prufrock sees through that life but finds no way of avoiding it. What he suffers from is not only ennui, but the despair of having to repeat that which he knows only too well.

Prufrock's wandering between the old self and spiritual rebirth can be described by Matthew Arnold's words: 'Wandering between two worlds, one dead / The other powerless to be born'.[35] They seem to imply the agony of those who were born in one era but had to adjust themselves to another. The dead world can be interpreted as the world of the dead, from which Lazarus comes: 'I am Lazarus, come from the dead, / Come back to tell you all'.[36] The new world, one which may listen to Eliot's Lazarus, has not yet come into being. In the much later period of

[32] A. D. Moody, *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 38.
[33] Kearns, p. 37.
[34] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism.*
[35] Matthew Arnold, 'Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse', *The Poems of Matthew Arnold,* ed. Kenneth Allott (London: Longmans, 1965), p. 288.
[36] T. S. Eliot, *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I,* ed. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue (London: Faber and Faber, 2015), p. 8.

his poetic career, Eliot indeed came back to rephrase the concept of communication between the dead and the living, with a more harmonious vision:

> 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.[37]

Prufrock, who finds a bald spot in the middle of his hair and keeps mumbling 'I grow old…I grow old…', is dying with the dying world of fastidious social etiquettes and shallow snobbishness.[38] But whatever knowledge he may have acquired from the dead world is yet to be reincarnated in the real world.

Such a chasm can also be related to what Eliot later terms, the 'dissociation of sensibility'.[39] In Clark Lecture VIII, Eliot criticises Laforgue's poetry that 'for Laforgue, life was consciously divided into thought and feeling […] They did not fit'.[40] In Prufrock's case, the dissociation results in a particular mental state in which the intellect rejects the object of desire but the body naturally reacts to it: 'And I have known the arms already, known them all – Arms that are braceleted and white and bare / (But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)'.[41] According to *The Light of Asia*, in order to divert the young Siddhartha's attention from spiritual quests, his father the king is advised that 'love / will cure these thin distempers […] / The thought ye cannot stay with brazen chains / A girl's hair lightly binds'.[42] Indeed, besides 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', the image of a girl's hair re-emerges and troubles the speaker in some other poems by Eliot, including 'La Figlia Che Piange' ('Her hair over her arms and her arms full of

[37] Ibid., p. 208.
[38] Ibid., p. 9.
[39] T. S. Eliot, 'The Metaphysical Poets', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, last accessed 9 June 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 380.
[40] 'Clark Lecture VIII', p. 744.
[41] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 7.
[42] Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia* (London: Trubner & CO., Ludgate Hill, 1879)., p. 26.

flowers'), and even the outspokenly religious poem, 'Ash-Wednesday' ('Blown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown').[43] A. D. Moody observes that for Prufrock, 'the nightmarish and the seductive become confused'.[44] From the Buddhist perspective, they are two sides of the same coin, for the seductive may cause attachment and fascination which eventually lead to pain and suffering: 'What grief / Springs of itself and springs not of Desire?'[45] In this sense, Prufrock suffers from a kind of mysophobia. It is caused not only by the uncleanness of the body, but also by his own inner self. The monotonous repetition of routines of daily life and the impermanent fulfilment of desires are digressions that occupy the mind and make it unaware of the condition of its own existence, which is monotonous and clichéd. The fear that he may become blinded by his own sexual desire makes the female body repulsive to him. This fear also reveals the tug-of-war between his thought and feeling. Sensuous desires are only too ready to drag him away from his prudent intellectual self.

Prufrock is aware of the danger of the anaesthetic effect of sensuous digressions. The aversion to them nurtures in him a temperament not dissimilar to that of the Buddhist, for it points to a potential renunciation of worldly life. The danger is embodied by the yellow fog and is intensified by the drowsy atmosphere that accompanies it. The fourth paragraph in the first section and the first paragraph in the third section also depict some capricious force hidden in the endless afternoons and evenings as if it is a wild beast with 'insidious intent'.[46] It forms an atmosphere of relaxation and anaesthesia that surrounds Prufrock and is seeking to etherise him. The pervading existence of the capricious force echoes the concept of 'Maya' in Indian philosophy: 'the powerful force that creates the cosmic illusion that the phenomenal world is real.'[47] P. S. Sri argues in *T. S. Eliot, Vedanta and Buddhism* that 'subject to maya […] Prufrock's existence […] is literally and metaphorically enveloped in a fog of unreality.'[48] 'Maya' is also the name of the

[43] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 28; p. 91.
[44] *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet*, p. 33.
[45] *The Light of Asia*, p. 224.
[46] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 5.
[47] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, last accessed 9 September 2019 <www.britannica.com>.
[48] P. S. Sri, *T. S. Eliot, Vedanta and Buddhism* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985), p. 72.

Buddha's mother, who died not long after his birth. The connection implies that illusion disperses after a buddha reveals the truth of human existence. In Buddhist mythology, 'the mothers of all buddhas die shortly after their birth [as] it is not suitable that any other child be conceived in the womb that had been occupied by a future buddha.'[49] Analogously, after Prufrock intuitively penetrates the surface of his life of ennui and sees the horrifying meaninglessness underneath, it is too late for him to turn back. As Eliot later puts it in 'Gerontion', 'After such knowledge, what forgiveness?'[50] Once a buddha is born, the mother has to die, for illusion and truth cannot live together on the same plane of human comprehension. Similarly, the end of the poem makes it clear that the vision of the mermaids cannot last when human voices come. It is significant that an enlightened mind should necessarily be born of illusion; such a pattern can be found in Prufrock, as he himself comes from a world from which he wants to run away. Edwin Arnold seemingly plays with such an idea when he describes the Buddha's renunciation of worldly life: 'The blind world stumbleth on its round of pain; / Rise, Maya's child! Wake, slumber not again!'[51] Facing the elusive existence which appears 'Asleep…tired… or it malingers', Prufrock cannot help but ask himself, probably in the mood of the young Siddhartha when he contemplates renunciation, 'Should I, after tea and cakes and ices, / Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?'[52]

The moment of crisis is the moment when the protagonist begins to see through the world of Maya and see the world of truth. In the 1930 essay 'Baudelaire' Eliot highlights the importance of the awareness of 'Sin and Redemption' in a world steeped in sensuous pleasure:

> the recognition of the reality of Sin is a New Life; […] damnation itself is an immediate form of salvation — of salvation from the ennui of modern life, because it at last gives some significance to living.[53]

[49] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[50] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 32.
[51] *The Light of Asia*, p. 52.
[52] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 7.
[53] T. S. Eliot, 'Baudelaire', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The English Lion, 1930-1933*, last accessed 8 June 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 161.

The aversion to sensuous passion is a phase towards willing renunciation of desire, which Siddhartha also went through before becoming the Buddha. In Arnold's version, coming near to enlightenment, the Siddhartha under the Bodi-tree resists various temptations including egotism, doubt, and sensuous desire.[54] Prufrock's moment of crisis also occurs when he is surrounded by temptations. The theme of being tested by temptations returns later in 'Burnt Norton' in the allusion to Christ in the desert ('The Word in the desert / Is most attacked by voices of temptation') and the first part of *Murder in the Cathedral* as Thomas Beckett faces his tempters.[55] In particular, Arnold links sensuous desire to 'Sin', casting a Christian veil on the Buddhist legend: 'That sensuous Sin which out of greed for life / Forgets to live'.[56] In other words, to be devoured by sensuous desires and digressions means death, the death of self-forgetting. Prufrock's over self-consciousness reflects his fear of sinking into wakeful oblivion, 'like a patient etherised upon a table' by the insidious drowsy atmosphere.[57] The same method of presenting distractedness as a state of etherisation is also applied by Arnold, when he describes how the young Siddhartha is temporarily distracted by objects of sensuous enjoyment:

> And when he waked, led back his thoughts to bliss
> With music whispering through the blooms, and charm
> Of amorous songs and dreamy dances, […]
> While essence of musk and champak and the blue haze spread
> From burning spices soothed his soul again
> To drowse by sweet Yasodhara; and thus
> Siddhartha lives forgetting.[58]

[54] *The Light of Asia*, pp. 159-60.
[55] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 184.
[56] *The Light of Asia*, p. 164.
[57] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 5.
[58] *The Light of Asia*, p. 47.

The danger of such a death of self is present in the description of the mysterious aura that surrounds Prufrock, as if he is detecting the traces of an antagonist but only ends up finding that he himself is the prey:

> And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!
> Smoothed by long fingers,
> Asleep… tired… or it malingers,
> Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.[59]

Prufrock's exploration of his own mind among digressions and temptations is strikingly similar to Siddhartha's in *The Light of Asia*. Siddhartha's father fails to prevent him from seeing the ugliness and suffering of human lives, just as Prufrock unerringly finds his way back to the overwhelming question among the city streets, the women who come and go, and the parties of 'tea and cakes and ices'.[60] The overwhelming question – which is not clearly defined, but obsesses Prufrock – may be delayed, but it is always ready to come back to Prufrock's mind; his deep anxiety about the basic condition of his existence makes sure that no digression can permanently hold his attention from the need to embark on a spiritual quest. As Arnold puts it, 'yet still come / the shadows of his meditation back'.[61] Christian Smidt observes that 'though narrative in a way, ['The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'] proceeds […] with numerous digressions from the "story" if not from the main nebula of vision.'[62] Digressions tend to lead the narrator astray, from his primary preoccupation with the 'overwhelming question' and from the vision of the cycle of life and death. The moment of abandoning the digressions inevitably comes, when Prufrock claims that 'I have known them all already, known them all'.[63] Similarly, after

[59] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 7.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., p. 25.
[62] Christian Smidt, *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 127.
[63] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 6.

seeing human misery in dying and death, Siddhartha exclaims 'my eyes have seen enough!'[64] The feeling of seeing enough serves as a self-revelation, which leads him towards renunciation. Prufrock, besides knowing all the digressions, confirms to himself that he has seen things beyond them: although 'I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker', 'I have seen [sea-girls] riding seaward on the waves'.[65] The tone in the repeated use of 'I have seen' is prophetic. To say that 'I am no prophet, and here is no great matter' only gives himself away.[66] In other words, to deny that he is a prophet reasserts that the visions are compellingly authentic to him.

He sees the pattern of his life persisting from the past to the future without any real change:

> There will be time to murder and create,
> […]
> And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
> And for a hundred visions and revisions,
> Before the taking of a toast and tea.[67]

However, from the Buddhist perspective, the endless process of restarting the same routine and recreating the same kind of social life can be taken as futureless, for this process is essentially a cycle of reincarnation. As Eliot puts it in 'The Dry Salvages', in this cycle 'the past is all deception, / The future futureless / […] time stops and time is never ending'.[68] The repetition forms 'the wheel of birth and death [that] turns around', and, as a result, the past, the present, and the future ultimately lose their distinctiveness.[69] It is worth noting that Prufrock thinks about the future in the future perfect tense, indicating the state of having done or achieved something, not in the present, but in the future. The difference between 'would it have been worth it' and 'will it be

[64] *The Light of Asia*, p. 80.
[65] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 8; p. 9.
[66] Ibid., p. 8.
[67] Ibid., p. 6.
[68] Ibid., p. 194.
[69] *The Light of Asia*, p. 39.

worth it' is that 'would it have been…' indicates a sense of the past in the future.[70] It is a double vision. Prufrock sees not only the future in things of the present, but also sees that the present moment becomes the past in a future moment. The repetition forms 'the wheel of birth and death [that] turns around'.[71] Now that Prufrock realises the meaninglessness of mere repetition, this way of life becomes hell. It is in accord with the Buddhist understanding of reincarnation, which is primarily the reincarnation of suffering and agony, rather than anything desirable. Prufrock's vision of the repeated meaningless life among the women who come and go is summed up by what Eliot observes in 'The Dry Salvages': 'People change, and smile: but the agony abides.'[72] Arnold offers a similar observation of human existence as well:

> Lord Buddha lived, musing the woes of men,
> […]
> The secrets of the silence whence all come,
> The secrets of the gloom whereto all go,
> The life which lies between[73]

In fact, after the Buddha experienced Nirvana under the Bodi-tree, he acquired a title 'tathagata', which etymologically means either 'one who has thus come' or 'one who is thus gone'.[74] It later appears in Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lectures on Buddhism.[75] Arnold's description of the Buddha's death refers the term to those who come onto the Buddha's path which leads to salvation:

> The Buddha died, the great Tathagato,
> Even as a man 'mongst men, fulfilling all:
> And how a thousand thousand crores since then

[70] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 8.
[71] *The Light of Asia*, p. 39.
[72] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 196.
[73] *The Light of Asia*, p. 141.
[74] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[75] 'The tathagata is always in yoga, never sleeps or dreams. He is omniscient in any single moment', Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 17 October 1913.

Have trod the Path which leads whither he went
Unto NIRVANA where the Silence lives.[76]

Prufrock is also one who comes into the world of illusions and, unlike the women, sees its deceptiveness. He is not sure where he should go, though he aspires, almost out of instinct, to the dreamworld of 'the chambers of the sea' where he may either be 'a pair of ragged claws' or enjoy the company of 'sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown'.[77] The dreamworld is susceptible to human voices, which implies that Prufrock can only come so far on the path of spiritual quest: he is at best one who comes to the end of the world of illusion, but not one who leaves it and goes into the world of the real. The way of life he deems empty and the people around him who are leading that life form the force that is antagonistic to his wish of escaping. The force essentially only repeats the past (as all time leads to 'the taking of a toast and tea'), directing individual minds back to a clichéd life of fastidious etiquettes and conventions, and the individuals thus directed only live in unquestioned given forms, gradually losing the feeling of being really alive.[78]

Nevertheless, Prufrock's despair is itself potentially enlightening. To see through the world of illusion which turns on the wheel of reincarnation and see its ultimate emptiness can be regarded as the Buddhist path towards salvation. According to the Buddhist definition of emptiness ('sunyata' in Sanskrit), to understand the emptiness of earthly life may lead one towards understanding 'the lack or absence of intrinsic nature in any and all phenomena, the final nature of all things, and the ultimate truth'.[79] These invisible forms are represented by the visible forms of the half-deserted streets, the one-night cheap hotels that host restless nights, and the oyster-shells: together they create a sense of hollowness. Streets, hotels, and restaurants are repeatedly filled and then deserted by people. The modern urban life that the poet observes is reincarnated again and again, with the places of social activity as the body and the attendees as

[76] *The Light of Asia*, p. 237.
[77] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 9; p. 7; p. 9.
[78] Ibid., p. 6.
[79] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.

the soul. The streets are half-deserted, beginning to show their essential hollowness. They are never absolutely filled, similar to the restless desire of the people who momentarily dwell in them. So is Prufrock's life, which goes in a circle and is never really fulfilled. Temporary fulfilment covers the emptiness underneath. The women come and go, but there would definitely come the moment when the room is totally deserted. Prufrock sees through that which is transient and sees the hollowness of his life. The more he walks on the streets towards the room and everything he expects, the more he feels the hollowness, as the half-deserted streets only 'follow like a tedious argument'.[80]

The use of the word 'follow' is noteworthy. The streets follow, but what or who exactly are they following? Prufrock? Is it not that Prufrock himself is following the streets? Perhaps they follow each other and there are simultaneous movements of each keeping up with the pace of the other. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, one of the intransitive uses of the word 'follow' is 'To happen or occur after something else; to come next as an event; to ensue.'[81] If the streets follow, they follow one another, similar to time, with one hour following the previous hour. Time can indeed be seen as a kind of tedious argument (it never ends and it repeats itself). Furthermore, both the streets and Prufrock are going across the buildings, and are also going through the evening time, while time keeps moving at its own pace: this scene demonstrates eternal drifting without an end. To emphasise that 'there will be time' may, on the contrary, indicate that there is little time left if he is to make real changes, for every second that passes without real changes would only push him closer to the restarting of the same works of a new day, a day which would be turned into the same day as the day before.[82] Arnold's Siddhartha is also trapped in the same situation before his great renunciation: 'This life they cling to is but empty show; / […] / But thou that art to save, thine hour is nigh! / The sad world waiteth in its misery, / The blind world

[80] Ibid., p. 5.
[81] *Oxford English Dictionary*, last accessed 9 September 2019 <www.oed.com>.
[82] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 6.

stumbleth on its round of pain'.[83] The repetition of life marches towards Prufrock and is ready to claim its inevitability if he does nothing but what he is used to doing in the same situation.

Through the emptiness of the outer world, Prufrock seems to see as well the emptiness of his inner world, which is reflected in the following lines:

> And indeed there will be time
> To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"
> Time to turn back and descend the stair,
> With a bald spot in the middle of my hair —
> (They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")
> My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
> My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin —
> (They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")[84]

The bald spot in the middle of his hair ridicules his thought of doing something daring. The act of descending seems to suggest the inevitable declining of life. Perhaps there is also a bald spot in the middle of Prufrock's soul, as he, before facing the people he is bound to face, foresees that they will be making fun of him. As Eliot writes in an uncollected poem, 'Spleen', 'Life [is] a little bald and gray'.[85] He knows what is coming, yet he goes on as if he is acting according to a script. In this sense, Prufrock is hollow at the core, and what is worse, he knows it. He even foresees that his efforts to make real changes will be thwarted and mocked. The repetition of 'thin' adds to the comical effect of Prufrock's fastidiousness over his appearance. A microcosmic round of being and non-being is complete, as no real change comes out of his inner struggle. The tight rhyming of 'thin', 'chin', 'pin', and 'thin' goes along with the building up and the breaking down of the speaker's emotional force. The repetitiveness of the rhymes and the fluctuation of emotion make a contrast that reveals the discrepancy between Prufrock's action and his mind. He does not

[83] *The Light of Asia*, p. 52.
[84] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 6.
[85] Ibid., p. 239.

approve of what he is doing, but he does not know what else to do. He says to himself, perhaps not without self-irony, 'Do I dare / Disturb the universe?', but he immediately assures himself that it is futile, as 'In a minute there is time / For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.'[86] It can be argued that for one who is deeply troubled by the world he lives in, to disturb the universe is to renounce it. The bald spot in the middle of the hair resembles a tonsure of monks and also echoes the Buddhist tradition of shaving all the hair on the head. It is, according to the explanation of 'tonsure' from *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, a mark of 'one's entrance into a new stage of religious development or activity', on the verge of which stands Prufrock.[87] It makes a contrast with his perhaps too formal outfit. Besides, his name may prompt the reader to imagine a prudish person wearing a frock, which could be 'the outer and characteristic dress of a monk.'[88] At least, when Prufrock plays the partygoer, he is also a secret thinker, with some 'overwhelming question' hovering at the back of his mind.[89]

Prufrock does ask himself questions which seem overwhelming enough, and one of them is 'Do I dare / Disturb the universe?'[90] The thought of disturbing the universe suggests universal renunciation, renouncing worldly life for a more spiritual life. It is worth noting that 'universe' and 'reverse' are etymologically related, sharing the same Latin root 'vertere', meaning to turn.[91] Jules Laforgue, who won the young Eliot's admiration, wrote: 'Tiens! l'Univers / Est a l'envers …' ('Oh, look! the universe / Is in reverse . . .').[92] The universe is full of turnings, from life to death, then from death to new life. Death is not the absolute end, but the universal turning seems to represent some absolute force that is relentlessly charging forward. Interestingly, the word 'verse' is also etymologically related to 'vertere', the Latin root of both 'universe' and 'reverse'.[93] One line of verse turns to the beginning of the next line, both of which are inherently related, as part of the same poem. The world of verse and the material world are both in constant

[86] Ibid., p. 6.
[87] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.
[88] *OED*.
[89] Ibid., p. 5.
[90] Ibid., p. 6.
[91] *OED*.
[92] *Poems of Jules Laforgue*, p. 39.
[93] *OED*.

motion. Even the reversing of an action is part of the motion. Reversion is analogous to rebirth, as rebirth also means the reversion of the end of life to the beginning of life. A minute that reverses the 'decisions and revisions' is part of the same flow of time that follows along with the motion. Similarly, 'reverse' rhymes with 'universe' and creates a sense of patterning, bringing Prufrock's rebellious thought back to the world of convention and predictability.

Compared with the futile thought of disturbing the universe, Prufrock's self-reflective questions after it help him make a significant step further down the path of his spiritual journey:

> 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;
> I know the voices dying with a dying fall
> Beneath the music from a farther room.
> […]
> And should I then presume?
> And how should I begin?[94]

Prufrock's world of convention and predictability is also a world of presumptions. The passing down of presumptions from one generation to the next is similar to the wheel of reincarnation. According to Buddhism, in the cycle of reincarnation, a certain 'mental continuum' including the predisposition of the former lives, is reincarnated, or inherited, by the present life.[95] It indicates much of what one should desire or hate in the form of unconscious presumptions. In Prufrock's case, he struggles against the presumptions and conventions that his society imposes upon him. While the Buddha's journey towards Nirvana is a struggle away from the wheel of reincarnation, Prufrock's quest for answers to his overwhelming questions is a war against presumptions. From the Buddhist perspective, to presume is to create names and forms for the targeted object, which

[94] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, pp. 6-7.
[95] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.

leads to corresponding sensations and consequential attachment. As Arnold's version of the Buddha's cardinal teaching shows, 'Senses and things perceived mingle and light / Passion's quick spark of fire'. [96] The question 'how should I begin' puts Prufrock in a thorny conundrum: how to begin without presumption? He is seeking a way of eluding formulation and attachment once and for all. By questioning the authenticity of presumptions, Prufrock starts to disturb the universe of his inner self. The word 'presumption' suggests limited knowledge of the past, as well as limited knowledge of whatever is outside the consciousness of the individual. They point to the imperfect knowledge of human existence due to 'misconstruction of the nature of reality', which, in Buddhism, means ignorance.[97] That 'presume' should rhyme with 'room' shows the poet's acute awareness of the limitedness of a mind trapped in presumptions. The voices and the music come from a 'farther room' which Prufrock cannot see into, so he can only, literally, presume what is going on in that room. Presumption presupposes ignorance. The Buddha was one who is said to have been able to transcend the limitedness of the individual mind, for he remembered his past selves who had lived in different epochs with different sets of presumptions. According to Buddhist legends in *Jataka Tales* as well as *The Light of Asia*, the Buddha acquired complete knowledge of his previous lives in different reincarnations. As Arnold puts it, 'while the wheel of birth and death turns round, / Past things and thoughts, and buried lives come back' to the Buddha's mind.[98] This indicates a time-transcending mind that penetrates the life condition of the personal and the individual. Later in 'Note on the Way [I]' published in 1935, Eliot explores the nature of a mind blinded by presumptions: 'It is better to suspend decision than to surrender oneself to a belief merely for the sake of believing something', and to presume for belief's own sake is to commit 'the sin of mental sloth.'[99] To transcend presumptions, Eliot goes on to argue, is to rebuild personal belief by finding a cause 'big enough, or profound and permanent enough', and to [transmute] it into a personal and peculiar passion.'[100] In other words, it is to realise

[96] *The Light of Asia*, p. 224.
[97] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[98] *The Light of Asia*, pp. 39-40.
[99] T. S. Eliot, 'Note on the Way [I]', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Tradition and Orthodoxy, 1934-1939*, last accessed 9 June 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 155.
[100] Ibid.

timeless values in individual existence so that one is, like the Buddha who remembered the past as his own experiences, not limited by presumptions.

Prufrock's defiance of presumptions reveals his fear of being pinned on the wheel of reincarnation. Social roles involve corresponding presumptions, and the discrepancy between presumptions and personal sensibility leads to Prufrock's social awkwardness as well as his anxiety over his personal identity. Roles are like bodies prepared to embody souls. Prufrock is so vigilant about roles that he makes himself a wandering soul without a suitable body. The failure to find a body for his spiritual self in the world that formulates his social self triggers a surge of emotion of retreat, back to the sea of the unconscious where only fragmentary beings dwell. The claim that 'I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas' reflects Prufrock's suffering when he wears masks of lifeless social presumptions. The forces of the outer world and obstinate inner desires are so encompassing that he has no place to hide, but retreats into the very depths of his mind where he is so fragmented that he is unrecognisable. This is a rare moment when Prufrock becomes assertive. He does not want to be formulated again, nor does he want to be trapped in an ego that is so conscious as to make him indeterminate. However, the world of the unconscious in which presumptions, along with the observing self, are dissolved and replaced by nothing is a nightmare of another kind: an inner world of chaos and capricious fantasies opposed to the outer world of lifeless formulations. It is by no means the poetic ideal that Laforgue imagines, 'an Absolute, itself unconscious, a cosmic principle having the characteristics of God minus the image of Man', though it is indeed void of any human image, human intellect, and human feeling.[101] As Piers Gray points out, Eliot 'transforms the poetically ideal into a vision of doom'.[102] In Clark Lecture VIII, Eliot emphasises the influence of Eduard von Hartmann's philosophy of the unconscious on Laforgue, linking it to Schopenhauer's nihilistic Buddhism: 'Laforgue is the nearest verse equivalent to the philosophies of

[101] *Poems of Jules Laforgue*, p. 3.
[102] Piers Gray, *T.S. Eliot's Intellectual and Poetic Development: 1909-1922* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press), p. 45.

Schopenhauer and Hartmann, the philosophy of the unconscious and of annihilation'.[103] When Eliot, to borrow his phrase from 'East Coker', 'questions the distempered part' of Laforgue's poetry, what he says can be used to describe Prufrock's spiritual conundrum: 'for Laforgue, life was consciously divided into thought and feeling; but his feelings were such as required an intellectual completion, a beatitude'.[104] Prufrock fails to find a permanent home for his feeling which is at odds with his social life. He sees his own death mixed with the death of St John the Baptist, but sees no vision of beatitude: 'Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter, / I am no prophet — and here's no great matter'.[105] In this sense, the Laforguean world of the Unconscious inspired by the 'pseudo-Buddhism of Schopenhauer and Hartmann' is unreliable as a spiritual home, in the same way that the sea-girls' singing only brings to Prufrock momentary enchantment.[106] The need for a complete vision of beatitude to reorganise personal feeling grows so much more conscious in Eliot's poetry of later periods that his study of Indian philosophy, including Buddhism, provides a new perspective to explore the nature of beatitude.

Eliot observes that 'The only world in which [Laforgue] could have satisfied himself, therefore, was a world such as Dante's'.[107] The place nearest to Dante's world in this poem is the epigraph; it refers to a scene from *Inferno* when Guido da Montefeltro confesses to Dante:

> If I thought my answer were to one who ever could return to the world, this flame should shake no more; but since none ever did return alive from this depth, if what I hear be true, without fear of infamy I answer thee.[108]

The epigraph implies that Prufrock is talking to the reader as if he is in hell and prepares to reveal to the reader something worth revealing about his suffering. This hell seems to be a certain mental

[103] 'Clark Lecture VIII', p. 745.
[104] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 190; 'Clark Lecture VIII', p. 744.
[105] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 8.
[106] 'Clark Lecture VIII', p. 746.
[107] Ibid., p. 743.
[108] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 376.

state, and whoever enters it can never return to the previous self which is ignorant of the hell, as 'no-one has ever returned alive'.[109] The epigraph from *Inferno* prophesies the failure of Prufrock's spiritual journey. What he can share with the reader is the knowledge of his suffering in the abyss, but not any knowledge of salvation such as that offered by the Buddha. His journey is the journey of discovery, not a journey towards any solution. He is trapped in the material world, which is a hell for him, as well as the inability to share what he discovers. This double existence puts him at the intersection of the two realms, facing both the pressure of society from outside and the struggle from inside. The spiritual part of Prufrock, which is on a quest of salvation, is at odds with both sides. Eliot later revealed that the 'you' in the first line 'Let us go, then you and I' is 'merely some friend or companion, presumably of the male sex.'[110] The image of a male friend in the street also appears in 'Little Gidding' as 'a familiar compound ghost / Both intimate and unidentifiable', who offers to tell the speaker knowledge about human existence.[111] The prototype of the compound ghost may come from *The Divine Comedy*, in which Dante goes into Hell with the soul of Virgil. Likewise, the 'you' that Prufrock addresses is perhaps also a spiritual existence, probably Prufrock's spiritual self, that witnesses the suffering of his physical self. On the epigraph Robert Hollander notes that 'report among the living would bring infamy, not fame. Since [Guido] believes that Dante is a damned soul, and thus unable to regain the world of the living, he will speak.'[112] The report echoes Lazarus's return from the dead and his revelation of knowledge barred from the living. In this case, the living is the ignorant. By referring to Lazarus, Prufrock seems to play the role of one who knows – or at least assumes that he knows – some secret that may end such ignorance.

The moment that Prufrock imagines himself as Lazarus who will tell the secret of the dead, the voice of the living retorts: 'That is not what I meant at all. / That is not it, at all.'[113] The secret from the dead is useless if it cannot be comprehended and accepted by the living.

[109] Martin Scofield, *T. S. Eliot: The Poems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 56.
[110] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 376.
[111] Ibid., p. 205.
[112] Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), p. 508.
[113] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 8.

Paraphrasing Luke 16: 31 of the Bible, Eliot observes in 'Notes on the Way [I]' that 'The real sceptic knows that even if one return from the dead, that will not settle the doubts of those who are not convinced by Moses and the prophets.'[114] As Prufrock has intuitively seen his end in both the vision of the cycle of life and death and the vision of the beheading of St John the Baptist, to a certain degree he can be regarded as someone who comes from the dead. But even if he really carries the answer to 'some overwhelming question', he still fails to raise the interest of the living. He is an imperfect seer who sees his own death but not his salvation, like Madame Sosostris in *The Waste Land* who sees only fragmented images and fails to see the hanged man. Prufrock's individual acts are counteracted by the forces around him. He is tortured by his incapacity to express that which is revealed to him by the dead. Later in 'Hamlet', Eliot criticises Shakespeare for attempting 'to express the inexpressibly horrible', which results in the failure to formulate an objective correlative for Hamlet's inexpressible emotion.[115] The awareness of something beyond speech is reminiscent of the apophatic tradition in Christianity, 'via negativa', which emphasises 'the absolute unknowability of God'.[116] It corresponds with the concept of 'neti-neti' (not this, not that) in Indian philosophy, which indicates the idea that the divine Absolute, or Brahman, 'is beyond all polarity and therefore cannot be characterized in the normal terms of human discursive thought.'[117] Moreover, Prufrock's frustration also comes from the world of the living, that it is unprepared or unwilling to listen to him. The vision of Lazarus's return is dispersed by a counter-vision: 'If one, settling a pillow by her head / Should say: "That is not what I meant at all; / That is not it, at all."'[118] The impossibility of '[saying] just what [he means]' is perhaps partly owing to the interlocutor's inability to understand it, as in *Family Reunion* when Harry says, '[they] don't understand what it is to be awake, / To be living on several planes at once.'[119] The Buddha,

[114] 'Notes on the Way [I]', p. 154.
[115] T. S. Eliot, 'Hamlet', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, last accessed 9 June 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 126.
[116] 'Negative mysticism: God and the Godhead', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.
[117] 'Nirguna (Sanskrit: "distinctionless")', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.
[118] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 8.
[119] T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London & Boston: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 324.

after achieving Nirvana, also had a moment of doubt on whether he should spread his knowledge in the world. Arnold's version reveals what lies between Prufrock and the world of the living:

> […] for how all men – Buddh mused –
> Who love their sins and cleave to cheats of sense,
> And drink of error from a thousand springs —
> Having no mind to see, nor strength to break
> The fleshy snare which binds them – How should such
> Receive […] the Law
> Redeeming all, yet strange to profit by,
> As the caged bird often shuns its opened door?[120]

It is in this sense that the fundamental teaching of Buddhism, the 'Four Noble Truths', are defined as 'four facts known to be true by those "noble ones" with insight into the nature of reality, but not known by ordinary beings.'[121] Besides, unlike Moses's message from Heaven, the knowledge of Lazarus, as well as that of Guido in the *Inferno*, is a message from Hell. In this sense, what Prufrock wishes to convey is a message about suffering, not about bliss. It is worth noting that suffering is indeed the starting point as well as the centre of the Buddhist Four Noble Truths. They are listed in *The Light of Asia* as 'Sorrow', 'Sorrow's Cause', 'Sorrow's Ceasing', and 'The Way' that leads to peace in Nirvana.[122] In Buddhism, to observe the nature of suffering is the starting point towards Nirvana, and Nirvana means the cessation of suffering. That is to say, knowledge of the nature of suffering is itself potentially enlightening.

The end of the poem offers a glimpse of hope, as Prufrock hears the mermaids singing. Even though Prufrock knows that he is to be wakened by the human voices, his having lingered in the chambers of the sea and heard the songs of the mermaids are signs of otherworldly happiness. If the human voices that make Prufrock drown represent a form of death, the mermaids'

[120] *The Light of Asia*, p. 186.
[121] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[122] *The Light of Asia*, pp. 223-26.

singing represents the vitality of being truly alive. To drown in the reality of human voices is at the same time to wake from the dream of the imaginative world of the mermaids where Prufrock feels at ease. It is similar to the state of day-dreaming in which the subject's will looses its grip on reality for a short while. As Schopenhauer puts it,

> There always lies so near to us a realm in which we have escaped entirely from all our affliction; but who has the strength to remain in it for long? [...] As soon as any relation to our will […] again enters consciousness, the magic is at an end.[123]

When Prufrock drowns in the human voices, his consciousness is sent back to the beginning of his spiritual journey, in the room where 'the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo'. For Prufrock, the personal inner duration may be truer than the flow of time in reality. To feel that he may drown in monotonous reality reflects that he is very much alive in his timeless inner world. The social life he dreads is related to death; it is not absolute annihilation, but the return to the insignificant. With such a cruel awareness of his own situation, the poem is full of self-irony that reveals and mocks Prufrock's awkwardness and the insidiousness of his society. The mermaids, however, are spared. The yearning for something different from the known world is cherished. Those intuitive moments tickle him, unlike the social life that deadens his sensibility, and thus they appear trustworthy. To trust something, for Prufrock, does not mean to intellectually judge that something is true, or he would not have regarded his life environment as a malingering antagonist force. Trust is more concerned with a leap of faith, a leap into the unknown but definitely felt realm of the inner self. After having 'known them all', the intuitively felt but not fully understood yearning becomes something eternally new to Prufrock.

In fact, the poet may have already dropped the reader a hint in the title about what Prufrock yearns for: the word 'Love'. As it is in the title, it may not necessarily represent 'Love' with a capital 'L' in the poet's mind when he wrote it, but, interestingly, the word 'love' is not

[123] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969), p. 197.

mentioned even once in the poem. This is a 'Love Song' without 'love', in which the idea of love would appear untimely. As the poet claims many years later in 'Little Gidding', 'Who then devised the torment? Love. / Love is the unfamiliar Name'.[124] The speaker may find it difficult to incarnate 'Love' in any form of 'love'. At first glance, the poem's preoccupation with spiritual suffering and self-irony makes 'love song' inappropriate as its title. However, with *The Light of Asia* in mind, one may find that such love without the beloved is comparable to the compassionate love which is regarded as Siddhartha's chief motivation to abandon his family in search of the answer to the ultimate question of salvation:

> Friend, that love is false
> Which clings to love for selfish sweets of love;
> But I, who love [my family] more than joys of mine –
> Yes, more than joys of theirs – depart to save
> Them and all flesh, if ultimate love avail.[125]

It is unlikely that Eliot should have called the poem a love song and completely ignored the element of love. The epigraph to *Prufrock and Other Observations* may shed light on Prufrock's journey towards 'the overwhelming question', or whatever he is vaguely looking for but could not name. The epigraph can be translated as 'Now can you understand the quantity of love that warms me towards you, so that I forget our vanity, and treat the shadows like the solid thing'.[126] When Prufrock lingers in the chambers of the sea and hears the mermaids singing, he probably would not ask himself 'should I be attracted by their singing and be warmed by that attraction?' The naturalness of the attraction is timeless, and thus one may argue that for Prufrock the mermaids' singing is more real than his social activities.

[124] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 207.
[125] *The Light of Asia*, p. 104.
[126] C. R. Mittal, *Eliot's Early Poetry in Perspective* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2001), p. 11.

Ricks and McCue reveal that Eliot translated the original Italian word 'vanitate' as 'nothingness'.[127] In 'Ecclesiastes', the preacher claims at the beginning that 'all is vanity', before stating that there is time for all things to happen (Ecclesiastes, 1:2).[128] Eliot observes in a letter to Frederick Pollock, dated 6 January 1930, that the original meaning of the word 'with the allusion to Ecclesiastes – is so much richer than "emptiness" is'.[129] Indeed, the origin of the word 'vanity' in Latin 'vanitas' contains several meanings which are inherently connected: 'emptiness, nothingness', 'falsehood, deception', and 'vainglory'.[130] They form a narrative of human existence strikingly similar to that of Buddhism. In the Buddhist worldview, the world of senses is illusory, leads to egotism, and is ultimately empty:

> So flameth […] lust and thirst of things.
> Eager ye cleave to shadows, dote on dream;
> A false Self in the midst ye plant, and make
> A world around which seems[.][131]

When Prufrock claims that he has 'known them all', the 'all' refers to entertainments and digressions which are deceptions or illusions that would lead him away from his spiritual concerns, and in the flow of time they are ultimately empty, without timeless value. Referring back to the epigraph, 'Love' is not part of the 'All' that Prufrock is tired of, for it is the key to enabling the speaker to see 'our vanity' as falsehood and nothingness. However, to 'treat the shadows like the solid thing' implies a 'failed embrace', as both sides, Statius and Virgil, are souls without a body.[132] While the real women with their human voices do not seem to be the right incarnations for the embrace of 'Love', the envisaged mermaids are shadowy and transient,

[127] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 372.
[128] *The Holy Bible: King James Version* (Harper Collins: Glasgow, 1991), p. 630.
[129] T. S. Eliot, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 5: 1930-1931*, ed. Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (London: Faber and Faber, 2014), p. 17.
[130] Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, ed. *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1879), p. 1957.
[131] *The Light of Asia*, p. 224.
[132] Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, trans. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander (New York: Anchor Books, 2004), p. 481.

existing only in Prufrock's mind. The poem is a love song without a proper lover, like a wandering ghost looking in vain for a womb for incarnation.

The word 'proper' points to two meanings. Prufrock's love song is not to any lady deemed proper by the world around him, 'behaving according to social norms or polite usage; decorous, well-mannered; correct, respectable (occasionally with implication of stiff formality)'.[133] In the meanwhile, he cannot see any vision 'Suitable for [his] specified or implicit purpose' that may embody the kind of love beyond desire, which is perhaps a vision of beatitude.[134] In the cycle of reincarnation, only 'Love' survives like a bodyless soul. Arnold weaves the theme of divine love, which is more familiar to Western readers, with the Buddhist worldview of impermanence:

> Before beginning and without an end,
> As space eternal and as surety sure,
> Is fixed a Power divine which moves to good,
> Only its laws endure.
> […]
> It slayeth and it saveth, nowise moved
> Except unto the working out of doom;
> Its threads are Love and Life; and Death and Pain
> The shuttles of its loom.[135]

Later in 'Gerontion', Eliot describes the various types of dried life without Arnold's 'Love and Life' as 'vacant shuttles [that] weave the wind'.[136] They represent the self-revolving world that terrifies Prufrock. Nevertheless, within the vision of the singing mermaids lies the source of hope that the poet would return to in his later poems. Prufrock's mystical experience of hearing and seeing the mermaids may have planted the seed of spiritual quest in his mind. As John Donne

[133] *OED.*
[134] Ibid.
[135] *The Light of Asia*, pp. 215-17.
[136] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 32.

writes, ‘Teach me to hear mermaids singing / […] / If thou be’est born to strange sights, / Things invisible to see’.[137] Prufrock has caught a glimpse of unworldly existence, and will never again be as ignorant as those who have never seen it. It can be argued that what Prufrock strives for is the magic that would permanently free him from worldly attachments and rigid formulations. In this poem, Eliot reveals some of the issues that are also at the heart of Buddhism, especially the phenomenon of reincarnation and the quest for freedom from worldly attachments, which are further treated in his later poetry by a mind more systematically trained in Buddhism. This poem penetrates into the calcified tissue of decadent social life and reveals the horror of meaningless ennui. In this sense, it can be regarded as a poem of initiation. The rest of the poems in *Prufrock and Other Observations* offer more insights into the Prufrockian experience of both the outer world and the inner world, from more impersonal perspectives.

[137] John Donne, ‘Song (Go and Catch a Falling Star)’, *John Donne: The Complete English Poems*, ed. A. J. Smith (London: Penguin, 1996), p. 77.

Chapter 2: The Body-Soul Complex in *Prufrock and Other Observations*

Existing criticism on the relationship between Buddhism and Eliot's poetry largely ignores Eliot's early poems. Eliot took up Indian studies only after he returned to Harvard in the autumn of 1911, by which time the major poems in *Prufrock and Other Observations* had already been drafted.[138] Nevertheless, as shown in Chapter 1, Eliot's exposure to Buddhism was much earlier than his university studies. In addition to *The Light of Asia,* Eliot also read Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* at an early age, which is a story that unfolds around a Buddhist quest for spiritual salvation. In 1909, Eliot wrote 'The Defects of Kipling', which is deemed 'his earliest piece of literary criticism'.[139] Decades later, he wrote in 'Rudyard Kipling' that Kipling's 'maturest work on India, and his greatest book, is *Kim*'.[140] What is more, *Kim* is among the books that Eliot 'often read aloud to [his wife Valerie Eliot] in the evenings', as she recalls in the introduction to his letters.[141] A close look at the early poems in light of the Buddhist journey of *Kim* proves to be fruitful. The following analysis draws on *Kim* to illuminate four poems from *Prufrock and Other Observations*, namely 'Portrait of a Lady', 'Preludes', 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', and 'La Figlia Che Piange'. After revealing the moments of crisis in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', the poet goes on in the rest of *Prufrock and Other Observations* to observe phenomena of the larger world which reflect Prufrock's spiritual crisis. Rather than becoming a 'swan song' as Eliot once feared, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' turned out to be a starting point of a spiritual journey, which, as the lama in Kim puts it, is 'well begun'.[142] The four poems examined in this chapter preserve a poetic mind's initial experiences in 'the Great Game' of life and death.[143] Besides *Kim,* this chapter also

[138] Note 2 'Composition and Shaping', in T. S. Eliot, *Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, ed. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue (London: Faber and Faber, 2015), p. 363.
[139] Introduction to *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: the Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905–1918*, last accessed 11 May 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. xxxi.
[140] T. S. Eliot, 'Rudyard Kipling', *On Poetry and Poet* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 247.
[141] Introduction to *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. xv.
[142] From a letter to Henry Eliot on 6 September 1916, in *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 151; Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (London: Penguin, 2011), p. 9; p. 131.
[143] *Kim,* p. 131.

refers to Eliot's early philosophical work and modern Buddhist scholarship to explore the proto-Buddhist elements in his early poetry.

One major concern of Eliot's criticism throughout his poetic career is the union of different spheres of existence. In 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', he stresses the necessity for individual artists to locate and evaluate themselves within the order of tradition: 'the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new'.[144] In 'Hamlet', he proposes the idea of the 'objective correlative', meaning 'a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion.'[145] Moreover, Eliot's comments on the metaphysical poets highlight the significance to him of the wholeness of sensibility, or the unification of thought and feeling. This points to a kind of artistic mind in which 'experiences are always forming new wholes.'[146] Later, he proposes an exemplary case of the unification, which is Dante's poetry, as he claims that 'Dante's is the most comprehensive, and the most ordered presentation of emotions that has ever been made.'[147] Through Dante's love for Beatrice, he tries to highlight the transcendence of worldly love with the love for God: 'the love of man and woman (or for that matter of man and man) is only explained and made reasonable by the higher love.'[148] This thread of thought, which is like a string of reincarnation, shows that the wholeness of sensibility which demands the integration of thought and feeling, or body and soul, is a persistent obsession in Eliot's poetic career. In 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', Prufrock is torn between the outer world and personal sensibility. The rest of the poems in *Prufrock and Other Observations* explore both the experience of breaking from the old world and the experience of venturing into a modern one. The former kind of experience, represented by 'Portrait of a Lady' and 'La Figlia Che Piange', focuses on interpersonal relationships and the conflict between the old world of conventions and

[144] T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926,* last accessed 26 February 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 106.
[145] Hamlet', p. 125.
[146] 'The Metaphysical Poets', p. 380.
[147] T. S. Eliot, 'Dante' (1920), *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926,* last accessed 26 February 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 231.
[148] T. S. Eliot, 'Dante' (1929), *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Literature, Politics, Belief, 1927–1929,* last accessed 26 February 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 732.

personal sensibility. The latter, exemplified by 'Preludes' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', is mainly concerned with the struggle of individual souls in a culturally barren environment of the modern city. In both kinds, the boundary between the personal and the impersonal is threatened and even trampled. The reincarnation of different forces in individual lives threads all major parts of the poems and reveals the tension between the subjective and the objective. In the following analysis, the idea of reincarnation in Buddhism helps clarify the body-soul complex that haunts the four poems.

The tension between the subjective and the objective is analysed by Eliot himself in his doctoral dissertation, *Knowledge and Experience*: it exists in 'a process of assimilation of feeling to a new object, or in assimilation of object to feeling.'[149] The emphasis on the 'process' of becoming can also be found in Hermann Oldenberg's *Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Order*. The section on 'soul' points out emphatically that '[being] is, we may say, the procession – regulated by the law of causality – of continuous being at every moment self-consuming and anew begetting'.[150] According to Kearns, *Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Order* 'was a standard text in Eliot's student days' and contains 'good internal evidence, as well, for his familiarity' with the book.[151] In fact, Eliot was aware of Oldenberg's Buddhist thought, which is mentioned in his notes. Besides, Anesaki refers to Oldenberg in 'Buddhist Ethics and Morality', a copy of which was preserved by Eliot.[152] Although Oldenberg's general viewpoint is taken as 'nihilist' according to Eliot's notes, his interpretation of reincarnation shares deep affinity with Eliot's observation of the relationship between the subjective and the objective.[153] On the nature of the reincarnated in different reincarnations, Oldenberg argues that 'it is not the same being and yet they are not separate beings which relieve one another in the series of existences.'[154] He negates the self as an unchangeable and enduring entity, and highlights the unceasing evolvement

[149] T. S. Eliot, *Knowledge and Experience, The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905–1918,* last accessed 20 July 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 251.
[150] Hermann Oldenberg, *Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Order*, trans. William Hoey (London: William and Norgate, 1882), p. 262.
[151] Kearns, p. 25; p. 84.
[152] Houghton Library.
[153] Ibid, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 17 October 1913.
[154] Oldenberg, p. 262.

of the subject in connection with past lives and future lives. Similarly, for Eliot, 'The soul is so far from being a monad', for 'in this process of relation the object itself is altered […] we may be said to move from one point of view to another'.[155] Therefore, in the chain of reincarnation, individual existence is, according to Oldenberg, '[not] being in the ordinary sense, but still assuredly not a non-being'.[156] There is no being because in the flow of time every whole and complete being is transient, but this does not mean that a vacuum is all there is in the universe, for changes are always changes towards possible new beings.

What lies at the heart of this argument is the Buddhist vision to see 'becoming in all apparent beings'.[157] In a similar line of thought, Eliot concludes that 'The principle upon which I insist is of course the unity and continuity of feeling and objectivity […] the two are only discriminated aspects in the whole of experience.'[158] From the perspective of reincarnation, the four poems are about embodying the individual soul and the lack of a suitable body. The anxiety of the individual soul animates these poems, as the soul wanders from the old world to the new in search of a suitable form. Furthermore, the wandering between bodies seems to be itself a body for dwelling. The soul's struggle between different forms of life is also a form, which manifests itself in the individual's interaction with the unsatisfactory patterns of being. In this way, the perspective of reincarnation offers the reader a unique angle that focuses on the interaction between the figures and their living environments, instead of the figures themselves as isolated and helpless individuals.

The general concern of the poems over the relationship between the subject and the object is reflected in their titles. For 'Portrait of a Lady' and 'La Figlia Che Piange', both titles suggest the use of the visual arts. Although the title 'La Figlia Che Piange' does not reveal an art form such as a portrait, the poem is in fact 'about a statue which Mr. Eliot had looked for in a museum in Italy but had failed to find', and the title is the name of that statue, meaning 'the

[155] *Knowledge and Experience*, p. 362; p. 313.
[156] Oldenberg, p. 280.
[157] Ibid., p. 251.
[158] *Knowledge and Experience*, p. 334.

weeping girl'.[159] With artistic forms such as painting and sculpture, the artist has limited freedom, but the limited freedom vitalises the form. The form is given before the work begins, and the exercise of the freedom of creation makes the artist acutely aware of the tension between form and content, or body and soul. The exercise of freedom in a form is also an act of reincarnation. It is both the realisation of the form with the content and the embodiment of the content in a form. In this sense, reincarnation is at the same time impersonal and personal. Although the titles of 'Preludes' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' suggest the use of musical forms, both 'prelude' and 'rhapsody' indicate a lack of high seriousness and elaboration such as in a symphony or a concerto. They allow some room for casualness and even whimsical improvisation. Unlike the protagonists in 'Portrait of a Lady' and 'La Figlia Che Piange' who wrestle with a given form, the individuals in 'Preludes' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' are in danger of falling into a formless and essentially chaotic life manipulated by the modern urban environment. Both musical titles suggest a certain degree of incompletion; while 'prelude' hints at an early stage of transition, 'rhapsody' implies whimsicality and uncontrollability.

The title 'Portrait of a Lady', compared with the two musical titles, suggests less freedom of personal artistic creation and more demand on the artist to adhere to an impersonal tradition. It is also a portrait of a world of cultural manners with which the speaker has a close relationship. On the one hand, he is deeply involved in the lady's society and even gains her admiration. On the other, he is not totally at ease in his relationship with her. If the lady in 'Portrait of a Lady' is an incarnation of a world of fastidious social manners and high talk, reflecting the life of the Victorian upper class, the speaker is a young member who is growing out of it. His difficulty expressing himself may reflect Eliot's personal struggle to grow out of the literary tradition of the Romantic and the Victorian periods, in order to express modern sensibility. Michael O'Neill observes that 'Eliot shows the impact of Romantic modes and purposes in the act of struggling to articulate his individual vision.'[160] The struggle is a struggle against the shadow of the past which

[159] T. S Eliot, *Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, ed. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue (London: Faber and Faber, 2015), p. 451.
[160] Michael O'Neill, *The All-Sustaining Air* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 64.

has already become part of the protagonist's soul. The pain of such struggling is reflected in the word 'fornication' from the epigraph: 'Thou hast committed — / Fornication: but that was in another country, / And besides, the wench is dead.'[161] Fornication suggests illegitimate intimacy, condemning the connectedness between the speaker and the lady. Besides, the epigraph also implies that before the protagonist finds a way to reconcile the shadow of the past and modern sensibility, that past will have died out. The lady's self-awareness of her situation, that she is dying with the world she represents, reveals the inevitable breaking down of her relationship with the speaker:

> But what have I, but what have I, my friend,
> To give you, what can you receive from me?
> Only the friendship and the sympathy
> Of one about to reach to her journey's end.
>
> I shall sit here, serving tea to friends…[162]

Her confession is similar to that of the devout old woman in *Kim*: 'I am old and useless […] None now love me – and none respect […] The room is always prepared; the welcome is always ready […]'[163] With the old way of life – no matter how cherishable it is for those who have spent their lives in it – the speaker cannot make sense of and express his buried life, and thus he can only smile when his buried life is in danger of being exposed to the lady. Although the lady is sympathetic towards the speaker, they can never form a kind of mutually appreciated friendship, for he must reincarnate in a new world what he has inherited from the lady's world.

The opening lines show the lady's endeavour to make her life appear natural. However, the speaker senses the aura of artificiality in the lady's intentional preparation to make the scene

[161] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 10.
[162] Ibid., p. 12.
[163] *Kim*, p. 229.

appear to be natural, that it should look as if it '[arranges] itself'.[164] One may argue that it would have been better if the scene was arranged unconsciously, owing to the lady's perfect sincerity in the daily arrangement of her house. What is presented to the reader is the subtle consciousness that she needs to do it intentionally so that the scene does not have the traces of artificiality or deliberateness. She prepares the room as if she does it according to some ideal in her mind, which reveals that the ideal does not naturally exist in her present daily life; she needs to strive deliberately to reincarnate it. To some extent, the lady sacrifices her originality and naturalness so that the form and manner of her life may comply with conventional views in her society, and appear natural and original accordingly. She brings back to life – and thus maintains – the pattern of existence of the elegant and graceful old world, despite the fact the world at large is changing and scrutinises her through the eyes of the speaker.

Her high talk about her own buried life is perhaps not without sincerity, for she thinks, acts, and, as a result, feels in the way she designs:

> Yet with these April sunsets, that somehow recall
> My buried life, and Paris in the Spring,
> I feel immeasurably at peace, and find the world
> To be wonderful and youthful, after all.[165]

When her buried life emerges, it is immediately explained and tamed by her conscious self. By following the orders of the conscious self as if she is performing some ritualistic acts, her whole being is altered. Similarly, the player of Chopin's music is regarded as 'the latest Pole', as if whoever plays his music should strive to become one of his reincarnations, to fit in the role well-prepared, so as to be safely comprehended with assumptions.

[164] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 10.
[165] Ibid., p. 11.

In contrast, the speaker tries to avoid being totally consumed by any role by wearing a facade of polite smiles. As a consequence, he suffers from the inconsistency between his buried life and his conscious life. It is described by Matthew Arnold: 'they lived and moved / Tricked in disguises, alien to the rest / Of men, and alien to themselves'.[166] The speaker's buried life fails to be incarnated, and it is 'hammering a prelude of its own'.[167] As it cannot be fully understood, or simply explained away, it is deemed 'absurd' and taken as a 'false note'.[168] The lady talks about the buried life with ease, but for the speaker if the buried life comes to the surface, it will disrupt his calm manner and make him appear ridiculous. The speaker's act of correcting his watch by the public clocks is a symbol of suppressing the personal by conforming to the forms and manners of life in a public domain; to 'Admire the monuments' implies the same act of synchronisation.[169] The word 'monuments' also appears in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in which Eliot argues that the monuments of the past form an order to which the new work of art must relate in order to find its place among them and acquire value:

> The necessity that [the poet] shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not onesided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves[170]

Eliot pays attention to the relationship between the new work of art and the impersonal order of the monuments, and strives for a balance between them. By contrast, whenever the inner voice of the buried life returns, the speaker is puzzled, not knowing what to do and even what to feel.[171] He is not equipped with a system of symbols, gestures, and language that corresponds with the system of social conventions and etiquettes that he is used to. In Eliot's own words, he is 'not

[166] *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, p. 272.
[167] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot,* p. 11.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.
[170] 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', p. 106.
[171] One of Eliot's uncollected poems is titled 'Do I know how I feel? Do I know what I think?', *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I,* p. 269.

clear in his mind as to what his temperament wanted him to do'.[172] What he has learned from the world that he shares with the lady must be fused into his personal sensibility before a new self can come into being, which would integrate the buried life and the conscious life. In this sense, the lady's failure to form a genuine friendship with the speaker symbolises the failure of the reincarnation of her way of life in him.

For the speaker, to give in to the capricious inner force is perhaps as hellish as to live in mechanical and rigid manners. Life without order is as unbearable as order without life. Trapped between life and order, the speaker wears the façade of a polite smile to deal with the lady: 'I smile, of course, / And go on drinking tea.'[173] Even the moments of uncontrollable disturbance, such as the moment when he hears 'some worn-out common song' from a street piano, undermine his efforts to 'remain self-possessed'.[174] According to the *OED*, self-possession means 'command or control of one's feeling, reaction, etc., esp. in difficult or stressful situation'.[175] In the poem, self-possession is close to the suppression of the buried life. It posits the speaker's conscious self against situations that threaten to break his composure or at least the gesture of remaining composed. When the lady admits her failure to build a friendship with the speaker, he cannot help feeling that '[his] self-possession gutters; [they] are really in the dark.'[176] It indicates that he realises his self-deception in wearing the mask of politeness to cover his inner anxiety.[177] The lady, though her manner of life seems awkwardly old-fashioned and she may appear affected, is at least consistent and honest with herself. To use the lama's comment on the devout old woman:

> She is upon the wheel and wholly given to the show of this life, but none the less, *chela*, she is virtuous, kindly, hospitable – of a whole and zealous heart. Who shall say she does not acquire merit?[178]

[172] T. S. Eliot, 'Ben Jonson', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, last accessed 26 February 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 152.
[173] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 11.
[174] Ibid., p. 12.
[175] *OED*.
[176] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 13.
[177] Ibid., p. 13.
[178] *Kim*, p. 229.

This echoes the question at the end of the poem: 'Would she not have the advantage, after all?'[179] The lady's self-consistency is hinted in the repeated phrase 'I shall sit here, serving tea to friends'.[180] The speaker, on the contrary, can only 'borrow every changing shape / To find expression', as if his soul is eternally wandering through different reincarnations, finding no real resting place.[181] The lady's insistence that he understands her feeling makes a contrast with his stubborn silence:

> But what have I, but what have I, my friend,
> To give you, what can you receive from me?
> Only the friendship and the sympathy
> Of one about to reach her journey's end.
>
> I shall sit here, serving tea to friends ....
>
> I take my hat: how can I make a cowardly amends
> For what she has said to me?[182]

Because he can only feel her feelings towards him and is unable to make a direct response, she can only offer admiration and sympathy. The failure to form a close relationship is repeated and intensified in 'La Figlia Che Piange'. In both poems, the speaker has to leave a lady for a long journey: 'You hardly know when you are going back, / You will find so much to learn.'[183] The lady senses the importance of the journey to him, and also that it means the end of their relationship. As Kipling puts it in *Kim*, 'When [one] comes to the Great Game [of the world] he

[179] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 14.
[180] Ibid., p. 12.
[181] Ibid, p. 13.
[182] Ibid., p. 12.
[183] Ibid., p. 13.

must go alone'.[184] Such a journey starts with the renunciation of the lady's world as well as that of the union with the weeping girl; it is similar to the Buddha's great renunciation of secular life.

Similar to the relationship with the lady of the old world, the speaker in 'La Figlia Che Piange' refuses to expose his inner self in case he should lose 'a gesture and a pose'.[185] By preventing an ultimate union of love, the speaker achieves the integration of art. In other words, he chooses a case of unfilled love over a love story with a happy and clichéd ending. Love is sacrificed so that renunciation can be complete, but the end of the poem shows that the speaker's love for the girl still smoulders in his memory and imagination. One may argue that the poem witnesses the transition of the object of art from love to the renunciation of love and finally to love that torments the renouncer. Attracted to the aesthetic beauty of unfulfilled love, the speaker decides that the girl must be deserted so that her grief can be exploited when he assumes the role of the artist. The title means 'the weeping girl', which contains a 'gesture and a pose'. She must remain in distress so that the artistic beauty of her distress can be embodied in the renunciation of fulfilled love. However, the speaker, or the imagined male figure who deserts the girl, also suffers. On the one hand, he wishes to maintain his 'gesture and […] pose', but on the other hand his mind is troubled by her image afterwards.[186] In the end, what remains or what endures the encroaching of time is the image of 'Her hair over her arms and her arms full of flowers'.[187] In other words, the speaker's efforts to preserve the artistic beauty of the girl's weeping are in vain, for in the end what really touches him and disturbs him is the beauty in the girl herself, rather than her weeping.

The second verse paragraph witnesses a sudden shift from obsession with the girl's beauty to a resolutely detached arrangement for objective aesthetic beauty. A split of personality occurs and the director coolly instructs the male character to leave the girl and let her grieve. The speaker designs that the pain of parting should be as deep 'As the soul leaves the body torn and

[184] *Kim*, p. 131.
[185] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 28.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.

bruised'.[188] The body-soul relationship indicates that the girl embodies the speaker's earthly love. The relationship reveals the split of his personality between the detached director and the male character who is emotionally involved. His intention to free himself from the attachment to the girl's physical beauty is suggested in 'I should find / Some way incomparably light and deft / Some way we both should understand, / Simple and faithless as a smile and shake of the hand'.[189] Such an attitude of evasion echoes the cool polite smile in 'Portrait of a Lady' and also points to the inconsistency between the speaker's formal pose and his inner yearning. Martin Scofield points out 'the conflict between the artistic desire for form and finality, and the continuing inescapable agency of the memory'.[190] In his uncollected poem 'First Debate between the Body and Soul', Eliot contemplates the conflict more openly:

> Assist me to the pure idea –
> Regarding nature without love or fear
> […] Till life evaporates into a smile
> Simple and profound.[191]

The artist fails to stop the image of the girl from compelling his imagination, for he cannot '[regard] nature without love'. In other words, for him the image of the girl is not a 'pure idea'; it is the integration of his thought and feeling. Although the speaker claims that he should maintain the necessary coolness of the artist, he cannot completely separate the two selves: 'the man who suffers and the mind which creates'.[192] As a result, the renunciation is not a complete one. Kipling's Kim also contemplates leaving worldly love behind for a greater course when he sees a girl in the morning sun: 'How can a man follow the Way [of the Buddha] or the Great

[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Quoted in Susan E. Blalock, ed. *Guides to the Secular Poetry of T. S. Eliot* (London: G. K. HALL & CO., 1996), p. 21.
[191] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 239.
[192] 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', p. 109.

Game [of the world] when he is so-always pestered by women?'[193] The speaker's mind is indeed pestered by the thought of the imagined weeping girl. The poem, rather than being what Eloise Knapp Hay describes 'a brilliantly dramatized nothing', is a failed attempt at a dramatised nothing.[194] The renunciation is not absolute, for attachment to the girl remains. After making the decision to leave the girl, his love for her still clings onto her images. Casting away one image, another will soon emerge, as long as his love for her remains intact. The speaker is reluctant to eradicate the seed of natural love, and in recreating her image, he himself is also recreated. The creator is created and recreated through the acts of creation.

While 'Portrait of a Lady' and 'La Figlia Che Piange' demonstrate the soul's struggle to renounce the body, 'Preludes' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' present the relationship between individual souls uprooted from the past and the modern world that seeks to consume them. In the latter two poems, the reader is led to feel the existence of some grand force, or the Absolute, which manifests itself through individual existence in an urban setting. Ronald Schuchard points out Eliot's obsession with the idea of the Absolute, highlighting his exploration of 'the relation of the tormented individual soul to an external, redemptive Absolute'.[195] However, in both poems, the awareness of the Absolute does not lead to spiritual emancipation or redemption. The relationship between isolated individual lives and the Absolute, or the vital force of life, is presented as negative. The vital force of life endures the forms of individual existence, and the poet sees the enduring as suffering. As the last section of 'Preludes' shows,

> I am moved by fancies that are curled
> Around these images, and cling:
> The notion of some infinitely gentle
> Infinitely suffering thing.[196]

[193] *Kim*, p. 258.
[194] Eloise Knapp Hay, *T. S. Eliot's Negative Way* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 28.
[195] Ronald Schuchard, *Eliot's Dark Angel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 82.
[196] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 16.

The poem consists of four small pieces, named by the poet as 'Preludes', which seems to follow the musical tradition of writing a group of preludes, represented by composers such as Chopin. A prelude is usually 'a piece designed as the formal introduction to a musical work' which is grander and more complex.[197] But a prelude could also have its own features and integrity. A prelude is a preparation but not yet a formal start to a full demonstration of the theme it reveals. It stands at the conjunction of the arousing of a musical mood and the indulgence in it. In this sense, a prelude contains the seed of a to-be-revealed larger piece, which fulfils the potential of the seed. It showcases the essence of some musical element that may be reincarnated in a more formal piece. Thus a group of preludes become a group of beginnings. What is more, to use 'Preludes' in the plural form is probably a reaction against 'The Prelude', undermining the Wordsworthian sublime. In 'Preludes', the same condition of life reincarnates itself in the individuals again and again, without significance of the redemptive or even the apocalyptic. Although a prelude signifies a beginning, it is also an end in itself, as a prelude is, similar to the formal piece that it may introduce, a piece of art with its own artistic wholeness. It can be taken as an act of incarnation. In the endless cycle of reincarnation, an act of incarnation is the end of one cycle and the beginning of another. In this process, the essence of one prelude is preserved in the next with new nuances. To use Eliot's own words, 'the character of a man [is] to develop […] into something new and unforeseen. But it will have, from its crudest beginnings, a character to which (though it may belie all our verbal definitions) it will always remain consistent.'[198] In this sense, the preludes are a series of reincarnations of the essence of the poem 'Preludes'.

'The lighting of the lamps' ends the first prelude, but also prepares for the second to start. In this sense, the first prelude is a prelude to the second, or one may say it is also a prelude to the rest of the poem. The reader is offered an impersonal perspective on the world. In the observer's eyes, the boundary between individuals and their living environment is blurred, as the city

[197] *OED*.
[198] *Knowledge and Experience*, p. 284.

dwellers wake up to enter a world that seems to be itself alive: 'The morning comes to consciousness' of traces of human activities.[199] Personal life is infiltrated by the impersonal aura of the modern city, and personal independence of the individual is undermined. The last line of the first prelude is doubly emphasised: it is an independent paragraph with only one line and it rhymes with the last line of the first stanza. This accentuated ending tries resolutely to bring the diverse but inherently kindred images into a master symbol, 'the lighting of the lamps'.[200] It indicates the awakening of some sublime form of life that integrates everything in the city, be it alive or not, as if the city becomes conscious of itself through the individuals. In fact, the last line of the first prelude is not always separated from the first paragraph. When the poem was originally published in *Blast*, it is immediately after 'A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps'.[201] Christopher Ricks observes that the alteration 'changes the feeling that is prompted by the rhyme *stamps* / *lamps*. We wait a moment longer. No longer is there any chance of the stamping of the horse's foot having the air of bringing into existence the lighting of the lamps.'[202] But there is the chance for the pause to inject a sense of authority into the last line, as if it is announcing with a solemn tone something about the whole first prelude. The lighting of the lamps across the city alters all images that come before it, by subordinating and thus unifying them to the urban environment as a whole. All four preludes form a vista of human existence, which suggests a unifying impersonal viewpoint. This vista foreshadows the vision of the modern city in *The Waste Land*.

One can also find in *Kim* an encompassing vision of the human world, shot through by the Buddhist awareness of the never-resting wheel of life and death:

> when they came to the Human World, busy and profitless, that is just above the Hells, his mind was distracted; for by the roadside trundled the very Wheel itself, eating, drinking, trading, marrying, and quarrelling – all warmly alive. […] note how the flesh takes a thousand shapes, desirable or detestable as men reckon, but in truth of no account either way[203]

[199] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p.15.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Christopher Ricks, *Decisions and Revisions in T. S. Eliot* (London: The British Library and Faber & Faber, 2003), p. 86.
[203] *Kim*, p. 213.

The flesh that takes a thousand shapes echoes the collective life of the city dwellers in Section II:

> With the other masquerades
> that time resumes
> One thinks of all the hands
> That are raising dingy shades
> In a thousand furnished rooms.[204]

The circle of day and night assures the almost mandatory return of the consciousness of the urban morning and the common imprisonment of the city dwellers. Every one of them holds a soul 'constituted' of 'The thousand sordid images' of the common urban environment.[205] The subjective is infiltrated by the objective. In every cycle of day and night, 'all the world came back' to the individual soul, shaping it as well as fusing it with other souls into the impersonal soul of the city.[206] Section IV provides a vision of the individual soul's expansion 'across the skies' and at the same time its endurance of 'insistent feet' on the city streets.[207] It is highly similar to the lama's spiritual trance at the end of *Kim*:

> my soul went free, and wheeling like an eagle […] As a drop draws to water, so my Soul drew near to the Great Soul which is beyond all things. At that point, exalted in contemplation, I saw all Hind, from Ceylon in the sea to the Hills […] I saw them all at one time and in one place; for they were within the Soul. By this I know the Soul has passed beyond the illusion of Time and Space and of Things. By this I knew that I was free.[208]

One may observe that Eliot's version contains all the features of the lama's, except the ecstasy of freedom. What Kipling presents is an experience of spiritual enlightenment, or Nirvana in

[204] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 15.
[205] Ibid., p. 16.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid.
[208] *Kim*, p. 289.

Buddhism. As shown at the beginning of this chapter, both Eliot and the Buddhism according to Oldenberg agree that the self is born of the interaction between the subject and the object, but it can be added that the inevitable accumulation of relations also leads to the death of the old self and the birth of a new self. As Eliot puts it, 'the life of a soul does not consist in the contemplation of one consistent world but in the painful task of unifying (to a greater or less extent) jarring and incompatible ones'[209] The mind of non-self, from Eliot's point of view, means a continuous psychological negation of the self's authority over the world it knows. It is in line with Eliot's poetics of impersonality: 'a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable'.[210] However, in 'Preludes', despite the absorption of the individual into the impersonal existence of the city, that which is 'more valuable' is absent. The speaker sees the evolution of the individual soul as purposeless and endless; in other words, he sees 'causality without substance.'[211] It is meaningless, repetitive, and dull: 'The worlds revolve like ancient women / Gathering fuel in vacant lots.'[212] Such a negative vision of the world is strangely reminiscent of Henri Bergson's philosophy which he eventually outgrew. Bergson hails the inner life of intuition: 'Joy indeed would be that simplicity of life diffused throughout the world by an ever-spreading mystic intuition'.[213] The bleak vision of 'Preludes' shows that such a world is by no means joyful. Eliot openly criticises 'the Bergsonian time doctrine' in 'Mr. Middleton Murry's Synthesis': 'It is a pure naturalism […] and there is no external standard.'[214] For Eliot, one may say, the process of depersonalisation and self-surrender must have a direction and an ultimate destination.

'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' continues to explore such bleak naturalism as presented in 'Preludes'. Unlike 'Preludes', the exploration is coloured with the poet's preoccupation with some possible external standard. The journey through the rhapsodic night exposes the danger of

[209] *Knowledge and Experience*, p. 362.
[210] 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', p. 106.
[211] Oldenberg, p. 251.
[212] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 17.
[213] Henri Bergson, *Henri Bergson: Key Writing*, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 341.
[214] T. S. Eliot, 'Mr. Middleton Murry's Synthesis', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Literature, Politics, Belief, 1927–1929*, last accessed 20 July 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 275.

the total lack of an objective form of life that one may safely surrender oneself to. Such an objective form is behind or at least intimately related to a concept that haunts the speaker throughout the poem – memory. The journey reveals, to use Andrés Romero-Jódar's words on the modernist authors including Eliot, 'the overwhelming anxiety that pushes their protagonists towards the most disquieting inner quests for meaning against an alienating world'.[215] Regarding this anxiety, Romero-Jódar refers to both the prophetic voice from *The Waste Land* ('I will show you fear in a handful of dust') and 'the dark and twisted world […] of Christopher Nolan's [film art]'.[216] It is worth noting that the film 'Memento', directed by Nolan, shares deep affinity with Eliot's quest for meaning in 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night'. The hero of the film, Leonard, is unable to preserve memories of recent events. As a result, he uses notes to keep reminding himself of the revenge he has to conduct. His life after the loss of memory is confined to the fragmented information on the notes he makes for himself. The idea of memory, including its nature and its use, is also a major occupation of 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night'. While 'Preludes' does not mention memory, 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' is deeply concerned with the use of memory. It seems that the awareness of memory gives the poem an extra dimension. At the end of the film 'Memento', Leonard chooses to create a piece of false information so that he can go on to live with a purpose. He knows that he will soon forget that the information is false and will take the false information as representing genuine memory. The manipulation of memory echoes Eliot's description that 'Midnight shakes the memory / As a madman shakes a dead geranium.'[217] In the poem, the speaker stands between the lifeless memory and some grand force that may bring chaos.

Memory reveals fragments of one's personal impression of the world, but the summary of them does not represent one's whole being. Donald J. Childs argues, from the perspective of Bergson's philosophy, that the 'Bergsonian mystical moment' in pure memory is what the protagonist is after but eventually fails to grasp.[218] For Childs, the Bergsonian pure memory is

[215] Andrés Romero-Jódar, *The Trauma Graphic Novel* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 4.
[216] Romero-Jódar, pp. 5-6.
[217] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 18.
[218] Donald J. Childs, 'T. S. Eliot's Rhapsody of Matter and Memory', *American Literature* 63 (1991), 485.

close to the mind of the unconscious that 'resists the tyranny of a selective consciousness'.[219] In this sense, against the practical memory that only 'throws up high and dry / A crowd of twisted things' is the pure memory that holds the key to a mystical vital force: 'Memory! You have the key'.[220] In *Kim*, when an old sorceress casts a spell for protection on Kim, she murmurs 'With Him are the keys of the Secret Things!'[221] The secret things suggest esoteric mystical experiences. Moreover, the idea of pure memory is close to the Buddhist concept of 'alaya', or 'storehouse-consciousness', which is regarded as 'a foundational form of consciousness, itself ethically neutral, where all the seeds of all deeds done in the past reside, and from which they fructify in the form of experience.'[222] Unlike pure memory, it is involved with both the internal world and the external world of the individual. Eliot also encountered 'alaya' in his formal Buddhist study. As his notes on Anesaki's lecture on 16 January 1914 reveal, 'alaya is a store of bijas [or seeds], of all mental and physical dharmas [or laws].'[223] Eliot also learned from the lecture the Buddhist idea that the mind cannot be separated from the outer world: 'The whole world, both mental and physical, is [a] manifestation of bijas. […] The world we see is a stage of causal nexus between the physical phenomena themselves, and between the physical and the mental.'[224] This understanding is perhaps what the protagonist in the poem is striving towards. Childs concludes that 'The search [for the significant] – expressed ultimately in terms of the mysticism of St. John of the Cross and the mysticism of Vedanta and Buddhism – is in the beginning (that becomes Eliot's end) a Bergsonian impulse'.[225] Compared with the Buddhist analysis of the mind that integrates both the internal and the external worlds, the Bergsonian pure memory, to use Eliot's own comment on Bergson's philosophy, 'is simply not final'.[226] Jewel Spears Brooker argues that 'Eliot's disillusionment [with Bergson] led him to return to Harvard and begin a serious study of

[219] Childs, p. 479.
[220] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 18.
[221] *Kim*, p. 181.
[222] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[223] Houghton Library.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Childs, p. 488.
[226] T. S. Eliot, 'Inconsistencies in Bergson's Idealism', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905–1918*, last accessed 1 August 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 79.

philosophy'.[227] The new period at Harvard witnessed his serious study of Buddhism, which combines mystical experience with a clear order of mental training and ethical codes.

With 'Portrait of a Lady' and 'La Figlia Che Piange' in mind, the reader may see that both 'Preludes' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' lack a similar male figure who is torn between the old world and the new, or who struggles to keep body and soul together in peace. Instead, individuals merely survive in a new but arid modern environment, without any memory of a past tradition to fall back on. If the lack of the memory of a cultural tradition means that individuals are essentially soulless, they are also in danger of becoming reincarnations of modernity, without any cultural depth. In 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', the idea of a point of reference is vividly embodied in the image of the lamp. Compared with the other objects that confront the protagonist, the street-lamp is exceptionally lively; all objects in the poem are silent except the street-lamp; it is the only connection between the protagonist and darkness. In the end, there is even a 'little lamp' that 'spreads a ring on the stair', like a halo, signifying a destination.[228] The lamp has a function similar to Leonard's notes in 'Memento', which is to offer clues for the protagonist's exploration of the rhapsodic night. The same can be said about memory. With memory, especially in the form of cultural tradition, individuals can merge themselves into the modern urban environment without being zombified by it.

The speaker seems to see a glimpse of hope, when he comes to the end of his night journey: 'Memory! / You have the key, / The little lamp spreads a ring on the stair.'[229] The image of the little lamp is intimately connected to memory in the poet's poetic vision, and the lamp leads the speaker to the space of order: 'The bed is open; the tooth-brush hangs on the wall, / Put your shoes at the door, sleep, prepare for life'.[230] A sense of order is diligently created out of the fragmented and trivial memory of daily life. It makes a contrast with the rhapsodic night that

[227] Jewel Spears Brooker, 'Eliot and Bergson: "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" and the Intractability of Dualism', *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 13 (2015), 1.
[228] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 20.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid.

evolves blindly. Eliot's note on F. H. Bradley's 1899 essay 'Some Remarks on Memory and Inference' reveals his own attitude on the use of memory:

> Our justification for regarding memory as in general accurate is briefly this, that by taking such a course we are best able to order and harmonise our world. There is in the end no other actual or possible criterion of fact and truth[231]

The order of daily life as one finds at the end of the poem is by no means another 'crowd of twisted things' from the lifeless fragments of memory or the nocturnal smells of the nightlife in the city. The order requires the cooperation of the individual to activate it. In this sense, the child's life is formless, without an order, which is why the protagonist sees 'nothing behind that child's eye'.[232] The child merely survives, like the cat and the crab. In this poem, life is not something one automatically acquires. It is, according to the definitions in the *OED*, more related to 'a particular manner or course of living', rather than 'animate existence'.[233] Nevertheless, the poem seems also to suggest the significance of a manner of living to the vitality of one's animate existence. In the film 'Memento', Leonard's notes represent his memory, and they remind him of the things he wanted himself to do after he lost his memory. The notes themselves are lifeless, but by following the notes, Leonard makes his life meaningful, because at least he has something to do. Memory becomes the key to the order of the past. It corresponds to the idea of order in Eliot's poetics of impersonality. The historical memory of a literary tradition is the source of the order of that tradition, and the new artist must find his position in that order – not without referring to his own sensibility – so as to make his work of art alive to the people who share that tradition. At the end of 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', the sense of ceremonial reverence in daily life seems to generate an aura of humility. The protagonist is ready to incarnate his soul in the order of daily life. To 'prepare for life' is to prepare for the end of the chaotic darkness of 'mere living'. The image of a bed may call up the image of a tomb prepared for death. It links back to the woman at

[231] *Knowledge and Experience*, pp. 329-30.
[232] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 19.
[233] *OED*.

the grinning door, but the speaker's tone of determination is different from the aura of hesitation around the woman. The choice of order is out of the speaker's free will, while the woman is lost in the spaces of the dark night that threaten to engulf her. It shows that the only way to release the self from the rhapsodic chaos is to reincarnate the self with order.

Chapter 3: The Reincarnation of Emptiness in *The Waste Land*

Compared with *Prufrock and Other Observations*, the influence of Buddhism on *The Waste Land* is more readily perceptible. Besides the use of the Buddhist 'Fire Sermon', the poem also expresses Eliot's Buddhist sensibility, especially a cultural perspective on reincarnation, and the acute awareness of the essential emptiness of worldly endeavours. By the time of the publication of the poem, Eliot had already finished his formal study of Buddhism, including the study of Buddhist texts in the original language and the lectures on Buddhism given by Anesaki. The copious notes that Eliot made during the lectures show his great interest in Buddhism and the efforts he made to delve into its depths. While *Prufrock and Other Observations* presents the individual soul's wandering between the old world and the new, in search of an answer to the overwhelming question, *The Waste Land* considers the intense suffering of those who still wander and their yearning for salvation, by bringing the old world and the new together in a timeless vision of 'the ultimate emptiness of the world of things.'[234] In the epigraph, the Sybil wishes to die, for her immortality means that her body inevitably becomes a waste land that stands alone in the desert of time. Beneath the life and death of the individuals, the waste land continues to exist and endure the repeated patterns of human endeavours for worldly ends. F. L. Lucas argues that the Sybil 'typifies […] the timeworn soul's desire to escape from the "Wheel" of things.'[235] This desire is pervasive in the poem, expressing itself in the seemingly endless struggle of the characters. Eliot comments on the poem that it is 'neither a success nor a failure – simply a struggle'.[236] It can be argued that such a struggle has a direction, towards the comprehension of

[234] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 21 October 1913.
[235] F. L. Lucas, 'The Waste Land', in *T. S. Eliot: The Contemporary Reviews*, ed. Jewel Spears Brooker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 116.
[236] T. S. Eliot, letter to Otto Heller, 5 October 1923, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 2, 1923-1925*, ed. Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), p. 242.

the nature of what Lucas calls the 'Wheel', which can be regarded as the Buddhist wheel of reincarnation.

The waste land survives even death, reincarnating itself in generations of human beings throughout history. In the cycle of reincarnation, death is not an isolated event, as the burial of the dead is at the same time the burial of the seed of life. What breaks down in death is the form of life rather than life itself. This idea is realised in the vision of impersonal existence, which is at the heart of *The Waste Land*. It is not limited to mere living or dying, but suggests the integration of both life and death. As life is destined to decay and perish, while death is not the absolute end of being, neither of them is sufficient to capture the dynamics of the endless cycle of rebirth which runs through the poem. The concept of reincarnation does exactly that, by stressing the interconnectedness between the dead and the living. However, it should be noted that reincarnation in this poem is presented as negative, as it brings back suffering. This idea is explained in the excerpts from *Manava-Dharmasastra* in *A Sanskrit Reader*, which Eliot read as part of his Indian studies; one excerpt states that 'When evil men die, another firm body is produced for them from the same five elemental particles, a body designed to suffer torments.'[237] At the heart of the phenomenon of reincarnation lies the nightmare of nihilistic emptiness embodied by the waste land, which reflects the poet's understanding of the Buddhist viewpoint of the evanescence of worldly existence. Sri concludes, after observing the endless suffering in *The Waste Land*, that 'Reincarnation, not death, is to be dreaded'.[238] Reincarnation perpetuates the waste land by bringing the haunting sense of emptiness into the lives of both the ancient and the modern. In this poem, reincarnation and emptiness are inseparable.

The reincarnated emptiness persists throughout time, and the juxtaposition of the past and the present in *The Waste Land* demonstrates the timelessness of the inner waste land in humanity. The end of the first section, 'Burial of the Dead', serves as the foreword to the time-

[237] Charles Rockwell Lanman, ed. *A Sanskrit Reader* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1906), transcribed with permission of the master and fellows of Magdalene College, Cambridge, Lanman, M. C. Old Library, M. 12. 347; Patrick Olivelle, trans. *Manu's Code of Law, A Critical Edition and Translation of the Manava-Dharmasastra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 231.
[238] *T. S. Eliot, Vedanta and Buddhism*, p. 43.

transcending visions in the other sections: 'You! hypocrite lecteur!–mon semblable,–mon frère!'[239] It resurrects Baudelaire's voice and addresses the reader, not just in 1922 when the poem was published, but in the here and now of the act of reading. It serves to transcend the limited perspective of the individual who is trapped within a single circle of birth and death. The voice travels through time and space, and warns readers from the new generation – and perhaps future generations – that they are among the people who are, as Eliot puts it in the draft of the poem, 'bound up upon the wheel'.[240] The world that the reader lives in is the same waste land the speaker talks about; the accusation of the reader's hypocrisy is also a reminder that no one is an innocent onlooker. Hypocrisy, according to the *OED*, means 'The assuming of a false appearance of virtue or goodness, with dissimulation of real character or inclinations'.[241] It suggests a conflict between appearance and the real. Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 21 October 1913 record the Buddhist view of the relationship between reality and appearance: 'Appearance and Reality are not antithesis: appearance is explained by Reality, and Reality seen through appearance.'[242] Most characters in the poem are trapped in the appearance of their own life, ignorant of the reality beneath it. The poet tries, through a time-transcending perspective such as that of Tiresias, to reveal the inner waste land in humanity. As he claims through a prophetic voice, 'I will show you fear in a handful of dust'.[243]

The waste land's wasteness is demonstrated by the collage of human desiring and suffering. It seems that people are born waste, and die waste, despite their social status and personal beliefs. The word 'waste' is related to a state of existence which is itself paradoxical. On the one hand, it may refer to lands which are 'Incapable of habitation or cultivation', but on the other hand, it also suggests 'former places of habitation or cultivation.'[244] Such places lie waste ('unoccupied, unused'), probably because they are, first of all, laid waste ('ruinous').[245]

[239] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 57.
[240] Ibid., p. 335.
[241] *OED.*
[242] Houghton Library.
[243] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 55.
[244] *OED.*
[245] Ibid.

These places bear a history of devastation and decline which leads to the current state of barrenness. In this sense, the waste land suggests at the same time alienation from the past and the sense of homelessness in the modern world. In its state of being waste (with a history of being wasted), the waste land may also be wasteful. It may 'destroy or lay waste to' the lives that try to inhabit it.[246] In this sense, the waste land reincarnates itself in its inhabitants. The first verse paragraph provides an example of how the devastated land devastates its inhabitants. Underneath the monologue of Marie lies her anxiety over her national identity:

> Bin gar keine Russin, stamm'aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
> And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,
> My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
> And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
> Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
> In the mountains, there you feel free.
> I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.[247]

Her assertion in German that she is Lithuanian rather than Russian reflects the devastation caused by the First World War, which greatly affected the geopolitics of Europe, for example, changing the boundaries of many countries. Europe was devastated, by shells as well as political changes. Devastation and disfigurement of the homeland led to confusion over national and consequentially cultural identity. That she should talk in German to assert who she is reveals the post-war struggle to adapt to a new identity and the cultural changes that came with it. The war not only laid waste to the lands, but also mentally dislodged the inhabitants. Torn between political powers such as Germany and Russia, a self-claimed 'real German' from Lithuania, as Moody observes, 'would be a stateless person'.[248] Individuals in their devastated homelands became spiritually homeless, reduced to wandering souls without a body. In the quoted passage

[246] *OED.*
[247] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 55.
[248] *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet*, p. 351.

above, a mental state of wandering is presented, through the mumbling voice which is fragmented and incoherent. Interestingly, the state of wandering is referred to in Sanskrit as 'samsara', which, according to *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, means to go through 'the cycle of rebirth' endlessly.[249] Marie's eagerness to assert her apparently muddled identity makes a contrast with her aristocratic leisured life and her happy childhood memory. It shows the lack of a harmonious relationship between her manner of life in public and her private inner life; here the Baudelairean accusation of hypocrisy is still echoing.

Marie's life as revealed in her own words appears superfluous and simplistic, but the indications of her social status and historical identity – which she only brushes over – show that her life is inevitably pervaded by the general social atmosphere of the world she lives in. Her emphasis on who she is betrays her anxiety over who she really is. The anxiety seems beyond her control. If individual lives are the incarnations of some impersonal force, beyond one's control is the manifestation of that force. Indeed Marie has had, on a less significant scale, an encounter about controlling. When the sled went down, she was told to 'hold on tight', so that she could go down on it. She controlled herself by surrendering herself to the sled, or whoever told her to 'hold on tight'. The issue of control returns with more seriousness at the end of the poem. 'The awful daring of a moment's surrender' suggests a kind of excitement reminiscent of Marie's fright in losing control.[250] The invisible 'controlling hands' require that the protagonist play along, with his heart responding 'Gaily, when invited, beating obedient', as if it is a boat that responds to 'the hand expert with sail and oar'.[251] One may regard the interaction as a mystical experience, when the heart controls the body by following the order from some divine power. Paradoxically, to be in control is to surrender a certain degree of subjectivity, as it suggests the interaction between the controller and the object under control. The controller's state of being is altered in the act of controlling. In other words, to control the object is to integrate with it. Furthermore, the paradoxical relationship between controlling and surrendering shares affinity with Eliot's poetics

[249] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[250] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 70.
[251] Ibid., p. 71.

of impersonality, only in the poem the tension between Marie and the sled is replaced by the tension between the individual poet and the literary tradition. The central message is that to be in control of the object, one must become part of it. One masters one's tradition by becoming its new bearer, or its new incarnation. The alteration points to a potentially harmonious relationship between the personal and the impersonal. The poem struggles on the path towards a positive integration. The waste land itself, both spiritual and physical, cannot provide an impersonal source of vitality that invites individuals to harmoniously interact with it.

The interaction between the controller and the controlled blurs the boundary between them, and as a consequence, the interaction itself becomes more real than either side, as it forges them into one body. The burial of a corpse in the garden is a very concrete vision of such an integration: the oneness of new lives and the dead in the same body. Sir James Frazer recorded in *The Golden Bough* – which inspired Eliot with the vegetation ceremonies – the use of 'effigies of Osiris made of earth and corn'.[252] The burial of the effigies would lead to the corn's sprouting, and it would appear that 'The corn-god produced the corn from himself.'[253] Death is taken as the cause, rather than the antithesis, of new life, and the speaker – who asks 'will [the corpse] bloom this year' – sees the eternal flow of some force potential of breeding new lives, which is beyond the life and death of any individual but links the old lives and the new. Kearns argues from the perspective of Buddhism that the act of stirring the old roots to breed new lives echoes 'the metaphor of seed' in Indian philosophy: 'deep scars of experience of former lifetimes, can, if they still carry a certain charge of desire and attachment, become activated again in a present lifetime.'[254] The undead roots are similar to the seeds, in continuing the cycle of rebirth. The verb 'clutch' in 'what are the roots that clutch' vividly presents the will of life that seeks to reincarnate itself. The roots bear the expectation of rebirth, as the enquiry about the buried corpse suggests. In *Karma and Rebirth*, Christmas Humphreys observes that 'the germs of propensities and

[252] James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London: Macmillan, 1922), p. 376. For Eliot's debt to Frazer, see 'Notes on *The Waste Land*'.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Kearns, p. 201.

impulses from previous births [move on] to be developed in this'.[255] The collective body exists before one is born, and does not die with one's death. In the cycle of life and death the dead keep returning to the living through the transmigration of the seeds. In this sense, the dead and the living are one. Such a relationship also reflects the connection between the dead masters in the past and the new artist. Acquiring a tradition can be regarded as the commemoration of the dead masters, through which the new artist as well as the new work of art becomes the reincarnation of that tradition. Such reincarnation, in Eliot's own words, is 'la vie commune de nous et de nos ancêtres'. [256] According to one of the handouts to Anesaki's lectures on Buddhism, the communion of the dead and the living completes 'the consummation of cause and effect.'[257] However, except for rare glimpses of such a communion, most of the poem presents a lack of consummation, that the dead haunt the living instead of communing with them. What the living unconsciously inherit from the dead is, rather than the fountain of timeless vitality, a disturbing emptiness at the heart of individual existence.

The relationship between the dead and the living as presented above shows that the dead continue to exist alongside the living, whereby death ushers in a new phase of life. In 'The Fire Sermon', the panorama of human suffering in the fire of bodily desire is parallel to the 'bones cast in a little low dry garret, / Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.'[258] It is worth noting that the bones are left in a garret, detached from the earth, and are thus unburied. They are exposed in the world above the earth, and yet they are ignored by the living. In fact, in England to be denied a burial after death penalty was once considered a further punishment for committing murder; that is to say, the criminal would still be persecuted even after death. As stated in The Murder Act 1751, 'for better preventing the horrid crime of murder […] in no case whatsoever

[255] Christmas Humphreys, *Karma and Rebirth* (London: John Murray, 1943), p. 22.
[256] T. S. Eliot, 'Autour d'une traduction d'Euripide', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905–1918*, last accessed 26 August 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, last accessed 26 August 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 499. A translation is provided after the original text: 'the communal life we share with our ancestors', p. 502.
[257] Houghton Library, on the handout titled 'The fourfold interpretation'.
[258] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 62.

shall the body of any murderer be suffered to be buried'.[259] In the England of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the death penalty may even have the criminal 'dismembered and displayed' after public execution.[260] In this case, even death cannot sever the link between the dead and worldly affairs. People who suffer such punishment do not formally leave the world of the living. Not only is there no symbolic gesture to note the end of the old relationship between the person who dies and the world of the living, such as a burial that conceals the remains of the dead, but the old relationship itself is forcibly prolonged, as the body is still exposed to the world above the earth. The dead continue to communicate with the living, not less directly than communication in spoken words. The communication between the dead and the living is a theme that may derive from, again, Eliot's concern for the individual artist's communication with the past. Later in 'Little Gidding', he claims in a mystical manner that 'what the dead had no speech for, when living, / They can tell you, being dead.'[261] More dramatically and surrealistically, the speaker in 'The Fire Sermon' hears 'The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.'[262] The bones seem to be laughing at the ridiculousness of human beings in their struggle to find possible meanings for life. It reflects the futility of the search for spiritual salvation in the waste land when the individual is ignorant of the interconnectedness of the living and the dead.

The denial of a burial of the dead, as well as the exposure of the remains of the dead, is a violent act that distorts or abuses the relationship between the dead and the living. In 'A Game of Chess', the male speaker realises that 'we are in rat's alley / Where the dead men lost their bones'.[263] Female voices resonate in all three episodes and intensify the sense of emptiness. The dialogue between the husband and the wife concludes the whole section:

> 'What is that noise?'

[259] Harold Nuttall Tomlins, *A Digest of the Criminal Statute Law of England* (London: Henry Butterworth, 1819), p. 358.
[260] Mary Abbott, *Life Cycles in England: 1560 – 1720* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 31.
[261] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 202.
[262] Ibid., p. 62.
[263] Ibid., p. 59.

The wind under the door.

'What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?'

Nothing again nothing.[264]

The sense of nothingness resonates in the helplessness of Philomel, the hysteria of the wife, and the tender voice of Ophelia, all embodying the desiccation of the waste land. '[Some] infinitely gentle, infinitely suffering thing' haunts the whole section, by passively enduring various kinds of abuse: the abuse of the senses ('drowned the sense in odours'), the mind ('Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak'), and the body ('You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique').[265] The different kinds of abuse display themselves, perhaps more directly, in the way the poet manipulates language. To borrow Eliot's own words, the language of the first paragraph 'is highly decorated, but the decoration has a purpose beyond its own beauty', and the same can be said about the wife's verbal abuse of the husband and the chattering gossip in a pub.[266] The excessive language incarnates the boredom and hollowness of existence in the waste land. Through the whole section, the language evolves from a decorative literary tone to hysterical and nihilistic sputtering, and then to coarse and vulgar gossiping. The range covers correspondingly the lives of extravagant aristocrats, the sceptical modern middle class, and the uneducated working class. The only thing they have in common is the suffocating emptiness in their own way of excess. As John Hayward puts it, 'A Game of Chess' presents a 'Contrast of high and low life in a meaningless, sterile land' to which both the high life and the low life are bound.[267] The change of Philomel and the ghostly voice of Ophelia add a temporal dimension to the waste land, that the wasteness also exists in the collective mind of humanity across history. Thus the poet's strategic abuse of language reflects the abuse of the senses, the mind, and the body in human society in all time and among all social classes. This is the game of chess that may well go on forever, between the chaotic voices of the human world and the silent collective soul that endures, as Eliot puts it

[264] Ibid.
[265] Ibid., pp. 58-60.
[266] 'Rudyard Kipling', p. 235.
[267] Quoted in *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 621.

in an uncollected poem, 'the new assertion of the ancient pain'.[268] Extreme hollowness is embodied by extreme indulgence, and the same pattern persists, through time and space, reincarnating itself in different circumstances.

From 'A Game of Chess' to 'The Fire Sermon', that extreme hollowness continues to haunt the poem through the loveless relationship between the two sexes, which is like 'rats' alley / Where the dead men lost their bones'.[269] The relationship becomes a domestic waste land deserted by love, and it devastates, or emotionally lays waste to, both sexes. Moreover, the agony over the lack of love seems to become a sinister force that reincarnates itself, from Philomel's being 'so rudely forced' to the typist's numb and indifferent sexual reaction.[270] When the typist thinks 'well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over', she may not realise, as Eliot's Tiresias who transcends time and space realises, that 'it' is timeless. The 'it', representing the act of fulfilling primitive desires, has been repeated for endless times in the past and will continue to reincarnate itself in the future.[271] Through Tiresias's prophetic eyes, the reader sees that it has been done, but it is not over: 'I Tiresias […] Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest – / I too awaited the expected guest'.[272] The vital force that stubbornly persists is similar to what Christopher Ricks calls the force of 'animus': 'The relation of animus to animation, incarnate in the life of the words, constitutes an aegis of Eliot's development'.[273] It is, as Ricks points out, 'an impulse of life', but it is not 'extinguishable [even] in death'.[274] The force outlives the incarnations which it animates. To use Eliot's own words in 'The Dry Salvages', 'People change, and smile: but the agony abides.'[275]

[268] From an uncollected poem by Eliot, 'Do I know how I feel? Do I know what to think?', in ibid., p. 269.
[269] Ibid., p. 59.
[270] Ibid., p. 58.
[271] Ibid., p. 64.
[272] Ibid., p. 63.
[273] Christopher Ricks, *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 206.
[274] *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice*, p. 206.
[275] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 196.

The doleful song at the beginning of 'The Fire Sermon' echoes the female voice that haunts the landscape of humanity throughout history. The scene that accompanies the song enhances the sense of barrenness:

> The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
> Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
> Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.
> And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors;
> Departed, have left no addresses.
> By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept . . .
> Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,
> Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.[276]

One may say that the melancholic song mourns for the absence of the significant. 'Departed' could mean 'gone away' as well as 'severed from the main body'.[277] The departure of the nymphs witnesses the secularisation as well as vulgarisation of the world. It echoes Ezra Pound's lament in 'Ione, Dead the Long Year': 'Empty are the ways of this land / Where Ione / Walked once, and now does not walk / But seems like a person just gone.'[278] Furthermore, the 'Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold' reflects the sense of loneliness in the church of St Magnus the Martyr, which is surrounded by 'clatter and chattering' from some public bar where 'fishmen lounge at noon'.[279] On one of the walls inside the church a 'fire sermon' can be found, which commemorates the Great Fire of London. However, the invisible fire of desire is still burning in the minds of the city dwellers, and the allusion to the Buddhist 'Fire Sermon' warns that the fire of desire ultimately brings only suffering. The vista of worldly endeavours in this section shows

[276] Ibid., p. 62.
[277] *OED.*
[278] Ezra Pound, *Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 54.
[279] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 64.

that the individuals are ignorant of the burning fire of desire that is consuming them. One of Eliot's handouts to Anesaki's lectures may shed light on their blindness:

> The common men, being blind to righteous and vicious.
> Have no faith in the nexus of cause and effect;
> Their ken does extend no further than the immediate profits;
> How can they see the infernal fires?[280]

Tiresias is the only exception. He experiences varied forms of life in different temporal zones, spatial zones, and sexes, as if they all happen in the present. It corresponds to what Eliot's Buddhist notes describe as 'a synthesis to embrace all views by elevating them […] to his own standpoint.'[281] The notes continue to acknowledge that 'This kind of synthesis is characteristic of Buddhism from its very beginning [and] won the name of middle path'.[282] Such a capacity allows him to see the lack of progress in humanity and the emptiness of endless craving:

> And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
> Enacted on this same divan or bed;
> I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
> And walked among the lowest of the dead.[283]

Tiresias's major conundrum is that he feels too fully the ultimate emptiness of existence, which seems to prevent him from justifying human reality. In *Buddhism and Christianity: A Preface to Dialogue*, Georg Siegmund points out the tendency towards nihilism among some Eastern sages which can be applied to Tiresias: 'The denial of the reality of the human world community has

[280] Houghton Library, on the handout that begins with 'The common men'.
[281] Ibid., Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 7 November 1913, which focused on Mahayana Buddhism, especially the Tiantai School.
[282] Ibid.
[283] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 64.

been pushed to extremes.'[284] Eliot's Buddhist notes also recognise the ultimate reality of suffering, but with a twist: 'Life is pain, a matter of fact, not necessarily pessimistic […] When pain and life are understood […] then what we have thought of as pain is no longer pain.'[285] In this sense, Tiresias's vision can be regarded as an attempt to confirm the emptiness of earthly life before any hope of salvation is possible. Kearns contends that Tiresias's visionary consciousness is itself enlightening, because '[only] when hollow experience becomes deep enough to provoke this recognition of […] the "non-ego" of all entities does its pain become a form of purification'.[286] The poignancy of such recognition can be felt every time the sense of hollowness emerges through one of the characters. It can be concluded that the end of the spiritual quest in the poem does not literally lie at the end of the poem. Its significance, though represented by 'shantih' at the very end, is carried in all the voices through which Tiresias speaks.

What comes out of Tiresias's intuitive knowledge of life is the Buddha's conclusion in 'The Fire-Sermon' that '[all] things, O priests, are on fire'.[287] The Buddha refers particularly to images perceived, sensations, and consciousness that are too easily hooked up by desire. Kearns rightly concludes that '[the] Buddha's sermon speaks of the burning of the mind in the fire of worldly experience', but she might be arbitrary as to assert that it also expresses 'the willed and deliberate burning of purification'.[288] The Buddha takes the burning of desire as that which should be avoided: 'Perceiving this, O priests, the learned and noble disciple conceives an aversion for [attachment to sensations]'.[289] It is in the deliberate juxtaposition of the Buddhist burning with the Christian burning of St Augustine that Eliot expands its meaning to purification. Burning itself is not final in the Christian scheme of salvation, because the sufferer looks to God for help and turn the fire of desire into the fire of purgation: 'O Lord Thou pluckest me out'.[290] Those who live without spiritual quest beyond the present life suffer the burning purposelessly, and for those

[284] Georg Siegmund, *Buddhism and Christianity: A Preface to Dialogue*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1980), p. 141.
[285] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 3 October 1913.
[286] Kearns, p. 208.
[287] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 640.
[288] Kearns, p. 209.
[289] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 640.
[290] Ibid, p. 66.

who strive away from the pain of burning, to accept the fire as purgation seems to be the only path. In this sense, Eliot integrates the pessimistic Buddhist worldview with Christian hope.

After Tiresias's bleak vision, 'Death by Water' presents a more complete synthesis of being and non-being, following the Buddhist middle path. As Eliot's notes further explain, the middle path 'was always Buddha's way of looking at things. Life is neither pain nor pleasure. The views that the world exists, or not; both are false; the truth lies in the middle, transcending both views.'[291] It can be argued that the nature of the whirlpool is similar to the nature of the Buddhist middle path. All longings dissolve, and the solemnity that accompanies Phlebas's entering the whirlpool is so overwhelming that the fire of senses and egotism seems totally quenched. The whirlpool may symbolise the eternal current of change that creates lives but also destroys them. In such a vision of oneness, life and death are inseparable. The power of the sea purifies Phlebas the newly dead, stripping him of his worldly attachments, or 'the profit and loss'.[292] That he 'passed the stages of his age and youth' suggests a process of concentration.[293] 'Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge' as Conrad puts it?[294] Perhaps more: he transcends them, 'Entering the whirlpool' of the cycle of life and death.[295] Conrad's question, which is the original epigraph in the draft of *The Waste Land*, suggests that to see the cycle of life and death in its completed form is essential to the understanding of the poem. In 'The Fire Sermon', Tiresias is a symbol of the presence of the past in the here and now, bringing all history of lust and suffering into an 'Old man with wrinkled female breasts'.[296] In 'Death by Water', it is substituted with the more abstract symbol of the whirlpool. Phlebas's lonely and strangely peaceful death becomes the ultimate consummation of all the hustle and bustle in the city swarming with ignorance, desire and calculations. Phlebas's death can be seen as the process of concentration that leads to ultimate impersonality. In this sense, to enter the whirlpool is to enter the all transcending middle path.

[291] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 7 November 1913.
[292] Ibid., p. 67.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 86.
[295] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 67.
[296] Ibid., p. 63.

As the discussion on reincarnation in *Manava-Dharmasastra* explains, 'A man who offers sacrifices within himself attains absolute sovereignty when he sees equally himself in all beings and all beings in himself.'[297] The concentration preserves the essence of one's whole being, which Humphreys describes as 'the indivisible wholeness of the thing we know as man'.[298] The essence of being is preserved while the irrelevant, including all forms of egotistic yearning, is purged. Phlebas's forgetting 'the profit and loss' in death by water is analogous to the complete oblivion of personal memory caused by drinking the water from Lethe: the dead can only be reincarnated after they 'lose all memory of their past existence'.[299] The necessity for purification makes reincarnation itself a ritual; and the solemn tone evokes a sense of religiosity. As a primitive ritual, death by water recorded by Fraser is more than death; it carries the hope for rebirth, as 'the mode of killing [the god] – by drowning – is probably a rain-charm.'[300] It is both an end and a beginning. In terms of the structure of the poem, this section is a sharp contrast with the elaboration of lust and suffering in the previous sections. It can also be seen as a ceremony of death by water for the previous sections.

The whole section can be seen as a ceremony to pacify the individual soul that suffers in endless reincarnations, and to envisage a new form of life not confined to the wheel of reincarnation. 'Gentile or Jew / O you who turn the wheel and look to windward, / Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.'[301] The image of the wheel could also be related to the wheel of fortune, which, as the name of a tarot card, is mentioned by Madame Sosostris in 'Burial of the Dead'. Eliot was fully aware of the multiple meanings that the image of the wheel carries. As his Buddhist notes show, 'turning of the wheel [is] "Brahmacakra" […] The myth of the wheel probably comes from a same myth'.[302] The Sanskrit term 'brahmacakra' means the universal wheel of creation in Indian culture.[303] If to live is to suffer on the wheel of reincarnation,

[297] Olivelle, p. 234.
[298] *Karma and Rebirth*, p. 25.
[299] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.
[300] *The Golden Bough*, p. 652.
[301] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 67.
[302] Houghton Library, Eliot notes on Anesaki's lecture on 10 October 1913.
[303] 'Brahma' and 'Chakra', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

the struggle of life would never succeed to help it escape itself. A certain form of death is necessary to inspect the struggle from an outsider's view, and thus to enable the sufferer to peacefully accept life as it is. The attitude is close to what Eliot calls 'a practical sense of realities' in 'Dante' (1929), which means 'not to expect more from *life* than it can give or more from *human* beings than they can give; to look to *death* for what life cannot give.'[304] The meditation on death, which is referred to as 'memento mori' in Western culture, is an important aspect of Buddhist mind-training. The contemplation on a dead body is designed to help the monk 'rid himself of lust and grief', as during the contemplation '[only] a body is recognized […], but no living entity, no Ego'.[305] The meditation on death generates the air of calmness in this section. For Phlebas who enters the whirlpool, both lust and grief are gone, along with 'profit and loss'. Lust becomes meaningless and grief futile, for death means that lust eventually loses the subject who is attached to it, and there is no 'self' to grieve over itself. Consequently, Phlebas's recalling of 'the stages of his age and youth' is pervaded by a sense of relief, rather than the Conradian horror in the flashback of one's whole life. As death puts an end to the restlessness of life, Phlebas begins to forget 'the cry of gulls', 'the deep sea swell', and 'the profit and loss', and the forgetting is part of his acceptance of the whirlpool.[306] The acceptance is not intellectual assent, but the result of the re-modulation of sensibility, as the ego loosens its grip on any object of attachment, including the obstinate struggle to get away from the pain of life's burning.

Entering the whirlpool symbolises a kind of spiritual exaltation no less significant than the moment in the hyacinth garden. The loss of the ego in those moments is reminiscent of the Buddhist doctrine of non-self. In 'Met Him Pikehoses: "The Waste Land" as a Buddhist Poem', Craig Raine argues that both the moment of the hyacinth garden and the 'awful daring of a moment's surrender' record 'the experience of Nirvana', in which the speaker 'managed, despite his doubts and "an age of prudence", to surrender his ego to the Infinite Substance in the moment

[304] 'Dante' (1929), p. 733.
[305] Henry Clarke Warren, *Buddhism in Translations* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), pp. 354-56.
[306] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 67.

of Enlightenment.'[307] The same can be said about the experience in 'Death by Water', that it registers an experience similar to the Buddhist state of non-self. Rather than the annihilation of the self, 'Death by Water' depicts a vision in which the boundary of the personal dissolves. As a result, the true self that is not bound to individual existence emerges. On the theme of the true self, Eliot's Buddhist notes show that 'Every being exists by inherent qualities. The true self of everyone is realised by participation in the divine life. The realisation of Self is a part of the realisation of the supreme being.'[308] The true self is realised through a personal mind which is constantly flowing and never stops to be fascinated by anything. In such a mind, all experiences are fused, from intellectual activities to daily life trivialities. Eliot observes in 'Metaphysical Poets' that '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'.[309] By contrast, a person with an impersonal mind as described above is consistent, without any chasm between personal understanding of life and the way to live it. In an unpublished lecture, 'Scylla and Charybdis', Eliot observes that 'if there is an evident contradiction between [one's] profession of belief and his behaviour […] we suspect the man of hypocrisy' or 'that he has not put his beliefs into order'.[310] It may not be a mere accident that the first section of *The Waste Land* ends with the accusation of hypocrisy, and at the end of the last section, the speaker posts a question 'Shall I at least set my lands in order?'[311] In the poem, the quest for the integration of belief and behaviour is reflected in the tension between the wandering self and the fragmented outer world. 'Death by Water' shows that, paradoxically, the only path towards the integration is not to strive for it. Adam Trexler describes the integration as a monad, when noting Eliot's use of rituals: 'For Eliot, the actual ritual encodes both subject and object in a single monad or point of view. This monad is simultaneously empirical, in that it does not demand a questionable

[307] Craig Raine, 'Met Him Pikehoses: "The Waste Land" as a Buddhist Poem', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 4 May 1973, p. 505.
[308] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 27 April 1914.
[309] 'The Metaphysical Poets', p. 380.
[310] T. S. Eliot, 'Scylla and Charybdis', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: A European Society, 1947-1953*, last accessed 26 February 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 700.
[311] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 71.

interpretation'.[312] Seen as a poetic ritual, 'Death by Water' fuses Phlebas's personal life into the whirlpool that blurs the boundary between different individuals, 'Gentile or Jew'. Kearns argues from the Indian perspective that the unification demonstrates Eliot's 'wisdom mode' of poetry, the essence of which 'lies in its simplicity and openness, its unrestricted and communal dimension', and that the unification 'does not require […] assent or denial to take effect.'[313] Deep in the sense of relief lies the feeling of release, or of letting go, which reflects the Buddhist mind of non-self, as any egotistic struggle is put to rest and the psyche as a whole is open to life as it is. As a result, after the spiritual death of the egotistic self, a new form of life is born, which integrates individual existence with the outer world.

The integration of life and death in the whirlpool transcends Phlebas's earthly life. The shipwreck that kills him suggests the failure of a physical homecoming. It is significant that the destination of his journey of homecoming should be in the sea, rather than his hometown or any other city on earth. All lands are in the end parts of the waste land, as all cities rise and fall, represented by the Unreal City. In *T. S. Eliot: A Virgilian Poet*, Gareth Reeves compares the sacking of cities in Aeneas's journey and the vision of falling cities in 'What the Thunder Said': 'The theme re-echoing through the *Aeneid* is that Rome's glorious empire rests on the destruction and burning of a long line of cities', while '"What the Thunder said" has its long line of destroyed cities, too.'[314] The burning of desire that accompanies St Augustine when 'To Carthage then [he] came' seems mixed with the burning of Carthage by Roman soldiers, whose great empire had its roots not in Rome, but in the ruins of Troy. Such a vision that mixes the past and the future is presented by Virgil at the beginning of *Aeneid*: 'That times to come shou'd see the Trojan Race / Her Carthage ruin'.[315] The past of the city is alive in its future, as if the city has a soul which survives the ruins. It can be argued that the poet is in search of his own 'Real City' through the waste land of the unreal cities.

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[312] Adam Trexler, 'The Transmutation of Anthropology in T. S. Eliot's Critical Method', *Paragraph* 29 (2006), 83.
[313] Kearns, pp. 19-20.
[314] Gareth Reeves, *T. S. Eliot: A Virgilian Poet* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), p. 34.
[315] Virgil, *Virgil's Aeneid*, trans. John Dryden (London: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 3.

The search for the Real City is reminiscent of St Augustine's City of God. The City of God may remain a platonic ideal and out of reach, but the City of Burning reincarnates itself, like a fire on a torch that lights another torch, which is exactly the metaphor for reincarnation used in Buddhism: 'to light a light from another light'.[316] What is more, Aeneas's journey is, to be more precise, the search for a new home rather than an Odyssean journey of returning to an existing home. In Eliot's vision, all cities in time are doomed to crumble, and thus the journey to find the Real City in time and space would never end. In this sense, all cities on earth are unreal cities, and the reader may have a sense that the shadows are roaming about, of the Platonic Republic, the city of Atlantis, and St Augustine's City of God, though Eliot does not specify his Real City or single out any of the choices. Naming it is analogous to reincarnating it, making it appear tangible and also vulnerable in the eternal tug-of-war between the real and appearance. Thus the Real City must remain forever tantalising among the ruins of all cities, in the sense that 'shantih', the last word of the poem, means 'peace which passeth understanding'.[317] The cosmic thunder 'DA' evolves into the three Indian admonishments, which generate a sense of ritualistic sublime, but they end in the repetition of the universal voice 'shantih'. The word suggests that in the end all acts are essentially one act, and all journeys are essentially one journey. Eliot's Phoenician fails to arrive at a new shore or to return home; his end is not any land, but the sea itself. His journey is a new embodiment of the ancient theme of sea voyage. Before Eliot's Phlebas, Tennyson's Ulysses finds out that the end of his journey is not home and family, but a new journey: 'To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths / Of all the western stars, until I die.'[318] One may say that Eliot's spiritual journey anticipates a similar end, that unnameable 'shantih' beyond all its incarnations in language.

The end of the journey, as a goal much yearned for, is inextricable from the journey itself. Throughout *The Waste Land*, the sense of hollowness and ill-at-ease, or the awareness that

[316] From 'The Milindapanha', in *Buddhism in Translations*, p. 234.
[317] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 77.
[318] Alfred Tennyson, 'Ulysses', *The Major Works*, ed. Adam Roberts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 80-81.

something is missing, strings together a series of allusions which are like different reincarnations of one event. Several scenes with aristocratic aura spread across the poem, from Marie's reminiscence of aristocratic life to Cleopatra's grandiose room, to the affair of Elizabeth I and the Earl of Leicester, and in the end to the faked madness of Hieronymo. In general, underneath the artificial and excessive adornment in these scenes lies the anxiety over the inherent ugliness of humanity, which is timeless. Similar to *The Golden Bough*, *The Waste Land*, to use Manju Jain's words, demonstrates 'the continuity between the primitive and the civilized and revealed the substratum of savagery and violence beneath the surface of civilization.'[319] In the poem, the emphasis of negativity is constantly readdressed, such as 'I do not find / The Hanged Man' confessed by Madame Sosostris, the gloomy husband's inner voice 'I think we are in rats' alley / Where the dead men lost their bones', and the empty chapel in 'What the Thunder Said'.[320] The poet notices an unfilled void in life itself and directs the reader, again and again, to something that is missing. The more such a void is suggested, the more intense is the hollowness that undermines earthly life. The tension peaks in the allusion to Christ's unseen presence on the journey to Emmaus. Mário Fernando Oliboni argues that in *The Waste Land* 'the Christian dogma is glimpsed through its absence from the contemporary scene.'[321] To some extent, the waste land appears waste because the protagonist realises that it is hollow at the core. Its bleakness seems to suggest religious melancholy, a case of which is recorded by Eliot's teacher William James: 'I thought myself, in fact, rejected by God, lost, damned.'[322] As a result, one recognises 'the very thing which was leading [one] to despair – the meaningless absurdity of life'.[323] Echoing religious melancholy, Eliot proposes the idea of 'the hatred of life' in 'Cyril Tourneur': 'the hatred of life is an important phrase – even, if you like, a mystical experience – in life itself'.[324] That is to say,

[319] Manju Jain, *A Critical Reading of the Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 143.
[320] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 56; p. 59; p. 70.
[321] Mário Fernando Oliboni, 'T. S. Eliot and the Experience of Believing a Dogma', *Revista de Letras* 13 (1970 / 1971), 173.
[322] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London and New York: Routledge), p. 117.
[323] Ibid., p. 124.
[324] T. S. Eliot, 'Cyril Tourneur', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: English Lion*, last accessed 4 September 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 199.

it is part of a spiritual journey, and it is necessary for one to experience it before new experience dawns. Siegmund also observes from the Buddhist perspective that '[the] experience of the nothingness of [one's] own being and of the world becomes for him the springboard for a dialectical leap from "nothing" to "all"'.[325] Such a leap is analogous to Buddhist enlightenment, or the realisation of Nirvana, when nothingness itself becomes meaningful. In Kipling's *Kim*, which Eliot much admired, the lama describes the feeling of entering Nirvana: 'my Soul was all alone, and I saw nothing, for I was all things'.[326] Sri compares the lama with Tiresias in *The Waste Land*, and argues that 'He is not impersonating [the different lives]; he contains them all in his comprehensive gnostic vision; he *is* all these different beings.'[327] Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 10 October 1913 also touch upon the paradox of nothing and all, only it breaks through the dialectical way of thinking that presumes the opposition of the two extremes: 'Everything is interrelated, and our mind is one of these appearances of realities. The excellent qualities of Buddhahood are contained within our minds.'[328] The world as presented in *The Waste Land* is one that contains different and often jarring voices, but they are all particles swept, engulfed, and fused by the same whirlpool of time, on the same wheel of reincarnation. No two individual beings are totally identical to or totally isolated from each other. In other words, no one fragment owns an independent self. The connection between them is, to some extent, more real than either of them. To see the connection is, according to Eliot's Buddhist notes, 'to view the whole world as coexistent, […] to see the mutual interaction' between all beings.[329] In this sense, the poem provides a Buddhist viewpoint to see the true nature of the world.

Such a synthetic viewpoint emphasises the connection between the one universal truth and the various individual realities. The end of the poem, which provides Eliot's personal interpretation of the three Indian admonishments, expands on this relationship. With the falling of the shower on the waste land, the concretisation of the thunder 'Da' into three distinct terms

[325] Siegmund, p. 30.
[326] *Kim*, p. 289.
[327] *T. S. Eliot, Vedanta and Buddhism*, p. 41.
[328] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 10 October 1913.
[329] Ibid., Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 5 December 1913.

implies the growth of different forms of life nourished by the same source. This process is highly similar to a Buddhist parable recorded by Eliot: 'There are innumerable plants of all sorts. When a rain comes, all the plants are nourished by the same rainwater, and grow according to their respective capacities.'[330] In this sense, the universal truth manifests itself in different manners through personal sensibility; It also suggests that individuals with various characteristics can access universal truth. Moreover, rather than revealing any spiritual message that may fill the void which plagues the characters, they are practical moral suggestions made for individual self-improvement. Datta (to give), Dayadhvam (to sympathise), and Damyata (to control) can be interpreted as self-surrender of one's egotistic self, compassion for all humanity, and self-control in an ethical sense. They echo the Buddhist emphasis on the oneness of morality and spiritual training. As it is put in Eliot's Buddhist notes, 'Characteristic of Buddhist morality is connection of every moral practice with mental training.'[331] At the heart of all three admonishments is the integration of the personal into the impersonal. It is the realisation of non-self, not by annihilating personal identity and personal characteristics, but rather by recognising the inseparability of the inner and the outer worlds as well as the oneness of individual reality and universal reality. Anesaki observes in *Buddhist Ethics and Morality*, which is part of the materials related to his Buddhist lectures and is also kept by Eliot along with the notes, that Buddhism '[seeks] the basis of morality immediately in the universal truths which are to be realised in every one's wisdom and attainment.'[332] Eliot's interpretation of the three admonishments, adhering to this line of thought, adds to them a personal shade. The account of the esoteric 'awful daring of a moment's surrender', the cryptic allusion to Coriolanus, and the remote memory of learning to sail a boat make them more Eliotic and less Indian. A synthesis occurs and the three Indian moral lessons as Eliot presents them cannot be simply ascribed to Eliot or the author of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*; they exist in between.[333] Eliot provides the three admonishments, each suggesting a corresponding state of being, with solid personal conditions. It is through the personal that one

[330] Ibid., Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 16 December 1913.
[331] Ibid., Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 10 February 1914.
[332] Ibid.
[333] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 76.

dives into the sensibility of one's whole being that dissolves the ego. The use of personality to achieve impersonal existence means to put the ego in a force greater than itself, a force symbolised by the whirlpool. The sacrifice of the personal and the acceptance of the impersonal, it can be argued, occurs at the same time.

When expanding on 'Datta', the poet's first sentence is not a declarative one that tries to define anything, but a question, perhaps a rhetorical question: 'what have we given?'[334] One may take it for granted that self-surrender to an impersonal force is to give away the self, but in fact there is nothing to give or to seek. Although the poem is inspired by the Grail quest, as recorded by Jessie L. Watson's *From Ritual to Romance*, a symbolic grail that may mark the end of the journey through the waste land is never properly presented.[335] To propose a quest means to presuppose an end, but throughout the poem the waste land remains the waste land, and what is proposed by the speaker to himself is a question: 'Shall I at least set my lands in order?'[336] To have an order imposed upon the seemingly fragmented ruins of the waste land is to realise the oneness of the impersonal and the personal. Such oneness is a structured integration. The idea of a certain form of oneness also shot through Eliot's interpretations of 'Dayadhvam' (to sympathise) and 'Damyata' (to control). For 'Dayadhvam', 'Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison' suggests that latent contemplation cannot open the door towards the wholeness of sensibility. On the contrary, it locks the ego in its own futile striving in search of the key. The allusion to Coriolanus also hints at the oneness of the subject and the object, as his love for his family ends his self-isolation and makes him no longer 'author of himself / And knew no other kin'.[337] He surrenders his ego to love and is re-connected to other individuals through 'All bond and privilege of nature'.[338] For 'Damyata', Eliot's example is more about surrendering to the mystical 'hand

[334] Ibid., p. 70.
[335] Ibid., p. 72.
[336] Ibid., p. 71.
[337] William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. G. R. Hibbard (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 119.
[338] Ibid.

expert' as if the speaker is the oars, 'beating obedient to controlling hands'.[339] The scene is a presentation of a harmonious interaction of the controller and that which is controlled.[340]

Such interactions do not occur automatically. In fact, the timeless human agony shown in the poem, which suggests the failure of attempting at a harmonious interaction, points to the lack of love. They involve the relationship between the two sexes that is gone sour when the absence of love is filled with mere animal desire, as George Meredith writes in poem VI of *Modern Love*, 'Shamed nature, then, confesses love can die'.[341] Stephen Regan observes the 'close similarities between Meredith's poems and the early work of T. S. Eliot'.[342] Eliot also commented on Meredith's work that in it faith 'is replaced by uneasy individual groping in the dark.'[343] In Eliot's poetry, love is essential to end spiritual darkness and trigger self-surrender to impersonal existence. The string of loveless relationships reveals the barrenness of the waste land, and also reflects the poet's determination to retrieve the experience of 'the heart of light', though in most cases he fails.[344] It is worth mentioning that Eliot also found in Buddhism a metaphor of light: '[some] schools compare the Buddha to the sunlight. […] we do not see the light itself. The sun's entity does not consist in its body alone; wherever it shines, there is its entity.'[345] This description of the nature of light echoes the intuitive experience in the hyacinth garden: 'my eyes failed, I was neither / Living nor dead, and I knew nothing, / Looking into the heart of light, the silence'.[346] The image of light and the idea of selfless love would later conjoin in the last movement of 'The Dry Salvages' where 'a lifetime's death in love, / Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender' are shot through by 'a shaft of sunlight' in which worldly distraction is lost.[347] The comparison shows that the seed of such enlightening visions is planted in *The Waste Land*.

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[339] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 71.
[340] See the sixth paragraph of this chapter, on the relationship between Marie and the sled.
[341] George Meredith, *Modern Love*, ed. Stephen Regan (Peterborough: Daisy Books, 1988), p. 32.
[342] Ibid., p. 18.
[343] T. S. Eliot, 'Religion and Science: A Phantom Dilemma', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: English Lion, 1930-1933*, last accessed 5 March 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 442.
[344] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 56.
[345] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 7 November 1913.
[346] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 56.
[347] Ibid., p. 200.

In the 'Datta' section of 'What the Thunder Said', the poet returns to the exalting experience of love which triggers self-surrender: 'My friend, blood shaking my heart / The awful daring of a moment's surrender / Which an age of prudence can never retract'.[348] Moody proposes that Eliot's interpretation is 'a final formulation of the primal love-experience, in the hyacinth garden'.[349] The identity of the friend, who seems to share that experience, is not offered, but Eliot particularly provided a French translation of the word 'friend' to a translator of *The Waste Land*, preferring the feminine 'amie' to the masculine 'ami'.[350] It indicates, though vaguely, a romantic relationship between the speaker and the unnamed friend. Lyndall Gordon is more assertive that romantic love is at the heart of those pure spiritual moments, and she particularly points out that Emily Hale, whom Eliot was much emotionally attached to, is his prototypal Beatrice and occupies a persistent and essential place in his poetry: 'the higher dream [is] associated with Emily Hale'.[351] This love experience seems to have the sweeping force that breaks through the individual prison of consciousness that differentiates the subject and the object. In other words, love leads to non-self. The idea of love, especially universal compassion, is characteristic of Mahayana Buddhism, which is the school of Buddhism that occupies much of Anesaki's lectures. According to *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 'In Mahayana literature, numerous techniques are set forth to develop compassion, including acknowledging the kindness one has received from other beings in past lifetimes.'[352] Such compassion nourishes in one's mind, along with the awareness that all beings are interconnected on the wheel of reincarnation, 'the aspiration to achieve buddhahood in order to liberate all beings from suffering.'[353] In other words, the awareness of the interconnectedness of all beings leads to the realisation of 'the connection between individual salvation and universal salvation' and 'salvation of self through saving others'.[354] Kearns argues that 'Although he was exposed to a more sympathetic treatment of the

[348] Ibid., p. 70.
[349] *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet*, p. 102.
[350] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 700.
[351] Lyndall Gordon, *T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), p. 242.
[352] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Houghton Library, on a handout that begins with 'The idea of the Universal Church'.

Mahayana through […] the lectures of Masaharu Anesaki, Eliot did not reflect this exposure except very indirectly until his later years' perhaps due to its 'linguistic and cultural contexts' which are 'beyond his range.' [355] However, the affinity between 'What the Thunder Said' and Eliot's notes on Mahayana Buddhism shows that its influence on him finds its way into his poetic sensibility regardless of his intellectual attitude. To use Eliot's own words on Dante's poetry, it 'can communicate before it is understood.'[356] Eliot adds that 'I have found with Dante and with several other poets in languages in which I was unskilled, that about such impressions there was nothing fanciful.'[357] With Mahayana Buddhism, especially its emphasis on the universality of truth and universal compassion which are readily comparable with Christian soteriology, linguistic and cultural barriers might not be as daunting for Eliot as Kearns suspects.

The awareness of the connection between individual salvation and universal salvation creates in the individual a double viewpoint that sees personal existence in relation to the universal phenomenon of becoming. Such a viewpoint is suggested in Hieronimo's faked madness which Eliot mentions at the end of the poem. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, Hieronimo stages a play but commits real murders during the performance, avenging his son. In the drama of the evolvement of the world, those who are burning in the fire of endless craving are unaware that they are different incarnations of the same roles on the same stage. Hieronimo is the one who knows what part he is to play, and he plays it. Harold E. McCarthy points out in 'T. S. Eliot and Buddhism' that 'having accepted things as they are, Buddhism then goes on to find a way of life that is both possible and desirable within the context of the facts of existence.'[358] Through dealing with the facts of existence, instead of escaping them, the Buddhist way of life leads one back to the personal, after one realises the emptiness of all forms of existence on the wheel of reincarnation. It teaches one to accept one's conditions of life and, at the same time, not to be attached to any of them. As McCarthy puts it, the kind of enlightenment that Buddhism strives

[355] Kearns, p. 69.
[356] 'Dante' (1929), p. 701.
[357] Ibid.
[358] Harold E. McCarthy, 'T. S. Eliot and Buddhism', *Philosophy East and West* 2 (1952), 47.

for ‘is not freedom from time as such, but freedom from bondage to the temporality of time; not freedom from desire as such, but freedom from enslavement to blind and shifting desires’.[359] The line ‘These fragments I have shored against my ruin’ suggests that the waste land is still there, and it is the speaker’s attitude towards it, as well as himself, that changes. The possible spiritual salvation hinted at in the poem is not the promise of eternal vitality, but rather the intuitive grasp of emptiness in all beings. One may even venture to say that, just as emptiness itself can be meaningful, by not offering any ready-made solution to the spiritual drought in the waste land, Eliot is pointing to a direction that leads to a new manner of facing it.

[359] Ibid., p. 53.

Chapter 4: The Higher Truth and the Turning Self in Eliot's Religious Poetry

Robert Crawford opens the first chapter of *The Savage and the City in the Work of T. S. Eliot* with the following comments: 'The dead always spoke strongly to T. S. Eliot. Continually he heard their voices and saw their patterns of action reincarnated in the speech and behaviour of contemporary life.'[360] Compared with Eliot's early poetry in which the dead seem to speak compellingly through the living, a new phenomenon emerges in his religious poetry, especially 'Ash-Wednesday': the evocation of the voice of the divine in the individual. The speaker willingly invites that timeless impersonal voice to speak through him, to reincarnate him in a divine body. It exercises unquestionable authority over personal feeling, and thus fuses the personal and the impersonal, or the non-self and the self. The intrusion of the voice as the omnipotent other is willingly called for and accepted by the speaker. In other words, it is a regulating power. The agony over the absence of the timeless divinity in *The Waste Land* is now appeased by the formal recognition of the Christian faith as the ultimate system of value, to which any earthly activity or personal feeling must refer for a new and everlasting meaning. In this sense, the poem signifies, as Eliot himself puts it, 'a certain *stage* of the journey, a journey of which I insist that all my previous verse represents previous stages.'[361]

Most criticism of the poem focuses on the Christian element, which is appropriate, as even the title itself bespeaks Christian influence. But Eliot was also alert to possible one-sided reading of the poem: 'I don't consider it any more "religious" verse than anything else I have written: I mean that it attempts to state a particular phase of the progress of one person.'[362] His insistence on calling the poem one phase of a longer journey suggests that previous phases and influences, including the Buddhist, need to be considered as inevitable parts of a larger framework,

[360] Robert Crawford, *The Savage and the City in the Work of T. S. Eliot* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 5.
[361] Letter to Algar Thorold, 23 May 1930, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 5*, p. 199.
[362] Quoted in *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 730.

in order to amply reveal the significance of Christianity in this phase. From *The Waste Land* to 'Ash-Wednesday', the savage that lies deep in humanity is tamed by faith that is filled with human love. The dramatic tension in Eliot's religious poetry lies less between the suffering individual and salvation, than in the intellectual reordering of worldly experience by the speaker's in-depth comprehension of the highest state of mind. One may find a prototype of such an order of spiritual salvation in Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lectures on Buddhism. The prototype stresses an inherent bond between the worldly and the celestial as well as the need to reveal the bond in the individual soul, so as to demonstrate a new order of being which integrates personal sensibility and spiritual renewal. The following analysis mainly draws on Eliot's notes on Buddhism to examine the order of spiritual salvation in Eliot's religious poetry, especially 'Ash-Wednesday'.

The speaker in the first part of 'Ash-Wednesday' is not content with the illusory visions which may satisfy the momentary need of a mind seeking a sense of security, as attachment to ephemeral visions will ultimately lead him to despairing nothingness:

> Because I do not hope to know again
> The infirm glory of the positive hour
> Because I do not think
> Because I know I shall not know
> The one veritable transitory power
> Because I cannot drink
> There, where trees flower, and springs flow, for there is nothing again[363]

He is looking for what Eliot calls 'an underlying serenity' that defies changes in the flow of time.[364] The underlying serenity is similar to the Buddhist non-attachment, which refers to the

[363] T. S. Eliot, *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, ed. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue (London: Faber and Faber, 2015), p. 97.
[364] T. S. Eliot, 'John Marston', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Tradition and Orthodoxy, 1934-1939*, last accessed 26 February 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 123.

'nondualistic, nonconceptual abiding in the present moment'.[365] It is a persistent state of tranquillity in the middle of the current of changes. As Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 12 October 1913 show, 'Even in this evanescence and change is dharma. Where there is dharma there is order and stability.'[366] Dharma means law, denoting the unchanged that governs the changing. The fear of becoming too much attached to evanescent phenomena is also expressed in Buddhism by the Sanskrit word 'adinava', meaning 'danger'. It

> '[designates] a crucial stage in the process of meditative development, in which the adept becomes so terrified of the "dangers" inherent in impermanent, compounded things that he turns away from this transitory world and instead turns toward the radical nonattachment [from sensuous enjoyments].[367]

A mind detached from transitory objects would not suffer from the pain of loss and disillusion. The transformation of the bones in the second section suggests that it is only after the speaker's existence is stripped down to the bare bones that a new and fundamentally different life, which is free from the cycle of life and death, is possible for him. The obtrusive stress on the word 'bones' seems to suggest that God's real intention behind the question 'Shall these bones live?' is not to restore the devoured flesh, but to breathe a new form of vitality into the bones, so that they can live without the flesh of the old self.[368] The speaker seems to strive for a balance between the materiality of the bones and a possible new spiritual vista that may accommodate them and help them form a new kind of existence in earthly life. The pursuit of a mind of non-attachment extends to the renunciation of the 'the blessèd face' of the divine. Such renunciation is willingly called for because the speaker sees that 'things are as they are' in their natural state of being, which hints at the timeless oneness of the things and divine grace, and therefore there is no need to strive for the blessèd face.[369] In this sense, what is really renounced is the egotistic effort to pursue the

[365] Carol G. Zaleski, 'Attention as a Key to Buddhist-Christian Dialogue', *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 14 (1994), p. 96.
[366] Houghton Library.
[367] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[368] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 89.
[369] Ibid., p. 87.

vision of heavenly bliss. Things are as they are, so is the blessèd face, which is not to be gained or possessed, but is to be discovered. In Buddhism, when things are as they are, their state of being is named 'tathata', which means 'the eternal nature of reality that is "ever thus" or "just so" and free of all conceptual elaborations.'[370] The Sanskrit term can be translated as suchness', 'thusness', or 'thatness'. Eliot shows his awareness of the subtlety of the concept: 'The tathata is being in itself […] It is universal to all beings […] illusion and reality are only the different aspects of the same tathata'.[371] It is timeless and is opposed to the phenomena of birth and death.

The wish to abide in the timeless moment of the here and now is at the same time the refusal to 'turn again' to any form of 'infirm glory' and 'transitory power'.[372] To turn to them means that one's mind is to be turned by them. The theme of turning is at the heart of 'Ash-Wednesday', as it unfolds the troubled relationship between what Eliot later terms 'the still point of the turning world' and the turning world represented by individual existence in the flow of time.[373] To turn again is to re-turn, though 're-turn' does not necessarily mean 'return'. Eliot had his own turnings, and he described them as if he had experienced a series of reincarnations: 'I have begun life three times: at 22, at 28, and again at 40; I hope I shall not have to do so again, because I am growing tired'.[374] The three times refer to his leaving America, his marriage, and his religious conversion. It can be argued that every turning brought him into a new life in which there was no turning back. However, in Christianity, if one returns, one turns away from sins and turns back to God, the eternal destination. Lancelot Andrewes meditates on the significance of returning in 'Ash Wednesday Sermon, 1619', suggesting that it means 'to return to Him by repentance from Whom by sin we have turned away'.[375] In fact, the whole sermon keeps returning to the theme of 'returning'. Regarding Eliot's great admiration for Andrewes, the theological significance of the word in relation to the Christian Ash Wednesday may have found its way into

[370] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[371] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 21 October 1913.
[372] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 87.
[373] Ibid., 'Burnt Norton', p. 181.
[374] T. S. Eliot, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 4, 1928-1929*, ed. Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (London: Faber and Faber, 2013), p. 650.
[375] Lancelot Andrewes, *Selected Writings*, ed. P. E. Hewison (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1995), p. 69.

Eliot's poem on the same topic.[376] While to return suggests repentance for moving away from the correct path, to re-turn, on the contrary, indicates further deviation, or moving further away, without necessarily going back in the original direction. Furthermore, to return also means to evolve away from what one originally is, which suggests a change of the state of being, as expressed in phrases such as 'turn into'. In this sense, to turn is to transform, no matter how slightly, and to re-turn is to transform again. In Eliot's religious poetry, 're-turn' is antithetic to 'return', and the process of evolvement and transformation contrasts with the timeless divinity beyond any worldly form. Merely to turn and re-turn would never lead one to 'the still point of the turning world'. To return back to a state of being when one has not yet turned into a different person through influences from the outer world is to return to a purer self. As the Buddha puts it in the *Anguttara Nikaya* which Eliot read in its original language Pali, 'Luminous […] is this mind, but it is defiled by adventitious defilements.'[377] That mind, when it is not defiled by attachments, 'is beyond production and cessation, birth and death, conceptualization and designation'.[378] It can be argued that the speaker's spiritual journey is meant to lead him to the luminous mind which is pure, timeless, and thus unchanged. It demands a spiritual withdrawal, or a final turning, from worldly life. By contrast, in a web of worldly attachments, individual existence is to be turned into something new, which means reincarnation in a new situation.

The idea of turning as reincarnation is more sensually presented in one of Eliot's unpublished poems 'The Death of St Narcissus':

> First he was sure that he had been a tree,
> Twisting its branches among each other
> And tangling its roots among each other.
>
> Then he knew that he had been a fish

[376] Eliot published an essay 'Lancelot Andrewes' in 1926, and a collection of critical essays titled *For Lancelot Andrewes* in 1928.
[377] Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans. *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, a Translation of the Anguttara Nikaya* (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 2012), p. 97.
[378] 'Buddha-nature', *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism.*

With slippery white belly held tight in his own fingers,
Writhing in his own clutch, his ancient beauty
Caught in the pink tips of his new beauty.

Then he had been a young girl
Caught in the woods by a drunken old man
Knowing at the end the taste of his own whiteness
The horror of his own smoothness,
And he felt drunken and old.[379]

Eliot's Narcissus seems to be a combination of the Christian saint who was 'a recluse in the desert for many years' and the classical figure Narcissus who recluses himself to his own image.[380] The Eliotic Narcissus sees his own self in subjects of his observation, and they appear to be his various reincarnations as he sensuously identifies himself with each of them. That he sees all things as different embodiments of the same force of life is strikingly similar to the Indian idea in the *Bhagavad-Gita* that all beings are incarnations of the same one God: 'I am the fire, I am the offering'.[381] The idea is essential in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which significantly influenced Eliot, and in another early poem 'I am the Resurrection and the Life', his treatment of the same theme is reminiscent of the method he uses in 'The Death of St Narcissus': 'I am the husband and the wife / And the victim and the sacrificial knife / I am the fire, and the butter also'.[382] Wandering through different incarnations, Eliot's Narcissus finally turned away from the world of flesh and 'become a dancer to God', which seems to be his last turning.[383] In this sense, to return to God is also to initiate a corresponding change of the protagonist's state of being. As Andrewes puts it in the 'Ash Wednesday' sermon, it 'requireth not only an alteration of the mind but of the will, a change not of certain notions only in the head, but of the affection of the heart too'.[384] And this last turning, as a process of transformation that affects the whole being, must affect the bodily

[379] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, pp. 270-71.
[380] Ibid., p. 1156.
[381] Ibid., p. 1159.
[382] Ibid., p. 272.
[383] Ibid., p. 271.
[384] Andrewes, p. 75.

existence as well: ‘our repentance is to be incorporate into the body no less than the sin was […] the heart within and the body without may both turn, since both have gone astray’.[385] After many turnings in different forms of worldly existence, Eliot’s Narcissus finally turns away from them, and turns to the only form left, a dancer to God. That ‘he could not live men’s ways’ echoes the refusal in ‘Ash-Wednesday’ to ‘[desire] this man’s gift and that man’s scope’.[386] The only way left is God’s way, for which the dancer to God must turn away from worldly attachments.

Henry Michael Gott describes men’s ways experienced and finally abandoned by Eliot’s Narcissus as ‘degrees of separation from a unified origin’.[387] In Eliot’s poetry, the relationship between the degrees of separation and the unified origin evolves from one of antithesis to one of structural harmony. In ‘Gerontion’, the Communion is shared among people with diverse cultural backgrounds, who are more like ‘fractured atoms’, rather than members of one community.[388] What is more disconcerting is that after they share the Communion, which represents the flesh and blood of Christ, they are in turn devoured by ‘Christ the tiger’.[389] The end of *The Waste Land,* which makes use of Indian thought, presents a more harmonious version of the relationship between the Word and the word. The divine thunder ‘DA’ incarnates itself into ‘Datta’, ‘Dayadhvam’, and ‘Damyata’, and they represent an order of moral duties which further merges into a unified voice of ‘shantih’. Balachandra Rajan describes this process as ‘an orderly descent through the scale of existence’.[390] ‘Ash-Wednesday’ demonstrates a new balance, represented by a new order: the lady, the leopards, and the bones. The surreal image of ‘Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper tree’ may evolve from Eliot’s early poem ‘Circe’s Palace’ which mentions ‘Panthers’, a kind of leopard.[391] Circe turns human beings into wild beasts, ‘And they look at us with the eyes / Of men whom we knew long ago.’[392] The eyes of the original soul look

[385] Ibid., p. 77.
[386] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 270; p. 87.
[387] Henry Michael Gott, *Ascetic Modernism in the Work of T. S. Eliot and Gustave Flaubert* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 56.
[388] Ibid., p. 33.
[389] Ibid., p. 31.
[390] Balachandra Rajan, *The Overwhelming Question: A Study of the Poetry of T. S. Eliot* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 32.
[391] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 89; p. 232.
[392] Ibid., p. 232.

through the new incarnation. In Ricks and McCue's notes to the poem, the leopards are linked to the entry 'leopard' in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*: 'a man who has killed a leopard remains in his hut three days; he practices continence and is fed to satiety'.[393] What immediately follows in the encyclopaedia is the introduction of 'the leopard society', which is perhaps more relevant to Eliot's man-eating leopard: 'Members wear leopard skins when they seize their victims for sacrifice.'[394] J. H. Hutton notes the phenomenon of leopard lycanthropy in 'Leopard-Men in the Naga Hills': 'A leopard is thus the recipient (from time to time) of a human soul'.[395] It seems that for the leopard-men the ideal form of existence would be the integration of the human soul and the body of a leopard. The leopard seems related to the source of vitality of nature which the leopard-men try to acquire. In Joseph Conrad's words, the leopard is a vessel for 'all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the heart of wild men'.[396] That life of the heart of darkness is, however, not a thing of the past. It is, as Eliot later proposes in 'The Dry Salvages', 'not the experience of one life only / But of many generations' from history beyond records, and manifests itself in the present.[397] When the divine guiding power is absent, the order-less force threatens to engulf the individual, for whom hell is inside one's own self. As Eliot puts it in *The Cocktail Party*, 'Hell is oneself. […] There is nothing to escape from / And nothing to escape to.'[398] Eliot's Buddhist notes also touch upon the nature of hell: '[Hell's] nature [...] consists in dvesa. But dvesa means at the same time to have a longing for something more.'[399] The Sanskrit term 'dvesa' refers to hatred. Although it is a violent uncurdled force, it has the potential to be directed into the channel of spiritual devotion. Before the divine figure of the Lady is introduced as a spiritual guide and object of devotion, the dark

[393] James Hastings, ed. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Volume 1: A — Art* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), p. 520.
[394] Ibid.
[395] J. H. Hutton, 'Leopard-Men in the Naga Hills', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 50 (1920), 42.
[396] *Heart of Darkness*, p. 7.
[397] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 196.
[398] *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot*, p. 397.
[399] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 5 December 1913.

force of natural beings rampages in much of Eliot's earlier poetry and triggers a spiritual yearning for salvation.

The reader can find the modern incarnation of 'the primitive terror' in Sweeney, the comical savage figure in Eliot's poetry. He speaks openly: 'I'll gobble you up. I'll be the cannibal.'[400] However, Sweeney is more than a man-eating man, not in the sense that he is more human, but, on the contrary, in that he is more like a man-eating beast than a man-eating man. One may accuse a person who conducts cannibalism of being inhuman and bestial, but may not impose on a wild beast the same accusations. In 'Sweeney among the Nightingales', Eliot blurs the boundary between the human and the animal:

> Apeneck Sweeney spreads his knees
> Letting his arms hang down to laugh,
> The zebra stripes along his jaw
> Swelling to maculate giraffe.[401]

With a tint of surrealism, Sweeney is almost physically transforming into some wild animal. As Eliot puts it in a book review, 'At the bottom of man's heart there is always the beast, resentful of restraints of civilised society, ready to spring out at the instant this restraint relaxes'.[402] Eliot was sensitive to the tension between the inner beast and the outer order, and in the 1920 poems, Sweeney who represents the inner animal is put alongside the church, as if to suggest the opposition between them. He juxtaposes the two at the end of 'Mr Eliot's Sunday Morning Service':

> Sweeney shifts from ham to ham

[400] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 121.
[401] Ibid., p. 51.
[402] T. S. Eliot, 'An American Critic: An unsigned review of Aristocracy and Justice, by Paul Elmer More', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905–1918*, last accessed 27 July 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 407.

Stirring the water in his bath.
The masters of the subtle schools
Are controversial, polymath.[403]

Eliot remarks in the same review that 'the human soul – l'anima semplicetta – is neither good nor bad'.[404] The lawless Sweeney seems to be the incarnation of such a simple soul, and the completeness of his animal simplicity reflects natural vitality, which is neither good nor evil. Crawford notes the doubleness of the relationship between the primitive and the modern, that the 'Discovery of Conradian horror beneath polite society' is put side by side with poets' 'privileged access to a primitive mentality'.[405] What makes the primitive a positive element is Christianity as 'a redeeming force'.[406] Sweeney stands alone as the elephant in the room, whose stirring shakes the base of the polite society that Eliot was familiar with, and is probably designed to incarnate that primitive force.

Compared with Sweeney, the hippopotamus which is 'merely flesh and blood' goes into Heaven, as Eliot ordains in 'The Hippopotamus'.[407] Meanwhile, the church, when it is neither doing good nor doing evil, or in other words, being lukewarm, seems to be more condemnable than either the savage Sweeney or the awkward hippopotamus. The epigraph to 'The Hippopotamus' singles out a particular kind of church: 'the church of the Laodiceans'.[408] According to the *OED*, the Laodicean means 'Having the fault for which the Church of Laodicea is reproached in Rev. 3:15, 16; hence, "lukewarm, neither cold nor hot", indifferent in religion, politics, etc.'[409] The lack of order is pitched against the lack of commitment; the choice between Sweeney and the Laodicean church thus becomes the choice between a lawless soul and a soulless body. Furthermore, it may interest the reader to note that a less well-known novel by Thomas Hardy is titled *A Laodicean,* which depicts a kind of mental uncertainty that leads to the

[403] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 50.
[404] 'An American Critic', p. 407.
[405] Crawford, p. 198.
[406] Ibid.
[407] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 43.
[408] Ibid., p. 43.
[409] *OED.*

protagonist's 'refusal to be content with life'.[410] The protagonist Paula is wavering between the old world of medievalism and the new world of modernity, represented by two men, and her lukewarm attitude is for herself 'a provisional necessity, until [she sees] a little more clearly'.[411] By comparison, the speaker of 'Ash-Wednesday' is not content with 'The infirm glory of the positive hour', mainly because he aspires for a more spiritual life and the aspiration renders him faithful. [412] In light of the comparison, to be Laodicean means that one is not faithful enough, or is too sceptical, to commit oneself to anything, and is thus feeling too insecure to believe in any way of life. The Laodicean is like a wandering soul without a body. This definition may remind the reader of the protagonists in Eliot's early poetry, including Prufrock and Gerontion. Prufrock's uncertainty in his self-questioning ('And how should I presume?') makes him closer to a Laodicean: he drowns by human voices for he fails to either become one of them or find the shore of salvation.[413] It should be noted that Eliot's reference to the Laodicean is explicitly religious, and in 'Revelation' the Laodicean church is urged to 'be zealous therefore, and repent' (Revelation 3: 19).[414] The impersonality of Eliot's early poetry appears to affiliate to his intellectual scepticism, but in his religious poetry in the post 'waste land' period, the poet creates a new mode of impersonality by surrendering the self to a divine Other. In 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service', Eliot does not make a choice between a Sweeney and a Laodicean church, but leaves a glimpse of divinity that suggests a third choice: 'But through the water pale and thin / Still shine the unoffending feet / And there above the painter set / The father and the Paraclete.'[415] Neither a Sweeney nor a Laodicean Church is ideal, for, even though they appear to be opposite to each other, they are not in communion with the divine Other, or that neither of them is in a 'harmonious union between the person and the truth', according to Eliot's Buddhist notes.[416] The notes go on to explain that

[410] Introduction to Thomas Hardy, *A Laodicean*, in. Barbara Hardy (London: Macmillan, 1975), p. 15.
[411] Ibid., p. 406.
[412] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 87.
[413] Ibid., p. 7.
[414] *The Holy Bible*, p. 1132.
[415] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 49.
[416] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 16 December 1913.

> Dharma [as truth] is unchangeable; but truth by itself is an abstraction. It can be realised and becomes the second force of the dhatus through the man who practices it […] a person may be living, but his life is vain without the foundation of the truth.[417]

'Dhatus' here refers to the fields of experience of the senses. In other words, in the spiritual wrestle with both the sinister inner darkness and the impotence to enter sincere spiritual life, the divine Other is called for to enable the spiritual communion that will change the order-less force into devotional passion and thus give it a second life.

In 'Ash-Wednesday', the divine Other who may bring about the integration by taming the order-less force is represented by the mysterious Lady. She is put in the same picture with the leopards, and yet carries an air of tranquillity: 'Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper-tree / In the cool of the day, having fed to satiety'.[418] One may say that it is a sanctified version of the story of the beauty and the beast, with the beast tamed by the beauty. It may remind the reader of the medieval tapestry series 'The Lady and the Unicorn' in the Musée de Cluny, which presents an array of animals around the mysterious lady including a unicorn. In medieval mythology, only a virgin can tame a unicorn. It can be argued that the prominent worship of the Lady throughout 'Ash-Wednesday' is meant to tame the otherwise capricious inner force, by enhancing the authority of some benign motherly power of spiritual regeneration. The virgin-beast symbol looks back to the Christian allegorical lesson: 'spiritual love casting out profane love'.[419] On the Lady hangs the only chance of maintaining order, a trace of which can be found in Eliot's early poem 'Aunt Helen': the death of the maiden aunt suggests the dissolution of the order of her household, which contains dogs, a parrot, and servants including a lascivious footman who covets a housemaid but 'had always been so careful while her mistress lived'.[420] David Hunt points out the similarity between the lady of the unicorn and the 'mistress of the beasts' in the 'hunting

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[417] Ibid.
[418] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 89.
[419] 'Unicorn', Gertrude Jobes, *Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore, and Symbols* (New York: Scarecrow Press, 1962), p. 1625.
[420] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 23.

mythology of the Caucasus', in which, more specifically, there is a certain goddess who can command 'snow leopards' to punish whoever violates her rule.[421] Eliot's white leopards, despite their serenity, do devour the flesh of the speaker, and the poet wastes no ink on the gruesome scene of flesh and blood: 'my leg my liver […] My guts the strings of my eyes and the indigestible portions'.[422] A beast-accompanying goddess also evokes the image of Diana, and in Eliot's poems such as 'Animula' and 'Burnt Norton', the scene of a boarhound pursuing its prey occurs, with the air of a mystical religious icon: 'Pray for Floret, by the boarhound slain between the yew trees'; 'Below, the boarhound and the boar / Pursue their pattern as before / But reconciled among the stars'.[423] In this sense, the image of the Lady and the leopards is an order of symbols that hints at a realm of otherworldliness.

One may also find a similar order that combines the benevolent and the violent in Tantric Buddhism, especially in its icons of Mandala. According to Eliot's Buddhist notes: 'The expression mandala is a very old one, the name was first applied to gatherings of disciples and later to groups of statues arranged in a systematic way.'[424] One of them, which Eliot detailedly describes in his notes, includes both the deity of meditation, Amitabha, and the deity who conquers worldly evils, Trailokya-vijaya-raja.[425] According to the notes, the lecture on that day paid much attention to the Japanese tantric school, Shingon, which uses icons of Mandala to explain the cosmic order of spiritual salvation. In this sense, it 'is sacramental Buddhism in contrast to doctrinal Buddhism', and is also 'concrete realisation of truth'.[426] Within this context, the scene of the boarhound and the boar, as well as the image that includes the Lady, the leopards, and the bones, can be likened to a sacrificial ceremony, which, if one has in mind Eliot's early poems 'The Love Song of St. Sebastian' and 'The Death of Saint Narcissus', is readily recognisable as the expression of some inner need for purgation.

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[421] David Hunt, 'The Association of the Lady and the Unicorn, and the Hunting Mythology of the Caucasus', *Folklore* 114 (2003), 75; 87.
[422] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 89.
[423] Ibid., 'Animula', p. 106; 'Burnt Norton', p. 181.
[424] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 10 February 1914.
[425] Ibid.
[426] Ibid.

Both poems are about the death of a Christian saint, in which the seemingly unnatural joy in self-torture is justified for being related to the love of God. The self-torture reflects the speaker's hatred for his own worldly existence: 'Because I was hideous in your sight / You would take me in without shame'.[427] According to Reiko Ohnuma, self-sacrifice as a means to achieve salvation is 'extremely popular in Indian Buddhism, appearing in innumerable variations throughout the history of the literary tradition and exerting a profound influence on Buddhist art, philosophy, and culture.'[428] One of the *Jataka Tales* or Buddhist birth stories accounts the story of a previous incarnation of the Buddha, Prince Mahasattva, who 'throws himself off a cliff in order to feed a starving tigress'.[429] As Eliot was undoubtedly familiar with the *Jataka Tales*, this story could have been one possible source of the image of the well-fed leopards. When it is put within the Christian context, the tendency of self-sacrifice becomes inextricable from a martyr complex, which becomes explicit in Eliot's plays *Murder in a Cathedral* and *A Cocktail Party*. Thomas Beckett's violent death and Celia's crucifixion near an ant hill by some natives can be seen as the continuation of the urge to sacrifice the personal self to impersonal divinity; this urge, as shown above, is also at the heart of 'Ash-Wednesday'. What is more, in 'Ash-Wednesday', the poet envisages the end of self-sacrifice, that the end of worldly attachment is at the same time the descent of divine grace. To die in the life of worldly attachments is to be reborn into the life of eternal love in relation to the Lady.

The Lady exerts her influence in causing the restoration of flesh to the bones after their flesh is consumed by the leopards. Under her influence, the inner force acquires a new body: 'It is this which recovers / My guts the strings of my eyes and the indigestible portions / Which the leopards reject.'[430] To be devoured by the leopards is the first step towards the coming of new life. A sense of order transcends suffering. In the Christian context, the three white leopards may represent 'the three enemies of the soul, which are world, devil and flesh', but with Eliot's earlier

[427] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 266.
[428] Reiko Ohnuma, 'The Gift of the Body and the Gift of Dharma', *History of Religions* 37 (1998), p. 323.
[429] Ibid, p. 325.
[430] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 89.

poems in mind, especially *The Waste Land*, the leopards are perhaps more related to worldly desires that consume one's secular life.[431] *The Waste Land* presents that the fire of desire reduces faithless individuals to unburied bones. While in 'Ash-Wednesday', the beasts are finally fed to satiety and the bones are re-incarnated. The use of the hyphen in the word 're-incarnated' is similar to that in the word 're-turn'. It is to show that the incarnation of the bones – that flesh is restored to them – is a unique event, not in the endless cycle of reincarnation. It refers to the Christian resurrection of the dead, which the poet directly touches upon in the Biblical allusion to the prophecy in 'Ezekiel': 'And God said / Shall these bones live?'[432] The new life of the bones is no longer isolated individual existence, but an order of being that includes the Lady, the leopards, and the bones. Moody observes that in the poem 'the bringing into harmony of those very different realms, the ascetic desert and the paradise of love, is an astonishing act of sensibility.'[433] One reason for such an achievement, to use G. Douglas Atkins's words, is that the poem is 'incarnational', not 'leaving the things of this world behind', but seeing them as part of a grand harmonious design.[434] The one who is consumed by primitive desire is to be re-incarnated by divine grace. In the second incarnation, the new body is given not by nature through the union of the two sexes, but by God through the union of the worldly and the divine, or the world in time and the timeless. Such a union is presented in the lines of chanting in the second paragraph of the second section, which stands out in a consciously styled form:

> Lady of silences
> Calm and distressed
> Torn and most whole
> Rose of memory
> Rose of forgetfulness
> Exhausted and life-giving

[431] Quoted in ibid., p. 741.
[432] Ibid.
[433] *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet*, p. 144.
[434] G. Douglas Atkins, *T. S. Eliot Materialized: Literal Meaning and Embodied Truth* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 20.

Worried reposeful
The single Rose
Is now the Garden
Where all loves end
Terminate torment
Of love unsatisfied
The greater torment
Of love satisfied
End of the endless
Journey to no end
Conclusion of all that
Is inconclusible
Speech without word and
Word of no speech
Grace to the Mother
For the Garden
Where all love ends.[435]

The language creates an aura of liturgical chanting, and peacefulness pervades the lines, as if the speaker's mind enters the realm of the timeless. In other words, the soul is transformed by its willing meditation on the divine. Such a form of existence is penetrated by the sacred love of the Lady. It is the purpose of itself, as it does not make any demand on her. The act of loving is already the destination. Therefore, it is neither 'love unsatisfied' nor 'love satisfied'; it is love perpetually satisfying, without attachment.[436] In this sense, it is the real end of the turnings that the speaker meets in worldly life.

The Lady not only brings about the second life of the bones, but also becomes its eternal source of vitality. All previous lives before the second life are but one life, and the second life is an eternal life that will end the cycle of reincarnation. The theme is further explored in *Ariel Poems*. 'A Song for Simeon' juxtaposes the Christian Incarnation with the reincarnations of

[435] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, pp. 89-90.
[436] Ibid., p. 90.

humanity, and the significance of the Incarnation makes the speaker denounce the wandering of the human will throughout history:

> I am tired with my own life and the lives of those after me,
> I am dying in my own death and the deaths of those after me.
> Let thy servant depart,
> Having seen thy salvation.'[437]

Kristian Smidt assuredly reads it as the speaker's wish 'to be freed from the eternal circle' of reincarnation in the earthly world, and no longer to 'turn again'.[438] The cessation of rebirth leads to a state of equilibrium in which the mind does not waver between different phenomena. As the Buddha puts it, 'Here, O monks, I say that there is no coming or going, no staying, no passing away or arising. It is not something fixed, it moves not on, it is not based on anything. This is indeed the end of suffering.'[439] The wish registers less the desire to strive for self-emancipation of any kind than the willingness to let go of egotistic effort of any kind. The emotion of letting go is expressed in the image of the aged eagle in 'Ash-Wednesday': 'Why should the agéd eagle stretch its wings'.[440] As *The Waste Land* poignantly demonstrates, renewal does not eliminate suffering from its root, and it leads only to another cycle of life and death. There is also an indication that real release from the cycle does not lie in personal efforts reaching out to search, but on the contrary, the first step is to stop any striving with a personal purpose. As a result of the self-imposed depersonalisation, the egotistic self in earthly life, along with the misery inflicted upon it, becomes insignificant, and the speaker sees his own earthly life as transient and light: 'My life is light, waiting for the death wind, / Like a feather on the back of my hand.'[441] Furthermore, the sense of lightness leads to the sense of emptiness which is expressed in the

[437] Ibid., p. 104.
[438] *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot*, p. 145.
[439] 'Nirvana', *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism.*
[440] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 87.
[441] Ibid., p. 103.

speaker's depersonalisation of his sensibility: 'Not for me the martyrdom, the ecstasy of thought and prayer, / Not for me the ultimate vision.'[442] The speaker experiences the retreat of the ego and achieves non-self in his vision of the divine.

By contrast, in Buddhism the state of non-self can be achieved through vigorous spiritual training such as meditation, which is pragmatic and requires no intervention from any kind of divinity. As Eliot's Buddhist notes show, 'Practice of meditation is accompanied by analytic views, and [leads to] final conviction that ego is not a substance […] The final conviction in conquest over selfishness is a thorough examination of the vacuity of the self, perfected by practice of meditation and spiritual realisation of the truth.'[443] In Eliot's religious poetry, the vacuity of the self is examined less through meditation than through prayer and faith. In this sense, non-self as an important goal of spiritual training in Buddhism is integrated into the Christian scheme of salvation. The speaker sees himself as the vessel that receives and embodies divine grace, rather than an independent being that creates it and owns it. Eliot expands on the idea in *Murder in the Cathedral*: 'A martyrdom is never the design of man; for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, not lost it but found it, for he has found freedom in submission to God. The martyr no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of martyrdom.'[444] The second epigraph to 'Sweeney Agonistes', which Eliot borrows from St John of the Cross, can be used to conclude St Thomas's spiritual journey in *Murder in the Cathedral*: 'Hence the soul cannot be possessed of the divine union, until it has divested itself of the love of created beings.'[445] In other words, the soul should be emptied to receive divine grace. The bones in 'Ash-Wednesday' sing praises of the Lady when they have lost their flesh – and they 'shine with brightness'.[446] It may be worth noting that the word 'light' in 'A Song for Simeon' has two etymological roots. One is related to lung:

[442] Ibid., p. 104.
[443] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 20 March 1914.
[444] *Murder in the Cathedral*, in *The Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 261.
[445] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 114.
[446] Ibid, p. 89.

'something full of air not heavy', which denotes emptiness.[447] The other denotes 'illumination'.[448] The shiny bare bones integrate both. The sense of relieving emptiness can also be found elsewhere in 'Ash-Wednesday', such as in the wings of the aged eagle which 'are no longer wings to fly / But merely vans to beat the air / The air which is now thoroughly small and dry'.[449] The word 'merely' seems to indicate the speaker's dedication: he feels that his physical existence in earthly condition no longer serves worldly pursuits. The use of the word 'van' may deserve more attention. According to the *OED*, as an image commonly seen in poetry, it means simply a wing, but it could also mean 'A winnowing basket or shovel', which is directly related to the act of beating the air.[450] Unlike wings that can float upon the flow of air, a winnowing van is designed to let the air flow across the sieve-like surface, in order to separate the grains from the chaff. It enhances the atmosphere of lightness and emptiness. Furthermore, the phrase 'small and dry' suggests something left after distillation. It also echoes Lancelot Andrewes's 'dry and lean both is our sorrow' and thus intensifies the general religious dolour in the poem.[451] In addition, the word 'thoroughly' again reminds the reader of the speaker's persistent wish for some kind of extremum of not only the purity of his spiritual emotion, but also the intensity of his insight into the relationship between the personal self and the impersonal divinity. As a result of such a process of self-purification, what is left of the protagonist's spiritual being is the timeless element that will not be altered in the flow of time.

After the leopards consume 'that which had been contained / In the hollow round of [the] skull', the skull is empty as a result of the purification.[452] And when it is incarnated again under the influence of the Lady, the flesh of human desire is replaced by the body of divine grace. The relation Eliot builds between the bones and the Lady hints at 'the impossible union / Of spheres of existence [which] is actual'.[453] In such a union of the divine and the human, 'the still point'

[447] John Ayto, *Bloomsbury Dictionary of Word Origins* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991), p. 323.
[448] Ibid.
[449] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 88.
[450] *OED.*
[451] Andrewes, p. 83.
[452] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 89.
[453] Ibid., 'The Dry Salvages', p. 200.

and ‘the turning world’ are inseparable. The turning world finds a master to surrender itself to, and is ready to be changed. The second life in the union asserts its authority through revaluation of the first life, or the worldly life. In this process, a new sense of good and evil emerges, as shown in Section III:

> I turned and saw below
> The same shape twisted on the banister
> Under the vapour in the fetid air
> Struggling with the devil of the stairs who wears
> The deceitful face of hope and of despair.[454]

The life of wavering between hope and despair is the life of endless turnings among transient attachments, and it is regarded as on the side of the evil. By contrast, the life of timeless tranquillity safeguarded through worship of the Lady is the life of righteousness. Eliot’s notes on Anesaki’s lecture on 10 October 1913 reveal the Buddhist understanding of good and evil: ‘Dharma means righteousness […] moral good is in accordance with truth. Truth alone is not moral good […] Goodness apart from wisdom is inconceivable, vice versa. […] Intellectual, religious, and moral senses are inseparable’.[455] This sense of good and evil is further elaborated in ‘Marina’, in which the speaker condemns those who lead a life of hollowness rather than holiness:

> Those who sharpen the tooth of the dog, meaning
> Death
> Those who glitter with the glory of the hummingbird, meaning
> Death
> Those who sit in the sty of contentment, meaning
> Death

[454] Ibid., p. 91.
[455] Houghton Library.

Those who suffer the ecstasy of the animals, meaning
Death[456]

With a strong sense of good and evil, the speaker condemns as evil all that is not done in reference to a plane of existence higher than that of the human. But the harsh tone that runs through the words of condemnation is soon dramatically softened by the power of his love for his daughter:

Are become unsubstantial, reduced by a wind,
A breath of pine, and the woodsong fog
By this grace dissolved in place
[…]
Whispers and small laughter between leaves and hurrying feet
Under sleep, where all the waters meet.[457]

It is not clear – perhaps it is deliberately made vague – whether that which 'become unsubstantial, reduced […] By this grace dissolved in place' are the people condemned or the animosity in the language of condemnation. What is certain is that the essential energy that charges the poem is now given a new manner of expression. Christopher Ricks argues that 'the energies of animosity [against the dead lives] are at once acknowledged to be substantial and believed to be so transcendable that they can "become unsubstantial".'[458] However, to be more precise, what is deemed unsubstantial is rather the ego that indulges itself in worldly fulfilment than the mental energy. To use Eliot's Buddhist notes and accompanying handouts, while 'ego is not a substance', the mental energy of the individuals is blindly 'wavering […] between vacuity and reality', unless it is 'coming into contact with the Blessed One' who represents the substantial.[459] In 'Marina', the daughter plays the role of the blessed, similar to the Lady in 'Ash-Wednesday'. The speaker's

[456] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 107.
[457] Ibid.
[458] *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice*, p. 234.
[459] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 20 March 1914 and the handout that begins with 'The common men'.

discovery of his daughter triggers a spiritual renewal, as if he is given a new life. The daughter seems to be the embodiment of the new life: 'Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let me / Resign my life for this life'.[460] Compared with the graceful bliss accompanying the recognition scene, the aura of hatred in the language of condemnation is perhaps itself condemnable. The change corresponds to the aforementioned pattern of the lady taming the beast. In Eliot's version, the element of violence and that of joy are both preserved, and they are, through the dramatic change of tone, presented as essentially the same force with different manifestations. For the speaker of 'Marina', the inner force that fuels the hatred against the profane is re-channelled through his love of the long-lost daughter.

In 'Choruses from "The Rock"', Eliot again deploys a voice that issues severe reprimands, which expose the human abuse of the gift from God:

> I have given you hands which you turn from worship,
> I have given you speech which, for endless palaver,
> I have given you my Law, and you set up commissions,
> I have given you lips, to express friendly sentiments,
> I have given you hearts, for reciprocal distrust
> I have given you power of choice, and you only alternate
> Between futile speculation and unconsidered action.[461]

The evil of humanity without divine grace seems to contradict the capacity of humanity to achieve union with the divine. The reproach echoes what St Paul says in 'Corinthians' as he explains the gift from God: 'there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. […] And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all' (1 Corinthians, 12: 4-6).[462] The human will seems to be taken as the manifestation of some divine power. Therefore, human behaviours such as those condemned in Eliot's poems, with or without a clear persona, are not inherently

[460] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 108.
[461] Ibid., p. 161.
[462] *The Holy Bible*, p. 1052.

evil, but evil in the sense that they deviate, or turn away, from the giver of the gift. It is worth noting that in borrowing the Shakespearean line 'desiring this man's art and that man's scope', Eliot substitutes 'gift' for 'art'. The word 'gift' leans more on the suggestion of 'The transference of property in a thing by one person to another'.[463] And the gap between the human and the divine is revealed in the tension between the gift and the use of the gift.

Furthermore, the gift from God is by no means decorative, but essential to the forming of the individual's manner of being. Eliot makes it clear that he '[does not] think that ordinary human affections are capable of leading us to the love of God, but rather that the love of God is capable of informing, intensifying, and elevating our human affections, which otherwise have little to distinguish them from the "natural" affections of animals.'[464] From the perspective of Buddhism, as Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 27 April 1914 show, 'The true self of everyone is realised by participation in the divine life [or an] ethico-religious relation. Moral life is not sufficient unless it is connected with the true sense of religious worship.'[465] The divine Other, as the guiding principle of the divine life, is, in Eliot's religious poetry, represented by a key figure or event around which poetic emotion flows, such as the Lady in 'Ash-Wednesday', and the daughter in 'Marina', and the Nativity in both 'Journey of the Magi' and 'A Song for Simeon'. The mortal life on its own is, in Eliot's vision of existence, 'unsubstantial'. He also puts it assertively in 'Ash-Wednesday' that 'there is no life' in 'the whiteness of the bones', and the potential of life in the bones rests in the Lady:

> Because of the goodness of this Lady
> And because of her loveliness, and because
> She honours the Virgin in meditation,
> We shine with brightness'.[466]

[463] *OED.*
[464] Quoted in *T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life*, p. 207.
[465] Houghton Library.
[466] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 89.

The life of the bones lies, not in the bones themselves, but in the Lady. It seems that the poet needs a figure other than the self to be the incarnation of divine grace, or at least to be the centre of poetic energy. In *The Golden Bough*, Sir James Frazer notes a concept of 'the external soul' in the mind of primitive humans: '[the soul] may be absent from his body and still continue to animate him by virtue of a sort of sympathy or action at a distance. So long as this object which he calls his life or soul remains unharmed, the man is well'.[467] The soul is detached from the body, so when the body, as one incarnation, is destroyed, the soul still remains intact. Nevertheless, Eliot's focus seems to be on the body's acceptance of the soul as a powerful Other that exerts decisive influence on the body. The revelation of the divine Other, according to Eliot's Buddhist notes, is also 'Revelation of the higher standpoint [and] revelation of higher truth'.[468] Such an external soul, as the centre of gravity of the body, is not totally confined by the body, though it is intimately related to it. Therefore, 'Ash-Wednesday', as well as Eliot's religious poetry as a whole, is preoccupied with the struggle to find the real centre of the individual self. The concept of 'the external soul' seems to indicate that one's true being does not equal one's existence in time. The awareness of the divine not confined within individual mortal life helps generate the tone of impersonality of the poem. Helen Gardner comments that in Eliot's early poetry, there is the awareness of 'life seen in shadow, a grey monotony', and then in 'Ash-Wednesday', 'the shadow itself enters the poetry'.[469] In other words, the shadow itself is being observed and the protagonist is the detached observer. The observer tries to see through the seemingly meaningless repetition of life and death, and to find the external soul, or the source of the gift from God, that would offer meaning to individual existence. It is an act of revaluation and transmutation of personal feelings, an act of orbiting the personal to the impersonal. The depersonalisation of poetic emotion is also reflected in the shift of tone from the first section to the second section of 'Ash-Wednesday'. The anxious uncertainty that creates a gap between the conscious self and God is replaced by a

[467] *The Golden Bough*, p. 668.
[468] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 28 November 1913.
[469] Helen Gardner, *The Art of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), p. 99.

pervasive aura of serene objectivity, as the focus becomes the Lady, rather than 'I'. The persistent self-assertion that begins with 'Because I' disappears, and the figure of the Lady becomes dominant. The musicality of the second section makes the lines flow more smoothly, and the speaker's over self-consciousness seems pacified. Whenever 'I' is mentioned, it is evoked passively ('And I', 'As I', and 'so I'), ancillary to the Lady. One after another so many 'I's emerge, but they are no longer eager to assert anything. The Lady becomes the centre around which personal emotions acquire an extra layer of significance.

In the final section, the insistence that 'when the voice shaken from the yew-tree drift away / Let the other yew be shaken and reply' foreshadows the claim in 'East Coker': 'there is no competition – / There is only the fight to recover what has been lost / And found and lost again and again'.[470] If the voice is taken to be related to prayer, then the 'thousand whispers from the yew' are by no means random noises.[471] They are endless attempts to turn to the timeless by those who pray in the world of time. As John Kwan-Terry puts it, they represent the 'renewed contact with the eternal'.[472] The renewed contact necessarily involves the bodily existence of the one who prays, just as the speaker cannot avoid the sea smell which 'renews the salt savour of the sandy earth'.[473] It should be noted that Eliot uses 'recover' and 'renew' to deal with the ordinary human emotions and sensations. They are not lost, but they reconnect the human soul and the world after the soul has experienced communion with the divine Other. It is a rejuvenation that is meant to maintain 'Our peace in His will / […] even among these rocks'.[474] The antithesis between the worldly and the divine dissolves when the speaker finally realises in his mind what Eliot's Buddhist notes describe, the 'communion of our mind with the cosmic spirit.'[475] In the end, the speaker turns to God by returning back to human life, so as to '[restore] / With a new verse the ancient rhyme.'[476] It echoes the order of Buddhist spiritual training, that after 'Going from outer

[470] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 96; p. 191.
[471] Ibid., p. 93.
[472] John Kwan-Terry, '*Ash-Wednesday:* a poetry of verification', in *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. A. D. Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 139.
[473] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 96.
[474] Ibid., p. 97.
[475] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 20 February 1913.
[476] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 92.

senses to [the] mind, to reach the depth of [the mind]', one finally '[returns] to the world for salvation of humanity'.[477] The return to the world out of religious conviction shows that faith does not eliminate natural affections. It makes them meaningful by directing them towards the love of God, and in the process the Christian truth seems to become a higher truth, which is what Helen Gardner calls 'the ground and test of all other truths'.[478] The higher truth is not set to stifle the other truths, as the other truths inherit from the higher truth their essence and become its different expressions. As Eliot puts it, in the end 'all significant truths are private truths'.[479] The relationship between the higher truth and personal truths is also touched upon in Eliot's Buddhist notes, '[by] identifying oneself with the truth one becomes Buddha, and the eternity of Buddhahood is in this way true.'[480] The last prayer of 'Ash-Wednesday' also stresses the unity between the personal and the impersonal: 'Sister, mother / And spirit of the river, spirit of the sea, / Suffer me not to be separated'.[481] Once again the reader is led to the paradoxical nature of Eliot's poetics of impersonality. To use the language of reincarnation, one may say that the higher truth is kept alive by incarnating, and reincarnating, itself in the private truths.

[477] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lectures on 16 January 1914 and 20 January 1914.
[478] Helen Gardner, 'Ash Wednesday' in *T. S. Eliot: 'Prufrock', 'Gerontion', Ash Wednesday and Other Shorter Poems*, ed. B. C. Southam (London: Macmillan, 1978), p. 229.
[479] T. S. Eliot, 'Degrees of Reality', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905–1918*,, last accessed 9 September 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 63.
[480] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 7 October 1913.
[481] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 97.

Chapter 5: The Suchness of the Rose Garden in 'Burnt Norton'

The contemplation of time in the first paragraph of 'Burnt Norton', that 'if all time is eternally present / All time is unredeemable', seems to be a response to the spiritual quest in 'Ash-Wednesday': to 'Redeem / The time. Redeem / The unread vision in the higher dream'.[482] If in 'Ash-Wednesday' redemption means self-surrender to the higher truth, in 'Burnt Norton' it is attainable through personal feeling of the eternity of the here and now. This feeling can be elucidated by the Buddhist teaching of non-attachment, especially the idea of suchness. As briefly mentioned in the last chapter, suchness refers to a state of 'being in itself […] in any single moment'.[483] Influences from things done reincarnate in things of a new present moment, and thus the flow of time makes sure that the present is forever renewed. In a letter to Paul Elmer More, Eliot hints at two kinds of time, time which is eternally present and time which brings the present into the future: 'if there is no future life then Hell is […] here and now; and I can see nothing worse in a Hell which endures to eternity'.[484] The suggestion of a certain kind of future life generates hope for salvation. In 'Ash-Wednesday', the quest for the redemption of time is closely related to 'restoring / With a new verse the ancient rhyme'.[485] The issue is expounded at the end of 'Little Gidding': 'A people without history / Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern / Of timeless moments.'[486] 'Burnt Norton' demonstrates that the redemption of time lies in the reincarnation of the timeless moments in the forever renewed present, by revealing the parallel existence of echoes, which dwell in the same rose garden. They are left by different visitors, but they also have their own life. In the meanwhile, the flow of time also triggers the speaker's concern over the ephemerality, which is also the emptiness, of the garden vison, especially that

[482] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 179; p. 92.
[483] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 17 October 1913.
[484] *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 5*, p. 293.
[485] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 92.
[486] Ibid., p. 208.

of the lotos flower. The poem shows that even though the vision is ultimately empty, it is still valuable to the speaker. This attitude reflects a mind without attachment when one is in the state of suchness. The mind in suchness sees the emptiness of worldly objects but is not blinded by the idea that they are empty. This chapter primarily explores how the poet confirms the timeless value in the garden vision without indulging in it, and analyses such a balance from the Buddhist perspective.

The poem 'Burnt Norton' is set in 'Burnt Norton' as a poetic location, not confined to the matrix of time and space, and it is where the visit occurs endlessly by different visitors as well as readers. It is both the beginning and the end, as people come and go and nothing stays permanently. Eliot explains that 'The poetry – if any – is in the poem and not in the house […] it provided the suggestion for a deserted house'.[487] Nevertheless, it is a deserted house inhabited by echoes which make the house full of vitality, similar to a fountain of life. By comparison, in *The Waste Land* the empty chapel becomes the witness of the retreat of religious faith, as if it is deserted by the divinity that once inhabited it. One may say that the rose garden in the house of Burnt Norton is haunted, but to be haunted by lively echoes can be positive; the echoless life in *The Waste Land*, by contrast, is filled only with noises of the wind.

Eliot reveals in a letter that he drew the inspiration of the ghostly echoes from 'a short story by Rudyard Kipling, which is called "They"': the echoes represent 'undefined wraiths or presences of persons of former times who had known the garden and for whom it was sufficiently associated with their emotions to have left impressions of them upon it.'[488] At the heart of Kipling's story 'They' is the presence of the benign ghosts of children who died prematurely. They haunt the house of the blind lady, but they are not exposed. Only their presence is felt. The lady and the narrator who visits her house are, in Eliot's words, 'in the awareness of the observing eye'.[489] If the history of visiting Burnt Norton comprises what has been and what will be, the ghostly children with only their laughter heard preserve 'What might have been', or the

[487] Ibid., p. 903.
[488] Ibid., p. 912.
[489] Ibid., p. 335.

possibilities that stay unrealised.[490] In Kipling's story, behind the child-ghosts are tragedies of child-loss, and the parents, including the narrator, are still suffering from the trauma. Eliot's version, however, bears no trace of hidden misery. It is pure, positive, and celestial: 'Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children, / Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.'[491] The image of 'children in the foliage' is a traditional icon in visual arts, especially tapestry, in relation to the source of life. Tapestries such as 'The Barque of Venus-Fortune' usually show winged children who are literally playing among tree leaves. To quote from *Tapestry in the Renaissance*, 'with its enchanted arcadian landscape […] and lively and energetic putti', such a scene manifests 'the idea of a golden age of happiness, richness, and abundance'.[492] The 'enchanted arcadian landscape' is reincarnated as the 'first world' that the speaker finds in Burnt Norton.[493] In his real life, Eliot was childless, but he was the godfather of several children, while in Kipling's story, the heroine is also childless, but she can feel the presence of the child-ghosts in her house and seems to have made a spiritual connection with them.

Such a connection also exists in Buddhism, as Eliot's Buddhist notes show, in the form of 'the relation of father-son' between the master and the disciples; the Buddha 'declares himself to be the father and lord of the world'.[494] The spiritual connection between the hidden children and the speaker shows that he is, in fact, their spiritual son, who finds spiritual rejuvenation in their garden. Eliot's Buddhist notes also explain the relationship between the Buddha and the world in terms of the inherent connection between fatherhood and sonship: 'When I, for example, become a father I do not cease to be a son: it is a farther development of the life given me; I realize the fatherhood of my father in my sonship.'[495] In Eliot's poetry, as well as in his plays, the parent-child relationship often reflects his contemplation of the unrealised possibilities of life. The sons in the plays such as *The Elder Statesman* and *The Confidential Clerk* become the

[490] Ibid., p. 179.
[491] Ibid., p. 180.
[492] Thomas P. Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance: Art and Magnificence* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002), p. 508.
[493] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 179.
[494] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 25 November 1913.
[495] Ibid.

problematic reincarnations of their fathers' hidden selves and old spiritual conundrums, while the daughter in 'Marina' carries new hope, and is seen as the father's other life, 'living to live in a life of time beyond [him].[496] The recovered daughter is the incarnation of one possibility of 'what might have been' that the speaker had no part in, for they were strangers to each other until the moment of recognition. In 'Burnt Norton', however, the possibilities remain possibilities, as the children stay hidden and unidentifiable. They never become the sons or daughters of the visitors, but they change the visitors who communicate with them into their spiritual children. In this sense, the speaker in 'Marina' creates his own fatherhood, while the speaker in 'Burnt Norton' creates his own sonship. Christopher Ricks comments that the need for a real daughter to embody spiritual yearning shows that 'Marina' has not, as St John of the Cross puts it, 'divested itself of the love of created beings'.[497] If Eliot 'incarnated within ['Marina'] a sense of those satisfactions that are other than religion's', when it comes to 'Burnt Norton', the satisfaction of hearing the hidden children's laughter is close to those of religion, for it is 'Timeless, and undesiring', not 'caught in the form of limitation'.[498] It is eternal joy without worldly attachment.

In 'Marina', Eliot creates a daughter who for a long time is lost to her father, while in 'Burnt Norton' he creates some hidden children not particularly related to anyone. And he even creates for children in the real world, including his godchildren, *The Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, in which the cunning and mischievous cats are reminiscent of the invisible laughing children in 'Burnt Norton'.[499] Indeed, one of the cats is 'a Mystery Cat' called 'the Hidden Paw', who likes to cause trouble and then disappear.[500] The first poem of the book, 'The Naming of Cats' shows that besides the 'sensible everyday names', a cat holds a unique hidden name that it 'will never confess'.[501] It suggests again the relationship between the essence and the body, that all the cats in the book may be the incarnations of one cat. Then in 'Old Deuteronomy',

[496] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 108.
[497] *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice*, p. 237. These words of St John of the Cross are used in one of the epigraphs to Eliot's 'Sweeney Agonistes'.
[498] *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice*, p. 237; *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 184.
[499] T. S. Eliot, *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 2*, ed. *Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue* (London: Faber and Faber, 2015), p. 44. In the Preface Eliot dedicates the book to his god-children.
[500] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 2* (London: Faber and Faber, 2015), p. 23.
[501] Ibid., p. 5.

Eliot even creates a cat 'who has lived many lives in succession', and the cat has had 'nine wives'.[502] He may have in mind the prevalent myth that a cat has nine lives. One may say that, similar to the garden of hidden children, *The Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* is Eliot's personal wonderland – this time not a waste land – in which the cats roam, disappearing and re-appearing with ease like the Cheshire cat in Alice's Wonderland. The elusive cats and the unidentifiable children reveal Eliot's concern over that which vitalises forms and appearances but transcends them all. It remains invisible but present. Eliot's notes on the Buddhist concept of 'dharmakaya' may shed light on this concern: 'The conception of real entity is empty without reference to its manifestation. Dharmakaya is nothing in itself. […] The dharmakaya is the same in all beings.'[503] According to *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 'dharmakaya' means 'truth body' and can be regarded as 'a kind of cosmic principle that was regarded as the true nature of the Buddha and the source from which his various other forms derived.'[504] In this sense, the speaker seeks through the various echoes in Burnt Norton the ultimate rose garden that is timeless but always present.

The vision of the wonderland-like garden, however, is accompanied by the shadow of reality. The reader should not forget that before the vision of the rose garden unfolds, the speaker hints at its destiny: 'But to what purpose / Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves / I do not know.'[505] The 'bowl of rose-leaves' with dust may in the end be the only trace of the garden. A contrast is here suggested. All the memories of what has been and all the imagination of what might have been, no matter how intense, may turn out to be simply 'Disturbing the dust' on the bowl of rose-leaves. Nevertheless, with the answer 'I do not know' the speaker betrays his affection for the garden. The same emotion flows as well in the image of the hyacinth garden in *The Waste Land*, when the speaker, facing the heart of light, 'could not speak [and] knew nothing'.[506] What is peculiar in such a situation is that he knows the illusiveness of the vision, but

[502] Ibid., p. 16.
[503] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lectures on 14 November 1913 and 20 February 1914.
[504] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[505] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 179.
[506] Ibid., p. 56.

still allows its unfolding. At the end of the first movement, the speaker reflects that 'only in time can the moment in the rose-garden, / […] / Be remembered; involved with past and future.'[507] To be able to remember it is more important than to indulge oneself in it, and to remember it without indulgence is more difficult than simply forgetting it. In reading 'Burnt Norton' from the perspective of Buddhism, Beryl Rosay McLeod argues that the poem 'explores emptiness and the need to empty [such] emptiness'.[508] That is to say, while one should not be attached to transient objects and illusions, one should also avoid being attached to the idea that they are transient. The mind that sees the world in this manner is resting in the state of suchness, which means 'the cessation of all dichotomizing tendencies of thought'.[509] It illuminates the delicate balance of remembering the moment in the rose-garden without egotistic indulgence, which Eliot strives to arrive at in the first movement of 'Burnt Norton'.

One image that captures the spiritual struggle towards suchness is the lotos:

> And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight
> And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
> The surface glittered out of heart of light
> […]
> Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.[510]

The lotos can be appreciated and be remembered, but it cannot be owned. Kearns is right in asserting that Eliot's use of the image of the lotos in the first movement of 'Burnt Norton' is 'deeply informed by its central place in Buddhist tradition'.[511] However, by adding that the ephemeral appearance of the lotos is 'at once maya, or "illusion", and at the same time "brahman",

[507] Ibid., p. 181.
[508] Beryl Rosay McLeod, 'Buddhism, T. S. Eliot, and the *Four Quartets*', *Journal for the Study of Religion* 5 (1992), 10.
[509] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[510] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 180.
[511] Kearns, p. 84.

or quite "real"', she risks vulgarising the significance of the lotos to Eliot.[512] According to Eliot's notes, consistent with the idea that the truth nature of the Buddha is shared by all beings, the lotos 'has many flowers and many fruits at once. The flowers and fruit are simultaneous. The real entity [is] represented in the fruit, its manifestation in the flowers. [There is] Mutual relation of final reality and manifestation.'[513] In other words, the ephemerality of the image of the lotos does not mean that it is unreal, in the sense that the waste land without God is unreal. Rather, it is beyond the dichotomy of illusion and reality, for it is part of a larger order of being in which final reality and its manifestation have their respective places in any moment of time. What the speaker tries to imply in its disappearance is the danger of becoming so attached to the manifestation as to ignore the final reality. Kearns notices the amalgamating power of the image, which is like a space where different echoes resonate at the same time:

> Here Indic and Western points of reference meet without fuss, the 'lotos' of the Buddhist and Upanishadic scriptures, the garden of Eden, and the 'emptiness' of shunyata, brought into correlation with the 'heart of light,' which returns us to the vision in the hyacinth garden in *The Waste Land*.[514]

The image of the lotos reveals Eliot's persistent quest for a vision of beatitude, but Kearns puts too much emphasis on the symbolic significance of the lotos as a religious icon and thus neglects the theatrical effect its illusiveness creates. The speaker tends to see through it to search for the real behind appearance. The sense of disillusion accompanying the disappearance of the lotos is all the more poignant especially when the reader has in mind its beauty 'out of heart of light'.[515] One enhances the other, and they are like two features of the same object. The speaker is aware that the illusion appeals to him. But what is real for him? The material world in which the pool is dry in a forsaken garden, or the affection he experiences for the illusory lotos flower? Either way,

[512] Ibid., p. 234.
[513] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 14 November 1913.
[514] Kearns, p. 234.
[515] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1,* p. 180.

the speaker knows that 'human kind / Cannot bear very much reality.'[516] The disappearance of the image of the lotos reveals the empty pool. The pool witnesses both the emerging and the fading of the lotos, but it stays undisturbed. Thus, the pool can be taken as a symbol of the mind of non-attachment, which, from the Buddhist perspective, refers to the capacity to allow various emotions and feelings to flow over the mind, but also the capacity to return in the end to tranquillity, or the state of suchness. In 'Buddhist Ethics and Morality', Anesaki defines suchness as 'that tranquil substance of all that exists', which seems to be embodied by the empty pool.[517] Kearns argues that the emptiness of the pool 'may be read either way, as loss and deprivation or as a clearing of sight', but the two ways are ultimately one way.[518] To return to the here and now, free of the attachment to what might have been and what has been, is an act of spiritual purification. When one's mind is purified of attachments, one dwells in the state of suchness, which is itself timeless.

The Buddhist suchness as explicated above shows that the eternal present is the real end of the speaker's spiritual journey. It is not a journey which leads to the abandonment of the echoes of what might have been and what has been. The paths meandering from the past ultimately converge in the present, which also indicates that without the paths from the past, there would be no present. Daniel Albright argues that in 'Burnt Norton', 'Eliot described how our lives fork backward into memory and fantasy […] The remembered self, then, is not linear, but a matrix ramifying backward in all directions, a garden of forking paths that converge in the present.'[519] Jorge Luis Borges's short story, 'A Garden of Forking Paths', also explores the issues of the matrix of selves, by proposing a new interpretation of time: 'all possible outcomes occur; each one is the point of departure for other forkings.'[520] From this view of time, all possibilities turn

[516] Ibid., p. 180.
[517] Houghton Library.
[518] Kearns, p. 235.
[519] Daniel Albright, 'Literary and psychological model of the self', in *The Remembering Self: Construction and Accuracy in the Self-Narrative*, ed. Ulric Neisser and Robyn Fivush (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 31.
[520] Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Garden of Forking Paths', *Labyrinths* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 51. José Luis Venegas emphasises the affinity between Eliot and Borges in 'Eliot, Borges, Tradition, and Irony', *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures* 59 (2006), 237-55.

into reality in their own branch of time, and the protagonist's reality is only one of them. In other words, what might have been is essentially as real as what has been. In the same story, Borges offers an example of how different branches of time 'converge in the present'. The protagonist in the story was read two versions of the same chapter from an unfinished novel, and the two versions, despite the great difference in the main body of narration, have the same beginning and the same end. The dramatically different versions of the past inevitably lead to the same moment of the present, and the confluence generates a sense of fate. Indeed, at the beginning of 'Burnt Norton', the poet offers a prophetic conclusion: 'What might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present.'[521]

In the garden vision, that which is always present is both an end and a beginning, as the present is linked at the same time to the immediate past and the immediate future. The speaker in 'Burnt Norton' sees the past and the future in the present, which renders the present a field of multiple existences with endless possibilities. The garden party at Burnt Norton includes visitors from time past, time present, and time future, all exerting influence on the speaker in the here and now of his visit: 'They were there, dignified, invisible / […] / There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting. / So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern'.[522] An uncannily similar pattern can be found in *The Waste Land* when Tiresias not only 'Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest', but also 'awaited the expected guest' from both the ancient past and the modern world.[523]

In Eliot's poetry, the speaker is waiting for, or expecting, the moment when the self enters interaction with an external Other and becomes subject to the interaction which is impersonal. The interaction is a process that unfolds continuously in the present, not done and becoming the past, nor pending to happen. The invisible guests are 'accepted and accepting', and the speaker moves with them 'in a formal pattern' which is impersonal, yet does not eliminate the personal. The real guest that the speaker is waiting for is the present as the process of happening, not bound up to the chain of past and future. The tendency to depersonalise personal existence perhaps

[521] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 179.
[522] Ibid., p. 180.
[523] Ibid., p. 63.

reflects the deeply-rooted influence on Eliot, of the Buddhist doctrine of non-self, though it should be noted that it is within something larger that the personal is depersonalised. In Eliot's poetic criticism, that larger existence is tradition, but in this poem, it is the flow of time.

In Movement II, the realm where the eternal present rules expands from the garden to the cosmic, and it seems that the idea of the present is not bound to only time present and time past, but is also spatial. It involves the interaction between the individual and the space in which individual actions are conducted. In *King Lear*, Gloucester's son Edmund complains about the absurdity of attributing the formation of human characteristics to astronomical phenomena:

> This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits of our own behaviour, we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars; as if we were [controlled] by heavenly compulsion; […] by spherical pre-dominance […] by an enforc'd obedience of planetary influence.[524]

By contrast, Eliot was more interested in how forms of being that have a grander scale than individual existence may find their ways into the private sensibility of the individual. In defending *King Lear*, Eliot observes that it is 'not a play to be acted', for it supposedly 'offends and scandalises ordinary citizens of both sexes', and he suggests the need 'for surrender or allegiance to something outside of oneself.'[525] In 'Burnt Norton' Eliot presents a vista of impersonal existence that internalises and encompasses personal being, in which the connection between individual lives and the constellations is asserted:

> Garlic and sapphires in the mud
> Clot the bedded axle-tree.
> The trilling wire in the blood
> Sings below inveterate scars

[524] William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. Grace Ioppolo (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), p. 17.
[525] T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary (April 1924)', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, last accessed 9 September 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 525.

Appeasing long forgotten wars.
The dance along the artery
The circulation of the lymph
Are figured in the drift of stars
Ascend to summer in the tree
We move above the moving tree
In light upon the figured leaf
And hear upon the sodden floor
Below, the boarhound and the boar
Pursue their pattern as before
But reconciled among the stars.[526]

It is not clear whether the 'tree' refers to the 'axle-tree', but the very regular rhythmical pattern, in creating a chanting atmosphere, merges both images into one emotional flow. An axle-tree is by definition not a tree with boughs and leaves, but the axle-tree in the quoted passage seems to be associated with 'the moving tree' that has a kind of 'figured leaf'. Normally, 'axle-tree' means 'The fixed bar or beam of wood, etc., on the rounded ends of which the opposite wheels of a carriage revolve', but in a rare use, it also refers to 'The imaginary or geometrical line which forms the axis of revolution of any body, e.g. the earth, a planet, the heavens.'[527] In 'Burnt Norton', according to Lois A. Cuddy, 'Eliot [fuses] the axletree, garlic, sapphire, mud, man, and the stars in the unifying principles of cosmic evolution.'[528] Cuddy seems to neglect that the axle-tree itself may be used to represent the order of cosmic evolution. The sense of order, with the harmony between the individual and the cosmic, demonstrates the working of some universal law. In Sanskrit, the idea of universal laws is conveyed by the word 'dharma', which appears numerous times in Eliot's notes. He was aware of the inherent connection of personal reality and universal laws: 'The Dharma manifests itself as Buddha; he teaches us and through him we develop the Bodhi [or knowledge of enlightenment] in ourselves. And our bodhi reveals to us the dharma'.[529]

[526] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 180.
[527] *OED.*
[528] Lois A. Cuddy, *T. S. Eliot and the Poetics of Evolution* (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), p. 43.
[529] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 4 May 1914.

The opening lines in Movement II as shown above present what it is like to live with a sense of order, without having to ask for one. The order is lived, or incarnated, and thus it is alive.

The axle-tree in Indian thought, especially Buddhism, is a symbol of the reincarnation of different categories of being, including 'divinities, demigods, and humans', and it is usually in the form of a wheel.[530] The image of the wheel is also used in *The Waste Land*, representing the cycle of life and death. Ian Harris lists Eliot's axle-tree as one symbol of the 'Cosmic Tree'.[531] When the wheel turns, the lives of humans turn along with the lives of the gods. It is similar to the Greek idea of fate, which is above and affects both men and gods. The Buddhist wheel of reincarnation puts them in the same pattern of evolvement, which is what Eliot presents: 'The circulation of the lymph / Are figured in the drift of stars'. It suggests that human existence, perceived by human consciousness in the flow of time, is perhaps only one aspect of a multi-layer compound of universal existence. Any movement in the plane of human existence suggests simultaneous movements in other planes, as well as the universal movement of the totality of being. In the grand pattern of the universal wheel, the individual fulfils the corresponding part of the pattern, but this is done by following an inherent universal order that extends to the whole wheel.

In *T. S. Eliot, Vedanta, and Buddhism*, Sri adds, besides the Indian symbol of the wheel in Eliot's poetry, the Christian use of the image: 'the circumference of the wheel may be said to represent the world of created things and the centre of the wheel the timeless realm of God.'[532] To be more precise, Eliot's focus is on the unity of the circumference and God:

> At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
> Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
> But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,

[530] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[531] Ian Harris, 'Attitudes to Nature', in *Buddhism*, ed. Peter Harvey (London and New York: Continuum, 2001), p. 282.
[532] *T. S. Eliot, Vedanta, and Buddhism*, p. 36.

> Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
> Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
> There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.[533]

The speaker tries to explain in his own paradoxical language the nature of the divine. A similar use can be found in Eliot's Buddhist notes, on the ultimate nature of the Buddha: 'Buddha is neither being nor non-being […] As his death is not his real end, so his birth is not his real beginning.'[534] This definition also echoes his definition of the divine stillness in Movement V: 'the end precedes the beginning, / And the end and the beginning were always there / Before the beginning and after the end'.[535] The sense of integration is what Eliot takes pains to stress in the string of paradoxes, and it points to the state of suchness which is beyond any dichotomy. All the pairs of opposite poles achieve reconciliation and integration in the image of 'the dance'.

Terri A. Mester argues that this passage 'has sources in Yeats's Great Wheel, the image of unified reality […] in *A Vision*'.[536] Mester also points out that the dancer behind the dance signifies, again in Yeats's system of thought, 'an escape from time or the cycle of endless reincarnations.'[537] Yeats's famous vision of dancing ('How can we know the dancer from the dance ') can also be used to describe the relationship between the Indian deity Shiva and the created world.[538] Shiva as the cosmic dancer, or 'the Lord of the Dance', creates, destructs, and recreates the world through his dance. The cosmic dance induces the dance of the life force in individual beings. As Eliot himself puts it, 'The difference between a great dancer and a merely competent dancer is in the vital flame, that impersonal, and, if you like, inhuman force'.[539]

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[533] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 181.
[534] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 21 October 1913.
[535] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 183.
[536] Terri A. Mester, *Movement and Modernism: Yeats, Eliot, Lawrence, Williams, and Early Twentieth-Century Dance* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1997), p. 83.
[537] Ibid.
[538] W. B. Yeats, *The Poems* (London: Everyman, 1994), p. 263.
[539] T. S. Eliot, 'Four Elizabethan Dramatists: A Preface to an Unwritten Book', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, last accessed 9 September 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 506.

The following lines in ‘Burnt Norton’ seem like a piece of description of or meditation on the experience of such a kind of spiritual dance in which the personal and the impersonal are one:

> The inner freedom from the practical desire,
> The release from action and suffering, release from the inner
> And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded
> By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving
> *Erhebung* without motion, concentration
> Without elimination, both a new world
> And the old made explicit, understood
> In the completion of its partial ecstasy,
> The resolution of its partial horror.[540]

It is worth noting that in ‘The Death of Saint Narcissus’, after tasting human ecstasy and human agony through many reincarnations, the protagonist finally becomes ‘a dancer to God’.[541] That he ‘danced on the hot sand / until the arrow came’ echoes ‘The Burnt Dancer’, in which the dancer is urged to ‘Dance fast dance faster’ towards some grave destiny assigned by some ‘hidden star’.[542] Eliot may draw inspiration for the mystical death dance from the dance performance of ‘The Rite of Spring’, which ends with the dramatic climax that the dancer dances to death, as a kind of sacrifice.[543] The sacrificial dance achieves ‘the completion of [human] partial ecstasy’ in the communication with the divine. In this sense, dance as the representative symbol of ‘the still point of the turning world’ is more than just about dramatic body language. It is the dialogue between the plane of human existence and the sphere of being which is not readily presentable to

[540] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 181.
[541] Ibid., p. 271.
[542] Ibid., p. 263.
[543] Eliot was not unfamiliar with the dance, the music for which is composed by Igor Stravinsky. For Eliot’s comment on the dance, please see: T. S. Eliot, ‘London Letter: September, 1921’, *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, last accessed 9 September 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, pp. 369-70.

human sensibility. The unfolding of the dialogue is the manifestation of the divine through the human. Susan Jones observes that

> Eliot saw in dance not simply an art form that draws attention to rhythmic and lyrical movement in time and space but one that also offered, in its religious origins, a liturgical component that he associated with the adoption of a 'moral' position, a giving up of the entire body to the practice of the form.[544]

The ritualistic sacrifice of the body to the form is at the same time the reincarnation of the form with the body, and, more importantly, it means not only the adoption of a moral position, but also the revival of faith. As Eliot puts it in a joint review of a book on dance and a book on Indian ritual hand-poses including those of Buddhism, 'you cannot revive a ritual without reviving a faith.'[545] Eliot suggests that dancing in the west could borrow 'a great deal from the beautiful and varied movements of the hands' in Indian religious rituals such as those in Buddhism. He does not elaborate on the point in the review, but according to his Buddhist notes, he was certainly familiar with the ritualistic use of hand gestures in Tantric Buddhism; he even drew a sketch of one of them. Every gesture is a kind of 'preaching to oneself'; to follow them is to 'realise the inseparable connections of men and [cosmic] elements', so as to reach the 'communion of our mind with the cosmic spirit.'[546] The cosmic dance in 'Burnt Norton' reveals the inherent connection between the turning world and its still point; it stresses the sense of communion and bypasses any form of dichotomy.

The performance of the dance is also an act of reincarnation that gives birth to the dance , as an ongoing activity rather than choreography. In this sense, 'there is only the dance' may as well mean, more specifically, 'there is only the dancing'. It might sound fastidious to ask why Eliot did not choose 'dancing' over 'dance', or, in that case, 'ascending' over 'ascent' and

[544] Susan Jones, '"At the still point": T. S. Eliot, Dance, and Modernism', *Dance Research Journal* 41 (2009), 37.
[545] T. S. Eliot, 'The Ballet', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, last accessed 9 June 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>.
[546] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 20 February 1914.

'declining' over 'decline' in 'Neither ascent nor decline'.[547] One possible explanation lies in the last movement of 'Burnt Norton':

> […] the co-existence,
> Or say that the end precedes the beginning,
> And the end and the beginning were always there
> Before the beginning and after the end.
> And all is always now.[548]

The speaker tries to show the co-existence of both the process of happening in the here and now and its position in historical or chronological time, 'involved with past and future'.[549] The present progressive tense reveals only one aspect of dance, which is dance as a process but not as a complete piece of work in its totality. For the individual in the plane of existence in chronological time, dancing will become dance as a whole with a beginning and an end, stored in memory. In fact, Eliot reveals with the word 'there' the essence of the co-existence: '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.'[550] The dance of life in the here and now means to be there, regardless of time and location. And the 'there' means 'At that point or stage in action, proceeding, speech, or thought.'[551] It highlights one's consciousness of the present, especially the self-consciousness of one's existence in the present, as suggested in the phrase 'to be all there', which means 'to have all one's faculties or wits about one; to be smart or on the alert'.[552] The problem of location seems secondary. The speaker is cautious not to attach the experience of being 'there' to any specific 'where' and 'when'. The experience cannot be defined or pinned down in the matrix of space and time as a specific event, though it may be triggered by one. What the word 'there' ultimately implies, according to

[547] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 181.
[548] Ibid., p. 183.
[549] Ibid., p. 181.
[550] Ibid.
[551] *OED*.
[552] Ibid.

Paul Foster's Buddhist interpretation of the poem, is 'an interplay of stillness and change', which he regards as 'a central part of [Buddhist] doctrine.'[553] Such interplay transcends both 'where' and 'when' and points to suchness which is not bound to any specific point in the time-space matrix.

The speaker's cautiousness in purging time and space from 'there' seems to have grown out of the anxiety that he may become too much attached to them. The beginning of 'Ash-Wednesday' provides an example that may illuminate the case in 'Burnt Norton':

> Because I know I shall not know
> The one veritable transitory power
> Because I cannot drink
> There, where trees flower, and springs flow, for there is nothing again[554]

The 'where' that accompanies 'there' is vulnerable and soon replaced by 'nothing'. The *OED* lists a line from Tennyson to illustrate one common use of the word 'there', which usually requires the word 'where': 'There rolls the deep where grew the tree.'[555] The canto from which the line is excerpted is also worth mentioning:

> There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
> O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
> There where the long street roars, hath been
> The stillness of the central sea.
>
> The hills are shadows, and they flow
> From form to form, and nothing stands;
> They melt like mist, the solid lands,

[553] Paul Forster, *The Golden Lotus: Buddhist Influence in T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets* (Sussex: the Book Guild, 1998), p. 96.
[554] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 87.
[555] *OED.*

Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

But in my spirit will I dwell,
    And dream my dream, and hold it true;
    For though my lips may breathe adieu,
I cannot think the thing farewell.[556]

In the text, 'there' outlives the different kinds of 'where' that accompany it. As Eliot puts it, sooner or later, 'there is nothing again'. However, 'there' standing by itself is like an invisible ghost; it needs a body to reincarnate itself. The *OED* defines the phrase 'to have been there' as 'to have had previous experience of the activity or thing under review'.[557] But Eliot's '*there* we have been', with the word 'there' italicised, points to the experience of being fully alive or self-conscious in the present, which can happen at more than one place and more than one time. The cosmic dance of life at the still point transcends the turning world, and one may say the dance has been *there*, is *there*, and will be *there*. Here, in fact, the word 'be' is at least as important as the word 'there'. At different points in the space-time matrix, one has different states of being, but they are essentially the reincarnations of the timeless dance of life. In other words, to be perfectly there is to dwell in the state of suchness.

Interestingly, the word 'there', which is abstract in nature, can be, and is frequently, used 'unemphatically to introduce' information which is more specific and substantial, such as in the phrase 'there comes a time when'.[558] When italicised ('there we have been'), it jumps out of the context and seems to assert that it is not confined or subject to what proceeds and succeeds it. The italicised word *there* becomes the still point of the context, or the here and now in 'the enchainment of past and future'.[559] The experience of being there, involved with the activity that

[556] Alfred Tennyson, 'In Memoriam CXXIII', *The Major Works*, ed. Adam Roberts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 283.
[557] *OED*.
[558] Ibid.
[559] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 181.

generates the experience, survives the details, as the details including time and location amalgamate and fructify the experience.

In the third movement, the speaker searches in vain for the experience of being 'there' among the fragmented 'where':

> Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of London,
> Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney,
> Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate. Not here
> Not here the darkness, in this twittering world.[560]

The allusion to the darkness of God in the work of St John of the Cross suggests that in such a 'place of disaffection', one is distracted from God or suchness, or the experience of being 'there', by worldly concerns.[561] Besides, the idea that distractions, which may very well include entertainments, are the cause of disaffection rather than satisfaction, is close to the Buddhist idea of suffering, or 'dukkha'. In Buddhism, 'dukkha' means a state of 'unsatisfactoriness'.[562] Interestingly, the etymology of the word indicates '"having a poor axle hole," which leads to discomfort'.[563] In the turning world of distractions, once the individuals lose themselves by being distracted, they lose any spiritual connection with the still point and can only wander on the wheel of reincarnation, across 'the twittering world'. What is more, to avoid distractions, the speaker plunges into internal darkness as a consequence of the 'destitution of all property'.[564] It corresponds to the Buddhist worldview that all the senses are on fire, which is famously alluded to in 'The Fire Sermon' of *The Waste Land*. Since 'the world of sense' is the cause of suffering,

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[560] Ibid., p. 182.
[561] St John of the Cross: "this dark night signifies here purgative contemplation, which passively causes in the soul this negation of self and of all things.", *The Dark Night*, in *The Collected Work of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O. C. D., and Otilio Rodriguez, O. C. D. (Washington: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1991), p. 360; *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p., 182.
[562] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[563] Winthrop Sargeant, trans. *The Bhagavad Gita: Revised Edition*, ed. Christopher Key Chapple (Albany: State University of New York, 1984), p. 303, note.
[564] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 182.

the cessation of suffering naturally lies in its 'Desiccation'.[565] From movement III to IV, the emotion of the poem jumps to the other extreme, as the sense of bleakness is abruptly substituted with a tranquil lyric mood. Unlike the sense of urgency in the quest for 'abstention from movement', 'the bell', 'black cloud', 'sunflower', 'clematis', and 'fingers of yew' are all moving, unhurried, in their own pattern accordingly to their own nature.[566] The image of the kingfisher integrates movement and stillness: '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.'[567] The agile flapping of the kingfisher's wing symbolises the stillness in movement. Through the image of the kingfisher, Movement IV demonstrates the state of suchness in which the essential stillness cannot be separated from the turning world.

Suchness as a connection between the realm of the timeless and the experience of earthly life, or that between the still point and the turning world, is further explored in the poet's contemplation of language, in Movement V. Foster compares the Christian 'Divine Essence' as suggested in the 'Word' with the Buddhist suchness, that they both point to 'The knowledge of God in our earthly existence'.[568] To be more precise, it is when the essence is in harmony with the form, not distracted 'by voices of temptation', the harmony reflects suchness, a natural state of being.[569] Similarly, the reading of the poem can be regarded as the re-enactment of the visit to Burnt Norton – it is the experience of the here and now that can be harmoniously reincarnated. Thus the poem itself is like a space that readers keep visiting. The present moment of reading the poem is not tethered to any specific time or location, but is an integration of time, space, the reader, and the poem when it is being read. To borrow F. R. Leavis's observation, a poem is a field of communication between the poet and the reader, which he calls 'the third realm'; it is 'a meaningful context' in which different minds meet.[570] The poem as the third realm does not totally belong to the poet or the reader precisely because of its dependence on the integration of

[565] Ibid.
[566] Ibid., p. 183.
[567] Ibid.
[568] *The Golden Lotus*, pp. 59-60.
[569] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 184.
[570] F. R. Leavis, *The Living Principle* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1975), p. 62.

both minds for its vitality. In this sense, a poem as the forever evolving relationship between the poet and the reader is very much alive.

When the words are not spoken, they remain in silence, but when communication between the author and the reader is to take place via words, they must be brought back to the temporary process of being alive by the reader's reading them, whether aloud or in the virtual voice of the mind. As a voice, the speech of the words is bound to die out until they are read again. The process is similar to reincarnation. The text of the poem does not equal the poem, in the same way that Burnt Norton the house has no monopoly over the poetic Burnt Norton. The text, the poem as a timeless vision, and the act of reading the poem form an order of self-renewal:

> Words, after speech, reach
> Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,
> Can words or music reach
> The stillness[571]

A similar order can be found in a handout to Anesaki's Buddhist lectures which Eliot preserved: 'the Buddha who has realised Buddhahood since eternity, the Lotus of the truth which leads all beings without exception to Buddhahood, and we, the beings of various existences'.[572] Different disciples can realise Buddhahood or Nirvana through learning the same texts that record the Buddha's teaching. Whenever the three elements are one, forming a trinity, the integration 'is the heritage of the sole great thing of life and death'.[573]

As Robert S. Lehman observes in terms of Eliot's historical sense, this order presents a 'developmental model of the world, one in which the present makes up a meaningful whole [;] the truth of the present is contained in the events of the past'.[574] In this sense, the reincarnation or

[571] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 183.
[572] Houghton Library, on the handout titled 'The Heritage of the Sole Great Thing of Life and Death'.
[573] Ibid.
[574] Robert S. Lehman, *Impossible Modernism: T. S. Eliot, Walter Benjamin, and the Critique of Historical Reason* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016), p. xv.

renewal of the poem as a vision of redemption in new generations of readers reflects continuity in eternal changes. As the final paragraph of Movement V shows, the essence to be conveyed by the body of language, or the Word by the words, though 'Caught in the form of limitation', is 'Between un-being and being.'[575] The Word rests in the suchness of the words. This harmonious relationship between the essence and the body, in T. R. V. Murti's words, means 'the steering clear of Eternalism […] and Nihilism'.[576] It is through this order of 'un-being and being' that the essence can be passed down. As the poet himself explains, 'Love is itself unmoving, / Only the cause and end of movement'.[577] The very end of the poem brings the reader back to the here and now in the garden, with a sense of urgency: 'Quick now, here, now, always'.[578] The revelation of the essence, in the end, points to the state of suchness in which the speaker hears the hidden laughers and thus realises the spiritual communion with the invisible children of the garden.

[575] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 184.
[576] T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1960), p. 7.
[577] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 184.
[578] Ibid., p. 184.

Chapter 6: Non-self and Spiritual Communion in 'East Coker'

In 'Burnt Norton', the spiritual still point represented by the rose garden is examined from the viewpoint of one who stands in the turning world, whilst in 'East Coker' the poet looks at the turning world in reference to the timeless communion of the personal and the divine, which can also be regarded as a still point. The present, as described in 'Burnt Norton', is the key to the still point, but in 'East Coker', it is by foreseeing the end in the beginning that one senses the stillness which is at the heart of all forms of existence. In order to access the timeless, one must first transcend time and see it as a whole, as if inspecting a crystal ball. From this perspective, the world is both revolving and still. This chapter argues that the individual who acquires such a perspective, which is essentially Buddhist, is egoless, and that this egolessness, or non-self, is achieved not through the extermination of personality, but through seeing the self as part of the world that revolves in endless reincarnations. The poem explores the nature of the self and the exploration leads to non-self, but non-self is found meaningful, as it prepares the individual for the descent of divine grace, which in this poem is described as 'the darkness of God'.[579] The process of depersonalisation towards non-self is also that of the purgation of attachments, and the completion of non-self lies in the spiritual communion in which the self, empty of attachments, is filled with the divine darkness of God.

'East Coker' was the first poem in *Four Quartets* to be published after the Second World War, in 1940. When he expressed his attitudes towards war poetry, Eliot was concerned with the relationship between the personal and the impersonal. As early as 1919, in a review of Herbert Read's war poems, Eliot praises them as 'the best war poetry that [he] can remember having seen. […] it is neither Romance nor Reporting; […] it is unpretentious; and it has emotion as well as a

[579] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 188.

version of things seen.'[580] One may say that a version of things seen with genuine emotion is between Romance and Reporting; it is a reincarnation of the emotion with materials from the outer world. According to Stephen Spender, Eliot, concerned with how to deal with public events, 'agreed that the problem was to write about a smaller theme – perhaps family life – which had all the implications of what is going on in the world outside'.[581] 'East Coker' can be regarded as such a poem, in which 'the years of *l'entre deux guerres*' are as personally felt as 'the evening under lamplight'.[582] The significance of the public events that attract the poet must be reincarnated in private themes and objects readily connected to the poet's sensibility, in order to have its new life in poetry. As Eliot's comments on wartime poetry show, 'while a poet, as a man, should be no less devoted to his country than other men, I distinguish between his duty as a man and his duty as a poet. […] the bigger experiences need time, perhaps a long time, before we can make poetry of them'.[583] And how long should one wait before poetry can be made out of war experience? Eliot answers that it should be when 'the experience has become a part of a man's whole past'.[584] In other words, what is needed is the completion of the larger experience's reincarnation in personal sensibility.

Such reincarnation is neither something entirely new nor entirely from the past; it conveys the poet's feeling of the past event in the here and now. In this poem, that feeling is explored in the speaker's relationship with his vision of the country mirth. 'If you do not come too close' seems like an instruction for the reader to be aware of the sense of distance. At such a location, the speaker is not too close but knows what is happening; he is neither part of it, nor

[580] T. S. Eliot, 'Reflections on Contemporary Poetry', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition*: *The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, last accessed 9 September 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 68.
[581] Quoted in *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 927.
[582] Ibid., p. 191.
[583] Quoted in ibid., pp. 1051-52.
[584] Quoted in ibid., p. 1052. Yeats expressed a similar view in the introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, that 'If war is necessary, or necessary in our time and place, it is best to forget its suffering as we do the discomfort of fever, remembering our comfort at midnight when our temperature fell, or as we forget the worst moments of more painful disease.' *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, ed. W. B. Yeats (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. xxxv. Eliot was aware of *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* edited by Yeats, as he mentions it in a letter to Michael Roberts on 19 September 1935, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 7: 1934-1935*, ed. Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (London: Faber and Faber, 2017), p. 776.

entirely unconnected with it. As Hugh Kenner points out, at that location, 'We are not addressed, [but] we overhear'.[585] The word 'overhear' suggests a middle ground where one is neither ignorant of what is going on nor bearing the intention to acquire any specific information. Within that safe distance, the speaker is neither in wartime Britain, nor Tudor England, but is simply 'there'. As mentioned in the last chapter, 'there' suggests more the condition of an ongoing process rather than a static point of location in the time-space matrix. The reincarnation of the significance of past events in a new poem occupies a unique location where the poet can say: 'I am here / Or there, or elsewhere. In my beginning.'[586] The problem of localisation is at the centre of the Buddhist understanding of reincarnation: 'Suppose […] a man were to light a light from another light; pray, would the one light have passed over to the other light?'[587] It can be said, in Eliot's manner, that the light is indeed 'here or there, or elsewhere', for wherever it is, it is still the light. In other words, reincarnation gives new life to the past, and manifests it in the here and now which is not confined to any specific point in the time-space matrix. In clarifying the nature of reincarnation, T. R. V. Murti observes that 'movement cannot be cut up into a number of discrete and disjointed entities, each one of which is static and dead. Movement is one sweeping act. It cannot be conceived, but only "felt" and lived through'.[588] The sweeping act of reincarnation is the act of transformation, rather than annihilation; houses 'crumble', but are also 'extended' into 'an open field, or a factory, or a bypass'.[589] In other words, the speaker of 'East Coker' sees through temporary changes and witnesses the flow of eternal transformation which goes beyond life and death. It is a double vision that sees the interaction of the old and the new.

Such a vision also gives the reader a sense of stillness, as the scene of the country dance is taken as a whole. It is, unlike the garden party in 'Burnt Norton', without the speaker's participation. He could be standing on the land of East Coker where the imagined scene of the old-time country mirth unfolds, but he is not really there as a participant. His pre-knowledge of

[585] Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd), p. 261.
[586] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 186.
[587] From 'The Milindapanha', in *Buddhism in Translations*, p. 234.
[588] *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, p. 183.
[589] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 185.

the whole scene is an awareness which lies beyond that of the country people in the scene. It encompasses theirs, reaching beyond both their beginning and their end. Eliot presents a similar idea in 'Preludes': 'You had such a vision of the street / As the street hardly understands'.[590] The idea appears in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' in a more polished form: 'the difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show.'[591] When the past is seen as a complete piece of history, it is given a second life in the observer's awareness. Eliot stresses the connection between the past and the observer by adding that '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.'[592] A similar balance exists between the country vision and the speaker. When the vision forms in his consciousness, to some extent, he becomes everyone in it, experiencing the endless cycle of their life and death. There is no sense of an egotistic self, only the vision presenting itself like a pattern that emerges repeatedly. In this sense, the speaker's awareness of the co-existence of the beginning and the end can be taken as a demonstration of the feeling of non-self.

The sense of non-self is intensified in the scene of ultimate nothingness as the vision shows, through the old timber's changes from fire to ashes, from ashes to earth, then from earth to sprouts of new lives that also decay. Even when he is looking at the scene of country mirth, he sees the 'Mirth of those long since under earth / Nourishing the corn'.[593] One may say that the speaker already concludes the feeling at the very beginning of the poem: 'In my beginning is my end.'[594] It is not meant merely to show that Eliot himself arrived at where his ancestor left England.[595] It also indicates that the speaker transcends the time span between his beginning and end, and sees the timeless pattern of existence behind all that can be affected by time, which is

[590] Ibid., p. 16.
[591] T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, last accessed 20 March 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 107.
[592] Ibid., p. 108.
[593] Ibid., p. 186.
[594] Ibid.
[595] See Ricks and McCue's note 'The Village and the Eliot Connection', ibid., p. 925.

like a ‘silent motto’ that outlives endless houses. Even the motto has more than one shadow, alluding to ‘En ma fin est mon commencement’ of Mary, Queen of Scots, besides the Eliots’ family motto ‘Tace et fac’ (‘be silent and act’).[596] In that silent motto, the speaker discovers something beyond the personal – a remote echo that is readily evoked. The silence is not lifeless, as it is patiently waiting for the next voice to breathe life into the motto. It is enhanced, in the second paragraph, with tangible details and a sense of loneliness. The open field, as a symbol of the silence, is a form that endures and survives all events which unfold on it, both their beginnings and ends:

> In my beginning is my end. Now the light falls
> Across the opening field, leaving the deep lane
> Shuttered with branches, dark in the afternoon,
> Where you lean against a bank while a van passes,
> And the deep lane insists on the direction
> Into the village, in the electric heat
> Hypnotised. In a warm haze the sultry light
> Is absorbed, not refracted, by grey stone.
> The dahlias sleep in the empty silence.
> Wait for the early owl.[597]

This paragraph is filled with the calmness of the countryside objects, which indicates some form of existence underneath the apparent changes on the surface: the deep lane may be ‘shuttered with branches’, but it still ‘insists on the direction / Into the village’. The use of a full stop, which makes ‘Wait for the early owl’ a whole sentence, also seems to give it the right to conclude the whole paragraph. The imperative mood suggests that it is at the same time a command or an

[596] For the motto of Mary, Queen of Scots, Eliot acknowledges that ‘this device was of course in [his] mind’ when he writes ‘In my beginning is my end’, Eliot’s letter to E. M. Stephenson, 19 August 1943, quoted in *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*. For the allusion to the Eliots’ family motto, Eliot’s brother Henry Eliot mentions that ‘he had thought of that’, quoted in *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 931.
[597] Ibid., p. 185.

instruction to the self which may also be seen as the imagined 'you'. The countryside objects calmly wait for the early owl, a symbol that indicates the flow of time. While enduring things that come and go, they remain essentially unchanged. All the natural and seemingly insignificant objects, such as the dahlias and the grey stone, are enduring, as well as resisting, time 'in the empty silence'. Their collective existence forms a timeless dimension of existence, on which things in different periods of history, from 'heavy feet in clumsy shoes' in Tudor England to 'a van [that] passes' and 'electric heat' of the modern time, unfold and also come to their own end.[598]

Such empty silence can be illuminated by the idea of emptiness in Buddhism. According to *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, emptiness, or 'sunyata' in Sanskrit, 'is clearly neither nothingness nor the absence of existence. […] Because all phenomena are dependently arisen, they lack, or are empty of, an intrinsic nature characterized by independence and autonomy.'[599] In other words, it does not deny the phenomena of various forms of existence, but it stresses their impermanence. To stress the timeless dimension does not mean that the warming but ephemeral country scene is dispensable. The awareness of the end hidden in the beginning tries to pull the reader, and perhaps also the speaker himself, from the natural beauty of the scene. However, as Leavis points out, its organic vitality, or 'the innocence that is so revealing', cannot simply be 'explained away'.[600] The attractiveness of the scene cries for the reader's acknowledgement of its significance. The ambiguity of a detached mind, which sees the emptiness of the scene but is still capable of appreciating natural beauty, reflects Eliot's efforts to find a balance, or a kind of middle way, of sensibility. In the speaker's eyes, suffering and mirth are both temporary phenomena on the moving surface of the still body of time. The first movement shows the reader a vision in which the speaker feels the warmth of ordinary earthly life but is at the same time aware of the ultimate emptiness of existence in time. Such a balance reflects a mind of non-attachment, which is consistent with the Buddhist understanding of the ephemerality of worldly existence.

[598] Ibid.
[599] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[600] *The Living Principle*, p. 195.

In the second and the third movements, the speaker's exploration of the relationship between existence in time and the timeless leads him to the darkness of God beneath the transient earthly life. '[The] wisdom of humility' grows out of the awareness that 'the knowledge derived from experience' is bound to expire in the flow of time. For Eliot, the only way to access the timeless divinity is to acquire the wisdom of humility, which helps one see through the knowledge derived from experience and embrace 'the darkness of God'.[601] To live with the darkness of God is to refuse subordination to anything worldly. Thus the wisdom of humility becomes a door to the divine. From the Buddhist perspective, it is to critically negate any proposed formulation of truth based on worldly experience. According to the Buddhist canon *Majjhima-Nikaya*, the Buddha 'is free from all theories', as theories themselves have nothing to do with 'fundamentals of religions'; these fundamentals refer to religious training 'leading to the cessation of misery' in Nirvana.[602] Murti explains that 'The right way is to take the truly universal as not falling within the realm of judgement. […] all points of view and positions are particular'.[603] The Eliotic humility also contains the spirit of critical negation, which is an extremely sceptical attitude towards practical knowledge, rather than any form of practical knowledge. Such humility requires self-surrender to the unconditioned.

The awareness of the timeless in the larger picture makes the speaker see the intimate scene of 'ordinary human affections' as part of a grand form of being. One may find in it a sense of the sublime that does not intimidate, but uplifts personal feeling to an impersonal, if not universal, level. It is deftly expressed at the end of the second movement: 'The Houses are all gone under the sea. / The dancers are all gone under the hill.'[604] The space between the two lines suggests that the poet intends to arrange them as two separate paragraphs in one discharge of emotional flow. After a long passage of dense intellectual contemplation that moves at a quick pace, the sparse rhythm of the ending intensifies the aura of vast and deep serenity. Moody

[601] Ibid., p. 187.
[602] *Buddhism in Translations*, pp. 122-23.
[603] *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, p. 163.
[604] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 188.

observes that the language of 'imperative logic' moves towards 'an immediate statement of […] basic conviction and assent' which is 'the true, and traditional, music of poetry'.[605] And indeed one can find similar music in Eliot's poetic predecessors. Wordsworth's version, perhaps not less powerful than Eliot's, presents 'An ordinary sight' permeated with 'visionary dreariness',

> Which, while I look all round for my lost guide,
> Invested moorland waste, and naked pool,
> The beacon crowning the lone eminence,
> The female and her garments vexed and tossed
> By the strong wind.[606]

The vast becomes vivid, and the small bears the force of the sublime which is also impersonal. Michael O'Neill argues that 'Wordsworth is there in *Four Quartets* and earlier, whenever Eliot dwells on the "moment" […] that arrests us in the rose or hyacinth garden.'[607] Those moments reveal the interconnectedness between the vast and the small. It is also what Eliot tries to remind the reader of at the beginnings of both the second movement of 'Burnt Norton' and that of 'East Coker', by bringing together the macrocosmic and the microcosmic, though the effort is more self-conscious and the presentation more intellectually organised. The sense of unity becomes more natural in the two closing lines aforementioned. Undecorated yet weighted, such music finds another chance of reincarnation in the opening lines of Thomas Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard':

> The Curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
> The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,

[605] *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet*, p. 216.
[606] William Wordsworth, *The Poems of William Wordsworth*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1916), p. 738.
[607] Michael O'Neill, 'English poetry, 1900–1930', *William Wordsworth in Context*, ed. Andrew Bennett (Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 75.

The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.[608]

Eliot gives an analysis of the poem in a lecture 'Scylla and Charybdis', and takes it as 'a good example of a beautiful poem which is nearly all platitude', echoing Wordsworth's 'ordinary sight [with] visionary dreariness'.[609] The leaving of the plowman injects a sense of emptiness in the fresh darkness, and the vast and all-encompassing emptiness of the world reveals itself as a kind of unbearable truth. To some extent, 'East Coker', especially the third movement on darkness, is also like an elegy, or endowed with the elegiac mood, especially in the scene of the silent funeral. Instead of being occupied with individual death or death of anything, it evokes the awareness of the ultimate emptiness not only of the dead, but also of the living. As the end of the first movement shows, the quotidian inevitably follows and seems to dissolve all poetic moods into the ennui of repetitiveness: 'Dawn points, and another day / Prepares for heat and silence.'[610] Daytime seems worse than darkness, for the emptiness of the tangible objects in daylight is more poignant than those hidden in the dark.

The darkness that the speaker ultimately turns to, however, is by no means nothingness that indicates nihilism. It seems to be esoterically positive, pointing to some liberating element that can only be accessed in the negation of worldly attachments. James Johnson Sweeney argues that 'this darkness is the darkness of the Isa Upanishad' in Indian philosophy, which claims that 'Into blind darkness enter they / That worship ignorance; / Into darkness, as it were, greater / They that delight in knowledge.'[611] Such darkness of ephemerality and nothingness may turn into the darkness of God which the speaker has to wait for patiently: 'I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you / Which shall be the darkness of God'.[612] The word 'shall' generates an

[608] Thomas Gray, *The Complete Poems of Thomas Gray*, ed. H. W. Starr and J. R. Hendrickson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 37.
[609] T. S. Eliot, 'Scylla and Charybdis', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: A European Society, 1947-1953*, last accessed 26 February 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 697.
[610] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 186.
[611] Quoted in James Johnson Sweeney, "East Coker': A Reading", in *T. S. Eliot: The Critical Heritage Volume 2*, ed. Michael Grant (London and New York: Routledge, 1982), p. 430.
[612] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, pp. 188-89.

air of authority, indicating 'what is appointed or settled to take place'.[613] It reveals the speaker's faith in the descent of divine grace which occurs after the deprivation of worldly attachments. The darkness of God is not an isolated entity in itself, and it is not embodied by any worldly object as well. Such darkness emerges only when the speaker intuitively sees that all forms of worldly striving are transient and 'go into the dark'.[614] He sees them as already infested by the darkness of ephemerality: 'the vacant into the vacant'.[615] In the universal darkness, those who go into the dark are also part of the dark. In other words, such darkness is not in anything precisely because it is latent in everything. The sense of emptiness accumulates to its extreme when in a vision of a funeral the speaker sees that 'we all go with them, into the silent funeral, / No body's funeral, for there is no one to bury'.[616] It coincides with the Buddhist interpretation of non-self that in the endless repetition of life and death there is ultimately no one who suffers but only suffering itself: 'Misery only doth exist, none miserable. / No doer is there; naught save the deed is found'.[617] The pattern itself persists, rather than any of its incarnations and reincarnations. In this sense, the funeral scene does not advocate nihilism; as a form of ritual, it bears solemnity rather than despair. And indeed with no one to bury, the sadness of loss loses its object as well. No attachment can be formed when the existence of both the subject and the object is seen as extremely momentary: 'And every moment is a new and shocking / Valuation of all we have been.'[618] The knowledge derived from the experience of the changing world fails to help one understand the world, for the world and the individual who wants to know the world are both changing in every moment. In the flow of eternal change, 'all we have been', or the individual self in each of us, can never be formulated.

The sense of non-self deepens in the example of the change of scenes in the theatre, which suggests that worldly life itself is darkness. When 'The lights are extinguished, for the scene [in

[613] *OED*.
[614] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 188.
[615] Ibid.
[616] Ibid.
[617] *Buddhism in Translations*, p. 146.
[618] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 187.

the theatre] to be changed', the speaker sees the 'movement of darkness on darkness'.[619] Things are moved in and out of the stage, but darkness is all that one can see. To see darkness move on darkness seems to be the real seeing, not deceived by recognisable images. Eliot already hints at the connection between darkness and seeing in *The Waste Land* when the speaker sees 'the heart of light' as his eyes fail. The darkness of God with which the speaker sees through the emptiness of worldly distractions corresponds with the mirror metaphor in Buddhism, which is a symbol of the wisdom of Nirvana. As early as 1917, Eliot mentions at the beginning of 'The Borderline of Prose' a Japanese artist Utagawa Toyokuni. He was wellknown for making colour prints of the 'Ukiyo-e' genre, which means "Mirror of the Passing World".[620] In its etymology, the phrase conveys 'the Buddhist notion that this present desire-ridden world of illusion was a place of sadness and pain.'[621] Later in the fourth Clark Lecture on Crashaw, Eliot refers to a string of poetic scenes on the theme of the ephemerality of worldly objects. One of them is from Swinburne's 'Before the Mirror. Verses Written under Whistler's "Little White Girl"', at the heart of which are the following two lines: 'Deep in the gleaming glass / She sees all past things pass.'[622] Out of the vision that the world passes into darkness seems to emerge the darkness of God. Such divine darkness is like a mirror that stays still, while the world passes on its surface. It may be worth noting that J. A. Whistler's painting 'Little White Girl' contains overtly oriental elements. He is deemed 'a crucial role in the Oriental movement', who had his own 'discovery of Ukiyo-e prints'.[623] According to Ricks and McCue's notes to Eliot's 'The Borderline of Prose', 'Japonism, which began with aesthetes such as Dante G. Rossetti and James McNeill Whistler, had spread by the 1890s into the larger Victorian culture.'[624] Besides the darkness of God, the pool with 'water out of sunlight' in 'Burnt Norton', in which the ephermeral lotos rises, and the

[619] Ibid., p. 188.
[620] 'The Borderline of Prose', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905–1918*, last accessed 9 September 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 537; note 1, p. 541.
[621] Timothy Clark, ed. *Ukiyo-e Paintings in the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 1992), p. 9.
[622] Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Poems and Ballads & Atalanta in Calydon*, ed. Kenneth Haynes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000), p. 105.
[623] John Sandberg, '"Japonisme" and Whistler', *The Burlington Magazine* 106 (1964), 500.
[624] 'The Borderline of Prose', p. 541.

'watery mirror' of the midwinter spring in 'Little Gidding', which is a season 'suspended in time', can also be taken as different versions of the mirror of the passing world.[625]

In 'The Mirror as a Pan-Buddhist Metaphor-Simile', Alex Wayman also notes the divinity of the mirror-like mind: 'the mirror can represent the Buddha because it is void of competing images'.[626] The 'realization of voidness' – after all worldly images pass across the mirror of the mind – means spiritual salvation from attachments; and the mirror-mind is called the 'voidness gate to liberation'.[627] In the third movement, the experience of waiting in the underground train between two stations without anything to distract the mind can also be compared with the mirror metaphor. When 'the conversation rises and slowly fades into silence', the mind in the waiting is like a mirror that reflects passing images, while its inherent emptiness remains intact. The mind, as well as the mirror, naturally becomes empty when facing nothing, and its emptiness also implies the ephemerality of worldly existence. The Buddhist mirror-mind sees the changing world in the way that 'an image void of self-existence is seen in a very clean mirror', which is analogous to Eliot's vision of the world as essentially 'vacant', not substantial in itself.[628] Such a mind is not attached to anything, and is without the egotistic desire to hold on to worldly objects. The mind of emptiness results from the awareness of the essential hollowness of the outer world, just as the darkness of worldly existence may lead the individual to the darkness of God. From the darkness of the world to the darkness of God, the negative connotation in the word 'darkness' is replaced by something positive. To see through the passing world means to let the mind move beyond it. As a result, the mind enters the darkness where it can stay pure. For Buddhism, it means the mind enters Nirvana, while for Eliot, it is the realm where 'darkness shall be the light'.

However, before 'the darkness [becomes] the light', the feeling of having nothing to cling onto is at first depicted as something that triggers panic or even horror: 'the growing terror of

[625] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 201.
[626] Alex Wayman, 'The Mirror as a Pan-Buddhist Metaphor-Simile', *History of Religions* 13 (1974), p. 256.
[627] Ibid., p. 254.
[628] Ibid., p. 259.

nothing to think about'.[629] It strips the mind of the complacent comfort of having something to think about, in which one is distracted from the unfathomable dark emptiness. In Buddhism, to be constantly distracted is to let the mind be filled with attachments, a process which eventually causes suffering.[630] But Eliot's example of facing emptiness captures the difficulty of adapting oneself to non-attachment, or the darkness of God. Kearns observes on the difficulty of maintaining the emptiness of the soul:

> This look into the dark calls the poet again to a sense of vision as dangerous and of his own hold on personal balance, religious belief, and transcendental wisdom as never anything more than a hold on 'nothingness' in the Buddhist sense, a precarious tenure poised always at the edge of the abyss.[631]

Kearns's words point to the fear of losing one's sense of self; to conquer this fear is necessary to achieve the final leap of faith into the darkness of God.

For Buddhism, the loss of the self in emptiness is desirable and signifies Nirvana. Emptiness is itself the only thing worth being described as 'divine', for it is 'commonly associated with the perfection of wisdom'.[632] Nirvana in its etymology means 'extinguishing', as 'when a flame is blown out by the wind', and consequently, there would be the darkness of Nirvana.[633] But for Eliot, emptiness, or the darkness of God, is not the final destination of spiritual progress. It is preparatory for one who is in it, 'in order to arrive at' a spiritual end where 'the darkness shall be the light'.[634] James Johnson Sweeney also points out that the retreat into the darkness of God is a 'transitional stage between periods – Jung's "Night Journey" of the Rebirth Pattern'.[635] Carl Jung's 'night sea journey' or 'Nekyia', from the perspective of psychoanalysis, refers to a 'descent into the deeper layers of the unconscious' where one may experience 'a pre-existent

[629] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 189.
[630] For a discussion of the relationship between 'distraction' and 'suffering', see Chapter 5.
[631] Kearns, p. 243.
[632] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[633] Ibid.
[634] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 189.
[635] Sweeney, p. 430.

unitary reality'.[636] Kathryn Wood Madden argues that the experience is 'transforming', after which 'A new reality is born to us, offering us a new intrapsychic core, perhaps even restructuring the entire personality in a way the ego can better deal with its context and circumstances, one that enables us to see through to our former origins'.[637] Such an experience is very similar to the Buddhist idea of '[getting] across the "raging river" of birth and death (samsara) to the "other shore"'.[638] In other words, a new self is expected to emerge out of the darkness of God.

It should be pointed out that Eliot does not tell the reader what it is like when the darkness becomes the light. The discourse on the darkness of God, in regard to St John of the Cross from whose work it derives, generates a mood of purgation or a mood of enduring some kind of test with patience.[639] However, what may come out of the purgation seems not the speaker's primary concern, for it is not to be consciously hoped for. The claim that 'darkness shall be the light' indicates that after the descent of the darkness of God salvation would naturally follow. In Buddhism, 'the cessation of suffering and its causes' means one is already in Nirvana.[640] It is a state of existence, not a precious item that may arouse one's egotistic desire to acquire it. As Eliot puts it, 'hope would be hope for the wrong thing'.[641] The hope 'for the wrong thing' can be compared with suffering in Inferno, and the waiting without hope is similar to suffering in Purgatory. As Eliot puts it, 'In hell, the torment issues from the very nature of the damned themselves […] they writhe in the torment of their own perpetually perverted nature', but in purgatory 'The souls […] suffer because they wish to suffer, for purgation. […] In their suffering is hope'.[642] Thus waiting as a kind of purgation becomes a manner of being, which is demonstrated in the second paragraph of the third movement, where the 'wild thyme [rests] unseen' and the 'laughter in the garden' is not lost.[643] Unlike the garden in 'Burnt Norton' where 'the roses / Had the look of flowers that are looked at', the garden here is more manifestly pure

[636] Kathryn Wood Madden, 'Images of the Abyss', *Journal of Religion and Health* 42 (2003), 125.
[637] Ibid., p. 130.
[638] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[639] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 945.
[640] 'Nirvana', *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[641] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 189.
[642] 'Dante' (1929), p. 716.
[643] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 189.

and complete. Its beauty and vitality will not be lost if the eye-beams from visitors are not there. The new garden symbolises the power of purgation that turns spiritual darkness into spiritual light.

The transforming power of the darkness of God is further explored in the fourth movement from a new angle, in which the darkness of humanity is regarded as at the same time a disease and its remedy: 'Our only health is the disease / […] / to be restored, our sickness must grow worse'.[644] Restoration, in light of all the medical terms that Eliot applies, suggests 'The reduction of a fracture or dislocation', a kind of 'integrity'.[645] That disease in humanity, or 'Adam's curse', is not something which can be cut away and be done with like a tumour. The poet tells the reader clearly that the art of the surgeon is the art of questioning – he 'questions', rather than 'removes' the 'distempered' part.[646] The repeated words such as 'only' and 'must' emphasise the need to face the inherent or hereditary disease, so that the patient may be transformed to such a degree that the malignant becomes benign. The style of the fourth movement, including the religious aura and the tight rhyming scheme, indicates the spiritual need of a form to accommodate and shape the diseased individual existence.[647] By turning to the first-hand feeling of the human body, the speaker presents the curse and the treatment, not in the manner of intellectual reasoning, but as sensuous experience that directly affects the mind:

> The chill ascends from feet to knees,
> The fever sings in mental wires.
> 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.[648]

[644] Ibid., p. 190.
[645] *OED.*
[646] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 190.
[647] Quoted in ibid., p. 946.
[648] Ibid., p. 190.

Iambic tetrameter holds up the steady and taut cadence in the first two lines. The chill ascends as if warmth retreats from a fresh corpse, but the change to the body is not accidental as it is willingly called for. The resoluteness to enter purgation and accept wholeheartedly what may come is also revealed in the application of the stanzaic form and the tight rhyming scheme. What is more, the voice of the speaker becomes objectified, as he is not only experiencing the purgation, but also calmly observing the corresponding feeling he has. The self-observation is also a process of depersonalisation. Moreover, the tension between the body and the surgical tools pushes the depersonalisation to such a degree that one may sense the speaker's hostility against the human body. Such a kind of hostility finds its expression in Buddhism as well, as the human body is seen as an open sore: 'in order to advance in the religious life […] they who have retired from the world take care of their bodies as though they were wounds'.[649] The hostility is also expressed in *The Waste Land*, as Eliot alludes to both religions in the burning fire at the end of 'The Fire Sermon'.[650] Words and phrases such as 'steel', 'fever chart', and 'mental wires' are cold, dry, scientific, and impersonal. One may find similar impersonal coldness in 'Sweeney Erect' when Sweeney 'Tests the razor on his leg / Waiting until the shriek subsides'.[651] However, unlike the autosadistic tendency in 'Sweeney Erect', the fourth movement of 'East Coker' is permeated with faith in salvation. The longest word in this stanza, is 'purgatorial'. It stands out, and it also stretches out the sense of frigidity. To freeze bodily passion and to awaken spiritual vitality seem to be the same process, as the duality of 'chill' and 'fever' is replaced by an integration: 'the frigid purgatorial fires'. The speaker drives himself into a narrow path where there is no room for scepticism: 'If to be warmed, then I must freeze'. The following elaboration of the flame into roses further enhances the paradoxical nature of the ultimate spiritual destination, that it is at once fluid and formalistic. To give the self over to the purgatorial fire seems like a formal act of restoration. It suggests that only by adopting an impersonal form of life can one attain real

[649] From 'The Milandapana', in *Buddhism in Translations*, p. 423.
[650] Besides the Buddhist 'Fire Sermon' which takes human senses as being caught in fire, the image of burning fire can also be found in the *Bible*, such as Amos 4: 11 and Zechariah 3: 2, as quoted by Ricks and McCue in *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 640; p. 681. See Chapter 3 for more discussion on the image of the fire.
[651] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 37.

freedom. What is more, through the purgatorial fire, a new vista opens up, as the soul in purgation is transformed and becomes capable of seeing the world from a new perspective. The vista is always as it is, and he who sees it is freed, for the capability to see the new vista is a sign of freedom from the previous worldview.

The last stanza of the fourth movement concretises the vista by introducing the religious theme of Communion into the discourse on purgation. It is one that Eliot continually returns to, and the different effects created by different treatments of the theme further demonstrate the reincarnation of the same theme in different forms. Eliot, in one review, says that he 'can subscribe wholly to this view' of T. E. Hulme that 'It is not, then, that I put up with the dogma for the sake of the sentiment, but that I may possibly swallow the sentiment for the sake of the dogma.'[652] And the corresponding 'sentiment' that follows the dogma or the chosen form facilitates the integration of the form and the material, which can be seen as an act of reincarnation. In Eliot's 'Gerontion', one may find an imperfect and problematic integration in the ominous vision of the Communion. The prophetic voice 'In the juvescence of the year / Came Christ the tiger' soon becomes fragmented: 'In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas, / to be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk / Among whispers'.[653] From 'Gerontion' to 'Sweeney Agonistes', the religious implication of the Communion is replaced by the candid talk of cannibalism, which is dull, repetitive, and almost compulsive and vulgar:

DORIS: You'll be the cannibal!
SWEENEY: You will be the missionary!
You'll be my little seven stone missionary!
I'll gobble you up. I'll be the cannibal.
DORIS: You'll carry me off? To a cannibal isle?
SWEENEY: I'll be the cannibal.
DORIS: I'll be the missionary.

[652] T. S. Eliot, 'The Return of Foxy Grandpa', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, last accessed 9 September 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 264.
[653] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 31.

If the religious element in 'Gerontion' reveals more doubt than faith, it is treated in 'Sweeney Agonistes' as if it is no more than a farce. Eliot's reworking of the theme of Communion in 'East Coker', especially in the final stanza of the fourth movement, brings the religious dimension to the front, with a fearlessly resolute and even heroic tone, strengthened by the structure:

> The dripping blood our only drink,
> The bloody flesh our only food:
> In spite of which we like to think
> That we are sound, substantial flesh and blood –
> Again, in spite of that, we call this Friday good.[654]

Harry Blamires argues that '[as] mere creatures of flesh and blood, our claim to health and soundness is a false one. As creatures of Nature we are both sick and insubstantial.'[655] The word 'substantial' connotes the scholastic idea of 'substantial form': 'the nature or distinctive character by virtue of possessing which a thing is what it (specifically or individually) is'.[656] In *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, non-self is also defined as 'insubstantial'.[657] Moreover, in Eliot's notes on Anesaki's Buddhist lectures, the word 'substance' refers to the timeless nature of the Buddha: 'The ground of communion lies in the identity of substance, of the dharmakaya in all beings. The dharmakaya is the same in all beings.'[658] As mentioned in Chapter 5, dharmakaya refers to 'a kind of cosmic principle' shared by the Buddha and all other beings. That cosmic principle is recognised as substantial in Buddhism, and also by Eliot. It is that which makes possible the spiritual communion between the Buddha, or the divine, and all earthly beings. The frequent reference to such a communion in the notes reveals Eliot's awareness of its significance

[654] Ibid., p. 190.
[655] Harry Blamires, *Word Unheard: A Guide through Eliot's Four Quartets* (London: Methuen, 1969), p. 71.
[656] *OED.*
[657] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism.*
[658] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 20 February 1914.

to him, especially when it is seen through the lens of Buddhism. In the Christian context, Christ's body is symbolically consumed during Communion. For the speaker, 'Good Friday' is good because Christ's sacrifice is a symbolic promise of salvation. '[B]lood' does not rhyme with 'good', which seems as if 'body and soul begin to fall asunder', but it enhances the feeling that it is necessary, especially 'under conditions / That seem unpropitious', to insist on calling Good Friday good.[659] All in all, the religious zeal is fuelled by the hope for the restoration of the substantial, the belief that the Eliotic version of Communion – with all the vivid consummation of flesh and blood – is a kind of necessity, conducted not out of desire but out of faith. The rhythm, which is steady and forceful, gives the impression that the inner dark force is under the control of an intellectual and impersonal mind, and is given a new life in the ritual of Communion.

The above three cases also demonstrate that the dark side in the human psyche is never eliminated, denied, or simply ignored in Eliot's poetry, but each time is given a different language with which to reincarnate itself. Paradoxically, the fourth movement indicates that human society relies on its dark side, or rather the consciousness of it, to thrive. That the wounded surgeon questions the distempered part with bleeding hands indicates a certain kind of kinship between him and the patient: they are both wounded. When the patient neglects the surgeon's wound as well as his own, the distempered part would remain unnoticed, and when the patient becomes conscious of it, it has the potential of restoring health. The whole movement is in the present tense, as if the restoration would be a timeless, as well as endless, undertaking, forever in the here and now. Eliot observes that 'sin will always remain […] To do away with the sense of sin is to do away with civilisation.'[660] Jung's theory about 'the dark side' of the human psyche also warns of the danger of ignoring it: 'When the hidden, repressed, guilt-laden personality is denied expression in life […] insanity, confusion, schizophrenia may result.'[661] The immortality of sin requires in the society of the mortals the persistent imposition of principles and orders, which is

[659] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 190, in 'Little Gidding'.
[660] Quoted in T. K. Titus, *Critical Study of T. S. Eliot's Work* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2001), p. 102.
[661] Gloria L. Young, 'Quest and Discovery: Joseph Conrad's and Carl Jung's African Journey', *Modern Fiction Studies* 28 (Winter 1982-83), 588.

in line with Eliot's idea of classicism: 'a belief in Original Sin – the necessity for austere discipline'.[662] Discipline tames the inner force that may otherwise bring chaos and pain, and leads the individual towards the state of non-self, as rules and orders weave an impersonal pattern of life that integrates the personal. Adam Kirsch observes in the introduction to *The Wounded Surgeon* that 'T. S. Eliot's image [of the wounded surgeon] evokes the resolve, not to say heroism, that [the confessional] poets displayed by submitting their most intimate and painful experiences to the objective discipline of art.'[663] It may be worth noting that before Eliot turned to Christianity for the sense of discipline, in Indian thought the call for the right order of existence appealed to him, and one major example is the Indian admonishments at the end of *The Waste Land*. Even after his conversion, the wisdom from the East still exerts significant influence on his poetry: the lesson given by Krishna in *The Dry Salvages* means to pacify the mind of the individual, with the advice to conduct right actions without thinking of their fruits.

Austere discipline channels the expression of personal feeling and emotion. The musicality in the fourth movement, which is part of the discipline, softens the pretentiousness in the religious claims. The poet tries to create an aura in which intellectual rumination is part of the music, as the religious claims gain a sense of authenticity without self-defence. The music and the claims are two spheres of one process of poetic performance, and the poetry lies in the integration of the two. The belief that something is 'to be restored' implies some original state of existence in which the personal and the impersonal are not split. And the use of discipline is to achieve that restoration through the manifestation of personal feeling in an impersonal form, which can be seen as a new life in a state of non-self.

In the fifth movement, the middle way of life is a timeless state of existence, as well as a new beginning. The allusion to Dante suggests that in the middle way, the speaker ends one kind of life and begins another; he is in the middle of changing from the old self to a new self. 'Here I

[662] T. S. Eliot, 'Syllabus of a Course of Six Lectures on Modern French Literature', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905–1918*, last accessed 9 September 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 472.
[663] Adam Kirsch, *The Wounded Surgeon* (W. W. Norton & Company: New York), p. xi.

am' shows his awareness of his existence in the here and now, and also echoes the end of the first movement: 'I am here / Or there, or elsewhere. In my beginning'.[664] In the ongoing process of being, every point is the middle way, where one stands in the middle of the current of eternal transmutation. Eliot captures such a feeling in the following lines:

> 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.[665]

In this sense, a new start in the middle way of life is 'a wholly new start', not because it is cut off from the past, but because the speaker's whole being is altered. The phrase 'no longer' reflects his poignant awareness of the changes brought by the flow of time. The speaker further reveals his sense of time when he stands 'in the middle way': 'Not the intense moment / Isolated, with no before and after, / But a lifetime burning in every moment'.[666] Thus one may say that to be in the middle way means to be in the process of moving from the past into the future, and this process is like a current that flows all the time. As Eliot puts it in the second movement, 'in the middle [means] not only in the middle of the way / But all the way'.[667] Tim McCracken argues that 'As a philosopher, Eliot's own "traditions" contained the [concept of living in this world for the otherworldly] of Christian and Buddhist teaching. And he needed a middle way through this condition'.[668] McCracken also highlights the significance of Eastern philosophy to the condition: 'Eliot's early work in Eastern philosophy yielded an understanding of a middle way as "a coherence which cannot be formulated"'.[669] It seems that in discussing the relationship between

[664] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 186.
[665] Ibid., p. 191.
[666] Ibid.
[667] Ibid., p. 187.
[668] Tim McCracken, 'The Postmodern Music of "Four Quartets": The Difficult Whole of Eliot's Middle Way', *CEA Critic* 52 (1990), 38.
[669] Ibid.

Eliot's middle way and Buddhism, he is not aware that Buddhism has a fundamental doctrine which is also called 'the middle way'. As revealed in Chapter 3, Eliot was certainly aware of the Buddhist middle way, or in his notes, 'the middle path', which 'was always Buddha's way of looking at things'. It refers to a mind that syntheses various viewpoints and is not blinded by any of them. Luis O. Gómez's explanation of the Buddhist middle way can be used to illuminate Eliot's: 'to secure continuity while avoiding the pitfalls of an unchanging self.'[670] Such continuity hidden in the eternal change of the self means that 'what there is to conquer / By strength and submission' is also 'what has been lost / And found and lost again and again'.[671] What Eliot seems to imply is that in the repeated raids on 'the inarticulate' with words, the inarticulate is reincarnated in language which is 'always deteriorating'.[672] In this way, a kind of continuity in change is maintained, and the inarticulate can be accessed, though indirectly, in different expressions as language itself evolves. That which validates such continuity cannot be extracted from the reincarnations, but the reincarnations keep it manifested. This is another aspect of the middle way, which acknowledges both eternal change and consistency.

That the inarticulate can only be indirectly felt through an embodiment is an idea which may find support from not only Buddhism, but also Christianity, especially the doctrine of the Incarnation. For Eliot, 'the fullness of Christian revelation resides in the essential fact of the Incarnation'.[673] It is the Word made flesh through which the timeless is revealed in time. The vision of the incarnational in the last paragraph of 'East Coker' is on a more personal scale, as 'the evening under starlight' and the 'evening under lamplight […] with the photograph album' merge into each other.[674] The integration of personal feeling and impersonal context requires 'a further union, a deeper communion', which alludes to the Eucharist.[675] Eliot once wrote an encouraging message to the Anglo-Catholic Congress in London, which declares 'the truth of the

[670] Luis O. Gómez, 'Some Aspects of the Free-Will Question in the Nikayas', *Philosophy East and West* 25 (1975), 86.
[671] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 191.
[672] Ibid.
[673] 'Introduction to Revelation', p. 2.
[674] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 191.
[675] Ibid., p. 192.

doctrine of Incarnation, its expression in the Eucharist, and the reservation of that sacrament in the tabernacle.'[676] In such incarnational communion, one cannot tell strictly the private self from the outer world. At the beginning of the fifth movement, the speaker grasps the very moment of the here and now in the assertive 'here I am', which is like self-assurance. Although the assertion seems to present the self as something new, the self exists within the context of the past and the future. 'having had' in 'having had twenty years – / Twenty years largely wasted, the years of *l'entre deux guerres*' enhances the connection between history and the self in the present.[677] The self that is asserted is a self in something larger. To use Moody's words, 'the years of *l'entre deux guerres*' created in Eliot 'his personal sense of the world crisis'.[678] Eliot goes further to stress that the 'lifetime burning in every moment' is not that 'of one man only', but is shared by both the individual and 'old stones that cannot be deciphered', which, according to John Hayward, refers to 'old gravestones'.[679] In this sense, one's self is not one's absolute personal property. It is to some degree also a shared self with the shadows of other selves. Moody argues that 'the acceptance of the ordinary sphere of human action which it involves was just what the poet had been progressively removing himself from' in his earlier poetry.[680] The acceptance signifies 'another intensity' of personal feeling. As Eliot himself puts it, 'the personal to oneself is fused and completed in the impersonal and the general, not extinguished, but enriched, expanded, developed, and more itself by becoming more something not itself.'[681] In this sense, non-self is not antithetical to individual self, but is a result of the development of individual experience.

The 'deeper communion' involves the death of the old self and the birth of a new self, when the speaker starts the quest for the union of the personal and the divine. Anthony Cuda, while explaining why Eliot confessed to Ezra Pound that he was 'afraid of the life after death',

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[676] Note 1 to T. S. Eliot, 'Message to the Anglo-Catholic Congress in London', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905–1918*, last accessed 9 September 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 138.
[677] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 191.
[678] *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet*, p. 203.
[679] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p.191; p. 957.
[680] *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet*, p. 220.
[681] T. S. Eliot, 'Poetry and Propaganda', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: English Lion, 1930-1933*, last accessed 23 July 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 26.

observes that 'Eliot's creative energies were moving steadily toward the unity of thought and feeling he found in religious writers, and his personal energies were not far behind.'[682] He also links Eliot's confession to his action of 'descending to his knees in front of Michelangelo's *Pietà* at St. Peter's'.[683] The religious gesture, along with his conversion, did not mean that his spiritual journey had finally come to an end. He was in the Dantean middle way, from where a long and arduous spiritual journey only began. Where he stood in that journey is revealed in what he says at the end of 'East Coker': 'In my end is my beginning'.[684] The revelation of the beginning in the end is in accord with the Buddhist middle way that stresses the balance between continuity and change: the old self dies away so that the new self grows out of it and starts the new journey. In a letter to Paul Elmer More, Eliot complains that 'Most critics appear to think that my catholicism is merely an escape or an evasion […] But it [is] rather trying to be supposed to have settled oneself in an easy chair, when one has just begun a long journey afoot.'[685] To take on a new journey after some significant and exhausting spiritual achievement reflects 'the wisdom of humility' which indicates self-surrender to the divine.[686] Such humility requires that '[even] old men ought to be explorers'.[687] They are also 'in the middle way', in their beginning, regardless of age and experience.

The end of 'East Coker' has a hidden connection with Eliot's studies of Indian philosophy. In a typescript of 'East Coker', Eliot adds 'Aranyaka, the forest or the sea' after 'For a further union, a deeper communion'.[688] According to Ricks and McCue's note, 'Aranyaka' refers to 'Sanskrit holy books of which the Upanishads are part'.[689] Similar to those who take on a new journey after acquiring the wisdom of humility, the Aranyakas 'were intended to be studied only by the initiated […] in the seclusion of the forest'.[690] Although 'Aranyaka, the forest or the sea'

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[682] Anthony Cuda, 'The Poet and the Pressure Chamber: Eliot's Life', *A Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. David E. Chinitz (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 9.
[683] Ibid.
[684] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 192.
[685] *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 4*, p. 567.
[686] Ibid., p. 192.
[687] Ibid., p. 191.
[688] Helen Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), p. 112.
[689] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume I*, p. 957.
[690] *Encyclopaedia Britannica.*

is later deleted, it suggests that, for Eliot, the wisdom of humility which may enable a deeper communion is not confined to Christianity; it can also be found in the wisdom from the East. Buddhism also emphases the importance of religious training even after one is enlightened: '[a] layman who has attained saintship, would not retire from the world without assistance […] just as a man who is weak, feeble […] proves unable to sustain princely power'.[691] Religious training, or the following of rituals, prepares the individual for the acceptance of that princely power, and this process is a kind of communion through which the individual is at one with the spiritual power that transcends the personal. The spiritual communion is willingly conducted, and it is itself an end. In other words, the new journey is a beginning as well as an end. Throughout 'East Coker', no end is without a potential beginning, and no beginning starts without a hidden end. The reader is continually reminded that depersonalisation towards non-self is inseparable from the awareness that the outer world encompasses the existence of the personal and plays a vital part in it. The speaker, after revealing the intrinsic emptiness of earthly life and worldly attachments, turns to spiritual communion with the divine darkness of God. Such a self-aware communion renders non-self meaningful by offering it a place in the scheme of salvation. Depersonalisation thus becomes necessary for the descent of divine grace. In this sense, Eliot amalgamates the idea of non-self, which is essentially Buddhist according to the above analysis, with the idea of merging oneself into the divine, which alludes to the Communion.

[691] *Buddhism in Translations*, p. 421.

Chapter 7: Christian Belief and Buddhist Doctrine in 'The Dry Salvages'

'East Coker' and 'The Dry Salvages' can be read as 'poems on one theme', according to Helen Gardner, and that theme 'might be called […] the redemption of time and the world of man'.[692] 'East Coker' sends out the message that the redemption of time lies in the individual's active engagement with the timeless realm of impersonal existence. Such an interaction is also a spiritual communion that results in the redemption of time for the individual man, directly affecting his sensibility. 'The Dry Salvages', on the other hand, presents the redemption of time for men, or humanity as a whole. This new vision of redemption is more depersonalised, represented by the Incarnation, rather than the Communion. The spiritual communion in 'East Coker' brings the individual into the state of non-self, while in 'The Dry Salvages' non-self is acknowledged as a fundamental feature of existence, ensured by the law of karma, or eternal change. The law of karma creates an endless chain of reincarnation, which perpetuates suffering. The introduction of the Incarnation as the timeless and the unalterable into the realm of reincarnation, where eternal change reigns, completes the vision of salvation in this poem. In other words, the poet integrates Christian Incarnation with Buddhist reincarnation, and the nature of this integration is explored in the following analysis of 'The Dry Salvages'.

At the beginning of the poem, the image of the river god reminds the reader of the persistent influence of the forgotten past on the 'worshippers of the machine', who are ignorant of the river god.[693] Such ignorance, stressing the limitedness of human consciousness, shares affinity with the Buddhist teaching of ignorance which refers to 'obstinate misunderstanding about the nature of the person and the world'.[694] The river god as an embodiment of time, even

[692] Helen Gardner, 'A Study of Eliot's More Recent Poetry' in *T. S. Eliot: The Critical Heritage, Volume 2*, ed. Michael Grant (London and New York: Routledge, 1982), p. 472.
[693] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 193.
[694] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism.*

though forgotten, is never invalidated. 'The river is within us', the poet warns.[695] Ignorance of the god only makes the god invisible; it becomes a ghost that haunts those who forget it, exerting its influence without being seen. In 'Gerontion', Eliot expresses the frustration of not being able to see through the labyrinth of time:

> History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
> And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
> Guides us by vanities. Think now
> She gives when our attention is distracted
> And when she gives, gives with such supple confusions
> That the giving famishes the craving.[696]

A wish is hinted at, which is a wish to transcend time by detaching oneself from any period of history. In the same way that the worshippers of the machine forget what life was like when the worshippers of the river god lived, people trapped in one period of history are born ignorant of lives in other periods. An explanation of such separation is offered in the *Jataka Tales*, or tales of the Buddha's rebirths, which Eliot studied at Harvard, that the separation is created by rebirth: the Buddha 'made manifest that which had been concealed by change of birth, —setting free, as it were, the full moon from the bosom of a dark snow-cloud.'[697] In the *Jataka Tales*, the Buddha remembers his previous lives, not imprisoned in any of the 'cunning passages, contrived corridors' of time. That is to say, by seeing history as a timeless presence, one sees beyond the life of one man only. Similarly, the 'hints of earlier and other creation' on the beach imply some forgotten past deeply buried in the sea.[698] In 'Passage to India', Walt Whitman expresses a similar yearning to transcend human history in order to reach 'the infinite greatness of the past': 'All these separations and gaps shall be taken up and hook'd and link'd together, / […] / Nature and Man

[695] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 193.
[696] Ibid., p. 32.
[697] V. Fausböll, *Buddhist Birth Stories, or Jataka Tales, Volume I*, trans. T. W. Rhys Davis (London: Trübner & Co., Ludgate Hill, 1880), p. 138.
[698] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 193.

shall be disjoin'd and diffused no more, / The true son of God shall absolutely fuse them.'[699] Kearns argues that 'The Dry Salvages' is Eliot's 'Passage to India', for 'it involves, as in Whitman, a "dark unfathom'd retrospect" as well as a fearless move forward', but she fails to recognise that the unfathomed retrospect that breaks through the limitation of time is itself a significant move forward.[700] To some extent, the salvation hinted in this poem means the liberation from the ignorance of time as an eternally flowing current.

The first movement is mostly occupied with the speaker's observation of the separateness of individual lives, but the speaker at the same time hints at their inherent connectedness. The river god of time creates what Eliot describes in 'silence', which is an uncollected poem, the 'seas of experience' of earthly life.[701] The image of the sea that 'has many voices' of life experience embodies the integration of all its 'earlier and other creation'. That '[the] river is within us, the sea is all about us' suggests a one-and-many relationship between the river god and the individuals, or that between the sea and the remains of sea creations on the beach. Many sea images in Eliot's earlier poems point to the breaking down of the personal in an impersonal form of existence, such as Prufrock's wish to become 'a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas', the 'twisted branch upon the beach' in 'Preludes' which is 'Eaten smooth, and polished', and the whirlpool in which Phlebas's personal identity is eaten away by the 'current under sea'.[702] The various cases of sea experience can be taken as the many voices of the sea, each voice struggling to find its own reality. In his doctoral thesis on F. H. Bradley's philosophy, Eliot uses the sea-anemone to explain the nature of the private reality of individual existence: 'The sea-anemone which accepts or rejects a proffered morsel is thereby relating an idea to the sea-anemone's world'.[703] Another similar use of sea creations further illuminates his point: 'Truth on our level is a different thing from truth for the jellyfish, and there must certainly be analogies for truth and error in jellyfish life'.[704] The sea creations are isolated from each other,

[699] Walt Whitman, *The Complete Poems*, ed. Francis Murphy (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 432.
[700] Kearns, p. 246.
[701] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 243.
[702] Ibid., p. 7; p. 18; p.67.
[703] *Knowledge and Experience*, p. 267.
[704] Ibid., p. 378.

and the speaker's awareness of the isolation generates an urge to break it. The anxiety over the seemingly unbreakable private reality is expressed in 'What the Thunder Said': 'We think of the key, each in his prison / Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison'.[705] The anxiety fuels the struggle to break the spiritual conundrum of being trapped in the prison of a personal reality.

From the Buddhist perspective, to transcend solipsistic reality means to be freed from the endless chain of reincarnation. The sea creations are trapped in their own reality, and thus cannot achieve the ultimate oneness with the sea. In the *Anguttara Nikaya*, the process of coming from private reality to impersonal reality is described as the rivers' flowing into the sea: 'when the great rivers […] reach the great ocean, they give up their former names and designations and are simply called the great ocean.'[706] Corresponding to the river god, the image of a river as a metaphor for the realm of reincarnation can also be found in Buddhism, as the Buddha's teaching is to help one 'get across the "raging river" of birth and death (samsara) to the "other shore" of nirvana'.[707] The metaphor is extended to a system of symbols: 'the person who goes against the stream is someone who 'does not indulge in sensual pleasures', and 'the one who has crossed over and gone beyond' is the person who 'has realized for himself with direct knowledge, in this very life, the taintless liberation of mind'.[708] In other words, the cycle of reincarnation is to be conquered, as it causes suffering. In this poem, however, the river god itself is seen as, to some degree, neither good nor evil:

> sullen, untamed and intractable,
> Patient to some degree, at first recognised as a frontier;
> Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce;
> […]
> Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder
> Of what men choose to forget.[709]

[705] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 70.
[706] *Anguttara Nikaya*, p. 1142. For Eliot's connection with the *Anguttara Nikaya*, see pp. 4-5.
[707] *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism.*
[708] *Anguttara Nikaya*, p. 391.
[709] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 193.

The speaker's observation of its sublime power is impersonal, as the steady flow of language, in the calm description of the river god, functions as Rolfe Humphries suggests: a 'tide of emotion withdraws'.[710] In such an impersonal vision, the speaker sees that the river god concretises the effect of the flowing time on tangible objects: 'His rhythm was present in the nursery bedroom, / In the rank ailanthus of the April dooryard, / In the smell of grapes on the autumn table'.[711] The mention of April in 'Portrait of a Lady' provokes the lady's memory of her buried life, 'recalling things that other people have desired', whilst the solemn tone in 'April is the cruellest month' that opens *The Waste Land* seems to condemn the buried life for triggering the reincarnation of suffering.[712] When it comes to 'The Dry Salvages', the impersonal vision of the river god and the sea, which may be taken as a poetic development from Eliot's earlier works, shows that the ignorance of the buried life or the 'earlier and other creation' of the sea, like the remembrance of it, is only a ripple of time. Such a vision reflects a mind of non-attachment which rests beyond any form of dichotomy; it is close to Buddhist non-self.

With both the Buddhist and Christian traditions in his personal memory, Eliot appeals to a 'spirit of the sea' for spiritual comfort at the end of 'Ash-Wednesday', which seems to evolve into the 'perpetual angelus' of the Annunciation in 'The Dry Salvages'.[713] As Ricks and McCue's note points out, the 'spirit of the sea' already contains a Christian allusion, 'Stella Maris', which means 'star of the sea'. It is explained in the *OED* as follows: 'A title given to the Virgin Mary, used allusively of a protectress or a guiding spirit.'[714] The poet opens Movement IV with an image of such a protectress: 'Lady, whose shrine stands on the promontory'.[715] She may remind the reader of the Catholic hymn 'Ave Maris Stella', which 'mariners sang every night on their

[710] Rolfe Humphries, 'Salvation from Sand in Salt' in *T. S. Eliot: The Critical Heritage, Volume 2*, ed. Michael Grant (London and New York: Routledge, 1982), p. 468.
[711] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 193.
[712] Ibid, p. 12; p. 55.
[713] Ibid, p. 97; p. 199.
[714] Ibid., p. 756; *OED*.
[715] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 198.

momentous voyage'.[716] As 'The Dry Salvages' unfolds, one may find that the spirit of the sea does not offer any guide to voyagers or fishermen for their practical purposes, for it guards 'time not [their] time', which is a time 'older than the time of chronometers'.[717] The 'Angelus', in the Christian context, refers to 'a Christian devotion in memory of the Incarnation […] It is recited three times daily, about 6:00 am, noon, and 6:00 pm. After the final recitation, the Angelus bell is rung.'[718] It denotes a kind of sacred time parallel to the secular time. The idea of two kinds of time also finds theoretical support from Christianity. Matthew L. Lamb, in his analysis of the religious experience of St Augustine and that of St Teresa of Avila, argues that history is not 'an ongoing continuum of time from the past through the present into the future', but 'conscious conversation and communion' with God.[719] In other words, the older time, signified by the communication between worldly existence and the divine, is the more real time. It makes chronological time seem fake and makes one feel that 'the past is all deception, / The future futureless'.[720] In St Augustine's words, 'In the sublimity of an eternality which is always in the present, you are before all things past and transcend all things future'.[721] Lamb explains that for St Augustine, 'There is no past and future in God, but only an eternal presence in, by, and for whom all times are created'.[722]

A similar idea can be found in Buddhism as well, when the Buddha teaches that in 'any kind of form whatsoever – whether past, present, or future' one should think that 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self'.[723] The Buddhist view of time is closely related to the doctrine of non-self, and its focus is on personal experience of time. To acquire such intuitive knowledge of non-self means that one's mind is to be freed from chronological time. As Rudyard

[716] Jane Campbell, 'Notes on Some Old Catholic Hymn Books', *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 31 (1920), 134.
[717] Ibid., p. 194.
[718] *Encyclopaedia Britannica.*
[719] Matthew L. Lamb 'The Resurrection and Christian Identity as *Conversatio Dei*' in *Concilium* 1993 (5): *Reincarnation or Resurrection?,* ed. Hermann Haring and Johann-Baptist Metz,112-3.
[720] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 194.
[721] St Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), book XI, 16, p. 230. Eliot may also allude to Augustine's idea of time at the beginning of 'Burnt Norton'.
[722] Lamb, p. 119.
[723] *Anguttara Nikaya*, p. 362.

Kipling notes in *Kim*, which is highly praised by Eliot, 'the Soul had passed beyond the illusion of Time and Space and of Things'.[724] When the flow of time is regarded as illusory, one sees what is behind it: the here and now that persists forever. The present life of the worshippers of the machine, who have forgotten the river god and buried any memory of it in the past, reflects a limited awareness of time. The river god, on the contrary, never forgets, as it is always 'waiting, watching and waiting'.[725] For the river god, there is no past or history, since nothing is forgotten and the effects of all things done are still reverberating. The river god's reality is timeless and is truly in the eternal moment of the present, unlike any individual reality that is trapped in one single round of life and death.

If the Buddhist non-self helps one transcend time, for the speaker, such a state of non-self or impersonality cannot be achieved without divine grace. The timeless vision in the first movement presents a picture of the basic human condition, with an impersonal perspective which undermines any anthropocentric tendency to put the individual at the centre of the changes of the world. To see that the world in time is ephemeral and that personal existence is limited and ignorant raises doubts about the efficacy of individual efforts to find meaning for life. The poet gives a vivid example, of Penelope forever weaving and unweaving her work in 'time not our time', waiting for a Ulysses that never returns.[726] The older time works without past and future, and what it does is similar to the towers in *The Waste Land*, 'upside down in air […] Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours'; it keeps the eternal hours, not counting them.[727] The example of Penelope reveals the almost horrifying vision of losing oneself in the realm of the older time, 'When time stops and time is never ending', in which what one is doing at the moment is seen as what one is always doing.[728] Rainer Maria Rilke, whose poetic achievement Eliot acknowledged by putting him alongside Yeats and himself, depicts an almost identical experience in a poem 'Autumn Day': 'Lord, it is time […] / Who's homeless now will never build a house.

[724] *Kim*, p. 412.
[725] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 193.
[726] Ibid., p. 194.
[727] Ibid., p. 70.
[728] Ibid., p. 194.

/ Who's all alone will now so long remain'.[729] God's presence diffuses comfortably in Rilke's vision. The presence of the divine seems to be taken for granted and safeguard meaning for the otherwise terrifying eternal moment of the present. In Eliot's poetry, one finds an arduous journey towards God before any Rilkean ease with God's presence manifests.

The difference may be partly due to the weighty role that Indian religions play in Eliot's poetry. As Stephen Spender observes in 'Rilke and the Angels, Eliot and the Shrines', compared with Rilke's poetry, in Eliot's, 'reservations are made to distinguish such a view [of oneness with God] from those Eastern philosophies which commit the devout to a condition of complete unliving within life', and he stresses that 'in some ways, Eliot's religion is surely a very peculiar mixture of Christianity and Buddhism'.[730] For Eliot, a pure heaven, like a pure hell, is a world 'human flesh cannot endure'.[731] The Buddhist vision of pure non-self and eternal change, for those who lead a secular life, is like a hell-like heaven. The sense of helplessness is intensified in the second verse paragraph of the second movement: 'Where is there an end to the drifting wreckage / […] / There is no end, but addition'.[732] The vision shows, to use Gardner's words, 'a meaningless, perpetual flux, a repetition without a pattern [of salvation]'.[733] If in the world governed by chronological time meaning is not to be found, then perhaps the hope of finding it rests in the realm of the time of God. In an early essay, 'The Relationship between Politics and Metaphysics', Eliot expresses his own concern over the quest for meaning outside history: 'if all meaning is human meaning, then there is no meaning. If you observe only human standards, what standards have you? History, if it is to be interpreted at all, must be interpreted from a point of view which puts itself outside the process.'[734] Such a point of view is consciously given in the

[729] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Selected Poems*, trans. Albert Ernest Flemming (New York and London: Methuen, 1983), p. 62. In a talk 'Die Einheit der europäischen Kultur', Eliot claims: 'without this French tradition [which starts with Baudelaire, and culminates in Paul Valéry] the work of three poets in other languages – and three very different from each other – I refer to W. B. Yeats, to Rainer Maria Rilke, and, if I may, to myself – would hardly be conceivable.' *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The War Years, 1940−1946*, last accessed 24 April 2019, p. 710.
[730] Stephen Spender, 'Rilke and the Angels, Eliot and the Shrines', *The Sewanee Review* 61 (1953), 579.
[731] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 181.
[732] Ibid., pp. 194-95.
[733] 'A Study of Eliot's More Recent Poetry', p. 478.
[734] T. S. Eliot, 'The Relationship between Politics and Metaphysics', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905–1918*, last accessed 25 April 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 99.

poem – so consciously that one may say the speaker is promoting it – in the repeated reference to 'the Annunciation'.

Nevertheless, introducing the Christian sign of salvation does not mean that the Buddhist worldview is to be quarantined, in case it contaminates the 'vision of orthodoxy' as Spender puts it.[735] On the contrary, the Buddhist worldview forms a background of despair upon which the need for divine grace to activate salvation is amply demonstrated. To be more precise, what is deemed problematic is, rather than the law of karma which maintains the cycle of reincarnation, the limitedness of human existence in it. It is worth noting that the kind of reincarnation in 'The Dry Salvages', presented with a sense of hollowness, is distinctively Buddhist, as no particular individual soul transmigrates from one human body to another. According to Ananda Coomaraswamy, whom Eliot highly praised for his capability to amalgamate Western and Eastern cultures, 'in the greater part of pre-Buddhist thought, and in all popular thought, […] the doctrine of metempsychosis, the passing of life from one form to another at death, is conceived animistically as the transmigration of an individual soul'.[736] In comparison, Buddhism emphasises non-self in reincarnation, that whatever remerges in the cycle of life and death, or samsara, does not have an individual identity. Coomaraswamy argues that the term samsara, which means wandering, 'is not for Gautama [the Buddha] the wandering of any *thing*. Buddhism nowhere teaches the transmigration of souls, but only the transmigration of character, of personality without a person'.[737] In the second movement of the poem, what is endlessly reincarnated is a set of patterns or forms, likewise without any specific and enduring subject, such as 'the soundless wailing' rather than anyone who wails, 'The silent withering of autumn flowers'

[735] 'Rilke and the Angels, Eliot and the Shrines', p. 579.
[736] Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916), p. 104. In a letter to Egon Vietta on 23 Feb 1947, Eliot writes that 'the late Dr. Coomaraswamy had some qualifications and much learning [who] approached the synthesis' of Eastern and Western religious thoughts. Quoted in Ricks and McCue's note to Movement III of 'The Dry Salvages', p. 976. Eliot even wrote a tribute to him: 'I am certainly an admirer of Dr. Coomaraswamy's work and I have found myself again and again in very close sympathy with his thought. I agree that his life-work should be honoured and that anything possible should be done which would make his work and his philosophy more widely known.' 'Tribute to Ananda K. Coomaraswamy', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: A European Society, 1947–1953,* last accessed 25 April 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 312.
[737] Coomaraswamy, p. 106.

rather than the flowers, and 'the drifting wreckage' rather than anyone who drowns.[738] The patterns reassert themselves in different circumstances as time flows, and the changes that time brings do not break the cycle.

The sense of wandering in a world of eternal change without any meaning or purpose is enhanced in the latter part of the second movement, in the dismissal of the idea of Darwinian evolution: 'development [is] a partial fallacy / Encouraged by superficial notions of evolution, / Which becomes, in the popular mind, a means of disowning the past.'[739] What the speaker sees is not development, but addition:

> There is no end, but addition: the trailing
> Consequence of further days and hours,
> While emotion takes to itself the emotionless
> Years of living among the breakage[740]

The phraseology is similar to that of Coomaraswamy when he clarifies the law of karma: 'nothing is transmitted but an impulse […] dependent on the heaping up of the past.[741] The cycle of reincarnation underpinned by the law of karma creates a world with two sides, one of eternal change, the other of re-emerging forms and patterns. Reincarnation determines that individual existence is trapped within the world of one circle of life and death. The consciousness of the individual cannot comprehend the world as an eternal flux with endless additions, but can only view it as more or less static and readily recognisable, constructed out of various forms and patterns. As the poem shows,

> We cannot think of a time that is oceanless

[738] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 194.
[739] Ibid., p. 196.
[740] Ibid., p. 195.
[741] Coomaraswamy, p. 107.

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

We have to think of them as forever bailing,
Setting and hauling[742]

The heaping up of negation results in a state of unending repetition. One has the feeling that the speaker takes the situation as not being ideal, a situation that calls for positive and affirmative intervention from outside, without which it will repeat itself endlessly, like a purposeless wanderer. Paul Foster interprets the situation from the perspective that the realm of samsara, or aimless wandering, is the realm of eternal suffering: 'We must, then, imagine the fishermen to be ever active […] We cannot think of them […] of setting forth to find themselves as mere shadows on an ocean of suffering, of coming face to face with the hazards of infinity's enormity'.[743] In other words, individual finite lives are ignorant of 'the hazards of infinity's enormity' which constitute their suffering. Towards the end of the second movement, the speaker presents a vision of eternal agony in reincarnation:

For our own past is covered by the currents of action,
But the torment of others remains an experience
Unqualified, unworn by subsequent attrition.
People change, and smile: but the agony abides.[744]

Agony is reincarnated, instead of the people in agony. That agony abides in the cycle of reincarnation is only half of the story, for the moments of 'sudden illumination', which are described as 'The moments of happiness', are 'likewise permanent'.[745] What is shown is the

[742] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 195.
[743] *The Golden Lotus*, p. 121.
[744] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 196.
[745] Ibid.

individual oscillating between timeless agony and timeless illumination; the oscillation is the deeper agony.

The sense of the limitedness of individual existence and personal effort can also be found in the last movement of 'East Coker': 'There is only the fight to recover what has been lost / And found and lost again and again […] / For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.'[746] What has been lost, such as the moments of sudden illumination, can only be recovered through reincarnation, but 'The Dry Salvages' adds that moments of agony pursue humanity through reincarnation as well. A fatalistic pattern emerges out of this picture of existence. Emphasising the significance of a pre-established outside pattern for Eliot, Spender argues that 'An ideal condition would be one in which there was neither past nor future, but a continuous present where men were absorbed in living the pattern imposed by the past'.[747] However, without a purpose, such a prison-like pattern can only be a nightmare, and one that endlessly reincarnates itself. The reoccurrence of the emergence and destruction of the forms of worldly objects is itself a grand pattern, which even includes the renunciation of worldly objects. From this perspective, individual existence, as a form, is merely the manifestation of the larger movement of the world in chronological time. Even prayer itself, with no response from the divine, is at risk of becoming one form or pattern in reincarnation. As the poet asks, 'Where is there an end to the drifting wreckage, / The prayer of the bone on the beach, the unprayable / Prayer at the calamitous annunciation?'[748] In the grand pattern, the clanging of the bell never stops, prayer never stops, but salvation, as something that may break the pattern, may never come. When the speaker asks anxiously 'Where is there an end of it [?]', it is like asking 'what is the key to breaking the pattern?' The prayer of the bone echoes the bones that pray to the mysterious Lady in 'Ash-Wednesday'. The poet claims: 'Let the whiteness of the bones atone to forgetfulness. / There is no life in them'.[749] The bones are damned, even though they pray. However, 'Because

[746] Ibid., p. 191.
[747] 'Rilke and the Angels, Eliot and the Shrines', p. 578.
[748] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 194.
[749] Ibid., p. 89.

of the goodness of this Lady' who 'honours the Virgin in meditation / [they] shine in brightness'.[750] Salvation, for Eliot, does not come as a consequence of mere prayer, but is given. A giver of salvation is needed to break the pattern, whose coming would be signified by the 'calamitous annunciation', calamitous in the sense that it would break the status quo. In a letter to Paul Elmer More on 12 February 1929, Eliot reveals that he found a 'void […] in the middle of all human happiness and all human relations, and which there is only one thing to fill. […] only Christianity helps to reconcile [him] to life, which is otherwise disgusting.'[751] To see all human happiness and all human relations as essentially hollow, without an enduring core, is Buddhist. Upon this Buddhist understanding of life the need for Christian salvation is founded. As Paul Murray puts it, 'A truly profound awareness of human agony, and of suffering in general [which] characterises the wisdom of both the Hindu and the Buddhist sages' pushes the poet to the realisation that 'One's only hope […] of attaining to a true liberation from the past, is […] the acceptance of a new path of enlightenment based on the direct and saving intervention of the Incarnate Word.'[752]

However, Murray's argument risks explaining away the significance of personal effort in Eliot's vision of salvation. The descent of divine grace is beyond human desire, but this does not lead to predestination. Smidt observes that 'the idea of the perfect efficaciousness of human effort rightly applied is implicit in all Oriental asceticism', though '[Eliot's] Christian orthodoxy prevents him from accepting it completely.'[753] Prayer, as one form of personal effort, still has a place in this poem, and it is emphatically the paradoxical 'unprayable Prayer'.[754] The word 'unprayable' suggests again the limitedness of individual existence, but as something that should be and can be done, prayer is the responsibility of those who would like to take part in the scheme of salvation. In the typescript of a review of Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur,* Eliot comments that

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[750] Ibid.
[751] *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 4*, pp. 432-33.
[752] Paul Murray, *T. S. Eliot and Mysticism* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 140.
[753] *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot*, p. 188.
[754] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 194.

> No doctrine […] assigns man complete responsibility, or complete irresponsibility, for his acts can be true to the facts […]. Of 'fatalism' in the modern sense there is none, any more than there is in the Mahabharata; but there is a belief in Fate, which is not the same thing.[755]

The *Mahabharata* is the Indian epic that includes the *Bhagavad-Gita* which inspires the third movement of 'The Dry Salvages'. Krishna's admonishment to Arjuna that he should act without thinking 'the fruit of action' can be regarded as the teaching on a man's responsibility to God.[756] To fulfil one's responsibility – praying for example – is to willingly fulfil the order of things ordained by God which includes one's ultimate salvation.

The third verse paragraph in the second movement offers a glimpse of such salvation:

> There is the final addition, the failing
> Pride or resentment at failing powers,
> The unattached devotion which might pass for devotionless,
> In a drifting boat with a slow leakage,
> The silent listening to the undeniable
> Clamour of the bell of the last annunciation.[757]

These lines sum up the blueprint of spiritual freedom from the world of chronological time. The persistent bell of the Annunciation makes a contrast with the failing powers of worldly existence. In Eliot's vision of salvation, one must ultimately respond to God so as to truly break the cycle of reincarnation. That is to say, one's responsibility, considering the ephemerality of worldly existence and the permanence of agony, is to God. Such unattached devotion to God is analogous to the Buddhist mind of non-attachment, but for Eliot to cultivate unattached devotion means to face the judgement of a God who is beyond good and evil. In a letter to Paul Elmer More on 2

[755] T. S. Eliot, 'Le Morte Darthur', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Tradition and Orthodoxy, 1934–1939*, last accessed 25 April 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 60.
[756] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 198.
[757] Ibid., p. 195.

June 1930, Eliot argues that 'To me, religion has brought at least the perception of something above morals […] the sense of something above happiness and therefore more terrifying than ordinary pain and misery'.[758] That sense of something above ordinary pain and misery is expressed at the end of the second movement, in the image of the ragged rock which is what the title 'The Dry Salvages' originally refers to:

> And the ragged rock in the restless waters,
> Waves wash over it, fogs conceal it;
> On a halcyon day it is merely a monument,
> In navigable weather it is always a seamark
> To lay a course by: but in the sombre season
> Or the sudden fury, is what it always was.[759]

If for a Buddhist the mind of non-attachment in Nirvana is the ultimate goal of spiritual training, the speaker sees beyond non-attachment itself: it is realisable only in the 'unattached devotion' to God. Such devotion requires that one must see through 'ordinary pain and misery' to find that which 'is what it always was', and accept it. On this point, in the same letter to Paul Elmer More on 2 June 1930, Eliot compares Christianity with Buddhism and stresses the need for both Heaven and Hell in his vision of salvation: 'I am really shocked by your assertion that God did not make Hell. It seems that you have lapsed into Humanitarianism. The Buddhist eliminates Hell […] only by eliminating everything positive about Heaven (*uttama paranibbana* being obviously not heaven).'[760] The term 'uttama paranibbana' refers to ultimate Nirvana at death: 'a total extinction of all conventional physical and mental existence […] and [the eradication of] all the causes that would lead to any prospect of future birth.'[761] In other words, ultimate Nirvana would leave both Heaven and Hell empty, as the subject who may suffer in Hell or be blessed in Heaven would

[758] *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 5*, p. 210.
[759] *The Poems of T. S Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 196.
[760] *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 5*, pp. 209-10.
[761] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.

disappear. In 'An Emotional Unity: A review of Selected Letters, 1896-1924, by Baron Friedrich von Hügel' (1928), Eliot particularly points out that 'When [Hügel] criticizes Buddhism (e.g. on page 364) he is admirable in his combination of sympathy with firm Christianity.'[762] Hügel's remarks on that page that may have caught Eliot's eyes are as follows: 'at least primitive Buddhism is without any conviction or idea of God. […] Their longing for Nirvana [… is] penetrated with a sense of mere change and hence of pure desolation […] because they have the dim, inarticulate sense of what the Abiding means that the mere slush of change is so sickening'.[763] Eliot makes similar comments in 'A Commentary' (April 1932): 'The Buddhist may become merged in nirvana; but that is a voluntary extinction, accomplished by the most arduous self-discipline, not a salvation from individuality imposed upon him by society'.[764] In other words, the relation between the individual and an impersonal form of existence must be kept, or salvation would be meaningless, for there would be no one to be salvaged in the realm of ultimate Nirvana which is a world of pure non-self. Eliot notes that as a religion, even 'Buddhism endured by becoming as distinctly a religion as Christianity – recognizing a dependence of the human upon the divine'.[765] Such dependence, on the side of the human, vouchsafes the efficacy of human effort. After Movement II expresses the need for the divine upon which the human can rely, Movement III unfolds around an Indian model of such a dependence – Krishna's revelation to Arjuna.

Although the presentation continues, of the world soaking in the current of eternal change, in Movement III, the revelation of Krishna shows that the ephemerality of the world in chronological time is inherently connected to the divine. An essential message one may receive from the vision is that there is one true God, the God of eternal change. The sense of the

[762] T. S. Eliot, 'An Emotional Unity: A review of Selected Letters, 1896-1924, by Baron Friedrich von Hügel', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Literature, Politics, Belief, 1927–1929*, last accessed 26 April 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 339.
[763] Baron Friedrich von Hügel, *Selected Letters, 1896-1924, by Baron Friedrich von Hügel*, ed. Bernard Holland (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1927), p. 364.
[764] T. S. Eliot, 'A Commentary' (April 1932), *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: English Lion, 1930–1933*, last accessed 26 April 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 459.
[765] T. S. Eliot, 'The Humanism of Irving Babbitt', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Literature, Politics, Belief, 1927–1929*, last accessed 26 April 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 456.

ephemerality of existence is pushed to its limit: 'You cannot face it steadily, but this thing is sure, / That time is no healer: the patient is no longer here'.[766] Individual existence becomes a perpetual process of re-settlement. Distraction means attachment, which is also new settlement. Enduring pain is a state; relief from pain is another – individuals are the prisoners of the ever-changing circumstance of life. It is not that one ventures through time, but that time ventures through individual existence. 'Fare forward, travellers!' can also be 'Fare forward, time!' With such a perspective, the speaker warns the reader through the voice of Krishna: 'You shall not think "the past is finished" / Or "the future is before us"', because they are forever crossing us.[767] Individual existence is forever coming from the past that cannot be absolutely got rid of and forever voyaging towards the future that always remains a tantalising glimpse. The 'fruit of action' never belongs to anyone, for everyone is changing ceaselessly. A very similar description can be found in Buddhist scripture: 'No doer is there does the deed, / Nor is there one who feels the fruit; Constituent parts alone roll on'.[768] Time's crossing even hypnotises the individual. Flowing from one hour to another, time is like the pocket watch that keeps swaying in front of those who are distracted by one thought after another. The mind is distracted, but the entire being of the individual is also distracted from the previous state. In the realm of the eternal present moment, to move in any direction is to move forward. Sri argues that 'Our individuality is no proof against the sea's elemental life-force'.[769] Any egotistic movement, purpose, or wish, is illusory, for our whole being is carried along by the great force of eternal change.

The ruthless reign of the force of eternal change in time heightens the necessity for unattached devotion to the timeless. In other words, human efficacy is acknowledged, in the relationship between the human and the divine. If in Movement II the divine and the worldly are presented as separate, the Annunciation on the one hand and the endless cycle of reincarnation on the other, in Movement III one's relationship with time becomes that with God. In other words,

[766] *The Poems of T. S Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 197.
[767] Ibid., p. 197.
[768] *Buddhism in Translations*, p. 248.
[769] *T. S. Eliot, Vedanta and Buddhism*, p. 100.

to deal with time is to deal with God. The relationship between Arjuna the man and Krishna the God is summed up by Sri, who sees it as 'man's intimate association with both time and eternality'.[770] He goes on to emphasise the importance of the present for the forming of the association: 'we are caught up in our regrets about the past or in our worries about the future that we are never quite conscious of the innocence and promise of the present'.[771] The present is ignored by those whose minds are occupied with time future or time past, and Krishna's admonishment is to remind Arjuna that only the present is real: 'this is your real destination.'[772] To focus on the present, in *Bhagavad-Gita,* means to devote oneself to the contemplation of the one true God: 'His heart being unattached to outer object, he finds the joy that is in the Self'.[773] By doing so, the oneness of the two spheres (time and the timeless) is achieved. Such oneness, though put forward in a background of Indian thought, prepares for the presentation of the Incarnation in the last movement. Evelyn Underhill, whose work Eliot read studiously, explains in *Mysticism* that the Incarnation is 'also a perpetual Cosmic and personal process. It is an everlasting bringing forth, in the universe and also in the individual ascending soul, of the divine and perfect [human] Life.'[774] This idea corresponds with the description of the true nature of the Buddha in Eliot's notes: 'Buddha's eternal life does not mean remaining always the same, but implies a constant activity'.[775] Such a constant activity suggests that the divine manifests itself not in a static image at a specific time, but that its revelation is an endless process. In this sense, the Incarnation can be interpreted as symbolising a kind of spiritual experience accessible to individuals at any moment in time, and the interaction between Krishna and Arjuna can be taken as one example:

[770] Ibid.
[771] Ibid.
[772] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 198.
[773] Swami Nikhilananda, trans. *Bhagavad-Gita* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, 1944), p. 174.
[774] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (London: Methuen, 1912), p. 141. According to Note 15 to 'Beyle and Balzac: A review of A History of the French Novel, to the Close of the Nineteenth Century', Eliot 'had read and kept note cards on Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism* (1911)', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: the Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, last accessed 26 April 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 53.
[775] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 19 December 1913.

> At the moment which is not of action or inaction
> You can receive this: "on whatever sphere of being
> The mind of a man may be intent
> At the time of death"—that is the one action
> (And the time of death is every moment)[776]

The eternity of the divine Self is manifested in what Underhill calls the 'everlasting bringing forth' of the worldly self. As Murray puts it, the 'eternal end' where one accesses the Self in God is 'ever still and always present'.[777] The use of the communication between Krishna and Arjuna reveals the poet's attempt, as Kristian Smidt puts it, 'to reconcile the reliance on divine grace with the reliance on human effort'.[778] Although Buddhism puts more emphasis on the efficacy of individual effort, the end of the reconciliation, that oneness of time and the timeless, is also a goal of Buddhist spiritual training.

From the Buddhist perspective, the reconciliation means, to use Kearns's words, 'to restore to the here and now its full dimension of importance'.[779] The here and now is the ground on which the speaker intuitively experiences the timeless: 'Here between the hither and the farther shore / While time is withdrawn, consider the future / And the past with an equal mind'.[780] The image of the further shore is reminiscent of the Buddhist symbol of the other shore which represents Nirvana. The stress on the significance of the here and now suggests that Nirvana does not lie in a different world other than this one. The experience of '[considering] the future / And the past with an equal mind', according to Foster, signifies a state of enlightenment 'in which all there is is the present, one of complete "choiceless awareness", of absolute presence of mind, without even the will to maintain the condition'.[781] To think that 'this is action' is as discriminative as the thought that 'this is non-action'. The relinquishing of the fruit of action

[776] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 198.
[777] *T. S. Eliot and Mysticism*, p. 48.
[778] *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot*, p. 189.
[779] Kearns, p. 109.
[780] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 198.
[781] *The Golden Lotus*, p. 128.

grants one the inner freedom from obsession with the fruit, which is freedom from both discrimination and time. A non-attached mind is beyond all form of dichotomy, which denotes the mind in Nirvana. As it is pointed out in Chapter 6, Nirvana in its etymology means the completion of a process of dying out, as 'when a flame is blown out by the wind'.[782] To 'be intent / At the moment of death' may allude to the experience of Nirvana at physical death, which is the aforementioned 'uttama paranibbana'. The word 'intent' indicates a state of high concentration of the mind, similar to meditation. Kearns points out that 'Eliot's word "intent" captures brilliantly both the sense of "purpose" and that of "concentration" involved in this detachment' from the world.[783] At that moment, the mind dwells in non-attachment, but it is by no means unconscious. The mind of non-attachment that persists in time cannot be gained without spiritual training and personal effort. The *Anguttara Nikaya* records the Buddha's teaching on 'noble mindfulness and clear comprehension', that 'Having cognized a mental phenomenon with the mind, [one] does not grasp at its marks and features. Since, if he left the mind faculty unrestrained, bad unwholesome states of longing and dejection might invade him, he practices restraint over it'.[784] In the mind of attentiveness, every moment witnesses both the life and the death of the mental phenomena that may fascinate the mind and blind it. Such a moment of death is also the moment of new birth.

If the interaction between Krishna and Arjuna merges the vision of eternal change and the vision of timeless existence, in the last two movements the poet offers 'hints and guesses' about the eternal life beyond personal struggle in the cycle of rebirth.[785] When the noise of worldly concerns calms down, the sound of the perpetual angelus emerges. The angelus that denotes the 'real destination' is always resounding through the sea of time, but most voyagers are ignorant of it, being preoccupied with worldly endeavours. The moment when 'time is withdrawn' is also the moment when the mind is withdrawn from distractions caused by worldly endeavours.

[782] *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[783] Kearns, p. 248.
[784] *Anguttara Nikaya*, p. 584.
[785] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 200.

The plane of salvation and the plane of suffering are the same. It can be accessed at any moment of time, just as one can be wakened up at any point of a dream. Suggestions can be found, of a dream that permeates the poem, in lines such as 'His rhythm was present in the nursery bedroom' (Movement I), 'To the sleepy rhythm of a hundred hours' (Movement III), and 'To explore the womb, or womb, or dreams' (Movement V).[786] It seems that only the perpetual angelus can wake the dreamers up, to a new world governed by a different kind of time. In Buddhism, the Buddha 'awakens to' the knowledge that 'All conditioned phenomena are impermanent […] are suffering […] are non-self', which is consistent to the vision of worldly existence in this poem.[787] Besides the ultimate awakening, the Buddha also talks about the more ordinary experience of staying awake. Among the kinds of people who 'sleep little at night but mostly keep awake' are 'A woman intent on a man' and a monk 'intent on severing the bonds'.[788] Penelope's repeated labour of weaving and unweaving, as alluded to in the first movement, is certainly intentional, and she stays awake 'Between midnight and dawn […] When time stops and time is never ending'.[789] Her awareness of time echoes the experience of being intent on the eternal moment of death as explained in the last paragraph. However, the Eliotic version of Penelope's case serves to exemplify the death of hope, as she represents 'Women who have seen their son or husbands / Setting forth, and not returning'.[790] They fail to hear the 'sound of the sea bell's / Perpetual angelus', and therefore the flow of time, no matter how long, is meaningless.[791] The end of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' also presents such a kind of death: 'Till human voices wake us, and we drown.'[792] Real awakening, in this poem, means to hear the angelus of the Annunciation, which signifies the death of the world of human voices and the ultimate rebirth into eternal life where the divine angelus sounds perpetually.

[786] Ibid, p. 193; p. 197; p. 199.
[787] *Anguttara Nikaya*, pp. 363-64.
[788] Ibid., p. 751.
[789] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 194.
[790] Ibid., p. 199.
[791] Ibid.
[792] Ibid., p. 9.

Prayer, which is much stressed in Movement IV, becomes the medium through which one can stay awake to the angelus. It will not change the fact that the women's sons and husbands are 'not returning'. The Lady's shrine stands on the promontory, watching those who voyage out into the sea, not returning. She seems to know that any prayer would not change their fate, but she prays for them still, as if it is more a gesture of faith than a practical means to rescue anything. It is the prayer that transcends phenomena of this world and is directed to the timeless divinity. In *Purgatorio* VI, when Dante questions the efficacy of prayer, seeing 'all those shades, / whose only prayer it was that others pray / and speed them on to blessedness', Virgil explains that 'defect was not made good by [practical] prayer / because that prayer did not ascend to God.'[793] Eliot, who had a keen eye for Buddhist elements that can be discussed within a Christian context, discovered a similar case of prayer in relation to Buddhism. Reviewing *'Noh' or Accomplishment: A Study of the Classical Stage of Japan* by Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound, he quotes the following passage:

> Tsure. I say they were very fine prayers. I will not come back without a struggle.
>
> Shite. I've a sad heart to see you looking up to Buddha, you who left me alone, I diving in the black rivers of hell. Will soft prayers be a comfort to you . . .?[794]

It can be argued that prayer purifies the minds of those who selflessly pray in various circumstances of worldly life. A strikingly similar case of praying in hell can also be found in Eliot's Buddhist materials from Anesaki's lectures: 'If you might fall to the hells because of your grave sins […] I will surely be in the hells together with you. If you and I were in the hells, Sakya Buddha and the Scripture will surely be there together with us.'[795] This Buddhist prayer is closely related to strong faith in the Buddha and his teaching, which makes dire circumstances endurable

[793] Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio,* trans. Jean Hollander and Robert Hollander (New York: Random House, 2003), p. 121.
[794] T. S. Eliot, 'The Noh and the Image', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905–1918,* last accessed 24 April 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 564.
[795] Houghton Library, on the handout that begins with 'the idea of the Universal Church'.

for those who prays. W. H. Auden observes that 'Whenever a man so concentrates his attention—be it on a landscape, or a poem or a geometrical problem or an idol or the True God—that he completely forgets his own ego and desires in listening to what the other has to say to him, he is praying.'[796] That is to say, prayer can be related to spiritual purification that leads to the state of non-self. In this sense, the practice of mental concentration in Buddhist meditation can also be regarded as a kind of prayer. According to Eliot's notes, one the one hand, 'One's mind is purified by meditation on this sunyata' or emptiness of worldly life; on the other, one can realise 'Purification of the mind through faith in Buddha'.[797] In Buddhism, faith and prayer are integrated, and they are necessary for disciples to genuinely understand the Buddha's teaching: 'Whatever might happen to you, arouse a strong faith and pray in sincerity […] Vain is holding the Lotus of the Truth without this heritage of faith'.[798]

Eliot's awareness of the relationship between Buddhist meditation that leads to non-self and prayer may shed light on the tendency towards depersonalisation in 'The Dry Salvages'. When the speaker prays for the people on the sea of time, he is at the same time asking the Lady to do so. By imperatively inviting the Lady, the speaker downplays the importance of the personality of the one who prays. His personal compassion for others gains the universal power of impersonal divinity through the Lady. One can discern the same poetic force that vitalises 'Ash-Wednesday', which is the worship of a highly symbolic lady through whom prayer becomes valid. Selfless prayer is one way to fare forward without the thought 'of the fruit of action'. When it becomes an end in itself – that is, it is not for any worldly purpose – it is the integration of action and inaction. In this sense, it is also the speaker's vehicle to arrive at the other shore. In Jahan Ramazani's words, prayer is 'ultimately to cross empirical truth with belief'.[799] The Lady represents an impersonal perspective of looking at the world of empirical truth, or the realm of worldly existence. She stands at the intersection of the shore of salvation with the sea of time.

[796] W. H. Auden, *Prose, Volume VI: 1969-1973*, ed. Edward Mendelson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 694.
[797] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 14 November 1913.
[798] Ibid., on the handout titled 'The Heritage of the Sole Great Thing of Life and Death'.
[799] Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry and its Others: News, Prayer, Song, and the Dialogue of Genres* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2014), p. 127.

Every moment and everywhere in the dimension of this shore could be the point of the intersection. Kearns puts forward a Buddhist version of such intersection, that ultimately 'samsara is (or is not different from) nirvana'.[800] It echoes the claim that can be found in one of Eliot's Buddhist handouts: 'there is Bodhi even in depravities and Nirvana even in life and death.'[801] For the speaker, the world of this shore can become the other shore only because the angelus of the Annunciation can be heard by those who are willing to empty their minds in prayer.

The purpose of the prayer, if any, is to 'pray for those who were' wherever 'the sound of the sea bell's / Perpetual angelus' cannot reach them, which is altruistic.[802] In other words, it is the prayer for the ignorant, a genuine wish that they can hear the angelus. When one hears it, ignorance is expelled. A new level of consciousness dawns, which is awareness of the timeless in time. To use Moody's words, 'This adds a new dimension to the agony' which is 'being in a state of illumination' while 'suffering [from] one's fate' of enchainment in time.[803] The new agony is the agony of someone who knows that most of us are suffering but are at the same time ignorant of the fact. It points to a higher level of consciousness. As Kashi Nath Upadhyaya observes in *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgita*, 'What is desirable and pleasant for a man with normal sensory knowledge, may be quite undesirable and painful to the man with paranormal vision'.[804] On such a new level of consciousness, the contemplation of timeless existence finally leads to the concern over the agony of the individual. As Balachandra Rajan points out, 'Eliot too knows that our responsibility is to ordain wisely and to act rightly in this world of good and evil in which we are placed'.[805] To explore how to ordain wisely and act rightly is the central concern of the final movement.

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[800] Kearns, p. 109.
[801] Houghton Library, on the handout titled 'The Heritage of the Sole Great Thing of Life and Death'.
[802] Ibid., p. 199.
[803] *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet*, p. 230.
[804] Kashi Nath Upadhyaya, *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgita* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971), p. 162.
[805] *The Overwhelming Question*, p. 119.

Right action is a key concept that the last movement mainly responds to, which, as the speaker admonishes in a tone similar to Krishna's, 'is freedom / From past and future also'.[806] Right action, or right effort, is one constituent of the Buddhist 'noble eightfold path' towards Nirvana.[807] It is about both the abandoning of 'unwholesome mental states' and the generating of 'wholesome mental states'.[808] The last movement opens with a series of wrong action which cannot lead the practitioner to spiritual salvation:

> To 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[809]

One may also think of Madame Sosostris in *The Waste Land* who 'had a bad cold' and a pack of tarot cards and Madame de Tornquist in 'Gerontion' who was probably practising theosophy 'in the dark room / Shifting the candles'.[810] Buddhism also condemns similar acts. As the *Digha Nikaya* records, 'Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins, feeding on the food of the faithful, make their living by such base arts […] as palmistry, divining by signs, portents, dreams, body-marks […] reading the finger-tips […] the ascetic [Buddha] refrains from such base arts'.[811] To search for the timeless actively, with any tool outside the self, is bound to fail. The acts and the tools are also distractions that bind the seekers to the sphere of time. Instead of attempting to 'riddle the

[806] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 200.
[807] '[T]he path that brings an end to the causes of suffering', *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[808] Ibid.
[809] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 199.
[810] Ibid., p. 56; p. 32.
[811] Maurice Walshe, trans. *The Long Discourses of the Buddha, a Translation of the Digha Nikaya*, (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 1995), pp. 71-72; Eliot quotes from the *Digha Nikaya* in a letter to Ezra Pound on 22 December 1936, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 8*, p. 417.

inevitable', the Buddha teaches that 'It is, monks, for elementary, inferior matters of moral practice that the worldling would praise the [Buddha].'[812] The poem expresses that what most of us can do, when the epiphanic moment of self-surrender in love is gone, is 'prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action'.[813] Moral practice and self-discipline train and harness one's manners in daily life, but the more effective surrender of the personal to the impersonal occurs when one is possessed by a kind of love that is overwhelmingly penetrating: 'Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender. / […] / lost in a shaft of sunlight, / The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning'.[814] The experience is close to Buddhist compassionate love, or loving-kindness, which also results in the death of the egotistic self.[815] It begins 'with wishing for happiness for oneself, and then [extends] that wish to others.'[816] In the end, it leads to what Coomaraswamy calls 'the identity of (true) self-interest with the (true) interest of others.'[817] For those who are capable of selfless love, the sea of time is also the sea of love. Such a kind of love is analogous to the universal compassion of the Bodhisattva, a type of saviour-like model in Buddhism, who 'firmly refuses to accept the final release' into Nirvana, for the salvation of 'all sentient beings'.[818] Eliot was certainly familiar with the Buddhist messiah figures, from Edwin Arnold's version of the Buddha to the compassionate Bodhisattvas who, as he himself noted, 'come to save others' and are known particularly for their 'practice of saving others'.[819] Thus it can be argued that Buddhist compassion adds a new dimension, that of non-self, to the idea of love in Eliot's poetry.

At the end of 'The Dry Salvages', the speaker, in a similar selfless spirit, seems to renounce his wish for salvation, or for the eternal dwelling in Nirvana:

> For most of us, this is the aim

[812] *Digha Nikaya*, p. 68.
[813] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 200.
[814] Ibid.
[815] For more discussion on Buddhist compassion see the chapter on *The Waste Land*.
[816] *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[817] Coomaraswamy, p. 229.
[818] Ibid.
[819] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 5 December 1913.

Never here to be realised;
Who are only undefeated
Because we have gone on trying;
We, content at the last
If our temporal reversion nourish
(Not too far from the yew-tree)
The life of significant soil.[820]

However, Nirvana lies exactly in the act of such renunciation. It is the renunciation of attachment to the imagined blessed state. The humility of the speaker, in his choice to be one member of 'most of us' and adopt the pronoun 'we', does not mean, as Leavis argues, 'the refusal of responsibility'.[821] On the contrary, he abandons the wish to gain the glory of becoming one of those who 'apprehend / the point of intersection of the timeless / With time', only to shift his focus to those who are suffering in worldly existence, and to stay with them.[822] For them, the hints of the intersection are in most of the time guessed, not wholly revealed, so what one can do is to preserve and go on creating such hints and guesses so that more and more people of 'most of us' can have a glimpse of the intersection and realise that worldly existence, with both suffering and enjoyment in the flow of time, is not all. The humility in renunciation echoes the second verse paragraph in the second movement in which the speaker sees the most reliable in worldly existence as 'the fittest for renunciation'.[823] In this sense, renunciation is the only right prayer at the 'calamitous annunciation'. It should be a thorough renunciation, which leads one to act without being preoccupied with any goal and to pray without attachment. To use Kearns's words, it is to be 'still with detachment, but with engagement as well, on the side conceived as right'.[824] Such renunciation is consistent with the Buddhist mind of non-attachment. It reveals a higher level of spiritual awareness than those who egotistically crave for the blessed state. To a mind of non-attachment, even such craving should be abandoned. To go on nourishing the soil of

[820] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 200.
[821] *The Living Principle*, p. 234.
[822] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 199.
[823] Ibid., p. 195.
[824] Kearns, p. 241.

spirituality without the concern of any result can be seen as a right act that transcends time. The trying is the successful realisation of its purpose, and selfless prayer is the most important trying that the speaker proposes, in order to connect with the divine. Kearns argues that in 'The Dry Salvages' Eliot prefers 'the path of the devotee over the path of the sage', but sage could be devotional as well.[825] As St Augustine puts it, 'Behold, piety is wisdom'.[826] When the devotees are performing acts of devotion, their state of devotion is a state of life the sages approve and even share. To go on trying is to maintain the devotional soul. In the act of trying, the devotee and the sage are one.

Selfless prayer as the right action to discipline the personal and enter communion with the divine also points to the wellbeing of other individuals who constitute a communal existence. Eliot observes in 'Civilization: The Nature of Cultural Relations' that 'The culture of a people is not a construction, but a growth. Like *agri*culture, it is something formed over a long period of time by cooperation of man with his environment'.[827] Every attempt to experience the intersection of the timeless with time would improve the environment, which, as a result of the improvement, will lead others in the same community to make more attempts. To some degree, the nourishers of the soil are also part of the soil, and the act of nourishing is also nourishment. Eliot's spiritual focus, in the end, moves back to the collective efforts of the individuals in time. As it is painstakingly demonstrated in most of the poem, time itself does not care about human misery, and thus it is essentially what the individual can do in time that concerns the poet. The speaker's insight into the law of karma ensures that the impact of personal effort would not die as the individuals die. As Coomaraswamy puts it from the perspective of Buddhist compassion but with terms familiar to Christians, 'whoever accomplishes a good deed, such as a work of charity or a pilgrimage, adds the prayer that the merit may be shared by all sentient beings.'[828] In this sense, faith in Christian salvation does not contradict the Buddhist pursuit for impersonal existence or

[825] Ibid., p. 249.
[826] *Confessions*, book VIII, 2, p. 134.
[827] T. S. Eliot, 'Civilization: The Nature of Cultural Relations', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The War Years, 1940−1946*, last accessed 25 April 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 424.
[828] Coomaraswamy, p. 231.

the state of non-self. In 'Goethe as the Sage' Eliot claims that 'wisdom is […] the same for all men everywhere. If it were not so, what profit could a European gain from the Upanishads, or the Buddhist Nikayas'.[829] In this poem the common wisdom that transcends doctrinal difference is close to what Murray calls 'The real contemplative or mystical gift', which is 'not so much the ability to transcend the limitations and the horror of time – in order thereby to escape into the realm of the Timeless – but rather the grace and the strength "To apprehend the point of intersection of the Timeless *with* time"'.[830] In the right action to nourish the significant soil, efforts in time ultimately lead to timeless spiritual salvation. Therefore, in right action the Christian devotee and the Buddhist sage are one.

[829] T. S. Eliot, 'Goethe as the Sage', *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 226.
[830] Murray, p. 106.

Chapter 8: New Life of the Timeless Soul in 'Little Gidding'

While 'The Dry Salvages' observes emphatically the reincarnation of human agony, in 'Little Gidding', reincarnation is not limited to the Buddhist vision of returning to human suffering. It becomes the renewal of the guidance of the timeless. It is willingly conducted, and points to a new order of existence different from the one the individual is born into. The reincarnation into the order of the timeless does not mean that the experience of living in a savage modern world disappears. On the contrary, the new circumstance of existence, such as the wartime London in the poem, helps create a unique interpretation of the timeless. In this process, the speaker acquires a double identity. He is not only his 'given self' shaped by the circumstance of existence contemporary to him, but is also, paradoxically, a self-constructed self. Such doubleness of identity offers him a perspective that seems impersonal but not indifferent. Similarly, Buddhism does not emphasise the oneness of different incarnations in an absolute God, but focuses on seeing the general condition of existence manifest in different incarnations from the past to the present. In other words, the Buddhist interpretation of reincarnation insists on the order of time. It is reflected in the compound ghost. The dead masters who merge into the compound ghost form a literary tradition which enriches itself through a string of reincarnations; they contribute their own personal experience of and insight into spiritual salvation to the impersonal tradition.

The impersonal becomes alive and is present only through the personal, and Eliot is already aware of this particular significance of the personal in his early paper, 'Leibniz's Monads and Bradley's Finite Centres'. He observes that the Bradleyan Absolute consists of different viewpoints or finite centres which 'aim at being one; each expanded to completion, to the full reality latent within it, would be identical with the whole universe. But in so doing it would lose the actuality, the here and now, which is essential to the small reality which it actually

achieves.'[831] The emphasis on personal experience of spiritual salvation is also shared by Buddhism, as the top priority of Buddhism, Nirvana, does not mean becoming the Absolute, but the cessation of personal suffering as the result of 'the extinction of the flame of desire'.[832] Eliot's concern over the condition of individual existence has an extra dimension, which insists on the necessity of self-surrender to the Absolute in order to safeguard the vitality of personal sensibility: 'you would have to put off / Sense and notion', yes, but 'You are here to kneel'.[833] In this way, Buddhist asceticism and Christian faith in God are integrated. In the poem, the delicate balance between the vision of the whole universe and personal reality of the here and now is presented in 'Little Gidding' as a dynamic conversation.

The unique season that opens the poem witnesses the poet's effort to strive for the integration of worldly reality and the vision of the otherworldly:

> Midwinter spring is its own season
> […]
> Suspended in time, between pole and tropic.
> […] This is the spring time
> But not in time's covenant. Now the hedgerow
> Is blanched for an hour with transitory blossom
> Of snow, a bloom more sudden
> Than that of summer, neither budding nor fading,
> Not in the scheme of generation.[834]

Sri's definition of the season is full of paradoxes: 'it is both momentary and unforgettable, temporal and eternal, in time and out of time – a present where past and future are gathered and opposites are reconciled'.[835] One more paradox can be added, that the season is both an end and

[831] T. S. Eliot, 'Leibniz's Monads and Bradley's Finite Centres', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905–1918*, last accessed 9 Sept 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 465.
[832] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[833] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 202.
[834] Ibid., p. 201.
[835] *T. S. Eliot, Vedanta and Buddhism*, p. 96.

a beginning, as winter and spring are brought together. The term ‘Midwinter spring’ is succinct and carries with it a sense of self-justification that defies definition. Standing as the first phrase of the whole poem, it attempts to trigger in the reader a sense of things as they are, or the sense of the authority of its own existence. By saying that it is ‘its own season’, the poet rejects categorisation: it is a season, but it does not precede or succeed any of the four seasons. It is as it is. However, season, by definition, is seasonal, with a beginning and an end. By adding that it is ‘the spring time / But not in time’s covenant’, such a season becomes a period of ‘time not our time’, which is reminiscent of the perpetual divine angelus in ‘The Dry Salvages’.[836] By bringing together opposites such as ‘frost and fire’, the poet creates a timeless compound vision that fuses and perpetuates seasonal phenomena.[837] The intersection of time and the timeless is achieved by bringing all time into the same instant. In other words, all reincarnations of spring and winter are fused in the one timeless incarnation that creates the unique season of Midwinter spring.

The timeless season as both an end and a beginning embodies what is illustrated in the rest of the first movement, the idea of ‘the world’s end’:

> If you came this way,
> Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
> At any time or at any season,
> It would always be the same[838]

One may argue that the imaginary season is a medium through which the poet catches a glimpse of the otherworldly end of this world. As Eliot puts in ‘Ash-Wednesday’, ‘Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something / Upon which to rejoice’.[839] What it leads to is an ultimate common end. The Buddha also talks about the world’s end in the *Anguttara Nikaya*. Since there is ‘no

[836] Ibid., p. 194.
[837] Ibid.
[838] Ibid., p. 202.
[839] Ibid., p. 87.

release from suffering' in the world of life and death, 'the wise one, the world-knower, who has reached the world's end and lived the spiritual life, having known the world's end, at peace, does not desire this world or another.'[840] In this sense, the world's end is not geographically definable, as 'There are other places / Which also are the world's end' where one can 'put off / Sense and notion' and be freed of the secular world of endless attachments.[841] Interestingly, the doxology 'Gloria Patri' from *The Book of Common Prayer* of the Church of England implies a different world which has no end: 'Glory be to the Father and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.'[842] Such a world of divine grace does not contradict the Buddhist vision of the end of the secular world, as both require purification. In its Latin version, 'world without end' is 'in sæcula sæculorum', which literally means 'into ages of ages'. It suggests that the grace of God is accessible in the endless cycle of life and death. One may argue that to pray at the world's end merges the Buddhist version of salvation with the Christian one.

The second movement offers a more realistic version of the world's end, namely its physical destruction in war. The poet breaks down the boundary between the facades of things and what they really are, and as a result the atmosphere for the meeting with the compound ghost is amply prepared. As David Crane observes, 'The time-bound and the eternal, the natural and the supernatural are entwined with each other.'[843] The supernatural, or rather that which transcends the natural, is not in any of the images, but in the poet's bringing together the formation, the duration, and then the end of natural objects: 'Dust inbreathed was a house – / The wall, the wainscot and the mouse'.[844] Objects are always imprisoned in normality, but the relations between them are the hints that lead the speaker to see beyond that normality which Buddhism regards as illusory and deceptive. In this way, the speaker sees burnt roses in 'Ash on an old

[840] *Anguttara Nikaya*, pp. 435-36.
[841] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 202.
[842] *The Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 21.
[843] David Crane, *On Eliot's Four Quartets* (Durham: The New Century Press, 1987), p 109.
[844] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 203.

man's sleeve', similar to the Buddhist vision of seeing at once one's endless reincarnations.[845] And what the vision implies is more than the ephemerality of all objects. 'Dust in the air suspended' may remind us of what the speaker describes about the midwinter spring, that it is 'Suspended in time'.[846] Murray observes that 'Eliot's almost obsessional horror of the transient world, his persistent desire […] to attain to a point of stillness or changelessness, brings him close to the "negative" spirituality of Buddhism'.[847] It should be pointed out that the point of stillness as presented in both the vision of the midwinter spring and the dust 'in the air suspended' does not signify a world completely cut off from the world in time. The midwinter spring exists not in time or in the realm of absolute stillness, but in that suspension of time, so does the meeting with the compound ghost, and, to look backwards, so does the moment of the hyacinth garden in *The Waste Land*. Even earlier, Prufrock is drawn to 'chambers of the sea' only before human voices wake him and put an end to the suspension.

The pursuit of the suspension rather than the Absolute, to some extent, is a consistent spiritual goal throughout Eliot's poetic career. Salvation does not mean escaping the chain of time and becoming identified with the Absolute, as freedom from reincarnation does not mean freedom from existence in the flow of time. What the speaker presents is a perspective that sees time on a cosmic scale, which witnesses even 'the death of air', 'the death of earth', and 'the death of water and fire'.[848] It corresponds to the Buddhist cosmology as recorded in the *Visuddhimagga*, or *The Path of Purification*: 'there are three kinds of contraction [of the world]: contraction due to water, contraction due to fire, and contraction due to air'.[849] Murray argues that 'To my knowledge Eliot never referred directly to the *Visuddhimagga* […] But we can, I think, be fairly certain that he was familiar with the poem. It was, in fact, one of the early Buddhist texts critically edited by Henry Clarke Warren and brought out after his death by Eliot's tutor at Harvard, C. R.

[845] Ibid., p. 202.
[846] Ibid., p. 201.
[847] *T. S. Eliot and Mysticism*, p. 128.
[848] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 203.
[849] Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga, The Path of Purification*, trans. Bhikkhu Nanamoli (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1975), p. 455.

Lanman.' [850] What is more, the *Visuddhimagga* was compiled by Buddhaghosa, whose commentary on the *Anguttara Nikaya* is on the list of Eliot's Harvard courses.[851] Therefore, Eliot might have had some knowledge of the *Visuddhimagga*. With such a cosmic viewpoint, the speaker sees all things as ultimately one, not immanent in each other, but on the same string of karma. It echoes the Buddha's remembrance of his previous incarnations: 'he recollects his manifold past lives […], many eons of cosmic contraction, many eons of cosmic expansion, many eons of cosmic contraction and expansion'.[852] The Buddha's manifold past is parallel to Eliot's compound ghost. The dead masters in the compound ghost represent a string of past incarnations of the same literary tradition. The tradition speaks to the new artist, but any one of the masters does not equal the entire tradition. Each master, being one incarnation of the tradition, can be regarded as one suspension of time, through whom the timeless values of the tradition are manifest.

Immediately after the cosmic vision and before the meeting with the compound ghost is an exceptionally long sentence that boldly temporises the impending encounter, as if time suddenly slows down and clots:

> In the uncertain hour before the morning
> Near the ending of interminable night
> At the recurrent end of the unending
> After the dark dove with the flickering tongue
> Had passed below the horizon of his homing
> While the dead leaves still rattled on like tin
> Over the asphalt where no other sound was
> Between three districts whence the smoke arose
> I met one walking, loitering and hurried[853]

[850] Murray, p.146.
[851] From 1912 to 1913, Eliot was enrolled on a course of Indic Philology: 'Indic Philology 4, Pail, Prof Charles Rockwell Lanman. Selections from the sacred books of Buddhism: Jatakas, Buddhaghosa's Commentary on the *Anguttara Nikaya*', lists of courses taken by Eliot at Harvard, King's College Archive Centre, Cambridge, The Papers of the Hayward Bequest of T. S. Eliot Material, HB.
[852] C. P. Sharma, *Sutta Commentary of Buddhism* (R. K. Publishers & Distributors, 2009), p. 137.
[853] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 203.

Unlike the opening lines of the poem, this sentence runs smoothly and agilely. Before the word 'I', a personal pronoun, appears on the stage, all the first words of the preceding lines are pointing to something else or somewhere else, but none signifying any substantive. The flux of the words generates a sense of drifting without the promise of an absolute end. The reader is led into that suspension again: 'the uncertain hour' when there is only 'the recurrent end of the unending'.[854] But still it is the hour 'before the morning', assuredly different from the dusk time that haunts much of Eliot's early poetry, from the evening 'spread out against the sky' to 'the violet hour, the evening hour that strives / Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea'.[855] It is the hour waiting for the rebirth of the day. Compared with the seemingly 'never ending' time 'Between midnight and dawn' in the first movement of *The Dry Salvages*, in that suspension the significant encounter with the compound ghost unfolds, which is a climax of the speaker's spiritual journey.

The compound ghost is created by the same force that brings the roses and the old man's sleeve into one: the force of karma that maintains the chain of reincarnation. When the force of karma is extended to a macrocosmic level, it operates 'as a universal, […] imperative world-order'.[856] From the perspective of this principle of influence, Virgil and Brunetto Latini are reincarnated in Dante, and perhaps for the reader, Dante in Eliot. Indeed, in a letter to Auden, Eliot says that 'if you ever want somebody to ghost poetry for you, I think I could fill the position satisfactorily'.[857] It shows that the vision which brings all time together does not simply concern the past – the compound ghost is not limited to the dead masters, but includes all future masters who make themselves part of the order of tradition. Such 'communication / Of the dead' requires that the life experience of the dead become part of the collective memory of the living.[858] In other words, one sees beyond the past by embodying it in the present. The one who meets the compound

[854] Ibid., p. 203.
[855] Ibid., p. 5; p. 63.
[856] Vishwanath Prasad Varm, *Early Buddhism and Its Origin* (Munshiram Manoharlal, 1973), p. 209; p. 237.
[857] Quoted in *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 1013.
[858] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 202.

ghost and accepts its influence gives it a new life. To use Smidt's words, it is both 'redemption *from* history *and* redemption *of* history'.[859] After arduous labour to acquire the culture passed down from the dead masters, that culture runs in his blood. Even if he forgets the details of the masters' works, he has already become part of the tradition. The relationship points to the affinity between the new and the old which is between identification and difference; as the poet puts it, 'I caught the sudden look of some dead master / Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled'.[860] The shadowy influence of the dead masters on the speaker is to some extent more solid than real acquaintances. He sees and interacts with the compound ghost 'both intimate and unidentifiable' who comes to 'set a crown upon [his] lifetime's effort', no longer a silent Stetson who never answers back.[861] Because it is unidentifiable, it cannot be identified with, and as a result confined to, anyone.

What the compound ghost offers is so definite and final: 'Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age / To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort'.[862] The sense of affirmation seems to beckon the spiritual impotence of Prufrock, Gerontion, Tiresias, and many more in Eliot's poetry who struggle but to no avail. 'From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit / Proceeds', until 'Little Gidding' where they may all become parts of the compound ghost as well.[863] In 'Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca', Eliot appears to be forgiving when it comes to being wrong in reading Shakespeare: 'About anyone so great as Shakespeare, it is probable that we can never be right; and if we can never be right, it is better that we should from time to time change our way of being wrong.'[864] Shakespeare, as one of the dead masters of a literary tradition, has been reincarnated and the reincarnations are themselves beyond right and wrong. At the end of 'Unravelling Eliot', Jason Harding agrees with Bernard Sharratt that the same attitude can be adopted when one is dealing with Eliot's work and his influence, that one should be allowed to

[859] *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot*, p. 228.
[860] Ibid., p. 204.
[861] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 204.
[862] Ibid., p. 205.
[863] Ibid.
[864] T. S. Eliot, 'Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Literature, Politics, Belief, 1927–1929*, last accessed 9 June 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 245.

put forward new interpretations, or new ways of 'being wrong' in the endless construction and reconstruction of Eliot himself.[865] In this sense, the reincarnation of the compound ghost is not only redemption from and of history, as Smidt puts it, but also the redemption from and of the self.

If Eliot himself becomes part of the compound ghost, one may argue that before he joined the masters, his own past selves struggled to form a compound self as well: 'I was still the same, / Knowing myself yet being someone other'.[866] Smidt observes that 'The whole past history of a man composes an ideal order, and the sense of this order compels a man to write with his whole past in his bones'.[867] It is not only the past of his personal experiences but also the tradition or the way of life he was born into without any choice. The revelation of the meeting releases the air of inevitability: 'I met one walking, loitering and hurried / As if blowing towards me like the metal leaves / Before the urban dawn wind unresisting'.[868] One may say the poet was compelled by the vision in his own poetic imagination to write down the encounter with the compound ghost. It is interesting that although these words are attributed to the compound ghost, we all know that the poet wrote them down himself, as if the dead masters speak through him. The force of tradition and the force of inner poetic urge become one. The words of the compound ghost reveal the mind of the poet. As the compound ghost's speech is the work of the poet who also plays the role of the ghost's interlocutor, the poet already participates in the voice of the ghost. The appearance of the compound ghost reflects the dispersion of the speaker's ignorance, that he no longer sees only himself, but also sees that he is at the same time 'someone other', and more:

> But, as the passage now presents no hindrance
> To the spirit unappeased and peregrine
> Between two worlds become much like each other

[865] Jason Harding, 'Unravelling Eliot' in *The New Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. Jason Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 23.
[866] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 204.
[867] *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot*, p. 236.
[868] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 202.

So I find words I never thought to speak
In streets I never thought I should revisit
When I left my body on a distant shore.[869]

The body is limited to the shore of life in time, but the mind, in communion with the dead masters, conquers time. As Kearns argues, 'we live at a perpetual intersection between time and eternity'.[870] Now that there is no hindrance of worldly attachment that may block his time-transcending vision, it becomes a thorough one, like the Buddhist vision that sees through endless reincarnations. For the seer of the vision, the apparent difference between the personal and the impersonal no longer matters.

To discover that 'the passage now presents no hindrance' indicates the clearing of sight. In Buddhism, wisdom is often related to the ability to see through the illusory and see the real. The word commonly used for wisdom in Buddhism is 'prajna', which is 'closer in meaning to insight'.[871] It corresponds to the concept of right views of the Buddhist eightfold path towards the end of suffering.[872] And right views 'involve an accurate understanding of the true nature of things'.[873] In this sense, the ability to see and meet the compound ghost is itself an indication that the speaker arrives at the intersection of the timeless and time. According to Kashi Nath Upadhyaya, Buddhism accepts the idea that 'The highest knowledge and insight which is the means to salvation is supposed to follow the rapt contemplative gaze of the mind when it is cleansed of its impurities.'[874] Spiritual purification through insightful knowledge of the human mind is systematically explored in the *Visuddhimagga*:

Formations are all impermanent:

[869] Ibid., pp. 204-05.
[870] Kearns, p. 256.
[871] *A Dictionary of Buddhism*, ed. Damien Keown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), last accessed 9 Sept 2019 <www.oxfordreference.com>.
[872] The eightfold path is also referred in the chapter on 'The Dry Salvages', with a focus on right action.
[873] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[874] Kashi Nath Upadhyaya *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgita* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971), p. 156.

When he sees thus with understanding
And turn away from what is ill,
That is the path to purity.'[875]

The Buddhist teaching, including both the message and the tone, echoes the speaker's admonishment at the end of Movement III:

And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
By the purification of the motive
In the ground of our beseeching.[876]

In both versions of purification, the starting point is the same, that the protagonist should cultivate a mind unattached with worldly phenomena. Such an unattached mind is also what the compound ghost demands from the speaker:

These things have served their purpose: let them be.
So with your own, and pray they be forgiven
By others, as I pray you to forgive
Both bad and good.[877]

Such spiritual purgation makes the speaker see the condition of individual existence beyond good and evil. As recorded in the *Visuddhimagga,* whoever enters the fourth realm of Buddhist meditation, or the fourth jhana, is freed of both 'pleasure and pain […] joy and grief'; it is also called the realm of 'neither-pain-nor-pleasure'[878] What is more, whoever reaches the eighth realm

[875] *Visuddhimagga*, pp. 2-3.
[876] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 207.
[877] Ibid., p. 204.
[878] *Visuddhimagga*, p. 171.

acquires the experience of 'neither perception nor non-perception'.[879] Eliot was familiar with the system of Buddhist meditation that aims to transcend the dialectical manner of thinking. At the end of 'The Relativity of the Moral Judgment', Eliot alludes to the death of the Buddha, how he entered the eight realms of meditation one by one, until 'from the eighth he passed directly into the highest paranirvana' or complete Nirvana.[880]

In 'Little Gidding', love beyond desire leads to the mind of non-attachment, which transcends not only good and evil, but also suffering itself. In Buddhism, one suffers because of the karma one created in the past including previous lives, and thus love beyond desire, as 'liberation / From the future as well as the past', is also liberation from suffering.[881] Suffering itself is meaningless, for it is merely the paying of one's debts. In Eliot's vision of burning, the fire of purgation is ignited by the fire of divine love beyond desire ('Who then devised the torment? Love'), and the suffering is also purgation, which burns away one's attachment to worldly phenomena ('To be redeemed from fire by fire').[882] In Eliot's vision, a Buddhist goal is to be achieved with a Christian method. Smidt argues that in the fourth section, 'suffering is ordained by Love and may lead to redemption'.[883] His opinion clashes with that of Leavis, who states that the urgent need for purgation, to some extent, makes the poem anti-human in its 'insistence on humanity's utter abjectness and nullity'.[884] From the perspective of purgation, one may argue that the glory and magnificence of the poem come exactly from the courageous quest, which also expands human sensibility. 'The intolerable shirt of flame' of human desire cannot be removed by human power, but it is within human capacity to realise that we are wearing it and it is painful.

What is worse than the pain of the burning desire is not to feel the pain when the mind is occupied by worldly attachment. In the speaker's assertion that 'We only live, only suspire / Consumed by either fire or fire' is the awareness that there is only one choice, ignorance or the

[879] Ibid.
[880] 'T. S. Eliot, 'The Relativity of the Moral Judgment', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905–1918*, last accessed 11 May 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 212.
[881] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 206.
[882] Ibid., p. 207.
[883] *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot*, p. 220.
[884] *The Living Principle*, p. 255.

dispersion of ignorance.[885] The redemption 'from fire by fire' brings together the fire of desire in the Buddhist Fire Sermon and the fire of purgation. It is also reminiscent of the Shakespearean rhetoric: 'be fire with fire; / Threaten the threatener and outface the brow / Of bragging horror'.[886] A further elaboration of the image of fire can be found in Shakespeare's Sonnet 73: 'In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire / […] / Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.'[887] To be freed from the fire of desire, one must burn away, with the fire of purgation, egotistic attachment to desire by which the fire of desire is nourished; one must be 'Consumed by either fire or fire.'[888] To suffer with the consciousness of the pain of attachment in all forms leads the speaker towards non-attachment. From the perspective of love, to expand love beyond desire is perhaps more painful than simply to detach oneself from desire-fulfilment, as it involves experiencing not only disillusionment in desire, but also the 'rending pain of re-enactment / Of all that you have done, and been'.[889] Sri observes from the Buddhist viewpoint that although 'Life consists in action and to act is to be involved in suffering […] action and suffering do have a significance from an eternal viewpoint, for they impel all life towards the still centre of the wheel.'[890] It is a process of self-transcendence, to outgrow blind desiring. Suffering becomes meaningful, for it nourishes within the sufferer a perspective that transcends time and space, which leads to selfless love and universal compassion.

Such selfless love, in Eliot's vision of spiritual salvation, has its root in the timeless divinity. As Eliot puts it in 'Dante' (1929), 'The final cause [of love] is the attraction towards God'.[891] In order to end suffering, its burning of purgation must escalate to such a degree that the mind is no longer tainted by worldly attachment. As 'East Coker' reminds us, 'our sickness must grow worse'. It must grow worse until the mind feels it not only as the pain felt by the self, but

[885] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 207.
[886] William Shakespeare, *King John* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2018), p. 299.
[887] William Shakespeare, *The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint* (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 113.
[888] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 207.
[889] Ibid., p. 205.
[890] *T. S. Eliot, Vedanta and Buddhism*, p. 52.
[891] T. S. Eliot, 'Dante', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Literature, Politics, Belief, 1927–1929*, last accessed 9 Sept 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 732.

also the pain inflicted on the world as well — the expansion of love beyond desire, as well as the expansion of the personal to the impersonal. The expansion is reminiscent of the Buddha's teaching of lovingkindness: 'We shall abide with lovingkindness in our hearts […] extending it to the entire world as our object, with our hearts abundant, exalted, measureless in lovingkindness, without hostility or ill will. That is how you should train yourselves.'[892] As Harry Blamires observes in his reading of the poem, 'attachment has to be expanded into love […] so free of self-interest that the attachment gradually loses its importance – not by being denied, but by being transcended'.[893] Only through such thorough renunciation of attachment can the speaker assert with confidence that 'all shall be well'. In this sense, the Buddhist quest for non-attachment is integrated with Christian love. Blamires interprets the expansion of love from a sociological perspective, in his reading of the following lines:

> And every phrase
> And sentence that is right (where every word is at home,
> Taking its place to support the others,
> 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)[894]

He compares the common word to 'the world's labours', the formal word to 'the world's officers and dignitaries', and a poem to an 'ideal society' in harmony.[895] Such harmony implies the integration of personal function in society and the common pursuit for the wellbeing of all members of society. The expansion of love beyond desire follows a similar pattern, as one's love

[892] Nanamoli Thera, trans. From the *Majjhima Nikaya*, in *Selected Buddhist Texts from the Pali Canon, Volume 1* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1964), p. 16. The idea of lovingkindness is also touched upon in the analysis of *The Waste Land* and 'The Dry Salvages'; see Chapter 3 and Chapter 7.
[893] *Word Unheard: A Guide through Eliot's Four Quartets*, p. 159.
[894] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 208.
[895] *Word Unheard: A Guide through Eliot's Four Quartets*, p. 172.

for the self can be extended to the love of a country, and even to all humanity. And in the end, one may feel love as it is, for it is no longer limited to one person, one place, or degrees of intimacy.

This order of love, for Eliot, is inseparable from the order of words: 'With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling'.[896] John Hayward notes that in 'Little Gidding', the image of fire 'is used variously throughout the poem as a symbol for Pentecost, for Purgatory, for Hell, and for Divine Love.'[897] They are, to be more precise, integrated into an order of salvation, as the pentecostal fire is linked to the purification of language and the purification is compelled by divine love. To use the imperfect tool of language to describe the experience may distort it or miss the target. As Eliot puts it in 'Burnt Norton', 'The Word in the desert / Is most attacked by voices of temptation'.[898] If the decay of language such as its growing imprecise is related to the voices of temptation, then 'To purify the dialect of the tribe' naturally requires 'the purification of motive'.[899] The problem of manners of speech is vital to Buddhism, as Buddha told his disciples to practise right speech, which is also part of the eightfold path towards salvation. It originally means 'refraining from the four types of unwholesome verbal action: viz., lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, and frivolous prattle'.[900] In Christianity, right speech is closely related to the Pentecost: 'they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.' (Acts 2:4)[901] In other words, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, the apostles do not talk on behalf of their worldly selves, but convey God's message to people. In *Murder in the Cathedral*, Thomas Beckett purifies his mind from the temptation of the glory of becoming a martyr: 'A martyrdom is always the design of God, for his Love of men'.[902] The 'drawing of this [divine] Love' compels the speaker to follow 'the voice of [its] Calling', so as to cleanse his language of the desperate 'Shrieking voices' that resonate in much

[896] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 208.
[897] Quoted in ibid., p. 1002.
[898] Ibid., p. 184.
[899] Ibid., p. 205; p. 207.
[900] *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[901] *The Holy Bible*, p. 996.
[902] *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot*, p. 261.

of his early poetry, and finally to move towards a kind of simplicity that allows his poetic language to convey the Edenic 'voice of the hidden waterfall' to the reader.[903] It is the beginning of the mission envisaged in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', the starting point of his poetic career: 'I am Lazarus, come from the dead, / Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all.'[904] The tone of 'tell you all' is demonstrated at the beginning of Movement III, when the speaker talks in a serious manner of preaching:

> There are three conditions which often look alike
> Yet differ completely, flourish in the same hedgerow:
> Attachment to self and to things and to persons, detachment
> From self and from things and from persons; and, growing between them, indifference
> Which resembles the others as death resembles life,
> Being between two lives.[905]

The tone echoes the Buddhist teaching of the three basic conditions of human life, which Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue quote in the corresponding note: 'There are three conditions, O priests, under which deeds are produced. And what are the three? Covetousness is a condition under which deeds are produced; hatred is a condition under which deeds are produced; infatuation is a condition under which deeds are produced'. [906] One may even notice the similarity in the hypnotic air of repetitiveness. In fact, Eliot was fully aware of the Buddha's linguistic manner of teaching, as he observes in 'The Preacher as Artist: A review of Donne's Sermons', 'The method – the analogy, and the repetition – is the same as that once used by a greater master of the sermon than either Donne or Andrewes or Latimer: it is the method of the Fire-Sermon preached by the Buddha.'[907] He mentions the Buddha's method again in Clark Lecture IV, that it

[903] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 209.
[904] Ibid., p. 8.
[905] Ibid., p. 205.
[906] *Buddhism in Translations*, p. 215.
[907] T. S. Eliot, 'The Preacher as Artist: A review of Donne's Sermons', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, last accessed 9 June 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 167.

'is merely the development in poetry of an expository device known to preachers from the earliest times, the extended, detailed, interminable simile. The Buddha used it in the Fire Sermon and elsewhere'.[908] Analogy, repetition, and simile all point to the reincarnations of the message of salvation in language. Such a message is sanctified in Christianity through the myth of the pentecostal fire. In this sense, the Buddhist method and the Christian myth aim at the same end: the use of language for spiritual awakening.

The significance of 'this Love' and 'this Calling' may lie in what Eliot calls in the final section of 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', the '*significant* emotion' in the works of a literary tradition.[909] In fact, the epigraph to that section, which is from Aristotle, means 'Mind is, no doubt, something more divine and impassible.'[910] The mind of the compound ghost, which is the mind that reincarnates and can never be eliminated, is perhaps something that can be called 'divine'. As the end of 'Little Gidding' asserts, the divine is 'Not known, because not looked for', but it seems that even if we determine to look for it, at best, it can only be 'heard, half-heard, in the stillness' of life experience.[911] Even the 'look of [the] dead master' can only be 'half recalled'. Eliot is striving for a balance: the voice is enough for salvation. Language provides hints and guesses that persistently point to that which is beyond the jaded experiences of earthly life, and the hints and guesses left by the dead masters keep up the consistency between the languages used by different generations of writers.

The word 'consistency' reveals the nature of the connection between two incarnations of the same essence, as it implies 'agreement, harmony, compatibility' between two different things, as well as personalities of the same person in different periods of time.[912] It is between total identification and total difference. This idea of consistency is in line with the Buddhist definition

[908] T. S. Eliot, 'Clark Lecture IV: The Conceit in Donne', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, last accessed 9 June 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 677.
[909] T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*, last accessed 9 September 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 112.
[910] Ibid., p. 114.
[911] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 209.
[912] *OED.*

of reincarnation, that one incarnation is 'neither the same as nor different from' another.[913] Eliot himself comments on the word 'incarnation' that it suggests 'the intention to avoid relation on the one hand and identification on the other.'[914] That which validates the consistency (the spirit of the dead masters for example) cannot be extracted from the reincarnations, for it is through reincarnations that the reader may have an indirect glimpse of the essence.

Therefore, the chain of reincarnations can also be seen as an endless process of deferment of that which is reincarnated. The continual deferment of the reincarnated safeguards consistency between the old and the new works of art. It is worth noting that in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' the speaker claims that, rather than becoming a 'Hamlet', he would like to be an attendant lord, 'Deferential, glad to be of use'.[915] According to the *OED*, the use of the word 'defer' involves the obscure meanings of 'To carry down or away; to convey (to some place)' and 'to offer for acceptance'.[916] As a cultural phenomenon, the reincarnation of the timeless is analogous to Jacques Derrida's idea of 'différance': 'the impossibility of any sign within a system of signs having a fixed meaning; the process by which meaning is endlessly deferred from one sign to another within such a system.'[917] The impossibility corresponds to the need for a medium between the timeless and the mortals in time, while the endless deferment, with its focus on linguistic changes which cause semantic alteration, can also be seen as a kind of reincarnation. Such linguistic reincarnation underlies much of the reincarnation of poetry. According to the explanation from *Encyclopædia Britannica*, différance means that 'Because each word depends for its meaning on the meanings of other words, it follows that the meaning of a word is never fully "present" to us'.[918] In *T. S. Eliot and the Poetics of Literary History*, Gregory S. Jay emphasises the common ground shared by Eliot and Derrida, that 'we vulgarize Derrida if we imply that the disclosure of absence is the business of deconstruction, for in "absence" resides

[913] *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
[914] T. S. Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture, The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: A European Society, 1947–1953*, last accessed 8 June 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 210.
[915] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, p. 9.
[916] Ibid.
[917] Ibid.
[918] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

the powerful trace of the "presence" used to think it. […] Eliot's poetry explores the horizons of such antinomies […] The impossibility of decipherment turns on the visible / invisible trace of the other in the text, preventing its absolute control of itself'.[919] What Jay tries to explain is demonstrated in the following enigmatic lines:

> 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.[920]

Just as the dead masters are brought back to life in every new artist who has become the latest incarnation of the compound ghost, they die again and again with the death of its latest reincarnation.

In the cycle of rebirth, that which is reborn comes into worldly life again and again, with both similarities and derivations compared with previous lives. To use the words of Tony Sharpe, 'this recurrence of the past in present' points to 'the experience of the living [which is] channeled through the words of the dead, and thus connection [is] made between the two orders.'[921] Every generation of artists, with the inheritance from their dead masters, know the world for the first time, as something new but also ancient. The timeless does not lie outside history. Only by returning to history can we find the timeless patterns in it. It is in the here and now that we access the timeless: 'So, while the light fails / On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel / History is now and England.'[922] The word 'England' directs the reader's consciousness back to the here and now. Returning to the here and now means to be at home there, to acquire a sense of belonging. The sense of being at home reflects personal feeling in relation to a sense of impersonal wholeness.

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[919] Gregory S. Jay, *T. S. Eliot and the Poetics of Literary History* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), p. 225.
[920] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 208. The same lines are also quoted in Chapter 1.
[921] Tony Sharpe, '"Always Present": T. S. Eliot and Re-cantation', *Modernism / modernity* 25 (2018), 382.
[922] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 208.

As Michael O'Neill puts it in 'Eliot: Form and Allusion', 'allusion [in Eliot] finds a home in an imaginative world that is innovative'.[923] In other words, the old settles down in the new home and becomes part of it. To be at home means neither coming nor leaving. Moreover, there is no sentimentalised attachment to the location, or the overt awareness that 'I am at home'. From the angle of Buddhism, the sense of being at home is close to the state of suchness, when one's mind is not attached to anything, but flows across worldly objects in tranquillity. According to a Buddhist scripture, the *Lankavatara Sutra*, non-attachment is 'seeing into the abode where things are in their suchness', rather than subjectively telling the self apart from other things with a mind of discrimination.[924] The mind in suchness does not try to grasp with desire any point of time and space, but only rests at the timeless moment of the here and now. Such a mind indicates a natural state of integrating with the environment one is in, re-enacting past tradition without too much deliberation.

By being at home in the here and now, one also finds a spiritual home. The end of the spiritual journey is a return home, or the relocation of the self in its relation with the outer world. As Eliot puts it: 'the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time.'[925] To rediscover the beginning after the long journey of purgation is essentially different from taking that beginning for granted. The returner returns with the traces left on him by the rest of the world as well as a fuller picture of the world in mind. The metaphor of 'mountain and water seeing' in Zen Buddhism can be used to illustrate the discovery of the beginning 'for the first time'. Its basic argument is that before one is released from the ignorance of the emptiness of the world, mountains are mountains and waters are waters; after one gains some knowledge of the world, mountains and waters are not simply mountains and waters; but after one has 'attained the abode of final rest' in Nirvana, mountains and waters are simply as they are. As Masao Abe points out, '[mountains] and waters disclose themselves in their totality

[923] Michael O'Neill, 'Form and Allusion', in *The New Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. Jason Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 26.
[924] From the *Lankavatara Sutra* quoted in D. T. Suzuki, *Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 123.
[925] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 208.

and particularity, and no longer as objects from our subjective vantage point'.[926] After the long spiritual journey to free oneself from attachment to worldly phenomena, one finds the true face of the world for the first time, and perhaps even rejoices, as the speaker in 'Ash-Wednesday' does, that 'things are as they are'.[927] Eliot encountered Zen Buddhism in Anesaki's lecture on 25 November 1913, as his notes show: 'Zen Buddhism says that enlightenment is self-attainment'.[928] Such self-attainment points to the ultimate return to one's own being. Besides, Eliot was certainly not unfamiliar with Mahayana Buddhism, also commonly referred to as later Buddhism, to which the school of zen belongs, as Anesaki paid much attention to Mahayana Buddhism in his Harvard Buddhist lectures that Eliot attended.[929] Moreover, Beryl Rosay McLeod observes in 'Buddhism, T. S. Eliot and *Four Quartets*' that the experience of knowing the old place for the first time suggests 'the insight of satori [which means] enlightenment.'[930] As an essential concept in Zen Buddhism, satori is often related to the experience of sudden awakening. It is congenial with Eliot's poetry in which the experience of sudden spiritual illumination is also a major concern. At the end of the poem, the expansion of the personal understanding of the world becomes a kind of spiritual concentration, reflected in the urgency of 'Quick now, here, now, always'.[931] Similarly, in 'Burnt Norton', there is also a sense of urgency in the voice of the bird: 'Quick, said the bird, find them, find them'.[932] It seems that such a vision would trigger the speaker's emotional upsurge and bring him to the intersection of time and the timeless. And there is perhaps also the hidden fear in the tone of urgency that the exaltation may ebb too quickly, and if the speaker does not follow the spiritual call with 'The awful daring of a moment's surrender / Which an age of prudence can never retract', he may fail to achieve the 'condition of simplicity / (Costing not less than everything)'.[933] Even to be able to lose 'not less than everything' needs an exceptionally rare experience of sudden illumination, which is 'the source of the longest river' of

[926] Masao Abe, *Zen and Western Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), p. 10.
[927] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 87.
[928] Houghton Library.
[929] Kearns, p. 76.
[930] 'Buddhism, T. S. Eliot and *Four Quartets*', p. 14.
[931] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 209.
[932] Ibid., p. 179.
[933] Ibid., p. 70; p. 209.

spiritual strength and also the fruit of a long journey of purgation.[934] In this sense, to return to the beginning is to achieve the reincarnation of the source in the here and now. It is a new beginning of the old end, or a new frontier of the old wisdom.

The first epigraph to *Four Quartets* shows that 'Although the Word (Logos) is common to all, most men live as though they had each a private wisdom of his own'.[935] On the one hand, from the common to the private, wisdom is reincarnated to suit various individual conditions. On the other hand, without the individual conditions as the media, the common source of all wisdom cannot be accessed by human understanding. It is worth noting that in the draft of *The Waste Land*, the heading to Part I and Part II is 'HE DO THE POLICE IN DIFFERENT VOICES'.[936] Jean-Michel Rabaté links the word 'police' to the Greek word for 'polity', and argues that the heading concerns 'the question of a founding law'.[937] In similar terms, the third movement of 'Little Gidding' claims that 'We cannot revive old factions / We cannot restore old policies', but 'the constitution of silence' gathers the souls of the dead masters and folds them into 'a single party'.[938] From *The Waste Land* to *Four Quartets*, Eliot's concern with the reincarnation of the common in the specific is itself reincarnated. Before the poet confidently presents the one-in-many relationship in *Four Quartets*, especially in the form of the compound ghost, *The Waste Land* as well as earlier poems such as 'Gerontion' reveals a chasm between the awareness of the common wisdom and its realisation in a new body. 'After such knowledge, what forgiveness?' so asks Gerontion.[939] A Gerontion, whose vision of history is similar to that of Tiresias's, could never regenerate back to a bestial Sweeney. He must move forward, cross the frontier of one life only which can be regarded as 'the world's end', and acquire the common wisdom shared by the dead masters.[940] As early as 1915, Eliot rephrases the last words of the Buddha at the end of 'The Relativity of the Moral Judgment' to express what he later had to face in his poems as well as his

[934] Ibid.
[935] Ibid., pp. 905-06.
[936] Ibid., p. 595.
[937] Jean-Michel Rabaté, 'Tradition and T. S. Eliot', *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. A. D. Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 214.
[938] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 207.
[939] Ibid., p. 32.
[940] Ibid., p. 202.

poetic career: 'you will meet in the world subtle disputants of the One and the Many, ready-witted men who will confuse your minds and sadden your hearts. Be ye not discouraged thereat, but work out your salvation with diligence'.[941] Eliot repeats the Buddha's last words in *A Cocktail Party,* when Reilly offers the option of a spiritual journey to Celia: 'Go in peace, my Daughter. / Work out your salvation with diligence'.[942] As the poem shows, a 'lifetime's effort' of spiritual quest leads to a compound ghost which embodies the ultimate one-and-many wisdom that transcends all the confusing disputations. The ghost can be seen as a personification of what Eliot calls 'a bond which embraces a longer period of time […]: a piety towards the dead, however obscure, and a solicitude for the unborn, however remote.'[943] It is worth noting that one may find an admonishment in the Bible corresponding to the Buddha's last words: 'not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' (Philippians 2:12)[944] In Eliot's poetry, the strands of Buddhism and Christianity are so intertwined that they form a unique spiritual order, pointing to the oneness of time and the timeless. Personal efforts in the here and now become inseparable from divine grace. As Eliot puts it at the very end of 'Little Gidding', 'And the fire and the rose are one.'[945]

[941] 'The Relativity of the Moral Judgment', p. 212.
[942] *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot*, p. 420.
[943] *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, p. 218.
[944] *The Holy Bible*, p. 1078.
[945] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 209.

Conclusion: Long Live the Compound Ghost!

In *After Strange Gods*, Eliot offers a more subtle opinion on his study of Eastern philosophy than that of praise or denial:

> A good half of the effort of understanding what the Indian philosophers were after – and their subtleties make most of the great European philosophers look like schoolboys – lay in trying to erase from my mind all the categories and kinds of distinction common to European philosophy from the time of the Greeks. […] my only hope of really penetrating to the heart of that mystery would lie in forgetting how to think and feel as an American or a European: which, for practical as well as sentimental reasons, I did not wish to do.[946]

The author of this thesis is ready to acknowledge that Eliot's goal of studying Eastern philosophy is not to 'really [penetrate] to the heart of that mystery' as an ambitious scholar in the field might try to do by dedicating a whole life's time to it. Similarly, it might also be contended that Eliot's ultimate goal of studying philosophy might not be to become a professional philosopher. Putting the above comments of Eliot back into context would show more clearly his attitude towards studies in knowledge from alien cultures:

> Just as I do not see how anyone can expect really to understand Kant and Hegel without knowing the German language and without such an understanding of the German mind as can only be acquired in the society of living Germans, so *a fortiori* I do not see how anyone can understand Confucius without some knowledge of Chinese and a long frequentation of the best Chinese society. […] Confucius was not born into a vacuum; and a network of rites and customs, even if regarded by philosophers in a spirit of benignant scepticism, make a world of difference.[947]

[946] T. S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods*, *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Tradition and Orthodoxy, 1934-1939*, last accessed 9 June 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 32
[947] Ibid.

Indian thought, or Buddhism, or any single field of knowledge, is not the real target of Eliot's criticism. He was primarily occupied with the phenomenon of cultural regeneration, or reincarnation. Even the seed of Buddhism did not fall into Eliot's soul from 'vacant interstellar spaces' of the dark.[948] The beginning of Chapter 1 makes it clear that the social atmosphere in the West became much more congenial to Buddhism after the popularity of Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*. The book became so popular that it found its way into the family library of the Eliots:

> In a family library there may be a book which somebody bought at the time it was published, because it was highly spoken of, and which nobody read. It was in this way that I came across, as a boy, a poem for which I have preserved a warm affection: *The Light of Asia*, by Sir Edwin Arnold. […] I must have had a latent sympathy for the subject-matter.[949]

To some extent, the connection between the young Eliot and Buddhism was a macro cultural phenomenon in a world growing more and more seriously interested in the East. The 'warm affection' towards the book, as well as the 'latent sympathy for the subject-matter', was probably behind Eliot's choice of undertaking formal study of Buddhism at Harvard, where academic interest in the East was also a cultural phenomenon, but on a larger scale. One may feel that the invisible hand of karma was at work, as 'the consummation of cause and effect' patiently and persistently shaped the mind of the future great poet.[950] Eliot's poetry had already become much penetrated by it before he mentioned the difficulty of 'really penetrating to the heart of [its] mystery'. The early influence of Buddhism on Eliot can be compared with intriguing whispers that stimulate the hearer's interest with unfamiliar messages and change him in the process. Edward T. Oakes observes in *Pattern of Redemption* that for hearing, 'the act of choosing what to perceive is out of the question (we can shut our eyes but never our ears!), and so our only choice is but to submit to the reality being communicated. […] hearing is defenceless and

[948] 'East Coker', *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 188.
[949] 'What is Minor Poetry?', p. 569.
[950] Houghton Library, on the handout titled 'The fourfold interpretation'.

necessarily open.'[951] In Eliot's intricate and multi-vocal pattern of redemption, the Buddhist voice is one of the most enduring. His more conscious and systematic study of Eastern philosophy started with the learning of languages or foreign tongues, namely Sanskrit and Pali. The more readily recognised uses of Eastern philosophy are also in the form of voices, such as the Buddha's teaching and the voice of 'shantih' in *The Waste Land*, and later Krishna's admonishment in 'The Dry Salvages'.

On the phenomenon of such inner consistency in Eliot's poetry, Gardner observes that

> His poetry is extraordinarily self-consistent, and there is almost nothing that he has published that does not form part of his poetic personality. One of the results of this integrity is that his later work interprets his earlier, as much as his earlier work does his later[952]

It can be argued that the consistency or integrity as Gardner points out reflects Eliot's deep interest in the journey of the soul towards salvation, such as explicated in Dante, St John of the Cross, Evelyn Underhill, and the Buddhist tradition of spiritual training. One great similarity shared by these various versions of the journey of the soul is that the soul's progression is highly systematic. Different phases are integrated into a well-structured and, to some extent, organic order. One example of such an order can be used to make clear the inner consistency in Eliot's poetry, namely the Buddhist icon of the Mandala as Eliot describes in his notes.[953] The Mandala consists of several levels of spiritual existence, each one of which is represented by a constellation of Buddhist deities. The lowest level, which is the farthest away from the centre, '[represents] the active principle of the mind surrounded by the various phases of volition and emotion'; it corresponds to the spiritual struggle in Eliot's early poetry before *The Waste Land*.[954] In the next level which is closer to the centre, the soul 'appears in a solitary transcendence'; it may remind

[951] Edward T. Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption* (New York: Continuum, 1994), p. 136.
[952] 'A Study of Eliot's More Recent Poetry', p. 470.
[953] The Buddhist Mandala is first introduced in Chapter 4, on the image of the Lady and the white leopards.
[954] Houghton Library, Eliot's notes on Anesaki's lecture on 6 March 1914.

the reader of Tiresias's bleak vision that transcends time and space.[955] The following level 'leads the [soul] to self-examination' as it 'enters into contemplation'; the oneness of self-examination and contemplation is also at the heart of Eliot's religious poetry.[956] The central constellation, presenting an image of the Buddha's celestial existence, symbolises '[the] world of premeditated ideas, as the first stage of emanation'; in Eliot's poetry, *Four Quartets* hints at a timeless 'first world' which parallels the central constellation in the Mandala.[957] This group of comparison reflects the richness of Eliot's poetry, as well as the intimate relationship between his poetry and his spiritual pursuit. Nevertheless, it is wise to refrain from reading Eliot's poetry as a Buddhist revelation. The Buddhist strand in Eliot's poetry creates a fresh point of view that observes his spiritual concerns, not offering a new set of concerns. As Sharpe suggests, Eliot went 'beyond the European mindset, toward the Asian philosophical and religious traditions that implicitly challenged that view of the world and its meanings'.[958] By doing so, Eliot also refreshes the European view of the world.

Of course, one should never forget the dominance of Christian influence in Eliot's work, both in terms of subject matters and the underlying sensibility. The Eastern – especially the Buddhist – voice adds extra depth to the Christian visions of salvation, not replacing them. The Christian visions create a field of force which twists influences from other areas so that, instead of creating doctrinal inconsistency or distracting artistic faults, these alien influences strengthen the dominant discourse. When writing a preface for 'an anthology which places side by side passages from Christian, Jewish, Moslem, Hindu and Buddhist scriptures and devotional writings', Eliot observes that 'What these writers aim at, in their various idioms, in whatever language or in the terms of whatever religion, is the Love of God.'[959] The integration of Eliot's Buddhist learning into his Christian concerns is a process which can also be elucidated by his own words: 'The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings,

[955] Ibid.
[956] Ibid.
[957] Ibid.
[958] '"Always Present": T. S. Eliot and Re-cantation', p. 381.
[959] T. S. Eliot, 'Preface to *Thoughts for Meditation*', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: A European Society, 1947-1953*, last accessed 21 September 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, pp. 587-88.

phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together.'[960] The new compound, which perhaps itself evolves into the compound ghost in 'Little Gidding', carries with it more than one shadow. For example, the image of the wheel, which in *The Waste Land* and 'Burnt Norton' strongly points to the Buddhist wheel of life and death, is adopted in the play *Murder in the Cathedral*. In addition, Eliot was also aware of the Christian use of the symbol in the legend of St Catherine of Alexandria, as it is mentioned in 'The Lesson of Baudelaire'.[961] Her story shows a pattern that shares affinity with the compound religious vision in Eliot's poetry: 'she professed that she had consecrated her virginity to Jesus Christ […] The spiked wheel by which she was to be killed broke when she touched it'.[962] Another case, which may elude some readers' eyes, is 'The wounded surgeon' in 'East Coker', which alludes to Jesus Christ. In Kipling's *Kim*, The Buddha is similarly described as 'the Physician'.[963] Later in Eliot's play 'The Cocktail Party', the mysterious wise guest, Reilly, who speaks the Buddha's last words, is a psychiatrist; after consulting him, Celia joins a Christian order and is eventually martyred. One may sense Eliot's acute awareness of amalgamating the Buddhist with the Christian.

The above two examples both point to Eliot's dramatic works. Due to the scope of this thesis, which is mainly on Eliot's poetic works, the plays are not analysed in detail. But if enough attention is given, they too may demonstrate the persistent influence of Buddhism on Eliot, or reveal new lives of his Buddhist legacy. He seems to recollect his study of Eastern philosophy in the play *The Confidential Clerk* through the words of Lady Elizabeth: 'And then I took up the Wisdom of the East / And believed, for a while, in reincarnation'.[964] Once again, the 'Wisdom of the East' is quickly fused with the Wisdom of the West:

[960] 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', p. 109.
[961] T. S. Eliot, 'The Lesson of Baudelaire', *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic*, last accessed 9 September 2019 <muse.jhu.edu>, p. 307.
[962] *Encyclopaedia Britannica.*
[963] *Kim*, p. 195.
[964] *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot*, p. 485.

> […] Of course, there is something in us,
> In all of us, which isn't just heredity,
> But something unique. Something we have been
> From eternity. Something…… straight from God.
> That means that we are nearer to God than to anyone.[965]

The compound ghost continues its journey after Eliot's major poetic works, and he seems more at ease in dealing with the voice from the East in his later works including the plays.

Besides the study of the plays, another direction of further research which this thesis may point to is the study of later poets who were influenced by Eliot's poetry to such an extent that they became the new incarnations of the compound ghost. One example is Ted Hughes. Hughes took Eliot as his spiritual father, who promoted his poetry, and whose poetry greatly inspired his own. Besides the well-known tributes to Eliot in *A Dancer to God*, Hughes's words in his diary upon Eliot's death shall, for the time being, suffice to suggest the extent of the influence: 'I've so tangled him into my thoughts, as the guru-in-chief, and dreamed of him so clearly and unambiguously that this will have consequences for me. At once I felt windswept, unsafe. At the same time, realized that from now on everything will be different. He was in my mind constantly, like a rather over-watchful, over-powerful father'.[966] Furthermore, Hughes also had an interest in Buddhism, especially *Bardo Thodol*, or *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. His enthusiasm for the book is unreservedly shown in a letter to Aurelia and Warren Plath:

> I wrote this oratorio for the Bardo Thodol, The Tibetan Book Of The Dead. I've just sent off a final version. That will be something for you to hear: it's quite awesome. It's the progress of the soul during the 49 days between death and rebirth, a sort of Buddhist Mass. I really enjoyed doing it, though I spent all the summer months just getting the material into shape and telling myself I ought to be working harder at it.[967]

[965] Ibid., p. 485.
[966] Quoted in Ronald Schuchard, 'T. S. Eliot and Ted Hughes: Shamanic Possession', *South Atlantic Review* 76 (2011), 61.
[967] Ted Hughes, *Letters of Ted Hughes*, ed. Christopher Reid (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p. 173.

István D. Rácz suggests that Hughes's interest in Buddhism is related to his 'viewpoint of shamanism', as both involve ritualistic treatments of death that point to rebirth.[968] The theme of a mass of rebirth, especially its combination of rituals and mysticism, may not be unfamiliar to readers of Eliot's poetry. For Hughes, shamans are spiritual leaders who 'become, briefly, incarnations of the sacrificed God'.[969] He seemed to count Eliot as one of the incarnations when he claimed that Eliot was 'a great literary shaman of the spiritual condition of the west', along with William Shakespeare and W. B. Yeats.[970] Ronald Schuchard, in his 'T. S. Eliot and Ted Hughes: Shamanic Possession', presents Hughes as a literary and spiritual heir to Eliot, who strives to become a new incarnation of the common spirit that once possessed Eliot: 'Like Eliot, who, after the violent visitation of his own dark angel began searching for manifestation of its presence […] Hughes too began to search for evidence of the call and acceptance.'[971] In this sense, the compound ghost of the dead masters is a guest coming to the house of the individual soul, and the visitation is likely to change the soul into a new voice of the compound ghost. Its journey extends beyond the life of any single voice, 'Before the beginning and after the end', as Eliot puts it in 'Burnt Norton'.[972]

Indeed, the compound ghost may have travelled across the boundaries of nationality and language, for example, from Eliot to the Polish poet Czesław Miłosz. As a translator of *The Waste Land* and 'Burnt Norton' from English into Polish, Miłosz perhaps translates Eliot's voice into his own when he writes the following lines:

> The purpose of poetry is to remind us
> how difficult it is to remain just one person,
> for our house is open, there are no keys in the doors,

[968] István D. Rácz, 'The Realm between Life and Death in Ted Hughes', *Hungarian Studies in English* 22 (1991), 125.
[969] *Letters of Ted Hughes*, p. 581.
[970] Ted Hughes, *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), p. 89.
[971] 'T. S. Eliot and Ted Hughes: Shamanic Possession', p. 60.
[972] *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 183.

and invisible guests come in and out at will.

What I'm saying here is not, I agree, poetry,
as poems should be written rarely and reluctantly,
under unbearable duress and only with the hope
that good spirits, not evil ones, choose us for their instrument.[973]

The above two stanzas from Miłosz's 'Ars Poetica?' may as well serve to conclude the conclusion of this thesis. By looking towards the future, it strives to reflect Eliot's spirit that 'to make an end is to make a beginning'.[974] The lineage of Eliotic poets both before and after Eliot, as well as the different periods of Eliot's creative life, forms an order of time, but in all time the compound ghost manifests itself as a new being which is fully alive in the here and now.

[973] Czesław Miłosz, *New and Collected Poems* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 241. For Miłosz's knowledge of Eliot, see 'The Music of What is: T. S. Eliot and Czesław Miłosz, or a Quiet Meditation on Time and Being' by Leonor María Martínez Serrano, in *Ars Inter Culturas* 5 (2016), 285-302.
[974] 'Little Gidding', *The Poems of T. S. Eliot, Volume 1*, p. 208.

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