

**T. S. ELIOT'S AESTHETICS OF IMMEDIACY:**

**LANGUAGE AND PERCEPTION IN**

*KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE, THE WASTE LAND AND FOUR*

*QUARTETS*

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis offers a reading of Eliot as a philosopher and poet whose creative career develops against the backdrop of a phenomenological world-vision which identifies reality with experience and defines experience as the interpretative process of perception. Eliot's career appears as a series of attempts to express this world-view: he elaborates this notion of reality in his philosophical writing, translates it into a set of premises on aesthetics in his criticism on anthropology and Shakespeare, and embodies it – as a realisation of these philosophical and aesthetic tenets – in his poetry.

Part I traces the development of Eliot's aesthetic world-vision in his theoretical writing. Chapter 1 foregrounds the dichotomy that I see underlying Eliot's thinking throughout his career, the dichotomy between linguistic structure and pre-articulate extra-linguistic experience. I interpret Eliot's definition of the Absolute as the ideal of the linguistic order, while immediate experience is a term for the lived reality as meaningful, its meaningfulness shaped within and supported by language. Chapter 2 examines the relationship between Eliot's thought and non-analytic philosophical schools, namely Indic traditions and ontological hermeneutics, in their common attempt to answer the question of how experience is inscribed into the linguistic structure articulating its meaning. Eliot's philosophical work answers this question by insisting on and elaborating the definition of reality as dependent on the intrinsic connection between direct experience and linguistic meaning, while his turn from philosophy to poetry appears as a turn to the most adequate discourse of truth. Eliot's conception of reality underlies his notion of a work of art, the subject matter of Chapter 3. In his critique of anthropology and related literary criticism, Eliot identifies ritual as the perfect form for meaningful experience and as the prototype of the work of art: both are constructed forms that signify experienced reality, and both demand the immediate involvement of the sensing body in the act of interpretation. I demonstrate that this double requirement – for a work of art to be, paradoxically, both a form of mediating meaning and of immediate experience – determines the shift over time in Eliot's response to *Hamlet*, and define the Eliotic notion of aesthetic unity as the moment in which the two aspects of aesthetic effectiveness merge into the event of lived meaning.

Part II examines how Eliot's poetry realises, intensifies and extends his aesthetic conception of reality. Chapter 4 shows *The Waste Land* to be a poem that overwhelms readerly perception with aborted possibilities of meaningfulness without articulating the event of meaning. This poem mimics in its language the structure of disordered reality, relying on the reader's natural inclination to construct meaningful unities in the interpretative act of reading. The poem's resistance to meaningful aesthetic unity is witnessed most clearly by the functioning of the Grail legend and of the Tiresias figure, both presented as centring forces but failing to serve this purpose. Chapter 5 looks at *Hamlet* as a textual bridge between the two poems, containing models of aesthetic representation of both the structures of immediate effects that dominate *The Waste Land's* vision of disorder and those of the unifying function found in *Four Quartets*. Chapter 6 reads *Four Quartets* as a quintessential poetic performance of the Eliotic aesthetic unity. This poem plays out the perceptual-and-signifying process of interpretative activity in which the world appears as a meaningful totality, directing the interpretative act towards the figure of complete meaningfulness that encloses the poem's multiple motifs: the composite image of the fire and the rose articulates the oneness of the two constituents of meaningful experience, the fire representing the experiential immediacy and the rose the structural unit that signifies the experience.

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The rose-garden of Burnt Norton, June-July 2009

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## PREFACE

Eliot's dissertation on philosophy was published in 1964, over four decades after his 'academic philosophizing came to an end' (KE 10). This work is known under the title *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley* though the title under which it was submitted was 'Experience and the Objects of Knowledge in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley' (KE 11). The title of the published work is undeniably more stylistically apt, but the original title is far more precise in naming the core focus of Eliot's philosophical attention: 'experience' stands by itself, with no attributes attached to it; but 'knowledge' comes with 'the objects' of its analytic attention.

This thesis is concerned with the distinction between the homogeneity of 'experience' and the diacritical nature of 'knowledge,' in the varied forms in which it appears in Eliot's philosophical, critical and poetic writing. I begin by observing the relationship between what Eliot terms 'knowledge' and 'experience,' looking into how the indivisible and indefinable 'experience' comes to be the 'knowledge' of 'the world of objects' that appears in Eliot as the phenomenological world, all its existents – including what is conventionally thought of as the subject – emerging and living in experience only. I follow the development of this Eliotic vision of the world as embedded in human perception through his papers on anthropology and in his criticism that translates his anthropological insights into the tenets of aesthetics. I see this vision underlying Eliot's prose throughout his career even though it often appears rather in the margins of his discussions of far more specific issues covering a far wider scale than a theory of aesthetics – something this thesis is attempting to derive – could ever accommodate. Eliot's proto-phenomenological vision of reality as both linguistic and

experienced and the aesthetic tenets he finds more explicitly formulated in anthropology fuse into a most powerful – at times overwhelming – aesthetic effect that Eliot experiences in his encounter with Shakespeare, most forcefully with *Hamlet*. I observe Eliot's response to this play in detail, for his reassessments and shifts in the vocabulary used to describe the Shakespearean effect show the tensions of the aesthetic experience he speaks about at work. Shakespeare, *Hamlet* in particular, reappears throughout Eliot's writing, explicitly as well as a rather ghostly presence, as an inexhaustible source of aesthetically effective models that Eliot sees in the work of other dramatists and poets and, even more importantly, transforms into aesthetically effective structures in his own poetry.

It is 'Marina' that realises this Eliotic proto-phenomenological-anthropological-Shakespearean aesthetic effect most intensely. This poem has been seen as 'one of Eliot's most delicate poems,' 'unparaphrasable' (Warren 87), 'one of the strangest' and 'one of the most beautiful' (Corcoran 116), Eliot's 'most unconstrained,' 'most loving poem' and, in a directly Shakespearean way, 'something rich and strange,' with an air that 'could not be purer,' not even in *Four Quartets* (Ricks 120, 230, 237), a poem in which all Eliotic tensions are momentarily resolved (Spurr 72-73). The formal limitations of space for this kind of study have prevented me from discussing this poem in detail; I have chosen to look at *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* instead, for these two poems show Eliot's poetic sensibility in development. I read these poems as the interrelated counterpart expressions of the Eliotic aesthetic vision of reality, the later poem punctuated by reflections on the earlier one. *Four Quartets* complements *The Waste Land*'s horror of being overwhelmed by the world's disorder and fragmentation with an enactment of a possibility of experiencing this world as an aesthetically unified and – even if only for a moment – meaningful vision.

Two remarks need to be made before I move to my reading of Eliot, one on terminology I will use throughout this thesis, and the other on the way I read Eliot's poetry. I think of the event of meaningful experience – the event that Eliot defines as a moment in which knowledge and experience merge in identity – as a moment of articulation: a moment of insight in which the pre-articulate experience of the real accepts an expression of its meaning in a signifying structure. In this moment of meaningfulness, an articulated meaning is also the experienced meaning of the reality to which the perceiving and interpreting eye attends, and therefore I will speak of meaningful experience as a moment of the complementarity of a signifying structure and the experience that it articulates. I will also use near-synonyms – such as reciprocity, interrelation, interaction and interdependence – to speak of the dynamics of the process in which this complementarity of meaningful experience appears. The perfect balance that these terms denote, however, is rare, if ever experienced at all. Most of the time, we experience reality as meaningful to an extent rather than completely, some of it understood – articulable in language as meaning – and some remaining a residue of the non-articulate, the background in which we apprehend the meaning. In Eliot, it is experience that is primary, always given, and this position seems to demand that we regard significative structures as supplied to articulate its meaning. Yet we speak of experience in language, inevitably signifying it in terms that specify it as a particular kind of experience, and as long as the experience we speak about accepts the meanings of our terms, it can be referred to as the kind of experience they denote; while the residue of unsignifiable reality – the pre-articulate experiential surplus that a linguistic expression fails to assimilate into the meaning it articulates – does not, by definition, have a name. I therefore think of and name this residue of the real the experiential *supplement* of the pre-articulate to the signifying structure that articulates the meaning of that part of our reality which we understand.

In my readings of Eliot's poetry, I focus on what I see as key moments in them, the moments that build most intensely on the junctures between language and experience that Eliot identifies in his theoretical writing. While I attempt to characterise the kind of an aesthetic unity that I see realised by each poem, my primary purpose is to expose the dynamics in which Eliot's poetic language works to create these effects. It is a part of my argument that Eliot's poetic language actualises in its grammar and in its network of intra- and extra-textual references the complex of relations that define the Eliotic vision of how language shapes the experience of reality. I admit holding the assumption that the sets of distinctions and the tensions of their articulation which I foreground in the passages I read empower the rest of the poem in each case and even, it could be said, the entirety of Eliot's poetry and probably poetry as such – after all, this thesis aims to highlight Eliot's concern with the functioning of language *per se*. I see the force of his poetry enabled by his deployment of the fundamental relations of this functioning, and this kind of working with language effectively characterises all literary writing. As this line of generalisation comes into play, my instant response is the wish to emphasise the importance of difference, for these sets of distinctions that I foreground are actualised in different ways in every poem and even in every passage of the same poem, not only for every reader but, ultimately, in every reading act. This insistence on the singularity of poetic effect – with a very specific function attributed to conceptual abstraction – is inscribed in Eliot's own position as a poet, critic and philosopher, which is among the focal points of my argument in this thesis. And so in my reading of Eliot's poetry, I respond to its invitation to be read line by line and sometimes word by word, for the kind of poetic experience it strives to give dwells in the area of the immediate, instant perception of its language – as it did for Eliot while reading and re-reading Shakespeare, in search for ways of naming and describing that



paradoxical effect of aesthetic immediacy that Eliot felt was produced by the medium of Shakespeare's poetic drama.

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To Lawrence Rainey I am grateful for challenging me to go into areas I was inclined to avoid: without his pressure and constructive advice, I would have missed the experience of discovering that poetry – Eliot’s perhaps more insistently than of other poets – speaks the truth more effectively than philosophy or any other language. I thank Vicki Mahaffey for carrying out what she considered to be the duty of an academic to her students, in being for us a source of ‘intellectual challenge and emotional support’ – I benefited from her commitment in many ways at the initial stages of this work while she was at York, and have felt her presence and support ever after. Hans Walter Gabler has read and generously commented on parts of this thesis in progress – I am extremely grateful to him for this, as well as for his encouragement and good will. Hugh Haughton has been a sparkling presence of an approach to poetry the gift of which I cannot boast – I gained from our numerous conversations, as well as from his comments and direction on those occasions when he had read my work.

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**PART I**

***KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE***

**AS BACKGROUND TO ELIOT'S POETICS:**

**FROM LINGUISTIC ORDER TO AESTHETIC TRUTH**

## CHAPTER 1.

### THE PREMISE: THE ABSOLUTE OF IMMEDIATE EXPERIENCE

#### THE ABSOLUTE: THE MEANINGFUL ORDER OF BEING

For Eliot the philosopher, the interrelation between ‘knowledge’ and ‘experience’ is not a question to be answered but a given that must be self-reflectively taken into account by every epistemological project. The statement that experience participates in the formation of the terminology of a system of knowledge is, effectively, the thesis of Eliot’s reading of Bradley, a reading in which metaphysical philosophy is not exempt from the pragmatics of human existence. In his 1964 Preface to the published version of *Knowledge and Experience*, Eliot reflects on a change that had to be made for the publication of his work:

What may at first appear more serious is the loss of one or several pages of the conclusion of the essay. The last page of the typescript ends with an unfinished sentence: *For if all objectivity and all knowledge is relative...* I have omitted this exasperating clause: it is suitable that a dissertation on the work of Francis Herbert Bradley should end with the words ‘the Absolute’. (KE 11)

Inscribing this unfinished sentence into the reception of his philosophical work, Eliot relativises the Absolute, building his thought on the paradox of its relativity. This relativity comes through Eliot’s attribution of the Absolute to Bradley’s voice, so that the Absolute defines Bradleyan philosophy as an idealist philosophy, while the Absolute found in Eliot’s dissertation is turned into a Bradleyan premise rather than being thought of as a philosophical premise about reality as such. And if considered in a relation, it is no longer the Absolute we are dealing with but its relativity, an Absolute

defined by Eliot as limited by the subjective point of view which accepts (as Bradley does) or doubts (as Eliot does) its absoluteness.

Eliot makes this gesture of undermining the absoluteness of the Absolute in the Preface to his dissertation, extending its effect to play down the significance that the publication of his philosophical work is likely to have. He deprives his dissertation of the authority conventionally ascribed to philosophical discourse to enclose the entire *oeuvre* of the author in a definitive conceptual formulation of the deep premises of his thought, while all other writing of the author is then read as subordinate to that formulation, as if they re-articulated the meaning of those premises rather than articulating meanings of their own. Eliot destroys this hierarchy in a multiple splitting of the uniformity of the subjective mind that it assumes: his dissertation, Eliot effectively says, rewrites Bradley's thought rather than writes down Eliot's own. This split is reinforced by another one, that which has happened in Eliot's own self in the course of time. His philosophical work was recognised by the philosophy department in the voice of 'Josiah Royce, the *doyen* of American philosophers,' as 'the work of an expert' (*KE* 10) when it was completed in 1916, but at the time of introducing this work to the public Eliot does 'not pretend to understand it' (*KE* 10). The language that he was qualified to use then is no longer his own, nor is its conceptual content. Eliot the poet of 1964 is not Eliot the philosopher-and-poet of 1916, let alone the fact that they both differ from the philosopher Bradley. The difference that Eliot delineates is not only the difference between two subjective points of view but also that of the two kinds of sensibilities embodied in different kinds of language, philosophical and poetic, the former characterised by conceptual consistency and the aspiration to speak the truth which, by implication, are not the attributes of the latter.

Most importantly, the poetic sensibility with which I have just identified Eliot's voice prefacing *Knowledge and Experience* is not defined, as it would have been in a

discourse governed by the law of conceptual coherence; it is enacted. Eliot says only that he is no longer a philosopher as he used to be but he does not say that he is a literary man. His reader knows him as a poet and, facing a rejection of his earlier, philosophical identity, assumes that this rejection is enabled by this other, literary, self-identification. And if literary discourse distinguishes itself from the philosophical as that which relies on the effect of its language rather than on defining its meaning conceptually, here it is: not only does the unfinished sentence in the draft which Eliot owns end with the word that is the exact opposite of ‘the Absolute,’ ‘relative,’ but it also enacts relativity by leaving the sentence (and so the whole dissertation) open-ended. The meaning of this unfinished sentence is left potential, realisable only in the specific context of its reading that may or may not demand completion. This completion, and so the meaning, is an interpretative (re-)construction of significative paths opened by the conditional ‘if’ that predicates the completeness of the philosophical Absolute with the relativity of a specific point of view. The Absolute knows its world as an all-inclusive harmony, and it speaks what it knows in complete, meaningful sentences; but it appears as this meaningful totality only against the background of the indeterminacies of immediate existence in its openness to the unpredictabilities of the impossible-to-know.

The unfinished sentence left out, Eliot’s dissertation ends with the following statement:

If I have insisted on the practical (pragmatic?) in the constitution and meaning of objects, it is because the practical is a practical metaphysic. And this emphasis upon practice – upon the relativity and instrumentality of knowledge – is what impels us towards the Absolute. (*KE* 169)

The Absolute is the hypothetical possibility of an all-inclusive harmonious order to which we strive while regarding it as actually existing, even if only as a prospect. This prospect of the absolute order of reality gives purpose and meaning to human

existence; but this order remains potential, and its meaningfulness is known only as the other of disorganised reality:

There is a real world, if you like, which is full of contradictions, and it is our attempt to organize this world which gives the belief in a completely organized world, an hypothesis which we proceed to treat as an actuality – whence the question how and how far we come into contact with this world of absolute order. (*KE* 90)

We oscillate between two experiences of reality: the disordered ‘real world [...] full of contradictions’ and ‘a completely organized world’ in which we believe as real because we have experiences of ‘order’ in practical reality. This ‘order’ appears in moments of meaningful perception of immediate reality (which Eliot, after Bradley, calls ‘feeling’) that are moments of all-inclusive knowledge; but this knowledge is all-inclusive only at the moment of insight, every shift in perception calling for a shift in the meaningful ordering of what is perceived:

We do not, in point of fact, simply know: we make tentative and hardly formulated theories of knowledge in practice, theories which go to make up our real knowledge. [...] Theoretically, that which we know is merely spread out before us for pure contemplation [...]. The real situation is rather that we have [...] a felt whole in which there are moments of knowledge: the objects are constantly shifting, and new transpositions of objectivity and feeling constantly developing. We perceive an object, we will say, and then perceive it in a special relation to our body. (*KE* 154-155)

Every moment of the absolute meaningful order of reality, or of knowledge, is bound to the point of view that perceives it and knows what it perceives. This shift, a change of reality and of the truth about it, does not imply falseness but is the only way in which we know the world: in a movement from one point of view to another, every one of these viewpoints equally valid in their given contexts. On the one hand, Eliot says, this undermines our theories because the validity of each theory is questioned from another point of view, rather than seen to establish the truth about the world; but on the other, these theories are true only because they originate in the specific, particular viewpoint able to claim the true meaning for the reality it perceives:

So long as our descriptions and explanations can vary so greatly and yet make so little practical difference, how can we say that our theories have that intended identical reference which is the objective criterion for truth and error? And on the other hand our theories make all the difference in the world, because the truth has to be *my* truth before it can be true at all. This is because an ‘objective’ truth is a relative truth: all that we care about is how it works; it makes no difference whether a thing really is green or blue, so long as everyone behaves toward it on the belief that it is green or blue. (*KE* 168-169)

There is no other possibility of knowing the truth except comparing ‘*my* truth’ of it at the present moment with the ways in which reality is seen from other viewpoints, my own or those of others. The water in the sea may be rather green or rather blue, and if it is important to determine which it is, we check our present perception of it with that of others or of our own in the past. We know reality in moments of its perception which overlap in some respects because we live in the same reality, and differ in others because we move in time and space and shift the focus of attention, constantly redefining the limits of what we perceive and know.

‘But a metaphysical doctrine pretends to be “*true*” simply, and none of our pragmatic tests will apply to it’ (*KE* 169). For Eliot, this very standpoint is a fiction. The world ‘exists only as it is found in the experiences of finite centres’ (*KE* 168), which brings us back to the dynamics of pragmatics just described. Truth is the question of correspondence between visions of the common world from different points of view. Meanwhile, a metaphysical doctrine ‘pretends to be “*true*” simply’ but in fact assumes an oxymoronic absolute correspondence of all relative worlds to the world of its own point of view, non-existent in any actual reality: if there is one truth about one reality, ‘where can you say that there exists the world to correspond?’ Eliot asks (*KE* 168). The oxymoron and the absence of reference make the metaphysical ‘truth’ meaningless: ‘The notion of correspondence will not do [to support the truthfulness of a metaphysical doctrine], for it has no meaning here’ (*KE* 169). And if a metaphysical theory relies only on the consistency of the truth that it asserts, it ‘fails in same way, if it is not merely “ideas” that we are examining, but reality’ (*KE* 169): ‘ideas’ are consistent in their own



metaphysical system, but the reality that they organise for us into a meaningful world is not. This ideal consistency ensures coherence and so makes the metaphysical truth meaningful in itself; but this meaningfulness does not self-evidently relate to the way things are: 'A metaphysic may be accepted or rejected without our assuming that from the practical point of view it is either true or false' (*KE* 169).

Without the limitation of a point of view, nor a relation to actual reality, the Absolute is characterised by this ideal consistency alone, impossible to localise in the world of our being and contemplate as an existent: 'The Absolute, we find, does not fall within any of the classes of objects: it is neither real nor unreal nor imaginary' (*KE* 169). That is because the Absolute does not appear in reality as an object at all. It appears as the idea of order itself, all-pervasive and self-sufficient, subsuming all reality there is, and invisible because of this omni-pervasive all-inclusiveness. There is no outside for this absolute order, so there is no point from which it could be viewed, while everything there is is its property. It can be thought only from within and only as a metaphysical ideal order, a meaningful harmony that may or may not be the harmony of actual, 'practical' reality given to us in moments of our limited and constantly shifting perception.

■

The structuralist perspective in which language is considered as a significative system that works according to its inner laws, a perspective historically unavailable to Eliot and yet foreshadowed in his philosophical work, makes it clear that Eliot is thinking about reality as linguistic process. The implicit definition of the Absolute that Eliot gives in his insistence on the impossibility to think it – the ideal, consistent, meaningful order, sufficient in itself and yet organising all reality there is – identifies the Absolute with the structure of language. Ideal meaningfulness and arbitrary relation to reality are

definitive characteristics of the Saussurean *langue*. The ‘world of absolute order’ which is ‘completely organized’ as a coherently meaningful whole (in opposition to ‘a real world [...] full of contradictions’ [KE 90]), is the whole of linguistic structure. And we believe it (‘treat it as an actuality’ [KE 90]) in spite of its merely hypothetical validity in the same way as we allow language to signify the real. The question remains ‘how and how far we come into contact with this world of absolute order’ (KE 90).

### **IMMEDIATE EXPERIENCE: THE ALL-INCLUSIVE FEELING OF THE REAL**

This contact is the matter of Eliot’s philosophical concern in his reading of Bradley, immediate experience standing for the basic premise of reality. Ostensibly, the key premise of Eliot’s dissertation is not the Absolute but immediate experience, its other terms being reality itself and ‘feeling:’ ‘the only independent reality is immediate experience or feeling’ (KE 30), Eliot says at the close of his introductory chapter laying out the *a priori* assumptions of his philosophical vision. This immediate experience, also reality and ‘feeling,’ is in a paradoxical relation with the Absolute, the two being counterparts in one respect but synonyms in another. In the introductory chapter of *Knowledge and Experience*, their synonymy surfaces almost unexpectedly, as if discovered in a semantic correspondence of their definitions demanding from Eliot a gesture of self-reflection:

Immediate experience, we have seen, is a timeless unity which is not as such present either *anywhere* or to *anyone*. It is only in the world of objects that we have time and space and selves. By the failure of any experience to be merely immediate, by its lack of harmony and cohesion, we find ourselves as conscious souls in a world of objects. We are led to the conception of an all-inclusive experience outside of which nothing shall fall. If anyone object that mere experience at the beginning and complete experience at the end are hypothetical limits, I can say not a word in refutation for this would be just the reverse side of what opinions I hold. And if anyone assert that immediate experience, at either beginning or the end of our journey, is annihilation and utter night, I cordially

agree. That Mr Bradley himself would accept this interpretation of his (*Truth and Reality*, p. 188) ‘positive non-distinguished non-relational whole’ is not to be presumed. But the ultimate nature of the Absolute does not come within the scope of the present paper. (*KE* 31)

It appears that the ‘non-distinguished non-relational whole’ in its all-inclusive ‘harmony and cohesion’ defines both the Absolute and immediate experience. Without distinctions or relations that differentiate things from one another, both the Absolute and immediate experience are conditions of no-thing, and it is a matter of will alone whether to value this condition as perfect ‘harmony and cohesion’ or to dread it as ‘annihilation and utter night.’ ‘But the ultimate nature of the Absolute does not come within the scope of the present paper:’ Eliot wants to keep his attention in the area between these conditions of nothingness, in ‘the world of objects’ which we think of as constituents of ‘an all-inclusive experience outside of which nothing shall fall’ but do not quite experience this all-inclusive whole. This difference between what we know as the world of objects and our experience in which there is more than we know is the condition for meaning to appear: meaning *is* only against the background of what it *is not*.

And yet these conditions of nothingness, though in themselves essentially the same, mark two different limits of meaningful experience. The Absolute is the destination point of ‘our journey,’ known as ‘complete experience,’ while immediate experience is its origin, defined by ‘mere’ immediacy. And if the Absolute is the principle of order that may or may not be the order of experienced reality, immediate experience is the condition of presence, the sense of the real that may or may not be ordered into a meaningful whole. Imagined in its purity – as ‘a felt whole’ (*KE* 155) before even there is the perceiver and the perceived – immediate experience is the given of the real. Within this ‘felt whole’ perception distinguishes the viewer and the viewed as objects of reality, while in itself this whole of immediate experience is no-thing but the condition of pure presence for any-thing to appear. Eliot quotes Bradley:

It means for me, first, the general condition before distinctions and relations have been developed, and where as yet neither any subject nor object exists. And it means, in the second place, anything which is present at any stage of mental life, in so far as that is only present and simply is. In this latter sense we may say that everything actual, no matter what, must be felt; but we do not call it feeling except so far as we take it as failing to be more. (*KE* 16)

Immediate experience is before ‘distinctions and relations’ happen, among them the distinction between the subject that perceives and the object that is perceived, as well as those of ‘time and space’ in which anything exists. It is before even a possibility of reflection, for the moment when a reflecting mind distinguishes itself from the external on which to reflect is already after the segmentation of the ‘non-distinguished non-relational whole’ has emerged.

This condition, then, can only be imagined: experience of reality never is ‘merely immediate’ but is always already framed in a set of distinctions of ‘time and space and selves’ in which ‘we find ourselves as conscious souls in a world of objects.’ The moment we perceive ourselves perceiving things in space around us and in time is already after the immediacy of reality has broken into the distinguished relational whole of its objects, to reverse Bradley’s negative definition of what immediate experience is not. Yet even in the world of objects, immediate experience remains as the aspect of presence of things that are in view: immediate experience is ‘anything which is present at any stage of mental life, in so far as that is only present and simply is.’ It does not appear by itself but only as the assertion of the existence of things coming to us through ‘feeling:’ ‘everything actual, no matter what, must be felt; but we do not call it feeling except so far as we take it as failing to be more.’

Translated into the structuralist Saussurean terminology, the characteristic of ‘distinctions and relations’ defines the post-immediate experience as the linguistic condition of human existence: relationality of distinct units of meaning defines the system of language. If the world is a relational whole of objects, these objects are distinguished from one another and simultaneously form a whole in the structure of

language which is a relational system of distinct elementary units of meaning. The Saussurean *langue* is analogous to the Eliotic Absolute because they are both defined as an ideal meaningful order arbitrarily related to practical reality which it is assumed to organise. At the same time, *langue* is analogous to the post-immediate experience of reality in that both are characterised by segmentation of experiential homogeneity into elements of meaning related to one another within an organised meaningful whole. Language is the bridge between two states of no-thingness, immediate experience and the Absolute, these states defined each by one of the two definitive aspects of the linguistic structure. And so ‘our journey’ between them – our actual existence ‘in the world of objects’ in which ‘we have time and space and selves’ (*KE* 31) – is an existence in a reality segmented into objects, the medium of this segmentation being the structure of language.

This formulation, however, not only assumes structuralist premises about language but also challenges them at the very core. The notion of this intrinsic interdependence between language and reality itself goes beyond structuralism, for it defines *langue* as a structure uncompromisingly torn away from the reality which it speaks. This division line is the basis of the fundamental structuralist postulate that linguistic sign is arbitrary, dependent on the relational system of which it is an element but not on the reality which it denotes. This postulate also defines the focus of the structuralist inquiry into language: it looks into the systematic relations of linguistic structure but not beyond. Yet Eliot leaves the issue of the Absolute (or the linguistic order) outside the scope of his concern (*KE* 31) and focuses his attention ‘on the practical (pragmatic?)’ (*KE* 169) – or on the post-immediate and pre-absolute human existence of actual experience which arises in interdependence between the system of language and the real which language signifies. This interdependence, and not the absolute linguistic order *per se*, is the central matter of Eliot’s concern. *Knowledge and*

*Experience*, as Eliot effectively explains in his introductory chapter, considers epistemology in the light of this interdependence, insisting on it, revealing its nature in every premise of epistemological projects which it appears to underlie.

If read in these terms, Eliot's philosophical work elaborates a fundamental extension of what would later emerge as the structuralist definition of linguistic meaning, the philosophical basis of this extension formulated in Bradley's definition of the post-immediate condition of human existence. The Saussurean understanding of linguistic process builds on the implications of the arbitrary relation of linguistic structure to the reality it signifies, this arbitrariness of connection between language and reality seen as the enabling and necessary condition for language to communicate meaning. But the Bradleyan world of 'distinctions and relations' never comes to be completely post-immediate. In Bradley's definition, 'distinctions and relations' develop against the background of 'feeling' in which 'everything actual,' before it is any-thing at all, 'is only present and simply is.' This 'felt' background never loses its significance but remains the source of all meaningful reality there is; it is, to quote Eliot again,

a felt whole in which there are moments of knowledge: the objects are constantly shifting, and new transpositions of objectivity and feeling constantly developing. We perceive an object, we will say, and then perceive it in a special relation to our body. (*KE* 155)

The world, a relational whole of objects, reinstates itself in moments of insight, 'new transpositions of objectivity and feeling constantly developing.' This development is a process in which 'moments of knowledge' arise in a constant interaction between the background of 'feeling' and linguistic-objective relationality, and the relation between the felt and the known redraws itself anew the emergence of every 'moment of knowledge.' Language signifies reality by organising that which is in immediate perception into a systematic relational whole of perceivable objects. This systematic relationality, formally a defining characteristic of *langue*, is not in the linguistic system alone but lives in immediate perception, reinstating itself in every moment of knowing

immediate reality. And the identification of the real as the immediately perceived means that every moment of knowledge ultimately assumes a system of meaningful coherence of its own. Linguistic system signifies reality in principle but the system itself – the meaning it articulates – is unique to every given ‘whole’ of ‘feeling’ in which meaningfulness comes up as the ‘objectivity’ of the world. This is the area in which I want to begin looking for answers to ‘the question how and how far we come into contact with this world of absolute order’ (*KE* 90) given to us with the gift of language.

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In his remark on the fact that immediate experience and the Absolute, two states of perfect harmony and cohesion, are synonymous with nothingness, a state of the nightmare of meaninglessness, Eliot is clear enough about his position as to which it is for him. The possibility of identifying the all-inclusive non-distinguishable being with ‘annihilation and utter night’ is there in the language of Eliot’s definition of his premise, a possibility of a meaning to which he ‘can say not a word of refutation.’ But this meaning is not his choice, he proceeds to say: ‘this would be just the reverse side of what opinions I hold’ (*KE* 31). Next to this assertion of the meaningfulness of immediate and complete experience, lies Eliot’s choice of immediacy as the primary value over that of the absolute order, as he takes immediate experience rather than the Absolute for the fundamental premise of his philosophy. Experience is not made meaningful by ordering reality into the known cohesion of the Absolute. The meaning of experience begins in the given as it is, moving from this given point towards the complete order that is unknown until it is found.

Eliot repeated this journey towards a discovery of a principle ordering reality several times. The premise of immediate experience – the real found meaningful in an all-inclusive harmony of its organised perception – reappears in Eliot’s writing under

many terms. It is 'immediate experience' in philosophy. In literary criticism, it is assertively stated by the term 'objective correlative' (*SE* 145) in which a work of art arrests the flow of 'feeling' to create 'that *particular*' (*SE* 145), 'significant emotion, emotion which has life in the poem' (*SE* 22), 'such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked' (*SE* 145). It is also the unity of sensibility Eliot finds in Dante and Donne: 'a system of thought and feeling; every part of the system felt and thought in its place, and the whole system felt and thought' in Dante (*The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry* 182-183), and 'a kind of unity in the strange ability of Donne to unite disparate thought in a continuity of feeling' (*The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry* 222). It is the 'fusion' of feeling and thought into the unique and unanalysable unity in meaning of a work of art, the distinctive characteristic of Shakespearean drama (*SE* 19-20), also realised in its effect of the 'ultra-dramatic,' an aspect impossible to conceptualise and yet undeniably formative of the ultimate experience of transcendence from one's own 'plane of reality' into Shakespeare's, as Eliot explains in his Edinburgh lectures (EL I 7-9, 12-13; EL II 9, 16-20). And it is in 'a kind of mirage of the perfection of verse drama, which would be a design of human action and words, such as to present at once the two aspects of dramatic and musical order,' the right balance of the two enabling art to fulfil its ultimate function 'in imposing a credible order upon ordinary reality, and thereby eliciting some perception of an order *in* reality, to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness, and reconciliation' (*OPP* 87). In every case, Eliot keeps his eye fixed on the same complementarity: he distinguishes a structure, a system of interrelated elements analysable in ostensibly formal terms, and the necessary supplement of the direct experience of immediately present reality which enables the structure to actually mean.



## CHAPTER 2.

### **INSCRIBING EXPERIENCE INTO LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE:**

#### **ELIOT AS A NON-ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHER**

My insight into the consistency of Eliot's assumptions – a consistency unobstructed by the fact that Eliot, by turning away from philosophy, seems to push his concern with the nature of reality into the margins of his direct attention – is enabled by the structuralist experience of considering language as a system of signification. Eliot extends this notion of language by insisting on the given, intrinsic interdependence between linguistic meaning and experienced reality. I see Eliot assuming the structuring significative force of language to organise reality, this organisation inevitably imposing relations of the linguistic system on unstructured experience that hypothetically might be signified in other ways. However, in contrast to the post-structuralist caution about this power of language to instate reality and an emphasis on the insurmountable divide between linguistic universe and the pre-linguistic unmediated real, Eliot builds on the sites of linguistically organised experience in which this divide does not exist.

The relation between structuralist premises about language and Eliot's on which I want to build is, clearly, not a historical one. A shared intellectual climate, and so the sameness of concerns, might be claimed between Eliot's and Saussure's thinking, but to establish a historical link between their premises is not my present purpose. Instead, I want to read Eliot in a dialogue with the structuralist view of language, this dialogue offering possibilities of mutual interpretation which I want to explore. Drawing a parallel between structuralist assumptions and Eliot's understanding of language gives

an analytic perspective in which Eliot's career appears as a coherent development of a defined notion of the nature of language, while this implicit notion itself extends structuralist premises that have been recognised as underlying the limitations of structuralist thinking.

The fundamental limitation of the structuralist definition of language that Eliot's writing uncompromisingly challenges is the premise that language is an immanent structure of signification. For structuralism, meaning is enabled by the fact that language is a self-sufficient differential relational system in which every unit of signification means by way of being defined by the differential relations of that system. In Eliot's premises, as I have outlined above, the significative importance of this linguistic relationality is recognised in its both aspects: the meaningfulness of systematic relationality appears as the principle of the absolute order manifest in 'moments of knowledge' (*KE* 155), while the differential, elementary nature of meaning is acknowledged in Eliot's insistence that the world is known only as a relational whole of distinct objects that, in their turn, are inseparable from 'terms' that denote them (*KE* 155, 165-168). However, Eliot attributes these aspects of systematic coherence and segmentation not to the system of language *per se* but to experience which language shapes for it to be meaningful, and so his definitions call for a reinterpretation of structuralist premises to include extra-linguistic conditions that enable the significative system of language to mean.

In Eliot, the extra-linguistic appears as immediate experience that, in its turn, is a synonym for reality itself. The problem with this identification of the extra-linguistic with experience and then with the real is that these are in themselves terms, and their semantics is loaded with the history of their use in the Western philosophical tradition which Eliot's dissertation explicitly questions. In addition to the polysemy of these terms derived from their multiple redefinitions, their meaning in Eliot's use is further

complicated by his idiosyncratic deviation from the basic principles of the kind of thinking that operates in them. The structuralist logic offers a way of avoiding this overdetermined semantic net: I will focus on the opposition between the linguistic (or the systematic) and the extra-linguistic (or the non-systematic) itself. Reading Eliot with this focus makes it possible to foreground his original, idiosyncratic vision of the relationship between language, experience and reality. And in the perspective of this relationship, his *oeuvre* appears as a consistent elaboration of a coherent philosophical-aesthetic vision of the world, original in that it is inassimilable into any of the schools of thought in terms of whose vocabularies Eliot has been read. Further, the way in which Eliot thinks this relationship seems to grasp the very core of the turn in the Western philosophy that had already been taking place at the time of Eliot's direct engagement with philosophy<sup>1</sup> and produced, in the course of the twentieth century, a range of philosophical languages that question the fundamental assumptions of Western philosophy and construct their discourses accordingly.

The ground for the overlapping between Eliot's thought and the linguistic turn in the Western thinking is their common rethinking of the nature of systematicity itself. In philosophy, this rethinking is directed towards questioning and modifying the basic

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Wollheim, in a review of *Knowledge and Experience* to the *New Statesman*, gives a concise description of this turn to explain the obscurity of Eliot's style. In Eliot's defence, Wollheim says that 'he wrote at a time when it was very difficult for a philosopher not to be obscure' because philosophy itself had already been losing its foundations of systematic thought, facing its 'inability to understand the relation between a thought and that of which it is a thought in any [...] terms open to it.' Bradley in Wollheim's account effectively appears as a thinker who realised the differential nature of language and its arbitrary relation to the reality it denotes, as well as the crucial implication that linguistic distinctions are imposed on reality and falsify it: even most contemporary philosophers, according to Bradley, 'committed the cardinal sin of analysis, which is to treat what can be distinguished as though it were different. [... In Bradley's view,] the ideas, categories, classifications that we impose upon the world falsify it, by suggesting real divisions where really there are none: although, as Bradley was quick to see, even to state the doctrine like this is already an error, for what are "we" and "it" but themselves unjustified abstractions?' ('Eliot, Bradley and Immediate Experience' 401). In a more extensive account of Bradley's influence on Eliot, Wollheim shows Eliot's linguistic awareness to be more radical than Bradley's, for Eliot rejects the only unity that Bradley still holds to, that of a subjective mind. For Eliot, 'mental contents are at best a transient phenomenon,' immediate experience, or feeling, 'breaks up and develops into "an articulate whole of relations" within which the broadest division is that into Subject on one side and Object on the other,' and because feeling is unstable, the subject-object distinction constantly reinstates itself as do all other distinctions of the articulate whole of feeling ('Eliot and F. H. Bradley: An Account' 176, 175). Long before the historical linguistic turn, Eliot had its premises available to him in Bradley's thought and radicalised their implications.

premises of analytic terms and procedures, namely two: the premise of the subject-object distinction, underlying the assumption that reality is objective and the demand that the analytic inquiry into the nature of reality must not allow intrusion of subjectivity; and the assumption that this objective reality is coherent, understandable in a system of interrelated concepts. These two assumptions are interdependent because analytic thinking associates coherence with truth, while incoherence is the marker of error, error itself attributed to an intervention of subjectivity.

Eliot's thought reinterprets these assumptions, turning the terms in which they operate into a complementary network instead of regarding them exclusive of one another. The underlying premise here is that all these oppositions derive from the experience of reality as given and that they mark different kinds of relations in which this experience takes place. Reality is objective when it is analytically understood, but it is also subjective because it is experienced. Objective reality is coherent because coherence is the property of objectivity: Eliot defines the world of objects as the relational structure analogous to the system of *langue*. The conceptual coherence of the philosophical discourse ('a metaphysical doctrine,' or 'a metaphysics' as Eliot says in *Knowledge and Experience* [169]) is a radical case of this structure, an instance of linguistic systematicity in the highest degree. Truth, meanwhile, indeed must be coherent because it is articulated in language, in itself the medium of establishing links of coherence necessary in the communication of meaning; but this system of coherent links, in order to have the value of truth, must be embedded in experience. To enable this link – to articulate truth in terms that are the terms of experience – Eliot redefines the notion of systematicity itself: he replaces the conceptual analytic coherence of philosophy with the experiential kind of coherence, which in Eliot is recognised as poetic.

A number of Eliot's critics explicitly claim that Eliot defies the linguistic order

by constructing his writing in resistance of conceptual coherence and in search of alternative terms, reading his poetry as resulting from this search (Lamos; Riquelme; Schwartz; Skaff; Spurr). But more importantly, Eliot's thinking has been shown to substantially correspond in premises with the thinking of the late nineteenth and the twentieth century that developed in reaction against the analytic premises in philosophy. This reactionary thinking validates subjectivity as the experiential locus of reality, and quests the claim of analytic coherence to the universal truth. Eliot has been read in the vocabularies of the phenomenology of Husserl (Kumar; Spanos), the hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer (Davidson; Shusterman; Spanos), and the pragmatics of William James (Michaels). References to Jacques Derrida punctuate many studies, while some consistently read Eliot in deconstructive terms (Austin; Ellmann). And it is in the non-analytic dimensions of interpreting the world that Eliot's thought and his poetry have been seen to rely on Indic traditions (Kearns; Perl & Tuck; Perl 'The Language of Theory,' *Skepticism and Modern Enmity*). These readings foreground the premises underlying Eliot's shift from philosophy to poetry in the aspiration to speak in a discourse of truth. In effect, they identify the pillars that support the other kind of systematicity, the Eliotic non-analytic alternative, that of poetic discourse. In the light of these premises, poetry appears the only kind of language that – paradoxically, for it is in itself a structure of mediation – enables access to the immediate experience of reality.

Reading Eliot as a philosopher who turned to poetry in search of a more adequate discourse of truth begins with a description of Eliot's redefinition of the subject-object relation. In contrast to the analytic premise of the divide between the inquiring subject and the object of inquiry, Eliot insists that no system of knowledge is independent from the point of view building it (Michaels 175; Perl, 'The Language of Theory' 1013). From here on, Eliot's readers elaborate the implications of this insistence, as formulated in both Eliot's own writing and the vocabularies that they use

to interpret Eliot, and demonstrate how the inscription of the inquiring subject into the system of knowledge being build redefines the notion of the epistemological system itself. The relations that define this non-analytic kind of systematicity constitute the thematic and structural network that is the ground of Eliot's notion of the aesthetic effect conceptualised in his criticism and realised in his poems, as I will show in the coming chapters.

The subject, meanwhile, remains a somewhat grey area. Critics tend to avoid directly defining Eliot's notion of the subject, this avoidance justified by his repeatedly stated rejection of the subject in both his philosophical work and literary criticism (Davidson 41, 66). And when aspects of Eliot's implicit understanding of the subject are discussed, its notion is seen circling in contradictions (Ellmann; Michaels 180). It is the subject, however, that is the core issue of the originality of Eliot's thought. His stance on the subject does not lend itself to any of the terminologies that have been used for explicating Eliot's thinking, while his original understanding of what the subject is so far has been overlooked. Eliot explicitly formulates his stance on the subject in *Knowledge and Experience*, this formulation being the matter of my concern further below. Eliot's understanding of subjectivity is at the core of his aesthetics developed in his criticism and realised in his poetry, as I will demonstrate in the remaining part of my thesis.

## **POETRY AS PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY: ELIOT AND INDIC TRADITIONS**

A discussion of the Eliotic notion of the distinction between the subjective and the objective must begin with a qualifying statement that this distinction operates in Eliot's language in the adjectival form rather than in the nominal. The subject-object distinction

marks the difference in the mode of apprehending reality rather than a divide between two separate entities, the subject and the object. For Eliot, the objective reality is the known, or linguistic, reality which is segmented and signified in a language of knowledge, while subjectivity stands for its complementary opposite, the pre-objective experience of that same reality before the perceiving consciousness has organised the perceived into a world of objects by means of a system of terms.

This position is most concisely put in a 1913 Harvard paper of Eliot's, 'Degrees of Reality,' which begins with a claim that there is no strict opposition between the objective and the subjective. Eliot explains: 'What we have is only an attitude toward objects which is defined in retrospection to be the recognition of an identity, – and of course is only on retrospection known as an attitude at all' (2). Objects of reality are out there independently of our relation to them, but we know they are there through 'an attitude' only. Objects are present to us in experience, or through 'feeling,' as Eliot will refer to it consistently in his dissertation; yet at the moment of perceiving objects we are aware neither of the fact of our perception nor of its mode, for this awareness arises only on retrospection.

The identity that Eliot is talking about in this sentence is an identity of the object to itself in its linguistic meaning, and we recognise this identity in a moment of linguistic denotation. Eliot distinguishes denotation from immediate perception in which the object is real though it may not be immediately denoted, recognised as 'an identity:' 'The object then is always real but we do not know what the object is' (8). The act of identifying the perceived object is the act of denoting it as a meaning; and the difference between the pre-denoted and denoted object is in the mode of our apprehension of it, in one case as 'a point of attention' at which we happen to look, and in the other as a linguistically articulated meaning that refers to this piece of reality that we are looking at: 'In the assertion "the sky is blue" a process takes place during which

a hypothetical point of attention is rejected and “the blue sky” substituted for it’ (9). This process, Eliot says, ‘is really continuous and unanalysable’ (9): for unknowable reasons and in unknowable ways, we perceive and understand reality by attending to it and substituting linguistic meanings for points of our attention.

Philosophising is a case of this process:

Hence in the logical process of a philosophical system you have a succession, or rather a continuous substitution. You start, or pretend to start from experience – an experience which is already saturated with theory and definition – and organise it. (12)

Eliot’s parenthetical remark here is crucial. On the one hand, pre-linguistic experience is distinct from linguistic knowledge: ‘as soon as we have defined experience, we have moved from experience into theory’ (11). But on the other hand, linguistic knowledge does not eliminate the experience of that which is known, for in this move into theory, the pre-linguistic experience of the reality denoted does not disappear:

Now when we define an experience we tend to substitute the definition for the experience, and then experience the definition. The original experience may of course have been a definition, but the act of experiencing is quite another thing from the act of defining. The distinction between reality and ideality then amounts to the distinction between the point of attention and the act of attention. (12)

The reality to which we attend, ‘the point of attention,’ may be already linguistic, its experience ‘saturated with theory and definition.’ But our attending to it, ‘the act of attention,’ is immediate: in this act of attention, we have ‘only an attitude towards objects,’ and we understand what kind of objects these were and how we perceived them, and even the fact that we did, only ‘on retrospection,’ as Eliot says in the opening of his paper (2). Significant mediation of one kind or other is omnipresent: we understand reality, experience it as the reality of objects, because it is mediated by interpretative frames. But in experience we are not always aware of the fact of this mediation. Immediate experience does not refer to the absence of significant



mediation but to our unawareness that our experience is being shaped by its structures into a network of meanings.

It is this unawareness of mediatory structures in the process of their direct perception that validates a theory as true. In this unawareness, a theory is immediately experienced, turning the pre-linguistic experiential field of perception into an all-inclusive meaningful structure. This experience of immediate reality as meaningful is what Eliot calls the Absolute: it is the meaningful unity and ‘an all-inclusive experience outside of which nothing shall fall’ at the end of our journey through ‘the world of objects [where] we have time and space and selves’ (*KE* 31):

The crudest experience and the abstrusest theory end in identity, and this identity I call the absolute. If you choose to call it nothing, I will not dispute the point. But whichever it is, it is both beginning and end. Thus the double process is accounted for. (‘Degrees of Reality’ 14-15)

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Thus the Eliotic redefinition of the philosophical linguistic systematicity into the linguistic structure of poetry builds on the identification of mediatory structures in which ‘the crudest experience’ and ‘the abstrusest theory’ rely on a common ground and, consequently, are brought together to result in the moment of identity that Eliot defines as the Absolute. On the largest scale, this common ground is culture, its values held and communicated in language, as well as in accepted practices through which this culture is lived. In the West, Eliot’s native cultural background, the linguistic and the practical are divided, the conceptual order associated with the philosophical knowledge of truth seen as hidden from the eye of an everyman subsumed in the preoccupations of the daily life. But this is not so in the Indic philosophical tradition – this difference is the bottom line of Eliot’s attraction to it.

The relationship between the fundamental premises and procedures of Western thinking and Indic traditions of thought has been highlighted concisely in Perl’s reading

of Eliot. In India, philosophy is understood as the practice of philosophising rather than a linguistic occupation as is the case in the West. In the *Mādhyamika* school, for example, ‘philosophy is not, as in the West, a set of logically demonstrated theoretical propositions; it is a psychological process that results in the apprehension that appearance and reality are the same’ (Perl & Tuck 82). The two states of no-thingness, immediate experience as the originally given ‘felt whole’ (*KE* 155) and absolute harmony as the destination point, translate in Nāgārjuna’s philosophy into two perspectives on the world: the viewpoints of ‘*samsāra*, or the conventional (the perspectives of the pre- and unenlightened)’ and ‘the standpoint of *nirvāna*, or the absolute (this is the perspective of the enlightened)’ (*Skepticism and Modern Enmity* 57). Through Indic philosophy, Perl associates immediate experience with the self-evident, unquestioned existence in the everyday routine structured by the cultural conventions of the community in which we live. He also notes the identity of the enlightened state of absolute completion of experience with the initial, pre-enlightened being in the conventional in Indic philosophy: ‘The viewpoint of the absolute, when it is achieved, is not absolutistic – it is an apotheosis of conventional reality. The absolute point of view is true by definition, but it validates the manifold and the conventional’ (*Skepticism and Modern Enmity* 57).

In the same paper of 1913, Eliot himself contrasts the way in which we make sense of the world in our everyday life as opposed to our aims in the philosophical inquiry into reality:

As social human beings, our interest is to hold various criteria of reality in various contexts and not try to be consistent; [...] But as philosophers, our aim is *consistency at any price*. [...]

What we ordinarily refer to as experience of reality, what provides the criterion of truth is simply the sphere of balance of collective meaning. (‘Degrees of Reality’ 13-14)

In the face of the absence of the absolute point of view from which to claim

absolute truth, truth dwells in the area of agreement of multiple points of view about what their shared reality is. A discourse of truth must aim for this inclusiveness. Philosophy, then, can only aspire to an approximation, an ‘increasingly adequate’ explanation of reality as it immediately appears to us but not the one that is absolutely right, while adequacy increases as the explanation ‘takes into account more points of view on the subject and includes more of its context and web relations’ (Perl, ‘The Language of Theory’ 1013). As Eliot says in a paper on Kant, ‘a *complete* explanation would be entirely in terms of appearance’ (quoted in ‘The Language of Theory’ 1013). That means, however, that this explanation loses in philosophical consistency and so in its explanatory force, its language aiming ‘to hold various criteria of reality in various contexts and not try to be consistent,’ operating as we do in our daily life rather than attempting to establish conceptual coherence. Aspiring to communicate truth rather than aiming for ‘*consistency at any price*,’ philosophy ends up explaining the reality that we consider to be lived, immediate reality. While associating the real with the immediately experienced, Eliot does not let it go unnoticed that reality – as we think and speak about it rather than immediately live it – is in itself defined by a network of linguistic terms in which we understand what it is:

[Eliot’s belief is] that ‘existence’ or ‘reality’ is a quality attributed to certain terms within a shared context of discourse, and that, in relation to its context, ‘knowledge’ is also only a term. [...] Our ‘real world’ is a fabric of implicit theories that we have tacitly agreed to call ‘facts’ (Perl, ‘The Language of Theory’ 1015)

Reality is linguistic. Its existents are common meanings, ‘facts,’ ‘tacitly agreed’ on in a ‘shared context of discourse’ by way of an overlapping of the terms of our ‘implicit theories’ in which we understand and articulate our immediate environment, without even questioning – but believing in – the truthfulness of these theories in relation to the real order of things. The structure of the language in which we articulate reality is the structure of that reality itself; linguistic grammar is the grammar of the

real. In a 1912-1913 paper on Greek philosophy, Eliot draws attention to this link in Aristotelian logic and remarks on the possibility of its development that Aristotle did not pursue, that of a 'search for reality by the analysis of grammar:'

It is only in the persistent faith in a difference between thought and reality which prevents Aristotle from explicitly handling metaphysics as the investigation into the ultimate meaning of thought as expressed in the forms of language. He conducts himself as if he were analysing things and not ideas. (quoted in Perl, 'The Language of Theory' 1016)

In effect, Eliot translates the demand of the Indic tradition for philosophical insight to be experienced in everyday reality into the demand that the language of truth is modelled on the structure of everyday life. The language of truth must 'hold various criteria of reality in various contexts' aiming for the most adequate expression of 'the sphere of balance of collective meaning' which Eliot understands truth to be ('Degrees of Reality' 13-14). The structure of this language of truth is defined by characteristics that are commonly observed in Eliot's poetry, summarised by Perl as 'multivocality, syntactic complexity and richness of association,' their combination making language 'untranslatable into theoretical terms – or rather, endlessly translatable, from an infinitude of perspectives' ('The Language of Theory' 1021).

This redefinition of the language of truth asserts the value of experience. The Indic tradition insists on this value by defining philosophy as a practice in which truth is understood as immediate participation in everyday reality rather than a linguistic meaning. Eliot effectively translates this into a statement that the system of knowledge contains the knower within its structure; and then this structure is the structure of the knower's lived reality. In his paper on Kant, Eliot says:

Knowledge is only knowledge when 'taken internally'. If you contemplate knower and known from the outside, what you find is *not* simply knower and known, but a peculiar complex of existents, and knowledge fades into ontology. Hence in order to know we must begin in *faith*. (quoted in Perl, 'The Language of Theory' 1014)

Things, for Eliot, exist in ideas in which they are known; and ideas, when they

are known, are known as things. Knowledge in this connection ‘fades into ontology’ because its language articulates what is known to exist. How this knowledge arises is unknowable: the process in which we substitute the expression ‘the blue sky’ for the point of attention that is the blue sky is not analysable. But it is this inexplicable connection between the grammar of language and the grammar of reality that makes knowledge real, experienced as well as conceptualised.

When we speak of ... so and so’s theory we are not thinking of it as true ... when or so far as we believe in a system we are inside it: there is no ‘theory’, for the theory *is* the reality.’ (‘The Validity of Artificial Distinctions,’ quoted in Perl, ‘The Language of Theory’ 1015)

In these early papers – and more elaborately in his work on anthropology which the matter of my later concern – Eliot refers to this inexplicable link as ‘faith.’ And faith, in the West as well as in India, is the form of experiencing truth through conventionalised religious practices among which is the practice of reading the text of the Book:

If one wants the truth about the Pentateuch, for example, one turns to the experience of Talmud and of Midrash, one learns the history and practices the conventions. One participates in, thus knows the truth – despite the fact that what is learned is an anthology of Rabbinic disagreements. (Perl, *Skepticism and Modern Enmity* 60-61)

Eliot will keep the distinction between the linguistic structure that communicates experience and the experience itself throughout his life. In a 1956 letter, he writes:

It seems to me that it would be more wrong to say that poetry has no meaning, than it is to over-emphasize the importance of meaning. The fact that a poem can mean different things to different persons – something which I think has been stressed by Paul Valéry as well as myself – must, however paradoxically, be reconciled with the assertion that it has an absolute and unalterable meaning... One can only deal with problems like this in contradictions. (quoted in Perl, *Skepticism and Modern Enmity* 60)

The meaning of a poem that is specific to every reader is the meaning experienced in an act of reading, with the contexts of that act inscribed into what it is; while the ‘absolute and unalterable meaning’ of a poem is its linguistic tissue, the formal significative structure which directs the act of reading and the inscription of its

referential contexts in an absolutely determined, ‘unalterable’ way. The meaning of a poem is a double process: the poem on the page is the point of our attention, while our reading of it the act of attending to it, an act in which we experience the definition of reality that the poem gives in its language, its meaning arising for us in a succession of inexplicable substitutions that our reading eye performs directed by the poem’s words.

### **THE AESTHETIC FORCE OF ONTOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS: ELIOT AND HEIDEGGER**

At the turn of the century, Eliot may have needed to look outside the context of his native cultural background in search of forms of thinking reality as experienced in a complex of both linguistic analytic understanding and direct, unreflected participation in it. But this search itself characterises the intellectual climate of Eliot’s time, and in the course of the twentieth century the West developed its own tradition of thinking reality in more ostensibly experiential terms. The compatibility of Eliot’s thinking with Martin Heidegger’s ontological hermeneutics has been demonstrated extensively by Harriet Davidson, in her study *T. S. Eliot and Hermeneutics*. Such a reading of Eliot in Heideggerian terms is enabled by the overlapping between Heidegger’s fundamental premise and Eliot’s, that existents of reality appear in a continuous tension between our pre-structured, immediate existence among them and structured, articulate understanding of their objective identities. Guided by the network of parallels between Eliot’s and Heidegger’s thinking drawn by Davidson, I go beyond her reading in directly highlighting the analogy between Heidegger’s premise of *Dasein* and the Eliotic immediate experience, which allows me to identify the tension between their visions of reality, the Eliotic version of ontological hermeneutics emerging as more ostensibly aesthetic than Heidegger’s.

Looked at from Eliot's perspective, Heidegger's hermeneutics foregrounds the ontological implications of the Eliotic link between the structure of language in which cultural tradition articulates its understanding of reality and the direct experience of that reality, this experience emerging as an ongoing interpretative activity which is identified with existence itself. While Eliot searches for forms of linking immediate reality with the philosophical thought by turning from Western philosophy towards Indic traditions, Heidegger insists on contemplating this link thinking within the frame of Western thought. It is in this focus that I see the interpretative value of Heidegger to Eliot: in his insistence on the value of the lived reality, challenging the Western tradition on the same issue as Eliot does, Heidegger – far more explicitly than Eliot – keeps his focus on the function of language as articulating the meaning of this immediately lived reality. In this emphasis, Heidegger encapsulates a set of premises about language that empower Eliot's creative thought, while in Eliot's own theoretical thinking these premises appear as scattered over different areas of his attention, rather implicitly underlying his concerns other than the concern with language. Thus while Eliot, in his interest in Indic traditions and anthropology (a matter of my direct concern in Chapter 3), seems to be losing faith in the power of language to articulate the meaning of reality, Heidegger directly addresses the question of how Western thinking of the relationship between language and reality must change in order to enable language to speak the truth. The answers given by Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics to this question are behind what can be thought of as Eliot's reacceptance of the authority of language to speak the truth, albeit not in the form of philosophy but in that of poetry.

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Heidegger articulates the link between immediate reality and language as a structure of meaning in the premise of *Dasein*, the pre-epistemological understanding of the world:

it is the mode of our being in a reality which we somehow already understand. On this plane of immediate understanding, there is no the object separate from the subject who knows the object by means of the systematic language of knowledge. Reality is before distinctions between them have emerged, though understanding itself appears as articulation in their terms. Thus reality is experienced as a continuous interpretative process, this process regarded as reality itself. For such ongoing interpretation that constantly redraws distinctions which signify reality,

*Dasein* is foundational: that anything *is* grounds the possibility of *Dasein*'s existence as comprehension that things are; but this ontological characteristic of *Dasein* allows the possibility that anything is. (Davidson 43)

For Heidegger as for Eliot, reality appears to us in our comprehension of it. Reality exists out there by itself, which makes it possible for us to comprehend it; but it is through comprehension only that reality shows itself for what it is. We let be that which is by apprehending it as meanings, in both our behaviour as we live in the given reality and in language as we recognise its objects in their objective identities.

The difference between the immediate and structural apprehension of the same reality appears clearly in Heidegger's explanation of the double nature of equipment:

Equipment – in accordance with its equipmentality – always is *in terms of* [aus] its belonging to other equipment: ink-stand, pen, ink, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room. These 'Things' never show themselves proximally as they are for themselves, so as to add up to a sum of *realia* and fill up the room. What we encounter as closest to us (though not as something taken as a theme) is the room; and we encounter it not as something 'between four walls' in a geometrical spatial sense, but as equipment of residing. Out of this the 'arrangement' emerges, and it is in this that any 'individual' item of equipment shows itself. *Before* it does so, a totality of equipment has already been discovered. (*Being and Time* 97-98, H 68-69)

This room is a metaphor for the world: we reside in it, doing things without thinking what is in the room and what we are doing or how, and we also know it as 'a totality of equipment' in which every "individual" item [...] shows itself.' As I will demonstrate in the subsequent chapter, Eliot thinks of this doubleness of immediately lived reality and its understanding as a meaningful structure in the context of



anthropology. Following Durkheim, Eliot speaks of the living space as a space of human activity regulated by ritual practices, in their turn rooted in a religious cult through which a culture interprets reality but also permeating the everyday routine of the members of that cultural community. Thus Eliot sees ritual as the paramount significant practice because ritual is a form that fuses the immediate experience of reality and an interpretative form in which lived reality appears as meaningful. This identification of meaningful experience with a rite also makes this experience ostensibly aesthetic, which underlies Eliot's attention to Shakespearean drama and, through it, his descriptions of poetic drama as an aesthetic medium. By combining elements of poetic and dramatic appeal, poetic drama articulates its meanings in the same kind of fusion of immediately lived reality with a structured form that Eliot observes in a rite. In Eliot, poetic language appears as an extension of this line of thought, its structural characteristics defined by the aesthetic imperative for it to build on the junctures between linguistic structure and immediate perception that Eliot identifies while looking at extra-linguistic forms of aesthetic communication.

Heidegger, in contrast to Eliot, never turns his eye away from language. He formulates the link between lived reality and a structure of meaning directly, in ostensibly phenomenological terms, through the difference in the way of attending to lived reality. This difference will appear in my discussion of Eliot in the next chapter as a demand for an artist to keep a double vision of reality and of the work of art as a form that articulates the meaning of that reality. To define it from the Heideggerian perspective, we reside in the world (as in a room filled up with equipment for us to use as we do things) without thinking about its arrangement, while our knowledge of the meaningful structure of the world in which we live (of the equipment that fills in the room) is a matter of reflection, of distancing ourselves from the immediate environment as the environment of our being. This reflection – even though it removes us from

reality as immediately lived – is an enabling force, for it foregrounds the existents of our environment in their individual identities as the constituents of the ‘arrangement’ that the place of our dwelling, the world, is. This process is the core of human existence, and Heidegger describes it as fundamentally linguistic:

All working and carrying out tasks, all transaction and calculation, sustains itself in the open, an overt region within which what-is can expressly take up its stand *as* and *how* it is *what* it is, and thus become capable of expression. This can only occur when what-is represents itself (*selbst vorstellig wird*) with the representative statement. (Heidegger, *Existence and Being* 328-329)

This representative statement through which reality exposes itself for what it is is not the property of the philosophical conceptuality in which reality is explained but is born in the immediate context within which reality speaks for itself. This statement arises in submission ‘to a directive enjoining it to express what-is “such as” or as it is’ so that ‘the statement “rights itself” [...] by what-is’ (329). On this condition, this is a statement of truth:

‘Truth’ is not the mark of some correct proposition made by a human ‘subject’ in respect of an ‘object’ and which then – in precisely what sphere we do not know – counts as ‘true’; truth is rather the revelation of what-is, a revelation through which something ‘overt’ comes into force. All human behaviour is an exposition of that overtness. (Heidegger, *Existence and Being* 336)

This dynamic is the structure of *Dasein* and the bottom line of its communicability. As Davidson puts it, ‘the always already meaningfulness of the world is grounded in its possibility for coming to language’ (47). This coming to language, the ‘uncovering’ of reality as it appears in direct experience, enables the interpretative circle of understanding that ‘is the expression of the existential *fore-structure* of *Dasein* itself’ (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 195, H 153). *Dasein* is a state of both linguistic and direct apprehension of immediate reality, truth arising in their agreement:

To say that an assertion ‘*is true*’ signifies that it uncovers the entity as it is in itself. Such an assertion asserts, points out, ‘lets’ the entity ‘be seen’ in its uncoverdness. The *Being-true (truth)* of the assertion must be understood as *Being-uncovering*. (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 261, H 218)

This interdependence between linguistic meaning and the direct apprehension of reality opens up ‘a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing’ that is hidden in the Heideggerian hermeneutic circle (*Being and Time* 195, H 153). This possibility is realised in the existence of language in discourse which, in its turn, ‘*is existentially equiprimordial with state-of-mind and understanding:*’ discourse is ‘the Articulation of intelligibility,’ or the effort of understanding and interpretation itself, and this discursive process is identified with the very nature of existence (*Being and Time* 203, H 161).

For Heidegger, the form of ‘the expression of the existential *fore-structure* of Dasein itself’ is not philosophical discourse, but poetic. The advantage of poetic language over philosophical is that poetry incorporates in its linguistic structure traces of discourse in which *Dasein* ‘expresses itself,’ makes itself known ‘by intonation, modulation, the tempo of talk, “the way of speaking”’ (*Being and Time* 205, H 162). In interpreting poetic language we experience the equiprimordial ‘state-of-mind’ that is the condition for ‘a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing.’ Poetry, by way of inscribing traces of the interpretative process of discourse into the structure of its language, gives us a kind of experience that is the experience of existence itself, whereby it also articulates the essence of existence:

In ‘poetical’ discourse, the communication of the existential possibilities of one’s state-of-mind can become an aim in itself, and this amounts to a disclosing of existence. (*Being and Time* 205, H 162)

In my reading of Eliot, this definition of the function of poetry as a discourse of truth splits into two areas of attention, in correspondence with the dichotomy between experiential immediacy and linguistic structure, which I see underlying Eliot’s thinking. Language as discourse, poetic or otherwise, defined in Heideggerian terms as the locus of the interpretative process of consciousness, operates on two planes: it signifies the immediate, sensuous perception of extra-linguistic reality; and it brings into the field of

the interpretative activity of consciousness a world of cultural artifacts, extending the existential horizon of the interpreting consciousness far beyond the limits of its physical experience.

The relationship between language and sensuous perception as it appears in Eliot is the direct concern of my reading of *Knowledge and Experience* further below in this chapter. In the context of Heidegger's thought, the important parallel in their premises is their common understanding of subjectivity: experience, for both Eliot and Heidegger, is not an attribute of the subject, but rather a term for the experiential background in which all existents of the world, including the subject, emerge in interpretative process. In Heidegger, the 'state-of-mind' does not refer to a psychological entity associated with the subject but, rather, to the locus of interpretative activity, the process of being in the world that is also understood. *Dasein* is not 'encapsulated as something "internal" over against something outside' but 'as Being-in-the-world it is already "outside" when it understands.' 'In talking, *Dasein* expresses itself' but '[w]hat is being expressed is precisely this Being-outside – that is to say, the way in which one currently has a state-of-mind (mood) which [...] pertain[s] to the full disclosedness of Being-in' (*Being and Time* 205, H 162). The Eliotic immediate experience, 'a felt whole' which is 'the general condition before distinctions and relations have been developed' (*KE* 155, 16), is the same state of immediate being before it has been defined in terms of a relational system of a world of objects. And once this 'felt whole' has turned into a world of objects, it coincides with consciousness: Eliot's definition of consciousness, as I will show, articulates the same overlapping of its allegedly internal content with what is conventionally thought of as the outside world as does Heidegger in his description of *Dasein* in terms of the distinction between subject and object.

As Eliot more emphatically relies on the aesthetic dimension of the meaningful experience of reality, the other aspect of the Heideggerian hermeneutic existence in the

world, that of its cultural richness, gains even more force of immediate presence to the interpreting consciousness than it seems to have in hermeneutic philosophy. The implication of hermeneutic thinking that language makes available to us the entire cultural heritage, of our own culture as well as that of other cultures, and that it reawakens our interpretation of them, was elaborated by Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer refers to this background of cultural awareness as ‘historically affected consciousness,’ and describes its interpretative activity as determined by its ‘horizon of understanding.’ This consciousness is of a subject collectively understood, a cultural community rather than an individual. And it is situated in the given moment of its own historical existence, this given point of view calling for reinterpretation of the past, reawakening it in the present in the effort of understanding the cultural reality which is now lived, by that reshaping cultural tradition itself:

Just as the individual is never simply an individual, because he is always in understanding with others, so too the closed horizon that is supposed to enclose a culture is an abstraction. The historical movement of human life consists in the fact that it is never absolutely bound to any one standpoint, and hence can never have a truly closed horizon. The horizon is, rather, something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving. Thus the horizon of the past, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion. The surrounding horizon is not set in motion by historical consciousness. But in it this motion becomes aware of itself. (Gadamer 303)

In Eliot, this hermeneutic logic appears as a relevant parallel in two contexts, of anthropology and of literary aesthetics, and it is in their comparison that Eliot’s emphasis on the perceptual immediacy of experienced reality emerges in full force. In the context of anthropology, the focus of my attention in the next chapter, Eliot relies on the Durkheimian definition of cultural change as fundamentally contingent, demanding that ‘[a] people wh[ich] replaces another’ is regarded as ‘a distinct individuality,’ without assuming any kind of continuity between them (IPR, Gray 114). In this context Eliot speaks of the inaccessibility of another cultural reality to the interpreter through language, looks for alternative, extra-linguistic forms of communication, and formulates

his aesthetic views. But in the context of literary tradition, a tradition that itself is embodied in language, Eliot speaks of the continuity of historical change in terms strikingly parallel to those of Gadamer's cultural hermeneutics. Here, he demands for 'the historical sense [that] involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence,' to enable the poet to write 'with a feeling that the whole literature of Europe [...] has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order' that the poet's own work is about to recompose (*SE* 14, 15).

I see this disparity deriving from the difference in point of view and in the focus of Eliot's definitions. Thinking of ways in which a culture – and the experiencing subject – interprets its lived reality, Eliot is trying to answer the question of how pre-articulate experience is articulated in language and other signifying structures (such as rites) and how, if at all, this pre-articulate experience can be communicated if not by means of language. Meanwhile, as Eliot speaks of literary tradition, his focus is restricted to the linguistic medium alone, and he describes the relationship between extra-linguistic experience and poetic language from the reversed perspective, first of all tackling the question of how literary tradition is internalised by the poet through 'great labour' till it permeates the poet's sensibility to 'his bones' (*SE* 14) and how this internalisation eventually enables the originality of the poet's own work. While Eliot sees no way of determining how lived experience is articulated in language, the fact that a meaningful articulation of reality – such as a poem – can be re-experienced, re-lived as the meaning of immediate reality, raises no doubt. On the contrary, this assumption is behind the closing statement of 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' that a poet himself does not understand his creative practice 'unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living' (*SE* 22).

This asymmetrical relation reinforces the ontological implications of the parallel between Eliot's premises and those of hermeneutic thinking. Reality appears as fundamentally linguistic experience for both Eliot and Heidegger. Heidegger locates the interpretative process in lived reality *per se* – in the world which is a room filled up with equipment using which we do things without thinking about the equipment itself unless we step back and reflect. Meanwhile, Eliot describes the same interpretative activity as ostensibly aesthetic experience, or the experience of perception, stressing the fact that the way in which immediate experience is transformed into a linguistic expression is unknowable. At the same time, Eliot's premises fully accept the reverse implication of hermeneutic ontology, that linguistic reality is also lived reality, for it is through language that the Gadamerian 'historically effected consciousness' lives in the awareness of the world reaching far beyond the limits of the consciousness's physical existence. In Eliot, this Gadamerian consciousness is explicitly effective in the field of the history of aesthetic form only, ostensibly in literary tradition. As if enacting the Heideggerian definition of poetry as a discourse of truth *per se*, Eliot accepts all that comes into the field of conscious perception through poetic language as the articulation of reality, this articulated reality re-lived pre-reflectively, through aesthetic apprehension of poetic discourse. The context – the horizon – of 'the existential possibilities' in which a work of art articulates the Heideggerian 'state-of-mind' (*Being and Time* 205, H 162) is, for Eliot as well as for Gadamer, the entire culture of which a literary work is an artifact. And for Eliot, in addition, this entirety of cultural reality is immediately present, always 'already living' (*SE* 22) in the process of the pre-reflective, aesthetic apprehension of literary language. All aesthetically communicated reality is real for Eliot, and so every poem is a statement of truth that the reader presumably re-experiences in the process of reading; but the Heideggerian premise that lived reality is

articulated in language through a move of reflection remains for Eliot an open, fundamentally unanswerable question, as I hope to make evident further below.

This asymmetrical acceptance of hermeneutic tenets makes Eliot's poetic world-vision of reality appear as defined by excess, for everything that comes to consciousness through aesthetically organised language is experienced as immediately present. *The Waste Land* is a poetic expression of the Eliotic experience of this excessive linguistic reality. This poem realises the function that hermeneutic thinking claims for every artifact, a poem in particular: its linguistic tissue concentrates in itself interpretative structures in which culture understands its own lived reality, the variety and density of those structures comprising the intensity of the poem's aesthetic effect. The experience of interpreting this poem is analogous to the experience of existence itself, in the full density and intensity of interpretative effort by which human existence is defined in the hermeneutic world-vision. This parallel grounds Davidson's claim that *The Waste Land*, a poem closely read in her study, is 'A Ceaseless Hermeneutic' in itself (97): it is an embodiment of the hermeneutic ontological claims as an instance on discourse that, as Heidegger puts it, communicates 'the existential possibilities of one's state-of-mind,' this communication regarded 'an aim in itself' turning the poem into 'a disclosing of existence' (*Being and Time* 205, H 162). My reading of this poem, however, will also show that this hermeneutic process is assumed rather than realised in this poem. *The Waste Land* forces the reader into constructing meaningful unities by overwhelming readerly perception with the excess of linguistic reality, assuming that the reader will do so by the natural inclination of human consciousness to understand what it perceives as a meaningful whole, but the poem does not direct the process of aesthetic interpretative perception into a moment of experiencing aesthetic unity.

It is *Four Quartets* that will do exactly what *The Waste Land* refuses to do. The later poem exploits Eliot's assumptions about the aesthetic perception of linguistic



meaning, controlling the excess of linguistic reality by locating readerly experience in perception itself. This poem holds to *The Waste Land's* hermeneutic-aesthetic premise that all reality communicated through aesthetically organised language is perceived by consciousness as immediately present, but it takes another step: it controls the excess of linguistic reality by the laws of perception that delimit and direct linguistic excess, creating an aesthetic unity synonymous with meaningful experience. Exposing the emergence this unity arises is the purpose of my reading of *Four Quartets*, while in the remaining part of this chapter I want to look into Eliot's formulations of the philosophical ground on which this unity builds.

The shift of attention to the perceptual ground of existential experience, which I want to undertake here, calls for a phenomenological vocabulary, a vocabulary that indeed has been productively used for interpreting Eliot (Kumar, Spanos). Davidson's reading of Eliot in consistently hermeneutic terms, however, uncompromisingly rejects the language of phenomenology, on the grounds that Eliot's premises do not accept the Husserlian 'transcendental ego' (66). Instead, in Eliot's effectively hermeneutic philosophical vision, 'the self becomes a locus of culture with no transcendental dominion over the cultural matrix' (5). In Eliot, the subject is an absence, absence itself defined as 'the absence of transcendent foundation, center, origin – whether subjective or objective – for our being' (3). To describe the inexplicable, inarticulable ground of the linguistic process which is hermeneutic existence, Davidson refers to Derrida: this linguistic process, as linguistic play, is 'permitted by the lack, the absence of a center or origin;' this centre of absence is 'a reality, a function' (Derrida 260, 271) but it has no centring force. It is, as Davidson puts it, 'a center which is non-center,' and this paradoxical centre of absence is the locus of the emergence of meaning (Davidson 38-39).

Without assuming to speak for Derrida or Heidegger, I want to suggest that in Eliot this absent centre that does not define but centres around itself the whole world signified and communicated in language is the body – not ‘a transcendent foundation’ but a radically physical one, without ascribing any metaphysical aspect to its centrality. Its absence is the absence to language, the incommunicability of its pre-linguistic experience of reality which, however, determines the map of meaningful distinctions, or the linguistic system, in which it understands and speaks the world. Its centrality is the centrality of signifying activity of which nothing can be said except that it is such a centre of signifying activity, determined by a myriad of identifiable factors none of which is given a decisive authority to claim the definitive significance to itself. This centre is, to quote Derrida again, ‘a function, not a being – a reality, but a function. And this function is absolutely indispensable.’ Derrida goes on to say:

The subject is absolutely indispensable. I don’t destroy the subject; I situate it. That is to say, I believe that at a certain level both of experience and of philosophical and scientific discourse one cannot get along without the notion of subject. It is a question of knowing where it comes from and how it functions. (Derrida 271)

Eliot offers a version of the subject in this Derridean sense, as an indispensable centre that cannot be defined by any metaphysical term but is a function and a reality making its factors interact in unpredictable constellations which make the living world. As it follows from Eliot, these interacting factors are language which is the system of culture, consciousness which is the locus of cultural perception of the world and of oneself in it, and the self that lives in the culture. This Eliotic version of the subject is the matter of my concern further below, after I consider Eliot’s conception of objective reality of which the subject is a part.

## LINGUISTIC REALITY IN PERCEPTION: OBJECTS AS MEANINGS AND MEANINGS AS OBJECTS

In the context of Eliot criticism, it is not phenomenological readings that point to the most significant contexts in developing of the Eliotic notion of the subject but a reading in the terms of pragmatics, as given by Walter Benn Michaels in a concise but important paper ‘Philosophy in Kinkanja: Eliot’s Pragmatism.’ Reading Eliot on his own terms, as I am about to do, calls for significant modifications of Michaels’s interpretation of Eliot’s thought, most importantly on the issues of the coherence of his notion of the subject and on the issue of linguistic meaning on which Eliot, in Michaels’s view, does not have consistent views (172, 174, 180, 182, 184-185, 189). In my reading below, I want to claim the contrary, the consistency of Eliot’s position on both the subject and linguistic meaning, defining them in close interrelation. Michaels relies on two tenets of pragmatic philosophy found in Eliot: the uncompromising emphasis of pragmatics on the given primacy of context (190), and the dependence of this pragmatic context on the notion of the pre-linguistic understanding of the immediate environment as formulated by William James (170-173). Without directly engaging in a deconstruction of Michaels’s argument, I build my vision of the Eliotic subject on these two assumptions even though Michaels takes them in other directions than I am about to do.

A concise formulation of contextual primacy comes towards the end of Michaels’s reading, by way of a summarising encapsulation of his argument:

Prior to context there is no world; prior to context there is no self; context describes the intermingling of world and self; context describes the intermingling of world and self from the beginning, genetically and structurally both. (190)

This ‘intermingling of world and self’ takes place on the grounds of the linguistic reference. In reference linguistic expression performs two functions, often simultaneously: language articulates the meaning of reality as an individual understands

it and communicates this meaning to other individuals of the linguistic community. The meaning of a word in reference is rooted in the direct, extra-linguistic perception of reality, while the meaning it articulates is collective because both language and the reality of which it speaks are shared. From the viewpoint of the subject, a meaning expressed in language is a property of both the individual perception of reality and the collective, social convention of referring to it in a certain way, by this word in this meaning rather than in any other combination.

Eliot refers to linguistic community as a 'community of meaning' (*KE* 161). And it is this double functioning of linguistic reference is the ground for, as Michaels puts it, 'the already public character of the individual self' (190). Eliot more explicitly speaks about it as an anthropological phenomenon rather than linguistic, associating this 'already public character of the individual self' with the social instinct that Eliot sees as religious ('Durkheim' 314), which I will discuss in more detail further below. The relationship on which I want to elaborate here is between the pre-linguistic, direct perception of immediate reality and the linguistic meaning that signifies this reality, transforming it into the reality of objects. This transformation relies on the perceptual and linguistic memory of the subject, and our experience of reality is an ongoing process of this transformation. Context, defined from this perspective, is a space of consciousness that perceives immediate reality through the senses and makes sense of the perceived by signifying it in language. This perceiving and signifying consciousness, if it must be thought of as the subject, splits into two subjective planes, the experiencing and the linguistic subject, the perceiving eye and the speaking 'I' that signifies what is being perceived, defining its own identity as the subject living among other existents of the world. The relationship between these two subjective planes of experiencing reality is the core of the Eliotic linguistic phenomenology and the ground of the poetic effects realised in his poems, most manifestly in *Four Quartets*, a poem

that I will show exploiting Eliot's assumptions about the relationship between language and perception.

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The dynamic of the process in which pre-linguistic perception turns into linguistic meaning intertwines psychological and linguistic development in the process of memory which is both perceptual and linguistic. Eliot does not elaborately describe the psychological aspect of this process, in a gesture of rejection of the psychological subject on the grounds of his philosophical premise that pre-linguistic reality is unknowable. He states the fact of the intrinsic interrelation between pre-objective perception and the reality of objects (*KE* 106-107), but the only way in which he approaches the non-linguistic perceptual constituent of this interrelation is by regarding this perceptual constituent as an inexplicable experiential supplement, the marker of subjectivity in the subject-object relation. Yet this description appears in William James, a philosopher whose work Eliot knew (*KE* 19, 29, 115, 116) and who relies on a premise similar to the Eliotic immediate experience. James provides Eliot with 'a model of epistemological innocence' (Michaels 172) in his description of how objective reality emerges out of the pre-objective extra-linguistic background, this process seen as dominating the mindset of a small child or a savage:

The primitive savage's mind is a jungle in which hallucinations, dreams, superstitions, conceptions, and sensible objects all flourish alongside each other, unregulated except by the attention turning in this way or that. The child's mind is the same. It is only as objects become permanent and their relations fixed that discrepancies and contradictions are felt and must be settled in some stable way. (James 299-300)

In parallel with the Bradleyan insistence that the background of 'feeling' is never fully subsumed into the objectivity of the world (*KE* 16, 155), this Jamesian childish pre-objective perception does not disappear in the course of the development of consciousness but remains as the perceptual foundation of our contact with the real. In

James's definition, sensations 'are *first* things in the way of consciousness' (James 6), which makes their reality 'paramount.' We do not question the reality of objects that assert their presence to our consciousness through the senses (299-306). Between sensations and 'adult consciousness,' there are 'perceptions' that develop on the ground of sensations by subsuming their indeterminate mass, 'a jungle' of the 'sensible' ground into objects of perceptions. The background of indefinite 'sensations' transforms into more clearly objectified entities, the properties of objects perceived ('perceptions'), while sensations as sensations are no longer the content of perception:

[W]hen qualities of an object impress our sense and we thereupon perceive the object, the sensation as such of those qualities does not still exist inside the perception and form a constituent thereof. The sensation is one thing and the perception another, and neither can take place at the same time with the other. (James 81-82)

'Sensations' in James refer to pre-objective sensuous perception, while 'perceptions' are James's term for objects in perception after 'qualities of an object impress our sense and we thereupon perceive the object.' So 'the sensating child' becomes 'the perceiving adult' by way of accumulating experience of perceiving the same object until consciousness recognises the identity of the object to itself in a contact with it immediately, as if skipping the actuality of the sensory data through which the object appears to consciousness. An adult mind performs the same process in every instance of perception, inclined to establish a network of meaningful associations by transforming pre-objective sensations into objective perceptions, in order to see its environment as a complex of real objects:

[P]erception is rarely abortive; *some* perception takes place. The two discrepant sets of associates do not neutralize each other or mix and make a blur. What we more commonly get is first one object in its completeness, and then the other object in its completeness. In other words, *all brain-processes are such as give rise to what we call FIGURED consciousness*. If paths are irradiated at all, they are irradiated in consistent systems, and occasion thoughts of definite objects, not mere hodge-podges of elements. (James 82)

The process of perceiving reality as constituted of objects is interrelated with the

linguistic development for James. In Eliot, this developmental logic underlies the process of the formation of the objects of reality as meanings, while consciousness that perceives these objects is always already linguistic. An Eliotic description of this logic must begin with the statement that the link between perception and linguistic meaning is inextricable, with no possibility of having one without the other. This bond is encapsulated in perhaps the most frequently quoted sentence from *Knowledge and Experience*: ‘Without words, no objects’ (KE 132). Eliot explains:

The object, purely experienced and not denominated, is not yet an object because it is only a bundle of particular perceptions; in order to be an object it must present identity in difference throughout a span of time. (KE 132)

The object *qua* object would not exist without this bundle of experiences, but the bundle would not be a bundle unless it were held together by the moment of objectivity which is realized in the name. I am very far from meaning that it is the act of naming which makes the object, for the activity does not proceed from one side more than from another. Objects cannot arise without names, and names never spring up without objects, ready to be applied to the first objects to which they seem appropriate. Nor do I mean that the object did not exist until it was known, but only that it has not the character of objectivity until it is known as an object. (KE 133-134)

Language is not a means of communicating reality that is already organised into a reality of objects but the medium of such organisation itself. Reality is out there independently of whether it is known (articulated in language) or not; but the objective structure of the real (knowledge of reality as the reality of objects in the identity of those objects to themselves) emerges only in the process of linguistic articulation which takes place in experience through the linguistic function of reference.

For Eliot, objective reality is the meeting point of the sensory contact with the environment and language, both aspects of our sense of the real seen as equally important ‘systems:’ ‘The world thus appears as an ideal construction of descriptions linked to the physiological and to the logical system’ (KE 106), while every object of this world, also ‘the thing,’ ‘is a logical construction, composed of two sorts of material, sense-data and universals’ (KE 107). This link of objective reality to ‘the physiological’

system – the system of the sensing body – is inexplicable. The fact that we know objective reality through what James termed ‘sensations’ that transform into more objective ‘perceptions’ that, in their turn, grow into the knowledge of the world of objects is evident; but it is indescribable *how* the process takes place. For Eliot, the hierarchy of linguistic organisation – from the most immediate and least objective ‘sensations’ to the most logically coherent and most abstracted ‘knowledge’ – is analytic, while in experience constellations of these levels of perceiving and understanding reality are contingent, with no possibility of determining the ultimate dynamic of their interaction.

And yet, even though full analytic description of this interaction is not possible, it can be observed, for the background of the non-objective experience of immediate reality transforms meaning in the process of linguistic conceptualisation. This non-objective background is an aspect and a source of the indeterminacy of objective meaning and its shifts in every instance of its appearance in reality. Eliot shows that this aspect serves its formative function even if the meaning in question (an object referred to) is at a far remove from sensory perception. Even when this object a symbolic abstraction, its identity depends on the context of its appearance, of which pre-objective experiential background is a formative part:

Now in any use of a word which symbolizes an abstraction the actual object of attention, I submit, is exceedingly variable: there is not simply one determinate object in various contexts, but the object varies with the context. Thus, in any use of an abstract term, we may distinguish between the logical meaning, which is an intended object, and the real meaning, which is a part of the experience and not an object real or intended. (*KE* 103)

There is a difference between an object symbolised by a word as ‘an abstraction’ and an object that appears as ‘a bundle of particular perceptions’ (*KE* 132). The former belongs to linguistic logic, much closer to the pole of ‘universals,’ while the latter is a cluster of ‘sense-data’ marked by a name as an object but not as much dependent on the inner logic of the linguistic system as ‘an abstraction’ is. The significance of this



difference emerges in Eliot's description of the process of memory, a description that also explains the difference between an object present to direct perception and its presence to consciousness in language. This difference – more precisely, the relationship between the perceptual and linguistic objectivities – underlies the possibility of the aesthetic affectivity of linguistic representation. Eliot's description of memory effectively explains how linguistically mediated meaning is experienced as immediate. It is this relationship and this process that I will show performed in *Four Quartets*.

In *Knowledge and Experience*, memory appears as a paradigmatic case of being conscious of reality in a way that foregrounds '[t]he contrast between meaning and reality' because in memory (as in anticipation) 'the reality intended is [not] a present sense perception' (*KE* 49) but a perception of the past (or future). Memory, in other words, is an instance of 'the consciousness of an intended reality and of a present meaning which are not co-existent in time' (*KE* 49). In every case of distinguishing an object, consciousness connects two aspects of its appearance, 'an intended reality' in which the object appears and 'a meaning' that enables the object's integrity and identity with itself. But in the case of memory, in contrast to direct perception, these two stages of linguistically supported objectification are separated by a temporal gap: the reality in 'sense perception' is in the remembered past, while 'a meaning' is what is remembered in the present. In this split, immediate experience is no longer located in the sensuous contact of the conscious body with its immediate environment but in the consciousness in which the event of remembering of that past experience takes place in the present: 'The reality is there, and the "mental state" here' (*KE* 49). This relocation is enabled by the capacity of consciousness to signify its immediate reality and preserve it in memory as meaning that can be recalled as real in a moment of remembering.

The significative process, however, necessarily transforms the immediate experience of the reality being signified, in two ways: signification reduces experience

to 'a meaning' leaving out the whole background of pre-objective perception; and consciousness re-signifies that meaning in the context of other objects present to it at the moment of remembering experience:

In memory, for example, or anticipation, there may be the consciousness of an intended reality and of a present meaning that are not co-existent in time. The reality is there, and the 'mental state' is here. And inasmuch as this present state may omit the greater part of what was present to the reality which is remembered, and may likewise add or distort, we are accustomed to form the notion of a perfect idea of the past experience identical in content with the experience itself, and differing only in that it is present as a memory instead of past as an experience. (*KE* 49)

'A memory' in the last sentence of this passage is a linguistic entity, a unity of the signifier and the signified which is 'a perfect idea of the past experience identical in content with the experience itself.' By stating that past experience 'is present as a memory,' Eliot asserts that the experience expressed in language is present to consciousness as meaning: language, that is, does not speak of things absent but instates in consciousness the presence of the objects it articulates. The reality of linguistic meaning for Eliot is self-evident enough to warn his reader against a misconception of memory as an effort of consciousness 'to identify itself with the past experience' with the envisaged 'completion of the process [in] hallucination' (*KE* 49).

Eliot's counter-definition of memory refuting this 'natural view' (*KE* 49) builds on identifying the difference between objectivity emerging from immediate sensory perception and objectivity asserted in language. This is a difference in meaning but, more importantly, in kind. Memory depends on distinguishing an articulus of an object (its 'image') from the appearance of that object in direct perception, each of the two objects (one directly perceived and the other remembered) emerging in a set of relations peculiar to the respective mode of their apprehension:

What we attend to in perception is one group of objects; what we attend to in memory is a different group: not, as in perception, the object as in itself it really is, but its image. Not that there are two distinct entities, the object and its image – the difference is not one of physical objects, but of intended objects. (*KE* 49)

In other words, consciousness knows the difference between the direct presence of an object to the senses and its articulated presence. Consciousness knows – or rather ‘feels’ – in which mode it apprehends the object and this mode of apprehension is the aspect of the object’s presence to consciousness and so of the object itself. The way in which the object appears in consciousness qualifies it as either present ‘in perception, the object as in itself it really is’ or ‘its image,’ each of these appearing in ‘a different group’ of objects. Conscious awareness of this difference is the condition of apprehending a memory as memory and not as a (re)production of the past reality which – if indeed (re)produced fully, with all levels of the formation of an object in perception involved as actively as they are in a direct sensory contact with objective reality – would be hallucination.

This ‘image’ is a stable unit of object-meaning only up to a point. The signifying process does not end with the transmission of objective reality directly perceived into an articulus of an object that is recalled by consciousness (re-)instating its presence. Presence is manifest as immediacy; and so the ‘image’ – if it is an object present to consciousness in ‘the “mental state” [that] is here’ – does not stand by itself but is complemented by ‘feeling,’ an analogue of the residue of the pre-objective ‘sensations’ experienced in response to the objective reality of ‘perceptions’ and of the objects of knowledge. ‘Feeling,’ as it appears in Eliot’s description here and throughout his dissertation, marks the link between the object and the perceiving consciousness, the fact of the presence of the object to the perceiving point of view. ‘Feeling’ is towards and of the object ‘felt,’ but it is an attribute of the consciousness that ‘feels’ the presence of that object, or experiences it as meaning. Eliot describes it as follows:

In perception we intend an object; in recollection we intend a complex which is composed of image and feeling. We do not intend to remember simply the object, but the object as we remember it. And this new object is much more *the experience* than *the past object*, for we try to remember how we felt towards the past object. (KE 49)

The example with which Eliot chooses to explicate the dynamic of this process is remembering 'a public address' (*KE* 50). The choice itself is remarkably consistent with the conception of memory that Eliot describes. A speech is an object that is already an articulation when directly perceived, so Eliot does not have to account for the complexity of the formation of an objective articulus out of 'sense-data' but can focus purely on the transformation of an object as meaning in the process of remembering it. But there is more to this choice than a pragmatic philosophical reduction aiming to purify the phenomenon being described, for this is an instance of Eliot's submission to his own premise that the logic of the pre-objective sensory perception is unspeakable because linguistic articulation is only of objective reality, and for the non-objective there are no words. The pre-objective background of experience can be referred to, as I am referring to it now and as Eliot does by naming it 'immediate experience' or 'feeling,' and its formative significance to our understanding of reality identified, as Eliot does by claiming that the world is 'an ideal construction of descriptions linked to the physiological and to the logical system' (*KE* 106). But this kind of reference is the limit of its denotation: in language, the pre-objective sensory perception of the real appears only as an aspect of the immediate presence to consciousness of the objects named, unsignifiable otherwise than in the prefix to the word denoting the object being perceived, as in the term 'pre-objectivity' itself.

Effectively, the object of Eliot's attention in his description of memory is the interaction between the intention of consciousness to organise this pre-objective perception into an objective whole and the linear-temporal structure of linguistic expression. Consciousness objectifies by way of being inclined to identify as the object of its attention the most totalising meaning of what it perceives to be its appearance in an instance of reference, while intermediary objectivities through the perception of which consciousness has constructed that ultimate object are dismissed as no longer

significant. To recall James, '*all brain processes are such as give rise to what we call FIGURED consciousness*' that understands reality as consisting of 'definite objects, not mere hodge-podges of elements' (82), while all pre-figured stages of its perception – 'sensations' and then 'perceptions' – are dismissed once reality has appeared to consciousness as the reality of objects. Though Eliot sees the mechanism of purely sensory perception as inaccessible to the analytic eye, he understands the process of communicating linguistic meaning to be susceptible to the Jamesian principle of the conscious perception, according to which consciousness aims at the identification of the object of the highest conceptual order. There is nothing to see before the process of objectification is complete enough for objects to be recognised as meanings, and its formative elements – the 'sensations' through which the object asserted its presence to consciousness – are dropped, forgotten once the object has been perceived as the object. But this transformation does not stop once the stage of linguistic articulation of the perceived is reached: the inclination of consciousness to understand the perceived reality on the highest conceptual plane remains. In Eliot, this inclination of conscious perception manifests itself as intertwined with the structure of language.

Unlike objects immediately perceived through the senses, linguistic meaning – which is the object a linguistic expression articulates – is structurally organised, and the hierarchy of its organisation is perceived temporally by hearing (or reading) a sequence of linguistic expression. Structurally, language articulates meaning by combining units that in themselves are not parts of the meaning being articulated. Sounds of the word are not constituents of its meaning, just as words are not quite the meaning of a sentence comprising them (this disparity is best seen in idiomatic expressions: the meaning of the phrase 'under the weather,' for example, is not the sum of the meanings of the words it comprises). These units can be analytically identified as different kinds of objective entities (sounds, words and sentences, also 'a public address') that are hierarchically (a

word is of sounds, and a sentence is of words that are of sounds). And a linguistic utterance articulates this hierarchy in a linear sequence, in its turn temporally perceived. In the direct perception of a linguistic articulation, the chrono-logic of the conscious construction of an object through a sequence of objective transformations coincides with the chrono-logic of its expression in linguistic structure. But this overlap, the ground in which meaning is perceived in continuity of its expression, is broken when the linguistic expression is re-collected after it has been understood in entirety: consciousness preserves the final, most totalising meaning of the expression, while the sequence itself and the dynamic of the process in which it was perceived are dropped.

Eliot's description of this disparity in the formation of meaning in the direct perception of a linguistic sequence compared to the meaning remembered shows a remarkable awareness of the structural planes of language, from phonetic to lexical to syntactic and discursive. This structure arises in the process of the perception of language: meaning is not the property of the linguistic sequence itself but results from the conscious activity of constructing it in perceiving the sequence, the activity itself and the sequence pushed out of the horizon of consciousness once the significative process is complete:

We are attempting to recall, let us say, a public address which we have heard. If memory were simply a restoration of the past, we might expect to recall first the words or fragment of the sentences which the speaker uttered, rather than the sense which we extracted therefrom. For these sounds which he uttered take precedence in time of the meaning; the meaning, to use Meinong's phrase, is a *zeitverteilter Gegenstand* [object distributed in time], and the fact that we recall the meaning, in most cases before we recall the actual words, would imply that the past presents itself in a different time-order than that of the objective time in which the events are held to have taken place. Now in most cases the meaning is what we want; if we had to live through the whole speech again to re-extract the meaning, we should find it very inconvenient. And the meaning can hardly be said to exist in time as the spoken words exist. (*KE* 50)

Consciousness, that is, already in the process of direct perception aims for the meaningful unit of a conceptually highest structural level, before the process of the utterance and perception of a linguistic expression is completed. And once this unit is

established, there is no way back: it is preserved in memory as the meaning of the past experience, forgetting the intermediary stages of its formation. Further, even if consciousness tried to recollect those intermediary stages through which the meaning emerged, it would re-experience them only in the light of the most totalising meaning to which they have led.

James, ostensibly focusing his attention on what Eliot considers to be the unanalysable 'feeling,' explicitly states that the perceptual and the significative planes of a linguistic sign are interdependent. He cites the French phrase '*Pas de lieu Rhône que nous,*' and comments:

[O]ne may read this over and over again without recognizing the sounds to be identical with those of the words *paddle your own canoe*. As we seize the English meaning the sound itself appears to change. [...] at that moment one may often surprise a change in the very *feel* of the word. (80)

Not only does consciousness aim at the most inclusive meaning of a linguistic articulation but this most inclusive meaning, once identified, contaminates the matter of the perceived through which the meaning reaches consciousness. Once consciousness realises the possibility that the acoustic form can hold a parallel content, the form is perceived as at least double, working in both systems of relations in which it is a significative structure, in this example English and French. The whole of the *langue*, in itself understood as the structure of relations between objects that are significative elements within a systematic whole, determines the character of the direct perception of the sound, 'the very *feel* of the word.' In the Eliotic vocabulary, the pre-objective 'feeling' is not only the background and the source of the objective reality which emerges from it but is also determined in nature by the (linguistic) meaning to which consciousness attributes it as the perceptual aspect of the object. A transformation from one plane of signification to another – from, say, pre-objective 'sensations' to more clearly objectified 'perceptions' – is irreversible for an analytic eye to see and explain. This means, among other things, that once an objective transformation has taken place,

the analytic eye cannot disregard it nor can it see the pre-objective for what it was before it was subordinated to the objective meaning consciousness has perceived most recently. Sensory perception is not only pre-linguistic but also post-linguistic: the 'sensation' itself, also the 'feeling,' is determined by the distinctions of which 'feeling' is an aspect.

This capacity of linguistic articulation to shape experience from the most abstract to the most immediate, sensory levels of the significative mechanism of consciousness-in-the-body is the bottom line of the aesthetic affectivity of poetic language. For Eliot, this effect is not exclusively poetic: all language conveys meaning that is articulated by linguistic structure but located in experience eventually rooted in the non-articulate sensory perception, or the perceiving body. Meaning is by definition someone's, the communicative situation either the speaker's and/or the addressee's, and the situation of remembering adds yet another experiencing instance, the remembering point of view – all these meanings, for Eliot, are different meanings, though the linguistic expression that directs their construction is the same 'public speech:'

[T]he meaning intended in attention to the speaker is not the same as the meaning intended in recollection. In hearing, we aim at the meaning of the speaker – in memory we aim at the meaning which we drew from his words. And the same distinction holds good, though it is less apparent, even with the speaker's words: for we intend in the one case the words as spoken, in relation to the speaker, and we intend in the other the words as we heard them. And the words in this aspect, were never an actual object of perception; they have their existence only in memory. (*KE* 50)

The supplement of the experiencing body, that is, never disappears from the structure of meaning as Eliot sees it. As long as the object-meaning is in formation, the subjective-experiential constituent shows itself as conscious perception which builds this object-meaning out of the network of perceptual and linguistic associations. And when the object of conscious attention has reached the completion of its objective identity in the highest degree, it brings the subject with it, as the consciousness-in-the-body that has intended and experienced this object-meaning. The subject is born at the



moment of the transformation of the perceived reality into the reality of objects. Throughout the process of objectification, it has been the perceiving-and-signifying consciousness; at the moment of the completion of this objectifying process, this articulating consciousness-in-the-body turns into a speaking voice that expresses the meaning it has perceived.

Correspondingly to the difference between objects of direct perception and those linguistically instated, Eliot distinguishes two kinds of articulating bodies, one involved in the process of direct experience of reality that is being objectified into meaning and the other reflecting (in remembering, for example) on that experience as a meaning already known:

The past which we aim at is the experience of an ideal individual, who should have been both internal and external to ourselves, who should have both known and experienced the past to which *in a very loose sense* our memory may be said to refer. (*KE* 50)

For Eliot, the relation between subject and object is strictly a matter of the degree of objectification. The subject is the other of the object, instated by the object appearing to consciousness but never an entity existing before the object to which consciousness attends. The distinction between the ‘internal and external’ individual in the fragment I have just quoted refers to two modes of apprehending objective reality, internality associated with direct sensory experience and externality with articulation. In direct perception, the object-meaning forms and transforms as a series of pre-articulate ‘sensations,’ and hence remains fundamentally ‘internal’ experience, enclosed in the perceiving body. Meanwhile, objective reality is ‘external’ to this body because it has been defined as the reality of objects distinct from the perceiving viewpoint itself.

But language is not the only means of expressing the meaning of the directly perceived reality: this meaning is also expressed through the body in its immediate response, as behaviour to the objects being perceived. Eliot articulates the significance of behaviour as part of his explanation of the interdependence between language and

objective reality encapsulated in the sentence ‘Without words, no objects’ (*KE* 132). The recognition of an object present to the senses, according to this description, begins with the bodily response: ‘[I]n any knowledge prior to speech the object is not so much an identity recognized as it is in a similar way of acting; the identity is rather lived out than known’ (*KE*133). While ‘the explicit recognition of an object as such’ is impossible ‘without the beginnings of speech,’ the recognition of the object’s identity may just as well be expressed by ‘a form of behavior’ which, if sufficiently regular, is understood in a similar way as a linguistic expression. To know the object as an object is not possible without language because, in addition to the fact that a part of the object’s identity to itself is its linguistic meaning, language is at the basis of the subject-object distinction itself: ‘Our only way of showing that we are attending to an object is to show that it and ourself are independent entities, and to do this we must have names’ (*KE* 133). But there is also a regularity of non-linguistic response, before this regularity turns into the linguistic understanding of what the perceived object is.

We may say if we like that the dog sees the cat and knows it is a cat, though it does not know its name, and I have no objection to this way of speaking loosely. But when we ask in what this knowledge consists, we can only point to a form of behaviour. [...] the point at which behaviour changes into mental life is essentially indefinite; it is a question of interpretation whether in expression which is repeated at the approach of the same object (as a cat may have a peculiar way of acting at the approach of a dog) [there] is behaviour or language. (*KE* 133)

Ostensibly, the argument of this description is against thinking of objects independently of linguistic structure. In the encounter of a cat and a dog, ‘we have no object (except from the point of view of the observer, which must not be confused with that of the patient under examination),’ for it is only ‘language which gives us objects rather than mere “passions”’ (*KE* 133). But nevertheless, from the point of view of the observer, Eliot reads the behaviour of a cat and a dog in a similar way as reading a linguistic expression. Even though ‘passions’ that arise in response to one’s immediate reality are unknowable until they are identified as responses to objects meanings, their

pre-linguistic bodily expressions can be understood, (re-)constructed by an observer in his language by interpreting the behaviour of ‘the patient under examination.’

By the time Eliot submitted his dissertation, he had used an opportunity to think of the structure of this (re-)construction as the core methodological problem of the anthropological investigation. And soon after submitting his dissertation he will define this immediate behavioural response as aesthetic, both contexts being examined in my next chapter. In *Knowledge and Experience*, Eliot states the ultimate inaccessibility and yet the authority of sensory perception in a description of hallucination. Eliot’s purpose here is to insist on ‘the unity and continuity of feeling and objectivity,’ these two being ‘only discriminated aspects in the whole of experience’ (KE 115). The emphasis on ‘the whole of experience’ implies that an object appears in the full complexity of objective relations, and so its identity to (and difference from) itself is perceived only by the point of view that makes the judgement what it is. Eliot looks at ‘a child frightened by a bogey:’

The child ‘thinks it sees’ a bear. The meaning of this phrase is by no means self-evident, for we have, I believe, no criterion for saying that the child does or does not see a bear. Such an illusion may be much more, or much less, than a cinematograph bear; Pierre Janet gives examples, from among his hysterical, of the sensation of touch and weight as well. [...] I do not see any priority of image over emotion, or vice versa. There is, if you like, a tendency for emotion to objectify itself, but the implication is surely mutual, for feeling and image react upon one another inextricably, and the two aspects are so closely related, that you cannot say that the relation is casual. (KE 115-116)

The pre-objective sensory perception, also ‘passion’ and, as here, ‘emotion,’ is aroused by an objective reality that consciousness aims to identify and respond to accordingly, to which Eliot refers to as ‘a tendency for emotion to objectify itself.’ This objectification intertwines all levels of perception and signification so intimately that they supplement one another without any discernible laws of dominance (there is ‘no priority of image over emotion, or vice versa’) or a possibility of discriminating what aspects of the object perceived have been supplemented. The bear appears to the child

real on the level of sensory perception, with the potential of ‘touch and weight as well’ as that of vision, these sensory responses shaping for the child a complex of perceptual-significative associations (mis)identified as a bear, this identity marked out by the word denoting the object dominating the child’s immediate reality. We know that there is no bear in the environment we share with the child, and conclude that the child is ‘frightened by a bogey.’ But the fact that we know there is no bear and so the child must be experiencing an illusion does not annul the child’s experience of a bear’s presence as real.

It is therefore not altogether true or altogether false to say that the child sees a bear. For to take one group of relations of the word ‘bear’, and say that this group and no other shall constitute the meaning, is not only unwarranted but impossible. The child does not know just what it means when it says ‘bear’, nor do we know what it means; it does not know what it has perceived when it has been frightened by a ‘bear’, nor do we know what it has perceived. For as the difference between real bear and illusory bear is a difference of fullness of relations, and is *not* the sort of difference which subsists between two classes of objects, so the one word must cover both reality and error. (*KE* 116)

We are able to discriminate between ‘reality and error,’ Eliot says, by comparing our perceptions of what we infer to be the same object and recognising, in this comparison, a distinctive enough difference in similarity of those perceptions: ‘The error is thus error because we are able in practice to assume that it was the true object that we perceived the whole time’ (*KE* 116). Objective reality is an outcome of the perceiving and signifying activity of the articulating consciousness, or an interpretation. And the judgement about its truthfulness is a product of the interpretation from another point view, the one that observes both the objective reality in question and the consciousness that identifies that object and decides whether the interpretation of reality of that consciousness is acceptable as true or not. Eliot presents this argument in defence of his insistence on the relativity of reality, or the non-existence of the absolute, metaphysical truth:

The real object was ‘there’, and in a practical sense it was that to which the perception referred, but the solution, in which we account for a true and a false

perception by summing them up under an identical reference, is essentially a *practical solution*, inasmuch as it involves an *interpretation* of a point of view which we do not accept, that of the error, and an interpretation is essentially unverifiable. (KE 117)

This '*practical solution*' of identifying an object perceived with a meaning, which is the event of signification, relies on two characteristics of the perceiving-and-interpreting consciousness: the will of the perceiving point of view to claim that meaning for that object and its resource of memory in which the object in question appears to it and is identified with other appearances of that object. Objective identity, Eliot says, is 'an ideal identity' which is 'supported, if you like the phrase, by the will' (KE 52) in an act of recognising the sameness of relation between the 'image' of the object in memory and reality directly perceived, while this relation itself 'exists only in relation with other (in fact, with all the other) identities in the series' (KE 52). This 'series' is the resource of the memory of the perceiving-and-signifying point of view:

You have a past experience and a present memory and, if these were all that existed, even they would not exist for they would only constitute two utterly disparate worlds. But you have also an experience *b* and a memory *B*, and so on, and when you have the two alphabets given and only then you have some standard for comparison. The reference of each memory is not given separately, but you are, in a sense, given the whole series first. You cannot say simply 'A is identical with *a*', but you say 'A is identical with *a*, with regard to the identity of *B* with *b*' and vice versa. (KE 52)

The message of this algebraic description is that the 'series' of the related pairs which the signifying consciousness sees as analogous appears on the basis of two types of memory: experiential, here marked by small letters and elsewhere described as rooted in the senses, and significative-linguistic, here marked by the capital letters and elsewhere associated with the object-'image' held in memory as 'a perfect idea of the past experience' (KE 49). This imagined 'series' of analogical relations between significative units and pre-signified experience implicitly assumes that consciousness, in the course of its life, accumulates the experience of not only objects as units of meaning identical to themselves, as 'images,' but also the experience of their

appearance in process, as they emerge to consciousness out of the pre-objective reality it perceives. And since the significative-objectifying mechanism is enabled by the relational 'series' accumulated by consciousness, it is individual to every point of view because it ultimately depends on the history of perception of that point of view. Our realities, though all emerging in the common world, are individually unique because we have individual, essentially singular biographies.

Eliot understands this singularity radically. If the laws in which direct perception and signification intertwine in the course of the biography of a point of view are indeterminable, psychology is impossible because the object of its inquiry, the subject, does not exist. Eliot devotes to this issue a full chapter of *Knowledge and Experience* (KE 57-83). But in the light of his premises about the structure of objective reality, the reasons for the impossibility of the psychological subject are stated in one sentence:

Apparently, another person may be an intended object, but can be a real object only to the person himself – and a person is not an object to himself, because he is directly acquainted with himself, and acquaintance is not a subject-object relation. (KE 106)

The subject is real only to the subject himself because direct sensory experience is the property of one's own body only; and since all objective reality is grounded in immediate perception, a self 'can be a real object only to the person himself.' But the rootedness of consciousness in the body also means that it cannot fully objectify itself from the immediate experience of itself into a significative unit as it does in completing the process of objectification of other objects. The supplement of direct, pre-objective experience to the object that consciousness is trying to define, itself, is impossible to eliminate because consciousness cannot eliminate direct experience of itself. And direct 'acquaintance is not a subject-object relation' because the distinction between consciousness as the perceiving subject and consciousness as the object perceived is incomplete. The subject is either not real, a logically constructed but fictional object observed as 'another person,' or not an object accessible to knowledge at all but a

perceiving-and-signifying point of view, unanalysable by definition.

#### **A DEFINITION OF THE SUBJECT AS THE PERCEIVING-AND-SIGNIFYING POINT OF VIEW**

The issue of the subject in Eliot has left many of his readers rather perplexed. His notion of subjectivity builds on the crossroad of two conceptual perspectives that do not contradict each other but are hard to keep simultaneously in mind. On the one hand, subjectivity is the locale – the perceiving and signifying centre – of objective reality; and yet, on the other hand, it is an essentially open medium, a functional network that organises all reality into a universe of the meaningful relations that the subject learns in the course of its life.

Eliot's own description of this relationality appears in the introductory part of his dissertation as a gesture of rejection of 'Mr Russell's supposition of a "consciousness" which might merely exist for a moment and experience the sensation of red.' Eliot's alternative is to insist on the Jamesian notion of 'context' which is also 'that of which Bradley speaks when he says that the finite content is "determined from the outside"' (*KE* 29). Eliot proceeds:

This determination from the outside is unending. In the first place, there is my present physical constitution, which determines the experience without being an element in it, and there is my whole past, conceived as either the history of my body or as the sequence of conscious experiences, so far as I can detach them from the objects in the experience, and consider them only as adjectives to myself. And secondly, there are the nature and the connection of the object, which fall outside of the present moment of experience, and are discovered on closer scrutiny. As we develop subject and object side, they seem to approximate independence, for the object is certainly independent of this knower, and the knower independent of any particular object: on the one side we get souls and selves, on the other the physical universe. (*KE* 29)

We need the distinction between the subject and the object to understand the reality in which we live. However, this distinction does not mark a dividing line

between them but is a condition for their interaction, a distinction that is drawn only in order to be continuously broken. There is consciousness and there is reality outside it, yet consciousness is not an entity in itself but is subject to the ‘unending’ ‘determination from the outside’ which Eliot understands as physical non-objectified matter. A dividing line between the subject and the object cannot be drawn in experience. But the hypothetical – purely theoretical – distinction between them enables us to see experience as the site of their reciprocal interrelation, without either being the origin of the other: ‘That objects are dependent upon consciousness, or consciousness upon objects, we most resolutely deny’ (*KE* 29-30). Their purity is only intended and never really experienced. Even in thinking of subjectivity and objectivity *per se*, they only ‘seem to approximate independence’ without ever reaching it because thinking itself is the outcome of their mutual contamination, a product of their interrelatedness in which subjectivity and objectivity appear in their respective approximations, consciousness and object. Reality is their interaction, their reciprocity, without either pre-dominating the other:

Consciousness, we shall find, is reducible to relations between objects, and objects we shall find to be reducible between different states of consciousness; and neither point of view is more nearly ultimate than the other. (*KE* 30)

Hence, there is no mental reality as opposed to the outside world, no definable inwardness for psychology to study: ‘[T]he external world and the mental world are exactly the same stuff’ (*KE* 74).

Just as the Heideggerian ‘state-of-mind,’ the locus of *Dasein* that is not ‘encapsulated as something “internal” over against something outside’ but ‘as Being-in-the-world [...] is already “outside” when it understands’ (*Being and Time* 205, H 162), the Eliotic consciousness does not contain anything inside it but is the medium that constantly articulates the meaning of the reality (in) which it lives. A part of this ongoing process of articulation is a repeated split in the point of view in every moment



of understanding, for in such moment consciousness situates itself as an existent, an object, of the world it understands, and that object is no longer the experiencing point of view looking at it. This objectified consciousness is a self, or a soul; and it redefines itself in every moment of understanding the world in which it lives. The ongoing interpretation of the world also is the interpretation of the self that interprets it, and then it is this self – the point of view that immediately experiences the world which it speaks – that is the ultimate instance of truth. In ‘Degrees of Reality,’ Eliot gives two definitions of the absolute: it is the identity between ‘the crudest experience and the abstrusest theory,’ but it is also the unique self: ‘Degree of truth is degree of individuality, and the ultimate individuality is the absolute’ (14, 15). In *Knowledge and Experience*, Eliot more elaborately articulates the relationship between the world and the self:

The point of view (or finite centre) has for its object one consistent world, and accordingly no finite centre can be self-sufficient, for 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, and passing, when possible, from two or more discordant viewpoints to a higher which shall somehow include and transmute them. The soul is so far from being a monad that we have not only interpret other souls to ourself but to interpret ourself to ourself. (*KE* 147-148)

A consciousness is inconceivable – there is only the world it sees. And because it is the same world, consciousness wants to see it as coherent in spite of the truth that this world does not appear identical to itself in different ‘moments of knowledge’ (*KE* 155). The soul itself appears to itself as a constituent of that world: it (re-)instates its own objectivity, an identity to itself within the world it sees in every ‘moment[] of knowledge’ of the world anew. Hence the task of interpreting ‘ourself to ourself’ is analogous to that of interpreting ‘other souls to ourself.’ Our other selves are removed in time, and so in the space they see, from our immediate reality being experienced here-and-now, so our continuity with ourselves is a part of the continuity of the world and we (re-)establish this continuity in constantly changing reality through interpretation. This

interpretation is the activity of 'a higher' point of view that 'shall somehow include and transmute' the 'two or more discordant viewpoints.' This 'higher' point of view is closer to the absolute truth but only that it perceives and interprets the 'discordant' ones that are in its view in the present moment. Every self-reflecting move of consciousness is a shift in point of view, the reflecting consciousness always being the 'higher' viewpoint in relation to those observed:

Wherever a point of view may be distinguished, I say, there a point of view is. And whereas we may change our point of view, it is better not to say that the point of view has changed. For if there is noticeable change, you have no identity of which to predicate the change. (*KE* 148)

The subject, hence, is no more than a relative stability of a point of view, a stability found in the sameness of the body which, however, does not coincide with the sameness of the conscious point of view that lives in it. For consciousness never stands still in its tireless pursuit of defining the ultimate object, the totality of the world, itself being an element of it among others; and hence this movement towards a more inclusive perception is a movement of the point of view repeatedly aiming to include itself into its own vision of the entire world. And this inclusion, if realised as such, means another split in the viewpoint: 'Strictly speaking, a point of view taking note of another is no longer the same, but a third, centre of feeling' (*KE* 149).

■

This third centre of feeling is the bottom line of the implications of these philosophical premises for the aesthetics of poetry. In 'Degrees of Reality,' Eliot defines this third viewpoint as the 'irreducible' 'act of attention' to all reality, this reality both sensually perceived and articulated in terms of the 'systems' by means of which we explain the real in discourse (17). All discourse assumes the presence of this irreducible point of view, a perceiving-and-signifying consciousness which interprets the meaning of the language being spoken in that discourse. This point of view is the locus of the meaning

that the discourse articulates in its language, meaning itself understood as experience directed by the signifying structure but not the structure itself. The event of meaning is the moment of understanding when the (mediatory) linguistic structure merges with the (immediate) experience of the meaning it brings alive to the perceiving-and-signifying consciousness.

The presence of this perceiving-and-signifying consciousness – or, rather, its involvement in the interpretative process – turns a poem as a linguistic structure into an instance of discourse which is a statement of truth, the validity of that statement confirmed by the fact of the experience of the poem's meaning. A poem, that is, assumes the presence of the experiential supplement to its linguistic structure, the reading consciousness-in-the-body responsive to linguistically communicated meaning both conceptually and perceptually. Poetic language relies on the imaginative capacities of the perceiving consciousness through which the experience of the reality this language speaks is bodily as well as linguistic. The poem's reader is like the child frightened of a bogey that the poem has constructed in its language. The reading consciousness-in-the-body supplies the missing elements for the 'fullness of relations' it cannot help but see as 'a bear' in the process of experience. At the same time, the reader is the observer of this experience, for she knows that this 'bear' is a bogey, a 'fullness of relations' that is a presence instated in the process of interpreting the poem's language, with no objective entity to point to as the source of the perception that has been experienced as 'a bear' (KE 116).

It is only in *Four Quartets* that a structure bringing these two points of view, the experiential and the linguistic, into one will be realised. This poem defines its reality as the field of conscious perception and plays on the inclination of consciousness to establish the most totalising meaningful structure in this field. The dynamic of this play I will explore in my reading of *Four Quartets*. *The Waste Land*, meanwhile, does not

yet dare to assume sufficient knowledge of signifying perception but only insists on the fact of its irreducible presence, a presence that it obsessively and somewhat paradoxically restates as a gap, a lack, an absence of meaningfulness in a reality overcrowded with unrealised, dead possibilities of meaning.

Before moving to the poems, I want to look into two fields of Eliot's theoretical concern – his writing on anthropology and his criticism of *Hamlet* – where the two points of view, the analytic and the experiential, are evident in Eliot's own thinking. In his analysis of the methods of anthropological investigation, Eliot identifies the limits of linguistic communication and considers the alternative channel through which experience may be communicated, by way of extra-linguistic sympathetic identification with the other, which then appears as the ground for Eliot's formulation of the nature of aesthetic experience. His response to *Hamlet* shows this alternative channel of communication at work, for Eliot identifies with Hamlet's point of view in this way in 1919, and reflects on this experience in 1937. These critical assessments of *Hamlet* expose the structure of Eliot's thinking as the extra-analytic, experiential viewpoint susceptible to the aesthetic affect evoked by Shakespeare. Both contexts, Eliot's knowledge of anthropology and his response to Shakespeare, appear in Eliot's poetry as sources of thematic motifs and formal structures, which I will consider in Part II.

## CHAPTER 3.

### **THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL MODEL OF AESTHETIC IMMEDIACY AND *HAMLET'S* EMOTIONAL EXCESS**

In the perspective from which I read Eliot, his interest in anthropology appears as an extension of his life-long, though often implicit, concern with the functioning of language. Anthropology presents for Eliot an epistemological project facing the core question with which Eliot himself is preoccupied as a philosopher and poet: given the fact of the intrinsic dependence of all knowledge and understanding on language, what are the possibilities of communicating experience that is not the property of the linguistic structure? How – if at all – does one access experience beyond that which is already known, already conceptualised in the language that is the structure of one's thinking and through which all experience is interpreted and understood? Anthropology suggests for Eliot an alternative form of articulation and communication that in itself is extra-linguistic, the rite, which Eliot then regards as the prototype of the aesthetic form. Both the rite and the work of art demand extra-linguistic involvement in their perception and, through this extra-linguistic dimension, communicate unknown experience as meaning. The focus of my attention in reading manifestations of Eliot's interest in anthropology is on ways in which anthropological contexts offer him models of linking linguistic structure and immediate experience.

As such a source of alternative ways of interpreting reality, anthropology has been seen as present in Eliot's field of vision from early childhood to the final period of his career: its significance has been highlighted in his creative writing beyond *The*

*Waste Land* (most extensively by Robert Crawford), and its assumptions has been seen as underlying his cultural criticism (explored by Marc Manganaro). Anthropological narratives provide Eliot with an abundance of poetic motifs and structures, foregrounded by some critics more consistently than others. Examples include Anne Bolgan, who builds coherence in *The Waste Land* on the narrative of the Fisher King, and Martha Carpentier, who singles out Jane Harrison as an underestimated source of mythological motifs in Eliot among other modernists. These correspondences, however, are manifestations of the deeper presence of anthropology in the frame of Eliot's thought. Anthropological discourse appears in Eliot's thinking as a source of structural models by means of which language can be taken beyond its systematic determinacies, used in ways that point to inarticulable, unmediated experience. This kind of significance of anthropology in Eliot is the focus of a number of theoretically oriented critics. Jewel Spears Brooker presents Frazer as providing Eliot with a method of a conceptually non-unified discourse for *The Waste Land* ('The Case of the Missing Abstraction'), while anthropological discourse beyond Eliot's immediate contexts – with reference to Lévi-Strauss – helps us to see the continuity of Eliot's anthropological method from his early masterpiece to *Four Quartets* ('From *The Waste Land* to *Four Quartets*: Evolution of a Method,' Lobb 84-106). William Harmon sees Eliot's poetry as expressing the peculiarities of the 'primitive mentality,' the anthropological analogue of the Eliotic unified sensibility (800-801), and presents Eliot as 'a philosophical anthropologist and, in poetry, a quasi-primitive as well' (797). Manganaro continues this line of thought, further exploring Harmon's thesis within the corpus of Eliot's creative and theoretical writing, but also situating it in the context of the linguistic turn in contemporary anthropology. Eliot's view of the problems of anthropological investigation appears as an early instance of James Clifford's and Clifford Geertz's insistence on the participatory involvement of the anthropologist in the culture he

describes. The anthropologist is thus seen as a writer of First Text, an inquirer who disregards extant accounts of the culture in question but instead discovers it through first-hand experience, articulating its values by way of ‘a logocentric transformation of native “experience” into’ the text that the anthropologist writes (*Myth, Rhetoric and the Voice of Authority* 2-9). Manganaro shows that Eliot’s criticism and poetry, with special attention given to *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*, is consistently searching for ways to grasp the ‘extrasemantic (or presemantic)’ (92), ‘prelogical’ (94) – aesthetic – dimensions of experience. And Eric Gould focuses on *Four Quartets* alone out of all Eliot’s *oeuvre*: it is this poem – in its discursive structure rather than *The Waste Land* in its narrative allusions to the Grail – that realises most fully the dimension of ‘mythicity.’ Through the multifaceted prism of hermeneutics and anthropological and linguistic theories of the twentieth century, Gould defines mythicity as a condition of ‘writing itself as it evokes the simultaneously open and closed nature of experience’ (43) by virtue of the exceptional capacity of an aesthetically organised text to lead the interpretative process of reading into understanding meanings that are not directly expressed.

My contribution to this field of Eliot criticism is in the attempt to trace Eliot’s theoretical formulations of the extra-linguistic, aesthetic aspect of the kind of articulation and communication of meaning that anthropology defines for him. In his analysis of the premises and methods of anthropological inquiry, Eliot articulates the fact of the intrinsic connection between linguistic structure and the immediate experience of meaning. To articulate this connection, the analytic stance must in Eliot’s thinking give way to the phenomenological position from which an analytically discerned meaning is true, actually present in immediate experience. In his philosophical work Eliot refers to this connection as a moment of identity between theory and experience, and it is the experienced meaning of a rite or of a work of art.

This moment can be approached in two ways: described analytically from the theoretical viewpoint, reflecting on both the formal structure that articulates the meaning and the experience of that structure; or experienced as immediate reality only, in which case its analytically discernable structure is invisible to the experiencing eye. This distinction will underlie my use of the terms ‘effect’ and ‘affect.’ Aesthetic effects of a work of art are defined from the position of an observer, in appreciation of both the effect produced and the formal structure that produces it. Meanwhile, aesthetic affect refers to the experience of being affected by the aesthetic force of a work of art to the degree of preventing the perceiving viewpoint from appreciating the formal structure that directs aesthetic perception. Eliot reflects on the subtlety of this distinction – the impossibility, in fact, of drawing a clear dividing line between analytic and immediate perception of an aesthetic object – in his definitions of aesthetic experience in anthropological contexts, the subject matter of the middle section of this chapter. This ambivalence of Eliot’s notion of the nature of aesthetic experience I will observe in his response to *Hamlet*, the matter of my concern in the closing section of this chapter. It is in the state of the affect produced by the Shakespearean effect of aesthetic immediacy that Eliot characterises the play in terms of Shakespeare’s failure to create an aesthetic unity in 1919. And he reflects on this experience in 1937, appreciating the fact of the play’s affectivity and identifying formal structures that produce this overwhelming effect. The same line of development I will observe in his poetry, seeing *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* as aiming for the two kinds of Shakespearean effects respectively. These two poems rely on the doubleness of poetic language, analysable as a formal structure of mediation on the one hand, and yet open to the immediate experience of interpretative process a poem demands on the other.



**THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL LIMIT OF ANTHROPOLOGY: LANGUAGE IN THE  
INTERPRETATION OF PRIMITIVE RITUAL**

My discussion of the significance of anthropology to Eliot's thought focuses on the paper that Eliot gave in December 1913 to a Harvard interdisciplinary seminar led by Josiah Royce. The paper is known under the title which Eliot gave it in 1926 in his Introduction to Charlotte Eliot's dramatic poem *Savonarola*, 'The Interpretation of Primitive Ritual.' Eliot's own summary of his argument in this Introduction had been the only evidence of the paper's existence till the publication of Harry Costello's record of Royce's seminar, edited by Grover Smith. In 1963, the year of the publication, Smith noted that Eliot's paper did not survive in any form (*Josiah Royce's Seminar* 14). But in 1968 its manuscript appeared among the papers of the Hayward Bequest to King's College, Cambridge, and is extensively quoted by Piers Gray in his book on Eliot published in 1981, the source of my citations of Eliot's paper below (Gray 108-142).

Bearing these historical circumstances in mind, Eliot's given title perhaps has done a little disservice to the significance of this paper, so far read primarily as a document of his anthropological sources. Indeed, the paper gives a sense of how close Eliot's familiarity with anthropology was at the time: not only does he know the work done in the field across the globe but he knows it well enough to derive and criticise the premises on which it relies, whether they are explicitly stated or implicitly assumed. Eliot gives a strong reading of Emile Durkheim and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl of the French school of anthropology, as well as of Andrew Lang, Edward Burnett Tylor and Jane Ellen Harrison, along with Frazer, of the Anglo-Saxon school, drawing comparative conclusions between them from a very insistent analytic perspective of his own. As such a critique, the paper shows Eliot concerned with the problem of intercultural communication, and so language, rather than with anthropological narratives *per se*.

Eliot defines the analytic focus of his discussion as ‘causality and interpretation of meaning’ (IPR, Gray 109) and promises to expand on this in the face of the problematic status of anthropology within the scientific paradigm. The problem of anthropology is that it deals with an object that does not lend itself to properly objective, or scientific, treatment: ‘no “scientific” definition of religion is possible’ (IPR, Gray 109). As a starting point to begin demonstrating this, Eliot quotes Durkheim to define the object of anthropology. The so-called ‘facts’ of anthropological investigation are cultural communities which ‘are born, develop, die, independently from each other...:’

A people wh[ich] replaces another is not simply a prolongation of this other with some new characters, it is something other, it has some added properties, some less, it constitutes a new individuality, and all these distinct individualities, being heterogeneous, can not fuse (se fonder) into one continuous series, nor, above all, into a single series (une série unique). (IPR, Gray 114)

In effect, the rest of Eliot’s paper expands on how absolute this rupture between different cultures is. He insists on the cultural dependence of a human mind (in opposition to its uniformity as assumed by Tylor and Lang), and takes it further to say that anthropological description builds on meaningful links that underlie the anthropologist’s own culture but not necessarily the culture at which he looks.

Lévy-Bruhl’s notion of the ‘pre-logical’ is a good example of how language constructs a reality instead of identifying a ‘fact’ outside linguistic structure. Basically, ‘pre-logical’ terms the mentality of totemic cultures: instead of conceptual reasoning underlying Western thinking, these cultures rely on the ‘law of participation’ in which everything is in part everything else. This law is the core of the self-conception of a totemic community that defines itself through identification of its members with a cult, which determines specific rites and other social practices of that community. In Eliot’s view, Lévy-Bruhl’s notion of pre-logical mentality might be useful in describing totemism, but the distinction itself is defective and ultimately misleading, because it

makes totemic understanding of the world a reduced version of the Western mind without doing justice to its otherness. In Eliot's words, 'it is not certain that the savage except so far as he had mental processes similar to our own, had any mental process at all' (*Savonarola* viii). At the same time, Lévy-Bruhl implicitly deprives the Western mentality of non-logical ways of apprehending reality, a reduction which Eliot refuses to accept. It may be the case that 'the mystical mentality [...] plays a much greater part in the daily life of a savage than in that of the civilised man' (Review of C. C. J. Webb 116) but Lévy-Bruhl seems 'to draw the distinction between primitive and civilized mental processes altogether too clearly' (IPR, Gray 122), exaggerating the difference between them (Review of C. C. J. Webb 116).

Reading Durkheim, Eliot observes an attempt to do away with linguistic conceptualising altogether in order to avoid the formative power of the terminology being used. Durkheim tries to do it by postulating two rules: '*consider social facts like things*' and '*systematically set aside all preconceptions*' (IPR, Gray 124). These rules for Durkheim effectively tackle one problem: as a science, anthropology must resist the temptation of a coherent explanation if it fails to correspond with the world. In Eliot's phrasing, this disparity is due to a 'contrast between logical necessity of the enchainment of our ideas in explanation and the real laws of nature' (IPR, Gray 124). To avoid an imposition of linguistic logic on the reality being described, Durkheim says, anthropological description must group social phenomena by shared exterior characteristics but not, as it has been the case, proceed from an ideology as a starting point.

Eliot has a problem with every term of this conception. Firstly, a 'fact,' a piece of empirical given for Durkheim, for Eliot is a conceptual construction: 'A fact is a point of attention which has only one aspect or [exists] under a certain definite aspect which places it in a system;' (IPR, Gray 116-7); 'A fact, then, is an ideal construction,

and has its existence within a more or less variable sphere of practical or scientific interest' (*KE* 60). Not only is a fact a linguistic structure before it has a clear relation to reality (as 'an ideal construction' defined by one aspect 'in a system') but its definition fully depends on the point of view that defines it within its own 'more or less variable sphere of practical or scientific interest.' For Eliot, there is no way of escaping either language or the formative input from the investigating subject, as Durkheim tries to do by establishing his rules.

Secondly, Eliot finds the notion of a 'social fact' highly problematic. Durkheim defines it, in Eliot's translation, as '[a]ny mode of action (*manière de faire*), fixed or not, which is susceptible of exercising on the individual an *exterior* (sic) constraint' (Gray 123). For Eliot, Durkheim, in asking the anthropologist to identify 'an exterior constraint,' demands the impossible, that one answer the question of the motives of behaviour which, in Eliot's terms, is fundamentally unanswerable. As he generalises in this paper, 'All questions of intention are [...] too subjective to be treated scientifically' (IPR, Gray 130).

The fundamental subjectivity of intentions – the impossibility of knowing internal experience until it is externally expressed in language or behaviour – Eliot considers in *Knowledge and Experience*, as I have discussed in detail above. Here, in his reading of Durkheim, Eliot formulates this by transforming Durkheim's twofold distinction, the social exterior versus the individual interior, into a twofold opposition of his own, the formal exterior versus the meaningful interior. All behaviour is exterior, Eliot says, but its meaning is enclosed in the interiority of intentions which is inaccessible to language at all, even if the agent that attempts conceptualising it is the same agent who experiences the meaning:

I say that we must treat the subject in terms of social behaviour, because in the scientific explanation the purposes of the people examined can never be taken on faith. (IPR, Gray 126)

No report, that is, of a native can be trusted, for the native does not know the meaning of his behaviour and must put the same kind of effort into explaining it as the anthropologist studying his culture (Smith, *Josiah Royce's Seminar* 82-3; 119). For Eliot, this is a linguistic problem before it is a problem of communication proper: any articulation in language involves an unanalysable leap from the immediate experience of reality into the conceptual structure of language. And for language to be conceptual, it does not have to be scientific, because all language is conceptual: myth, commonly seen as an alternative, non-analytic discourse of signifying reality, for Eliot is already governed by the logic of linguistic rationality and hence removed from the immediate reality grasped in ritual practice. As Eliot says in a review of 1916,

Mythology does not explain reality but rationalises the savage's own religious practices, while the true origin of these practices are unknown to the savage just as they are to the scientist. ('Durkheim' 313)

Having made this distinction between the meaningless, exterior form, behaviour, and the inaccessible interior meaning, Eliot bends the positivist terms he has read in Durkheim to articulate a phenomenological position:

[I]f you take a purely external point of view, then it is not behaviour but mechanism, and social phenomena (and ultimately, I believe, any phenomena) simply cease to exist when regarded steadfastly in this light. You *must* take into account the internal meaning: what is a religious phenomenon for example which has not a religious meaning for the participants? (IPR, Gray 127)

Having performed the substitution of a 'phenomenon' for a 'fact' in order to preserve the identity of the object of concern, Eliot jumps back into positivist shoes and tries to determine 'the point which is as far in the direction of description (and away from interpretation) as we can go and still have religious facts to describe' (IPR, Gray 128). This point, in his view, is the practice of worship, the actual ritual; while any explanation going beyond that, Eliot says, 'will be an increasingly dubious *interpretation*' (IPR, Gray 128). This suggests a methodology:

So far as there is an external order in ritual and creed and in artistic and literary expression, this order can be reconstructed and cannot be impugned. But the

'facts' which can be thus arranged are decidedly limited, and consist historically in a certain order – we never know any too exactly of *what* the order is. (IPR, Gray 129)

'Miss Harrison is one of the most proficient exponents' of this historical comparative method; but her proficiency is not at all devoid of interpretative input: '[O]ne has only to open the contents table of one of her extraordinarily documented books to perceive how her "*fact*" melts into interpretation, and in interpretation into metaphysics' (IPR, Gray 141). The same applies to Frazer. Though Eliot acknowledges that Frazer 'is unquestionably the greatest master,' who indeed managed to prove that, across cultures, 'certain fixed relations can be found which are not relative to the observer,' (IPR, Gray 129) he has not avoided falling into the trap of over-interpretative activity; Eliot 'cannot subscribe for instance to the *interpretation* with which he ends his volume on the Dying God' (IPR, Gray 130).

Eliot's remarks may easily be read as critical assessments of the work of Harrison and Frazer, as if he said: these are great achievements by these scholars, but there are some issues on which it is possible to improve. Yet the core issue is that an interpretative input from the subject who describes reality is inescapable and even necessary if this reality is being described in the phenomenological terms of human experience rather than in the positivist terms of empirical facts, a switch which Eliot performs as he reaches a critical point in his reading of Durkheim. The identity of a phenomenon to itself is in the meaning in which it presents itself in experience. And as we have seen, the identity of meaning, Eliot says in *Knowledge and Experience*, is 'an identity supported, if you like the phrase, by the will' (*KE* 52). Eliot's definition of the anthropological 'fact' as the fact of ritual, and of religion as the phenomenon of experiencing meaning is an act of such will expressed in an emphatic insistence on the imperative I have quoted: to 'take into account the internal meaning' in the consideration of religious phenomena (IPR, Gray 127).

The major implication that follows from this act of will is that it blends belief, meaning, religion, language, culture and consciousness into an unknowable net of mutual determinations. Language and religion, in Eliot's phenomenological definition of religion in terms of 'the internal meaning' (IPR, Gray 127), appear as determinants of experience before it is articulate enough to be accessible to analytic reflection, so the meanings they shape in this non-reflective mode of perception are the reality of and for consciousness. But language and religion are also social structures shaping the value system of a cultural community, which means that consciousness and its reality are socially shaped, though neither the precise constellation of the cultural values structuring that consciousness nor the ways in which it comes to be can be analytically defined.

At the close of his paper, Eliot says that anthropology is in the hardest possible position of all humanities because no one else deals with

the differences of mind in so significant a sense. [... S]ociology and comparative religions [...] have a task so far as I know unique among sciences: that of interpreting into one language an indefinite variety of languages. (IPR, Gray 133).

In studying societies and religions, anthropology deals with 'the differences of mind' which gives it for the object of study 'an indefinite variety of languages' to be interpreted into one. Eliot does not find that task accomplished in the work of the anthropologists he knows; nor does he feel he has offered a substitute methodology worth serious consideration. The question of the validity of anthropology as a science he leaves open.

## **ANTHROPOLOGY TO AESTHETICS: AESTHETIC IMMEDIACY IN THE LAW OF PARTICIPATION**

Yet Eliot transforms the failures of the anthropological enterprise to signify the direct experience of reality in language into a positive phenomenological programme of literary aesthetics. Eliot recognises a channel of immediate, non-linguistic communication in the Lévy-Bruhlean ‘law of participation’ in which everything is everything else, a law that for Eliot articulates the principle of pre-objective immediate comprehension of reality and, hence, the affective ground of aesthetic effect. Strictly speaking, the law of participation does not distinguish between kinds of objects that contaminate each other in their participatory communication. But in the Eliotic transformation of it into the principle of aesthetic effect, it predominantly applies to intersubjective pre-conscious identification with other viewpoints in which their experience of reality is our own on extra-linguistic planes of perception.

This structure of intersubjective communication appears in Eliot’s dissertation as a double (or multiple) point of view underlying every process of understanding. This is an aspect of Eliot’s philosophical vision of reality we considered earlier. In his paper on ritual, Eliot notes this communicative channel when he says that we understand other beings on an interpersonal level, ‘by intuitive sympathy with’ them (Smith 76). And the source of this intersubjectivity Eliot finds, again, in anthropology proper, reading *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* by Durkheim (the review was published in the year of submission of his dissertation, 1916): intersubjectivity derives from the natural human need in ‘group consciousness’ which, above all, is ‘a religious instinct.’ Eliot summarises as follows:



On one side the consciousness of man is limited by the individual's needs and activities. The individual marries and begets; hunts and fishes, builds and labours, and these are interests of purely individual consciousness. The instinct of association and community with other men is not merely defensive or economic, nor is the community an accident of common descent. It is a religious instinct. For the savage or the civilised man, a solely individual existence would be intolerable; he feels the need of recreating and sustaining his strength by periodic refuge in another consciousness which is supra-individual. Totemism is the organisation of the group, and the religious festival its expression. ('Durkheim' 314)

This 'instinct of association and community with other men' is not exclusive to primitive society: 'the civilised man' finds 'a solely individual existence' just as 'intolerable' as 'the savage.' The everyday practical activity of both 'the savage [and] the civilised man' is characterised as 'consciousness,' which is both individual and social ('supra-individual'). And 'the religious festival' is the 'expression' of 'group consciousness' in the practical activity (or behaviour) of the same kind as matter-of-fact activities pursued on the everyday basis without questioning their meaning or purpose. The 'religious instinct' which supports the sense of 'group consciousness' makes cultural practices, one of which is a rite, as natural as individual unreflected habits of living in the immediate environment.

Instead of thinking of the development of culture in historically progressive terms which oppose the pre-rational mind of 'the savage' to the rationality of 'the civilised man,' as does Lévy-Bruhl's notion of pre-logical mentality, Eliot distinguishes the rational and the pre-rational as aspects of the human comprehension of reality regardless of the culture's stage of historical development. These aspects come across as the linguistic, conceptual understanding of objective reality, the bread and butter of philosophy and science, and immediate, pre-objective, bodily – aesthetic – comprehension of and response to the environment through participation. In 1924, Eliot reviews W. J. Perry's work on anthropology. He does not value the work itself very highly, but uses the opportunity to point out the real issue that anthropological inquiry should consider, the nature of the distinction – or rather, the indeterminability of the

distinction – between the aesthetic and the religious or magic functioning of cultural artifacts. Eliot draws attention to the origins of the arts in the magical function of totemic objects, and asks whether this magical bond is not the core of the aesthetic effect as such:

The Indian who hung a necklace of bear's-teeth about his neck [was] not aiming primarily at decoration, but invoking the assistance of life-giving amulets. At what point, we may ask, does the attempt to design and create an object for the sake of beauty become conscious? At what point in civilisation does any conscious distinction between practical or magical utility and æsthetic beauty arise? [...] Is it possible and justifiable for art, the creation of beautiful objects and of literature, to persist indefinitely without its primitive purposes: is it possible for the æsthetic object to be a *direct* object of attention? (Review of W. J. Perry 490-491)

In other words, is the aesthetic object – given that in its aesthetic function it produces an affective state in the perceiver, exploiting the Lévy-Bruhlean participation law eliminating distinctions including the subject-object one – is such an object an object at all? Can a point of view attend to it without being immediately involved into the process of apprehending just what this object is? If the aesthetic effect of a work of art exploits the immediate responses of human consciousness, responses that pre-reflectively involve one's body and mind, how can a work of art be regarded as itself an object, 'a *direct* object of attention' which assumes a clear-cut dividing line between the comprehending viewpoint and the object to which it attends? Can an aesthetic structure, fundamentally relying for its aesthetic effect on the participatory instincts of consciousness-in-the-body, at the same time assert its objectivity, which demands a complete division between the perceiving viewpoint and the object it perceives?

This paradox of the aesthetic artifact is irresolvable; in fact, the aesthetic effect results from the contamination of the two ways of comprehending reality. In *Knowledge and Experience*, aesthetic apprehension appears as a prototypical example of immediate experience *per se*, or rather the kind of experience that brings it as close to pure 'feeling' as possible:

*Mere* feeling is something which could find no place in a world of objects. It is, in a sense, an abstraction from any actual situation. We have, or seem to have at the start a 'confusion' of feeling, out of which subject and object emerge. We stand before a beautiful painting, and if we are sufficiently carried away, our feeling is a whole which is not, in a sense, *our* feeling, since the painting, which is an object independent of us, is quite as truly a constituent as our soul. (KE 20)

To create an aesthetic form that would produce this effect, an artist must apprehend it from a double point of view, experiencing the affect but also reflecting on the relation between the formal structure of the work and that experience. And Eliot's descriptions of artistic sensibility emphasise as the distinctive characteristic of the artist's mind its exceptional capacity for self-reflection while its immediate experience of reality is the same as that of everyman. Artistic sensibility responds to its environment more acutely and registers its own responses, which enables it to come up with structures – works of art – that affect every human sensibility in a similar way. The artist, in this process of the aesthetic comprehension of the world and its communication in creative expression, identifies and relies on the most immediate, pre-reflective responses of the human body-and-mind. These responses, however, have a history of cultural interpretation which the artist must manipulate in the work of art in order to evoke the immediate, participatory involvement of the consciousness-in-the-body of its audience and, at the same time, infuse it with meaning. In the 1918 review of Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*, Eliot puts it as follows:

The artist, I believe, is more *primitive*, as well as more civilized, than his contemporaries, his experience is deeper than civilization, and he only uses the phenomena of civilization in expressing it. Primitive instincts and the acquired habits of ages are confounded in the ordinary man. ('Tarr' 106)

In a slightly later review, in 1919, Eliot rephrases the same in ostensibly more literary terms:

And as it is certain that some study of primitive man furthers our understanding of civilized man, so it is certain that primitive art and poetry help our understanding of civilized art and poetry. [...] More intelligibly put, it is that the poet should know everything that has been accomplished in poetry (accomplished, not merely produced) since its beginnings – in order to know what he is doing himself. He should be aware of all the metamorphoses of

poetry that illustrate the stratifications of history that cover savagery. For the artist is, in an impersonal sense, the most conscious of men; he is therefore the most and the least civilized and civilizable; he is the most competent to understand both civilized and primitive. ('War-Paint and Feathers')

And in 1923, Eliot finds the perfect combination of the primitive-immediate and the conceptual-analytic comprehension in the Aristotelian theory of the aesthetic form of drama. To begin with, the Aristotelian definition of drama includes the essential element of direct bodily participation called for by various kinds of rhythm; Eliot quotes Butcher:

[P]oetry, music, and dancing constitute in Aristotle a group by themselves, their common element being imitation by means of rhythm – rhythm which admits of being applied to words, sounds, and the movements of the body. ('The Beating of a Drum' 12)

This rhythmic patterning – repetition of elements that appeal to the full variety of perceptual involvement, from the body in dancing to the ear in hearing the sound to the understanding of linguistic meaning in words – is the fundamental condition for the catharsis. It is not, Eliot insists, primarily intellectual or moral but aesthetic experience, necessarily involving the senses:

As for the catharsis, we must remember that Aristotle was accustomed to dramatic performances only in rhythmic form; and that therefore he was not called upon to determine how far the catharsis could be affected by the moral or intellectual significance of the play *without* its verse form and proper declamation. ('The Beating of a Drum' 12)

This perfect balance involving all perceptual capacities of human sensibility drama inherits from ritual: 'The drama was originally ritual; and ritual, consisting of a set of repeated movements is essentially a dance' ('The Beating of a Drum' 12). This ritual 'dance,' in Eliot's understanding, is a repetition of otherwise instinctive movements, of behaviour that is immediate bodily response to the surrounding environment before it is understood and can be denoted in language, just like in a cat's 'peculiar way of acting at the approach of a dog' (*KE* 133). And so it is a mistake to ascribe to this behaviour a pre-conceived pragmatic function or intended purpose, even

though ritual turns it into a repeatable, aesthetically structured form which then historically develops into drama:

It is equally possible to assert that primitive man acted in a certain way and then found a reason for it. An unoccupied person, finding a drum, may be seized with a desire to beat it; but unless he is an imbecile he will be unable to continue beating it, and thereby satisfying a need (rather than a 'desire'), without finding a reason for so doing. The reason may be the long continued drought. The next generation or the next civilization will find a more plausible reason for beating a drum. Shakespeare and Racine – or rather the developments that led to them – each found his own reason. The reasons may be divided into tragedy and comedy. We still have similar reasons, but we have lost the drum. ('The Beating of a Drum' 12)

Though immediate response, and so behaviour, is pre-rational, the human mind instinctively rationalises, and so – 'unless he is an imbecile' – the savage or the civilised man rationalise why they beat a drum though actually the drum inexplicably evoked that response. Reasons for ritual behaviour, in Eliot's narrative, historically turn into 'reasons' of dramatic convention, eventually leading to the great Aristotelian generic distinction between tragedy and comedy. Our cultural memory has preserved these 'reasons' well enough for them to hold true ('We still have similar reasons'); but aesthetic experience, in fact, is before them: the real reason why the savage beats the drum is that he is seized 'with a desire to beat it' and not 'the long continued drought,' let alone the tragic or comic plot structure of a play.

Eliot repeats his demand for a participatory, ritual aspect in the dramatic genre on several occasions. In April 1923 he writes in *The Criterion* that 'the stage – not only in its remote origins, but always – is a ritual, and the failure of the contemporary stage to satisfy the craving for ritual is one of the reasons why it is not a living art' ('Dramatis Personæ' 305-306). In the same review, Eliot wishes actors had 'had the training in movement and gesture – the only training in movement and gesture – the training of ballet' that would have made their performance less 'inchoate' ('Dramatis Personæ' 305) but a more clearly shaped, aesthetic form. In a paragraph-long parenthesis Eliot adds that the only way cinema – though deeming itself the generic heir of drama, the

contemporary realistic form ‘merely because it is a series of photographs’ – actually affects its audience is by being a rhythmic form: ‘The egregious merit of Chaplin is that he escaped in his own way from the realism of the cinema and invented a *rhythm*’ (‘Dramatis Personæ’ 306). By such dance-like, rhythmically patterned behaviour the stage calls for actual, immediate participation, a kind of participation found in ritual where everybody present is included in its action:

The working-man who went to the music-hall and saw Marie Lloyd and joined in the chorus was himself performing part of the work of acting; he was engaged in that collaboration of the audience with the artist which is necessary in all art and most obviously in dramatic art. (‘London Letter’ Nov. 1922, 662)

An ideal stage performance, that is, absorbs the spectator’s perceptual attention in such intensity that the stage itself – its function of drawing a demarcation line between the spectator’s space and the space of representation – disappears. An ideal stage performance entangles the spectator’s perceptual attention into the rhythmic patterns of its form so that the spectator – imaginatively or actually, by joining in the chorus, for example – participates in the action on the stage, making the same bodily movements as the actors and as everybody would do in a rite. The meaning of this aesthetic ritual-like experience comes after, in an interpretation of the spectator’s own experience he has gone through by repeating the actor’s movements.

This means, strictly speaking, a dead end for the critic. Anthropology has taught Eliot that immediate aesthetic experience, just like that of ritual practice, is inaccessible to conceptualisation even if the experiencing and the interpreting subject are the same. There is no possibility of conceptual generalisation, and hence no field for a critical inquiry. Eliot takes this uncompromising position, effectively a projection in the literary criticism of the Durkheimian demand for a non-interpretative approach to ritual, in his 1919 essay on *Hamlet*:

*Qua* work of art, the work of art cannot be interpreted; we can only criticize it according to standards, in comparison to other works of art; and for

‘interpretation’ the chief task is the presentation of relevant historical facts which the reader is not assumed to know. (*SE* 142)

Facts must be provided, as fully documented as a critic can achieve. Just as an anthropologist must register the exterior behaviour, the actual ritual and no more, the critic must keep attention focused on the definitive characteristic of the phenomenon being described: aesthetic ‘standards’ that define a work of art as a work of art.

### **IMMEDIATE REALITY IN THE LANGUAGE OF *HAMLET***

Eliot formulates this uncompromising stance on interpretation in relation to *Hamlet*. And yet for Eliot himself there seem to be too many aesthetic ‘standards’ effectively in place in this play. His assessment of *Hamlet* is trapped in the paradox of the aesthetic artifact, the paradox which he formulates in his 1924 review of the anthropological work by Perry, when Eliot asks whether it is possible for an aesthetic object ‘to persist indefinitely without its primitive purposes’ or, to say the same from the opposite perspective, ‘for the æsthetic object to be a *direct* object of attention’ (Review of W. J. Perry 490-491). Eliot’s response to Shakespeare oscillates between these two points of view: his 1919 essay on *Hamlet* is grounded in a direct involvement in the play’s action comparable to the participatory role in ritual which is, for its participants, the structure of their immediate reality and not ‘a *direct* object of attention.’ But Eliot’s lectures on Shakespeare given in 1937 show him approaching Shakespeare from a critical distance, looking at the plays as ‘the aesthetic object’ for a description of their structures from an analytic distance. Shakespeare, that is, provides Eliot with a kind of aesthetic unity which, in 1919, he experiences as fully analogous to the immediate experience of reality and then, reflecting on his experience in 1937, discerns the formal structures that determine this analogy.

In 1919, in the wake of his philosophical and anthropological investigations, Eliot assumes that a play is the contemporary form of primitive ritual. Consequently, it must be analysed formally in the same way, by describing the 'set of repeated movements' ('The Beating of a Drum' 12) which a play is by being a script for repeatable performance. Eliot terms this ritual 'dance' ('The Beating of a Drum' 12) an 'objective correlative' (*SE* 145), the term deriving from his philosophical engagement with the nature of meaningful reality which is the world of objects in perception:

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. (*SE* 145)

This definition infuses the positivist requirement of strictly formal description of ritual behaviour as a dance merely observed with the phenomenological pathos of Eliot's philosophy. Eliot identifies the meaning of the ritual-dramatic 'dance' by associating every move in it with an object that instinctively evokes the response observed. This response Eliot assumes to be immediate, pre-reflective, of the same kind as that involved in being seized by a desire to beat the drum the moment it appears in view ('The Beating of a Drum' 12) – except that the drums here are 'a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events' patterned to evoke a combination of responses that 'shall be the formula' of a singular '*particular* emotion' evoked by the work of art as a whole. In its unique structure a work of art mimics the actual perception of the real, or of the world of objects as Eliot describes it in his dissertation, involving all levels of perceptual response in full intensity and resulting in a complex experience of a work of art that is recognisable as identical to itself.

In the explanatory examples that follow this definition, Eliot keeps faith with his premise that a point of view, consciousness-in-the-body, is a sheer functional centre of immediate response to objective reality; and he is consistent in assuming the instinctive



intention of consciousness to accommodate multiple viewpoints that perceive reality in one, the irreducible observing and unifying viewpoint. This multiplicity Eliot also identifies as the religious instinct underlying, in Durkheim, the 'group consciousness' of the totemic primitive society ('Durkheim' 314). And Eliot's examples of the successive realisation of an 'objective correlative' effectively describe the Lévy-Bruhlean law of participation in action:

If you examine any of Shakespeare's more successful tragedies, [...] you will find that the state of mind of Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep has been communicated to you by a skilful accumulation of imagined sensory impressions; the words of Macbeth on hearing of his wife's death strike us as if, given the sequence of events, these words were automatically released by the last event in the series. The artistic 'inevitability' lies in this complete adequacy of the external to the emotion. (*SE* 145)

To 'find the state of mind of Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep [...] communicated,' or to actually experience it, the spectator must identify with her by imaginatively *being* Lady Macbeth: living in her world and moving in her body while the play lasts. Anybody can assume Macbeth's point of view and appreciate the ability of Shakespeare to create an objective reality for this point of view with such precision that the responses shown to be Macbeth's are felt as automatic, inevitable because they are immediate responses to the objects that evoke them.

This automatic immediacy of response to reality, observed in the play and yet intensely felt, experienced together with the characters, is the height of the artistic capacity to manipulate the immediate responsiveness of the perceiving viewpoint. 'The artistic inevitability lies in this complete adequacy of the external to the emotion' (*SE* 145), and because 'this is precisely what is deficient in *Hamlet*,' Eliot judges the play as 'an artistic failure' (*SE* 145). But in fact Eliot's interpretative analysis of the play shows exactly this kind of 'complete adequacy.' Just as in his examples of the Macbeths, reading *Hamlet*, he does not speak about *Hamlet* the play but about 'Hamlet (the man)' (*SE* 145). This is a perfectly justifiable methodological move: to appreciate the fact of

the adequacy ‘of the external to the emotion,’ the observing point of view must identify with the character. And yet Eliot slips. Observing the Macbeths’ immediately responsive behaviour, he keeps his double vision by both taking their viewpoint in their reality and appreciating the adequacy of their response as he compares it to his own imagined reaction. But when Eliot comes to *Hamlet*, his viewpoint completely merges with Hamlet’s, with no observing eye to appreciate the ‘adequacy’ of the emotional response of both Hamlet and Eliot himself to the reality they face.

Without a hint of doubt, Eliot expands on his main point that Hamlet ‘is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in *excess* of the facts as they appear’ and proceeds with a description of those ‘facts’ that trigger the sense of excess and Hamlet’s ‘bafflement’ resulting from it (*SE* 145). At no point does this description reflect that Hamlet’s reality is the referential reality of the play, and not the reality of the interpreter. Eliot fully conflates his point of view with Hamlet’s, and the world in which Hamlet experiences his ‘bafflement’ (*SE* 145) for Eliot is perfectly real. By implication, Hamlet’s reactions are adequate to the disordered world in which he finds himself: in defence of Shakespeare, Eliot says, ‘it must be noticed that the very nature of the *données* of the problem precludes objective equivalence’ (*SE* 145-146).

This reality which is ‘in *excess* of the facts’ – represented, constructed in the language of *Hamlet* – Eliot sees as given, that which on another occasion he calls ‘the material which [the artist] must simply accept’ (‘Ulysses, Order, and Myth’ 166). But if James Joyce deserves Eliot’s praise for having found, in ‘using a myth,’ ‘a method [...] of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape as a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history’ (‘Ulysses, Order, and Myth’ 167), *Hamlet* is denied an acknowledgement of the same intentional structure. Eliot does not recognise the meaninglessness of Hamlet’s world as the intended meaning of *Hamlet*. Instead, he charges Shakespeare with a failure to ‘drag to light, contemplate, or

manipulate [his material] into art' (SE 144), for Shakespeare does not build for 'Hamlet (the man)' an understandable reality, a world of objects, which Eliot sees him build for the Macbeths. Speaking in his own philosophical terms, Eliot's 'feeling' that develops in the course of experiencing the play is in perfect continuity with the object-meaning that it articulates: *Hamlet* represents Hamlet's sense of the meaninglessness of the world in which he lives and makes Eliot experience the same, in a full conflation of the experience *in* and *of* the play. *Hamlet* provides Eliot with a perfect 'objective correlative' of his experience of the immediately real. Hamlet's reality triggers in Eliot responses so automatic, so immediate, so dense and intense that his sensibility has no energy left to observe those responses and to appreciate the exactness of the 'equivalence' between the formal structure of the play and the 'emotion' it conveys for him.

In 1919, Eliot does not realise that his 'objective correlative' defines the structure of experience rather than the form of a work of art, nor does he see that his analysis of *Hamlet* does not consider *Hamlet* (the play) as the object of his attention but indulges in the experience of 'Hamlet (the man)' instead. This indulgence is a 'collaboration' which is direct participation in the reality presented, necessary in the appreciation of all art, on which Eliot remarks in remembering the 'working man who went into the music-hall and saw Marie Lloyd and joined in the chorus' ('London Letter' Nov. 1922, 662). There is just one difference: the artistic medium that disappears from Eliot's sight in his self-forgetful participation in the play's action and, in this disappearance, turns the space constructed in it into unmediated reality is not the stage of *Hamlet*'s dramatic action but the language in which it is presented. Shakespeare's words evoke in Eliot's perception the objective structure of the reality he knows without distortion, with too little difference for Eliot to be aware that this objective structure is articulated from another point of view. Shakespeare's poetic language is intertwined

with the dramatic structure of *Hamlet* in ways that for Eliot fully reproduce the dynamic of the fluctuation between articulated ‘objectivity’ and pre-objective ‘feeling’ in which reality is perceived, its objects ‘constantly shifting, and new transpositions of objectivity and feeling constantly developing’ (KE 155). For Eliot, *Hamlet* is the linguistic structure entangling the immediate perception of reality in what Heidegger calls the ‘*fore-structure*’ of being itself, a structure in which the interpretation of reality circles endlessly between the concealedness and disclosure of its meaning. *Hamlet* gives Eliot a discourse which he experiences as truth.

■

It takes Eliot another eighteen years of reading Shakespeare and writing his own poetry and criticism to recognise this effect and articulate it from an ostensibly analytic perspective, defining it as the distinctive structural characteristic of Shakespeare’s poetic drama. In his Edinburgh Lectures of 1937, Eliot speaks of the exceptional ability of Shakespeare to manipulate a variety of ‘planes of reality’ (EL I 7, 9; II 9, 10, 12); to appeal, in Granville-Barker’s words, ‘past reason, past consciousness often, to our entire sentient being’ (EL 11); to create the ‘ultra-dramatic’ dimension in which Shakespeare’s ‘dramatic verse [...] introduces other interests and values, which exceed the demands of the “dramatic”, if we keep “dramatic” to its meaning of what is effective on the stage for an audience’ (EL I 7). Shakespeare’s language, that is, penetrates his audience’s understanding of their actual surroundings. The dramatic structure, the formal pattern – what Eliot has earlier compared to the ritual dance – of Shakespeare’s plays extends beyond the formal boundaries of the stage or the page into the real world. This capacity Eliot sees as the token of Shakespeare’s success (EL I 7).

In these lectures on Shakespeare, Eliot singles out one play, the one which shows ‘the maximum of the ultra-dramatic effect [which] is maintained in solution in

what the audience can take;’ which is the apogee of Shakespeare’s ‘dramatic skill’ because in it ‘the dramatist and the poet are perfectly one;’ which is ‘the farthest point to which the audience can go with Shakespeare,’ for he presents ‘a role in which every man can, in fantasy, cast himself’ – for all these reasons, ‘the most successful’ play is *Hamlet* (EL I 12-13; II 4-9). In an ostensibly personal tone, Eliot describes how Shakespeare lures him into identifying with his characters and hence into experiencing the unknown:

What Shakespeare seems to ask me to do, and when I am in sensitive enough mood makes me do, is to see *through* the ordinary classified emotions of our active life into a world of emotion and feeling beyond, of which I am not ordinarily aware. What he makes me feel is not so much that his characters are creatures like myself but that I am a creature like his characters, taking part, like them, in no common action, of which I am for the most part quite unaware. (EL II 11)

In these lectures on Shakespeare, Eliot also distinguishes the purely formal patterning of the Shakespearean play. The analogue of the ritual dance here is not the ‘objective correlative,’ the structure in which the form of articulation is infused with sense, but a properly formal ‘musical element’ (EL I 1) in the dramatic effect of the Shakespearean play, the ‘musical pattern’ which Eliot describes in these lectures as the unifying aesthetic structure of Shakespeare’s drama (EL I 10, 20; II 3, 5 10, 14, 17). And the recognition scene in *Pericles* – the arche-text to Eliot’s most Shakespearean and, for many, most aesthetically effective poem, ‘Marina’ – for Eliot is both a ‘perfect example of the “ultra-dramatic” and that of the dramatic culmination in becoming ‘a ritual’ (EL II 18).

This map of distinctions is drawn in 1937. Eliot observes himself from a critical, analytic point of view which distinguishes between immediate responses and then identifies structures that bring these responses about. In 1919, this analytic vision was overwhelmed by his immediate response to *Hamlet*, Eliot’s sensibility manipulated by Shakespeare’s language in ways which Eliot was not yet able to identify. His rather

ironic statement in that early essay that ‘there can be no doubt’ about ‘the intractability’ of the material in *Hamlet* on which Shakespeare ‘was unable to impose’ a ‘dominant motive’ (SE 143) sounds, in this light, as the highest praise. Explicitly criticising Shakespeare for not presenting a structural pattern that is articulate enough, Eliot gives this criticism in a recognition that Shakespeare reaches the most immediate, least conventionalised, properly pre-objective, pre-articulated responses which Eliot does not yet know in himself. Shakespeare opens for Eliot the precipice which for Heidegger is the concealed realm for ‘a possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing’ (*Being and Time* 195, H 153). In 1937 Eliot explicitly recognises this, giving the decisive emphasis to the aesthetic affectivity of *Hamlet*, the obvious, historically witnessed power of the play go beyond directly comprehensible, conventional structures. This capacity to reach what is not yet known he sees as the definitive aspect of all poetry:

I re-read my earlier paper [...]. What I regret in this instance is my use of the word ‘success’ and ‘failure’. I called *Hamlet* and ‘artistic failure’ and *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakespeare’s ‘most assured artistic success’. I still think the two later plays much better pieces of construction; I still think the workmanship more masterly throughout [...]. *Coriolanus* is certainly more agreeable to taste formed on the French classic theatre. But as for ‘success’! I now take rather more the view of people of the theatre, that anything is successful that succeeds. ‘Success’ was the wrong word. And as for the intractability of the material, I am not sure now, that for the poetic dramatist, *all* material is more or less intractable – at any rate, when one is Shakespeare. (EL II 10)

In 1937, even having highlighted the major affective structures of Shakespeare’s poetic drama, Eliot is cautious not to make too rigidly analytic conclusions about the Shakespearean effect. Since 1919, he has learned the lesson of the indeterminability of knowledge when knowledge directly deals with structures of immediate experience. Even though indefinable, nor properly visible in itself, experience asserts its significance by the sheer force of presence which, though it is the presence of things, has the power to redraw their definitions, transform them into another map of the world and hence present another existential reality.

In Eliot, poetry is the site of this transformative presence of reality, and Shakespearean traces here are persistent. Poetry does not demand the analytic assuredness of criticism, the discourse of knowledge, in an explicit recognition of affective structures. As the discourse of immediate experience, poetry wants just the opposite, an immediate response to and mimicry of those structures before they have become analytically identifiable ‘conventions,’ however indispensable these conventions are in successful communication. In Eliot’s poetry, Shakespeare appears exactly on this level of textual patterning, some of his appearances acknowledged by Eliot while others never are explicitly noticed. Eliot’s poetic mimicry of Shakespeare – of *Hamlet* in particular – is the last of the three continuities that I will observe in my reading of his poetry further below. It is in different combinations of the overlapping of the three perspectives I have discussed – his philosophical premises about the immediate experience of reality, the aesthetic theory derived from his engagement with anthropology, and his poetic experience of Shakespeare – that *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* present such strikingly different experiences of existence in the same world.

**PART II**

**POETIC VERSIONS OF REALITY:**

*THE WASTE LAND*

AND

*FOUR QUARTETS*



## CHAPTER 4.

### ***THE WASTE LAND: A POEM OF LACK AND EXCESS***

My vision of the dynamics of *The Waste Land* is that this poem aims to evoke the Eliotic experience of immediate reality by overwhelming readerly perception with half-formed meanings, throwing these half-meanings into the field of vision with such intensity that no thread of coherence can reach completion. It is as if the speaking eye of the poem perceived reality over-susceptibly, too much and too fast for it to make sense and say what it sees in full, grammatically constructed sentences coherently linked to one another to form a meaningful statement about the world. Whatever ‘moments of knowledge’ (*KE* 155) are promised by the language that the poem speaks, whatever meaning begins germinating in the words the poem utters – inevitably put one after another, in an ‘enchainment of our ideas’ (*IPR*, Gray 124) and so of the reality they speak, – its ‘little life’ is not allowed to ‘bloom’ into a tree (*CPP* 61-62). April is the month of ‘breeding / Lilacs’ and ‘stirring / Dull roots with spring rain’ but the ‘corpse planted last year in [this] garden’ is not seen ‘to sprout’ (*CPP* 61-62) into a living being. *The Waste Land* gives enough to raise an expectation, to ask the question. But it makes sure that the question is not answered, that the ‘heap of broken images’ it resists a soothing flow of thought, making it stumble instead in ‘this stony rubbish’ in which there are ‘the roots that clutch’ and ‘branches grow’ but the tree they might be parts of is ‘dead’ (*CPP* 61). All elements are there in the poem’s language, but in the reality it speaks there is always one missing and another in excess, so that nothing comes into being out of them. The poem indulges in its ingenious capacity to ‘connect / Nothing

with nothing' (*CPP* 70), stubbornly getting the balance wrong, as if it knows what is needed for the miracle of fulfilment to happen but deliberately gives something else instead.

'[T]he dead tree gives no shelter' for there is no water in 'the dry stone' in which the tree has grown (*CPP* 61); and 'no water but only rock' maps out 'the agony of stony places' in which 'one cannot stop or think,' subsumed by a thirsty fantasy of '[a] pool among the rock,' of at least a 'sound of water over a rock' – a fantasy of 'spring' (*CPP* 72). But 'Phlebas the Phoenician,' whose 'bones [are picked] in whispers' by a 'current under the sea,' is not enjoying this fantasy come true. No longer does he have any fantasies, nor even memories: he, 'a fortnight dead / Forgot the cry of gulls' (*CPP* 71); he is in far too much water, and it has brought him death instead of a capacity 'to think' (*CPP* 72). Philomel can think, and she is alive; but her life is human no more, and her thoughts cannot be spoken. She cannot not think, in fact, except her thinking is fixed on one memory which is of violence past, but this is a past that is painfully present. She has been raped, 'rudely forced,' 'by the barbarous king,' mutilated to cover the crime and, eventually, transformed. She is a nightingale, and she can '[fill] all the desert with inviolable voice,' but this is a voice with no words, her cry speaking only what the 'dirty ears' of 'the world' cannot help hearing in it, the primal reason of her loss of language, the rape (*CPP* 64). The woman (if this is a woman speaking) whose 'nerves are bad to-night' does not intend to invent meanings for herself but wants to hear her interlocutor speak, imploring: 'Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak' (*CPP* 65). But the interlocutor – unlike Philomel perfectly capable of words, with a line from Shakespeare on the surface of his (?) mind – does not voice his responses to her questions: 'Are you alive, or not?' his silence makes her ask. Nor do these unvoiced responses really answer the questions but, as if deliberately, they misunderstand them, use them to articulate the same kind of image: an association of a living body with the

dead. '[W]e are in rats' alley / Where the dead men lost their bones' says the first reply, placing us, living beings, in the space of the dead. And the second response presents, in its Shakespearean source, a living man as if he were dead: the speaker remembers a line – 'Those are pearls that were his eyes' – from *The Tempest*, from Ariel's song describing Antonio's corpse in the sea to his son Ferdinand, though Ariel knows Antonio is in fact alive (CPP 65).

Such is the cruelty of *The Waste Land's* spring, the fantasy brought by the 'dry sterile thunder without rain' (CPP 72): everybody, every thing here is awakened to the life of a living corpse, not that of a living being. 'Gentile or Jew,' however 'handsome' (CPP 71), 'He who was living is now dead' and 'We who were living are now dying' (CPP 72). We are dying, the poem says, 'With a little patience.' We are not dead yet, there still is a life to go through before we finally come to it. But the moment we become aware of death, we are among those who 'were living,' life itself transformed into an adjunct, an unavoidable supplement to its end squeezed into the space of 'a little patience' with which we await death whatever we are doing while waiting. And yet this is a supplement that is the only tangible reality we have. Which, life or death, do we regard as blessing and which a curse? Even the epiphany – the only unambiguously positive moment in the poem, the memory of the hyacinth girl – is a state of being 'neither / Living nor dead.' The speaker remembers himself unable to speak not for the lack of words but because there is nothing to be said: his 'eyes failed' and he 'knew nothing / Looking into the heart of light, the silence' (CPP 62). Such is the 'shantih' of *The Waste Land's* meditation: the best it can bring is 'The Peace which passeth understanding' (CPP 80), a meaningless harmony. It may be experienced as a moment of bliss, that of '[l]ooking into the heart of light,' but this is a light that blinds, with nothing to see, know, and say, hence 'the silence' (CPP 62).

In these structures of deficient wholes, *The Waste Land* speaks between the meaninglessness of the hypothetical ‘timeless unity’ of immediate experience and ‘the world of objects’ lacking ‘harmony and cohesion.’ This world, incoherent and fragmented as it is, however, is a lived world, imbued with meanings, for things can be spoken, while a ‘non-distinguished non-relational whole’ is not accessible to linguistic expression, even if it is a ‘positive’ whole, the Absolute (KE 31). *The Waste Land* speaks the only reality that can be known and spoken, the incoherence of the world of things, their disharmonious multiplicity. The poem constructs immediate reality as the other of meaningful coherence: complete coherence is assumed – as the fullness of being, or ‘the conception of an all-inclusive experience outside of which nothing shall fall’ (KE 31) – but it is not actually constructed. For if it were, this would not have been the coherence of immediate experience but that of language, and then the poem would have stepped out of touch with immediate reality completely, fully into an order which is, though meaningful, not real. *The Waste Land*’s obsession with the immediate turns it into a field of the war against the cohesion of language which, as a linguistic artifact, the poem inevitably speaks.

For Ruth Nevo, this war of *The Waste Land* against all known frames of coherence is extensive enough to claim, in 1982, that the poem is ‘a deconstructionist Ur-text, even [...] a Deconstructionist Manifesto’ and that ‘disunification, or desedimentation, or dissemination [...] is the *raison d’être* of the poem’ (454). Nevo summarises the sites of this ‘disunification’ in a paradigmatic list of ‘the fundamental categories of literary criticism,’ every one of those categories ‘dismantled’ in this poem. It has no narrative, time, or place; no protagonist; ‘no drama, no epic, no lyric;’ ‘no one point of view, no single style, idiom, register;’ no identifiable ‘overall subject matter, or argument, or myth, or theme;’ no ‘obvious conventional poetic features such as meter, rhyme, stanza, or any regularity or recurrence or set of symmetries which would

constitute formal pattern in any classical sense at all' (455). Its symbols 'refuse to symbolize:' they 'explode and proliferate,' 'turn themselves inside out, diffuse their meanings, and collapse back again into disarticulated images' (456). It 'has no beginning or end:' 'no inception and no center and no closure' (456). Even the material body of the poem is indeterminate, its textual limits blurred, nor does it have a single authorial originating consciousness: there are drafts cancelled by Ezra Pound, and Eliot's added Notes which function, in Nevo's view, as a parody of rather than help to the exegesis of literary criticism (457, 459-460). Nevo compares *The Waste Land* to other early poems of Eliot, challenging enough in themselves, and appreciates 'the radicalization of the irrational and the incoherent which has taken place' by identifying the absence of the basic phenomenological condition for meaning to appear: in those other poems, 'there are personae and stories to be described. There are figure and ground. Here none' (456).

And yet, absent structures must somehow assert themselves, even if only to be identified as missing frames of understanding. 'Disunification' can happen only to a unity. And in *The Waste Land*, Nevo says, a poem that refuses all known definitions of poetic unity, 'there are moments of all these generic constellations' (455). The poem promises, does not fulfil the promise and, in desperation, promises again. Its event is the event of seduction, with nothing to follow. The poem behaves just like that lover of the maiden who has been undone in Richmond and Kew and learned not to mind: 'After the event / He wept. He promised "a new start." / I made no comment. What should I resent?' (*CPP* 70)

Maud Ellmann frames *The Waste Land* in a metaphor of seduction. The poem is 'A Sphinx Without a Secret' (91); 'like any good sphinx, [it] lures the reader into hermeneutics, too: but there is no secret underneath its hugger-muggery' (92). The life of this poem, its 'game,' also 'the nightmare that it cannot lay to rest,' is 'the ritual of its

own destruction' (109). Reading *The Waste Land*, Ellmann seems to suggest, means participating in this ritual, while an aspiration to explain it 'in search of the totality it might have been' (92) leaves the poem itself in 'the "waste" beneath the redevelopments' needed to construct that desired totality (91). Hence the poem has been 'thoroughly explained, [but] is rarely read;' and reading 'its broken images' opens up its self-destructive, 'suicidal logic' (91-92). One way or another, that is, killing is not to be avoided. To explain *The Waste Land*, 'to force it to confession may also be a way of killing it' (91). But if we choose the other way, that of submitting to the poem's own doings, we are entangled in the 'obsessive rite' that 'surreptitiously repeats the horror that it tries to expiate' (95), the invasion of the dead into the world of the living (94). We either kill the poem in an act of explanation ourselves or go through the rite of suicide that it stages for us. The poem assumes nothing beyond itself; there is only it, and it makes sure nothing remains after its own end.

My own vision of *The Waste Land* is that its circling around the motif of death is an inevitable side effect of the poem's refusal to locate the event of meaning in any of the sites of human existence which it articulates as given reality. The poem throws at the reader – or throws the reader into – the world as it is: overcrowded with meanings already present, given and therefore already past the experience of their emergence – their event – in the reality of here-and-now. Hence they are dead meanings, 'Unreal' (CPP 73). In 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' Eliot speaks of 'the dead poets' asserting their 'immortality' in what we often consider to be the most individual parts of a contemporary poet's work, this life of the dead made possible by 'the historical sense' which is 'not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence' (SE 14). *The Waste Land* is overwhelmed by this presence of the past, and this overwhelming presence of the already-dead past forecloses the possibility of the poem's own living presence by taking up all present space. The horror that the poem faces and reproduces is, as

Ellmann puts it, ‘the semantic epidemic’ (104), while the response to it is an obsessive abjection of all those meanings, for they are not the poem’s own. And abjection is a failed attempt to deny presence, the presence of that which is being denied asserting itself in the very act, the statement of denial: in order to deny, it needs to state, to point to that which it denies, and that means acknowledging its presence.

Ellmann characterises *The Waste Land* as ‘one of the most abject poems in English literature’ (93), defining its abjection with reference to Kristeva and Bataille. Kristeva gives Ellmann a metaphor that identifies abjection with the passage itself, the ‘betweenness’ (96, 98) on which *The Waste Land* thrives by confusing distinctions and making the signifieds of its signifiers migrate into the spaces of their semantic others. Such is the migration of the first person pronoun which ‘roams from voice to voice’ without warning (96), as well as the figure of Tiresias, an androgynous blind seer, ‘the very prophet of abjection, personifying all the poem’s porous membranes’ (97). But the ‘utmost abjection’ in Kristeva is signified by corpses, ‘because they represent “a border that has encroached upon everything”’: an outside that irrupts into the inside, and erodes the parameters of life;’ and so it is not the dead themselves that cause the anxiety of *The Waste Land* but ‘the collapse of boundaries [...], be they sexual, national, linguistic, or authorial’ (Ellmann 94). Kristeva herself draws on Bataille’s definition of abjection, saying that it ‘is merely the inability to assume with sufficient strength the imperative act of excluding abject things,’ while this act is fundamental in a culture’s self-definition because it ‘establishes the foundations of collective existence’ (Ellmann 93, 110). Ellmann comments: ‘Waste is what a culture casts away in order to determine what is not itself, and thus to establish its own limits’ (93-94).

But abjection thus defined has an enabling aspect, an aspect I want to foreground. The act of ‘excluding abject things’ points to them nevertheless, for in its intention of exclusion it identifies ‘the foundations of collective existence,’ or ‘the

parameters of life,' simply by focusing on some things rather than others. In this focus, abjection asserts the structure in which the rejected appears as a fundamentally significant dimension of existence. Ellmann notes the moment of return of 'abject things,' the fact that gestures of rejection '*reinvent* the waste they exorcise' (94), and reads *The Waste Land* as a poem of 'betweenness,' stuck in the space of denying what it says with no space beyond this denial to escape to, 'caught in a perpetual allusion to the texts [among other things] that it denies' (96). This vicious circle is an acknowledged effect of the poem. What I wish to emphasise is that this space of 'betweenness' is also the space of indeterminacy, of the pre-articulate immediate experience of reality rather than just a space defined by the terms between which the poem posits itself in its obsessive rejection. The rejected is evoked and thus returns, but this return brings more than the rejected: it also evokes the unpredictability of the 'betweenness,' its openness to more than the things between which it is. It seems that *The Waste Land* defines its existential space in this residue, in this indeterminate 'more' – in that which has not been said yet and hence is not yet in known systems of relations between things and terms – rather than in the 'betweenness' proper where everything, to use Ellmann's vocabulary, is epidemically contaminated and displaced.

In Ellmann's reading, the Eliotic abjection in *The Waste Land* and beyond appears as a neurotically repeated attempt at purifying that which is contaminated and displaced, the attempt itself having exactly the opposite effect to what is intended, for it multiplies the epidemic instead of restoring the purity of things (Ellmann 104). I want to suggest that this Eliotic desire for purity is a desire for the precision and clarity of articulation aiming not only to define their limits but also to exhaust the relations in which these limits appear. Establishing this clarity, exhaustively negating all the cross-contaminations of available terms means delineating the space that is being spoken here-and-now, that which has not yet been said but demands expression – which is, in



Eliot's philosophical terms, immediate experience, or the real itself. It will take a journey to *Four Quartets* to see the dynamic of the positive construction of the meaningfulness of this existential space. Meanwhile, *The Waste Land* maps out the territory, so to speak, the cultural landscape – the given reality – in which the poem finds itself and which it registers as the space of its own being without yet being able to say what this being is. I have noted moments of a positive experience of existential harmony in *The Waste Land*: the episode of the hyacinth girl and the poem's closure with the word of peace, 'shantih;' but the problem with these moments of epiphanic experience is that they are radically cut off from language, marked by the inability to speak and / or understand. In its denial of everything it finds already articulated, already in language, in its rejection of all cross-connections and re-productions of these articulated meanings, *The Waste Land* tries to identify, to point to – to situate its reader in – this experience of immediate reality which is in the reality articulated but itself is not an articulation.

This is, effectively, the vision of Davidson's hermeneutic reading of *The Waste Land*. The absence of the metaphysical centre in the world it presents is the absence of reality to language, but this is an absence that by itself is undeniably present, and this presence is the reality of human existence. The poem's reiteration of the motif of death is its refusal to give a permanent – ideal, linguistically fixed, metaphysical – life to any thing, while life asserts itself in the persistence of desire. In Davidson's reading, this desire is a desire for the wholeness and completeness of being, for the sufficiency of self, also – to say the same from the opposite perspective – 'the desire to escape the absence by defining our existence' (103). All culture is produced 'in the endless elaboration of a relational linguistic world, to cover the absence' (103). It is in human nature to want 'to know Being as a whole – something changeless, eternal, and

complete;’ but the reality is that of ‘change, finitude and absence’ of this complete wholeness because it ‘can only be manifest in beings which are themselves finite’ (103).

*The Waste Land* embodies this underlying tension of hermeneutic existence by resisting assimilation into a unifying term, enacting ‘the existence of the details [...] not to be submerged in a unity of idea’ (108). Its fragmented narratives, ‘caused by the metaphoric technique,’ convey ‘the contingency of this world and its resistance to symbolic enclosure:’

The parataxis and symbolism in the poem set in motion a restless search for meaning which can never be satisfied because of the metonymic density of the world, just as the metonymic realism sets up expectations for a coherent world which are shattered by the creative force of metaphoric intervention. (114)

*The Waste Land* evokes absence, enacts it in its language by not saying what it wants to say. It is not ‘a merely symbolic presentation of nothingness which fills the void with the *idea* of nothingness’ (emphasis Davidson’s). It ‘*releases* absence as nothing’ (emphasis mine), ‘as a function of the dense and changing particularity of the world’ which does not lend itself to linguistic conceptualisation but overwhelms with conceptually inassimilable multiplicity. ‘The details simply exceed the themes’ (114).

A major technique to articulate this density of the world’s particulars is an all-inclusive language of allusion. The Eliotic allusion does not, as Davidson notes, provide a key to the meaning of the poem, nor even significantly shift it, but increases the semantic density of the poem’s language by being a ‘linguistic connection to a broader culture’ in which the poem speaks (115; 115-116). The poem insists on ‘the cultural nature of linguistic material,’ while the multiplicity and significance of the poem’s intertextual references are such that they make the poem a condensed expression of the world itself. The texts to which *The Waste Land* alludes are ‘texts which have been absorbed into the culture and have actually shaped our world,’ and thus the poem ‘self-reflexively establish[es] a common world which both fills our consciousness and yet extends far beyond it’ (116). *The Waste Land*, by promising and yet not providing the

word for what it means, insists that the reader experiences this world as its meaning, that the experience of reading the poem is the experience of turning in the circle of ‘that ceaseless hermeneutic between desire and death in which finite existence always just escapes our efforts to capture it in the word’ (Davidson 134).

This paradoxical juncture is experienced by many readers of this uncanny poem. It turns out, after all, that in a paranoid re-asserting of the absence of a unifying meaningful structure that the poem makes its reader expect, in its refusal to assimilate into a generalising statement of its meaning, *The Waste Land* somehow attributes this non-meaning to existence nevertheless. Somehow, all indeterminacies accepted, there is no doubt that the tension in which these indeterminacies appear is the tension of the ‘true foundation’ of human being (Davidson 134). I want to claim that *The Waste Land* conveys this effect by placing its negations in fundamentally significant sites of the human understanding of reality. While none of the identifiable structures of meaning and no principle of coherence actually unify the poem, its enigmatically disturbing appeal is enforced by the fact that it locates meaninglessness in the right places for the reader to recognise in the poem’s abjections a statement on – or, rather, a linguistic enactment of – human existence. ‘There are limits to ambiguity,’ Stephen Thomson says about ‘Marina:’ ‘No one, I wager, will ever seriously read “Marina” as a poem about a ship, with “daughter” a mere metaphor’ (119). In the same way, the reader of *The Waste Land* knows that the matter of concern here is existential anxiety, the human condition: the hermeneutic circle begins in this semantic field whatever interpretative statements are achieved in the course of the explanatory turns that the reader chooses to make. Cleanth Brooks describes the ways in which *The Waste Land*’s symbolic structure ultimately gives ‘the effect of chaotic experience ordered into new whole’ (167), while William Spanos methodologically destroys the poem’s unity in a hermeneutic project of ‘a dis-assembling [... the] figure’ of *The Waste Land* in order ‘to

retrieve the poem from the tradition' (*The Waste Land: A Phenomenological Destruction* 229). But in either of these contrasting readings the effort of understanding the poem's message builds on the assumption already formed that it is dealing with the questions of life and death (Brooks 137) and the possibilities of 'dis-covering' their truth (Spanos, *The Waste Land* 229).

This effect – the fact that the hermeneutic circle of interpreting *The Waste Land* finds itself interpreting the structure of existence *per se* – is an independent effect of this poem, an effect conveyed in its own terms. Writing his analysis of *The Waste Land*'s symbolic structure in 1939, Brooks does not have the luxury of referring to Eliot's philosophical writing for the context of the philosophical premises underlying the poem as we do, but he states nevertheless that the poem is realist, that it aims to convey the experience of the modern chaotic reality being ordered into a 'new whole' (167). At the same time, there are evident parallels between Eliot's theoretical thought about the nature of reality and the structures that make human reality the substance of *The Waste Land*. Rather than assuming that Eliot's poetry originates from his philosophical premises, I regard the fact of these parallels as the manifestation of Eliot's consistency in his concern with the nature of reality and an aspiration to express its experience in language, theoretical or poetic. In other words, Eliot's philosophy and poetry are not in a derivative relation to one another but they both originate from that enigmatic, non-articulable wholeness of reality experienced as the presence of here-and-now. This experience, as well as its articulation in both philosophical and poetic language, is not Eliot's alone but commonly human. The commonness of both the world and our inclinations to interpret it in some ways rather than others is the condition of our pre-reflective understanding that reading Eliot we are concerned with the fundamental issues of existence itself.

My inquiry into *The Waste Land* below explores the junctions of the articulations of experiential reality, parallel and yet intertwined, independent from one another and yet mutually interpretative. I want to foreground the ways in which Eliot's poetry reiterates his philosophical thought about the real, while being aware of the indirectness of the relations between them. As discourses with different purposes and of different structures, theory and poetry do – and mean – different things. Poetry enacts the sense of reality which philosophy talks about. Poetry makes its language mean by mimicking the structure of the perception of the reality which theory attempts to describe reflectively, identifying the dimensions of the meaningfulness of the real. Eliot's poetry *is* the language which his philosophy takes to be the carcass of meaningful reality, of the lived world. But this difference – poetry being the discourse of the immediate experience of reality while philosophy is a discourse of reflection on it – is not a conceptually neutral shift of emphasis onto one of the two aspects of meaningful experience, the immediacy of perception or the signifying structure of language. Eliot's philosophy does not explain his poetry in the conventional sense of the word, by providing key terms to unlock the indeterminacies of poetic meaning, with poetry assumed to be saying the same as philosophy but less clearly because poetry is a discourse of linguistic ornamentation. With Eliot, poetry is philosophical not because it is grounded in a conceptually coherent philosophical system but because its language is the body of a thought which is philosophical in its intention of attending to and articulating the structure of experienced reality. The indeterminacies of Eliotic poetic language are inevitabilities of this thought; they are articulations of the complexities of the experienced real and not a homage to the rhetorical convention of poetic discourse. I see Eliot's philosophy as indicating significant relations which reappear in poetry in their full complexity, the enactment of this complexity in poetic language being the only way they can be articulated. Eliot's poetry not only embodies his theoretical thought

about language and reality but also extends it, complicates it and comments on it by playing out the experience which in the philosophical language is a hypothetical, conceptually identified abstraction, an experientially void marker to designate the gap in a philosophical system that wants to think what it itself is not: the immediacy of experience.

*The Waste Land* is a poem that articulates the difference between the immediacy of experience and the systematicity of theoretical thought. It exposes the gap between the immediate experience of given reality and its epistemological conceptualisation, or knowledge. In the terms of the underlying opposition of *Knowledge and Experience*, this poem wants to do away with the conceptual order of language – knowledge – which it assumes to be false and, instead of this language of knowledge, it wants to speak immediate experience only. *The Waste Land* wants to be the counterpart, the exact opposite of what Eliot knows knowledge to be. In this intention, the poem faces the truth of the fundamental Eliotic premise – a premise forgotten in the zeal to speak immediacy itself – that experience is informed by knowledge, that experience is an aspect of the known, the latter's non-conceptualisable supplement that cannot be thought or spoken about as a thing in itself because it is not a thing but an aspect of things known to be real. *Four Quartets* will contemplate this interdependence between knowledge and experience and use it as the major enabling force. The later poem will take the coherence of language as a structure and the dependence of its meanings on the things it says for the fundamental given, a starting point from which it will manipulate linguistic expression into an articulation of the complementarity of knowledge and experience itself. But *The Waste Land* does not yet have this confidence. It wants to have immediate experience by itself, in its pure state, as the other of knowledge. It wants to get rid of the linguistic order in which it knows the world and see the remains

that must be – given that there is nothing else except the linguistic order of knowledge and the pre-articulate immediate experience – reality itself.

The logic that most powerfully unifies a literary work is narrative. *The Waste Land* defies this logic in its play with the narrative that it claims – deceptively again – for its centre and the unifying frame, the legend of the Grail.

#### **AESTHETICS OF EVASION: THE ABSENT UNITIES OF THE GRAIL**

It is impossible to say now what significance of anthropology to *The Waste Land* would have been recognised had not Eliot acknowledged Sir James Frazer and Jessie Weston in the Notes. The poem contains so many references, their source narratives overlapping and commenting on one another in so many ways that no single source – not even a combination of two sources, as Eliot's acknowledgement in the opening note suggests – seems to hold centrality firmly enough to unify it, to assimilate the universe of texts interwoven into the ex-centric texture of its lines. In 1956, Eliot tells the story of the Notes' appearance with a striking directness in his tone. It was 'discovered that the poem was inconveniently short' to be published on its own as a book, and he 'set to work to expand the notes, in order to provide a few more pages of printed matter, with the result that they became the remarkable exposition of bogus scholarship that is still on view to-day' ('The Frontiers of Criticism,' *OPP* 109). And three years later, in 1959, Hugh Kenner describes the Notes in the terms of textual expansion rather than of any interpretative assistance to the understanding of the poem: Eliot 'dilated on the Tarot Pack, copied nineteen lines from Ovid and thirty-three words from Chapman's *Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America*,' added a few casual observations and, 'with the aid of quotations from Froude, Bradley, and Hermann Hesse's *Blick ins*

*Chaos*, succeeded in padding the thing out to suitable length' (129-130). And yet, however sceptical a view this history suggests about the status of the Notes, and however contingent the character of their functioning (noted by many critics but also directly addressed [Nitchie]), they have performed their mischievous trickery of luring Eliot's critics into the woods of *The Waste Land's* quasi-explanatory symbolic systems perfectly well.

In 1956, Eliot singles out the case of Weston to describe the unwanted effect of the 'bogus scholarship' attached to *The Waste Land*: 'It was just, no doubt, that I should pay my tribute to the work of Miss Jessie Weston; but I regret having sent so many inquirers off on a wild goose chase after Tarot cards and the Holy Grail' ('The Frontiers of Criticism,' *OPP* 110). Indeed, the vagaries of Weston's presence in *The Waste Land* encapsulate the Janus face of this poem: its seductive duplicity is manifest yet again in the fact of Eliot's acknowledgement itself and the nature of the significance given to both Weston and Frazer in the note. There is a 'plan and [... the] symbolism of the poem' (*CPP* 76) but they are not in the poem itself, they are elsewhere, in Weston's *From Ritual and Romance* which, Eliot says, 'will elucidate the difficulties of the poem much better than [his] notes can do' (*CPP* 76). And the Note proceeds with an implication, in the same sentence after a semicolon, that the poem is something other than this 'plan' can show. Eliot refers to Weston only those 'who think such elucidation of the poem worth the trouble' (*CPP* 76). Finding 'the plan' that will 'elucidate the difficulties of the poem' is not, therefore, a self-evident purpose of reading it – the poem itself may well be found, instead, in 'the difficulties' rather than in their 'elucidation.' But such is the nature of critical enterprise that it thrives on explanation and, therefore, goes chasing the wild goose of an interpretative key even if it has been given signs that this chase, in fact, makes us forget the very thing it is supposed to unlock. 'We think of the key, each in his prison / Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison' (*CPP* 74), says



*The Waste Land* approaching its close. The critic's key is a principle of coherence which, we somehow tend to think, means unlocking a poem; but instead we lock ourselves in the prison of the explanatory enterprise itself.

Just like all promises of this poem, the promise of the key to *The Waste Land* in Weston's book on the origins of the Grail is not quite fulfilled: *From Ritual to Romance* does not elucidate any difficulties but rather adds to them. To begin with, it is far from obvious what, in Weston, could be seen as 'the plan,' for the book itself does not have any obvious organising structure. It aspires to answer the question of the origins and the meaning of the Grail legends, and does so in an ostensibly scholarly investigation which compares a myriad of narratives that are versions of the Grail myth or are related to it through similarities in separate elements. In addition to the variety of the sources of these narratives, both literary and mythological, as well as those of the anthropological descriptions of ritual practices in cultures all over the world, Weston accounts for the scholarship that has been carried out on every aspect of her inquiry. Her own investigation claims that multiple versions of the Grail cannot be assimilated into one proto-narrative because, in this legend, narrative itself is a superstructure rather than the lost origin. Multiple versions of the Grail differ from one another not because they deviate from some unidentified mythological-religious narrative but because they assemble elements that themselves are narrative explanations of fertility rites, while both rites and the narratives framing them differ from culture to culture though they all interpret the same natural reality. The sameness of reality is, Weston concludes, the source of both the legend's appeal and of its openness to re-telling its tale in yet another manner: 'The Grail romances repose eventually, not on the poet's imagination, but upon the ruins of an august and ancient ritual, a ritual which once claimed to be the accredited guardian of the deepest secrets of Life' (187); and it is this capacity of the Grail to reach, through ritual, to 'the deepest secrets of Life' that the legend is retold now and

again in a variety of genres, ‘making its fresh appeal through the genius of Tennyson and Wagner’ (188).

Weston’s thesis – that the Grail romances derive directly from ritual practices – is the only axis of coherence in the book’s discourse. *From Ritual to Romance* does not give a synopsis of the Grail legend anywhere in the text, nor does it follow the development of its narrative stage after stage. There is no plot common to all versions, and therefore they can be discussed only in terms of differences in plot elements, such as the difference in the formulation of the task of the hero in *Gawain*, *Diû Crône* and *Perceval* versions (12-24). And even these are not located in the sequence of their appearance in the Grail narrative but looked at as if they were independent fragments. Further: though some elements that Weston discusses clearly are those that shape the plot (such as the Fisher King, for example [113-136], or the mystery of the Grail [137-163], or the Perilous Chapel [175-188]), there are others that build up a network of symbolic meanings rather than of narrative coherence (like the symbols of a fertility cult and Tarot cards [65-100]), and in some chapters Weston goes into quite extensive descriptions of ritual practices in cultures all over the world, comparing them before indicating their significance to the Grail (34-64, 81-100). Nor is there a method that defines the principle of Weston’s juxtapositions: she draws parallels between elements found in the Grail and ritual practices wherever they appear, be they events that initialise the movement of the plot, as the task of the hero is, or symbols, such as the Lance and the Cup representing the Male and the Female respectively in both ritual practices and the Grail (75-76), or structures of formal representation, such as the form of a dialogue in *Rig-Veda* hymns related to the genre of drama (27-28). Weston’s presentation of this panoramic view of rather contingent and fragmentary similarities is regularly interrupted by extended references to works by other scholars, sometimes for evidence and support and sometimes to disagree with their methods and conclusions. If

this can be considered a ‘plan,’ *The Waste Land* certainly borrows it; but the reader will have to put some effort into elucidating what ‘the plan’ is for it to begin elucidating any of the difficulties of Eliot’s poem.

Eliot’s critics tend to erase Weston’s presence<sup>2</sup>, regarding her as a satellite to the adjacent, more obviously productive fields of reference. If she is mentioned at all, her importance to *The Waste Land* is assimilated into that of Frazer’s work which Weston is seen to extend, or else *From Ritual to Romance* is regarded as one of Eliot’s many sources of the Grail legend itself, alongside Wagner, Nietzsche’s critique of Wagner and Verlaine (*CPP* 61-62, 67, 76,77; Kearns 197, 198n; Kenner 146; Smith, *T. S. Eliot’s Poetry and Plays*, 86). Scholars of Eliot’s work on anthropology tend to disregard Weston, apparently seeing her as a literary scholar, a folklorist rather than an anthropologist. Harmon mentions only the fact of Eliot’s ‘testimony’ that he used Weston, along with Frazer, in *The Waste Land*, which is another proof that Eliot had anthropology on his mind while writing the poem (804). Manganaro refers to Weston – in those instances when she is not presented as an extension of Frazer’s presence in Eliot’s work – only to leap to the Grail and say that the legend in *The Waste Land* ‘functions implicitly, unimaged but ever-present’ (*Myth, Rhetoric and the Voice of Authority* 85), as ‘the poem’s narrative arc of expectations, its functionality as quest-romance’ (*Culture, 1922* 149). Brooker silences Weston, with help from Kenner and Litz, redirecting attention to Frazer alone: ‘Litz and Kenner are right to lament that generations of readers have been sidetracked by a spurious plot and a nonexistent hero, but they are wrong to dismiss Frazer and his fellows’ (‘The Case of the Missing Abstraction’ 543). Weston, meanwhile, merely doubles an aspect of Frazer’s significance to Eliot, by using his ‘method of generating abstractions through the

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<sup>2</sup> There are exceptions to this tendency, of course: Gregory Jay, for example, looks specifically into how Weston transforms the Grail legend in the aspects relevant to Eliot and how Eliot does and does not continue Weston’s line of thought (61-63).

comparative study of fragments [...] to generate (construct) a parent myth behind the Grail legends' (548). And Smith goes directly for the parent myth itself: *The Waste Land*, he claims, 'summarizes the Grail legend, not precisely in the usual order but retaining the principal incidents and adapting them to a modern setting' (*T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays* 70). Smith corroborates his claim with the evidence of Eliot's acknowledgement of his 'indebtedness to both Sir James Frazer and to Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*' – somewhat strangely undisturbed by the fact that Eliot's copy of Weston held in the Houghton Library is not annotated and that some pages of it Eliot left uncut (70, 311n) – and, indeed, he consistently reads *The Waste Land* as a modernist resetting of the Grail plot.

This relocation of the source of an explanatory system – from Weston to the Grail or Frazer – does not quite solve the problem of the unity of *The Waste Land* but works, rather, as another move of deferral of the promised unity of meaning. Brooker blames Smith for initiating a version of the Eliotic 'mythical method,' canonised but actually misleading in its claim that '*The Waste Land*, like *Ulysses*, is based on a background myth, that this myth provides a shadow plot and shadow hero' (Brooker 541). And Smith himself, in fact, in his later work more emphatically hedges his thesis that the Grail as presented in Weston makes *The Waste Land* accessibly coherent: Weston and Frazer 'each has a coherent system of ritual and myth with which Eliot may be compared and by which its coherence may be tested,' but Eliot's borrowing from them is transformative, and the transformation is clearly in the direction of obscuring the sources: '*The Waste Land* is tentative where Weston is doctrinaire, diffuse where Frazer is organised' (*The Waste Land* 53). As to Frazer, Eliot only borrows from *The Golden Bough* 'certain material,' which 'implies in no way Eliot's outright acceptance of Frazer's interpretations' (54) – the coherence of the source, in other words, is broken down by the manner of Eliot's use of it. And the manner of use itself, Smith goes on to

say, is found in Frazer's work just as well: 'Eliot contrived in "Ulysses, Order, and Myth" a recipe for literature which should transcend narrative and incorporate the hypotheses of the social sciences, and such discoveries as those marshalled in Frazer's *The Golden Bough*' (60). It seems that Eliot relies on his anthropological sources here and there but there is no way to define the principle of this reliance.

To complicate the matter of the key source further, scholars of Frazer's work and of his influence on Eliot do not seem to believe in the coherence of *The Golden Bough* itself, effectively claiming that Eliot learned from Frazer techniques of breaking a coherent development of meaning rather than relying on any kind of systematic conception that might have been discerned in Frazer's work. This tradition of a stylistic rather than a conceptual juxtaposition of Frazer's writing with Eliot's begins in 1973 with John B. Vickery's study of the significance of *The Golden Bough* to modernist literature. For Vickery, *The Waste Land* is the apotheosis of Frazer's presence in Eliot's writing, its development traced throughout Eliot's poetry and criticism, from *The Sacred Wood* (the title of which, Vickery claims, comes from the first chapter of *The Golden Bough* [234]) to *Four Quartets*. Vickery frames his reading of *The Waste Land* in the narrative of the development of religious consciousness. It is Frazer who might have 'brought Eliot to the Anglican Communion and an acceptance of orthodox Christianity,' by emphasising 'the pattern of death and resurrection' (243) and by accounting for 'nature myths, mystery cults, and the Grail legends [...] as progressive stages in the gradual evolution of man's religious consciousness' (245). In Vickery's account, *The Waste Land*, relying on both *The Golden Bough* and the Grail, is a narrative poem representing the emergence of religious consciousness in its protagonist's quest.

Though by itself such omni-presence of Frazer in Eliot may sound rather overemphasised, Vickery corroborates his thesis not only with conventional literary

analysis tracing parallel motifs in *The Waste Land* and *The Golden Bough* but also with analogies between their styles. Vickery admits that ‘Eliot’s abrupt transitions from topic to topic and his juxtapositions of apparently ironic materials’ might have been learned from Laforgue and Corbière,’ but there is also a source of the same stylistic model ‘nearer to home:’ this kind of discourse defined the ‘comparative method of the classical school of anthropology, especially in the form in which it was utilized by Frazer’ (237). This style, for Vickery, is a ‘permanent effect’ of *The Golden Bough* on Eliot’s poetry that translates the directness Frazer’s presentation of his material into a poetic technique of communicating ‘subtle insights with a powerful immediacy’ (237). In Frazer, this effect of immediacy is conveyed by detailed description of self-contained scenes of cultural realities (rites) rather than theorising about their meaning. And though these scenes by themselves often show similarities and parallels, their ‘irregular overlapping produced so jagged an outline as to appear almost to be dissolving into chaos’ (238). In other words, the abruptness and fragmentation of style, in Frazer, mimics reality in the same way as it does in the writing of literary authors, and it is this principle that marks Frazer’s presence in Eliot:

Not in style, to be sure, but in the panoramic view of man’s variety and disparities, irony, incongruity, and insight are welded together as firmly as in the poetry of Donne, Marvell, or any other of those who thought with their fingertips. (238)

This analogy between Frazer’s method of comparative sociology and Eliot’s poetic technique is the bottom line of Eliot’s ‘mythical method’ – this is also the thesis of Brooker’s juxtaposition of Eliot’s and Frazer’s methodological positions. She distinguishes as many as four categories of misinterpretation in ‘Ulysses, Order, and Myth’ in Eliot criticism (‘The Case of the Missing Abstraction’ 540-543), and offers an alternative to all of them, redefining the Eliotic ‘mythical method’ as ‘a near-synonym for “scientific” or “comparative” or “inductive”’; or more precisely as a term for the scientific method as transformed by its application in the arts’ (543). Brooker looks into

the genesis of Frazer's method, which suggests to her the structure of the method itself. Frazer's investigations began with his interest in one myth. He could not find analogies to it as a whole – which, by implication, would have explained its meaning – but he could see analogies to its parts, and then went on collecting and putting them together for comparison (545-46). The ghost of a single myth behind the volumes of Frazer's work, in Brooker's view, is absolutely central to his method (547), just as it is for Weston, for the focus of her attention is 'a parent myth' behind the differences of the Grail legends that she investigates (548).

The crucial twist in Brooker's admirably coherent and analytically explicit argument is that she does not identify this assumed myth with a narrative that Frazer might be thought to be proposing after all, nor does she claim any other frame of coherence in Frazer's work. In Brooker's view, Frazer's assumption of a unifying structure, a single myth which he declares to be the focus of his interest, remains a unity hypothetically assumed but never actually surfacing in Frazer's discourse as an organising pattern of any kind, narrative or logical, the discourse itself presenting cultural reality as it finds it:

The unity of *The Golden Bough* does not depend on the chronological or logical arrangements of Frazer's fragments. Frazer merely collects and preserves fragments as he finds them in the present, broken, distorted, changed by history and evolution. With minimal or no damage to his thesis, he could rearrange them, or he could throw some out and/or add others. And Frazer does not assume the existence of a culturally shared myth or abstraction. He brings his own myth and takes special care to keep it always in the reader's mind. (549)

This 'special care,' Brooker says, amounts to repeated references to the myth of the Dying God, in the title *The Golden Bough* and throughout its twelve volumes (549). But this is a void marker, a 'reference point myth [which] exists as an abstraction' (551), without a possibility of identifying what kind of abstraction it is nor a defined content it communicates. In Frazer's method, unity 'does not derive from the sequential relation of part to part, either chronologically or logically,' nor does it come 'from the

reference of the work to an abstraction pre-existent in culture,' nor does it exist 'on the surface of the work' which, instead, is intentionally fragmented to represent the fragmentation of historical reality (549-550). Having refuted every possibility of a defining unity, Brooker takes the only way out to save it – even if only as an idea, a pure hypothesis of unity itself – by relocating unity from the text being read to the process of reading:

Unity derives finally from the relation of the fragments to the comprehensive abstraction generated as the reader compares them to each other and to abstractions which emerge in the process of reading. (550)

With a few substitutions of terms, Brooker's description of Frazer's comparative method could be quoted word for word to describe the structure of *The Waste Land*. And Brooker draws this analogy herself: 'In *The Waste Land*, the myth is suggested by the title and by the notes, and is reinforced by fragments of the myth within the poem' (551).

Perhaps, however, there is a slight qualification to be made. Given all his admiration for Frazer's work, Eliot did not think Frazer had succeeded in keeping the idea of the deep structure the parent myth at bay, nor did he believe that there had to be a deep structure assumed at all. Rather the opposite: an interpretative intervention into the otherwise ingenious corpus of anthropological descriptions of *The Golden Bough* is the only fault that Eliot finds with Frazer in 1913 (IPR, Gray 130); and he reiterates this response again in a 1924 review for *Vanity Fair*, more emphatically praising Frazer for having 'withdrawn in more and more cautious abstention from the attempt to explain' yet mentioning nevertheless that the first, two-volume, edition of *The Golden Bough* 'was an attempt to explain the Priest of Nemi' ('A Prediction' 29). If *The Waste Land* indeed mimics the unity – or rather the absence of unity – of *The Golden Bough*, the Grail must not be thought to unify it even in a fragmentary presence.



Indeed, the Grail does not seem to provide a unifying frame to *The Waste Land* even though formally this is now and then claimed. Smith is one among many to say that the Grail underlies the poem and then hedge this statement with a denial of an identifiable unity that the legend might be thought to be bringing into the poem. What is it exactly, we might want to ask, that remains of a summary of a plot if it does not keep ‘the usual order’ and only ‘retain[s] the principal incidents [...] adapting them to [another] setting’ (*T. S. Eliot’s Poetry and Plays* 70)? Helen Gardner effectively states the same: like *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land* builds on a myth to which the poem constantly refers, these references, in Gardner’s view, being the major axis of the poem’s unity (*The Art of T. S. Eliot* 85, 87). But when it comes to characterising what this unity is, all that is left of the myth is two thematic motifs, ‘the mysterious sickness of the Fisher King and the blight of infertility which has fallen upon his lands,’ and the decisive turn of the plot, the question or ‘the magic act’ of ‘the destined Deliverer’ which removes the curse (85). Gardner does not regard these elements as contributing to a unity of plot: unlike Joyce, Eliot ‘discards plot and his poem has no conclusion or solution.’ Eliot’s ‘constant references to the underlying myth’ – though considered by Gardner the main device holding the poem together – are accompanied by ‘musical repetition and variation’ that must be there to order ‘an extraordinary variety of styles’ in which the poem is written (87, 85). And this supplementary formal patterning seems to be a necessity rather than a free choice, for the source of the unifying structure, the Grail, does not actually contain one: there is ‘something in the Grail legend [...] that resists the ordering of plot. The “meanings” are always overflowing the narrative and overwhelming the design’ (87). Further, Gardner sees Eliot complicating this already defective narrative organisation inherent in the Grail itself even further, by building the poem ‘on the predicament which the myth embodies, [but] omitting any of the solutions of the predicament which we find in the various Grail stories’ (87). These omissions

defer the climax of the narrative tension that the presence of the Grail makes the reader assume: '*The Waste Land* moves, if it moves at all, towards some moment which is outside the poem and may never come, which we are still waiting for at the close' (87). The tension is located in an expectation unfulfilled, or – yet again – in the act of reading.

With the Grail, just as with Frazer, critical exegesis turns in exactly the same interpretative circle. The critic finds a source of unity that itself appears not to possess the unity it promises to provide, which leaves the only possible solution: to turn unity into a readerly expectation that is raised but not fulfilled and then transformed into an element of the reading process which draws solely on the reader's response. The poem demands active participation from its reader in the construction of its uniformity, while references to its sources enlarge the circle of interpretation but do not answer the question of its meaning. Meaning – in Eliot's poetry as well as in his philosophy, as it turns out – is a matter of immediate experience and not of linguistic structures alone, even if these structures are poetic. And *The Waste Land* pushes the event of meaning into the only locus of experience, the act of reading in which the reader is the only experiencing agent. If the Grail myth indeed gives an interpretative key of central significance to *The Waste Land*, this key seems to be the significance of the only crucially decisive event of its disordered plot. This event is the act of the quester's question, the act itself, regardless of what exactly the quester asks, bringing the miracle of the revival to the Fisher King and of his land. The meaning of the 'heap of broken images' (CPP 61) of *The Waste Land* depends on the same involvement of its quester, the reader. As Kenner puts it, 'all that is requisite is sufficient curiosity; the man who asks what one or another of these fragments means [...] may be the agent of their regeneration' (147). Like the past in Kenner's reading of *The Waste Land*, the poem 'exists in fragments precisely because nobody cares what it meant; it will unite itself

and come alive in the mind of anyone who succeeds in caring' (147). By relying on the responsiveness of human mind,

Eliot develops the nightmare journey with consummate skill, and then manoeuvres the reader into the position of the quester, presented with a terminal heap of fragments which it is his business to inquire about. (148)

Cleo McNelly Kearns sees Eliot paying special attention to those versions of the Grail in Weston that emphasise the importance of the healing question from the quester, while *The Waste Land* places the reader in the position of Parsival (197-201). For Bolgan, *The Waste Land's* fusion of multiple subjective agents into one – the healer is also the healed, and the quester merges with the Fisher King – disables the aesthetic effect of the poem, for it fails to provide a central persona for the reader to identify with to see the poem's world (30-33). But Kearns sees this fusion as both intentionally constructed and extended outside the poem's text to include the reader: '[T]he quester who must ask the saving question [...] is not a "character" within the work, but the reader, a figure not only implicit in but also invoked by the text' (199). Through the Grail and by other means (such as the 'you' of the poem), *The Waste Land* makes

a direct plea to the reader to enter the poem's discourse, to overcome the inhibitions that allow its riddles to go unchallenged, and to ask of this disturbed text, of its speaker, and of the culture from which it comes, 'What ails you?' By refraining from asking this question [...] we participate [...] in Parsival's evasion. (199)

By asking the question and, more importantly, in trying to hear the poem's answer, the reader co-authors *The Waste Land's* meaning, if meaning indeed must be the outcome of the reading act. 'Each reader of *The Waste Land* will construct a variant of Frazer's monomyth,' says Brooker, and in the process of this re-construction 'the reader becomes Eliot's co-poet' ('The Case of the Missing Abstraction' 551). In a similar way, in his use of the Grail, Eliot weaves the plot of Parsival in a complexity of syntax which makes the reader and the writer interchangeable, either of them able to play the quester's role in making the poem's meaning come alive (Kearns 197-198n).

It may seem that in this conclusion the Grail has been found, the question of the significance of anthropology to *The Waste Land* answered. Via *The Golden Bough* or the Grail, *The Waste Land* says that unity is not a textual structure but arises in the discursive situation in which the text is read, springing out of the reader's quest into the meaning of the object of attention, the poem which is the analogue of the world for the quester in the Grail myth. Unity arises in the process of experiencing the poem in the act of reading, or – if it has to be specified as a particular meaning, a particular kind of 'abstraction' – it is a re-articulation of this experience that is derived from the poem every time anew. But the joy of discovery does not last long, for the Grail slips away once we take another step back and reflect on the conclusion itself. Eliot's readers seem to agree that through the Grail *The Waste Land* shifts the responsibility for constructing its meaning to the reader, but what they do not say is that this is true of every poem and even every kind of text. Even further: this relocation of meaning from the structure that articulates it to the experience of discerning it is at the basis of Eliot's hermeneutic vision of all reality, whether this reality is already structured, textualised or not.

This shift to experiencing meaning rather than rearticulating it in presumably clearer, more coherent, analytic terms is just as alive in Eliot's 1956 reflection on the effect of his Notes to *The Waste Land*, where he considers their story as a paradigmatic case of the intrusion of critical discourse into poetic experience. In 'The Frontiers of Criticism,' Eliot remembers his poem as an example of the perception of a literary work that raises the question of the limits of literary criticism. Joyce epitomises this questioning, yet not in *Ulysses*, with which *The Waste Land* is commonly compared, but in *Finnegans Wake*, a far more daring challenge to the critic. This challenge makes *Finnegans Wake*, Eliot says, an ideal work for scholarly investigations – for 'exegetists,' also 'practitioners of hermeneutics with emulative zeal' – because it calls for their 'labours [...] to unravel all the threads and follow all the clues in that book'

(*OPP* 109). And yet, though such exegesis is absolutely needed to understand anything in ‘that monstrous masterpiece,’ *Finnegans Wake* – like ‘most poetry’ of which it is, for Eliot, an example (‘a kind of vast prose poem’) – is not quite ‘written in that way or requires that sort of dissection for its enjoyment and understanding’ (*OPP* 109).

Obscurity of meaning, Eliot says, does not necessarily mean that there is a meaning obscured, a riddle to be solved. It may be that it is there for the work to be, ‘without elaborate explanation, merely beautiful nonsense’ which the author wrote without realising ‘how obscure his book was,’ while critics, being ‘unconscious of the fact, [...] invented the puzzle for the pleasure of discovering the solution.’ This ‘error,’ Eliot says, is the error ‘of mistaking explanation for understanding’ (*OPP* 109). Just as in our experience of reality which Eliot describes in his philosophical papers, there are two modes of apprehending a literary work, reciprocally interdependent and yet distinct: there is critical ‘explanation’ striving for the systematic, analytic knowledge of the work as a defined meaning, and immediate pre-reflective ‘understanding’ of the same work, the experience of the formation and transformations of meanings that its linguistic texture conveys. Knowledge and experience, ‘explanation and understanding,’ evoke, enable, and enrich one another, and they may even merge in cathartic ‘moments of knowledge’ (*KE* 155) that subsume immediate experience into their meaningfulness, this meaningfulness itself arising as a moment in which knowledge and experience complement one another in an event of insight. But for most of the time they are not the same, and the distinction must not be lost.

*The Waste Land*, Eliot implies in ‘The Frontiers of Criticism,’ dwells in the woods of the immediate pre-analytic experience. It is a poem for immediate ‘understanding’ but it neither assumes nor expects us to solve any puzzles that are the bread and butter of critical ‘explanation.’

**THE ALL-PERVASIVE CONSCIOUSNESS OF A POET-ANTHROPOLOGIST: THE PECULIAR  
CENTRALITY OF TIRESIAS**

Yet the story of the significance of the Grail myth and, more generally, of the Notes in *The Waste Land* is two-sided. As we have just observed, this story denies what seems to be the major function of the Notes: they were composed without an intention to provide an explanatory frame for the poem. The case of the Grail myth shows clearly that the Notes do not serve this function. But at the same time, this story exposes the necessity of having a unifying frame in mind in order to be able to see that the poem's unity lies elsewhere than in conceptual or narrative logic. In the case of *The Waste Land* this is a paradoxical unity, for it is the experience of reality as fundamentally ununifiable, an experience that the poem aims to (re-)produce for the reader by its language. The Notes reinforce and extend this effect. They manifest the presence of the machinery of the analytic critical discourse next to the poem, while constructing this manifestation in such a way that no analytically discernable unity is allowed to take over the experience of excessive fragmentation that the poem's language provides. Even if it is the absence of a meaningful unity that is being stated, the statement itself is enabled by the complementarity of linguistic structure and extra-linguistic experience that for Eliot, as my argument goes, defines reality itself. Every kind of linguistic order must be present as a hypothetical possibility and tried out for us to be able to see and say that the poem is not defined by any of them, and that it is to be experienced rather than explained.

When regarded as a part of the poem's textual body, the Notes point to these hypothetical unities that *The Waste Land* does not realise. They function as an extension of the poem's strategy of seduction: they promise an analytically discernable unity, such as that of the Grail narrative, but then the poem refuses to accept it. The history of the

composition of the Notes, as well as the way they function, makes it evident that this was not an intended and thoroughly designed effect, for Eliot indeed composed them in a casual manner, ‘with diffidence, even indifference,’ as Rainey puts it (*Revisiting The Waste Land* 38), without quite thinking about how they would determine the reception of the poem. Yet having been written with this attitude, the Notes perform a function that is even more important for my discussion here: they manifest Eliot’s immediate, pre-reflective responses to his own poetry, indicating contexts that resonate in Eliot’s mind as he comments on some of *The Waste Land*’s lines.<sup>3</sup> In this immediate response documented in such localised commentary, the significance of every note being restricted to a line and sometimes a word, Eliot turns the Notes into the field of an even further disruption of a sense of unity that a poem is conventionally expected to give.

There is one exception to *The Waste Land*’s law of fragmentation, a paradoxical exception, for it brings about a figure that fully conforms to the poem’s law of fragmentation, by embodying the paradigm of disruptions that define the poem’s vision of reality. This figure is Tiresias, a figure that simultaneously is and is not the unifying core of *The Waste Land*. Tiresias is the centre of the aesthetic unity of the poem because his perception of the world is defined by the tensions through which *The Waste Land* conveys for its reader the vision of the excessive and disordered reality. But because this vision is a vision of disorder, Tiresias does not perform a unifying function in the conventional sense of the word. In the light of Eliot’s philosophical premises about reality, Tiresias appears as a figure that exposes the experience of reality as a structure, a constellation of different ways of perceiving and understanding reality without, however, unifying these perceptions into a meaningful vision of the world. This paradoxical non-unifying unity – Tiresias as an embodied deconstruction of the Eliotic consciousness-in-the-body – is the subject matter of the remaining part of this chapter.

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<sup>3</sup> Nitchie elaborates on this kind of functioning of the Notes, highlighting it as their structural characteristic rather than deriving this function from the circumstances of their composition.

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Critics usually begin exploring the interpretative potential of Tiresias's figure with Eliot's note to line 218 (*CPP* 78). This note is itself seen as ascribing to Tiresias a narrative centrality which then is observed to deviate from the expectation of conventional narrative structures raised by the note. This kind of reading assumes that Eliot speaks from the viewpoint and in the idiom of literary criticism, as the fact that the note is Eliot's comment on the meaning of his poem suggests. But in fact his voice here is of Eliot the philosopher, a voice that does not yet quite distinguish between the ostensibly aesthetic, formal structures of a literary work and the significative structures of language – just as it was the case in the 1919 essay on *Hamlet* but not in the Edinburgh Lectures of 1937. From this philosophical viewpoint, Eliot's Tiresias (read in the full complex of his appearance in the poem: the note and the narrative fragment) in effect articulates his notion of the perceptual structure of reality signified in language, this notion developed in the philosophical terms in *Knowledge and Experience*. The note on Tiresias reads:

Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character', is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem. (*CPP* 78)

This description begins with the fundamental given of Eliot's phenomenological worldview, the irreducible point of view, which is the point of perceiving reality and of signifying it in the process of perception. Tiresias is said to be 'a mere spectator,' a perceiving eye; he is not a psychological subject, not a 'character,' but the function of watching, the seer of the poem's reality in the literal sense of the word. Tiresias is the point of view for the reader to assume in order to follow the poem's articulation of its vision of reality.



This Tiresian point of view is peculiar, however: it differs from the actual viewpoint, the reader's, by being purely linguistic. In Eliot's note on Tiresias's significance, Tiresias himself appears as an element of the poem's linguistic network. We will have to look into what kind of consciousness Tiresias's is to understand his capacity to unite all personages of the poem, as Eliot says in the note. But the series of identifications by which Eliot characterises Tiresias already establishes this figure as a linguistic function, a marker of a common semantic denominator. The underlying principle of these identifications is that of analogy between the elements being identified with one another – any analogy, without assuming a narrative continuity or the sameness of the narrative function of the analogous elements. The one-eyed merchant, though a human figure, is a card in Madame Sosostris's pack (*CPP* 62). The seller of currants appears in the poem over a hundred and fifty lines later (lines 53 and 210 respectively) as 'Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant / Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants' (*CPP* 68). The Phoenician Sailor is the dead body in the sea of Part IV, 'Death by Water' (*CPP* 71). And Ferdinand is a Shakespearean voice, from *The Tempest*, who speaks twice in the poem, quoting different lines of the same passage from the play, in lines 192 and 257 (*CPP* 77, 78; Rainey *The Annotated Waste Land* 103), while his name is never mentioned in *The Waste Land*. Given the degree of the poem's fragmentation and the demand it puts on the reading process to establish links of coherence that will carry it through, this net of identifications – the one-eyed merchant in line 53 is the Smyrna merchant in line 210 and the drowned sailor of lines 312-321, and they are all Ferdinand, a shadow presence somewhere in between all these – is far from self-evident. But they share common markers. Mr. Eugenides is referred to as a 'merchant' which is also the identity of the one-eyed man pictured on the card in Madame Sosostris's pack, verbal repetition relating them to one another. Neither of them is explicitly said to be a sailor, but shipping is a part of most of merchandising

businesses, and Madame Sosostris warns her client to '[f]ear death by water,' the kind of death that fell on Phlebas. And with this, comes Ferdinand who believes – having heard Ariel singing to him about it, the song quoted first in the Sosostris episode and the quotation repeated in 'A Game of Chess' – that his father has been drowned in the sea. There is no structure that would bring all these 'personages' together under a common denominator other than their anthropomorphic identity, as Eliot's meticulously precise choice of the word denotes. 'Personage' is a person claiming some status of importance, but also an effigy of a person, a symbolic marker of it, as well as a character impersonated on stage, and *The Waste Land's* 'personages' are all these. In other respects, the network of identifications Eliot draws relies on common semantic markers of the 'personages' being identified with one another, which does not build a coherence of the narrative kind, but is a network of contingent linguistic associations. This network is the structure of Tiresias's – and the poem's – reality.

This linguistic principle works just as well in the field of non-linguistic, physical differences between points of view. The sameness of all these personages, scattered throughout the poem's lines and its narrative planes, is characterised as the principle according to which 'all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias.' This statement formulates the peculiarity of Tiresias's perception of the world in the context of Eliot's premise that the perception and understanding of reality are grounded in the body. The sameness of sex implies the sameness of physical ground and thus the sameness of the viewpoint marked by gender identity ('all the women are one woman') – which, however, is not relevant in Tiresias's case, for his is the androgynous body, the difference of sex being erased in his mythical biography. '[T]he two sexes meet in Tiresias,' Eliot says and proceeds with a quote from Ovid's narrative of Tiresias's change of sex and of its consequences in full. The course of events of Tiresias's metamorphoses establishes him as an Eliotic abstract point of view in two respects: both

sexes meeting in Tiresias, he is a universally human experiencing viewpoint; and the significance of this fact in Ovid's narrative about the misfortune that Tiresias's androgynous experience brings him performs the Eliotic premise of the primacy of immediate experience over conceptual knowledge. Tiresias's androgyny is the reason for which he is called to settle the dispute between Juno and Jove. The two gods want to know who, men or women, get more pleasure from sexual life, and Tiresias is the only one who has had both experiences and can judge (Rainey *The Annotated Waste Land* 107-108). Immediate experience is the ultimate authority of knowledge, an authority accepted even by gods.

Ovid's narrative about Tiresias continues, and its events turn Tiresias into a consciousness that breaks through the other limit defining the finitude of human being, the limitation of time, turning it into the limitless kind of consciousness, linguistic. Juno does not like Tiresias's answer and blinds him for it; but then Jove compensates the loss by giving Tiresias the gift of seeing the future. With the loss of one kind of sight and the gift of the other, Tiresias's reality is removed from sensuous perception into consciousness alone. What Tiresias '*sees*' (Eliot's emphasis draws attention to the peculiarity of the meaning of this word speaking of Tiresias) is the vision of a blind man: it does not denote seeing physical reality present to the senses but means the presence of things in consciousness, as they appear to the mind's eye. This shift from the physical reality present through immediate perception into consciousness is pushed further by Jove's gift of seeing the future. With Jove's gift, Tiresias's perception breaks the limit of the finitude of human existence in time. And perception beyond the temporariness of one's physical existence undermines the sense of temporality itself, for everything – past, present and future – are equally present to Tiresias's consciousness here-and-now.

These mythic transformations of Tiresias make him an incarnation of Eliot's philosophical notion of consciousness as the medium of signifying reality. With the physical limitations of human reality erased, both of sex and of temporality, the horizon of Tiresias's immediate experience is limitless: the field of his vision – and so 'the substance of the poem' – is human reality *per se*, in its all-inclusiveness and the immediacy of its experience. But at the same time and somewhat paradoxically, Tiresias's present is removed from immediate experience, for presence of things manifests itself most powerfully through the sense of vision. There are other senses, of course, through which immediate reality appears to the perceiving body. But vision is special. The eye is the physical experiential ground of and the metaphor for the Eliotic notion of a point of view. The point of view is as irreducible as the act of seeing is once vision is given. And a point of view also denotes a perspective, a principle of selection of the reality to which a point of view attends and of the coherent organisation of that reality, just as the physical act of seeing is both limited and directed, for we do not see what is behind us, and we cannot choose not to see what is in front of our eyes. Further, the continuity of reality being perceived builds on the continuity of the change of perspective which moves together with our body, and this continuity we experience as the continuity of the space and time which is our lived reality. Without physical vision, which is both the experience and the metaphor of the notion of a point of view, nor any limits that define the finitude of human existence, either of sex or of biographically determined historical time, Tiresias's consciousness is deprived of this experience of perspective. Tiresias can assume all possible viewpoints – he is the 'personage [...] uniting all the rest' (*CPP* 78) – but his is not a physically coordinated viewpoint in itself. That leaves his consciousness with the only matrix of coordination – language.

Thus the limitless and perspectiveless consciousness of Tiresias, with no ground of the immediate experience that defines the here-and-now of its own being, is language

itself. All reality is equally present to this consciousness but it is all present in objects of the post-immediate kind, the kind defined in *Knowledge and Experience* as ‘a complex of image and feeling’ (KE 49), which Tiresias either remembers as past or foresees as future, his own or someone else’s. In this linguistic reality, the narrative of Tiresias in the poetry of *The Waste Land* presents him as the Eliotic phenomenological-linguistic subject, the subject that constructs its reality as a relational whole of objects that are also linguistic meanings, while these objects-meanings themselves are recognisable as selfsame real existents on the ground of repeated reference to them in experience. The development of Tiresias’s perspective in the course of his narrative, as I am about to observe, shows this definition in action. The focus of Tiresias’s vision wanders in the associative network of the language he speaks until it is fixed on an event that was the origin of his fate.

This fatal event is the act of mating. Tiresias’s disgust at the sight of mating snakes was the beginning of his metamorphoses: he struck them apart and was turned to a woman; seven years later, he saw the same scene again, did the same hoping for the reverse transformation and so ‘was a man again’ (Rainey *The Annotated Waste Land* 107-108). The quarrel between Juno and Jove which he was called to settle followed, as did the consequences. Tiresias’s narrative pictures the intercourse, not of snakes but of human beings, the typist and the ‘man carbuncular.’ But this narrative has a preamble. Given the structure of Tiresias’s consciousness I have just described, this event is not seen taking place somewhere in a London apartment, for Tiresias does not see physically, nor does he need to. All events of historical reality, of past, present and future, are present to this speaking consciousness without restraints of their sequentiality or their linear distribution in time. Tiresias speaks in the fullest awareness of the whole world. The words uttered are the only pointers of his focus, while the rest of the reality he knows – all reality there is, that is – is in immediate proximity, threatening to

interrupt the developing line of coherence. The opening seven lines of Tiresias's narration enact the struggle of this all-perceiving over-responsive consciousness to hold its attention steady until it identifies an object to cling to. It is only in the eighth line of the narration that the central narrative agent, the typist, is named, and Tiresias finishes his first sentence only in line nine:

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back  
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits  
Like a taxi throbbing waiting,  
I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,  
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see  
At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives  
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,  
The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights  
Her stove, and lays out food in tins.

(*CPP* 68, l. 215-223)

The sentence enacts in its language the process of conscious awareness overcrowded with incompatible perceptions and obsessed with analogies that keep falling into view, these emerging analogies delaying the meaning that a sentence is expected to articulate. 'The eyes and back' are, as must be inferred, those of a clerk getting up from the desk at the end of the day. But the poem does not say this. Instead, it names the opposite sides of a human body that can be perceived at once only if the perception is omnivisible, with all possible perspectives of vision actualised at once as Tiresias's, or if they are immediately understood to denote one entity, a human person. The unstoppable energy of life, the natural given of a human being, is named 'the human engine.' The poem impatiently foretells the presence of the taxi in the next line, as well as the mode of automatism in which the coming scene will be told. They both, 'the human engine' and the taxi, wait, except Tiresias has an extra analogy with the machine to think about, in their common 'throbbing,' however different the reasons and the meaning of the vibration that neither of them can help. The subject of the sentence comes in the fourth line only, and syntactically it is the fourth phrase, following three

modifiers of time the last of which contains a simile. And the subject, 'I Tiresias,' is separated from the predicate, 'can see,' by three more modifying phrases.

These delays are only the beginning of an unsolvable confusion of grammar as to the object of the transitive verb 'see.' The repeated 'At the violet hour' is a modifier of time. Against common convention, it follows the predicate 'see' without even a comma to separate its syntactic independence, so that the reader must rely on the preposition and on the memory of readerly perception in which the phrase must have inscribed itself as the opening phrase of the verse paragraph. The following clause, 'the evening hour,' may come up as a modifier to 'the violet hour' to specify its meaning. But it can also be read as the object that Tiresias 'can see:': he contemplates the world which is the same every day at this 'evening hour that strives / Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea.' In any case, line 222 has a few surprises. Its opening phrase, 'The typist home at teatime' is an object of predication but, repeating the structure of the preceding phrase, 'the sailor home from sea,' it clings to the same verb 'bring' ('the evening hour [...] brings the sailor home from sea [and] the typist home at teatime') rather than to the verb 'see' denoting Tiresias's perception. Then follows a list of the typist's actions, but the fact that these are the typist's actions is only logically inferred because syntactically they are not linked to any subject at all (as it would have been in, say, 'The typist [comes] home at teatime, clears her breakfast,' etc., or in 'the evening hour [...] brings [...] the typist home, [and she] clears her breakfast,' etc.) – it is only metaphorically that 'the evening hour' can clear someone's breakfast and lay out another meal instead. In this deviation of grammar from the referential logic that the narrative suggests, the verb 'see' loses its object in the mist of half-articulated attributive and predicative relations. But at the same time its transitivity permeates everything that follows in the sentence – as if 'the evening hour,' with all its strivings

and accomplishments, the typist, and her movements around the room were all objects of the same kind perceived by Tiresias's omnipotent perspectiveless mind-vision.

But once the narrative agent, the typist, is identified, Tiresias's eye clings to it and coherence is there. The typist is the point of view from which to perceive and understand, and the narrative follows its formal convention from now on. It begins by setting the scene, the typist's living space. The divan which is also her bed is the centre of her abode and of the action that is about to take place, also a hybrid, a meal at first with the intercourse to follow; and the narrative takes a look through the window, outside the room but still a space inhabited by the typist, her combinations 'perilously spread' to dry. The other narrative agent arrives into this space, the young man carbuncular, and the poem proceeds with the narration of the action, in sufficient detail and without interruptions to follow its course without effort. The poem sees the typist's guest off, and rounds up the narration with a verse paragraph of the typist's reflection on the event. A more coherent narrative is hardly to be imagined.

Tiresias's signifying voice creeps into it twice. The experiential viewpoint is the typist's – this reality is lived by, with, and through her. But the speaking consciousness – the signifying instance – is Tiresias's. His first interruption states this explicitly:

I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs  
Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest –  
I too awaited the expected guest.

(*CPP* 68, 1.228-230)

Tiresias introduces himself as the peculiar, androgynous experiencing body that he is, 'old man with wrinkled dugs' marking both kinds of bodily experience, female and male. Both will be important in the course of his narrative, for he is about to assume the young man's point of view. In just a few lines, he 'guesses' that the time is right, '[e]ndeavours to engage her in caresses' and, finding them 'unreproved, if undesired,' 'assaults at once.' The typist's viewpoint is absent in this part of narration, for the point of view can inhabit only one experiencing body at a time, even though Tiresias's



androgynous consciousness-in-the-body switches from one to the other without difficulty. While switching his experiential viewpoint from one agent of the narrative action to the other, Tiresias keeps his all-pervasive linguistic awareness alive. He ‘perceived the scene, and *foretold* the rest:’ he is the signifying consciousness that has this experience already articulated in language, in an articulation that is yet in future for both the participants of the event and for the reader. Both the limitlessness of Tiresias immediate experience and the timelessness of his reality are taken further in his second interruption, now in parenthesis:

(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.)

(*CPP* 69, 1.243-246)

Tiresias has ‘foresuffered all enacted on this same divan or bed.’ The fact that he is the signifying instance does not distance him from the pain of the experience he articulates. And unlike an ordinary human being, Tiresias suffers *all* experience taking place, for both the typist and the man. The latter two lines delineate the entire horizon of the reality present to Tiresias’s consciousness: from the time when he ‘sat by Thebes below the wall’ to the time and the space of the afterlife when he ‘walked among the lowest of the dead.’ The multiplicity of viewpoints which Tiresias’s consciousness identifies and identifies with in this horizon-less reality is unimaginable, and so is the amount of pain he experiences with them in the constant, ceaseless present of his limitless consciousness, without beginning or end in either space or time.

■

The Tiresias section thus encapsulates Eliot’s vision of reality as given to experience in language, experience itself determined by the focus of consciousness on some signifying relations over others while keeping the whole spectrum of these relations in

mind. This notion of reality as linguistic is among the core tenets of Eliot's thinking, and this centrality is reflected in the function of the Tiresias episode in the structure of the poem itself and not only asserted in Eliot's note. And the episode claims a central position in the poem formally. This section is the most extensive and the most coherent narrative in the poem – in fact, the only sufficiently well articulated narrative, with all links of coherence explicitly present. This coherence comes up as exceptional in the poem as it stands in the final, published version, with the Notes or without. But this exceptional status is even more assertively witnessed by the poem's development, as seen in the drafts, for the Tiresias episode is the only narrative passage that survives the process of revision. The revision of the section itself, in addition, compressed it and made it more fluent, in content by removing phrases and lines that do not directly move the narrative line forward (the draft gives a far more extensive characterisation of the young man, for example [WLF 44-45], in the published poem condensed into barely few words), and in form by giving the narrative in a single verse paragraph instead of quatrains as it appears in the drafts. The stability of rhythm and rhyme (found to this degree in no other fragment of the published poem) supports the flow of language in the reading process, enhancing coherence even further.

Coherence is not the principle on which *The Waste Land* builds as a whole. The dynamics of the revision process shows Eliot irresponsive to markers of narrative unity and disregarding Pound's advice on strengthening the narrative flow. Pound needs to tell Eliot, for example, that Phlebas is an integral part of the poem' to prevent him removing the lines of 'Death by Water' together with the narrative of the sailor that preceded it in the draft (WLF 129). Eliot does not see the link himself or does not regard its possibility as sufficient grounds to keep the passage in the poem. And there is an instance of the disruption of a narrative line which Eliot left in the poem against Pound's advice. 'A Game of Chess' closes with a scene in a pub, a conversation

regularly interrupted by the publican's shout 'HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME.' Pound feels that Eliot begins this syncopation too early: 'Perhaps not so soon, C[ou]ld you put this later;' and on the carbon copy he remarks again, 'later?' (*WLF* 12-13, 18-19). The first shout, indeed, comes in the third line of the fragment, before the scene of the conversation has actually been set. But Eliot leaves the line where it is and, further, removes the syntactic markers of the conversation, inverted commas, leaving the reader to negotiate the way through the speaking voices (*WLF* 12-15; *CPP* 65-66). It is the destruction of coherence that is the tendency of Eliot's moves in revising the poem, while enhancing meaningful links, the smoothness of Tiresias's narration is a happy exception.

This exception is enabled by the fact that Tiresias embodies the Eliotic notion of what human reality is, and through this it claims centrality in the poem on the plane of content. Tiresias's narration is perfectly coherent and yet it does not evoke Eliot's resistance to the sense of unity that dominates *The Waste Land* because the structure of that narration – the way in which the real that is being articulated is perceived and understood – expresses Eliot's own sense of immediate reality as described in his philosophical work. All definitive dimensions of Tiresias's sense of the real that make him the incarnation of Eliot's philosophy are given in the poetry itself. I began my reading with the note but the aspects which define Tiresias as a linguistic, experientially limitless consciousness are all given in the poetry. Tiresias introduces himself as the androgynous body and as a mind that has no limits to the horizon of its vision. And he identifies with both the typist and the man freely, actually demonstrating the presence of multiple ways of experiencing reality in his mind, as well as the non-psychological linguistic principle of identifications that his consciousness builds as it articulates its limitless reality. The only detail that the poetry does not mark in its language explicitly is the kind of significance that the act of copulation has in Tiresias's biography – for

this detail the reader has to go to the originating source, Ovid. But the poem is not quite about Tiresias as the linguistic subject. Tiresias is the quintessential medium that perceives-and-signifies, but the object of the poem's attention – through Tiresias – is the reality itself.

This reality is anthropological. Tiresias's consciousness is rooted in his androgynous body, and the turning point that determined his singular identity is mating, an act which is the same kind of natural ground for cultural self-conception as seasonal change is for fertility rites. Fertility and its cultural interpretations are the pivotal points of attention in Frazer's descriptions of cultural practices all over the world in all historical periods, as well as in Weston's foregrounding of the ritual meanings in the variants of the Grail. And for Tiresias's mind all human history is equally present. A seer from classical mythology, an inhabitant of Thebes and the Underworld, observing a couple in the modern cultural setting, Tiresias holds in his mind and body the entirety of human culture in its all expressions. This property of Tiresias's mind is inferred from rather than explicitly claimed in his narrative. But *The Waste Land* – the poetic expression of what Tiresias actually 'sees,' this reality the substance of the poem – thrives on exploring this aspect of reality by creating a discursive network of the richest and densest kind through both direct quotations and less direct allusions to a myriad of artifacts, a network that is a miniature, condensed poetic expression of the complexity of the culture in which the poem speaks. Tiresias, for Eliot, is the quintessential expression of human being, simultaneously natural and cultural, immediately experiencing and distantly observant, a linguistic mind living in the sensuous body. In his figure, Eliot finds a confirmation from anthropology of his philosophical view of what human existence is.

Tiresias's singularity, the outcome of his mythical biography, breaks through the limits that define the finitude of human being, thus exposing their significance, giving a

figure to imagine what it would be like not to be defined by these limits and in this way to think what human existence is. It takes Eliot a dissertation in philosophy to describe his vision of human reality. Tiresias, his story narrated by Ovid, is a mythical-poetic articulation of the same fundamental premises, in just nineteen lines that Eliot quotes in his note, except that it appeals to the participatory, aesthetic channels of communication rather than logical-linguistic, the property of philosophical contemplation. The content, however, is the same – both ways of expression attempt to understand the structure of human reality, and they identify the same significant sites that define it. That is why, as Eliot introduces his quotation of Ovid in the note, '[t]he whole passage from Ovid is of great anthropological interest' (*CPP* 78). Lionel Kelly reproaches Eliot that in this statement he makes 'no allowance for the determining perspective of the authority he cites' and that Eliot does not see 'Ovid's endeavour as culturally determined' (197). But this is exactly Eliot's point: a culturally determined frame of articulation is meaningless unless its meaning is grounded in commonly human reality, in experience that in itself is not culturally determined though every culture – every human being, in fact – articulates this given ground in a peculiar way. Ovid's authority, from this viewpoint, is given paramount recognition. Ovid uses the poetic convention of his time – which is indeed culturally determined – in such a way that its mediatory intervention is invisible and irrelevant, for it communicates dimensions of existence that are fundamentally human. Ovid, for Eliot, is an epitome of a poet-anthropologist.

And so is Eliot's Tiresias. His description meticulously conforms to the Durkheimian imperative in Eliot's interpretation of 1913. Tiresias regards his subjects purely 'in terms of social behaviour' which, however, denies a possibility of meaning, for meaning is internal, a matter of experience. Observed from 'a purely external point of view,' the behaviour of Tiresias's subjects comes up as 'mechanism' (*IPR*, Gray 126-127). This tonality of the mechanistic begins at the beginning of Tiresias's narration,

with the identification of human body with the engine of a taxi, both ‘throbbing waiting.’ It is held evenly throughout the narrative in its language of bare report as it describes the details of the scene and the action taking place, and it is further reinforced by the ‘indifference’ observed in both the typist and the man. She looks to him bored, he finds his caresses ‘unreproved, if undesired’ by her, and he does not mind: ‘His vanity requires no response.’ And the narrative fragment closes as it began, with another attribution of the mechanistic to the human: the typist ‘smoothes her hair with automatic hand’ and her company for the rest of the evening is a machine, a gramophone on which she puts a record (*CPP* 69-68).

The typist’s silence – the only thought her ‘brain allows [...] to pass’ is ‘half-formed,’ and it is a sigh of relief that her ordeal is over – is a more powerful expression of her pain than any words could be. It is even more powerful when seen in the historical context to which this episode refers, the reality of poverty, social deprivation and neglect into which women of this newly emerged profession were thrown (Rainey *The Annotated Waste Land* 50-70). Markers of this reality are there in the poem: the smallness of the typist’s room, so that her washing must be dried outside, her ‘food in tins’ for supper, and the multifunctional ‘divan or bed.’ Tiresias the experiencing body, as said in the parenthesis spoken in his own voice, does not go through this reality as indifferent as his description strives to be: he has ‘foresuffered’ the typist’s future in his ceaseless present. Meaninglessness – the inarticulability of the meaning of this experience, the mechanistic nature of the lived reality of Tiresias’s subjects – is not merely produced by the ‘purely external point of view’ of the observer but appears to be a given of the reality observed. Formal, mechanistic repetition is the way of modern rites to communicate the pain of being.

And yet, there are mountains in which ‘you feel free,’ and the epiphanic vision of the hyacinth girl elsewhere in the poem, and the thunder prays. And though Kyd’s

‘Hieronymo’s mad again’ – after all this effort to make sense of the reality that *The Waste Land* speaks, – there is the harmony of ‘shantih,’ ‘The Peace which passeth understanding’ (CPP 61, 62, 75, 80). After all, Tiresias’s vision is of a limitless consciousness of all possible reality, the consciousness of excess, which is not the real structure of human experience but a mythological invention to try out its limits, to go beyond them in imagination. The meaninglessness of this excessive reality, perhaps, comes with the absence of perspective, the side effect of Tiresias’s omnipreceptiveness, while human reality as it is – finite in space and time and limited by the peculiar capacities of a given mind and body – finds its meaning in its limitations. This human reality of meaning in limitation is played in the music of the poetry of *Four Quartets*.

## CHAPTER 5.

### THE SUBTEXT OF *HAMLET* IN *THE WASTE LAND* AND *FOUR QUARTETS*

My thesis about the importance of *Hamlet* in Eliot's poetic writing is that this play contains aesthetic structures that for Eliot articulate the experience of immediate reality and that they appear in this function in his poetry. This is not to say that *Hamlet* is a literary source for these poems in the conventional sense of the word, nor even to claim Eliot's critical, analytic recognition of *Hamlet*'s presence in his poetry. Rather, I want to observe manifestations of Eliot's responsiveness to the play, sometimes accompanied by analytic conceptualisations of what formal structures evoke the response but sometimes recognisable only in structural analogies between Shakespeare's drama and Eliot's poetry. *Hamlet* contains both kinds of signifying structures realised by *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* as these poems rely on one or other of the two complementary constituents of aesthetic experience. There are images and motifs that articulate the disordered immediacy of the earlier poem, but also those that organise immediate experience into an aesthetic unity, as the later poem aims to do. To foreground these contrasting structures in *Hamlet* while describing their relation to the poems I read is my present purpose.



## ANTHROPOLOGICAL STRUCTURES OF IMMEDIACY IN *HAMLET* AND *THE WASTE LAND*

*The Waste Land* explicitly quotes four of Shakespeare's plays. The most extensive allusion, to *Antony and Cleopatra* in the opening of 'A Game of Chess,' as well as the lines from *The Tempest*, are acknowledged in the Notes, with the line from Ariel's song quoted twice without acknowledgement; the closing part of the poem refers to Coriolanus, and the pub scene closes with a line from *Hamlet*, Ophelia's farewell given word for word (*WL, CPP* 64, 67, 77; 69, 78, 62, 65; 74, 66). In addition to these, Peter Milward hears echoes from *Macbeth*, *Cymbeline*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *King Lear* and *Pericles*. As to *Hamlet*, Milward sees it appearing in *The Waste Land* implicitly two times: the image of dust is most prominent in this play out of all Shakespeare's plays (219), and the dialogue in 'A Game of Chess' – "Do / "You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember / Nothing?" (*WL, CPP* 65) – borrows the formal structure from the conversation between Gertrude and Hamlet about the Ghost:

HAMLET	Do you see nothing there?
QUEEN GERTRUDE	Nothing at all, yet all that is I see.
HAMLET	Nor did you nothing hear?
QUEEN GERTRUDE	No, nothing but ourselves.

(3.4.122-124; Milward 223)

Smith gives the same list of Shakespearean sources of *The Waste Land*, outlining a more complex network of associations. He claims, for example, that quoting Ophelia's farewell Eliot has in mind Laforgue's 'Hamlet' rather than Shakespeare (*T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays* 81; *The Waste Land* 127), and that the persona's answer 'Nothing' to the unnamed lady in 'A Game of Chess' echoes Cordelia's reply to King Lear and Ophelia's answer to Hamlet, 'I think nothing, my lord' (3.2.112) (*T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays* 81). From this list Milward singles out *The Tempest* as exercising a unifying function, saying that it 'is of all Shakespeare's plays the most central to the

meaning of *The Waste Land*' (225). In proposing this view Milward is not alone. Wilson notes the centrality of the water image in both *The Tempest* and *The Waste Land* (57-58). Greene claims that the poem carries the same message as the play, as both present art as a form of redemption and self-control. For Jay, the presence of *The Tempest* in *The Waste Land* presents a case of a disseminated underlying structure, manifest clearly enough to be recognised as such but, nevertheless, transfigured to form the poem's own web of imagery (54). And in Neil Corcoran's view, the poem's repeated revisiting of the play turns *The Tempest* into 'a kind of repeated undersong [...], to a point of implying [...] the presence of a ghostly, skeletal or attenuated narrative' (111).

Smith, even though his account of the poem is punctuated by references to the play throughout, considers *The Tempest* as 'one of Eliot's minor sources' (*T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays* 70), and suggests an intermediary source, *Shakespeare's Mystery Play: A Study of The Tempest* by Colin Still, which turns the play into another manifestation of Eliot's anthropological interest (70, 84). Ronald Tamplin takes the hint and proposes that Still's book is a major source for *The Waste Land*: '[I]t directs and extends material from Weston and Frazer and ensures that the patterns in the poem deriving from comparative religion ascend rather than coalesce, move rather than mark time' (352). Still, in other words, functions as the literary supplement to Eliot's anthropological sources, a work that indicates for Eliot the possibilities of ordering the material found in Frazer and Weston that are 'not helpful' enough by themselves, in Tamplin's view (352).

Besides the fact that this statement somewhat unnecessarily downplays the significance of anthropology in *The Waste Land* and Eliot's thinking in general, it does not sit quite well in the timeline of the poem's genesis. Still's book came out in 1921. Eliot indeed drafted most of the lines that made their way into the published version of

*The Waste Land* in the autumn of that year, as Tamplin assumes (352), but the fragment in which Eliot plays with *The Tempest*'s line 'Those are pearls that were his eyes' was written in May (Rainey, *Revisiting The Waste Land* 35; *WLF* 122-123). Also, even though Tamplin delineates a network of correspondences between Eliot's poem, Shakespeare's play and Still's anthropological reading of *The Tempest*, Still does not appear in this reading as a sufficient source of the unifying structure of the poem. Tamplin goes outside Still, more than once, to highlight relevant ritual symbolism in the poem (364, 367), and eventually concludes that Eliot may not have intentionally relied on Still but that a bulk of the material used by Eliot and Still overlaps, which turns Still's study into a helpful point of reference to the reader functioning 'as a control upon what we might have understood in any case' (371).

In its effort to find a unifying structure for *The Waste Land* and almost explicit recognition of failing to accomplish the task, Tamplin's reading is another example of the vicious circle of searching for the Grail into which Eliot entices his readers by his references to anthropological sources of the poem, particularly to Weston. Still's study of the anthropological subtext in *The Tempest* repeats Weston's inquiry into the Grail legend's origins in both the purpose and methodology. Still aims to show that *The Tempest* is a mystery play, an allegory of initiatory rites, these rites providing the symbolism for the play's imagery and constituting its unifying core (6-9). He does this by outlining a network of detailed comparisons and large scale analogies between anthropological descriptions of initiation rites from different periods and regions and *The Tempest*, this network matching Weston in complexity and scale. This complicates the line of Still's argumentation to such a degree that the author feels the need to ask his reader to be patient and follow the abundance of evidence he presents until it accumulates and foregrounds his argument (10-11). In the context of this parallel between Still's study and Weston's, *The Tempest* appears as a textual field of the same

kind as the Grail myth: a literary form that mediates significant structures functioning in ritual which for Eliot is the quintessential form of immediate aesthetic effect, without establishing an aesthetic unity of the literary kind conventionally associated with narrative unity.

I want to claim this kind of function for *Hamlet* in *The Waste Land*. Without explicitly framing the poem in its narrative unity (which is, by definition, impossible if the play is seen from Eliot's perspective of 1919, as lacking aesthetic unity of any order), *Hamlet* contains images and tropes that duplicate significant structures of ritual practices described in Frazer. Further, the network of analogies and repetitions I am about to highlight among *The Waste Land*, its anthropological contexts, and *Hamlet* foregrounds a specific kind of relation. This relational network circles around the word 'violet,' the word that marks in both *Hamlet* and *The Waste Land* articulations of the Eliotic vision of the significant process as described in my reading of *Knowledge and Experience*. This network does not establish any interpretative links between the three texts in which 'violet' appears, nor is it strong enough to say that either *Hamlet* or *The Golden Bough* is Eliot's source for one of the most aesthetically effective collocations of *The Waste Land*, as 'the violet hour' is. And yet somehow 'violet' points to the contexts that shaped Eliot's sense of the aesthetic, weaving around itself a web of repetitions that, if seen on their own terms, appear to be coincidental rather than intended to serve any specific purpose. In this function of marking contexts outside the poem without ascribing to those contexts an interpretative function, 'violet' appears as a figurative expression of the mediatory presence *per se*: it is present in – even directs – the perception of other things to which we attend, but there is no role for it to play beyond this mediatory presence. 'Violet' appears as this figure of sheer mediation in *The Waste Land*'s lines referring to the 'violet hour' of the evening. And this mediatory

significance of the image expands as we look into its functioning in *Hamlet* and *The Golden Bough* as seen in conjunction with *The Waste Land*.

■

Eliot's responsiveness to *Hamlet* on the level of minute verbal correspondences comes up in the drafts of *The Waste Land*: he cancels, on Pound's advice, entire episodes modelled on Joyce and Pope (Rainey, *Revisiting The Waste Land* 19-20; *WLF* 38-39, 127), but leaves verbal allusions to *Hamlet* against Pound's hesitations. This applies to two instances. Eliot ignores Pound's suggestion to remove the words 'Good night' said twice in what became line 171, the penultimate line of the pub scene closing with Ophelia's farewell of the published poem. Eliot transforms the words into the cockney 'Goonight,' but leaves them where they are, reinforcing the repetition of the same words (now in standard English) in the line from *Hamlet* (*WLF* 14-15; *WL, CPP* 66), the final version reading as follows:

Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight.  
Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.  
Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.

The other instance makes a more tentative case, but it points to a more significant half-presence of *Hamlet* in *The Waste Land*. In one of the draft typescripts of the Tiresias episode, Pound circles the words 'violet hour,' suggesting removal or change (*WLF* 42-43). There are more changes that Pound suggests to the adjacent lines, some of which Eliot accepts, such as removing the last metric foot in the first and third lines of the episode. He even takes Pound's suggestion of shortening the line a step further, cutting out the word 'the hour' that follows the collocation marked by Pound, but 'the violet hour' remains where it stands in the draft, untouched:

At the violet hour, the hour when eyes and back and hand  
Turn upward from the desk, the human engine waits –  
Like a taxi throbbing waiting at a stand.

(*WLF* 42-43)

At the violet hour, when eyes and back  
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits  
Like a taxi throbbing waiting.

(*WL, CPP* 68)

Pound does not comment what exactly it is that he doubts, but only singles the phrase out, in this one instance out of the four that the word ‘violet’ appears in *The Waste Land*, all lines in which the word appears read and marked by Pound twice (*WLF* 30-31, 42-43; 74-75, 84-85). The collocation indeed stands out. Opening the Tiresias episode, it is expected to set for the reader the scene of the narrative action that is about to begin, and orient her in the environment she needs to imagine to follow the literal meaning of the poem’s lines. Instead, it presents a semantic riddle, for it is a modifier of time characterised by a visual attribute. The reader has two options to choose from. She can stop and interpret what ‘the violet hour’ might refer to, in which case the opening phrase is producing an effect that goes against the signal of the long paragraph that has just begun and that suggests a heightened pace of development as compared to the considerably shorter verse paragraphs preceding and following it. Or else the reader can skip the phrase for now, delaying an interpretative decision about its meaning till after the passage is read further along. Pound, in other words, has marked for Eliot an instance of functional ambiguity.

This functional ambiguity does not last long. The logic of delay in orienting the observing eye underlies the opening of this passage, as I have described it in the previous chapter; and the collocation reappears five lines down, its meaning now modified as ‘the violet hour, the evening hour that strives / Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea.’ The hour is both located in the time of the day, ‘evening,’ and its visual modifier, ‘violet,’ is given a tentative objective source through its reference to the sailor’s marine environment, the sea and the sky at this hour appearing to the eye in different shades of blue. This tentative link is reinforced, and the colour linked to the

cityscape directly much further in the poem, in ‘What Thunder Said,’ where ‘violet’ modifies the atmosphere of falling cities, the word again used twice in close proximity, seven lines apart:

What is the city over the mountains  
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air  
Falling towers  
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria  
Vienna London  
Unreal

A woman drew her long black hair out tight  
And fiddled whisper music on those strings  
And bats with baby faces in the violet light  
Whistled, and beat their wings

(*WL, CPP 73*)

The manuscript for these lines shows an expansion of the attributive function of the adjective ‘violet,’ in what seems to be a change made in Eliot’s instant response to the line as soon as he has put it down on paper. Line 379 of the published poem in the manuscript looks as follows:

And bats with baby faces, in the violet ~~air~~ light,

(*WLF 74-75*)

Eliot writes ‘violet air,’ automatically repeating the collocation of the earlier line, but then immediately changes his mind: he crosses the word ‘air,’ sooner than he has put the comma at the end of the modifying phrase, and replaces it with ‘light.’ This substitution complicates the pattern of repetition and difference. The repetition of the adjectival modifier ‘violet’ echoes the rhythm of the earlier use of the word, in the expository part of the Tiresias episode, while the nouns this time are different, in contrast to the full repetition of the collocation in the Tiresias passage. This semantic bifurcation of the meaning of ‘violet,’ however, suggests the same movement towards specifying the meaning of an expression as in the Tiresias episode, where the second instance of ‘the violet hour’ is explicitly modified as ‘the evening hour.’ This development from the least to the most specific (also from the least to the most explicit)

meaning underlies the sequential distribution of all four instances in which the attributive modifier 'violet' is used. Reading the sequence of the word's appearances backwards, it is the light that illuminates the air and gives a shade of violet to the cityscape in the evening, and such an evening hour in the city is the setting of the event and the whole landscape of the poem that Tiresias observes.

Characterising a specific time of the day, the evening hour, by a visual quality, the colour 'violet,' sharpens the imaginary visual perception in the background of which we understand of the poem's lines in the act of reading. This unusual collocation makes us, just as Dante makes Eliot, 'visualise all the time' ('The Noh and the Image' 103), relying on the sensory – aesthetic – dimension participating in our interpretative activity. But this visual experience does not have a reference point. The search for the literal meaning I have just performed makes it clear that 'violet' refers to an intangible object, which is not an object in the strict sense of the word at all but a presence manifest through and in other objects which it contaminates while remaining unperceivable by itself. Neither the hour, nor the air, nor even the light can be seen in colour unless this colour is made visible by the objects that reflect it taking this colour as their attribute. 'Violet' in *The Waste Land* is a perfect marker for and figure of a mediatory presence. No-thing in itself, nor even an attribute of a thing, it colours the whole field of perception, in *The Waste Land* literally, as the colour of the city in the evening. It is perceived immediately, as the visual characteristic of all objects even though it is not their property but a quality of the medium – the light permeating the air at the evening hour of the day – by which the eye perceives all objects.

It is in this kind of presence that 'violet' functions in *Hamlet*. The word appears in the play three times, just as in *The Waste Land* there are three collocations in which the adjective is used. In contrast to its adjectival form denoting the colour in the poem, it refers in *Hamlet* to the flower in all three instances. But the flower as referred to in the



play is never actually present: in one case ‘violet’ is used figuratively, and in two other instances it is referred to as an absence. This absence of violets appears as loaded with a symbolic value in the narrative of *Hamlet*, and this symbolic value – evidently in the context of Eliot’s interest in anthropology, though anachronistically for Shakespeare – is rooted in vegetation rites described by Frazer and Weston. In *Hamlet*, if the play is looked at from the Eliotic perspective, the violet marks the paradigm of mediation forms that communicate meaning for immediate perception, language and ritual, while the object to which it refers is not actually present to the senses.

The first reference to the violet comes in Laertes’s warning to Ophelia not to trust Hamlet:

For Hamlet and the trifling of his favour,  
Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,  
A violet in the youth of primy nature,  
Forward not permanent, sweet not lasting,  
The perfume and suppliance of a minute,  
No more.

(1.3.5-10)

‘A violet in the youth of primy nature’ here is a metaphor of fragility and instability, the flower encapsulating a range of tangible qualities of what itself is intangible, not properly an object: Hamlet’s disposition. It manifests itself as a constellation of qualities, like those of a violet but, in contrast to a violet, they cannot be attributed to an object of physical reality to which one can point: ‘the trifling of [Hamlet’s] favour’ is the complex of the qualities Laertes enumerates alone, impossible to locate in any specific point of reference as one can speaking of a flower. Instead, ways in which these qualities are perceived permeate the perceiving subject: it is ‘sweet not lasting,’ literally referring to the sense of taste and metaphorically to pleasure, also like a ‘perfume,’ both taste and smell present in the body of the perceiver. And these qualities are said to be in motion, as a flower ‘in the youth of primy nature’ is known to be in a constant development rather than mature stasis, ‘[f]orward not permanent.’ The

exact combination of the immediate perception of this metaphorical violet which is Hamlet's favour keeps its identity only for a fleeting moment, as prone to change as a young violet is.

In its objective structure – in showing itself to the perceiving point of view in immediate, sensuous perception as a constellation of sensory responses – Hamlet's disposition as Laertes describes is a case of the Eliotic bogey that scares the child: an intangible, unidentifiable object which is a 'fullness of relations' (*KE* 116) immediately perceived and signified as this particular meaning, as I have described it in Chapter 2. And in *Hamlet*, as for Eliot in *Knowledge and Experience* and elsewhere in his writing, the unobjectifiable sensuous perception marks a living, truly experienced meaning carried through in language. Returning Hamlet's gifts, Ophelia speaks of 'words of so sweet breath composed [that] made the things more rich,' and says that now, '[t]heir perfume lost,' these some time '[r]ich gifts wax poor' (3.1.100-102). Hamlet's words of affection for Ophelia have imbued his gifts with richness, as the violet light of *The Waste Land's* cityscape colours all that appears to the eye in the evening hour of the day – for only as long, however, as they are actually perceived in these identities, as words of affection or the violet light.

The other two references to the violet in *Hamlet* appear as foregrounding narratives told in the anthropological sources of *The Waste Land*. The first of these two references comes as Laertes sees Ophelia after Polonius's death. Throughout the scene, Ophelia comes and goes singing, an act that is in itself a variant of the lamentation rite, and Ophelia actually understands her action as ritual. Greeted by Laertes, she does not reply to his words but corrects him, saying 'You must sing "Down, a-down," and you, "Call him a-down-a"' (4.5.171-172). She then gives flowers to Laertes, naming the symbolic meaning of every one of them. Violets she does not have: 'I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died' (4.5.182-184).

Frazer's and Weston's descriptions of fertility rites suggest a reason why violets may have withered. Lamentation for the dead god Adonis is a way of celebrating his cult, a couple of laments being quoted in Weston for the beauty of their poetic form (39-40). And Frazer describes variant manifestations of the Adonis cult extensively, this part of *The Golden Bough* referred to in Eliot's headnote to the poem (*CPP* 76). Among the celebrations of the dying god, there are the gardens of Adonis, which are miniature versions of the vegetation cycle that the god represents, 'baskets or pots filled with earth, in which [...] various kinds of flowers were sown and tended for eight days, chiefly or exclusively by women.' The plants in these baskets would shoot up very quickly but also wither very fast, for there was not enough earth for plants to grow roots (Frazer 341). These baskets represented the dead god: together with the images of Adonis, they would be flung into the sea, in hope of the god's resurrection. And growing plants represented Adonis's living phase: Adonis 'must have been the *Adon* or lord of each individual tree and plant rather than a personification of vegetable life as a whole' (339). The god is buried every winter in the natural world, withered plants being seen as his body, and the gardens of Adonis re-enact this part of the life cycle in spring, just before this body comes back to life in the shape of fresh green.

In *Hamlet*, Polonius's death is punctuated by the motifs of the vegetation cycle, as found in both Weston and Frazer. In one of his performances of madness, Hamlet calls Polonius 'a fishmonger' (2.2.176). And his body, as Hamlet reports to Claudius in another of his mad talks, is eaten by fish, this weird supper a part of the natural cycle: 'A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm' (4.3.27-28). In a closer parallel with the Adonis cult than with the Fisher King's narrative, one of Ophelia's lamentation songs maps the dead body on the soil of the burial:

He is dead and gone, lady,  
He is dead and gone.

At his head a grass-green turf,  
At his heels a stone.

(4.5.29-32)

But the body of Polonius, for whom Ophelia laments, is not buried. It is last seen being taken away by Hamlet from Gertrude's bedroom (3.4.190), and Hamlet refuses to return it, answering to Rosencrantz's question that he '[c]ompounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin' (4.2.5). Without a body to be buried, Polonius, a Shakespearean analogy of Adonis, cannot come back in the form of violets: they have all withered because there is no dead body of the resurrecting living being for the flowers to grow from. This cycle in *Hamlet* gets a full articulation with Ophelia's death, in Laertes's wish as she is being buried that 'from her fair and unpolluted flesh / May violets spring' (5.1.234-235). The violet in *Hamlet* marks the full cycle of life as seen in the symbolism of primitive ritual: it is first associated with youth, referred to by Laertes as a flower 'in the youth of primy nature' (1.3.7); it is a flower that withers when there is no body to be buried for it to grow roots in, as Polonius is not properly buried (4.5.182-184); and it is expected to spring from Ophelia's dead and buried body.

This value of the violet as an element that foregrounds the life cycle by marking its turns is restricted to *Hamlet*. In Frazer, the flower is a plant of the same value as many others seen as embodiments of Adonis. But Frazer's description of the appeal of the rite's symbolic meaning contains most significant elements of *The Waste Land* in close proximity, most of them also appearing in *Hamlet* as just described. As a part of his description of the Adonis cult, Frazer tells of ritual killings of corn harvesters, to appease the god of corn, whose souls were thought to come back in 'the sprouting corn' but also 'in the spring flowers:' 'What more natural than to imagine that the violets and the hyacinths, the roses and the anemones, sprang from their dust, were empurpled and incarnadined by their blood, and contained some portion of their spirit?' (340). Frazer proceeds with two stanzas of Omar Khayyám's poetry, in Edward Fitzgerald's

translation, that speaks of ‘Hyacinth [that] the Garden wears / Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head’ (340). Violets in *The Golden Bough* appear next to and in the same value as hyacinths, and a hyacinth garden in *The Waste Land*, as I have noted earlier, marks the only clearly epiphanic scene, a vision of a loved girl (CPP 62). The corpse in Stetson’s garden expected to sprout in the spring (CPP 63) directly pictures the scene of a human body growing out of the natural ground. *The Waste Land* develops the image further in Part III, by mapping out the streets of London with parts of the human body, as Ophelia does in her song mapping the dead body on the soil of the burial:

‘Trams and dusty trees.  
Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew  
Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees  
Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe.’

‘My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart  
Under my feet. [...]’

(CPP 70)

While Frazer goes beyond *Hamlet* in placing the image of the hyacinth garden in proximity to violets, both appearing in *The Waste Land*, the presence of *Hamlet* in the poem steps out of Frazer’s field of reference in containing another powerful image, the rat, in the contexts I have just discussed. Hamlet kills Polonius after he speaks from behind the arras where he is hiding to observe Gertrude’s and Hamlet’s conversation. Before thrusting his sword, Hamlet shouts, ‘How now, a rat? Dead for a ducat, dead’ (3.4.23). Whether Hamlet, pronouncing these words, believes he is killing a rat, is hard to tell. Polonius gives himself away by speaking out, in words. These words perhaps would be accompanied by movement as well, but it takes some effort of imagination to see how one could take the kind of movement of an arras produced by a man moving behind it for the kind of movement produced by a rat. This doubt grows even stronger when we see Hamlet assuming he might have killed the King (3.4.25) and having no regrets after he discovers the victim of his sword is Polonius, calling him ‘wretched,

rash, intruding fool' and telling him to '[t]ake [his] fortune' (3.4.29, 31). The 'rat' of Hamlet's exclamation might be another insulting name for Polonius, or anyone hiding to spy on Hamlet. Or (and perhaps more convincingly) this exclamation might be Hamlet's gesture of protecting himself from the blame for killing a noble person, presenting his action instead as an act of protecting the Queen. The object to which 'a rat' denotes in this scene is indeterminable: neither the fact of reference of the word 'rat' to a rat nor the frame of reference in which the word has a specific meaning can be determined unequivocally in the narrative space of the play.

*The Waste Land* refers to the rat twice. Both references are enigmatically disturbing, inviting a close interpretative attention that the present discussion cannot afford. The reference in 'The Fire Sermon,' however, at least lends itself to a narrative reading, on this plane referring to a rat the persona would be likely to see on the banks of the Thames: 'A rat crept softly through the vegetation / Dragging its slimy belly on the bank' (CPP 67). But the lines that mention the rat in 'A Game of Chess' read almost like a reflection on the unsolvable ambiguity of Polonius's death, the rat appearing as an image of an ominous indeterminability of meaning in the face of multiple frames that define it, every one of them equally possible but none more likely to be true than others. 'I think we are in rats' alley / Where the dead men lost their bones' (CPP 65) – these words appear four lines below the most extensive allusion to Shakespeare in *The Waste Land*, the pastiche of Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra on her throne, and just above the lines that have been heard to echo *King Lear* and, more importantly, two moments from *Hamlet*. One of these moments is Gertrude's and Hamlet's exchange with reference to King Hamlet's Ghost, present to Prince Hamlet but not to the Queen, who sees or hears 'nothing' where Hamlet sees the King (3.4.122-124 WL, CPP 65; Milward 223). Being 'in rats' alley,' in this context, seems to denote the space of indeterminacy, where half-defined things change their identities depending on the frame of reference in

which they are interpreted. The violet and the rat contain structures of this kind of indeterminacy. But *Hamlet* also provides Eliot with the figure that encapsulates the very nature of indeterminacy, a dead man who has lost his bones, as Polonius did when killed by Hamlet: the Ghost.

#### **SHAKESPEAREAN DEFINITIONS OF THE AESTHETIC UNITY OF *FOUR QUARTETS***

The kind of presence of *Hamlet* just observed in *The Waste Land* manifests Eliot's responsiveness to the immediate affectivity of the significative structures found in the play and scattered throughout the poem without, however, centring their network on a single unifying core. This effect of Shakespeare Eliot conceptualises in his criticism on the playwright, with reference to *Hamlet* in particular. The figure of the ghost presents Eliot with a case that articulates the constitution of the correlation between the pre-articulate immediate perception of the reality of objects and its articulate objective structure, this constitution being manifest most fully in the appearance of King Hamlet's Ghost. This structure of a half-defined object present to immediate perception, its undefined constituent identified as the experiential supplement of the pre-articulate significative perception in process, underlies the aesthetic unity of *Four Quartets*.

The purpose of the remaining part of this chapter is to foreground Eliot's definitions of objective correlation in his consideration of the Shakespearean aesthetic effect in the Edinburgh Lectures and elsewhere, keeping the focus specifically on the manifestations of the experiential aspect in Eliot's descriptions. In the 1919 essay on *Hamlet* Eliot asserts the absence of the unifying aesthetic structure in the play and then explains how this absence is manifest. In contrast, in the criticism I am about to look at Eliot's starting point is the unity of aesthetic experience, while an objective structure

that a work of art articulates is seen as emerging from it. In other words, rather than applying a ready-made definition to a work of art as he does in the 1919 essay on *Hamlet*, Eliot derives a definition from the experience of aesthetic unity as given. The Edinburgh Lectures contain perhaps the only fully explicit description of the Shakespearean aesthetic unity carried out from this analytic perspective in Eliot's criticism, which I will look into immediately below. I then move to an analysis of two examples of the objective correlative that Eliot gives in the original version of his early essay on *Hamlet* but excludes from the variant included in the collections, the storm in *King Lear* and the closing scene in *Othello*. And I close my discussion with a description of the correlative structure realised in the ghost figure as discussed in Eliot's criticism and manifest in *Hamlet*.

The importance of this discussion to *Four Quartets* is that Eliot, in his explicit and implicit examples of objective correlation, articulates dimensions on which this poem builds its aesthetic unity. *Four Quartets* enacts the process of the emerging objective reality. This process is aesthetic experience itself and its suspense resolved in a cathartic moment of an articulation of the meaning that signifies this experience in a word. Eliot conceptualises this in his readings of Shakespeare, and the dimensions of aesthetic experience that he identifies in these descriptions underlie the aesthetic affectivity of *Four Quartets*. My reading of the poem in the chapter below will not apply these descriptions as a methodological guidance but will follow, instead, the inner logic of the poem. This inner logic, however, mirrors the structures of aesthetic affectivity that I am about to show Eliot observing in Shakespeare. The sequential order, in which the opening of a work leads to a moment of meaningfulness; the insistence on the actuality of the experiential, processual aspect in the formation of meaning; the assumed unity of the given experiential point of view that builds this meaning in the interaction of a variety of modes in which it perceives and understands reality, a literary



work organising this interaction into meaningful experience – all these aspects Eliot recognises in Shakespeare and realises in his own manner in *Four Quartets*.

■

Eliot's responsiveness to the immediate effects of Shakespeare's drama is a consistent element in his otherwise changing view of the playwright's work, as especially clearly witnessed by the development of his view on *Hamlet*. His position as a critic on the overall effect of the play shifted, and he suspended from publication his most extensive and ostensibly positive statement on the play and, more generally, on Shakespeare. The Edinburgh Lectures, though read in English more than once (in 1937 in Edinburgh, 1941 in Bristol, and in 1950 in Germany, for the German audience abridged to one lecture which was given in English), were published only in a German translation (Marathe 95; Warren 124). Yet next to these gestures of ambivalence about the worth of his own views, there is a piece of firm ground of which Eliot is confident. He uses the passages of close reading from *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* that were written for the Edinburgh Lectures in a 1949 essay, 'The Aims of Poetic Drama,' soon revised for the Theodore Spencer Memorial Lecture given at Harvard in 1951, and then publishes it in an essay collection (EL II 1-6; 'Poetry and Drama,' *OPP* 75-76, 87-88) (Warren 124). While Eliot is unsure, that is, about the ultimate effect of larger structures in Shakespeare, those of the aesthetic unity of an entire work as an aesthetic object contemplated from a reflective distance, he is confident about his descriptions of the play's immediate effects, those in which he sees aesthetic experience brought about by the tissue of Shakespeare's language. In the case of *Hamlet*, Eliot is quite explicit about this. The play 'is far from being one of those plays which have the most plausible stories,' he says, 'and it certainly has not the best controlled plot,' nor is Shakespeare at his best in this play in following 'dramatic rules' (EL II 6). But *Hamlet* is the best at

making the spectator identify with its protagonist (6-7), and its language is versified in such a way that its organisational pattern is 'perfectly transparent; one looks quite through it and only sees the meaning.' Not only is 'any distinction between poetry and prose' lost in the perception of the play's verse, but language itself disappears in the aesthetic experience of the reality that the play communicates: 'we are too absorbed in the meaning to consider the medium' (4). It is this effect that *Four Quartets* aims to produce, relying on both the Shakespearean aesthetic structures of conveying it and the Eliotic premises about the nature of reality that, for Eliot, enable the effect.

The claim about the transparency of Shakespeare's verse is the thesis of Eliot's description of the opening scene of *Hamlet* in both the Edinburgh Lecture II and 'Poetry and Drama.' But in the fuller account of 1937, Eliot describes this effect of transparency in terms of the sequential development of Shakespeare's plays in the reading process, which he highlights in a juxtaposition of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*. In both plays, Eliot finds the moment of the immediate experience of the play's referential reality, a moment when the organisational pattern of the play's language is 'perfectly transparent' so that 'one looks quite through it and only sees the meaning' (EL II, 4). But in *Hamlet* the movement towards this moment is impossible to observe because, as Eliot sees it, its opening lines throw the spectator into the referential reality of the play instantly. Therefore, he must begin his explication of the Shakespearean immediacy by looking at *Romeo and Juliet*.

*Romeo and Juliet* conveys the same effect of immediacy in the balcony scene, with yet another kind of patterning clearly at work, 'musical,' in the arrangement of voices which works in the harmony of a duet with an effect comparable to the early work of Beethoven (EL II 3; *OPP* 87-88). In Eliot's view, the two opening scenes of *Romeo and Juliet* are 'unpromising,' some or other element missing for them to have a proper effect. But with the appearance of the Nurse, 'the versification begins to come to

life,' largely because Shakespeare versifies conversational language ('the living speech') more successfully than anyone else of all 'poetic dramatists,' English or otherwise (EL II 1-2). Then Eliot moves to the discussion of the balcony scene and its musical pattern which creates and increases suspense till the music of the verse and the semantics of the whole scene fuse in the word 'lightning,' given to the leading voice of Juliet in this scene and repeated further – a linguistic patterning that makes *Romeo and Juliet*, for Eliot, 'one of the swiftest moving of all plays' (3). This dynamic of leading the reader towards a moment of aesthetic immediacy, closed in a single unifying image, is the underlying logic of suspense in *Four Quartets*.

And yet Eliot's praise of the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* is only a preamble for the discussion of the dramatic scene that he perceives as quintessentially immediate, the opening of *Hamlet*, 'a far more stupendous piece of writing than the balcony scene of *Romeo and Juliet*' and 'as fine an opening scene as you can find in the whole drama anywhere' (4). In 'Poetry and Drama,' the purpose of Eliot's reading of the first twenty-two lines of the play is to demonstrate the structure of the scene which, though analysable on reflection, has 'the immediate impact' of making the spectator 'unconscious of the medium of its expression' (*OPP* 75). But in the Edinburgh Lecture II, Eliot raises an additional question, that of multivocality, in the lecture appearing under the name of multiple styles. Eliot's discussion of *Romeo and Juliet* is punctuated by the statement that it is an unusual 'mixture of styles' (EL II 2), with 'a greater variety of versification than in any previous play' (3). And when it comes to the perfection of the opening scene of *Hamlet*, Eliot says that the real question with which he is concerned is 'the astonishing variation of style, without ever any sense of incongruity' (EL II 4). An analysis of the scene follows, demonstrating that this scene conveys an exceptional effect of immediacy by marking every character with a distinctive rhythmic pattern of speech, an analysis repeated with some changes in the 1951 lecture and in the

collected essay in 1957 (EL II 5-6; *OPP* 75-77). In the unpublished lecture, Eliot concludes his close reading with the following:

I am not sure that, at least for the English audience, a too consistent plot and economical action are not a disadvantage. What is wanted is plenty of incident, suspense, surprise and variety. *Hamlet* is superior in providing all these, together with a dominant tone which unifies them and makes each incident essential. (EL II 8)

Stylistic variation, that is, must be there for the language to mimic the structure of reality which Eliot sees crowded with points of view that speak in distinct voices. In this mimicry, by creating an analogous perceptual structure, Shakespeare's poetic language in *Romeo and Juliet* and in *Hamlet* conceals itself in presenting, as it were, reality as it appears in direct experience. The lack of organisational patterns on the larger scale, those of plot, is irrelevant, even unwanted, 'at least for the English audience' that has not been nurtured by the French tradition of classical drama and therefore does not have the conditioned expectation of the Aristotelian dramatic unity (EL II 10). But there must be another centre of unification, the perceptual-and-signifying point of view and voice which here appears under the name of 'a dominant tone.' *Four Quartets* will transform this unity of 'a dominant tone' into the unity of immediate and yet meaningful experience, by concentrating its articulation of the unifying image-meaning around a single perceiving-and-signifying point of view.

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In *The Waste Land*, this assumption of the aesthetic unity situated in the perceiving-and-signifying viewpoint is absent, or, rather, it is assumed as given – or not – in the perceiving body, which is impossible to control. And so *The Waste Land* articulates multivocality alone, modelling its articulation on the opening scene of *Hamlet* that Eliot finds particularly effective. The acting agents of the play, according to Eliot's description, crowd it swiftly, announcing their presence by 'short, brusque ejaculations

[...] suitable to the situation' that is being staged. Then the pace slows down with the appearance of Horatio and Marcellus, the rhythm changing 'again on the appearance of Royalty, the ghost of the King' and again, now 'to staccato in Horatio's words to the ghost on its second appearance' (*OPP* 75-76). The language of the opening scene in *Hamlet*, by changing the tempo and the rhythm of its verse, distinguishes the voices of the characters from one another, conveying a sense of their multiplicity in the language they speak, making it audible even if the play is read on the page rather than seen on the stage. This is exactly how Eliot opens *The Waste Land*, as the poem throws the reader into its overwhelmingly multivocal, excessive, overcrowded reality in the opening verse paragraph and extends the effect throughout its lines to the very end, multiplying voices and simultaneously blurring distinctions between them, to close with words in another, foreign language and voice, speaking a weird kind of peace, 'shantih,' that passeth understanding.

*Four Quartets*, in contrast, actively directs the aesthetic experience of the perceiving-and-signifying point of view, as Eliot sees it done in Shakespeare's plays, most explicitly in *Romeo and Juliet*. In this play, Shakespeare leads his spectator to a moment in which aesthetic immediacy is experienced in the reading act as meaning emerges out of a network of rhythmic effects and connotations that eventually come together in a word, an expression that encapsulates the experience in a meaning, as 'lighting' does according to Eliot's description. In the light of the Eliotic philosophical premises, this manipulation of the perceiving point of view into experiencing a moment of aesthetic unity involves balancing two complementary constituents of meaningful reality: the indeterminate pre-articulate immediate experience, in this dichotomy appearing as the process of signification, and the structural unit – a word – that denotes that experience as the perception of the object which is its meaning. In the linguistic process of everyday language use as it appears in Eliot's analysis of memory in

*Knowledge and Experience* and James's descriptions of the psychological process of perceiving linguistic meaning that I have discussed in Chapter 2, the experiential constituent of the signifying process is subsumed by the structural meaning as soon as this meaning has been perceived by the signifying consciousness. The processual tension of experiencing meaning dies out once the meaning has been articulated. Aesthetically organised language relies on this inclination of the perceiving consciousness while working against it. Poetic language must be patterned in such a way as not to allow the full assimilation of the experiential energy into the linguistic concept that articulates the meaning, keeping both aspects of meaningful experience, the structural and the experiential actively evoked. *Four Quartets* encapsulates this doubleness in the composite image of the fire and the rose, not directly related to Shakespeare. But it is in Shakespeare that Eliot recognises and foregrounds this dichotomy analytically, most fully in his descriptions of the aesthetic functioning of the ghost figure, the unacknowledged agent of the correlation between immediate experience and objective reality.

Eliot's does not want to allow the assimilation of experiential indeterminacy into a linguistic concept, even when he speaks from the analytic point of view, that of a literary critic. This unwillingness is witnessed by the changes he makes to his 1919 piece on *Hamlet* where he defines the objective correlative, turning the review of J. M. Robertson's study of the play, which the piece originally was, into an essay to be collected in *The Sacred Wood*.<sup>4</sup> These changes are three. Two of them are clearly required by the shift in genre and, with it, in the object of attention. The essay, whether titled 'Hamlet and his Problems' (*The Sacred Wood* 95) or simply 'Hamlet' (*SE* 141), claims to speak of *Hamlet* itself rather than of Robertson's work on it, as the review

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Warren reads Eliot's early essay on *Hamlet* in the context of Robertson's work (16-18), highlighting Eliot's selective use of Robertson's argument and in some respects going beyond him. William H. Quillian gives a fuller account of Robertson's importance in the development of Eliot's position on *Hamlet* (49-74).

does. Thus Eliot cuts the opening sentence introducing the work being reviewed, ‘We are very glad to find Hamlet [sic] in the hands of so learned and scrupulous a critic as Mr. Robertson’ (*Athenaeum* 940). He also adds a reference to and a quotation from the work of another important figure of the Shakespearean scholarship of the time, Robert Stoll (*SE* 141-142), to widen the context in which Eliot wants to resituate now his own reading of *Hamlet*, rather than Robertson’s. But the third change he makes is not fully explained by the generic transformation of this text from a review into an essay: Eliot removes the two closing sentences of his original review. The very last one, again, refers to Robertson. It effectively concludes the review with Eliot’s reinforcement of Robertson’s view, saying that ‘[t]he material proved intractable in a deeper sense than that intended by Mr. Robertson in his admirable essay’ (*Athenaeum* 941), thereby closing the review with a return of focus on Robertson. This clearly had to be removed for the text of the review to function as an essay on *Hamlet* rather than on Robertson’s work on the play. More significantly, together with this last sentence, Eliot cuts the preceding one: ‘In the Storm in *Lear*, and in the last scene of *Othello*, Shakespeare triumphed in tearing art from the impossible: *Hamlet* is a failure’ (*Athenaeum* 941).

This cancellation is not demanded by the change in genre that the review is undergoing by being collected as an essay. Further, it seems rather strange that Eliot decides to cut this statement out. This sentence effectively gives two more examples of Shakespeare’s successful realisation of an aesthetic unity by actually providing an objective correlative in both *King Lear* and *Othello* even though these plays, like *Hamlet*, represent a reality that is just as hard to control by means of an aesthetic structure. By implication, the difficulty is the same as Shakespeare faced in *Hamlet*: picturing the experience of the disorder of the real is ‘the impossible’ task for an artist because a work of art by definition presents a kind of order, a task that Shakespeare ‘triumphed’ in accomplishing in the two other plays but not in *Hamlet*. In *Lear*, Eliot

sees Shakespeare achieving this paradoxical ordering of disorder by framing the chaotic reality of Lear in a structure that means disorder, mimicking it on the formal plane and denoting it in its semantic content, the storm. In an important way, the objective correlation in *Lear* goes further than it does in *Macbeth*. Eliot's examples with the Macbeths operate within the referential reality of the play only, the observing point of view assuming their viewpoint and appreciating the exactness with which Shakespeare controls the perceptual energy of both his characters and the spectator. Meanwhile, in identifying the storm as the objective correlative in *Lear*, Eliot is looking at the play from a properly critical, analytic distance, regarding the play itself as an object of his attention at the same time as responding to the objects of its referential reality, that of Lear, in an identification of the observing point of view with that of the character.

The storm in *King Lear* is the background of Lear's descent into madness, as he sees the order of his world falling apart. The storm begins when Regan, after Goneril, explicitly refuses to obey him (2.2.457-458), and it is no longer there when Lear is called a madman (3.6.9-14). Lear expresses his rage at his daughters' disobedience and then his despair by means of metaphors of storm, calling for it and describing his state of mind in its imagery. He leaves Regan's house to travel into the storm that has just begun, 'minded like the weather, / Most unquietly' (3.1.1-2). 'Contending with the fretful elements,' he '[b]ids the wind blow the earth into the sea / Or swell the curled waters 'bove the main, / That things might change or cease' (3.1.3-6). 'Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow, / you cataracts and hurricanes, spout / Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!' (3.2.1-3) we hear him cry and then conclude, 'This tempest in my mind / Doth from my senses take all feeling' (3.4.12-13). The storm, for Lear, is both the objective, physical reality that immediately surrounds him and the figure that signifies the disordered reality of his whole world as he sees it falling into chaos on every plane of his existence: the nature that surrounds him, his



kingdom, and his mind. This multifaceted functioning of the storm image is also present for the spectator of the play who observes the chaos of storm on the stage and understands it to be King Lear's state of mind as expressed in his metaphoric exclamations. The storm in *King Lear* is a perfect objective correlative: it establishes the correlation between the direct experience of physical reality and the linguistic structure that articulates its meaning on all levels of the perceptual-significative act for both Lear's point of view and that of the spectator.

One of the reasons why Eliot may not have been comfortable with this example seems to be that this correlation is, in a way, just a little too complete. The storm image, though its semantic dimension is enacted in the action of *Lear* in its full multifaceted force, also lends itself to linguistic functioning only. As an image, it is a concise significative unit that expresses the dominant, unifying semantics of the entire play which may then be understood as an expansion of this dominant motif. The correlation between the direct perception of the stormy chaos on the stage and its linguistic articulation would be present and experienced in its fullness while watching a performance, but the analytic perspective and the language of criticism thrives on the possibilities of reducing the experiential and operating in linguistic concepts alone. Eliot does not want to facilitate this reduction even in the critical discourse, nor does he want to allow this reduction to define his description of the double structure of the aesthetic experience, the emotive charge in it – the pre-objective, yet unsignified 'feeling' – playing as important a role as the fact that a work of art must be 'an expression of *significant* emotion' (SE 22).

In addition to this, in both examples cancelled by Eliot for the collection, the successful realisation of objective correlation seems to derive its unifying effect from the position of these images in the plot sequence of each play, both of them marking the resolution of the narrative suspense. Eliot's reference to *Othello* shows this dependence

particularly clearly. He does not specify what exactly it is that makes the last scene the objective correlative of the play but only names it formally, as 'the last scene,' the closing unit in the linear structure of plot. And in the terms of the events of plot that *Othello's* closing scene includes, it is a concentrated resolution of the narrative suspense: Othello enters Desdemona's bedroom, kills her, learns of his delusion about her infidelity, and kills himself (5.2). The scene begins with a turn of the plot towards resolution and knits up all threads of the narrative suspense one after another. The aesthetic closure that Eliot sees Shakespeare realising in *Othello* but not in *Hamlet* is narrative closure: the last scene of the play realises this kind of closure exhaustively, and Eliot gives no hint to any other kind of unity he sees this scene as proving. The storm in *King Lear* marks the same kind of a turning point towards resolution as the beginning of the bedroom scene in *Othello*. The storm begins with Lear realising that his world has fallen apart, and it goes on until a new kind of order is established, Lear having lapsed into madness, unable to cope with the chaos. This is where the resolution of the play's plot begins, while the rest of the dramatic action only exposes the scale and the details of the destructive impact of this turn on the lives of the other characters in *Lear*.

Eliot's immediate aesthetic response, that is, recognises the affective impact of sequential distribution, coinciding in Shakespeare with narrative sequentiality, but he does not want to give it a dominant, properly unifying significance explicitly. The fact that Eliot's analytic eye does not see an analogous unifying structure in *Hamlet*, 'a failure' in the respect in which *Lear* and *Othello* are a success (*Athenaeum* 941), witnesses yet again that narrative structure takes its part in the complex of signifying and affective tensions that determine Eliot's sense of objective correlation in this play. The ghost appears in and dominates the opening part of *Hamlet*, the stage of the creation and build-up of the narrative suspense, and it disappears from view before the

plot approaches resolution. As the ghost appears in the opening part of the play only, Eliot's analytic eye misses the presence of the figure of semantic closure, which an objective correlative by definition is. In *Four Quartets*, he will correct this deficiency. Though narrative structure in itself is of a ghost-like nature in this poem, as it appears and disappears depending on shifts in the interpretative point of view, the ghost enters the stage of its performative action very late, to reinforce its semantics of objective correlation with the affect of closure supplementing the experience of reading as the poem approaches the end. Its semantics, meanwhile, unfolds in the poem in the sequence of narrative steps that mirror those of Hamlet's Ghost in Shakespeare's play.

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It is the peculiar ontology of the ghost that makes it the figure of objective correlation. The ghost is an existent that by definition does not have an objective integrity, its identity depending on way in which its appearances are perceived and interpreted. In this ontological ambiguity, the ghost is a variant of the bogey as Eliot describes it in *Knowledge and Experience* (116): an object that exists in perception only and only for the perceiving point of view, its identity prone to change together with a shift in viewpoint. The ghost is a kind of an object that Eliot would call a half-object: it is never an object of reality fully distinct from the subject to which it appears and which constructs the meaning of these perceptions. Ezra Pound, in a book that Eliot reviewed in 1917 ('The Noh and the Image'), articulates the nature of this ambiguity of the ghost figure in his comment on the major difficulty in translating a play by Ujinobu, 'Awoi No Uye,' that pictures a princess tortured by a ghost. It is impossible to separate, Pound says, 'what belongs to Awoi herself from things belonging to the ghost of Rakujo, very much as modern psychologists might have difficulty in detaching the personality or

memories of an obsessed person from the personal memories of the obsession' (Pound & Fenollosa 114).

Eliot's review of this book actually focuses on this ambiguity of the ghost's identity, an ambiguity deriving from the impossibility of determining which elements of it are produced by the perceiver's mind rather than actually perceived in the immediate presence of a ghostly object. The Japanese theatre manages to keep this ambiguity alive, which Eliot in this review regards as the token of its aesthetic effectivity, superior in comparison to the Western tradition in which the ghost is located in the subject's perception unequivocally:

The phantom-psychology of Orestes and Macbeth is as good as that of Awoi; but the method of making the ghost real is different. In the former case the ghost is given in the mind of the possessed; in the latter case the mind of the sufferer is inferred from the reality of the ghost. The ghost is enacted [...]. In fact, it is only ghosts that are actual; the world of active passions is observed through the veil of another world. ('The Noh and the Image' 103)

In this review, Eliot elaborates that the Noh theatre relies on possibilities of aesthetic appeal – the appeal to the sensual immediate perception of what is happening on the stage – far more heavily than Western drama building on realistic conventions and the structure of plot. Eliot even gives an example of a similar reliance on the perceptual imagination in the Western literary tradition: 'in reading Dante,' he says, 'we need to visualise all the time' (103). It is through this exploitation of the perceptual planes of aesthetic experience that the Noh makes the ghost real to the spectator and opens to her experience the reality of the possessed. The spectator is forced to construct the identity of the ghost in the same way as and together with the character on the stage, interpreting the immediate pre-objective perceptions through which the ghost appears, in opposition to the Western theatre where ghosts appear as already located in the character's mind, clearly identified as ghosts of one kind or other.

This kind of reliance on immediate pre-objective perception out of which objective reality appears simultaneously for the character and the spectator while

keeping the ambiguity about the meaning of this reality, however, creates a problem of aesthetic order, just as it did in Eliot's 1919 reading of *Hamlet*. The ambiguity of the identity of the ghostly reality so well communicated in the Noh by not defining the nature of the ghost conflicts with Eliot's assumption that the ultimate function of a work of art is to articulate the meaning of reality 'in imposing a credible order upon ordinary reality, and thereby eliciting some perception of an order *in* reality' ('Poetry and Drama,' *OPP* 87). Indeed, when Eliot's view is restricted to the European context alone, he does not want any ambiguities about objective identities of the existents that appear on the stage. Shakespearean ghosts therefore present a problem:

The fault is not with the ghost but with the presentation of a ghost on a plane on which he is inappropriate, and with the confusion between one kind of ghost and another. The three witches in *Macbeth* are a distinguished example of correct supernaturalism amongst a race of ghosts who are too frequently equivocations. It seems to me strictly an error [...] that Shakespeare should have introduced into the same play ghosts belonging to such different categories as the three sisters and the ghost of Banquo. ('Four Elizabethan Dramatists,' *SE* 115-116)

Eliot hedges this reproach to Shakespeare: this 'error is condoned by the success of each passage itself' and, more generally, he explains that the Elizabethans aimed 'to attain complete realism without surrendering any of the advantages which as artists they observed in unrealistic conventions' (*SE* 116). He acknowledges the aesthetic effectiveness of the Shakespearean representation of the ghost, and yet sees it as effective in spite of the fact that it does not conform to identifiable laws of aesthetic unity.

Shakespeare, indeed, realises both the European and the Japanese conventions of the dramatic representation of the ghost as Eliot describes them, in *Hamlet* more fully than in *Macbeth*, apparently leaving Eliot at a loss: he avoids discussing the structure of representation of King Hamlet's Ghost. In his review of Pound's book on the Noh, Eliot mentions both plays, but *Hamlet* only gives an occasion for Eliot to remark on the effect of immediacy conveyed by the opening scene, while his explanation of the difference

between the English and the Japanese conventions of representing the ghost refers to *Macbeth* only. The rhetoric of his analysis of *Hamlet*'s opening, when he comes to read the scene closely two decades later in the Edinburgh lectures and, yet later, revises this reading for 'Poetry and Drama,' shows him a little indecisive about the Ghost's identity. In the Edinburgh Lecture II he speaks of 'the appearance of the Ghost' and 'an abrupt change of rhythm in Horatio's words to the Ghost on its second appearance' (EL II 5). But in 'Poetry and Drama' the first reference is rephrased as 'the appearance of Royalty, the ghost of the King' while leaving the second reference to the Ghost in its original wording (*OPP* 76). The difference is subtle: even named as 'Royalty,' the Ghost is still 'the *ghost* of a King;' but it nevertheless shows an explicit awareness, absent in the earlier variant of the same text, of the double identity of the apparition, as well as Eliot's willingness to acknowledge this duplicity. In 1917 Eliot avoids mentioning Hamlet's Ghost at all; in 1937, he regards it as a ghost, assuming that the name makes the meaning self-evident; and in 1951 and 1957, he feels a need to register the ghost's split indeterminate identity openly in the language he speaks about it. Eliot does not know what he thinks about Hamlet's Ghost, but in 1951 he also knows that this not-knowing is a defining aspect of the experience that an indeterminate object, such as a ghost, evokes.

This line of the development of Eliot's view on the function of the ghost is another manifestation of the shift in his responsiveness and focus, from the effects of immediacy alone in the early period to the ways of their integration into an aesthetic unity later in his career. The ghost in *Hamlet* is, indeed, a mediatory figure that integrates both kinds of requirements that for Eliot define a successful aesthetic structure: of aesthetic immediacy and the determinacy of meaning, or of the Japanese and the English conventions. *Hamlet* presents an even more complicated case than *Macbeth*. If *Macbeth* unnecessarily complicates its aesthetic structure by presenting two

kinds of ghosts, the supernatural witches and the ghost of Banquo which is a product of Macbeth's mind, *Hamlet* has one ghost that, when seen from the Eliotic perspective, cannot be unequivocally identified as any of these. Focusing on the narrative line of the play, King Hamlet's Ghost clearly appears as a supernatural being. The play begins with its appearance to a number of characters other than Hamlet, so that the spectator knows for sure that the ghost is not the product of Hamlet's imagination. Yet at the same time the Ghost's representation realises the dynamics of the formation of the object of reality as Eliot describes it in *Knowledge and Experience*, and in this line of reading it appears as an equivalent of a bogey: a bear that is real at the time of its direct perception but disappears once the point of view has assumed the analytic, observing position.

The irresolvable ambiguity of Hamlet's Ghost builds on the implicit assumption that underlies Eliot's vision of the perceptual process and destabilises the certainty of the ghost's identity established by *Hamlet's* narrative line. While insisting on the uniqueness of every living point of view in what Eliot refers to as practical reality, the theoretical perspective from which Eliot describes the structure of perception and experience assumes that this structure is universal. The analytic description of the process in which reality emerges in perception as the reality of objects distinguishes between modes of perceiving and signifying that reality, implicitly attributing these modes to every possible experiencing viewpoint, while the individuality of every given point of view for the description of the structure of experience *per se* is irrelevant. The experiencing viewpoint, in other words, appears as an abstraction, a locus where the immediately perceived is signified in an interaction of all modes of perceiving the real, while the identity of the object that is perceived is a result of this interaction. Keeping the focus of attention on the objective identity of the Ghost thus understood pushes into the margins of attention the fact that it appears to different characters of the play, for it is only the ways of its appearance and their combination that matters. These

appearances determine what this object is, while the fact of the multiplicity of the viewpoints which perceive it is of secondary importance.

The representation of King Hamlet's Ghost, in fact, foregrounds the structure of an object's appearance to different channels of perception, for it shows itself in deficient structures of perception in different instances. It is first an indefinite 'thing,' then a 'fantasy' and an 'apparition,' the indeterminacy of its identity and intentions towards those to whom it appears evoking the wish to hear it speak (1.1.19-27). It then shows itself clearly enough to be recognised as King Hamlet (1.2.188-241); but when it speaks to be heard by the guards, it is invisible, only heard from under the floor (1.5.151-182). It chooses how fully it wants to appear to different viewpoints at different moments, in full control of its appearances to every point of view: the guards get to perceive the Ghost only defectively, in one way or other at a time, but Hamlet sees it and hears it speak simultaneously (1.5), even in the presence of another viewpoint, Gertrude's, that does not register the Ghost's presence while being in the same place at the same time (3.4.93-127). This representation of the ghost deconstructs the structure of the perceptual process in which an object emerges in a particular identity, identifying and singling out its constituent elements and their combinations in its exposition of the paradigm of objective presence, from the non-appearance (to Gertrude) and half-appearances (to the guards) to the fully fledged presence (to Hamlet) of the object to the perceiving point of view.

The fullness of the Ghost's appearance to Prince Hamlet makes him the unifying point of view, the Eliotic centre of aesthetic unity stated in the Edinburgh Lectures, as I have discussed above. In addition to 'a dominant tone' that for Eliot unifies the play, Hamlet is a character that allows for the highest degree of the identification of the spectator's point of view with the character, thereby opening up for the spectator the Shakespearean experience of reality (EL II 7-8). This chain of identifications of



experiencing viewpoints – spectators with Hamlet’s and with Shakespeare’s – is enabled by Eliot’s implicit assumption that on the level of perceptual structure all experiencing viewpoints are the same, for they shape their unique visions of reality by establishing links between the same set of the modes of immediate and analytic experiences. Hamlet’s encounter with his father’s ghost articulates this set. Not only does Hamlet see the Ghost and engage in conversation with it but he also reflects on the significance of this encounter, doubting the validity of the Ghost’s accusations of Claudius and Gertrude and even of his own identification of the Ghost with his father. ‘The spirit that I have seen / May be the devil, and the devil hath power / T’assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps [...] / Abuses me to damn me,’ Hamlet says, and decides to look for ‘grounds / More relative than this’ before taking any action of revenge (2.2.600-606). And, importantly for the conception of Hamlet as the unifying point of view, this paradigm of the ways in which Hamlet senses his father’s presence goes beyond his ghostly identity, for Hamlet first sees his father in his mind’s eye (1.2.184), learning about the Spirit’s apparition to the guards after he shares this mental appearance with Horatio.



Eliot articulates the structure of this unifying point of view – understood as a localised constellation of all actual modes in which objective reality is perceived and signified – in *Four Quartets*. The locus of this constellation is, ultimately, the speaking point of view. This viewpoint is Eliot’s, but also the reader’s, because to understand the poem’s meaning is to go through the effort of the articulation of the reality immediately perceived, and this effort builds on the capacities of perceiving and signifying consciousness that all experiencing viewpoints share. To expose the ways in which the poem relies on this sameness and manipulates readerly experience into a moment of

aesthetic unity is the purpose of my reading of *Four Quartets* in the chapter below. I focus my attention on passages that I see as exploiting the interdependence between the perceptual and the signifying – or the bodily and the linguistic – dimensions of understanding reality most fully, and one of the crucially important moments in the poem is the passage in which it pays homage to *Hamlet's* Ghost, in the *terza rima* of 'Little Gidding.'

The homage itself is ghostly, hiding under the surface of Eliot's Dantesque voice as Eliot mimics the poetic form of *The Divine Comedy* and models the encounter that he depicts on Canto XV of *Inferno*. This dependence of the passage on Dante is even clearer in Eliot's manuscripts of the poem, as one of the drafts has the persona addressing the ghost as 'Ser Brunetto' (Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets* 174). The Shakespearean ghost appears through a similar double presence, though somewhat reversed. A direct allusion to *Hamlet* comes with the ghost's farewell, as it fades 'on the blowing of the horn' (LG II, *CPP* 195), an Eliotic transfiguration of the Shakespearean crow of the cock in *Hamlet* (1.1.119-122). And 'Little Gidding' constructs the event of the encounter on the basis of the example of *Hamlet's* Ghost, rather than on the appearance of Brunetto's ghost to the persona of Dante. Dante, in the Canto about Brunetto, encounters 'a company of spirits' each of which 'stared steadily' at him until, after a while, he 'was recognised by one, who took [him] by / the hem and cried out: "This is marvellous!"' (Dante, *Inferno*, XV.16-24): the Dantesque ghost singles itself out of an indeterminate multiplicity of spirits. And it is the spirit that approaches Dante's persona rather than the other way around: only after it has spoken to the persona and 'stretched his arm towards [him]' the persona 'fixed [his] eyes upon his baked, brown features' and recognised the ghost as Brunetto (XV.25-30). But *Four Quartets* reverses this interaction, repeating instead the dynamic observed in *Hamlet*: Eliot's persona meets 'one walking' (LG II, *CPP* 193, emphasis mine) just as the guards

and then Prince Hamlet see one ghost. And for Eliot's persona the interaction begins with his own gaze at the ghost, as it does for both the guards and Prince Hamlet in Shakespeare, even though this gaze registers the ghost looking at him: 'as I fixed upon the down-turned face [...] I caught the sudden look of some dead master' (LG II, *CPP* 193). This change of direction – from the immediacy of perception towards reality, emerging as the reality of the world's existents, rather than reality falling into perception and overwhelming it with its excessive presence – underlies the difference between *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*. The excess of reality in *The Waste Land* was the subject matter of my chapter on the poem; my reading of *Four Quartets* aims to foreground its articulation of perceptual – aesthetic – unity.

## CHAPTER 6.

### ***FOUR QUARTETS: A POEM OF ‘CONCENTRATION WITHOUT ELIMINATION’***

*Four Quartets* is a poem of inclusion and closure. It is the direct opposite of *The Waste Land*'s mad disorientation in response to the excess of reality as it comes into view: Eliot reflects on that early experience in the recognition that ‘human kind cannot bear very much reality’ (BN I, *CPP* 172) and contemplates the limitations that make reality bearable. It is in 1913 that Eliot sees ‘the enchainment of our ideas in explanation’ in contrast to ‘the real laws of nature’ (IPR, Gray 124), emphasising the unknowability of the link between them and, with it, the inaccessibility of reality beyond our direct experience. But in 1934, reality for Eliot is the enchainment itself. This is the reality of living in the body, as given to us by the law of nature, as well as in the presence of things beyond the limits of the physically given here-and-now: ‘the enchainment of past and future / Woven in the weakness of the changing body, / Protects mankind from heaven and damnation / Which flesh cannot endure’ (BN II, *CPP* 173). The Tiresian consciousness of *The Waste Land*, the linguistic all-inclusiveness of all there has been and will ever be, is the ground on which *Four Quartets* builds its vision. The vision itself, however, is no longer a mind-vision of a blind seer overwhelmed with the excess of reality present to it, for all this reality is now woven in the body, in itself a limit which the poem sees as a blessing. The weakness of the body is to be accepted with gratitude, for it protects us from all which our ‘flesh cannot endure.’ It is the threads of this web that *Four Quartets* exposes, weaving them into the web of reality to be experienced by the reading eye, the poem’s meaning – its intended purpose – being the experience itself.

Both *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* seek for ways of marking the field denoted by the basic premise of *Knowledge and Experience*, the timeless unity of immediate experience in which there are no objects, space or selves because this experience is pre-linguistic, while distinctions are the given of our post-immediate condition (*KE* 31). For *The Waste Land*, this post-immediacy is a curse, and it acknowledges this curse by obsessively restating absence, the absence of reality to language, so that the only way of speaking reality is saying what it is not. But *Four Quartets* keeps the full perspective of Eliot's philosophical premise in view. The post-immediate condition in which this poem speaks is the middle way in the journey from the unknowable all-inclusive whole of immediate experience to the all-pervasive order of the Absolute, the experience of a meaningful unity in which all distinctions now present melt. For this poem, the post-immediacy of human condition means that everything that appears to view has derived from the pre-linguistic whole of immediate experience and therefore nothing can be rejected but must be welcomed, in the belief that all this reality will fall together into a meaningful whole. *Four Quartets* – itself a post-immediate, linguistic existent – contemplates the emergence of reality to view, in the formation of distinctions as experienced in the post-immediate world of objects in which we live, and enacts the process of this emergence in its language, until bringing all it has created for the reading eye into one moment of experiencing meaning.

Enacting this process, *Four Quartets* closes the gaps of incomprehensibility that *The Waste Land* left gaping open. This poem does not explain the incomprehensible, for that which cannot be comprehended cannot be explained. But the poem encloses its horror, delimits it in the knowledge that incomprehensibility is only a part of the cycle, that it is 'surrounded / By a grace of sense,' punctuated by moments of 'concentration / Without elimination' in which 'both a new world / And the old [are] made explicit, understood / In the completion of its partial ecstasy, / The resolution of its partial

horror' (BN II, *CPP* 173). Peace, in this poem, no longer needs to be the mysterious 'Shantih' that 'passeth understanding' (*WL*, *CPP* 75, 80) nor is it blinded when 'Looking into the heart of light' (*WL*, *CPP* 62). In the garden of *Four Quartets*, this blinding light is the source of the transformations of immediate reality, a sequence of perceptions named – identified in complete images, even if only for a passing moment before they turn into something else or disappear – to form meaningful continuities with the environment in which they appear, relational wholes in which this emerging reality is experienced. If looked into '[w]ith a little patience' that for *The Waste Land* defines being itself (*CPP* 72), the vision of this blinding sunlight dissolves into a world of objects present in perception here-and-now. This vision is a prototype of contemplative-performative moves that constitute the content and the significative dynamics of the poem. This is the 'first world,' as the poem names it twice in inviting the reading eye to follow its emergence in its lines and signalling that there are more worlds of this kind coming in the poem's course.

Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,  
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,  
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,  
The surface glittered out of heart of light,  
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.

(BN I, *CPP* 172)

The sunlight here has the depth of the vessel that it fills in, as water would have if there were any in the dry pool at which the eye, blinded by the sun, is looking. Perception itself, the knowledge of the world that the watching eye has in its memory, turns the substance in the pool, light, into what it is supposed to be, water, and then the eye sees the surface of this water though consciousness knows this is not water the eye is looking at but sunlight. So '[t]he surface glittered out of heart of light' in a signifying move of immediate perception, in a moment of suspended disbelief, forgetting the knowledge that there is no water in the pool – allowing the lotos, the flower of forgetfulness, to rise, 'quietly, quietly' – and letting perception itself build its own

meaningful unities, delicately complete like a Chinese jar, another prototypical image of aesthetic fragility that the poem will give (BN V, *CPP* 175). These unities arise in a fusion of the known with the perceived, complementing one another, supplying elements for a complete vision of meaningful reality to appear. What is known to be sunlight turns into water, and then this water is seen to have a reflective surface which, in its turn, reflects the roses that are retained in this perceptual whole by memory's possession of percepts just grasped in the field of attention even though they are no longer present to the senses.

The wholeness of the perceptual vision that the poem remembers and describes relies on this dynamics of retention, and the language in which it is conveyed enacts it. The description is punctuated by the pronoun 'they,' its reference found in the roses, named just before the vision begins, said to have had 'the look of the flowers that are looked at' and to have moved with us. They move 'as our guests, accepted and accepting:' accepted as our guests in the world that is our present reality and accepting our definition of that which is perceived as roses. To keep the reading eye glued to these roses is the only way of identifying what the 'they' of the line in this sentence and the pronouns of the previous one mean:

And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses  
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.  
There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting.  
So we moved, and they, in formal pattern,  
Along the empty alley, into the box circle,  
To look down into the drained pool.  
Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,  
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,  
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,  
The surface glittered out of heart of light,  
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.  
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.

(BN I, *CPP* 172)

This movement of both the perceiver and the perceived is performed 'in a formal pattern' that the poem constructs to sustain the vision as we read on, in the same way as

it was experienced in the walk in the garden of Burnt Norton which the poem recollects. The reflection is not the actual reflection on the mirror-like surface of the empirically non-existent water in the pool, but a projection of the mind's eye, the presence of the roses remembered. The reflective surface is as if of water because the pool invites water by being a pool, a construction built to hold water. Water there by the law of the aesthetic unity of the world being perceived, the kind of unity that emerges by itself in the unknowable, unstoppable movement of immediate perception. This is not an illusory unity, not a false reality, but a unity that accepts the aesthetic law of the senses, bringing up the meaning of the immediately, pre-rationally real. The roses – and the whole world in which they appear, be it the garden of Burnt Norton or the one imagined while reading the lines of 'Burnt Norton' – are a presence of the ghostly kind, half-real: undeniably here at the moment of immediate perception of them as this kind of existent, yet disappearing once the perceptual process has moved on.<sup>5</sup> The vision emerges out of immediate perceptual associations, holds there for a moment, just long enough to be named, recognised, frozen in language as a complete meaningful form – 'quietly, quietly' – and goes away with a change in the immediate environment: 'Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.' The 'partial ecstasy,' the 'resolution of [the] partial horror' of the world, has reached the moment of its completion and is over – just for

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<sup>5</sup> Ronald Bush reads this passage differently, eventually coming to a similar conclusion. A network of parallels with *The Family Reunion* makes Bush assume that the pronoun 'they' denotes unidentifiable ghosts that the persona senses to be present in the garden. These ghosts follow the persona until he sees them reflected in the pool, in Bush's view a symbolic representation of his life, as they would be seen when they are behind him (190-191). But in a close reading of the same lines, given to demonstrate that 'this poem's "passages" are made through effects that construct a new reality out of language' (193), Bush shows how Eliot combines rhythmic and syntactic patterning to make the reading eye stop on the reference to the roses and, once it does, never to withdraw its attention from them (194-195). Like the ghost of 'Little Gidding,' the roses, the ghosts and the complex of motifs around them have been traced to sources beyond Eliot's *oeuvre*, such as Donne and Lewis Carroll (Smith, *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays* 260), as well as Kipling and Elizabeth Barrett Browning (Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets* 39-41), most of these references provided by Eliot himself. I interpret these responses as witnessing the network of relations between the ghost figure and the formation of referential meanings (the rose being a prototype example of their emergence) in this poem that I have discussed in the previous chapter. More aspects of this relational network are considered further below.



now, until another moment in which ‘a grace of sense’ will show in ‘a white light still and moving’ at the same time (BN II, *CPP* 173).

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*Four Quartets* stages this play of reality rising in immediate perception as the world of object-meanings in a variety of significative modes, making them supplement one another in a description and enactment of the emergence of the immediately real as meaning. While *The Waste Land* obsessively circles in deficient structures of signification to claim for the space of being the unstructured experiential flux, the other of the structural fixity of language, *Four Quartets* accepts this dichotomy as the two complementary aspects of reality as experienced in the process of their constant, unstoppable interaction. In *Four Quartets*, the meaningfulness of reality is a matter of the articulation of the pre-articulate which is given to experience all at once and is ordered into a network of meaningful relations by experience itself. This poem sets out a structure in which the experiential overlaps with the significative, identifying the dimensions of this overlap and playing out the effort of articulating the pre-articulate immediate reality, understanding this effort to be the fundamental structure and the dynamics of existence. If *The Waste Land* is true to reality by mimicking its disordered excessive structure, counting on the reader’s natural inclination to order and reorder it into arbitrary chains of meanings, *Four Quartets* contemplates, mimics and directs the process of the ordering itself. Both poems build on the basic premise of the factual, empirical presence of the perceiving-and-signifying body, the reader. But in contrast to *The Waste Land*’s expectation that the reading point of view will construct its own paths of coherence in the excess of reality presented, *Four Quartets* aims to keep control of the perceptual-and-signifying process of the reading act. To keep this control, the poem opens by articulating the dimensions of the process that a reading act as signifying

activity is, discerning a relational network of meaningful experience out of the pre-articulate non-relational perceptual unity. The opening movement of 'Burnt Norton' stages this process, aiming to bring about the event of the birth and existence of the world for a human eye, while simultaneously exposing the fundamental structures of experiencing reality that make this event what it is. Foregrounding this is the purpose of my reading of this movement immediately below.

### **STAGING IMMEDIATE REALITY IN LANGUAGE: THE 'FIRST WORLD' OF 'BURNT NORTON'**

*Four Quartets* does not, as *The Waste Land* did, throw its reader into the linguistic universe at once but opens by demarcating the structure of the Tiresian linguistic consciousness. This is the kind of consciousness in which all experienced reality is stored in conscious memory and fore-knowledge as linguistic meanings. The all-inclusive static existence of all time in linguistic consciousness appears against the background of reality as experienced, which the poem identifies with the immediate experience of that which is present in flux, as one limited vision of the immediately real transforms into another, the flow of these transformations constituting the experience of temporality itself. There is time as the history of lived experience, the semantic substance of linguistic memory and knowledge, the totality of all experienced reality static in its eternal all-inclusive presence; and there is time that is the marker of the immediate manifestation of things, in the flow of the direct experience of the real in which some existents of the all-inclusive linguistic reality assert their presence in the here-and-now perceivable to the experiencing point of view. The experience of the complementarity of these two kinds of time, one static and the other in flux, 'Burnt

Norton' will call 'the still point of the turning world.' This point is not to be called 'fixity, / Where past and future are gathered' but, instead, the given without which '[t]here would be no dance, and there is only the dance' which is 'neither arrest nor movement' (BN II, *CPP* 173) because it is a constant oscillation between the two kinds of time as our existence shifts from one kind of awareness of the world to the other.

*Four Quartets* begins articulating this juxtaposition of linguistic and experienced reality as two ways of thinking time rather cautiously, as if speaking on the ground of the conventional understanding of the nature of time which, however, the poem's formulation instantly doubts: 'Time present and time past / Are both *perhaps* present in time future' (BN I, *CPP* 171; emphasis mine). This doubt is immediately supplemented with a direct reversal of this temporal directionality, the other, equally valid possibility that 'time future [is] contained in time past.' The poem's thought moves in a space where both ways of interpreting temporal sequentiality are valid, without a possibility of establishing any of them as true. The 'perhaps' qualifies both kinds of subordination, effectively saying that the past may belong to the future in the same way as the future is found in the past; and these two perspectives are connected by the conjunctive 'and,' rather than the disjunctive 'or.' These two ways of thinking temporality are complementary, co-existing in the all-inclusive present stretching to the limits of what is conventionally thought of as time past and time future.

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future  
And time future contained in time past.

(BN I, *CPP* 171)

This totality of the real – understood absolutely, as the eternal presence of all time – is the point of departure for the contemplative statement of the subsequent sentence: 'If all time is eternally present / All time is unredeemable.' The word choice – 'eternally' and 'unredeemable' – brings in the Christian frame of reference which will

underlie the poem's contemplation on existence as it goes on.<sup>6</sup> But for now the poem proceeds to specify its meaning that time, if eternal, is unredeemable in another direction: 'What might have been is an abstraction / Remaining a perpetual possibility / Only in a world of speculation.' An abstraction is a defining property of the linguistic structure. Linguistic meaning, the poem then says, is 'a perpetual possibility' belonging to 'a world of speculation,' the kind of world that in *Knowledge and Experience* appeared under the name of a systematically ordered metaphysical doctrine the truthfulness of which is hypothetical until it has been validated in the world of practice (*KE* 168-169). There is the real world, that is, and there are worlds of speculation, those of things that 'might have been' but not actually are, and that are 'a perpetual possibility' defined as 'an abstraction.' They are linguistic meanings; they may turn real but in themselves they are a speculative, abstracted 'possibility' of meaning which is yet to be validated as truth in experience.

This half-existence of the eternally present time, of all reality that has ever been or might have been or will be, is its unredeemable sin. The poem is about to begin redeeming it by bringing some of its existents to life, enacting their movement in the immediate experience which is also the movement of time and the experience of temporality. 'To be conscious is not to be in time,' it will say shortly; 'But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden [...] / Be remembered; involved with past and future' (*BN II, CPP* 173). To be conscious of reality is not to experience it immediately. To be conscious of reality is to contemplate it in language where all reality is 'a perpetual possibility' and 'an abstraction.' But one's own existence is temporal, lived as a

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<sup>6</sup> This notion of time – as the experience of temporality on the one hand, and as all reality eternally present to consciousness on the other – is steeped in hermeneutic thought, developed in detail in Book Eleven of St. Augustine's *Confessions*. Augustine makes this distinction to explain the difference between divine time, which is God's 'ever-present eternity' (254), and human time experienced in motion. The divine eternity of things, for Augustine, originates from and exists in the Word, which makes God's eternity the eternity of the all-inclusive linguistic consciousness, as that of Tiresias in *The Waste Land*. For Augustine, to understand the nature of things means to reach towards God, the only purpose of human existence. This aspect of Augustine's hermeneutics is present in Eliot in his premise of the givenness of the interpretative intention in our perception of the world.

sequence of meaningful moments, such as the one in the rose-garden, that are placed somewhere specific in the time-line of one's life, 'involved with past and future' defining one another in the time perspective of the experiencing body. 'Only through time time is conquered' (BN II, *CPP* 173), in either direction. The time eternally present, the totality of the reality known in language, turns into the living present by presenting its existence to the immediate experience of the given here-and-now. And the flux of lived experience, a sequence of meaningful moments coming one after another in time, is preserved in linguistic memory, as a totality of meanings eternally present to be remembered and relived even though they are not in the here-and-now of the experiencing body.

Thus the closing sentence of the exposition in 'Burnt Norton' identifies the future and the past – '[w]hat might have been and what has been' – into one unnamed category, by implication the time that is not the living present, and claims the eternal / perpetual presence of all this time turned into a world of abstract existents. This is the stage of the poem's dramatic action, the 'significant soil' (DS V, *CPP* 190) in which its words will 'reach into the silence' (BN V, *CPP* 175) by bringing to life some of the potentially real existents of the linguistic universe in a void space of the present moment.

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future  
And time future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present  
All time is unredeemable.  
What might have been is an abstraction  
Remaining a perpetual possibility  
Only in a world of speculation.  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.

(BN I, *CPP* 171)

Having outlined this space of the timeless presence of all reality, past, present and future, the poem at last explicitly specifies it as the space of consciousness aware of

all this timelessly present time, denoting this space as the space of memory: 'Footfalls echo in the memory / Down the passage which we did not take' (BN I, *CPP* 171). Specified as '*the* memory,' it is the faculty of memory but also a specific memory, of an event remembered and thus present in the speaker's mind's eye to be referred to as 'the memory.' The reader, this event the speaker refers to not being available to her as the memory, is invited to re-construct it by identifying her reading eye with the remembering eye of the speaking voice, re-enacting the remembered experience in the process of understanding the speaker's re-remembering that reality in the words of the poem's lines.

This sudden throwing of the reading eye into the world of specificities instantly places it in a constellation of particularised points of view. It indicates the speaker's viewpoint, for he is the perceiving eye in the reality remembered. And it forces the reader to identify with that viewpoint, for this is the only way to reconstruct that reality, make it present to the reader's own imaginative perception and thus understand what the poem says. The poem makes it easy for the reading eye to identify with the eye remembering: the memory is of a walk in the garden of Burnt Norton, its paths delineated in the poem's lines.

What might have been and what has been  
Points to one end, which is always present.  
Footfalls echo in the memory  
Down the passage which we did not take  
Towards the door we never opened  
Into the rose-garden.

(BN I, *CPP* 171)

But the poem does more than throwing the reader into the immediate reality remembered. It stages the same event that the reading eye is experiencing in the reading act, for it announces the presence of a living body yet unknown, walking into the reality of the perceiving eye, the identity of that ghostly being yet to be figured out. 'Footfalls echo in the memory' that is about to be told, just as the words of the speaking voice will

be said to echo in the reader's mind just a few lines below, the poem speaking to the reader directly: 'My words echo / Thus, in your mind.'

This garden is a garden remembered, known, and the experience is the experience of recollecting, re-living the memory while knowing about the reality in which the remembered event occurs more fully than it was experienced at the time: the door at the end of the passage was never opened, and yet the speaking voice knows that this is the door into the rose-garden. This door is an entrance to a world that is known to be out there but has not been chosen to experience, was not actually entered, its 'perpetual possibility' remaining 'an abstraction' not realised.

The poem plays on the semantic value of the door: it is a point of entrance, of crossing from one defined space into another, the two divided by a wall. These two spaces are separated so that it is not possible to be in both of those spaces at once, even though that other space, on the other side of the door, is visible to the eye from where it is. In *Four Quartets*, this division line is between that which has been given or chosen to actually experience and that which is known to exist out there in the field of perceivable reality and yet not actually, immediately lived through. This door is the figure of the reader's experience of the poem: here is my reality, the poem says, my world, a world that you can see and imagine yourself being in as you follow your eye discovering roses growing in my garden, while actually being on the other side of the entrance, in your own world. It is this symbolic value that the poem exploits, not the empirical reality of Burnt Norton. A biographically oriented reader willing to read this description as Eliot's memory of visiting Burnt Norton, with Emily Hale, in the summer or early autumn of 1934 (Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets* 35-36), will find that in the present garden of Burnt Norton the passage into the rose-garden does not have a door but is more like a deep arch, a doorway, that is, which is always open, inviting the visitor to sit down in its side spaces and enjoy the view in either direction

opening to view. And the passage luring the eye to follow is not towards the rose-garden but in it; this passage going down the hill, with roses on either side is, in fact, all that the rose-garden is (see next page). This rose-garden does not refer to the topography of Burnt Norton but rather to that of 'Burnt Norton,' in the linguistic tissue of the poetry in which the memory is recollected directing the flow of experiential energy into a meaningful harmonious whole of the world.<sup>7</sup>

The plural 'we,' then, who are walking in this space, includes the reader, and the map of the garden is a description of the linguistic mindscape in which the walk takes place, its pathways and doors and existents (such as roses) all made present by words that refer to them as meanings. And then the paths that have or have not been taken in the walk are threads of coherence built by making interpretative choices in the process of signifying the narrative happening in this space, these threads weaving into the poem's meaning. It is the walk itself that matters, the experience of reliving the reality once lived but now memorised, the linguistic reality that by itself is an unredeemable 'abstraction,' 'a bowl of rose-leaves' covered by the dust of having been dead for a while. The poem does not know 'to what purpose' it is '[d]isturbing' this dust. Nevertheless, it intensifies the movement of bringing these now metaphorical roses to life, by crowding the garden with more echoes, '[o]ther echoes,' of both the voices speaking to us, of the bird, and of other presences yet unknown of which the bird speaks. We are about to find what these presences are, if only we agree to 'follow the deception of the thrush' and go '[t]hrough the first gate, / Into our first world' to which we are now rather impatiently invited for an encounter with the existents of the poem's reality which we do not yet know.

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<sup>7</sup> This conflation of the linguistic texture of the poem with the landscape has been read as the manifestation of the Eliotic transformation of the Romantic landscape poems of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Spurr supplements Bornstein's thematic reading of this relationship with a stylistic analysis (80-95). Hansen traces Eliot's use and transformation of the Romantic landscape techniques enabling the aesthetic effect of *Four Quartets* back to five short landscape poems of Eliot's published in his *Collected Poems* in 1936.





The rose-garden of Burnt Norton

Visited as a part of the programme of the inaugural T. S. Eliot International Summer School, June-July 2009.

My words echo  
Thus, in your mind.  
But to what purpose  
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves  
I do not know.

Other echoes  
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?  
Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,  
Round the corner. Through the first gate,  
Into our first world, shall we follow  
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world.  
There they were, dignified, invisible,  
Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,  
In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air,  
And the bird called, in response to  
The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,  
And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses  
Had the look of the flowers that are looked at.  
They were as our guests, accepted and accepting.

(BN I, *CPP* 171-172)

To enter and experience the poem's world, we must suspend our sense of truth, the knowledge of the world as we experience it outside the poem's world, and follow its voice of aesthetic deception instead: 'shall we follow / The deception of the thrush?' The thrush is a bird likely to be heard in the garden of Burnt Norton. But its song cannot say anything unless we imbue it with meanings, just like we do when reading words while looking at letters on the page, meaningless black strokes on the white sheet of paper unless they are perceived as words. *The Waste Land* presented us with Philomel's fate to speak by her birdsong only the pain of the violence to which she had been subjected because this is what is heard in it by 'the dirty ears' (*CPP* 64) that know her story. But *Four Quartets* turns the helplessness of Philomel the nightingale into the power of language to convey for us a sense of lived reality, through a material form, sound, that in itself means nothing, no more than the song of a bird, unless we hear it as meaningful. This poem also knows that the reality it is bringing to life is an imagined reality, 'a deception,' the reality for the experience of which we must forget that it is being staged for us by the poem's language. Only on this condition of eliminating our awareness of the communicative act itself will the poem's worlds come to life. Water

will appear in the pool of sunlight and will reflect the roses that are, at first, ‘dignified, invisible.’ Only after some time of ‘[m]oving without pressure, over the dead leaves’ they will be identified as roses, tentatively, through an anaphoric repetition in the lines insistently pointing to them, ‘There they were.’ And they will be found only if the watching eye accepts the imperative of the poem to ‘find them,’ in determination to identify what the poem makes this watching eye to see.

The vision of the roses in the pool follows, as I have described. The dynamics of its development, the epiphanic moment of its completion, and its abrupt disappearance are all driven by the aesthetic law of immediate perception, perception itself mimicked in the significant tensions of the language in which the vision is presented. The movement closes with the poem’s self-reflection after the world it has created has gone:

Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,  
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.  
Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind  
Cannot bear very much reality.  
Time past and time future  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.

(BN I, *CPP* 172)

The bird reappears, now to bid a farewell, telling us to go, not into but from the world it has led us to, the garden being left full of yet unrealised living existents. The leaves of the garden, like the words of the poem, are ‘full of children, / Hidden excitedly, containing laughter’ in an anticipation of the joy of discovery once they are found, as were the roses. Then the bird turns back on the experience we have just had and justifies our submission to the temptation of delimiting reality, deceiving ourselves as we followed the thrush and experiencing the world just pictured as if it was real: ‘human kind cannot bear very much reality,’ the thrush says. This kind of deception is given to us together with our identity in kind as human beings. The poem is soon to speak of the given limitation of our vision as a blessing, protecting us from all that ‘[w]hich flesh cannot endure’ (BN II, *CPP* 173). And the movement concludes with a

reiteration of the definitive dimensions of the stage on which the action has taken place, the eternal present of linguistic consciousness which has at its disposal all reality there is, past, present and future, this stage now cleared for another enactment of the same kind of perceptual-significative vision, another world to be experienced in reading the poem's language.

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The first movement of 'Burnt Norton' stages the event of meaningful experience, at the same time exposing the structures of experiencing reality that enable this event. Its language, assuming the involvement of a reading eye and mind turning it into living discourse, enacts this event with a double purpose: to give a specific, particular aesthetic experience which it is, but also to look into what this experience is as experience *per se*. This reflective viewpoint frames the vision of the Burnt Norton roses on the narrative plane, speaking before and after the event the poem has staged. But it is also marked by the shift in register, a philosophical contemplation on how reality is given to experience opening and closing the movement, with an example of the kind of experience the poem is talking about given in the middle. Unlike most of the longer movements of the poem, this one is a single verse paragraph, with only two line breaks marking the moment of entry into the rose-garden of Burnt Norton, the lines foregrounded by these breaks in themselves a reflection on the action that is about to be performed: 'But to what purpose / Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves / I do not know' (CPP 171). This reflection is given after the narrative has already begun: footfalls that echo in the memory and the passage to the rose-garden that was not taken have just been mentioned. This reflection, rather, withholds the narrative action just as the scene has been set for it, slowing it down, exposing the dividing line between the world in which the speech act of the poem takes place and the world it constructs for the aesthetic

experience to happen. The event of meaningful experience is framed by reflection on what it is sequentially, by being reflected on before and after its enactment, but this reflecting point of view is also there while the event takes place, accompanying the experience of it throughout, reminding of its presence here and there.

Thus the opening movement of 'Burnt Norton' attempts to keep its feet on two grounds: to observe the sequential logic of language and perception, in the interweaving of which the poem creates its aesthetic visions, and simultaneously signal the constant presence of the reflecting eye that is never fully subsumed by the experience that the poem speaks. In this attempt, the movement presents the structural model of which the whole of *Four Quartets* is an expansion. This expansion takes place as a repetition of the kind of self-sufficient movements as the opening of 'Burnt Norton' is, though the kind of self-sufficiency and the logic of inner cohesion vary from movement to movement – every one of them creates its own world. This repetition has a cumulative effect, for the poem's visions and reflections echo one another both verbally and semantically, comment on what has been said before, and specify and expand distinctions and links used as self-evident elsewhere. The poem as if keeps saying the same from yet another point of view, in yet another register. As Eric Gould puts it,

Eliot's *Four Quartets* [...] are nothing if not a grand hermeneutic of poetry, a display of the poet's concern not simply with watching himself write, but with summing up the fate of poetry as the fate of language and reading. [...] The function of the poem's narrative is to carry a message in patterns which are repetitive, dialectical, even cybernetic, for the patterns are constantly evolved as functions of the reader's consciousness of the poem and of the limits imposed on poetry by language. (131-132)

This network of expanding self-commentary which the poem is does not accept any outside logic of ordering. Neither the conceptual hierarchy of the philosophical kind nor narrative continuity, the literary principle of coherence, is strong enough to

assimilate the poem into their kind of cohesion.<sup>8</sup> The reading eye is left with the poem's language one to one, to follow its shifts of register and the overlapping motifs of its formally self-sufficient movements and to experience the emergence of meanings that the reading mind itself constructs in its interpretative effort. This experience is the purpose of the poem's speech act, '[d]isturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves' (BN I, *CPP* 171), its self-sufficient aim.<sup>9</sup>

'Burnt Norton,' however, does not only disturb this dust but also directs the energy of the disturbance into an aesthetic experience of meaningfulness, which develops sequentially. There is the beginning, the development towards an epiphanic vision, and the end, this enclosure marked both by the narrative logic of the vision of the roses and by the explicitly reflective stance that the speaking voice takes as it opens and closes the movement with a contemplation on temporality and presence. This sequential logic of enclosing the enacted event organises the whole of *Four Quartets*,<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Spurr hears in *Four Quartets* two kinds of discourse, one associated with intellect and doctrine while the other is linked to the visionary poetic imagination (77-107). Spurr demonstrates these two kinds of discourses working against each other and finally concludes that *Four Quartets* claims idealistic triumphant resolutions, such as 'a reconciliation of the temporal and the eternal, or human suffering and divine love [...] without having developed a textual unity that would make them wholly convincing,' the narrative line of the poem picturing 'the actual experience of textual, psychological, and metaphysical disunity' (104). Stead reads *Four Quartets* as a failed attempt of Eliot's to establish an alliance between 'pure discourse and pure Image,' in the line of the English poetic tradition that 'has always occupied the middle ground' between emphasising poetic vision and speaking in metrically organised prose (175-185). Leavis reads this structure of *Four Quartets* as Eliot's strategy of evasion, as he 'has no intellectually storable answer in his mind for us to elicit from the "music" of the poem (174), also interpreting it as a poetic failure (155-264). Eliot criticism around and after the linguistic turn interprets the poem's resistance to logical ordering as a positive aesthetic programme of Eliot's manifest throughout his writing, the core of this programme seen in Eliot's challenging of the validity of logical thought and the resultant cross-contamination of philosophical, critical and poetic discourses (Davidson, Ellmann, Freed, Gould, Perl, Riquelme, Spanos).

<sup>9</sup> To this demand of the poem a number of Eliot's readers respond by interpreting Eliot through the trope of figuration, most productively in reading *Four Quartets* but also underlying Eliot's writing beyond this poem (Ellmann, Jay, Riquelme). In Brooker and Bentley's study of *The Waste Land* this aspect appears by way of their insistence, on Eliot's behalf, on the primacy of the process of the reading act over the text itself, this displacement from the structure of language to its process emerging most explicitly in reading the closing movements of all parts of *Four Quartets* next to Derrida's 'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' (8; 5). In Ricks, the processual aspect of Eliot's poetry appears under the term of animation, its energy in surplus in the early poetry, to the point of Eliot's failing to control the range of meanings it produces, while *Four Quartets* fully controls this energy, which has made some of Eliot's readers feel that this poetry 'lessened in its life' (207).

<sup>10</sup> James Olney's reading of *Four Quartets* focuses on and exposes its construction of aesthetic unity as heavily relying on sequential logic: the poem presents a concentrated reiteration of the major motifs

which is the matter of my concern in the closing section of this chapter. Before I move to it, I want to look into the poem's articulation of the structure that enables its own significant process, the split between the knowing and the experiencing point of view. It follows from Eliot's philosophical premises that this split is the fundamental given of our perception of all reality. And *Four Quartets* begins exposing this split from the very beginning: as early as in 'Burnt Norton' I, it is manifest in the distinction between the experience of temporality and the presence of all time as linguistic consciousness. In fact, its articulation begins already on the threshold of the poem: the Heraclitean epigraphs that Eliot gives in Greek articulate the dimensions that define this split. The first epigraph – 'But although the Logos is common the many live as though they had private understanding' (Riquelme 204) – highlights the distinction between the shared linguistic structure and the act of understanding linguistic meaning which is always a private, individual experience. And the second epigraph – 'The way up and down [or to and fro] is one and the same' (Riquelme 202) – states the complementarity between the stasis of an existent 'objective' structure of reality (the way) and the motion of experience in which it manifests itself to the experiencing point of view, this motion bound to have a specific direction (up and down, or to and fro).<sup>11</sup> An awareness of this split never leaves the poem's discourse, the dichotomy of knowledge and experience

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developed in its course in the closing twenty lines of 'Little Gidding,' the network of semantic and rhythmic patterns falling together into a poetic statement of existential unity (275-299). Without referring to *Knowledge and Experience*, Olney relies on the same basic premise as Eliot's: that the self is synonymous with the world in which it lives because they merge in conscious experience of the world as meaningful, so that 'a work like *Four Quartets* stands for the whole integrated psyche of mankind; it becomes, for the moment, an epitome representation of the human effort towards consciousness' (261). Even though Olney places a far more explicit emphasis on the self than Eliot's philosophy and criticism readily accept, his conclusion about *Four Quartets* insists that the poem aims to lead the reader to a moment of experiencing the oneness of being without allowing for the conceptualisation of what it is (299).

<sup>11</sup> Riquelme ascribes the function of a structural model to the whole poem – which I located in the first movement of 'Burnt Norton' – to the epigraphs and the Heraclitean a-logical discourse in general (199-275 *passim*; especially 203-207, 330-333). While I agree with Riquelme's reading, my response to *Four Quartets* is that it is a remarkably self-sufficient poem: it creates a dense intertextual network to manifest its own belonging to the culture in which it speaks, but it incorporates structures of interpretative value found in them in its own textual tissue, as if weaving an inner intertextual web of self-commentary. Thus while the epigraphs articulate distinctions that underlie the meaningful experience of reality, the opening movement of 'Burnt Norton' begins by exposing their interaction, both the network of significant distinctions and the exposition expanded in the rest of the poem.

punctuating its discourse explicitly (EC II, *CPP* 179; DS II, *CPP* 186-187), as well as underlying its imagery and contemplation as it does in 'Burnt Norton' I. But the most direct articulation of the splitting point of view is the ghost scene of 'Little Gidding,' the object of my attention immediately below.

**A NARRATIVE PERFORMANCE OF THE EXPERIENCING-AND-LINGUISTIC POINT OF VIEW: ELIOT'S GHOST IN THE ACT OF READING**

Eliot's readers disagree about the aesthetic effect of the ghost scene in *Four Quartets*, but very few readings leave the scene out of the scope of their attention. This scene indeed stands out in the poem in a similar way as does the Tiresias episode in *The Waste Land*. It is the longest passage in *Four Quartets* written in a consistent metrical pattern, and it is the only one that presents a clearly developed, conventional narrative line. Just as in *The Waste Land*, these two characteristics foreground the scene as an island of coherence in a poetic sequence that as a whole does not rely on any immediately identifiable structure of aesthetic unity. To complete the list of correspondences, the ghost scene in *Four Quartets* also, like the figure of Tiresias, presents a structure of meta-commentary. In *The Waste Land*, Eliot ensures this status for Tiresias's figure by explicitly stating it in the Notes, in itself a paratextual supplement to the main body of a poem that is defined generically by the function of a critical reflection on the text to which it is attached. The ghost scene in *Four Quartets*, as one would expect in a poem of inclusion, has a structure of self-reflection integrated into its narrative. The ghost speaks to the poetic persona as the voice of memory and reflection on the life experience now past – 'I may not comprehend, may not remember,' the persona says to



the ghost in asking it to speak – and then predicts what is ahead for the poet, as the ghost goes on to ‘disclose the gifts reserved for age / To set a crown upon [the poet’s] lifetime’s effort’ (LG II, *CPP* 194). *Four Quartets* in itself is commonly seen as a poem that closes up Eliot’s poetic career, both because it is the last poetic sequence he wrote and because it resolves a range of aesthetic tensions that may be observed developing in the earlier poems. The dialogue between Eliot’s persona and the ghost makes an explicit claim for this function: it stages a discursive structure in which this kind of reflection is performed. It is not just ‘the substance of the poem’ (*WL*, *CPP* 78) that the ghost’s eye sees and comments on in *Four Quartets* but the entire life experience of the poet who wrote it.

Critics inscribe this scene into the biographical narrative of Eliot’s poetic development, trying to identify the ghost with literary voices that are significant to Eliot’s self-conception as a poet, this move encouraged by direct and implicit references to them that turn the ghost into a composite figure of authority, an imagined poet-master of Eliot. Thus the associations of the ghost with Dante and Yeats are even more explicit in Eliot’s drafts than in the final version of the poem (Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets* 67; 174, 186-189) which, when read on its own terms, still contains allusions that make the presence of these voices unmissable. Dante is heard throughout the passage in the Eliotic rendering of the *terza rima*. And Yeats speaks most clearly in the metaphor of a poet having to ‘move in measure, like a dancer,’ even if numerous other allusions to him escape instant identification by the reading eye (LG II, *CPP* 195). Alongside these two figures, the ghost just as often has been associated with Swift (Bush 230-234) but also Mallarmé and King Hamlet’s spirit (Donoghue 234, 279-282), while one of the most extensive lists also includes Milton and Pound (Kenner 274). This is indeed ‘a familiar compound ghost / Both intimate and unidentifiable,’ composed of

many figures Eliot 'had known, forgotten, half recalled / Both one and many' (LG II, *CPP* 193).

In contrast to these readings defining the significance of the ghost scene in the authorial context, I want to foreground its functional value in directing the significative process of the reading act, with a particular emphasis on the formal singularity of this scene in the context of the sequence of *Four Quartets*. The ghost episode stands out as the only instance of a fully staged dialogue in the whole poem. Though the poem has an assertive speaking 'I' throughout its lines, the addressee of this speaking voice is always the reader, except for this one passage where the reader is an outside observer of the communicative act in which she is not involved. This scene also ascribes the viewpoint of reflection (this viewpoint manifest throughout the poem in its shifts of register and the explicitly self-reflective remarks of the speaking voice) to another persona than the speaker, the ghost. This articulates the full network of distinctions that distinguish the points of view involved in the discursive structure of the poem as a speech act in a clearly set representational structure. The reader is an outside observer, the speaking persona is the narrator and the character in the narrative he tells, and the event is his encounter with another narrative agent, the ghost. Distinctions between the narrating voice and the voices speaking in the space of the event narrated are clear: there is no ambiguity about the identities of the speaking voices, since all shifts are signalled by quotation marks, while the speaker is also identified by verbs of reporting. This clarity of distinctions between the points of view and the representational planes to which they belong is exceptional, for it appears nowhere else in *Four Quartets*, a poem that consistently builds its aesthetic effects on just the opposite, merging the representational planes in which it speaks, as I observed it happening in the opening movement of 'Burnt Norton.' If the reader has been experiencing these ambiguities as a source of suspense demanding constant interpretative attention, the ghost scene appears as the culmination

and the resolution of this suspense, presenting an episode in which all points of view are clearly distinguished from one another.

This clarity serves at least two other functions in the overall structure of the poem. The most obvious function is performative: in a most straightforward way, the ghost scene of 'Little Gidding' performs for the reader the kind of action in which the reader herself is participating while reading the poem's lines. The poem thus articulates the reader's experience, and parallels on the narrative plane between the reader's relationship with the poet and the poet's with the ghost are obvious. Just as the ghost of the dead master is a voice of authority to Eliot's poetic persona, so Eliot's voice (the voice of *Four Quartets*) is a poetic authority to the reader. And just as the ghost's poetic identity is composite, '[b]oth intimate and unidentifiable' (LG II, *CPP* 193), so is Eliot's, in this passage particularly assertively as his persona speaks in the voices of the poets that constitute the compound identity of the ghost. But more importantly, such a clear representational structure – every point of view, every voice located where it belongs – makes unmissable the point where the split of a viewpoint actually happens and multiplies until it is controlled by a representational structure such as that of the ghost scene. This event is marked by the ambiguous identity of the speaking viewpoint, such ambiguity inevitable at the moment of split, which singles it out as a point of departure from the norm of the episode in which it appears. The ghost scene stands out of the whole poem by manifesting a singularly clear network of distinctions between points of view participating in it in order to create the context for foregrounding the articulation of the core event, the splitting of the point of view, which appears as a point of ambiguity in the clear structure of the section.

This split viewpoint results from the Eliotic premise of the irreducible experiential point of view. This irreducibility means that every moment of articulated 'knowledge,' as soon as it is perceived as an articulation, appears against the

background of non-articulate experience manifest as the actuality of perception itself. This premise underlies the argument of *Knowledge and Experience* throughout as Eliot's insistence on the necessity for every epistemological system to take into account the experiential ground on which it inevitably builds. In 'Little Gidding,' the premise of the irreducible experiential point of view is performed rather than philosophically argued. The model of the representational structure for this performance Eliot finds in *Hamlet*, King Hamlet's apparition comprising the crucial elements of the splitting point of view, as I have discussed in the previous chapter. 'Little Gidding' gives a concise and modified version of this appearance, turning it into the event of the splitting viewpoint and compressing its articulation into four lines:

So I assumed a double part, and cried  
And heard another's voice cry: 'What! are *you* here?  
Although we were not. I was still the same,  
Knowing myself yet being someone other.

(LG II, *CPP* 193)

This compression eliminates the narrative suspense in which the Ghost appears in *Hamlet*: it directly articulates the structure of the split of the point of view instead of narrativising it and in this way focuses attention on the split itself. However, even though the appearance of the Ghost in *Hamlet* is spread over three acts of the play, it also contains a direct articulation giving the gist of what may be behind the larger narrative in which the ghost appears, in the form of what seems to be an almost accidental pun. Hamlet, while being unsure about the identity of the ghost, speaks to it, gives it a name and, with this name, a voice: it is after the Ghost is named King Hamlet that it is heard to speak (1.4-5). The act of naming in Hamlet's first address to the Ghost does not instantly mark the distinction between Prince Hamlet and King Hamlet: Hamlet says 'I'll call thee Hamlet,' and only then specifies 'King, father, royal Dane' (1.4.25-26). This pun on names is a concentrated expression of the Eliotic vision of the narrative function of the Ghost I have described. Naming the Ghost (a figure of an

indeterminate identity whose presence is nevertheless somehow felt) with his own name, Hamlet as if delegates a part of himself to it, marking a split in his subjectivity and yet simultaneously keeping a claim on this instated other viewpoint as his own through the sameness of the name. ‘Little Gidding’ conceptualises this complex ambivalence in two lines, its persona saying: ‘So I assumed a double part, and cried / And heard another’s voice cry: “What! are *you* here?”’ (LG II, *CPP* 193). In the immediate reading of the ghost’s reply, the emphasised ‘*you*’ refers to the speaking persona, in the same structure in which King Hamlet’s Ghost addresses Prince Hamlet the moment it has a voice to speak. But the Eliotic persona is already a split viewpoint, and this split is marked in the subsequent line by the persona’s self-reference in first person plural rather than singular: ‘Although we were not,’ the line says. This plural then again turns into singular, the speaking voice saying ‘I was still the same;’ and its singularity is split again, now in terms that identify the kind of difference between the two viewpoints, inassimilable to one another and yet co-existing in one persona; the one that knows oneself and the other that is ‘someone other;’ the one being the point of view of knowledge and the other that of immediate experience.

This identification of the two viewpoints within the self-perception of the speaker is followed by a look at the ghost:

I was still the same,  
 Knowing myself yet being someone other –  
 And he a face still forming; yet the words sufficed  
 To compel the recognition they preceded.  
(LG II, *CPP* 193-194)

In Dante, the persona looks into the face of Brunetto’s spirit closely, ‘so that the scorching of his face could not / prevent my mind from recognizing him;’ and he speaks to the spirit explicitly face to face, ‘lowering my face to meet his face’ (Dante, *Inferno* XV.27-29). In Shakespeare, Hamlet’s Ghost appears to Horatio with his beaver up (1.1.37-38), so that Horatio can see its face and describe it to Prince Hamlet as ‘more /

In sorrow than in anger' and 'very pale,' having looked straight in the Ghost's eyes, able to say to Hamlet that the Ghost had 'fixed his eyes' upon him '[m]ost constantly' (1.2.229-232). But the Eliotic ghost's face is 'down-turned,' and it remains 'a face still forming,' never emerging in a properly shaped form that would mark the ghost's identity. Instead, the ghost speaks in the voice of the fully fledged authority of a master poet in the rest of the *terza rima* passage. And the fact of the ghost's identity lying in the voice rather than in the face is stated as early as in the expository lines just quoted: 'the words sufficed / To compel the recognition they preceded.' Recognition comes through words – words give the ghost its identity; while the face – the unique wholeness of one's non-linguistic, bodily identity – never forms: it is 'a face still forming' before the ghost gives its speech, and it is never mentioned either in the course of the interaction or after. Instead of turning the ghost into a more definable figure, the closure of the scene lets its ghostly indeterminacy contaminate the persona's perception of everything he notes as perceived. The street where the ghost leaves him is 'disfigured.' The ghost leaves 'with a kind of valediction' rather than a proper farewell; and it goes away by fading, an indeterminate, unspecifiable kind of the decline in presence (LG II, *CPP* 195). Just as in the first, prototypical vision of the poem in the rose-garden of Burnt Norton (and in *Hamlet*, the Shakespearean ghostly presence in this passage) the ghost's disappearance is marked by an intrusion from without, now by 'the blowing of the horn' (LG II, *CPP* 195).

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John Paul Riquelme reads the *terza rima* passage in continuity with the first half of the second movement of 'Little Gidding,' the three verse paragraphs preceding the scene of the encounter with the ghost being the most extensive of all allusions to Heraclitus in *Four Quartets* (333). Eliot's description of the exchange between elements here

functions in a similar way as epigraphs: they are a commentary on the performative action that is about to begin, not as much on the thematic plane as structurally, the *terza rima* scene enacting the Heraclitean logic in *Four Quartets*. Heraclitus appears as another half-presence, though of a somewhat different kind from the ghosts of Dante and Yeats, for it is the communicative situation of writing itself that this poem models in the kind of indeterminacy Eliot creates through the mediation of the Heraclitean kind of discourse. ‘When Eliot echoes and translates Heraclitus, he echoes something as insubstantial and impalpable as a ghost,’ says Riquelme, a process he sees enacted in the ghost scene. This scene, then, is an allegory of the writing situation where Eliot assumes ‘the persona of Dante, which turns out also to be a composite ghostly figure’ that appears in ‘the curious process of both conjuring and echoing a ghost’ (Riquelme 208).

Somewhat paradoxically, the Eliotic ghost of multiple identities is conjured up, so that it appears in the here-and-now of the writing-and-reading process; and yet it is simultaneously echoed – that is, it is not present in the here-and-now of the writing-and-reading act, for an echo is heard only when the origin of the sound, the voice, is at a distance from the here-and-now of the field in the actual presence. This merging of presence and absence through the indeterminacy of the originating voice is, Riquelme goes on to explain, how this poem makes the experience it conveys in its lines happening here-and-now, enabling us to ‘experience the poem as if it were in some uncanny ways ours’ (209). Though, Riquelme says, ‘it is not property in the ordinary sense, not even the poet’s,’ we appropriate it by investing the poem’s language with past experiences that are memories of our own: ‘As we encounter and trace echoes in the reading process, the poem’s language becomes ours to remember, even though we know its origins always through mediations’ (209). Eliot enables this relocation of the experience of the language that the poem speaks from the authorial viewpoint to the

readerly by an implied ‘overlap between the reading and the writing of his poem since his experience of writing also took the form of recollecting something not his, including passages from the work of other writers, which his poem can cause us to remember’ (209).

This description indeed is fully compatible with the Eliotic understanding of how language, through memory, brings experience to life in the act of linguistic communication, as described in *Knowledge and Experience* (49-50). But there is more behind this process than the intertextual network of shared literary experiences permeating our linguistic memory, as Riquelme’s description suggests. The memory that *Four Quartets* exploits is not only the memory of what we know to have been someone else’s, the experience now past, but also – and perhaps primarily – the memory of what has been going in the poem itself. This poem works on the premise of the ghostly half-presence of meaning in language, assuming that the space which, in language, is given up to absence is the space of immediate experience, inaccessible to linguistic articulation. The half visible face of the ghost is the image through which it communicates the inaccessibility of another’s experience, for experience is rooted in the body and the other’s body is not accessible to me. And yet this face is visible to an extent, as another body similar to mine, and I can experience the reality it experiences by imagining my body being that other body and responding, in my body, to the immediate reality of that other body. That experience is other experience but it is also mine because I live it through my body. It is both observed by my perceiving eye and yet also immediately experienced through my sensory imagination. *Four Quartets* contemplates and enacts this split in point of view with the aim of unifying the distinct modes of apprehending reality that each of them marks into one meaningful experience, one meaning. The poem opens its vision by recognising, and explicitly identifying, the unstoppable splitting of the experiencing point of view whereby it understands the



reality present to it. But it also encloses all these points of view in the singularity of immediate experience the poem assumes to accompany all these splits in the reading act, until they implode in the paradoxical visionary oneness of the fire and the rose.

The ground which enables this paradoxical oneness to take place is in the structure of the split of the point of view exposed in the play with pronouns as Eliot's persona gives the ghost a voice. The distinction that it articulates is not, as it might be thought of in a conventionally narrative interpretation of these lines, between Eliot's own consciousness and what Eliot would have imagined to be Dante's consciousness or Yeats's, but between two modes of apprehending reality, knowing and being. It is the distinction between and the unity of these two modes of being in the world that is enacted in the opening part of the encounter with the ghost, as Eliot's persona assumes 'a double part,' speaks in two voices, simultaneously crying himself and hearing 'another's voice cry' the same words, and then remarks, now in yet another voice, that of himself as the narrator who remembers and tells us about the event being staged for us in his narrative: 'Although we were not. I was still the same, / Knowing myself yet being someone other' (LG II, *CPP* 193). This last sentence is an Eliotic definition of the meaningful wholeness of being. It grasps both the distinction between and the co-existence of different modes of experiencing reality, opposed in the complementary dichotomy of knowledge and experience. The persona is ('I was') the same, and knows this sameness as consisting of 'knowing' himself and 'being' someone other.

This distinction between knowing oneself and being someone other is radical: 'being' never assimilates into 'knowing,' it is always 'being someone other' than that which is known. On the narrative plane, the ghost marks the viewpoint of knowing: its speech is the poet's own reflection on his life, given in the voice of an imagined 'dead master,' with the authority of wisdom and knowledge that it implies. But the identity of 'someone other' is ambivalent. The same narrative logic suggests that this 'someone

other' is the persona of whom the ghost speaks, the persona of the present of their interaction. Yet there is also the point of view that regards both the (ghost's) knowing viewpoint and the persona being known: the viewpoint speaking to the reader. The narrator says 'I *was* the same:' he no longer is what he was at the moment of the interaction with the ghost, but the eye and the voice speaking to the reader in the here-and-now in the poem's lines. Neither the stance of knowing nor the self on which it reflects and which it characterises is the experiencing point of view, for this point of view is the watching eye that perceives them all but cannot perceive itself because it is watching.

Every split, every point of view this watching eye sees is no longer itself, but always already other, already at a remove from its own being *per se* actualised in the act of seeing. This watching eye knows itself as the experience of this immediate being, a residue of the actuality of perception, of seeing that is unobjectifiable, invisible to itself. 'The patient' – the one who suffers, who endures – 'is no longer here,' says 'The Dry Salvages.' We, travellers whom the poem addresses 'are not the same people who left that station / Or who will arrive at any terminus.' Instead, the poem says,

You who come to port, and you whose bodies  
Will suffer the trial and judgement of the sea,  
Or whatever event, this is your real destination.

(DS III, *CPP* 188)

Krishna, to whom these words are ascribed by 'The Dry Salvages,' never specifies the destination point as a location. It is not the port to which voyagers and seamen being addressed come in this sentence. And in the wider context of the adjacent lines in which Eliot's persona speaks in Krishna's voice as well as his own (in yet another variant of the performance of a ghostly presence), this destination appears as the indeterminate, indefinable present, its spatial and temporal limits visible as that which is not it:

Here between the hither and the farther shore

While time is withdrawn, consider the future  
And the past with an equal mind.

(DS III, *CPP* 188)

‘Here,’ between two shores, is the destination. It is also the temporal present, the moment of being ‘now’ which is without limits of its own but is located between the past and the future, or rather in their overlapping, in the extended moment in which the past and the future are treated ‘with an equal mind’ because they are thought of as the present.<sup>12</sup> To ‘consider the ‘future / And the past with an equal mind’ is to live this present. This present is lived in the body: the grammar of the elusive sentence by which Krishna addresses the travellers – ‘you’ the seamen, but also us, human beings sailing through life – suggests that the destination he refers to is ultimately ‘[y]ou who come to port, and you whose bodies / Will suffer.’ There is only one suffering body available to the poem, the reader’s who is involved in the reading act. It is an eye that the poem knows to be out there to experience the reality that the poem speaks, but this eye cannot be specified in any more precise way than the sheer presence of the experiencing body. *The Waste Land* is disturbed by this sense of the presence of an eye it cannot identify, anxiously asking ‘Who is the third who walks always beside you? [...] Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded / I do not know whether a man or a woman’ (*CPP* 73). But *Four Quartets* knows that it is being seen and relies on this vision, creates a network of paths it can take and manipulates them for this watching to reach the experience of the implosion of the multiple meanings of the poem into one.

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<sup>12</sup> St. Augustine describes this ungraspability of the present. Since every interval of time that denotes the present can be split into smaller intervals (weeks into days, days into hours, hours into minutes and so on), it is only the indivisible fraction that can be validly called time present. ‘But this flies so rapidly from future to past that it cannot be extended by any delay. For if it is extended, it is then divided into past and future. But the present has no extension whatever.’ For ‘extension’ here Augustine uses ‘spatium,’ in Latin denoting extension in both space and time (256).

**TOWARDS 'THE END OF ALL OUR EXPLORING:' THE ELIOTIC ONENESS OF THE FIRE  
AND THE ROSE**

The articulation of the split of the experiencing and understanding point of view is a constituent element of the poem's larger movement towards closure. It is these two points of view, as two modes of the meaningful perception of reality that the poem will aim to bring together at the end. This movement begins, however, much earlier than the ghost scene, as soon as *Four Quartets* steps over the middle point of its textual sequence, in 'The Dry Salvages.' These signals manifest the poem's awareness of its own sequentiality in the process of reading. 'Burnt Norton' opens by presenting the 'first world' in the vision of the roses in the garden pool (BN I, *CPP* 171). 'East Coker' opens by stating the circularity of being. 'In my beginning is my end. In succession / Houses rise and fall' (EC I, *CPP* 177), it says implying that the moment of speaking, and so of present existence, is in the middle, between the beginning and the end. And it reasserts this directly in the closing movement, the speaker placing himself 'in the middle way' (EC V, *CPP* 182). Here, in the middle part of its own speaking act, *Four Quartets* also explicitly reflects on the fact that it is a sequence of repetitions saying the same, one 'way of putting it' following another, turning the poem itself into 'a periphrastic study' (EC II, *CPP* 179). Again, now as it has begun approaching its close, the poem is more straightforward about its own intentions: 'a raid on the inarticulate' it is, an effort to make sense of 'the general mess of imprecision of feeling / Undisciplined squads of emotion,' this effort itself the only mode of existence there is. 'For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business' (EC V, *CPP* 182).

'The Dry Salvages' contemplates another kind of pattern in which reality appears delimited in experience while known to be all-inclusive, as the circularity of being thought of in the lines of 'East Coker' is. 'The Dry Salvages' thinks of the

givenness of the existential perspective in which we live, while knowing that there is an inexhaustible multiplicity of others. This contrast is the one between the river and the sea, the images with which 'The Dry Salvages' opens: 'the river / Is a strong brown god' living 'within us,' unlike the sea which is 'all about us,' with its 'many voices, / Many gods and many voices.' This multiplicity of the voices of the sea is a metaphor of the multivocality that underlies the Eliotic sense of immediate reality, the bread and butter of *The Waste Land's* poetic structure and effect. In *Four Quartets* just as well these multiple voices are '[o]ften together heard,' but at least one of them '[m]easures time not our time [...], a time / Older than the time of chronometers.' The sea contains all there has ever been, all 'that is and was from the beginning,' and yet its voyagers will fare forward; 'Not fare well, / But fare forward' (DS I, V, *CPP* 184-185, 188). Though reality presents an inexhaustible multiplicity of perspectives, one's own existence flows in a given direction. It may be, like the river, 'sullen, untamed and intractable,' but it is nevertheless 'recognised as a frontier.' *Four Quartets* reminds us of this delimiting force which, once accepted, '[t]he problem once solved,' 'is almost forgotten' (DS I, *CPP* 184).

In 'The Dry Salvages' the poem also shows signs of awareness of its own delimited perspective as seen from the present moment in which it speaks. This present in the poem's textual linearity – also the timeline of the reading act in which the poem lives – is the moment just after the middle point. The poetic sequence has just stepped into the latter half of its textual line and, consequently, of the experience of its life in the reading process, and it begins contemplating the nature of what it sees coming for itself, the end. 'Where is there an end of it, the soundless wailing, / The silent withering of autumn flowers / Dropping their petals and remaining motionless [...]' it asks, knowing that its own lines are soon to turn into a kind of 'soundless wailing,' their words silently withering like those autumn flowers and turning into 'the drifting wreckage' of letters

on the page (DS II, 185). The poem answers these questions from multiple points of view at once, but their summary is encapsulated at the close of ‘The Dry Salvages’ in the name of Incarnation. ‘These are only hints and guesses, / Hints followed by guesses,’ the poem again, while saying what it wants to say, reflects on what the act of saying is in itself. ‘[B]ut you are the music / While the music lasts:’ you, the reader, are the experiencing body of the meaning of your own being played out by these words while they are heard, while their music lasts.

The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.  
Here the impossible union  
Of spheres of existence is actual.

(DS V, *CPP* 190)

There is more to the experience of this ‘impossible union’ than understanding: it is ‘the gift *half* understood.’ The actuality of this gift draws on other ‘spheres of existence’ too, while the miracle of their union – ‘the impossible union,’ a union that cannot be, for it is not known nor can be imagined to exist, and yet may be given as ‘the gift’ – lies in the experience of the actuality itself, in its givenness to the irreducible ‘here’ of immediate being. This actuality of the impossible union that is born in the merging of ‘spheres of existence’ is the focus of ‘Little Gidding’ where the ghost, the pre-figuration of the miracle of incarnation and the proto-structure of the experience of the event of meaning that this poem aims to convey, finally appears.

If ‘The Dry Salvages’ only hints to the coming closure while developing a subject matter of its own, ‘Little Gidding’ weaves the texture of its poetry by tying up threads that have been the matter of the poem’s pattern so far. ‘Burnt Norton,’ for example, ‘can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where. / And I cannot say, how long, for this is to place it in time’ (BN I, *CPP* 173). But ‘Little Gidding’ – though knowing, as it would coming after ‘The Dry Salvages,’ that ‘[t]here are other places / Which also are the world’s end, some at the sea jaws’ – assertively points to the locus of its being: ‘this is the nearest, in place and time, / Now and in England’ (LG I, *CPP* 192).

'East Coker' asserts the imperative of 'the fight to recover what has been lost / And found and lost again and again' against the background of doubt about the success of the ceaseless 'trying' to make sense of the world. This ongoing effort is what 'East Coker' understands to be its existential given, an effort pursued regardless of the awareness that it brings 'perhaps neither gain nor loss' (EC V, *CPP* 182). But 'Little Gidding' does not have to kill its own hope as does 'East Coker' by stating its commitment while renouncing the hope of accomplishing its own attempt. 'Little Gidding' – a textual analogue, a linguistic map of the 'significant soil' that Little Gidding has been – *is* the place '[w]here the prayer has been valid' and, having had this experience and remembering it, it knows exactly what needs to be done for the miracle to happen:

If you came this way,  
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,  
At any time or at any season,  
It would always be the same: you would have to put off  
Sense and notion.

(LG I, *CPP* 192)

On the textual plane, in 'Little Gidding' rather than in Little Gidding, where the poem weaves its network of self-referentiality, this is a greeting of the reader at the final destination of the reading journey that is approaching its end. The poem marks the reader's encounter with itself in the perspective of the reader's existence and in that of its own. To have come 'this way' means to have read the poem this far, keeping the expectation the poem knows it has not fulfilled yet, whatever routes of building coherence have been taken and wherever they have began: in the first world of 'Burnt Norton' as the textual linearity of the poem sets it out for us, or in the middle way of 'East Coker,' or in 'The Dry Salvages' foreseeing the poem's end. This multiplicity of routes is enabled by the split between, on the one hand, what is textually given as the defined sequence of the poem's words that must be read in this given linearity in order to understand what the poem is saying and, on the other, the experience of this given

texture of words, which can and inescapably does take multiple routes to understand what it means. This split extends to a reference to the reader's existence outside the experience of the poem in the reading act. Any routes could have been taken, starting anywhere, to approach the poem and this point in its textual linearity, but the poem itself and the experience expected 'would always be the same,' in the same way as one's being in Little Gidding is always 'now and in England.'

To appreciate this place for what it is, to experience a moment of meaningfulness for which we have come this way, we 'would have to put off / Sense and notion:' to forget oneself, suspend our awareness of the body and mind – sense and notion, experience and knowledge – that shape the meaning of reality for us, and trust the place where we are – 'Little Gidding' as well as Little Gidding – to shape its reality for us to experience while we are here. Giving up everything we know and submitting to the poem's language is the 'condition of complete simplicity / (Costing no less than everything)' that the poem wants us to accept, promising that 'all shall be well' (LG V, 198). This is the kind of humility that is endless, as spoken about in 'East Coker,' '[t]he only wisdom we can hope to acquire,' if only we overcome our 'fear of possession, of belonging to another, or to others, or to God' (EC II, *CPP* 179). This humility in the anticipation of the otherness it is about to bring demands elimination of any vision of what might be coming, so that the unknown reality can be experienced for what it is but not for what we want it to be:

Or when, under ether, the mind is conscious but conscious of nothing –  
I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope  
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love  
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith  
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.  
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:  
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.  
(EC III, *CPP*180)

This anticipation without imagining an object being anticipated is an anticipation of the gift, of the impossible union experienced as the actuality of spheres



of existence that 'The Dry Salvages' names Incarnation. 'Little Gidding' rearticulates the inarticulability of its miracle, and the condition for it to take place. All knowledge we already have, all preconceived assumptions, and even a wilful disposition to learn what we do not know yet, accepting in advance the authority of this newly discovered knowledge, are only a hindrance for the miracle we have come to experience: 'You are not here to verify, / Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity / Or carry report.' This is the answer of *Four Quartets* to the question Eliot asked in *Knowledge and Experience* of 'how and how far we come into contact with [the] world of absolute order' (*KE* 90): it is out of immediate experience – 'a *felt* whole' (*KE* 155, emphasis mine) of the pre-linguistic real, also the totality of the perceived 'before distinctions and relations have been developed' (*KE* 16) – that 'moments of knowledge' (*KE* 155) arise as if by themselves. These moments of insight cannot be predicted or expected, for they are shaped by experience itself in the process of the direct pre-reflective perception of that which is given. Our journey always begins with immediate experience, while knowledge – 'complete experience' which is the Absolute (*KE* 31) – is the end of this journey through our experience of the post-immediate 'world of objects [in which] we have time and space and selves' (*KE* 31). Only on this condition of the primacy of experience our knowledge is the knowledge of truth.

In his theoretical writing, as we have seen, Eliot identifies this knowledge of truth that is rooted in immediate experience with faith. And so poetry, the Eliotic discourse of truth, is a form of prayer. Like prayer, poetry 'is more than an order of words, the conscious occupation / Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.' The language ('an order of words'), its understanding ('the conscious occupation of the praying mind') and even the immediate enactment of the pattern the language sets out in speaking it (in 'the sound of the voice praying') are not what the promised experience is about. This list exhausts the constituents of the linguistic act,

leaving the only possibility of locating experience: it can only be an inconceivable supplement, or the supplement of the inconceivable. This unconceptualisable supplement of immediate experience – now in the form of ‘complete experience at the end [...] of our journey’ which is the ‘harmony and cohesion’ of the Absolute rather than the ‘annihilation and utter night’ of the ‘merely immediate’ (*KE* 31) – in ‘Little Gidding’ appears in the image of the most intense bodily experience imaginable: fire.

And prayer is more  
Than an order of words, the conscious occupation  
Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.  
And what the dead had no speech for, when living,  
They can tell you, being dead: the communication  
Of the dead is tongued by fire beyond the language of the living.  
(LG I, *CPP* 192)

The defining aspect of the prayer – the ‘more’ that makes the prayer what it is – is communicated only by the dead, those who are not in the reality we know, not in the world of the living. And this communication comes as the inarticulable itself, not in the name but as the permeating pain of ‘fire beyond the language of the living.’

This fire marking the transcendental, incommunicable experience, in its direct association with the dead, directly invites the Biblical frame of reference, as do the numerous other allusions to fire throughout *Four Quartets*. But at this point ‘Little Gidding’ speaks of fire in a pun that is about to be taken further in the speech of the ghost, the dead master of Eliot’s poetic persona. The communication of the dead, the immediate experience of the transcendental unity of the Absolute as Incarnation, is ‘*tongued by fire beyond the language of the living.*’ Read in the context of the Bible, this word choice evokes the symbolism of Pentecost (it is ‘pentecostal fire’ that marks the midwinter spring of the opening verse paragraph of ‘Little Gidding’ [*CPP* 191]), a festival celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit, in itself an event of Incarnation. The apostles first hear a strong wind that fills in the house where they are, then ‘there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them,’ filling

them with the Holy Spirit and enabling their tongues to speak in the languages of those they speak to, bringing them the message (Acts 2:1-11). The Holy Spirit appears to the apostles in ‘cloven tongues *like as* of fire:’ it is something unnameable in form like fire, identified in language through a simile with something it is not. And these tongues like as of fire do not burn but fill the apostles with the Holy Spirit itself that comes out in their capacity for meaningful speech. The incarnation happens in the bodies of the apostles, in the perceiving bodies, and its experience is the experience of meaningfulness that then is spoken in languages that had been never known.

It is this infusion of the incommunicable, immediately experienced meaning into the language being spoken (in itself dead, merely ‘an order of words, the conscious occupation / Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying’) that is the only justification of the ‘lifetime’s effort’ of Eliot’s poetic persona. *Knowledge and Experience* has witnessed to us Eliot’s effort to understand how ‘an order of words, the conscious occupation’ of an inquiring mind relates to the real, immediately lived background of existence. And *The Waste Land* has conveyed, in its disorderly ‘order of words,’ a vision of reality in which this infusion of experience into language does not happen. In the now of *Four Quartets*, these works appear as documents of past experiences, shaped as they are into ‘thoughts and theory which [have been] forgotten.’ ‘These things have served their purpose,’ the poem says, in a similar way as ‘[l]ast season’s fruit’ has, eaten by now. These things are spoken of in ‘last year’s words [that] belong to last year’s language,’ while ‘next year’s words await another voice’ (LG II, *CPP* 194). It is only in the present, in the present of the experiencing and speaking body, that ‘an order of words’ articulates meaningful experience: this experience is a fruit being eaten now, and once it has been eaten, ‘the fullfed beast shall kick the empty pail.’ The meaning of this experience is spoken in the voice of the now, finding ‘words [one] never thought to speak’ (LG II, *CPP* 194) – as do the apostles, speaking in

languages they had never known to convey their message to those by whom they want to be heard.

The ghost, Eliot's own voice of reflection and knowledge, gives the list of the disillusionments that every poet is to face, every one of those disillusionments in one way or another denoting a failure to communicate, bring meaningful experience that once was there to life: in 'the cold friction of expiring sense' or in 'the laceration / Of laughter at what ceases to amuse' or, most powerfully, in 'the rending pain of re-enactment / Of all that you have done, and been.' The ghost concludes:

From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit  
Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire  
Where you must move in measure like a dancer.

(LG II, *CPP* 195)

This measure of a dance does not have to be read in the voice of Yeats, since *Four Quartets* gives its own articulations of its meaning. 'At the still point of the turning world,' it is the paradoxical stillness of being that is also movement; 'Except for the point, the still point, / There would be no dance, and there is only the dance' (BN II, *CPP* 173). 'Burnt Norton' has danced this dance in the enactment of the flow of transformations within the same field of perception in its vision of the roses reflected in the pool, 'surrounded / By a grace of sense' that turned the world into a harmonious whole of existents present in the here-and-now of immediate being, even if only for a moment (BN II, *CPP* 173). This dance is of words that move, like music, in time, and yet can 'after speech, reach, / Into the silence,' by bringing existents into the space of nothingness, and hold the fragile stillness of a Chinese jar that 'still / Moves perpetually in its stillness' (BN V, *CPP* 175). And 'Little Gidding' describes in detail this dance of sense that words bring to life, if only the sentence 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)

(LG V, *CPP* 197)

Fire marks the union of the two points of view, or modes of experiencing reality: the pre-articulate immediate perception and its articulated understanding merge in one moment of experienced meaning. Fire in *Four Quartets* stands for this complementary unity, for the immediacy of experiencing the meaning that is conveyed – somewhat paradoxically – through the mediation of language, in both the Christian and the poetic contexts that *Four Quartets* evokes. For Eliot, relying on the premise he elaborates in his anthropological papers, the premise that linguistic meaning and religious belief are intrinsically linked, immediacy is one and its experience is the same even though its meaningfulness may come through different forms of significative mediation. And so ‘Little Gidding’ speaks of a choice that, though it must be made, is irrelevant because it is the choice between two versions of the same, their ‘tongues’ bring the only ‘discharge from sin and error,’ the immediate experience of truth:

The dove descending breaks the air  
With flame of incandescent terror  
Of which the tongues declare  
The one discharge of sin and error.  
The only hope, or else despair  
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre –  
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

(LG IV, *CPP* 196)

While the first verse paragraph of this movement of ‘Little Gidding’ revokes the imagery of the Pentecostal gift of tongues, the Holy Spirit first announcing its presence by a terrifying sound and then appearing as flames, the second verse paragraph adds to this imagery yet another point of view, the one where fire is immediately experienced in the literal sense of the word, as the pain of burning:

Who then devised the torment? Love.  
Love is the unfamiliar Name  
Behind the hands that wove  
The intolerable shirt of flame  
Which human power cannot remove.

We only live, only suspire  
Consumed by either fire or fire.

(LG IV, *CPP* 196)

The legend to which these lines allude is of Hercules's death (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IX). Hercules's wife Deïanira sends him a shirt believing it to have been soaked in a love charm while in fact it is poisoned with the blood of the hydra Nessus. The moment Hercules wears the shirt he is inflamed with excruciating pain which, however, does not kill him, nor can he remove the shirt or find a remedy. The torture Hercules goes through makes him wish for death, so he entreats the gods to let him die (IX.176-210). He has his revenge on Lichas who tricked Deïanira into sending Hercules the poisoned shirt (IX.211-228), and builds for himself a pyre on which his body is burnt, now in the actual flames of fire rather than flames of pain, while his soul is turned immortal and taken to the stars (IX.229-272). Hercules's pain, in Ovid, is described in the vocabulary of fire throughout: this pain is referred to as 'flames,' and pictured in the image of his blood hissing 'in the burning poison' like 'a white-hot metal strip [when] dipped / Into a cold tank' (IX.170-171). Flames of fire in which Hercules burns on the pyre, after the pain he has endured, are a relief: he lies down resting, 'with no other expression than if [he] were lying down as a dinner guest / wreathed with garlands among full cups of undiluted wine' (IX.237-238).<sup>13</sup>

There are two kinds of flames in Ovid, the flames of Hercules's pain and the flames of fire in which his body finally burns. Neither of them can be removed by human power, nor that of gods: they take Hercules's soul to the stars, but his body must burn to ashes. The pain he endures is prolonged, it is one, and it is the most immediate

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<sup>13</sup> Feder highlights the Christian subtext in Eliot's use of the image of the 'intolerable shirt of flame:' the fact that 'he is the one mortal in Greek myth who, through his own labors and sufferings, was raised to the level of gods;' 'the blindness of Deïanira's "human" love, the agony of the deceived and poisoned hero, his final consumption in the funeral pyre, which he himself commanded to be lighted, and the implication that, as Heracles' suffering was caused by a superhuman agent, so "human power" could not remove it"' (317; 316-317) – these narrative turns of the myth about Hercules's death make the Greek hero a figure of Christ. While admitting the fact of the narrative parallels that increase the density of the allusion, I see the effect of the lines in which the allusion appears as relying primarily on the literal meaning of the image before its symbolic implications are evoked.

one can imagine, his flesh burning to the bone. Eliot encapsulates all this narrative in two lines, in one image of ‘the intolerable shirt of flame.’ Even without the context of Ovid’s Hercules in mind, the reading eye is invited to visualise a body wearing a shirt made of flames, intolerable for its burning pain. This pain can only be imagined, for fire indeed is the experience beyond the language of the living: no one who has gone through it can speak it because this experience brings death. In Eliot, however, this imagined pain is a figure for the experience of the body itself, the kind of experience that is given with it and through it, the experience that ‘human power cannot remove’ for we do not choose it, in the same way as we do not choose to live and breathe: ‘We only live, only suspire / Consumed by either fire or fire.’

Love, Christopher Ricks aptly notes, is given an ambivalent status by these lines. Unlike the word ‘Name,’ ‘Love’ is capitalised following syntactic conventions, the first time because it begins a new sentence and the second time because it opens a line, so ‘we shall never know whether or not it is personified to the Absolute here’ (249). Yet ‘Love’ is capitalised in the subsequent movement of ‘Little Gidding,’ the line containing the word singled out so that it is impossible to miss: ‘With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling,’ it says, standing between the two verse paragraphs of the closing movement of ‘Little Gidding’ and of *Four Quartets* (LG V, *CPP* 197). And the poem has described love as the completeness of being, the absolute unity of the oscillation between ‘un-being and being,’ including desire which ‘itself is movement / Not in itself desirable’ and yet ‘in itself unmoving, / Only the cause and the end of movement, / Timeless and undesiring’ (BN V, *CPP* 175) like the Aristotelian God, the Unmoved Mover, also interpreted as Incarnation (Donoghue 240-241). In ‘Little Gidding,’ this experience of complete being, love, is called ‘the unfamiliar Name,’ this word capitalised unambiguously, as if all that the all-inclusive, complete experience of love needed to be turned into a personification of the Absolute was to be

given the name. There are many names in *Four Quartets*, functioning insistently to mark the singularity of their meaning, their rootedness in the specific, particular soil where they exercise their power of naming. Every one of the poem's titles realises this singularity of meaning, for they are references to specific places.<sup>14</sup> And 'East Coker' intensifies the sense of specificity by speaking in the voice of Eliot's forefather and namesake, Sir Thomas Elyot (EC I, *CPP* 177-178). But the word 'name' is never used except for this one instance in which the poem capitalises it to give the authority of the Absolute.

The poem will keep this 'Name' unfamiliar to the end. It will not thematise its meaning, will not fill in the gap between the singularity of the immediate experience in which this name appears and its all-inclusive, complete absoluteness. The reading eye itself will make this irrelevant choice of the pyre that will immerse it in the experience of meaningfulness. The poem will only recollect its own images through which it has been trying to convey what this experience is. It will remind us of the imperative of the search for meaningfulness, in the face of which '[w]e shall not cease from exploration,' even though we know that we are doomed to the endless circularity in which 'the end of our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time' (EC V, *CPP* 197). It will mention again the gate that must be crossed to enter the unfamiliar world and will recall the ghostly presence we have half-seen in 'our first world,' the garden of 'Burnt Norton,' in the image of 'the children in the apple tree, / Not known, because not looked for / But heard, half-heard' (EC V, *CPP* 197-198). It will reproduce the sense of presence itself, the fragility of the completeness of its meaningfulness, voiced by the bird of that same 'first world' and echoed in the closing

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<sup>14</sup> Manganaro interprets the fact the Eliot sets his poems in sacred sites – not only Little Gidding seen as such, but all four locations of *Four Quartets* – with the purpose of pointing to the kind of significance that does not lend itself to a specific meaning but, instead, is transfigured in an unstoppable interpretative process; these sacred sites are ritual and also 'linguistic markers for the inarticulate, indeterminable, or transcendent' (*Myth, Rhetoric and the Voice of Authority* 108-109), the 'unfigurable' (68) field for the figuration that the poem performs.



movement of 'Burnt Norton' and now, in the closing of the whole poem, once again, 'Quick now, here, now, always' (EC V, *CPP* 198). It will repeat the other imperative, of giving up all we are, in the wisdom of humility as we follow the 'condition of complete simplicity / (Costing no less than everything)' (EC V, *CPP* 198). And it will reassert the belief in the harmony of being that is about to come, with the gift of the impossible union of spheres of existence, as the poem reiterates yet again that 'all shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be well' (EG V, *CPP* 198).

But it is in the three closing lines that *Four Quartets* brings its own visionary experiences, experiences that in their complexity involve every sense of the perceiving-and-signifying body the poem has inflamed, into one image. Now it is not a locus of experience, as it was in 'Burnt Norton,' that placed its definition of complete being '[a]t the still point.' Now it is a point in time, a belief and a promise that this moment of bliss will come: 'All manner of things shall be well,' the poem says, when it comes (EC V, *CPP* 198). In this moment in time, 'the tongues of flame are in-folded:' it is the inside of the burning shirt of flame that the poem directs the reading eye to look into. This gaze makes the perceiving body imagine and feel the embrace of 'the tongues of flame' piercing every cell with the pain of being that we do not choose, nor have the power, to remove. The poem holds this imaginary experience held for just a moment longer by the hyphen – 'in-folded' – that makes the eye pause, focus, think, live through the image and only then move on. And then the poem wants us to see this fire from a distance: 'the tongues of flame are in-folded / Into the crowned knot of fire,' this visual image instantly identified as the crown of the flower that was the centre of the visionary experience with which the poem began its course, the rose. The poem closes, in-folds into the crowned knot of the tongues of fire that has been burning while it was being read.

As for the reader, ‘all shall be well and / All manner of things shall be well / When [...] the fire and the rose are one’ (EC V, *CPP* 198). This oneness of the fire and the rose is a composite figure for the complementarity of immediate pre-signified experience, permeating the experiencing body, as the fire does, and an image that signifies this experience as a meaning, recognisable in its identity when observed from afar as an entity in itself, as the poem has made us see the rose. In this complementarity – when the experienced is also a meaning, when the in-folded tongues of flame burning the experiencing body appear to the eye as the crowned knot of the rose – immediate reality is known for what it is. *Four Quartets* closes with this composite image, a poetic encapsulation of the Eliotic vision of reality; but the experience that this composite figure presents, is not the figure. The moment of this experience is located in the indeterminable ‘when’ of the event of meaningfulness, experienced and known as such experience – if at all – by the only burning body and the only watching eye available to the poem: the reader. ‘The poetry does not matter’ (EC II, *CPP* 179); it is this experience that counts.

## **CODA:**

### **A REFLECTION ON FIERCE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS**

Eliot has taught me a great many things, but the sense of surprise has been recurrent: many a time I could not believe how contemporary he read to me. The event of my true encounter with him lives in the memory of reading his essays, a little after I had a chance to struggle through some of Jacques Derrida's writing, with a growing sense of awareness as I went on how uncomfortably deconstructionist Eliot sounded to me at times. Sometimes he even seemed to speak as if after deconstruction, as if trying to qualify, make more precise, or reply to some questions that Derrida had left for me disturbingly open. Now I interpret that experience as a half-realised recognition of a common ground in the shared concern with the relationship, in its many forms, between language and reality. I have learned since then that this common concern gives Eliot a voice to speak to the entire paradigm of the twentieth century's thought: the ontological hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer; the phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty; the pragmatist philosophy of Richard Rorty; the structural linguistics of Saussure; and the psychoanalysis of Freud and its Lacanian and post-Lacanian interpretations, to mention only those thinkers that repeatedly appeared in the field of my vision as possible frames for organising my argument in this thesis.

Eliot's message to the post-structuralist thought about language, as I hear it, is a challenge to the underlying structuralist assumption that the universe of language works according to its own laws, and that the only way not to lose the sense of the real is to keep alive the awareness of the gap between what comes to us in language and reality. It is as if Eliot begins half a step before this awareness must be insisted on, at the point of

identifying the reason why there must be an effort to remember this gap between language and reality, for the necessity of such a reminder can arise only against the given that we are inclined to forget that linguistic meaning may not be the meaning of reality. In this forgetfulness, linguistic existents are real, and it is this reality that is the reality of Eliot's thought, theoretical and poetic.

Richard Wollheim follows Eliot's deviations from Bradley's thinking with a meticulous precision, one by one, and arrives at a grotesque vision of reality that these deviations imply, as Eliot leaves no way to 'avoid a monstrous overpopulation of Reality:'

Monstrous not only in its scale but for its character. Every supposition, paradox, error, self-contradiction, will spawn a corresponding inhabitant of the world: Ivanhoe, the present king of France, the golden mountain and the round square exist. ('Eliot and F. H. Bradley: An Account' 179)

All Wollheim's examples of monstrous existents come from *Knowledge and Experience*, and the monstrosity that he describes is the monstrosity of *The Waste Land's* vision. *Knowledge and Experience* points to at least two answers as to how this monstrously overpopulated reality is controlled. One of these answers says that reality is not in language alone but in language as it shapes and is directed by perception, and perception has its own unbreakable laws, such as a given perspective and the limits of one's vision in both space and time, and the selectivity of memory. It is these laws that control the aesthetic vision of *Four Quartets*.

But the other answer does not go so smoothly. The other answer has to do with the issue of the sameness and difference in point of view. It is by way of perceiving the sameness of reality from different points of view that we know that our reality is real, and it is by way of communication with others that we know that our reality is not an invention of our individual mind. This is the other answer *Knowledge and Experience* gives to Wollheim's question of how the monstrous overpopulation of reality is to be controlled. Much has been said in Eliot criticism about multivocality and the

multiplicity of perspectives, appreciating the destabilising, energising force of Eliot's remarkable capacity to keep a myriad of viewpoints alive within one sentence and sometimes within a phrase. But the anthropological background on which Eliot builds his world-vision points to the limit he might have overlooked. This multiplicity of points of view is ultimately located in the sameness of the viewpoint of a culture, and that sameness Eliot associates with the inexplicable phenomenon of faith. To recall Eliot's reading of Durkheim in 1916, 'group consciousness' – in a 'civilised' society as well as in a totemic one – is 'not merely defensive or economic' but 'a religious instinct,' the need for 'periodic refuge in another consciousness which is supra-individual' satisfied in rites ('Durkheim' 314). According to this definition, culture is rooted in the soil where it lives and understood as 'group consciousness' united by a religious instinct that is at the core of shared cultural practices and values. And this definition reappears in Eliot's lectures on culture of 1933, around the time of his writing of 'Burnt Norton.' It is this description of the 'civilised' society in the Durkheimian terms that holds the notorious anti-Semitic remark:

What we can do is to use our minds, remembering that a tradition without intelligence is not worth having, to discover what is the best life for us not as a political abstraction, but as a particular people in a particular place. [...] The population should be homogeneous; where two or more cultures exist in the same place they are likely either to be fiercely self-conscious or both to become adulterate. What is still more important is unity of religious background; and reasons of race and religion combine to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable. (*After Strange Gods* 19-20)

This and other expressions of Eliot's anti-Semitism have been considered as an outcome of the kind of aesthetic force that his language produces, in instances such as this appearing as a failure to control its energy (Ricks). And it has been addressed directly, read in far more emphatically political terms, with the fullest imaginable picture of the manifestations of anti-Semitic views in mind, including the instances of compliance with its expressions that may be observed in Eliot criticism (Julius). In the narrative I have been trying to tell about Eliot, this question is about the pre-logical

dimensions of our mentality, our direct – immediate – responses to the world which is embedded in – appears to us in the medium of – the culture into which we are born and in which we learn our forms of behaviour before there is a possibility of understanding and self-consciousness. It follows from Eliot's views on the significant force of aesthetic communication that our reality is living culture, its values inscribed in our direct perception of the world through language and faith, and that the meanings this language produces trigger our immediate responses to them before we know what they are ('the true origin of [cultural] practices are unknown to the savage just as they are to the scientist' ['Durkheim' 313]). The question Eliot asks in 1913 but not in 1933 is how, in this reality determined by the given cultural system of values, we conceive otherness, if at all. Perhaps Eliot's failures can tell us something about the ugly side of immediate experience, just as the failures of anthropology told Eliot about the nature of beauty. Some gaps perhaps need to be invented to make reality bearable for human kind.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- BN 'Burnt Norton,' quoted from *CPP*.
- CPP* Eliot, Thomas Stearns. *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot*. London: Book Club Associates by arrangement with Faber and Faber Limited, 1975 (1969).
- DS 'The Dry Salvages,' quoted from *CPP*.
- EC 'East Coker,' quoted from *CPP*.
- EL I, II ----. 'The Development of Shakespeare's Verse.' Two lectures delivered at Edinburgh in 1937. Hayward Bequest to King's College, Archives Centre, Cambridge University.
- IPR ----. 'The Interpretation of Primitive Ritual.' Gray, Piers. *T. S. Eliot's Intellectual and Poetic Development. 1909-1922*. Sussex: The Harvester Press; New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1982. 108-142.
- KE* ----. *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley*. London; Faber and Faber, 1964.
- LG 'Little Gidding,' quoted from *CPP*.
- OPP* ----. *On Poetry and Poets*. London, Boston: Faber and Faber, 1986 (1957).
- SE* ----. *Selected Essays*. London: Faber and Faber, 1961 (1932).
- WL* ----. *The Waste Land*, quoted from *CPP*.
- WLF* ----. *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*. Edited with an Introduction by Valerie Eliot. London and New York: A Harvest Book, Harcourt, 1971.

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