ELIOT'S EARLY POETRY: AN OVERVIEW

In view of the fact that "the same or similar ideas or moods recur in various poems", it is possible to form an idea of some of the major preoccupations of Eliot's early poetry.

The Fallen Nature of Man

There is, first of all, the overwhelming sense of man's innate sinfulness -- the consciousness of the brute within and of the need to rid oneself of it. In *The Hippopotamus*, the poet explicitly states that "Flesh and blood is weak and frail". In *Sweeney Erect* he scoffs at Emerson's notion that man is different from other animals in his capacity for moral rectitude:

(The lengthened shadow of a man
Is history, said Emerson
Who had not seen the silhouette
Of Sweeney straddled in the sun.)

In *Sweeney Among the Nightingales*, he is tormented by the presence in him of the 'Apeneck Sweeney' having a sway over his animal instincts. No wonder, in observing Mr. Apollinax, the poet does not fail to discern, behind the shy figure of a Fragilion, a Priapus, hidden in the shrubbery, 'Gaping at the lady in the swing', or laughing 'like an
irresponsible foetus'. And, the readers of Boston Evening Transcript are seen swaying in the wind 'like a field of ripe corn'.

Earlier, in Prufrock, the overpowering instincts account for the protagonist's moral prevarications. The moment of his greatness 'flickers':

In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

It engenders in him a sense of his unworthiness, so that he apprehends that 'the mermaids' will not sing to him. It is this tormenting sense of sin which debars Gerontion from entering into a state of mystic communion with the divine:

I have lost my passion: why should I need to keep it
Since what is kept must be adulterated?
I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:
How should I use them for your closer contact?

Eliot's early poetry presents the picture of fallen humanity inhabiting an `inferno' of lust and sin. However, in confronting this state of mankind, the poet confronts his own state of inner depravity, arriving, as it were, at the stage of the Dark Night of the Soul, as in Gerontion, which is ancillary to his subsequent attempts at purgation in Ash-Wednesday and progress towards a state of Paradiso in the Four Quartets.
Temptations of Desire

Most of the early poetry is preoccupied with the poet's contemplation of 'desire'. The poet's response to sensuality is apparently governed by his belief in Original Sin and the Fallen nature of Man, reinforced by his mother's Puritan admonitions to 'loose the spirit from its mesh'/ From the poor vesture of the flesh'¹, as also by his reading and absorption of Buddhistic lore. The poet seems to consider among the sins of the body what the Buddha described as the 'thirst or craving for sensual delight, seeking gratification now here, now there -- the craving for the gratification of the passions'². In Melange Adultere de Tout, the poet admits:

J'erre toujours de-ci de-la
A divers coups de tra la la*

In Eliot's first 'blasphemous' poem titled 'He said: this universe is very clear...' (Inventions of the March Hare), the protagonist has a vision of mankind caught helplessly in the web of 'a syphilitic spider'.

Significantly, Eliot's Prufrock can discern how 'the wrong appetences born of the unconscious blind impulses' beget 'wrong perceptions'³. He realizes what the Dhammapada affirms: 'Lust beclouds a man's heart when it is confused with woman's beauty and the mind is dazed'⁴. The thought is

* I wander always here and there/And get lost in fleshpots.
suggested by Prufrock's metaphor of 'the fog'. It is seen putting consciousness to sleep. In the Rhapsody, desire is seen to

Dissolve the floors of memory
And all its relations,
Its divisions and precisions.

Evident in the early poetry is Eliot's apprehension of emotions as a poor guide in life, with an implied stress on the need for strong control ('Damyata'). In Conversation Galante, he talks of 'Our sentimental friend the moon!' which is compared to 'an old battered lantern hung aloft/To light poor travellers to their distress.'

Both Prufrock and Gerontion are conscious of the fact that 'man struggles pitifully, matching his puny strength against the huge impersonal forces of this cosmic process. Age after age, aeon after aeon over measures of time beyond thought, swept along by currents of passion in a void that he peoples with the phantoms of desire.' Do I dare/Disturb the universe?' asks Prufrock. And Gerontion wonders:

What will the spider do,
Suspend its operations, will the weevil
Delay? De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammel, whirled
Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear
In fractured atoms. Gull against the wind, in
the windy straits
Of Belle Isle, or running on the Horn.
White feathers in the snow, the Gulf claims...
Eliot's early poetry abounds in image of women as deadly enchantresses. In *Whispers of Immortality*, for instance, Grishkin has the subtle effluence of a cat:

The sleek Brazilian jaguar  
Does not in its arboreal gloom  
Distil so rank a feline smell  
As Grishkin in a drawing room.

It is, however, the poet's encounter with the degrading spectacles of the dark world of grimy sensuality which causes his revulsion against the 'inferno' of lust. The following description in *Sweeney Erect* evokes its abominations:

This withered root of knots of hair  
Slitted below and gashed with eyes,  
This oval O cropped out with teeth:  
The sickle motion from the thighs.

What repels the poet is the sight of automatic lust devoid of the consciousness of good and evil, which resembles the copulation of beasts:

Remark the cat which flattens itself in the gutter,  
Slips out its tongue  
And devours a morsel of rancid butter.

Lust in Eliot's poetry is perceived as detrimental to one's moral and spiritual health. In *Burbank*, its contamination is seen to divest the protagonist of divine grace:

the God Hercules  
Had left him, that had loved him well.
In *Sweeney Among the Nightingales*, the protagonist departs from the scene of lust sensing damnation. One can find in the following lines from *Theragatha* a remarkably parallel expression to this apprehension:

But I, of evil lures aware,
Beheld in her a subtle snare,
Designed to do me deadly harm,
Disguised by Mara's* treachery.\(^6\)

In the final analysis, the early poetry of Eliot views 'desire' as a dark force of evil that tightens around man 'its lusts and luxuries', and is seen as the greatest obstacle on the path of man's spiritual progress. It engenders in the poet's psyche a tormenting sense of sin: 'De quel droit payes-tu des experiences comme moi?'\(^6\) he asks the waiter in *Dans le Restaurant*. It accounts for his yearning to purge himself of this sin. In *Melange Adultere de Tout*, the sensual craving (*Kama-tanha*) is finally replaced by the craving for self annihilation (*vibhava-tanha*)\(^7\).

**The Present State of the World**

The poet sees the contemporary secular world in its infernal aspect. While the people on the lowest rung of society are seen as helpless victims of man's lust as well as of his callous indifference and apathy, the ones on the upper rungs hibernate in a death-in-life state, going round 'the

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\(^*\) Mara = Lust.
prickly pear\textsuperscript{8}, with no higher values of life to redeem them. In the big cosmopolitan cities - the fleshpots of the world - the poet sees "rats' underneath the piles, and "the Jew' underneath the lot.\textsuperscript{9}

The morning comes to consciousness
Of faint stale smells of beer
From the sawdust trampled street...\textsuperscript{10}

In the 'barren New England hills'\textsuperscript{11}, the poet already discerns a metaphor for the modern waste land. At the arrival of Spring, there is no quickening of the spiritual instinct for a communion with the divine. Instead, people turn to their epicurean delights which constitute the be-all and end-all of their lives:

In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas,
To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk Among whispers...\textsuperscript{12}

In A Cooking Egg, the poet has the Shelleyan vision of the 'Weeping, weeping multitudes', drooping in a hundred A.B.C.'s, 'Over buttered scones and crumpets'.

As a consequence of man's exclusive devotion to the cult of sensuous pleasures, the Word remains 'Swaddled with darkness'\textsuperscript{13}. No doubt, in the absence of any moral or spiritual discipline,
Unnatural vices
Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues
Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.  

As a result, mankind bears the brunt of `the wrath-bearing tree'.  

For, as the poet says in Burbank:

The horses, under the axletree
Beat up the dawn from Istria
With even feet.

This vision of divine retribution recurs in The Waste Land when in `What the Thunder said', the poet hears the `Murmur of maternal lamentation' and sees the `hooded hordes swarming/Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth/Ringed by the flat horizon only'. (cf. Auden's The Shield of Achilles). It is followed by a vision of the world's collapse:

Falling tower
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal

The horror of time, decay and death

The early poetry of Eliot is almost equally concerned with the atrocities of a time-ridden world and the need to transcend it. In Prufrock, there is the philosophic contemplation of man's earthly sojourn as one governed by inexorable operations of time constituting a series of ordeals in which man is seen as a helpless puppet ranged
against certain cosmic forces which appear beyond his understanding and control:

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

There is also the disturbing awareness of the inevitable decay with the passage of time. There will thus be time `to turn back and descend the stair,/With a bald spot in the middle of my hair' and lament the fact that `I grow old...I grow old...' There is the tug of time and death:

And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat,
    and snicker,
    And in short, I was afraid.

In the Preludes, the poet observes the dull and incessant `masquerades' of time. He feels his soul `trampled by insistent feet/At four and five and six o'clock'. And in Aunt Helen, he takes note of the fact that earthly time is indifferent to man's fate. While the aunt is dead, and 'shortly afterwards' the parrot dies too, `The Dresden clock' continues ticking on the mantelpiece.
As we move from *Prufrock 1917* to *Poems 1920*, the consciousness of time grows grim and disturbing. In *Gerontion*, the protagonist is an 'old' man awaiting helplessly the prospect of stiffening in a rented house, i.e. this world. In *Burbank*, the 'smoky candle end of time' is seen declining even as the protagonist meditates on 'Time's ruins'. In *A Cooking Egg*, the 'red-eyed scavengers' of time descend on the earthly scene and rob the protagonist of his Eden of childhood bliss as well as his dreams of heroic achievements which, with the passage of time, get 'Buried beneath some snow-deep Alps'. There is allusion to the havoc wrought by earthly time in the epigraph of *Sweeney Erect* (Supra: our analysis of the poem) which is made the subject of grave philosophic contemplation in *The Dry Salvages* where the poet talks of

> time counted by anxious worried women
> Lying awake, calculating the future,
> Trying to unweave, unwide, unravel
> And piece together the past and the future,
> Between midnight and dawn, when the past is all deception,
> The future futureless, before the morning watch
> When time stops and time is never ending...

And in *Whispers of Immortality*, the poet, like Webster, is 'much possessed by death', seeing 'the skull beneath the skin'. In *La Figlia* the poet renounces earthly love because, as he was to explain later in *Ash-Wednesday*,

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I know that time is always time
And place is always and only place
And what is actual is actual only for one time
And only for one place...

Eliot's concern with the theme of time, as we have already seen, continued in his later poetry. In "Burnt Norton", there is the 'religious or philosophical' speculation or meditation on the nature of time and its irrecoverability. And, in the course of The Dry Salvages, the poet muses upon the need for release from the wheel of time, from 'the trailing/Consequence of further days and hours'. It may remain an unattainable ideal, but the early poetry (as, for instance, in the juxtaposition in Mr. Apollinax and Lune de Miel of the earthly time and the realm of eternity, of death and immortality), as much as the later, suggests the possibility of transcending the barriers of time and mortality through one's alignment with a different set of values. The implicit ideal in early poetry remains the aspiration expressed in the following Sanskrit verse:

Asato ma sadgamaya;
Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya;
Mrtyor ma amrtamgamaya

(Lead me from illusion to reality;/Lead me from darkness to light;/Lead me from mortality to immortality.)

A Sense of the Void

The early poetry also manifests Eliot's strong sense
of 'the futility and the void' in all human affairs. The overwhelming question in Prufrock is: 'would it have been worth it, after all'? To the protagonist of the Preludes, the worlds appear to be revolving 'like ancient women/Gathering fuel in vacant lots'. (my italics) In Conversation Galante, the poet's music is meant to 'body forth our own vacuity'. This sense of the ultimate futility of it all is summed up by Gerontion's prophetic words: 'Vacant shuttles/Weave the wind.' Irrespective of on which side of the hedge you stand, the pious as well as the profane will meet nothing but extinction. No wonder, Gerontion, overcome by the sense of utter disillusion, turns to 'a sleepy corner'. Significantly, Eliot had wished to introduce the first version of The Waste land with Gerontion. In Gerontion, as elsewhere in early poetry, the complete knowledge is also the knowledge of vacuity -- both his own and that of the world. This note of emptiness pervades Eliot's work. It persists in the last major work, the Four Quartets where the world is perceived as 'a place of disaffection' where one is

Distracted from distraction by distraction
Filled with fancies and empty of meaning...17

Closely allied with 'disillusion' is the poet's feeling of nausea in the course of his encounter with the world of 'sense':

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Among the windings of the violins
And the ariettes
Of cracked cornets
Inside my brain a dull tom-tom begins...

The following lines from The "Boston Evening Transcript" give a poignant expression to the poet's sense of ennui:

I mount the steps and ring the bell, turning
Wearily, as one would turn to nod good-bye to La Rochefoucault,
If the street were time and he at the end of the street...

In his early poetry, Eliot's ennui, like Baudelaire's, may be explained as "a true form of acedia, arising from the unsuccessful struggle towards the spiritual life."

The Absolute

Despite his apparent cynicism and despair caused by his awareness of his own and the world's sinfulness, the central character in Eliot's early poetry is endowed with a deeply religious sensibility and is sensible to the intimations of "the Absolute". What persists alongside the sense of the meaninglessness and the void is the abiding faith in what George Santayana called "a pure and radical transcendentalism" which recognizes nothing except the realm of essence which is eternal and infinite. It is evident in Prufrock's vision of the mermaids, in an aspect of Mr.
Apollinax's laughter which is "submarine and profound/Like the old man of the sea's /Hidden under coral islands', in Saint Apollinaire En Classe in Lune de Miel, and in the picture of 'The Father and the Paraclete' in Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service.

All through Eliot's early poetry, the central character is shown to be familiar with the language of symbols. It is through intuition and the symbolic mode of apprehension that he is able to get at the hidden pattern underneath the surface of chaotic human experience. He is able to read 'The word within a word' of which the secular world remains oblivious. In Rhapsody on a Windy Night, he apprehends the agony of this life as the 'last twist of the knife' and listens to the Absolute's exhortation:

'The little lamp spreads a ring on the stair. 
Mount
The bed is open, the tooth-brush hangs on the wall, 
Put your shoes at the door, sleep, prepare for life.'

Towards 'nirvana'

Even though the central character in Eliot's early poetry, like its author, is 'a man haunted by guilt and remorse' he is nonetheless, possessed by a sense of special destiny, of one being 'elected'. There is a suggestion in Melange Adultere de Tout of the poet's aspiration for the ideal of a saint or a martyr:
On montrera mon cenotaphe
Aux cotes brulantes de Mozambique.*

He cherishes the mystic vision of liberation ("nirvana") and a new birth in the desert of this world:

Je celebrai mon jour de fete
Dans une oasis d'Afrique...**

It is in pursuance of this ideal that in *La Figlia* he seeks the sublimation of human love into divine love, exhorting his beloved to `Stand on the highest pavement of the stair' and `weave, weave the sunlight in your hair'. The ideal of the saint and the martyr also finds affirmation in *The Death of Saint Narcissus***. In fact, all through Eliot's early poetry, one can discern the need for severe discipline as a way of alleviating the sinfulness and the fatuity of life. It is evidenced in Prufrock's admission, `I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed', in *Gerontion*'s image of `Christ the tiger' devouring us, which recurs in *Ash-Wednesday*'s metaphor of `three white leopards', and in the picture of purgatory in Mr. Eliot's *Sunday Morning Service*:

Under the penitential gates
Sustained by staring Seraphim
Where the souls of the devout
Burn invisible and dim.

Finally, the most redeeming aspect of the central character's philosophy of Catholic disillusion is his abiding

* They will point out to my cenotaph
On the burning coast of Mozambique.
** I celebrate my birthday/in an oasis of Africa...
faith in divine grace as the means of salvation. It is indicated in his belief in *Lune de Miel* that the lofty pillars of his Catholic Faith have the divine power to bring about a radical transformation in man. No wonder, Gerontion, "and old man in a dry month", waits for "rain" -- the life-giving waters of spirituality. (cf. the quest for water in "What the Thunder said" in *The Waste Land*.)

**The Continuity of Eliot's Central Concerns**

In his critical writing Eliot has emphasized upon the continuity and interrelatedness of a writer's work. The early poetry of Eliot shares the sense of alienation from the mundane existence and the spiritual urge for a higher mode of life not only with his later poetry -- a fact already taken note of -- but also with his plays.

The Christian pageant *Choruses from "The Rock'* projects the absurdity of most activities and the palpable presence of evil in human affairs.

The ideal of the saint and the martyr, which had fascinated Eliot from the beginning and found expression in the poetry of his Harvard days, elicits from him a highly imaginative response in *Murder in the Cathedral*. The imaginative centre of the play, as well as of Eliot's early
poetry, lies in the consciousness of guilt, sin and the 'void'. The experience of earthly hell -- 'I have tasted/The savour of putrid flesh in the spoon' -- constitutes the core of both. And as in the play, where the blood of Christ and of the martyrs is invoked like some shower bath for the spirit, the waiter in Dans le Restaurant is enjoined upon to go and take a bath.

The protagonist of Eliot's most powerful verse drama The Family Reunion treads common ground with the central character in Eliot's early poetry. His experience of the earthy inferno, of its squalor and degradation is what permeates the early poetry. Like Harry leaving the stage as one 'elected', Gerontion turns from the world to sleep to it, and Sweeney leaves the brothel with 'a golden grin' and turns to 'The Convent of the Sacred Heart'. It is pertinent to observe that as in The Family Reunion, so in Eliot's early poetry, there is an interplay of religious and secular concerns, and unless the reader is 'religious enough' he cannot understand the motivation of the central character.

The world of The Cocktail Party, like that of Eliot's early poetry, is a bleak world. It is reminiscent of the world of Gerontion -- a world of illusion where one is tormented by a sense of one's unreality. Interestingly, the situation of Dans la Restaurant almost repeats itself in this play where Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly is shown in the half-
priestly role of 'a very great doctor' to whom a young woman Celia comes, filled with a sense of emptiness, of failure'. He leads her away from conventional life towards a spiritual quest and eventual martyrdom. The 'guardian' in Dans le Restaurant, however, shares the lot of the sufferer:

Remarkably, even in Eliot's last play The Elder Statesman, the protagonist is cast in the mould of Gerontion, contemplating the sterility of his life. A play about self-introspection and self-realization, it ends with the protagonist, a-la-Gerontion, retiring to the shade of a beech tree, and 'dying', perhaps with the metaphorical implications that Eliot associated with it.

In fine, in Eliot's early poetry, as in his later work, true life is to be found outside the claims of the material world. But, of the vision of the other world, both the early and the later work give only a vague hint, an intimation.

CONCLUSION

The early poetry of Eliot is an expression of the poet's experience of the earthly inferno, his sense of 'the Void', his consciousness of the realm of the Absolute, and his realization of the need for purgation as a mode of salvation. It reflects his belief in Original Sin, and his
conviction that man is by nature imperfect and frail, and can accomplish anything of value only through austere discipline. However, for Eliot, as for Baudelaire, "the recognition of the reality of Sin is a New Life'. (supra : our analysis of Melange Adultere de Tout.) The sense of Evil, in fact, as Eliot said, implies the sense of good.

The early poetry achieves a two-fold vision of the world -- its state of sinfulness and its futility. It does so through the double nature of the central character, an alter ego of the poet, who is both a drifter -- a part of the world's corruption -- as well as a prophet who sees through the void in all human affairs. On the one hand, he is "voluptuous and morally retrograde' and, on the other "passive, reflective, with a taste for theology and mysticism'. It is, however, quite evident where the poet's true sympathy lies. He aspires to shun the "lower' in favour of the "higher dream'. (supra : our analysis of Prufrock and Gerontion.) It is this double nature of the protagonist which leads to his anxious and troubled "self-communing", reflective of his "moral and spiritual struggle' vis-a-vis his own moral failure as well as that of his society "worm-eaten by Liberalism'.

The philosophy that emerges from our reading of Eliot's early poetry is the Catholic philosophy of
disillusion summed up later by the poet in the following lines of *The Hollow Men*:

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the shadow

*For Thine is the kingdom*

The early poetry is as much preoccupied with 'the Shadow' as with the modes of liberation from it. The possibilities of purgation and beatitude, so overtly explored in the later poetry, are not missing from his early work which has definite strains of them. (Supra: our analysis of *Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service* or *Dans le Restaurant*. In fact, all through Eliot's work, there is an insistent contrast between the sensual and the ascetic life. The poet associates the senses with sin and guilt. And, for those instinctively drawn to sensuality, severe discipline or asceticism is seen as the only way of bridling it. In passing, therefore, from Eliot's earlier poetry to his later, one finds that the poet's instincts and preoccupations do not change. He remains a Calvinist, through and through.

That Eliot's early poetry looks forward to the later is established from the fact that when one turns to poems like *Journey of the Magi* or *Ash-Wednesday*, written on an ostensibly religious subject, there is continuation of the theme of weariness, suffering and a sense of alienation which...
terminates in "the painful necessity of rebirth', a form of
dying into life. (supra: our analysis of Gerontion.)

One can also detect in the early poetry "the
expression of an unattached religious sensibility -- the
instinct for belief', or, like Dante's, an attempt to
construct something "permanent and holy' out of one's
"private failures and disappointments'.

(Read our analysis
of Sweeney Among the Nightingales or Burbank.) Eliot's major
Christian concerns as he listed them in his radio-talks
titled 'The Modern Dilemma' (1930) were "holy living and holy
dying... sanctity, chastity, humility, austerity. Implicitly though, these are the major concerns of his early
poetry as well. What is necessary, and what we have attempted
to do, is to bring to its analysis, "all the moral and
philosophical weight which one has borrowed or learned from
elsewhere' so that its exposition becomes "a way of
understanding the larger culture and disciplining private
feelings and experience.'

The early poetry of Eliot has no "palpable design'
upon us. It does not subordinate poetry to religion. It is
a "presentation' -- "It does not set forth a belief.' It
fulfils Eliot's ideal of poetry because it is not defined
"by its uses'. And even though it effects, as Eliot
remarked, "revolutions in sensibility' and makes us from time
to time "a little more aware of the deeper, unnamed feelings which form the substratum of our being, to which we rarely penetrate", it still is poetry, first and last.

Nevertheless, there is a religious or philosophic vision that comes through -- through the contrastive juxtaposition of images (the earthly and the mystical), the symbolic mode of apprehension, and a mode of expression which achieves a fusion of the expressible and the inexpressible. The poetry has a certain prophetic quality which can, however, only be discerned through the reader's capacity to grasp the language of symbols. Towards that end, one should not only read the words for their surface meaning but also look for the "word within a word" so that the hidden pattern of meaning may be discovered. Looked at in this manner, expressions such as "the evening is spread out against the sky", "sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells", "In the room the women come and go/Talking of Michelangelo", "The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes", "Combing the white hair of the waves blown back/When the wind blows the water white and black", "A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps", "And then the lighting of the lamps" -- to mention only a few instances -- take on a new, an epiphanical aspect. Read thus, the mode of Eliot's early poetry reveals itself as the "mantric" mode where, to quote from the *Four Quartets*, "Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,/Every poem an epitaph."
Eliot's poetic mode in the early poetry is in sharp contrast with that in the later poetry, as for instance in *Ash-Wednesday* where it is explicitly religious:

Blessed sister, holy mother, spirit of the fountain,
spirit of the garden
Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood
Teach us to care and not to care
Teach us to sit still

or, as in the *Four Quartets* where the poetry, otherwise so "meditative, grave, sorrowful, but also dry, experienced and harsh," tends to be more and more declamatory:

You say I am repeating
Something I have said before. I shall say it again.
Shall I say it again? In order to arrive there,
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.

And yet, despite the apparent differences between the two poetic modes, the leitmotif of Eliot's poetry, both earlier and later, remains the poet's "desperate spiritual quest." In the early poetry, what one envisages is that in the framework of symbolist aesthetics which commits the poet to the notion of impersonality, there is a constant personal struggle of the poet with his inner demons and, through this struggle, the poet is working out a personal idiom, and a vision, with a spiritual orientation which finally culminates in his conversion to Catholicism.
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10. Ibid., p. 23.
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Conclusion

3. Ibid., 201.
4. Ibid., pp. 164-65.
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9. Ibid., p.105.