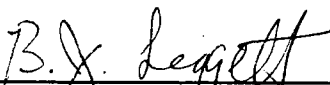
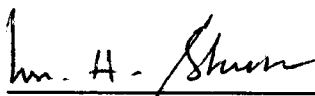
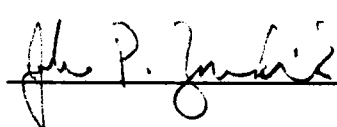


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**THE EXTINCTION OF PERSONALITY IN
T. S. ELIOT'S EARLY POETRY**

**A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

**Bonnie C. Winsbro
June 1987**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the ways in which the personae of three early works by T. S. Eliot--"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Gerontion," and The Waste Land--exhibit the characteristics of an impersonal poet. An impersonal poet, as described in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," is one who cultivates a "consciousness of the past," continuously comparing and contrasting the present with the past; who subordinates individuality to tradition, surrendering and sacrificing self and extinguishing personality; and who separates the "mind which creates" from the "man who suffers," transmuting personal passions into a new and universal "art emotion."

All three personae possess the mind of an impersonal poet--that is, a mind that operates as a medium in which external emotion activates and combines with feelings, phrases, and images suspended in the mind to form new combinations. All three personae separate the man who suffers from the mind that creates, but the relationship between the two aspects differs for each persona. Prufrock stifles the creative mind and lapses into inaction and suffering. Gerontion, having already sacrificed self, personality, and passion, exists only as a "dull head," a "dry brain in a dry season." And within the persona of The Waste Land the man who suffers struggles against a distractingly creative mind to resurrect the self that has been sacrificed and buried.

Although the three personae emphasize different attributes of an impersonal poet, processing stimuli differently, they all progress in a similar pattern as they journey within themselves, exploring connections

between mind and man and personality. Ultimately, all three sacrifice a sense of self in order to escape emotion, passion, and the conflicts of personality, lapsing into a state of ennui--an inability to act, a sense of life as a form of death, and an acceptance of suffering as a given that can be relieved only through death.

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1. INTRODUCTION

By 1922 Eliot, in addition to writing poetry, lecturing for extension courses, and working at Lloyds Bank, had written and published almost a hundred essays and reviews. Through these publications, Eliot carved out a position for himself as literary spokesman for the modern age, and through that position, as he admitted in 1961, he advanced the type of poetry he and Ezra Pound wished to produce:

. . . in my earlier criticism, both in my general affirmations about poetry and in writing about authors who had influenced me, I was implicitly defending the sort of poetry that I and my friends wrote. (TCC 16)¹

Instrumental in establishing both Eliot and his poetry were the essays gathered and published in The Sacred Wood in 1920, particularly the essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," which first appeared in The Criterion in late 1919.

"Tradition and the Individual Talent" introduces two aspects of Eliot's impersonal theory of poetry: (1) the relation of a new and individual poem to tradition, the "whole of the literature of Europe from Homer" (SW 49); and (2) the relation of a poem to its author. In essence, an impersonal poem is one that subordinates the individuality

¹Eliot's works are identified in the text by the following abbreviations: (CPP) The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950 (New York: Harcourt, 1971); (KE) Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley (New York: Farrar, 1964); (OPP) On Poetry and Poets (New York: Farrar, 1957); (SE) Selected Essays, 1917-1932 (New York: Harcourt, 1932); (SW) The Sacred Wood (London: Methuen, 1964); and (TCC) To Criticize the Critic (London: Faber, 1965).

of the author--both his individual talent and his individual consciousness, or personality--to a cumulative "consciousness of the past" (SW 52). An impersonal poet must strive to separate the "man who suffers" from the "mind which creates" (SW 54) and to "surrender . . . himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable" (SW 52)--that is, the living human tradition binding all men and all ages.

The present study, using "Tradition and the Individual Talent" as Eliot's primary statement on his impersonal theory of poetry, views the manner in which Eliot's application of the two aspects of the theory are reflected in the personae of three early works: "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Gerontion," and The Waste Land. The emphasis is not on the manner in which Eliot the poet applied the theory, but rather on the ways in which the personae--the central characters of the poems--exhibit the characteristics of impersonal poets. We see in one or more of the personae a strong "consciousness of the past," a comparison or contrast of self against the dead. We see the way in which their minds, those "receptacle[s] for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images" (SW 55), actually work.

All the personae exhibit to some degree the characteristics of a poet more than an ordinary man, as Eliot distinguished them in "The Metaphysical Poets":

When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of the cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes. (SE 247)

Along with that formation of "new wholes" from "disparate experience," however, we see an increasing separation of the "man who suffers" from "the mind that creates." Ultimately, we see the way in which the personae sacrifice a sense of self in order to escape from emotion, passion, and the conflicts of personality, ultimately lapsing into a state of ennui--an inability to act, a sense of life as a form of death, and an acceptance of suffering as a given that can be relieved only by death.

Prufrock's mind works like that of an impersonal poet, combining disparate experience to create new forms and comparing himself to figures of the past. It is this comparison, however, that destroys him. Journeying into his own personal hell, Prufrock discovers that he cannot live up to those figures or to the imitative roles his mind creates. Finding that he cannot act, he retreats to his world of isolation and suffering--one of the "lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out windows . . ." (CPP 5). In a later work, Murder in the Cathedral, Eliot paradoxically equates suffering with action: "acting is suffering/And suffering is action" (CPP 182). And yet for Prufrock suffering is synonymous with inaction. To produce impersonal poetry, a poet must rise above his personal suffering, using the individual experience to create universal experience. Prufrock remains immersed in his own suffering, stifling the creative mind that encourages him to act.

Gerontion, however, has allowed the "mind which creates" to dominate the "man who suffers," the man who experiences emotion, whether painful or joyful. He has sacrificed self, passion, personal experience so that his mind might operate as a "receptacle for seizing and storing

up numberless feelings, phrases, images . . ." (SW 55). The problem is that Gerontion has denied personal experience and personal emotion to such an extent that he has extinguished the passion which is the necessary material or ingredient for creating new forms. Passion or emotion is required to activate and unite with those feelings, phrases, and images suspended in his mind. When we see Gerontion, he is just beginning to awaken to his present condition, recognizing that he is only a "dull head." Through an intellectual journey into his past, he discovers that, having denied passion for so long, he has lost it and has at the same time lost the use of his five senses. Like Prufrock, however, Gerontion does not act; he simply resigns himself to waiting for death.

The persona of The Waste Land continues Gerontion's quest into the cause of his sterility. In this persona we see three levels of consciousness operating: the "man who suffers," the "mind which creates," and the extinguished and buried personality. The man who suffers actively seeks the cause of his sterility, but is continually distracted by the mind that creates, which quickly converts every personal experience to an experience of universal significance. Eventually, the man who suffers leaves the external landscape of London to journey into the internal landscape of his own buried personality to discover the cause of his suffering. He discovers, as Gerontion does, that his sterility arises from his own past denial of passion, but this knowledge offers him no more relief than it did Gerontion. At this point the original denial cannot be reversed; he can only wait for death. The mind that creates hastily shores fragments of universal significance

about the ruined man, reburying the long sacrificed and temporarily resurrected personality.

Although Prufrock, Gerontion, and the persona of The Waste Land emphasize different attributes of an impersonal poet, processing stimuli differently, they share similarities. All three personae journey into themselves seeking to discover something, exploring the connections between mind and man and personality. In "Little Gidding," Eliot writes:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time. (CPP 145)

This seems to be the case with all three personae. There is the sense that each has made the same journey again and again, but always with the same conclusion: There is no escape; we must wait for death to save us from this misery and suffering.

Eliot lived to regret the enthusiasm with which "Tradition and the Individual Talent" was originally received and consistently reprinted throughout the years. As early as 1928, when Eliot issued the second edition of The Sacred Wood, he expressed some regret about its essays, primarily for "faults of style"--"a stiffness and an assumption of pontifical solemnity" (SW vii). But Eliot has been criticized far more sharply by the critics of his criticism, primarily for his apparent contradictions and changes of view, which tend to bewilder and confound readers. Ivor Winters says that Eliot "has repeatedly contradicted himself on every important issue that he has touched . . ." (75).

Eliot responded to such attacks by emphasizing, as he did in the preface to the 1928 edition of The Sacred Wood, that "what had happened . . . was not so much a change or reversal of opinions, as an expansion or development of interests" (SW vii). But Eliot's contradictions have not occurred only over time but also within a single essay or among essays written within the same year. These early contradictions, however, can be traced to two primary factors: (1) the ambiguity of Eliot's language, in which the meanings of such words as personality, impersonality, emotions, feelings, tradition, and individuality seem to shift and slide according to when and where they are used; and (2) the fact that when Eliot was writing the essays included in The Sacred Wood, he was still in the process of discovering what poetry should be. As he wrote in 1956,

The best of my literary criticism . . . is a by-product of my private poetry-workshop; or a prolongation of the thinking that went into the formation of my own verse . . . its merits and its limitations can be fully appreciated only when it is considered in relation to the poetry I have written myself. (OPP 117)

Distracting as Eliot's ambiguities are, they offer insight into the conflicts, or double vision, of the critic and poet and should remind us that throughout his lifetime Eliot was "exploring" and not until very late in life did he seem "to arrive . . . /And know the place for the first time."

What I attempt to do in the section that follows is to look beyond and beneath the ambiguities, inconsistencies, and faulty metaphors of "Tradition and the Individual Talent," seeking some stable base from

which to study the personae of the early poems. One objective is to determine exactly what Eliot meant by "tradition" at the time he wrote the essay and to clarify the relation between tradition and individuality. Another is to define the poetic process--the process by which a poet fuses emotion and feelings to produce a new art emotion. The final objective is to look more closely at the sacrifice that Eliot expects a poet to make: What exactly is sacrificed, and why is it necessary? Ultimately, I hope through this analysis of "Tradition and the Individual Talent" to isolate several characteristics of an impersonal poet that are exhibited by Prufrock, Gerontion, and the persona of The Waste Land.

2. ELIOT'S IMPERSONAL THEORY OF POETRY

Part I of "Tradition and the Individual Talent" discusses tradition, defends the supremacy of tradition over individuality, and suggests ways in which a poet might attain a sense of tradition. A sense of tradition, Eliot says, is a "consciousness of the past," an "historical sense" that allows one to see the way in which the past continues to exist in the present, the way in which everything that has passed before has in some way shaped and "directed" the present. The past is not dead, but living; an organic entity, tradition alters slightly as each new work of art is added to it. However, not every new work will be absorbed by the body of literature constituting tradition. To be absorbed by tradition, altering the past, a new work must add something new, unique, or individual, but that individuality must reflect the past. That is, what is "best" and "most individual" in a new work actually asserts the immortality of the dead poets, the "whole of the literature of Europe from Homer," not a totally unique, individualistic, personal point of view (SW 38).

At the time Eliot wrote "Tradition and the Individual Talent," he was still strongly influenced by both Irving Babbitt and Ezra Pound, both of whom, as David Ward (44) discusses, traced the idea of tradition back to Confucius, about whom Babbitt wrote in 1924:

He aspired at most to be the channel through which the moral experience of his race that had accumulated through long centuries and found living embodiment in these sages should be conveyed to the present and the future; in his own words, he was not a creator but a transmitter. (Babbitt, Democracy and Leadership 34, cited by Ward 44)

Ward goes on to argue that Eliot's interest in tradition at the time he wrote the essay was influenced by a series of lectures on Homer that were delivered by Gilbert Murray at Harvard in 1907. Gilbert himself was influenced by such anthropological scholars as Sir James Frazer and Jane Harrison, who "approached the study of primitive society through the study of classical literature" (Ward 46). Murray argued that the epics of Homer were written by anonymous poets, who were entirely self-effacing, each content to subordinate his individuality to the "living saga" of, say, the Iliad. Murray, with his interest in anthropology, clearly meant by "tradition" the human tradition that links primitive societies with civilized ones, the essential human roots that link Kurtz's outpost in the Congo in Conrad's Heart of Darkness with modern European civilizations. Not until the late 1920s, as Eliot's move toward Anglo-Catholicism decreased his dependence on Babbitt and Pound did Eliot begin to think of "tradition" as primarily Christian theology rather than the human tradition that links all of mankind through all ages (Ward 46-48). Thus, through The Waste Land Eliot conceives of history and tradition as the living human tradition as recorded in and expressed through literature. Soon after The Waste Land--and certainly the germ of the new meaning is evident there--Eliot more and more began to limit "tradition" to Christian theology and literature.

The modern artist, then, should attempt to merge with the living tradition of past literature. He should not attempt to discover and express "a complete meaning alone"; the complete meaning of a new work of art is revealed through its relation to all the literature of the past, whether that relation is one of comparison or contrast. The new

work of art must "conform" or "fit in." By "conformity," Eliot does not mean a "blind or timid adherence" to a previous generation (SW 38); he means that the new work must assume a form that shapes itself to the living form of the art of the past. The past and the present must coalesce into a single form that continues to develop as an entity.

The best illustration of an admirable individuality carried to a destructive extreme is found in Eliot's discussions of William Blake, whom Eliot both praises and condemns. Eliot praises Blake for managing to avoid the sort of education that results in blind conformity in art. In direct contrast to Tennyson, who was "a poet almost wholly encrusted with parasitic opinion," Blake "was naked, and saw man naked, and from the centre of his own crystal. . . . He approached everything with a mind unclouded by current opinions" (SW 154-55).

Although Part I of "Tradition and the Individual Talent" clearly emphasizes the supremacy of tradition, Eliot never denied the necessity of individuality, of a unique way of perceiving the world. Allan notes that Eliot in his dissertation

argued that . . . the closest approach to reality . . . was the immediate experience of the individual. If you deny the validity of individual experience in the name of the social point of view, you are left with nothing but unreal abstractions; there is no immediate social experience. . . . (Allan 124)

However, one must not, as the Romantic poets did, allow one's hunger for "novelty" to exceed one's "strength of digestion" (Eliot, "The Romantic Generation" 616). Blake, Eliot says, attached too much importance to his uniquely individual philosophy, vision, insight, and technique--so

much so that he became "eccentric" and "inclined to formlessness" (SW 155). Blake would have been a better poet, Eliot says, if he had controlled his "considerable understanding of human nature," his "remarkable and original sense of language, and the music of language," and his "gift of hallucinated vision" by asserting a "respect for impersonal reason, for common sense, for the objectivity of science. . . . What his genius required, and what it sadly lacked, was a framework of accepted and traditional ideas which would have prevented him from indulging in a philosophy of his own . . . (SW 157-58).

Eliot's fascination with Blake suggests the difficulty Eliot himself had in weighing the merits of individuality against those of tradition. He sees in Blake both the value and failure of individual talent--a talent that captured the most powerful of personal visions, but one that could not be merged with tradition. Blake, Eliot says,

made a Universe; and very few people can do that. But the fact that the gift is rare does not make it necessarily valuable. It is not any one man's business to make a Universe; and what any one man can make in this way is not, in the end, so good or so useful as the ordinary Universe which we all make together. (Eliot, "The Mysticism of Blake" 779)

Clearly, Blake should have, in Eliot's view, surrendered his individual Universe for "something which is more valuable"--an ordinary Universe common to all men.

Allan sees Eliot's "high valuation of personality in one sense and his rejection of it in another" as complementary rather than contradictory (114). Again, he looks to Eliot's dissertation, this time its conclusion, to explain this complementarity:

We may put ourselves at the individual or social point of view, as we please; but we must not forget that unless we make allowance at the start for the equality of their claims to validity we shall be left with a most uncomfortable hiatus, for we can never deduce the one from the other. (KE 159)

The individual point of view (individual talent) must interact with the social point of view (tradition).

The modern poet then must put away any individual consciousness, replacing it with a universalizing "consciousness of the past." He must submit to "a process of depersonalization," a process by which his individual vision, truth, and experience are tempered by and merged with the cumulative vision, truth, and experience of the past. "What happens" to a poet during this process of depersonalization, Eliot says, "is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (SW 52).

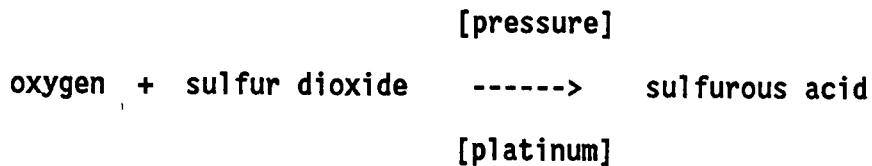
The immediate effect of these words is chilling. The suggestion that one continually surrender oneself as one is at the moment of immediate experience, continually sacrifice self and extinguish personality, in order to be absorbed into some larger amorphous identity grates upon the sensibility of many contemporary readers. Most of us seek through attitudes, personality, appearance, or style that individual essence that we think of as "self." What could be of such value or such worth that we would voluntarily sacrifice self or surrender our direct and immediate response to be a part of? Critics have attempted to soften the statement by analyzing the ambiguity of the terms used, but the central message in the context of the essay, and as

illustrated by the example of Blake, is clear: A poet should depersonalize his poetry; he should be original and individual in the sense that he should not imitate his predecessors; but his individual experience, emotion, and vision must be suppressed so that his work can be absorbed into the living form of the literature of the past.

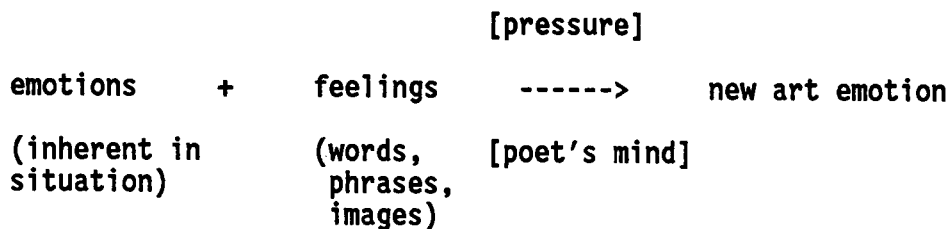
In Part II of the essay Eliot shifts his focus from the surrender of individuality to tradition to the eradication of the poet from the poem or, more precisely perhaps, the man from the poet. The primary message here is that the poet must remove any trace of personality or personal emotion from the poem. A poet's "personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life," are not the proper emotions to be expressed in poetry (SW 57). In fact, a poet can write just as well about emotions he has never experienced as he can about those with which he is familiar. He should not seek new, complex, or original emotions; he should deal only with ordinary emotions common to all men.

Just as the poet's personal emotions have no place in poetry, neither does the poet's personality. In fact, the poet has "no 'personality' to express"; instead, he has "a particular medium"--a mind--"in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways" (SW 56). There is no direct relation between the impressions and experiences occurring in a poem and the impressions and experiences of the man, or the personality of the poet, who writes the poem. That is, what is significant in the poem is not necessarily significant to the man and vice versa.

Eliot describes the poetic process through his analogy of a chemical reaction that occurs only when a certain catalyst--a shred of platinum--is present:



The formula for the analogous reaction occurring in the poetic process would be:



The analogy breaks down for at least three reasons: (1) the chemical reaction itself is inaccurate since the production of sulfurous acid (H_2SO_3) requires the presence of water (hydrogen); (2) the source of intensity or pressure in a mind that is inert and passive is unclear (Winters 78-79); and (3) a catalyst and a receptacle, as Eliot later describes the poet's mind, are not interchangeable. Again, however, despite the faulty metaphor, Eliot's primary message is clear: the poet's mind is a receptacle in which feelings (words, phrases, images), impressions, and expressions float in suspension in an inactive state. An external emotion, an emotion inherent in a specific dramatic situa-

tion, such as "the murder of Agamemnon, or the agony of Othello," passes through the mind of the poet, activating certain of the floating, suspended feelings. The emotion combines with those feelings with which it has some affinity (although the affinity is not "superficially evident") and passes out of the poet's mind into the poetry, where it evokes within the reader a new emotion that differs in substance (as an acid differs from a gas) from either the original emotion or the original feelings. The intensity of the new emotion derives not from the original emotion but from the process of fusion that occurs in the mind. If the reaction is completed successfully, the newly formed emotion contains no trace of the poet's mind, which like the platinum catalyst remains "inert, neutral, unchanged."

In a truly impersonal poem, the emotion expressed can in no way be traced to either the mind of the poet or the emotion of the man. The originating emotion--the emotion that enters the poet's mind--is not an emotion immediately felt by the poet, but an ordinary emotion inherent in a certain dramatic situation. It may be the emotion felt by either the protagonist or the spectator of the event. The poet, then, is not writing from his own emotion or passion. In fact, "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material" (SW 54). The impersonal poet sacrifices his own emotion, extinguishes his own personality, so that his mind can operate unhindered and unhinderer as a catalyst, a receptacle, an enzyme that digests and transmutes passions aroused by an

event into art. If the poet succeeds, then the "difference between art and the [originating] event is always absolute" (SW 56).

As Blake was Eliot's example of an individual talent gone amok, John Donne is a prime example of a poet who transforms an existing emotion into a new one through a rational, intellectual process:

One of the characteristics of Donne . . . is his fidelity to emotion as he finds it; his recognition of the complexity of feeling and its rapid alternation and antitheses. A change of feeling, with Donne, is rather the regrouping of the same elements under a mood which was previously subordinate: it is not the substitution of one mood for a wholly different one. . . . The mind has unity and order. (Eliot, "John Donne" 332)

As in the reaction between emotion and feeling, the new mood is not "wholly different," but simply a "regrouping of the same elements" through a process that rapidly alternates and opposes feelings while remaining faithful to a found, not a felt, emotion. It is a poet such as Donne who could combine emotion (falling in love) with both intellectual experience (reading Spinoza) and sensory experience (hearing a typewriter and smelling cooking), rapidly alternating, opposing, and rearranging those disparate experiences to form new wholes (SE 247).¹

The poetic process, then, for Eliot is not one of "emotion recollected in tranquillity." It is not a "turning loose of emotion"

¹Five years later, after Eliot discovered Lancelot Andrewes, he dismissed Donne as "a 'personality' in a sense in which Andrewes is not: his sermons, one feels, are a 'means of self-expression.' He is constantly finding an object which shall be adequate to his feelings; Andrewes is wholly absorbed in the object and therefore responds with adequate emotion" (SE 299).

experienced by the man, nor is it an expression of that man's personality. Instead it is "an escape from emotion . . . an escape from personality" (SW 58). It is a scientifically detached operation in which many impressions and experiences are concentrated passively, without conscious deliberation by the poet, to produce art that evokes a unique experience in the reader. However, although the concentration of the poetic process "does not happen consciously or of deliberation," Eliot warns that "much in writing poetry must be conscious and deliberate. A bad poet is unconscious where he ought to be conscious and conscious where he ought to be unconscious. Both these errors make him 'personal'" (SW 58).

When exactly should a poet be conscious and when unconscious? This is one of those instances when, as Brian Lee notes, a reader has to "connect what is disconnected" to compensate for Eliot's "apparent carelessness about making the connections" (3). However, working back through the essay, we can begin to make those connections. We know that a poet must always remain "conscious of the main current" of the past. Not to do so would place individuality above tradition, resulting in individual or personal poetry. A successful poet must also remain unconscious, or passive, during the reaction between emotion and feelings. Not to do so would interfere with the process and risk injecting into the art emotion the poet's individual personality. Being simultaneously conscious and unconscious seems a tricky business, if not an impossible task. Presumably, however, a poet has so fully absorbed or procured (through "labour" or "sweat") a consciousness of the past that that consciousness is part of the floating feelings suspended in

the mind, the feelings that are activated unconsciously and undeliberately by an external structural emotion.

A final twist, commented on by many critics, is the seemingly unconscious afterthought added by Eliot immediately after he insists on the necessity for escaping emotion and personality: "but only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from those things" (SW 58). The implication here is that the poet separates the "mind which creates" from "the man who suffers," not because the separation is necessary, but because he wants to escape from the "personality and emotions" that make him suffer.

The desire to escape from the conflicts and agony of personal emotions seems to be one motive for Prufrock's inability to act, Gerontion's loss of passion, and an overactive consciousness of the past by the persona of The Waste Land. The three personae sacrifice self, personality, and passion, not necessarily because they want to be poets but because the sacrifice offers a means of escaping conflicts they cannot seem to resolve otherwise. Each of the personae exhibit, to different degrees, one or more of five basic characteristics of an impersonal poet:

1. A consciousness of the past, such that present meanings are automatically and unconsciously compared and contrasted with the dead.

2. Operation of the mind as a finely perfected medium in which external emotion combines with numberless feelings, phrases, images to form new combinations.
3. A continual surrender of self to the human tradition expressed through literature, the sacrifice of self, the extinction of personality.
4. Separation of the man who suffers from the mind which creates; the digestion and transmutation of passions.
5. Depersonalization as a means of escaping personality, emotion, passion.

3. SUFFERING VERSUS CREATING

Although "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" was written eight years before "Tradition and the Individual Talent" was published, Prufrock's strong "consciousness of the past" indicates that Eliot was already practicing, to some extent, the later theory. Prufrock exhibits an especially strong tendency to compare and contrast himself to figures drawn from the tradition of literature. In fact, it is this comparison that destroys Prufrock, for the "man who suffers" discovers that he cannot live up to the roles constructed by the "mind which creates." The poem traces Prufrock's attempt to subordinate the man who suffers to the mind that creates, but ultimately Prufrock fails to merge the two selves into a single, unified, assertive personality, capable of acting and interacting in the ordinary world.

We are introduced in the opening stanza of the poem to the divided man--"you and I"--as he prepares to descend into his personal hell, perhaps seeking among other things to resurrect a unified self. We learn that Prufrock would be a lover, a prophet, a hero. One part of him believes these roles accessible to him if only he could believe in his own vision, or individual talent, and act upon it, revising, recreating, and expressing that vision in a way that would be understandable first to himself and then to others. In this role Prufrock is also the would-be poet. On the other hand, Prufrock, despite his poetic potential, is only an ordinary man, a man unable to transcend his individual hell in order to create new wholes out of his individual, chaotic, and ultimately meaningless existence, a depth from

which he does not expect to return alive. Resurrection, unification of the two selves, into a life of action proves impossible for Prufrock. His inaction derives in part from a fear that he can never express his individual vision, acquired through experience and suffering, in terms that can be understood by another. In turn, this inability to articulate his vision arises from the inability to see himself truly as a traditional hero.

Prufrock remains an ordinary man rather than a poet because he allows the "man who suffers" to direct and ultimately stifle the "mind which creates." The self of the mind believes that "there will be time/To prepare a face," "to murder and create" new masks, new roles, new personae.¹ Full of the creative impulse, the mind believes there is "time yet . . . for a hundred visions and revisions." Visions in themselves are inadequate; the mind must revise visions, "regrouping . . . the same elements under a mood which was previously subordinate" in "rapid alternation and antitheses" to produce a "wholly different" mood (Eliot, "John Donne" 332). There is time for both selves to express themselves, opposing and balancing each other. The optimism here derives from a faith in the power of mental faculties to create, to make of self and the universe what one will. One can be a lover, a prophet, a hero, simply by activating the power of the mind to recreate that role for oneself out of examples of the past and literary tradition--such as a Marvellian lover, John the Baptist, Lazarus, or Hamlet. One must simply conform, formulate oneself, create a role for oneself

¹David Spurr also sees Prufrock as a failed poet, tracing his failure to an "inability to 'murder' existing structures in order to 'create' anew" (10).

out of one's consciousness of the "whole of the literature of Europe from Homer," which has preceded and continues to direct one's slight, ordinary, isolated, and individual existence. One can, if one wills it, extinguish one's own personality, sacrifice one's self, surrender one's individual suffering, to become an extension of those who have passed before.

The ordinary man, the emotional "man who suffers," falters, however, because when he compares himself--his actuality--to those who have passed, he is conscious not of similarity but of contrast. Behind the created man--the mask, the prepared face, the firm assertion of the "morning coat" and the "necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin"--lies the actual man, his bald spot and thinning hair, his thin arms and legs. Prufrock loses faith in the power of the mind to create. Who, after all, is formulating whom? He attempts to create for himself an accepted role through the assertion of "a formulated phrase," but breaks down when he recognizes that creation, like beauty, lies in the eye of the beholder. Ultimately, the power to create and revise an object lies with the one doing the looking, the evaluating, the sizing up. Prufrock doubts the ability of his mind to create a view of an object (himself) that will be perceived by others (the women) in the same way in which he wishes to be perceived. His doubt derives from personal experience with his own double, and thus untrustworthy, vision; the poet in him sees "Arms that are braceleted and white and bare," but the ordinary man sees ordinary arms "downed with light brown hair."

The ordinary man, whose fiction collapses in the face of reality, fails to see a valid comparison between himself and traditional heroes.

The closest he has come to John the Baptist is that they have both been "served up" by women. The closest he has come to Hamlet is the role of "attendant lord." Not a prince himself, he can only "advise the prince" (and falsely at that) and play the role of court flatterer. Prufrock, like Polonius, is

Deferential, . . .
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;

but, ultimately, he falls outside the action; readily dispensable, his death will be not a tragedy but an embarrassment. His most fitting role, perhaps, is that of Fool, an inarticulate Lazarus, who knows about death and suffering, but who speaks in riddles, destined never to be understood. Words fail Prufrock. The only means by which he feels he could communicate clearly and honestly would be to flash his "nerves in patterns on a screen"--a total and intricate exposure of his internal suffering without words.

Prufrock believes himself to be possessed of some inner vision that comes from the universal experience encompassing all of human nature and behavior and suffering accumulated since Homer. He has a knowledge that transcends ordinary knowledge and recognizes, as Lyndall Gordon notes, the "prophet's obligation to articulate what he alone knows" (47). What he knows and is unable to articulate is the utter meaninglessness of life in face of the ultimate finality of death. Having seen death, the "eternal Footman," having heard death's "snicker," having experienced fear, he has allowed the moment of potential, of greatness, to "flicker"

and die out. Prufrock's knowledge, the message he wishes to convey, is of the common suffering shared by all men. The way in which he would seek union with another person, which he equates with sexual union, is to express and share that suffering:

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows?

The common loneliness of mankind is for Prufrock, the sufferer, the basis for communication between two souls. But when he reconsiders his audience--"the women . . ./Talking of Michelangelo"--he realizes that such communication of suffering would be inappropriate, gauche. He would do better to sacrifice the man who suffers, extinguishing emotion, passion, suffering altogether, to be "a pair of ragged claws/Scuttling across the floors of silent seas." How much simpler to surrender both selves, leaving only a mindless and emotionless shell, submerged in silence, experiencing no urge to communicate.

Ultimately, of course, Prufrock is unable to progress from ordinary man to poet. He remains unable to suppress individual emotion to a level that would allow his creative mind to dominate, producing love, prophecy, action, or poetry. He allows his poetic potential, his moment of greatness, to pass and then wonders whether, if he had been able to unify those two selves into one complete and effective whole, the consequences would have been "worth while." If he could have united the two selves, could he have communicated with another, either sexually or spiritually, sharing his suffering, his loneliness, his fears of death,

and would that communication have been understood? He seeks spiritual union through sexual union, but fears that his partner will not understand the full implications of his desire (as he himself does not). He fears that any communication between them will prove sterile and empty, either empty conversation--a question dropped upon a plate--or empty sex. He yearns for full communion with another but, debilitated by his fear that any interaction will be inadequate, he evades the "overwhelming question"--which he can hardly formulate for himself, much less for another person. He chooses ultimately not to disturb the universe--that individual universe that cycles outward from him at its center.

Prufrock fails, then, to rise to his poetic potential, primarily because, although he separates the man who suffers from the mind that creates, he fails to surrender the man and his suffering. Despite that failure, however, Prufrock does exhibit several traits of the impersonal poet. Primarily, we see the way in which his mind operates as a passive medium in which the emotion of the external situation--the desire of a lonely, doubting man to seduce a lady within the confines of a rigidly ordered social structure--combines with numberless feelings, phrases, and images to create new forms. As Grover Smith notes, the action of the poem is "limited to the interplay of impressions, including memories, in Prufrock's mind" (16). Prufrock possesses the ability of a poet such as Donne to combine ordinary, human love with both intellectual and sensory experience to evoke a mood or emotion not actually in any of these elements. For example, the opening simile of the sunset does not, as David Ward notes, "describe evening or patient primarily, but . . . a state of feeling that is passive, and mimics death" (15).

Surrendering to this passive atmosphere, Prufrock's two selves journey into the mind--into its "half-deserted streets," its "muttering retreats," its "restless nights in one-night cheap hotels." The streets of the mind lead "like a tedious argument of insidious intent/ . . . to an overwhelming question." The argument itself is tedious, tiresomely dull; but its intent is "insidious," threatening, leading to that overwhelming question which cannot be expressed in words. The question, and its answer, must be experienced and converted into a new art emotion.

The desire for union then is not expressed in terms of sexual desire. It is transmuted into the sensuality of "the yellow fog," "the yellow smoke," that "rubs" and "licks" and "lingers," then "slips by the terrace" and makes "a sudden leap," after which it curls "about the house" and falls asleep. The sensual imagery here depicts a union of several elements--the fog, the smoke, the night, and the house. Fog and smoke unite first in a single entity, which in turn unites with the house, enveloped in the "soft October night." Interaction among the elements is complete; the advances of the fog/smoke are reciprocated by the night-enclosed house, as soot from the chimney falls upon the back that rubs against the window pane. The sort of union that Prufrock seeks, culminating in a shared, interlocked repose, can best be expressed by this combination of the external emotion--desire for sexual union--with stray images of a fog and cat--rubbing, licking, lingering, leaping, and curling down to sleep--mixed with concrete details of an ordinary world--smoke, soot, night, chimney, drains.

In the same way, we see Prufrock, when presenting the ordinary emotion of an ordinary man--the fear of sexually approaching a woman--express feelings not in the actual emotions at all. His desire and fear are translated into a series of feelings, one following the other in rapid succession. He descends from a consciousness of the present and the future as a time in which to act--to decide, to revise, and to reverse--into a state of world-weariness, a regret for time lost, for a life "measured out . . . with coffee spoons." As he descends deeper into himself, further from the creative mind and deeper into his suffering, he hears "voices dying," drowned out by "the music from a farther room," the melody of a distant, submerged world. Sinking deeper, further from the rational faculties of the mind, he sees himself as a creation of others, his own objectivity transformed by the subjective, evaluative appraisal of others. Relinquishing his need for creating masks, he senses the peacefulness and rest afforded by "the afternoon, the evening" of one's life, when one accepts that one is not, "nor was meant to be" an ardent lover, a martyred prophet, a tragic hero, but only a babbling, misunderstood Fool. He drops then into despair, recognizing the futility of sex "among the porcelain." Ultimately, the inability for union derives from the inability to reconcile the meaningless world Prufrock inhabits with the women--"the cups, the marmalade, the tea" and "the novels, . . . the teacups, . . . the skirts that trail along the floor"--with the one he inhabits alone--"the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets" where "lonely men in shirt-sleeves [lean] out of windows."

We see then the way in which Prufrock's mind leaps from image to image, some drawn from literature, some from routine, daily existence, to evoke a mood of the resignation of a man grown aged with accumulated experience. We see Prufrock age before our eyes as he passes from one mood or emotion into another. Indeed, the power of the poem derives not from the intensity of the external emotion--the desire for sexual or even spiritual union--but from the experience of vicariously witnessing the awful, painful intensity with which ordinary emotion fuses with all the experiences of Prufrock's life to yield an ultimate recognition of the failure of one's very existence and the recognition that yes, actually, it is too late: "I grow old . . . I grow old."

Wending ever deeper as he journeys into himself, Prufrock has passed from the confines of the mind to the realm of the unconscious, the inner psyche. Stripped of pretense and masks and the rational will to create, Prufrock suddenly projects a vision of "mermaids singing, each to each":

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.

This vision of the inner man, beyond both creating and suffering, is expressed in pure alliterative lyricism, the melody of mermaids singing, and colored in basic white and black. Welling up from Prufrock's inner self comes the voice of the romantic, visionary lyricist, desiring a world irrevocably forbidden to him: "I do not think that they will sing to me."

Recalled from his inner journey back to the external world by "human voices," he awakens not to resurrected life, but to a death-in-life.² Having surrendered his claim to the "music from a farther room" but having also refused to allow the mind that creates to sacrifice the man who suffers, Prufrock returns to the world as two selves--as "we," companions sharing a common hell--rather than as "one." Unable to unify himself, Prufrock will continue to suffer life rather than to live it.

²That Prufrock returns to the same "etherized" mood in which he began his journey indicates a cyclic process, suggesting that the journey is particularly tedious and insidious because it has been made repeatedly with similar results.

4. SURRENDERED PASSIONS

Prufrock denies the opportunity to experience passion because he cannot believe in and act out the roles that his mind creates--lover, prophet, hero. Because the man who suffers dominates the mind that creates, Prufrock remains an ordinary man despite his poetic potential, his ability to create new forms out of "disparate experience." "Gerontion," written eight years after "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," shows what is left of a man who has continuously denied passion throughout his life. Gerontion, who sees himself as "a dull head among windy spaces," is not unlike that emotionless shell suggested by Prufrock: "a pair of ragged claws/Scuttling across the floors of silent seas."

Like Prufrock, Gerontion has successfully practiced some skills of an impersonal poet, but he has either carried those skills to a destructive extreme or has practiced some to the exclusion of others. For example, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" Eliot, describing an impersonal poet, says that

the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material. (SW 54)

Gerontion's problem is that he has consistently denied the passions that constitute the material of the mind, the very material that the artist relies on to "digest and transmute" into new forms. Gerontion's mind has continued to operate as "a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the

particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together" (SW 55). But until some sort of passion or emotion activates and fuses with those feelings, phrases, and images, they will remain suspended in the mind indefinitely, and no new forms will be produced.

Thus, in Gerontion the man who suffers, the man who experiences the painful and joyful passions of both personal and external emotion, has been almost totally extinguished by the mind that creates. When we are first introduced to Gerontion in the first stanza of the poem, we see a man who is overcome with feelings of old age, sterility, impotence, and disease. As we accompany Gerontion on an intellectual journey into his past to discover the source of his sterility, we begin to suspect that his life has been "a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. . . . a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (SW 52-53). The Gerontion that we see resides neither in his sensual body nor in his emotions, but only in his head, a head that, although not empty, is "dry" and "dull."

That Gerontion views himself as simply a mind that is old, sterile, nonproductive, and untouched by emotion or passion is clear in the refrain that recurs throughout the poem:

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

.

Vacant shuttles
Weave the wind. I have no ghosts,
An old man in a draughty house
Under a knob.

.

Tenants of the house,
Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season.

Gerontion has been reduced to a "dull head." The house of his mind is "draughty"; winds blow through the house, but they are woven by "vacant shuttles." No ghosts, neither holy nor unholy spirits, provide the material that, when woven with the wind, could activate and regenerate the "tenants of the house." Thus, these tenants--the thoughts, feelings, phrases, and images--remain suspended, waiting for the ghosts with which they could unite to produce fertile new forms.

Gerontion's sense of old age seems to derive primarily from his feelings of being a "dry brain in a dry season." It is increased, however, by his dependency on the boy and the contrast between them. Gerontion is in "a dry month"; anticipating only death, he looks backward. In contrast, the preadolescent boy, "waiting for rain," anticipating the passion and potency of manhood, gazes forward. But for the moment the two are linked by Gerontion's senility and the boy's youth in the pastime of reading.

When the boy reads to Gerontion of "the hot gates" of Thermopylae, Gerontion's mind strays, thinking backward of what he has missed: I never fought--either in ancient Thermopylae or in modern Europe. Having never fought, he has been denied a sort of suffering, which painful as it is, binds men in a common cause, a common pain, a common victory or defeat. Having never fought, he has no direct experience with this suffering that unites men; he has only dry thoughts, the words, phrases, and images picked up from reading about or listening to those who did fight.

The sense of loss that Gerontion feels from not having fought leads him to appraise the present condition of his old age:

My house is a decayed house
And the jew squats on the window sill, the owner,
Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,
Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London.

His house, his mind, besides being "draughty," is "decayed." Its condition seems to reflect the condition of its owner, Gerontion, who sees himself as a displaced jew, a refugee of Belgium, who has partially restored himself in London. Both Gerontion as owner and the house of his mind show the marks of suffering. Thus, Gerontion did suffer as a result of war; but his suffering is that of a victim--a fleeing, homeless refugee or a bomb-scorched house--rather than of a fighter, active and potent.

In an abrupt change of metaphor, Gerontion then envisions his mind not as a "patched and peeled" house in urban London, but as a rural field filled with "rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds," the infertile waste of thoughts inactivated by passion:

The goat coughs at night in the field overhead;
Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds.
The woman keeps the kitchen, makes tea,
Sneezes at evening, poking the peevish gutter.

In his senility Gerontion seems part lustful old goat, coughing at night, and part old woman, making tea, sneezing, "poking the peevish gutter" of his mind. His mind has deteriorated to a gutter for carrying off waste and perhaps, in the word's second connotation, to a level of low vulgarity.

Gerontion is awakened from the contemplation of the state of his mind by the boy, who is reading no longer of Thermopylae but of the promise of Christ's nativity: "The word within a word, unable to speak a word,/Swaddled with darkness." The boy reads excitedly of the hope of regeneration through Christ: "In the juvenescence of the year/Came Christ the tiger . . . ," but Gerontion's mind immediately begins fusing the external emotion with images in his mind to produce new forms and ultimately a new mood. When he thinks of Christ's resurrection, he thinks first of springtime, a time of lush and burgeoning vegetation and rising passions, but he sees the season as profligate and "depraved." Then he thinks about the way in which the original passion of Christ's birth, death, and resurrection has been diluted through time to a ritual sharing of wafer and wine:

To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk
Among whispers; by Mr. Silvero
With caressing hands, at Limoges
Who walked all night in the next room;

By Hakagawa, bowing among the Titians;
By Madame de Tornquist, in the dark room
Shifting the candles; Fraulein von Kulp
Who turned in the hall, one hand on the door.

Here there is no wonder, no sense of a tiger springing, no passion of Christ's death reflected in the profligate dogwood or the flowering judas. Instead the ritual of the Eucharist is performed "among whispers." And what should be the rite that unifies mankind has been replaced by or is enacted side by side with the rites and passions that separate men and nations from each other and that separate men from God.

Mr. Silvero, Hakagawa, Madame de Tornquist, and Fraulein Kulp are distracted from the true meaning and communion of the Eucharist by their individual "passions." They are living in what the persona of "Burnt Norton" calls "a place of disaffection"; they are "distracted from distraction by distraction/Filled with fancies and empty of meaning" (CPP 120).

Thus, the external emotion of Christ's birth, death, and resurrection activates a cluster of feelings, images, and phrases that have been suspended in Gerontion's mind. And yet he feels that he is unable to convert these confused feelings into a new form, a clarity that satisfies: "Vacant shuttles/Weave the wind." He is unable to fuse the external emotion with the images in his mind productively because he can locate no responding passions--either on the level of Christ the tiger or on that of Mr. Silvero, Hakagawa, Madame de Tornquist, or Fraulein Kulp--in himself. He himself has no ghosts, no holy or unholy passions, materials necessary for the creation of new forms.¹

"After such knowledge," he asks, "what forgiveness?" The knowledge that he has somehow missed passion--the passions of war, of Christ, of the sensuality of "depraved May"--is one that cannot be forgiven. The best he can do is try to understand and to explain his reasons. Thinking back then over his life, Gerontion attempts to discover, not through emotions but through a willed act of the intellect, how he managed to live a life without passion:

¹Of course, poetry is being produced here--out of the suffering of a man recognizing his own sterility and impotence--but Gerontion himself is not making the connections necessary to achieve the clarity he needs.

Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities.

One's absorption in history can lead one astray from reality. Prufrock, as we have seen, envisioned himself as a potential lover, prophet, hero; but then, contrasting himself against greatness, Prufrock lost the faith in himself to act, not only on a grand scale, but even on the most minimal and ordinary level of human interaction. He retreated into himself and his solitary suffering. Gerontion, thinking back, sees that he was deceived, as Prufrock was temporarily, with "whispering ambitions" and "vanities." Gerontion does not tell us, as Prufrock does, what his own ambitions or vanities were; but whereas Prufrock retreated from both ambitious and ordinary involvement in the world, Gerontion appears to have actively pursued those ambitions--but at great cost.

Whatever Gerontion's ambitions, they distracted him, preventing him from seeing the value of certain gifts when they were offered:

Think now
She gives when our attention is distracted
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
That the giving famishes the craving.

Although Gerontion's use here of the plural "our" suggests universality, the "history," described as female, seems to refer primarily to Gerontion's personal history. Gerontion was offered a gift, which in the context of what follows, appears to have been passion. But he was so confused by the turmoil of emotions--whether he should or should not

accept the passion offered--that "the giving famished the craving"; the confusion killed the desire. This fragment of history suggests the period of early youth, a time when sex is terrifying because it is forbidden.

Gerontion's early desire to escape the confusion of emotion and passion leads to a second stage in his rejection of passion, one in which history

Gives too late

What's not believed in, or if still believed,
In memory only, reconsidered passion.

Passion was again offered to Gerontion at a later age, but by then he no longer believed in the power of the love he had felt earlier.² Or perhaps he "still believed" in the power of love, but "in memory only." Once perhaps he had experienced that power, but no longer could he revive the emotion of the original experience.

Finally, he realizes that the original event occurred too early, at a time when he was weak, at a time when he thought it could "be dispensed with"--again because he was pursuing ambitions and satisfying vanities that seemed, perhaps, more valuable than passion:

Gives too soon

Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with
Till the refusal propagates a fear.

²Or if history is read here as tradition, all of literature since Homer, Gerontion may be expressing his disbelief in the transcendent love "remembered" by the persona of The Waste Land--Tristan and Isolde, Antony and Cleopatra, Ferdinand and Miranda.

Having refused the initial experience of passion for whatever reasons, passion now breeds fear--fear that the original intensity of passion cannot be revived, fear that he can no longer respond physically, or fear that the satisfaction of sexual desire is sinful. Gerontion himself seems unable to define the fear exactly. He simply acknowledges that fear exists and, in acknowledging it, discovers connections among it and the refusal of passion and "unnatural vices":

Think
Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices
Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues
Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.
These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree.

Gerontion's "heroism" and "courage" in denying passion resulted in "unnatural vices"--the denial of sexual union to one who desires it is both "unnatural" and a "vice"³--and his "impudent crimes" have forced virtue upon him. Here he suggests that he did not actually desire "virtue"; but the fear arising from the refusal forced it upon him. Again, Gerontion seems uncertain of cause and effect; he simply sees connections. What he does know is that "These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree"; his denial of passion is in some way linked with feelings of guilt and sin.

³Moody argues this point not in his discussion of "Gerontion" but in his discussion of the persona's exercise of self-control in The Waste Land. The persona's self-control, he says, "must leave the other's heart unfulfilled, wishing to respond and vainly waiting." The resulting frustration of the loved one, he goes on to say, breeds feelings of compassion and guilt in the persona (103-04).

Thoughts of guilt and sin recall Gerontion to the external emotion that activated the thoughts, the juvenescence offered by Christ the tiger. And yet the process in his mind has transformed the original mood of hope to a new mood of despair: "The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours." The tiger will not save us; it will annihilate us. An old man looking back, Gerontion has discovered guilt, a guilt associated with his denial of passion. Like John Marcher in Henry James's "The Beast in the Jungle," Gerontion seems to have dispensed with passion for a purpose; that is, he was waiting expectantly for something "more valuable," some vague, undefined "ambitions."

In "The Beast in the Jungle," May Bartram reminds Marcher of the secret he had shared with her ten years earlier:

You said you had had from your earliest time, as the deepest thing within you, the sense of being kept for something rare and strange, possibly prodigious and terrible, that was sooner or later to happen to you, that you had in your bones the foreboding and the conviction of, and that would perhaps overwhelm you. (James 336)

Marcher later considers marrying May, but does not because "his obsession . . . wasn't a privilege he could invite a woman to share Something or other lay in wait for him . . . like a crouching beast in the jungle. . ." (James 343). All he could be certain of was "the inevitable spring of the creature" and that "a man of feeling didn't cause himself to be accompanied by a lady on a tiger-hunt" (James 343).

Not until after May's death does the "lurking Beast" spring, sealing Marcher's doom. Too late he learns that

The escape would have been to love her; then, then he would have lived. She had lived--who could say now with what passion?--since she had loved him for himself; whereas he had never thought of her . . . but in the chill of his egotism and the light of her use. (James 382)

When Marcher visits May's grave, he is shocked by the great grief he sees in the face of a stranger visiting another grave. "What," Marcher wonders, "had the man had, to make him by the loss of it so bleed and yet live?" (381).

Gerontion sees in the tiger's spring neither juvenescence nor resurrection, but the knowledge, like Marcher's, of his own great guilt, the guilt of denying passionate love to himself and another. Indeed, "After such knowledge, what forgiveness?"

And yet despite the implications of his knowledge, Gerontion seems to comfort himself that, despite his denial of human love and passion, or perhaps because of it, he and the one he has denied will somehow not have "reached conclusion" even after his own death:

Think at last

We have not reached conclusion, when I
Stiffen in a rented house. Think at last
I have not made this show purposelessly
And it is not by any concitation
Of the backward devils.
I would meet you upon this honestly.

Interpreting these lines with any certainty is virtually impossible. In one sense they suggest that the achievement of the "ambitions" for which Gerontion has sacrificed passions will bestow a fame on him and his beloved that will survive their death. But when "Gerontion" is read

along with The Waste Land, as Eliot originally intended, the lines suggest, as we will see in more detail in the next chapter, that Gerontion's "ambitions" were spiritual; that he intentionally denied human passion in order to attain divine love. Nevertheless, whatever the nature of Gerontion's ambitions, he made this "show" of his life, he says, denying his beloved, for a purpose--and that purpose was to attain something of more value, something that would survive death.

And yet despite this rather vague comfort, Gerontion still suffers from the knowledge of his own sterility, for he asks the woman, what can I do now to regain some intimacy with you?

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

Thinking back, Gerontion sees that the denial of passion deprives one of the "beauty" of sexual union. Too long a denial "propagates a fear," a "terror" that the experience of love and passion can no longer be repeated. And terror leads to "inquisition," the never-ending self-examination and mental persecution of obsession and guilt. In "Ash Wednesday" the persona, torn between human desire and divine love, prays

that I may forget
These matters that with myself I too much discuss
Too much explain (CPP 61)

And Gerontion asks why he should retain human desire since he is forced to "adulterate" it, to dilute and modify it. Having lost his passion through years of denial and adulteration, he has lost all his senses-- "sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch."

Up to this point, Gerontion has suggested several different reasons for having denied passion: (1) his pursuit of some unidentified ambitions and vanities; (2) his desire to escape the confusion of passion and emotion; (3) his loss of a youthful belief in the power of love; (4) his belief in the dispensibility of love; and (5) his fear of disillusionment, impotence, sin. But buried in these final passages is the hint of one other reason why Gerontion has denied passion--that is, the desire to be a poet. Passions are the materials that must be transmuted, but to be an impersonal poet means to adulterate those passions, to transform them from individual significance to universal significance.

Such a reading is hardly evident, of course, without reference to "Tradition and the Individual Talent." But when we compare the poem and the essay, both written in 1919, we sense that Gerontion has surrendered his passions, sacrificed his "self," and extinguished his personality to attain something more valuable--those vague, unidentified, and perhaps fluctuating ambitions. That those ambitions might be artistic is suggested by the lines

These [senses] with a thousand small deliberations
Protract the profit of their chilled delirium,
Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled,
With pungent sauces, multiply variety
In a wilderness of mirrors.

These lines recall Eliot's scientific analogy for describing the poetic process, in which emotion, rather than being expressed directly or "turn[ed] loose," is fused with and tempered by the "numberless feelings, phrases, images" stored in the mind ready to "unite to form a new compound" (SW 55, 58). Within Gerontion's mind the senses (through which experience is perceived) fuse with "a thousand deliberations" (numberless feelings, phrases, images). Through this fusion the original emotional "delirium" is "chilled" and the "sense" is "cooled" so that the brain, or rather the contents of the brain (its impressions and experiences), is "excited." This process yields multiple and various new constructions, reflecting but not duplicating exactly the original emotion. Although valuable for the creation of poetry, this process neutralizes the man, reducing him to a mere receptacle or an inert catalyst, no longer moved, changed, or affected by passion. "Why," Gerontion asks, "should I need to keep it [passion]/Since what is kept must be adulterated?"

Gerontion then suggests that this process--the poetic process that adulterates passion--is one that he can no longer stop, any more than the spider can "suspend its operations" or the "weevil/Delay." He must continue to create impersonal characters--"De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammel"--out of his private experiences. But the process of creating these new forms does not appear to leave him as inert and unchanged as the shred of platinum; instead, the process leaves him "shuddering" as the "fractured atoms" of his private universe spin into existence outside his own mind. Like a lonely "Gull against the wind, in the

windy straits,/Of Belle Isle, or running on the Horn," Gerontion is buffeted by the wind, shedding "White feathers in the snow."

Practicing the poetic process has widened the gulf between Gerontion's mind and his passion, so much so that the passion is largely nonexistent and all that remains is "a dry brain in a dry season." Without the passions necessary as material, the winds blow through and around Gerontion, producing no new forms, and merely driving him "To a sleepy corner" to wait for death and recall the Duke's words in Shakespeare's Measure for Measure:

Thou has nor youth nor age,
But as it were an after-dinner's sleep,
Dreaming on both, for all thy blessed youth
Becomes as aged, and doth beg the alms
Of palsied eld; and, when thou art old and rich,
Thou hast neither heat, affection, limb, nor beauty,
To make thy riches pleasant. What's yet in this
That bears the name of life? Yet in this life
Lie hid moe thousand deaths; yet death we fear,
That makes these odds all even. (III, i: 32-41)

Despite Gerontion's intellectual journey into his past, he reaches (and we reach) few sound conclusions. He discovers primarily his own version of the Duke's words--that youth is distracted from passion by the ambitions of manhood, and that the man who has achieved his ambitions regrets the denial of that passion--so that life itself, which kills so much daily, is far worse than the death we fear.

However, Gerontion discovers from his journey no way in which to regenerate himself, no way to reactivate the senses or revive passion. Without passion, he is simply a mind, a "dull head," a receptacle for

dry thoughts. As in the case of Prufrock, the journey has been illuminating, but the conclusion is the same: I am as I am--old, ineffectual, empty of passion. Because I cannot change, I cannot act; I can only retreat into suffering and wait for death.

5. QUEST FOR THE EXTINGUISHED PERSONALITY

The persona of The Waste Land continues the quest initiated by Gerontion. He too seeks the source of and a cure for his sterility. But unlike Gerontion who exists only as a mind, a "dull head," the persona of The Waste Land, who remains unnamed, embodies both the man who suffers and the mind that creates. In fact, what we see is a constant interaction between the two. Seeking salvation, the persona wanders aimlessly through the waste land of London--or more likely, as Prufrock does, through the waste land of his own mind. He is thwarted in his search, however, by the mind itself, which wants only to escape personality and emotion. Whenever the man who suffers attempts to resurrect his individual personality and his private emotion, the mind intervenes, transforming the personal into the universal.

The five parts of The Waste Land depict stages in the struggle between the man who suffers and the mind that creates as the persona journeys ever further from the universalizing faculties of the mind and deeper into his private nightmare. Ultimately, what we see, if only momentarily, is the exorcism of the demon, the private experience, buried deep in the psyche of the persona. Not until many years after Eliot wrote "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and The Waste Land (in 1953) did he discuss the existence of such a demon:

[The poet] is haunted by a demon, a demon against which he feels powerless, because in its first manifestation it has no face, no name, nothing; and the words, the poem he makes, are a kind of form of exorcism of this demon. In other words . . . , he is going to all that trouble, not in order to communicate with anyone, but to gain relief from acute

discomfort; and when the words are finally arranged in the right way--or in what he comes to accept as the best arrangement he can find--he may experience a moment of exhaustion, of appeasement, of absolution, and of something very near annihilation (OPP 107)

What we see in The Waste Land is a generally, but not totally, successful attempt by the mind to consciously and deliberately control and suppress the demon, or the personal experience, that unconsciously plagues the persona, rendering him sterile and impotent. The mind does this by converting personal experiences and memories into universal ones reflecting either the sordidness of modern civilization or the glory of past civilizations as preserved in literature.

Part I introduces all three manifestations of the persona: the man who suffers, the mind that creates, and the buried personality. In Part II we see the way in which the mind operates, fusing external emotion with words, phrases, and images to form new combinations. In Part III the man who suffers begins to reassert himself, but his contemplation of his suffering is interrupted repeatedly by the mind that creates. Beginning in the middle of Part III, however, the music of the typist's gramophone seems to revive some consciousness in the persona of the buried personality. From that point, the persona begins his journey by water, which leads him further from the faculties of the creative mind and closer to that buried personality that conceals the source of his sterility. Part IV briefly points to the immersion that releases memory of the past. In Part V the persona journeys deeper into the individual heart of darkness; his journey becomes progressively less a journey into the collective past of mankind and more a journey into the personal

nightmare of the individual past of the persona. Ultimately, the buried personality reveals not only the source of the persona's suffering but also the knowledge that there is no cure. With this knowledge, the man returns to his suffering, the individual personality returns to the grave, and the mind quickly transforms the personal into the universal.

In describing his impersonal theory of poetry, Eliot explains that

What happens [to the poet] is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality. (SW 52-53)

In the persona of The Waste Land we see a man who has extinguished and buried a part of himself, a part of his individual personality. This buried personality occasionally revives, attempting to make itself known, but is either suppressed or converted by the mind into new forms.

However, the extinguished personality clearly reveals itself, if only momentarily, at the end of the poem--the point at which the speaker translates the thunder's rumble into words that articulate and reveal his own weaknesses. At the first rumble of thunder, the man hears:

Datta: what have we given?
My friend, blood shaking my heart
The awful daring of a moment's surrender
Which an age of prudence can never retract
By this, and this only, we have existed

At the second rumble, he hears:

Dayadhvam: I have heard the key
Turn in the door once and turn once only
We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
Only at nightfall, aethereal rumours
Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus

And at the third rumble he hears:

Damyata: The boat responded
Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
To controlling hands

Taken together as an expression of the man's "supreme moment of complete knowledge," when he lived "his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender" (Conrad 118), the messages seem to recall a moment at which the persona actively chose to deny human love and passion. The sole event by which he has existed can be traced to "the awful daring of a moment's surrender." It is unclear exactly what was surrendered or to what extent. But the second and third responses indicate that, although the persona perhaps surrendered to a moment's passionate desire, he ultimately controlled and stifled that desire. Although the key turned once, the door remained locked. The persona refused the moment, denying both the total fulfillment of desire and the communion with another that might have resulted from acceptance. He exerted control, directing it not externally to control the heart that "would have responded/Gaily," but internally to control his own desire and passion. As a result both he and the one that "would have responded" remain isolated, "each in his prison," and "think of the key

. . . /Only at nightfall." At night dreams "Revive for a moment" the persona, just as the pleas of loved ones revived and almost saved Coriolanus, who had isolated himself from his country, his surrogate father, his mother, his wife, and his son.

Although the individual personality emerges clearly only when the persona translates the thunder, we see signs of his existence in Part I, "The Burial of the Dead":

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.

Spring, like the dreams of nightfall, threaten to revive the personality that has been buried by the transforming mind. Unlike April, winter is a protective season:

Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.

The buried self exists, but is blanketed with forgetfulness, or the consciousness that "digests and transmutes [personal] passions" into new forms (SW 54). Then comes April, "stirring/Dull roots" and close after comes summer, which "surprised us."

From this point, we see the creative mind come into action. The persona begins to remember, create, and try out a multiplicity of characters, roles, voices, and situations. The fusion between real experiences that actually occurred to the persona and the words,

phrases, and images that are suspended in his mind is such that no one, perhaps not even he himself, can distinguish between what was immediately experienced, what was read or heard or observed, and what was created from a combination of the two. We begin to get a sense of the persona as Gerontion, a creative mind from which fragments are whirled into a separate existence outside the mind.

But among the confusion of voices and characters we occasionally hear the voice of the buried self, the individual personality that has been sacrificed and nearly extinguished by the mind, which automatically and continuously transmutes individual experience into collective experience. Partially revived and resurrected by dreams and spring, the buried individuality is a corpse that, if not watched, might sprout or bloom or be dug up by a dog. The personality breaks forth briefly in the middle of Part I:

--Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

Sprouting out of the welter of voices in Part I, this memory appears to be the experience by which the persona has existed, the moment of surrender to an overwhelming passion, the moment when he "heard the key/Turn in the door once and turn once only." That the experience in the Hyacinth garden is linked with the experience alluded to in the thunder's message is clarified by a similar passage in the later poem "Burnt Norton," published in 1936:

Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. (CPP 117)

Although the later poem suggests that the decision not to open the door was mutual, the passages in The Waste Land indicate that it was the persona who refused the experience. It is he who raises the experience in the Hyacinth garden from a sexual one to a spiritual one:

I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

That this is a spiritual moment and not just a suspension of consciousness or annihilation, as Moody (81) suggests, can be seen by looking again to some of Eliot's later poems. In "Ash Wednesday" the persona "renounce[s] the blessed face" of his beloved, transforming her into "Blessed sister, holy mother, spirit of the fountain, spirit of the garden" (CPP 60, 67). She appears to him "in white and blue, in Mary's colour," "wearing/White light folded, sheathed about her . . ." (CPP 64). Guided by the "silent sister," the persona travels toward

the Garden
Where all loves end
Terminate torment
Of love unsatisfied
The greater torment
Of love satisfied (CPP 62)

And in "Burnt Norton" the persona rejoices in

The inner freedom from the practical desire
The release from action and suffering, release from the inner
And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded
By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving
Erhebung without motion, concentration
Without elimination, both a new world
And the old made explicit, understood
In the completion of its partial ecstasy,
The resolution of its partial horror. (CPP 119)

The experience in the Hyacinth garden, as remembered by the persona of The Waste Land, seems linked with the later experience in the rose garden and with the attempt by the persona of "Burnt Norton" to locate "the still point of the turning world." Rather than uniting with his beloved in a moment of sexual fulfillment, the persona of The Waste Land rises above the sexual moment into a spiritual experience. He transcends his human desire, transforming it into divine love, which necessarily isolates him from the beloved who inspired but cannot share the love.

The experience in the Hyacinth garden, when read in terms of the thunder's message, suggests that the persona's sterility derives from his inability to repeat the experience--his inability to reach divine love through sexual love. Like Prufrock, the persona wants not just sexual union, but a total, mystical communion that unites man, woman, and God. Or as the persona of "East Coker" says:

We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion (CPP 129)

Beginning with Part I, then, we can trace the interaction between the man who suffers and the mind that creates. The man who suffers, although "forgetful" of "memory and desire" in winter, becomes painfully aware during April, the "breeding" season. Summer activates the mind that creates, releasing not personal memories but memories one would expect from the "mind of Europe." They are memories of a not too distant summer in Austria, followed rapidly by another person's (Marie's) childhood memory of an Austrian winter interjected into the empty European conversation in the Hofgarten:

we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

But the man who suffers is not long distracted by these vapid memories. He asks, "What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow/Out of this stony rubbish?" Recognizing that the man who suffers will not be satisfied with trivial memories, the mind creates a new voice, one that matches more closely the mood of the questioning persona. For the first time we hear the sonorous, prophetic voice of Tiresias, the ancient seer of Thebes:

Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,

And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

The prophet promises to reveal knowledge, to show something other than humans can perceive, something other than "a heap of broken images," but ultimately reveals only what all men already know: "fear in a handful of dust." The response distracts the persona from his desire to identify "the roots that clutch," the branches that sprout from the buried personality, by introducing the subject of death.

The mind immediately seizes the external emotion of death, fusing it with a refrain from Tristan's song to Isolde. In this way the mind changes one mood into another, as Eliot says Donne does: "A change of feeling, with Donne, is rather the regrouping of the same elements under a mood which was previously subordinate . . . (Eliot, "John Donne" 332). Thus, here elements of death are regrouped, transforming fear of death into awe of the redemptive, death-transcending power of love. It is this new mood that resurrects the buried self, who tells of his transcendent experience in the Hyacinth garden. But the mind, returning to Tristan's dying lament, "Oed' und leer das Meer," quickly stifles the personal experience, burying it in the pervading mood of the redemptive love of Tristan and Isolde.

The mind abruptly introduces a new character, perhaps introduced by the idea of the sea. Madame Sosotris, modern prophetess, is the female counterpart of Tiresias. She is sick, and he is old and blind, and

neither seems to reveal much of true value. Madame Sosostris sees but cannot read the cards. She warns the persona to fear death by water when that is the only means to his salvation. Tiresias, on the other hand, as we will see in more detail later, reduces the sterility of modern civilization to its empty and depraved sexuality, surely a symptom rather than a cause.

Madame Sosostris's reference to "crowds of people, walking round in a ring" revives the man who suffers, who sees his own living death reflected by the crowds of London, a city which seems unreal because it seems a land of the dead rather than the living:

Unreal City,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.

The man who suffers sees himself here as one of many, all suffering from the same ailment, but each isolated in his individual prison, avoiding looking at or communicating with one another. At this point the man simply recognizes that his suffering is reflected by others; he does not see them as suffering because of his own impotence, as the mind later suggests when it alludes in Part III to the Fisher King. He does see one man he knows and stops to speak, but the voice that is heard and the words that are spoken are alienating rather than sympathetic. The mind has intervened, creating a new character and voice to speak for the man. This character fought with Stetson at Mylae, not in Europe, and he accuses Stetson of a crime far different from the one the man would have

accused him of. That is, the man who suffers sees in his acquaintance another buried personality, but the mind that creates, using a tone quite unlike that of the man who suffers, implies that Stetson has killed and buried someone.

A similar event occurs in a later poem, "Little Gidding." The persona, wandering about London before dawn, meets "some dead master." Wanting to talk with his old master despite the fact that they inhabit different worlds, the persona makes the necessary transition:

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--
And he a face still forming (CPP 141)

Whereas the persona of "Little Gidding" assumes "a double part" and "another's voice" in order to encourage honest communication, the mind that creates intrudes in the persona of The Waste Land in order to prevent honest communication.

That the mind does intrude here, just as the man begins to speak, indicates that the individual personality is never so deeply buried that the mind that creates ever forgets him. The mind is always aware of the presence of those "dull roots." Its objective is to keep them buried, to prevent their sprouting and blooming, so that it can convert the personal emotion into universal emotion without revealing the personal experience. So the mind struggles with the man, who wishes to understand his suffering. Wanting only to escape personality and emotion,

the mind leaps in at any point at which the man who suffers attempts to voice his individual personality or personal emotion.

Part II, "A Game of Chess," is dominated primarily by the mind that creates, and we see in its opening stanza perhaps the best example of the mind operating as a "finely perfected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations" (SW 53-54). In describing the room in which the persona and his partner are enclosed, in which they are entombed in a living death, he compares and contrasts their passionless relations to some of the most passionate relationships recorded in literature. An external emotion--the all-consuming and destructive sensuality of Antony and Cleopatra, manifested in literature through the "rich profusion" of the woman--fuses with words, phrases, and images suspended in the persona's mind:

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra
Reflecting light upon the table as
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
From satin cases poured in rich profusion;
In vials of ivory and coloured glass
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,
Unguent, powdered, or liquid--troubled, confused
And drowned the sense in odours

The theme and words in the passage come, as Grover Smith notes, not only from Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra but also from another of his plays, Cymbeline, and two stories by Poe, "The Assignation" and "Shadow--A Parable" (123-24). Cymbeline tells the story of Imogen, who

was "poisoned" at her husband's request because he believed that Iachimo had successfully seduced her. The poison administered to Imogen was replaced with a sleeping potion--which did not kill, but simply put her to sleep, a living death from which, when she awoke, was born a new regenerative love between her and her husband. The story recalls the love potion taken by Isolde and Tristan as well as the magic practiced by Prospero and Ariel in The Tempest to regenerate the world of Naples and Milan through the love of Ferdinand and Miranda.

In "The Assination," however, the poison is real, and the lovers die, presumably uniting after death. But the primary mood evoked by "The Assination" as well as "Shadow--A Parable" is the narrator's sense of being oppressed by the opulence surrounding him, of being "troubled, confused/And drowned," as the persona of The Waste Land is, by the "rich profusion" of his partner's boudoir. Thus, the originating emotion--the sensuality that was the lifeblood of Antony and Cleopatra--has been transformed into the oppressiveness of excessive opulence. Woman's sexuality has been transformed from the regenerative love of Imogen to the stimulating but destructive sensuality of Cleopatra to the oppressive and stifling presence of the persona's partner. Together, these ladies, in varying situations, exhibit both the medicinal and poisonous effects of belladonna.

Thus, the excessive sensuality of Cleopatra, which destroyed the public man while fulfilling the private man, fuses with the words and phrases and feelings from other literary works, to produce a new emotion--not of stimulative and healing sensuality, but of the poisoning, cloying, numbing effects of sensuality. Instead of flames of

passion, the "flames of sevenbranched candelabra," tainted by the "synthetic perfumes," and the flames from "Huge sea-wood fed with copper/Burned green and orange," cast a "sad light" on the couple entombed in the room.

The woman advances on the man, as Cleopatra might, but she seeks, instead of sexual union, simply to awaken the man from his lethargy. She hammers away at his indifference, trying in vain to elicit some response, but her advances are poisonous rather than stimulative:

Stay with me.
Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak.
"What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
"I never know what you are thinking. Think."

.
"Do
"You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember
"Nothing?"

"Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?"

Confronted by a partner who appears to be dead--he no longer, as far as she can tell, speaks or thinks or sees or remembers--the woman is driven to distraction, threatening to "rush out as I am, and walk the street/With my hair down," as Dido did. Dido ran into the streets of Carthage when Aeneas retreated from their private love to perform his public duty, but the man here has simply retreated into the private, isolated world of his own madness:

I think we are in rats' alley
Where the dead men lost their bones.

.
I remember
Those are pearls that were his eyes.

O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag--
It's so elegant
So intelligent

Like Philomela, the man is unable to express himself in a way that the woman will understand. He believes that, even if he should speak, his partner would understand his words and his thoughts no better than she understands his silence, just as Philomela's song of suffering is misinterpreted--"Jug jug' to dirty ears." So they continue in a relationship that has deteriorated to a "game of chess," he withdrawing from her advances, but undermining her through his indifference. "Pressing lidless eyes," they await "a knock upon the door," the death that will release them from their tomb, just as the Sibyl of Cumae waits in her jar.

The mind again interrupts the man who suffers before he can reveal too much of his personal experience by setting another scene of modern sexual sterility against the backdrop of Cleopatra, Imogen, and Philomela. Lil, who at 31 is already "antique," has borne five children, and is losing her teeth, has lost all sexual desire for her husband. To her the advances of Albert, who as her friend tells her, "wants a good time,/And if you don't give it him, there's others will," seem only a rape and violation that are destroying her through excessive child-bearing. Like Philomela and the persona, she is violated but speechless; she suffers but cannot articulate that suffering to those who will not understand. Although her suffering is unromantic--"jug jug"--in comparison to that of Philomela, Lil is just as trapped in her misery as the persona and sees no escape other than death.

Despite the brief distraction of the pub scene, or perhaps as a result of it, the man who suffers reasserts himself at the beginning of "The Fire Sermon":

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.

Summer has passed. The falling leaves clutch and sink into the earth where they will mingle with the "roots that clutch." The nymphs not only of summer but of the ancient world are gone, and along with them their song; the wind that sweeps the land makes no sound. The only song is the lament rising from the buried self, stirred perhaps by the clutching leaves:

Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept . . .
Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,
Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.

Although the personal experience is partially disguised by the allusion to Spenser's wedding song and Psalm 137, the lyricism and the tone of the lines link them to the song that wells up from the buried personality.

Hearing this song, the man continues to try to identify the source of his suffering:

But at my back in a cold blast I hear
The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

A rat crept softly through the vegetation
Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
While I was fishing in the dull canal
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
And on the king my father's death before him.
White bodies naked on the low damp ground
And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.

The first lines recall the man's unspoken response to his wife:

I think we are in rats' alley
Where the dead men lost their bones.

The end of summer and the coming of winter remind the persona of death, which he envisions as rats among bones and perceives as the grim joke of death, similar to Prufrock's fear of the Eternal Footman's snicker. The mind suggests that the persona is a Fisher King, that his own impotence and sterility affects the land around him. But the man senses that no external hero can save him; he must fish in the "dull canal" where the "dull roots" are buried to find his own salvation. All of mankind suffers the same fate; fathers are dead and brothers are wrecked and dying. All men are dying kings, and each is responsible for his own wreck and his own salvation. Musing upon his own wreck and his own death, the man thinks again, "But at my back from time to time I hear . . . , " but the mind intervenes:

The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.
O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
And on her daughter
They wash their feet in soda water

Again the mind that creates prevents the man from discovering or revealing too much. He distracts him with the coarse vulgarity of Sweeney, a man who would hear in the nightingale and swallow's song the sounds of his own automatic, passionless intercourse with Mrs. Porter, not the impassioned, transforming suffering of Philomela and Procne.

The mind flits from the vulgarity of Sweeney to another sexual vulgarity, which seems to be a memory of an actual experience that once occurred to the man in London, the "unreal City/Under the brown fog of a winter noon," when Mr. Eugenides propositioned him. From this sordid memory of "a winter noon," he returns to the present "violet hour" of twilight, the hour before death "when the human engine waits/Like a taxi throbbing waiting."

But suddenly the mind intervenes again in another example of the way in which one mood or emotion mixes with disparate experiences to produce a new mood. Thus, the mind converts the man's throbbing between life and death in the "violet hour" to the throbbing of Tiresias "between two lives"--male and female:

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

Tiresias, however, who like the Sibyl of Cumae seems unable to die, sees the "violet hour" not as the hour preceding death but the hour preceding sexuality. Tiresias is blinder than he thinks, for he can see only through his own perverted experience:

I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest--

(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all

I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
And walked among the lowest of the dead.)

Tiresias becomes the epitome of the impersonal poet, the mind that creates, the "mind of Europe." Having lived since the time of Thebes, having "walked among . . . the dead," and having been both male and female, he can observe a scene and foretell its outcome. That is, by "amalgamating disparate experience," he creates, "forming new wholes" (SE 247). What Tiresias observes is

The typist home at teatime, [who] clears her breakfast, lights
Her stove, and lays out her food in tins.
Out of the window perilously spread
Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,
On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.

The scene of a working girl coming home at the "violet hour" is all that Tiresias sees. But what he sees, the situation, combines with his hermaphroditic sexual experiences to create the scene of the lifeless sexual encounter between clerk and typist. This is automatic sex, driven by the throbbing of machinery rather than passion. The "young man carbuncular," advancing on the typist according to a well formulated and frequently practiced plan,

Endeavors to engage her in caresses
Which still are unreprieved, if undesired.
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;

Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference.

The clerk, unlike the woman in the chess game scene who is goaded to attack by her partner's indifference, is unaffected by the typist's indifference; in fact, he "makes a welcome" of it. Like the earlier couple, the clerk and typist neither converse nor communicate in any way, but unlike the previous couple, neither the clerk nor typist is concerned enough about the event to feel distraught about it.

Thus, Tiresias in his role as prophet-seer performs as a creating, transforming mind, devoid of individual personality or personal emotion. Tiresias is blind, no more effective than Madame Sosostris, because in creating a scene from all that he has foresuffered and observed since the time of Thebes up through modern London, he fails to see the source of the persona's sterility or the persona's personal means to salvation. That is, all the scenes remembered by or created by Tiresias (or the mind) are scenes of mutually satisfying passion, destructive passion, passionless lust, violation of women. Together these scenes summarize the experience perhaps of a civilization, but not the personal experience of the persona. He differs from these assorted heroes, heroines, and characters because he did not violate his beloved in the Hyacinth garden; he did not control the heart that "would have responded/Gaily." Instead he stifled desire and denied his single opportunity for communion with another human being because he wished to transcend human love, which appears to his mind to be destructive, lustful, and vulgar, in order to attain the divine, redemptive, trans-

forming love of Dante for Beatrice. While the persona envisions human love as a bridge to divine love, his mind sees in human love only lust, depravity, destruction, and sterility.

The scenes created by Tiresias and the mind may reflect glimpses of the persona's individual problem, but by and large they form only "a heap of broken images," as unreadable as Madame Sosostri's tarot cards. Only by experiencing death by water, journeying into the heart of his own individual darkness, can the man identify his individual pain and seek his individual salvation. And he is released to do so by the typist, who undisturbed by her recent violation, "smoothes her hair with automatic hand/And puts a record on the gramophone."

Although the music probably has no effect on the typist, it revives in the man who suffers the memory of an isolated instance of human communion:

"This music crept by me upon the waters"
And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.
O City city, I can sometimes hear
Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,
The pleasant whining of a mandoline
And a clatter and a chatter from within
Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls
Of Magnus Martyr hold
Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.

The man follows "the pleasant whining of a mandoline" to "a clatter and a chatter" of fishermen gathered at noon in a communal atmosphere. Absorbing the sense of community that binds these men who share a common livelihood and a common relaxation, the man looks from them to "the walls/Of Magnus Martyr," whose "Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white

and gold" symbolizes the shared longing of men for understanding, salvation, and rebirth throughout western civilization. The fishermen have found in their spirit of communitas a vitality that regenerates them daily--the type of sharing and sympathy that eludes the persona.

From this point the persona begins his journey by water, and as he travels down the Thames from London and across the channel to Europe (Margate Sands), he is traveling ever closer to the individual experience that will explain his sterility and suffering. The mind continues to transform this personal journey into historical, traditional, literary journeys--the sojourn of St. Augustine to Carthage, the descent of Dante into hell, the quest to the Chapel Perilous, the journey of the disciples to Emmaus, and the exploration of Marlow up the Congo into the heart of darkness. But the transformations do not succeed in distracting the man who suffers from journeying toward his individual heart of darkness, the buried experience, that perhaps will transform and save him.

His journey from London to Margate Sands includes three stages, transformed by the mind into the song of the Thames daughters, which recalls by contrast the song of the Rhine daughters. The Rhine daughters retain their virginity, but lose the treasure of the Rhine to a man who is willing to renounce love forever in order to possess the gold. The Thames daughters, having forfeited their virginity, sing of their fall: the first song unemotionally relates the event (similar in tone to the typist); the second expresses world-weary cynicism; and the third reveals debilitating despair and desolation. The man progresses through these stages, reaching that final point at which one "can

Connect/Nothing with nothing," a point at which he faces two alternatives, offered by west and east, that as Ward (112) notes can never meet: salvation through love or salvation through renunciation.

Passing out of the fire, the persona experiences death by water. "Entering the whirlpool" of his own personal past, he passes through "the stages of his age and youth." Only through drowning, which involves an immersion in his private and individual past, can the persona progress toward regeneration, the cure for his sterility, that he seeks.

The persona continues his journey in Part V. Despite references to Christ in the desert or at Gethsamene, the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the fall of civilizations throughout time ("Jerusalem Athens Alexandria/Vienna London"), and Kurtz's outpost in the heart of the Congo, the mind is largely inactive, merely accompanying the man who suffers as he journeys into the desert of his own sterility, a desert unidentified geographically or historically:

Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water
If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
If there were only water amongst the rock
Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain
There is not even solitude in the mountains
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
From doors of mudcracked houses

Here, although the man who suffers and the mind that creates journey together, the senses predominate. The man is so thirsty, hot, and distracted by the sound of "dry sterile thunder," that he "cannot stop or think." The suffering perceived by the senses dominates the intellect, and the persona begins to see his own personal demons, "red sullen faces" that "sneer and snarl/From doors of mudcracked houses." This is a nightmare desert, devoid of human welcome or community.

The man's longing for water and his longing for the sound of water make him long for song, and in his suffering he begins to sing himself:

If there were water
And no rock
If there were rock
And also water
And water
A spring
A pool among the rock
If there were the sound of water only
Not the cicada
And dry grass singing
But sound of water over a rock
Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
But there is no water

The man abruptly breaks off his singing to ask who accompanies them: "Who is the third who walks always beside you?" The third, "wrapt in a brown mantle," is the buried self, who although not yet identifiable, is at least visible. The hooded self is only one of "hooded hordes swarming/Over endless plains" making a "sound high in the air/Murmur of maternal lamentation"--the buried selves of all those who deny their memories and desires.

Music infiltrates this nightmare, but it is largely wordless and meaningless--a cacophony of sounds: "maternal lamentation," "whisper music" fiddled on a woman's "long black hair," a tolling of bells, the singing of grass and cicada, and "voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells." The man is plagued by song without content and a chapel without life or meaning. The cock crows, announcing the coming rain, the storm that will release the message of the buried self. The immediate effect is to thrust the persona back into the physical world. No longer on the Thames in England, he is on the Ganges under the Himalayas and around him he senses "the jungle crouched, humped in silence." Like Gerontion, he senses that a devouring tiger is prepared to spring.

When the Eastern thunder speaks, the buried self responds, translating its message according to his own personal experience: I have denied the human passion once offered. This is the knowledge also of Gerontion and of John Marcher in James's "The Beast in the Jungle." As Gerontion asks, "After such knowledge, what forgiveness?" The persona returns to his "Fishing, with the arid plain behind [him]," and asks, "Shall I at least set my lands in order?"

This is exactly what the mind that creates proceeds to do, seeing in the persona's personal impotence and ruin reflections of the impotence and ruin of previous poets: Dante's account of the 12th century Provençal poet Daniel Arnaut; Pervigilium Veneris, written in the 1st or 2nd century; and a 19th century Spanish sonnet by de Nerval:

Poi s'aspose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam uti chelidon--O swallow swallow
Le Prince d'Aquitaine a la tour abolie

The message of the thunder has been transformed and universalized by the mind to the point that the previous lucidity is now distorted by what seems madness. However, the mind that creates has in its madness produced fragments that do seem to "fit"; that is, they fit the universal man that the mind has created rather than the buried personality: I must ever purify myself of earthly lust. I must continue to suffer as I await a transformation like that of Philomela and Procne that will heal me and release my song. My towers have fallen; I am impotent because I have lost my wife and been cut off from my ancestry. What the fragments conceal is that the persona, as revealed by the messages from the thunder, (1) unlike Arnaut, has denied earthly passion; (2) unlike Philomela and Procne, has lived a life devoid of passion rather than one destroyed by passion; and (3) unlike the Prince of Aquitaine, is impotent because he refused a living woman, not because he survives the death of his beloved.

The conclusion of the persona seems to be: It is too late for me. I cannot remedy the wound I have inflicted upon myself. A ruin, I can only wait for death. But the mind shores against that ruin fragments of universalizing situations it has been creating--the destructive nature of human lust, regeneration and creation of song through suffering, and love that transcends death--rather than mourning the hopelessness of the individual.

6. CONCLUSION

"The Hollow Men," written in 1925, three years after publication of The Waste Land, bridges the gap between the impersonal poetry of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Gerontion," and The Waste Land and the much more personal poetry of "Ash Wednesday," Four Quartets, and the plays. In "The Hollow Men" the "mind which creates" has given way almost totally to the "man who suffers." The persona exhibits little "consciousness of the past," instead focusing almost totally on immediate pain and suffering. The self, temporarily resurrected in The Waste Land, here speaks forth--in self-derision, in fear and dread, and in hesitant hope alternating with despair. The only remaining vestige of the mind that creates is the operation of the mind as a "finely perfected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings . . . enter into new combinations" (SW 53-54). But the "feelings" in the mind of the hollow man seem to be drawn more heavily from his personal experiences than from literary tradition.

That the hollow man is in a state similar to that of Gerontion and the persona of The Waste Land is apparent in his description of himself and his friends. Like Gerontion, the persona sees himself as simply a "dull head," a "headpiece filled with straw":

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!

The persona's mind is "stuffed" with feelings, words, phrases, and images, but he feels "hollow" and empty of any saving passion. The hollow men sing a song without content that recalls the empty, meaningless cacophony of sound heard by the persona of The Waste Land at the end of his interior journey:

Our dried voices, when
We lean together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass

Despite the similarity, however, between the hollow man and the earlier personae, the hollow man expresses a new note of fear or dread not heard before but that will be repeated in "Ash Wednesday":

Let me be no nearer
In death's dream kingdom
Let me also wear
Such deliberate disguises
Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves
In a field
Behaving as the wind behaves
No nearer--

Not that final meeting
In the twilight kingdom.

Both Gerontion and the persona of The Waste Land wait for death, anticipating in death a release from present misery. They express no sense of the hollow man's fear of "that final meeting/In the twilight kingdom," the hour of judgment.

The hollow man's dread of the judgment implicit in "that final meeting" deprives him of any vitality or purpose in "death's dream

kingdom," what we call life. Life for the hollow man is no life, just as it was no life for Prufrock, Gerontion, and the persona of The Waste Land, for

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

For Thine is the Kingdom

Between the conception
And the creation
Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the Shadow

Life is very long

Between the desire
And the spasm
Between the potency
And the existence
Between the essence
And the descent
Falls the Shadow

For thine is the Kingdom

Here we see why life is death for the persona, why action is necessarily suffering. When one desires something more valuable--the kingdom of God--then life becomes a trial in which each act is seen and judged by the "eyes." When every act of man is judged, the only escape is to avoid action, and not to act becomes a form of death. To avoid action, one must deny the emotions and personality that cause conflict. Life then is reduced to a "very long" period of waiting, as the persona of "East Coker" says, without hope, love, or thought:

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 . . .
(CPP 126-27)

The sense in "The Hollow Men" of a man attempting to understand and express a personal agony, to both cling to and strip away "deliberate disguises" is an extension of what we have seen in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Gerontion," and The Waste Land. In all the poems there is a struggle between the desire to reveal the "self" and the desire to sacrifice that self to universality, to conformity with tradition. In "Ash Wednesday," Four Quartets, and the plays, the individual personality becomes much more dominant and seems more and more the personal voice of Eliot himself. The mind that creates continues to allude to tradition, but that tradition is almost entirely now the tradition of the Church. There are some allusions to universal suffering of wartime London, but more and more we hear reverberations of Eliot's personal experiences--as a child, as a young man in love, as a middle-aged man struggling between hope and despair, between desire and asceticism.

Because of the increasingly dominant individual or "confessional" voice, many of the later works help elucidate vague passages in the earlier works. For example, the passage above from "The Hollow Men"--"Between the desire/And the spasm/ . . . Falls the Shadow"--helps explain Gerontion's "fear" and "terror" and "inquisition" concerning the "beauty" of sexual passion. And in "Ash Wednesday" the persona's

transformation of his beloved into "Blessèd sister, holy mother, spirit of the fountain, spirit of the garden," a vision "wearing/White light folded, sheathed about her . . . " helps to explain the experience in the Hyacinth garden. "Burnt Norton" helps explain the key which turned in the lock but failed to open the door:

Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. (CPP 117)

But it is in Four Quartets that we hear the persona, and I think we must say Eliot, speak about his early theory of poetry. In "Dry Salvages," written in 1941, the persona says:

We had the experience but missed the meaning
And approach to the meaning restores the experience
In a different form, beyond any meaning
We can assign to happiness. I have said before
That the past experience revived in the meaning
Is not the experience of one life only
But of many generations--not forgetting
Something that is probably quite ineffable:
The backward look behind the assurance
Of recorded history, the backward half-look
Over the shoulder, towards the primitive terror.
(CPP 133)

This passage expresses the essence of Eliot's theory of impersonality. The personal experience is not important in itself, but only in the meaning that "restores the experience/In a different form." The immediacy of the original experience is sacrificed to the universal

meaning; and the universal meaning is always the same--the "primitive terror" of death known by all men.

Again, in "Little Gidding," also written in 1941, the persona says:

History may be servitude,
History may be freedom. See, now they vanish,
The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved
them,
To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern.
(CPP 142)

One must detach oneself from one's personal history--"the faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved them"--and seek freedom in universal history, which renews and transfigures personal history "in another pattern."

In both the passage from "Dry Salvages" and the passage from "Little Gidding," Eliot still clings dogmatically to the basic tenets of his impersonal theory. But yet another voice is heard which seems to question the efficacy of that theory. In the predawn hours, wandering the streets of war-bombed London, the persona of "Little Gidding" meets "some dead master," who says:

'I am not eager to rehearse
My thought and theory which you have forgotten.
These things have served their purpose: let them be.
So with your own, and pray they be forgiven
By others, as I pray you to forgive
Both bad and good. . . .

For last year's words belong to last year's language
And next year's words await another voice. . . .'
(CPP 141)

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