

**P O E M S (1920)**

### CHAPTER III

#### 1920 POEMS.

With Gerontion, the element of religious inquiry is added to the already existing material concerns of Prufrock. In this sense, Gerontion is an advance from Prufrock. It is the first poem to point explicitly a connection between boredom and man's alienation from God. O. Matthiessen has pointed out that Gerontion deals with the most moving recurrent themes : the horror of modern life without faith, its disillusioned weariness of knowledge and its agonized slow drying up of the springs of emotion. 'The little old man' at the last stage of his life undertakes a serious and tragic meditation and asks what the human life has come to. Gerontion is Prufrock's world more fully realised. C.K. Stead says, "Gerontion, like Prufrock, has its genesis at a deeper level than that of conscious will. The 'psychic material' takes on the dark stain of some intense suffering. The gentle, youthful aspirations of Prufrock have passed through fulfillment into some unimagined horror in which all desire that issues in action is seen as destructive."<sup>1</sup>

CARR. PRUFROCK  
GERONTION

To Elizabeth Schneider, Gerontion is primarily an abstract seeing eye, a symbol of human awareness. But even then, he is still dramatic enough to remain a person. The poem tends to split between the personality which nevertheless is undefined and the argument which is not intimately enough related to the old man's feelings. The imagery in Prufrock though common place in its own way, diverts many times to highly imaginative and violent images. But the imagery in Gerontion shows an astonishing awareness of the images of modern world. According to John Vickery, Gerontion operates on four levels of subject and image. They are individual man, religion, nature and history, which together make a simple complex image. The individual level of the poem serves as the focus for the other three levels. And so, imagery in Gerontion is complex.

To all intents and purposes, an old man musing on his past and anticipating his future, constitutes an uncomplicated image and a straightforward topic. In the face of this fact, Gerontion elaborates both his despair over his mortality and the true nature of the divinity that is both human and immortal. Prufrock was the centre the flowing social current, a part and parcel of it. But Eliot placed Gerontion away from the community, in fact, outside the community; so that he can have a wider perspective of different systems that engage human life. Gerontion's



mental processes, conscious and unconscious alike, create a world in which religious, natural and historical events of different periods and times exist simultaneously. Though the images are random, their succession is not 'free', for there is at the centre of the poem, a firm rational statement.

The house in which the old man lives is a 'decayed' house. Hugh Kenner says, "the voice searches out all the recesses of 'house'. The habitation, the family stock, the European family, the mind of Europe, the body and finally the brain. This is for the first time since Prufrock, the Eliot of the unique generalising style, the words of a protagonist, who is more substantial than a type, more general than a man."<sup>2</sup> The 'decayed' house hints at the total collapse of the European civilization on one hand, and of the mind of man on the other. The owner of the house is a 'Jew'. He is a slum landlord. Hugh Kenner remarks, "If the Jew is the owner of the house, then to the extent that the house is Gerontion's consciousness, the Jew is Christ waiting to take back what has been lent."<sup>3</sup> But the verbs and participles such as 'squats', 'spawned', 'blistered', 'patched' and 'peeled' have a clear mocking tone and these verbs can be aptly attached to the Jew as the image of a slum landlord. Eliot said,

"In Gerontion and elsewhere, the Jew embodies the rootlessness of the modern metropolis . . . Behind this is a belief that 'blood kinship' and attachment to the soil are features of a 'harmony with nature' which a genuine society has 'unintelligible to the industrialised mind.'"<sup>4</sup>

The goat coughing at night and the woman sneezing at evenings are symbols of the infirmity and the sexual corruption of the modern era. The action of the woman such as keeping the kitchen, making tea and poking the peevish gutter are deprived of any meaningful significance and reduce the woman to a mere instrument for providing food and tea. The image compresses a sense of negative uselessness of human life. The world of action and heroism is a faraway world for both Gerontion and Prufrock. The 'hot gates' and the 'warm rain' signify African jungles. Gerontion in his lifetime has not faced even these minor discomforts which he takes for the self-sacrifice that accompanies heroic life. The warm rain and the salt marsh are also the mirages of a man dying for want of water.

The religious imagery appears for the first time in Gerontion which later on assumed an overwhelming significance in Ash Wednesday. For the modern man, Christ

as the object of worship was given too late. And so it was difficult for him to accept Christ as the Lord God. Gerontion recalls the pharisees who would wish for a demonstrable sign, and through them, voices his own desperate hope for empirical evidence of grace. The 'we' of the quotation generalises his own anxiety. Although Christ came at the appropriate time, the response to Christ is inappropriate and degraded, coming as it does at the wrong time, 'in the depraved May' and accompanied by signs of betrayal, dogwood and flowering judas. Elizabeth Drew comments, "The words, 'depraved May, dogwood, chestnut, judas', besides referring to old paganism and sexual fertility rituals, point forward to new paganism that Renaissance ushered in."<sup>5</sup> They also indicate the debasing of Christianity and dissipation of the word into whispers. That Gerontion cannot meditate upon the significance of Christ's Nativity and cannot translate the retelling of the event into insight is indicated simultaneously by the interruption and the implied pause before beginning again.

"In the juvenescence of the year/came Christ the tiger

In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut flowering judas . . . "<sup>6</sup>

The Holy Communion that is being eaten and drunk away among whispers relates to the cosmopolitan world in which Gerontions' life has been betrayed. Hugh Kenner comments, "The 'whispers' are not necessarily any longer whispers of religious awe, but the whispers of conspirators or just of tourists."<sup>7</sup> They are persons only at the prompting of their own names. Daniel Schwarz in his article, "The Failure of Meditation" remarks that Gerontions bitter phrase for these people 'vacant shuttles weave the wind', ironically recalls the self-deprecatory phrase, 'A dull head among windy spaces' and thus unintentionally forges a link between himself and the people he despises.

In Portrait of a Lady, the animal imagery is used with the purpose of degrading human life to the level of animals. In Gerontion, animal imagery gets a religious dimension. The image of the Tiger as Christ is seen by the people in the modern world as Blake's beast of Prey who has come to devour them. It is linked with the Cowering Cherub of the Bible. With this, the Communion's original aim of establishing a bond between the deity and his worshippers is totally perverted. Man is now bound to be the God's sinister antagonist through communion with the evil of his own nature, and in consequence affecting a corruption of life and fertility. The image of the

Tiger as Christ is an antithesis of the image of the lamb as Christ. It also indicates that Christ is a menacing image to Gerontion. The Tiger which springs in the new year is the image of the regeneration of Christ. It is an expression of hope. But Gerontion fails to meditate on the meaning of resurrection. Christ's rebirth, if properly understood, is in fact the end of the dilemma of life and death. But Christ as the Tiger is a threat that terrifies, Gerontion who thinks of Christ as a punishing Tiger of wrath.

Throughout the poem, secular and sensuous images intermingle and continue to intrude upon Gerontion's meditative efforts. The 'backward devils' refer to the devils of Dante's *Inferno*. In disclaiming the assistance of the 'backward devils', Gerontion is assuming the full responsibility of his life. But on the other hand, as Daniel Schwarz points out, Gerontion has become another of those devils since he moves further away from the Word and its contingent mysteries.

The refusal of Gerontion's age to contemplate the miracle of Incarnation gives birth to a fear that there is no true God. The wrath-bearing tree not only suffers for the knowledge of mortality man has gained from it, but also produces wrath as its fruit, thereby revealing



itself as the vegetable analogue of the conquering Christ. John Vickery says, "The image of the 'Wrath-bearing tree' is a form beneath which timid and straitened imagination has hidden the dying and reviving God, whom men must share in communion if they would live eternally. The revolutionary implication of the word are disguised as a dangerous animal and a poisonous tree." <sup>8</sup>

The image of history in Gerontion is an innovation of Eliot away from the horror biographic formula of the early fragments. Gerontion tries to give his religious impulse a clearer intellectual basis by defining it against the backdrop of history. He thinks of it as a mistress who deludes and panders to men's vanities. In the end, history leaves men graceless and baffled. The image of history stands for secular ambition. Gerontion denounces history as a reasonable alternative to faith. Lyndall Gordon says, "Gerontion, while making his personal statements, used preacher's terms like 'forgiveness, vanities, unnatural vices, virtues, impudent crimes and the backward devils.'" <sup>9</sup>

Gerontion thinks of the image of history in the light of the vacant present. History has nothing substantial to give to mankind. According to Hugh Kenner, if the 'Corridors' evoke other sorts of passages, then history turns, like Gerontion's brain, into a ramshackle

house. Yet at the same time, history is the source of man's salvation in so far as it contains and records the recurring presence of the mystery of death and life which is concretely embodied in the figure of the dying and reviving God. The first facet of Gerontion's problem was that not only did history give a deity to men when their minds were diverted to mundane issues, but also it gave a plethora of deities, so that the craving for the one God went unsatisfied and ultimately died. Gerontion also uses images from the material world such as 'pungent sauces' and 'wilderness of mirrors' to bring out his plight. The pungent sauces with which his brain is excited imply the dilemma of religious belief. He is caught in a 'psychic' house, a wilderness of mirrors from which there is no escape. One remembers the 'magic lantern' of Prufrock that 'threw nerves in patterns of a screen'.

Elizabeth Schneider comments, "As one reads, the thoughts of Gerontion appear to proceed through a phantasmagoria of random images and names in a succession that approaches chaos. It is not chaos however, nor is it pure mood like 'Rhapsody', for floating along a mood, one encounters at the centre a rock of rational statement and suddenly realizes that the succession of images is not at all 'free'".<sup>10</sup>

The imagery of nature with that of history and religion contributes significantly to the theme of the poem. It is

essentially related to destruction and is nautical, planetary and almost equally cosmic. The imagery of drought continues throughout the poem. It opens with 'a dry month' and ends with 'a dry season' with no hope of life giving rain. The key adjective of the poem is dry. Rain is the symbol of grace fertility. The barren land is a land of rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron and merds. The word 'windy' is repeated throughout the poem. Gerontion describes himself as 'a dull head among windy spaces' or 'an old man under a windy knob' and further 'windy straits'. The wind is an image suggesting purposelessness and futility. Gerontion names them as the 'Trade winds'. The winds drive the old man to a sleepy corner, a self-pitying silence. Further, Gerontion identifies himself with the solitary gull, fighting against the wind. Like the gull, his fight is meaningless and he will be destroyed. The reference to 'Belle Isle', 'Cape Horn' and the Gulf of Mexico show that Gerontion has come faraway from his original quest of coming to terms with the true God. The sea imagery which includes the sea-gull, the Gulf-Stream, the Trade winds, is highly realistic as compared with the sea-imagery in Prufrock. It is a way of imaginary escape from the monotony of this world for Prufrock, whereas for Gerontion, it is a way to destruction.

By thinking about the weevil and the spider, Gerontion stresses the process of mutability and mortality in which he

himself is caught. Thoughts of mortality evoke the images of fragments of bodies whirled beyond in fractured atoms. Destruction overtakes all those who think of death as an end in itself rather than as a transitional state protected by sacred rites. The imagery of nature conveys the sense of some underlying continuity which provides a ~~perennial~~ perennial renewal of life through death. Gerontion has no hope of such a renewal and ends by driving himself to a sleepy corner. The 'dry brain', 'the dry season' and 'the dry month' all 'waiting for rain', are symbols of the spiritual drought which overwhelm the whole world.

Two other poems that form an interesting corollary to Gerontion are "The Hippopotamus" and "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service". Both the poems deal directly with the concepts of Christian religion and the Church as a religious institution whose only purpose is to lead people to salvation. People in the modern world have failed to hear the Word. Their condition is worse than Gerontion's for they do not recognize its seriousness. The point of comparison between "The Hippopotamus" and the Church are their grand size, their indulgence in material gains and their complete lack of spiritual concerns. The details describing the Hippopotamus like 'Broad-backed', 'resting on belly in the mud,' its inward frailty can be interpreted in terms of the Church also.

The muddy grossness of the fleshly hippo-relates him to the 'original sin', without which salvation is impossible.

The hippo cannot achieve his object of reaching the mango but the Church is satisfied with the 'pomegranate and peach. The mango is the symbol of supreme spiritual salvation while the pomegranate and peach are minor fruits and are symbols of minor comforts of life. The implication is that the Church is satisfied with minor material comforts. Like the hippo, who sleeps in the day and hunts at night, the Church reverts the natural order. It 'sleeps and feeds' at the same time. The 'mysterious way' in which the Church works, may be the supernatural way whose operation is unpredictable and inexplicable. The absurd image of the winged hippopotamus accompanied by angels is delightful but only superficially conceals a serious concern with the promises and paradoxes of Christianity. The hippo-seems to be solid matter and his way materialistic, but he will be accepted into the community of Christ.

Blood of the Lamb is a sacrificial image of Christ. It will cleanse man of sin. While the hippo will be cleansed in the blood of the Lamb and will live in the company of saints, the Church will remain on earth covered with 'mist'. It is the mist of various religious controversies as well as the material concerns in which the Church is engulfed.

Eliot here uses animal imagery not with the purpose of narrow comparisons or contrasts, but with a wider perspective. In 1917 poems, it is used for the purpose of degrading man to the level of animals. Here in "The Hippopotamus", it is used to degrade the institution of Church. Eliot's purpose remains the same. The poem is an expression of dissatisfaction with the negative attitude to life which Eliot saw operative in the established religions.

Mr. Eliot's "Sunday Morning Service" brings about the aspect of religious controversies and arguments. He uses the image of the caterpillars who provide the bearing of pollen from flower to flower. They are the 'Sapient Suttlers' of the Lord. The reference here is to the learned scholars who wrote many diverse commentaries on the Bible. Imagery of sex appears with two contrasting purposes. In this poem, it is used for spiritual fertility. The terms such as 'superfetation', 'mensual turn of time' and 'enervate' are related to sex. The diverse religious commentaries were a kind of over-fertilization that produced Origen and the many like him. The word 'enervate' comes in two different contexts. It has a spiritual meaning when Origen says that in relation to God, this Logos or Son was a copy of the original and as such, inferior. There is also a sexual connotation to the word which telescopes his self-castration as a youth of

seventeen. We have thus a further contrast between his verbal fertility and sexual sterility. Using sexual words in non-sexual contexts may also bring out the essential sterility of the Alexandrian doctrine and satirises it with the simple Christian sentiment and belief.

The caterpillars have a 'middle man' function as they pass with their 'hairy bellies' from the male organ to the female seed-bearing plant. The word 'epicence' refers to the contact with both sexes. So also the Christian Scholars pass on the word of God to fertilize religious controversies and heresies. The image of the Baptism of Christ aptly contrasts itself with the superficial arguments and controversies of the scholars. The painting of the Umbrian School has a simplicity in itself. It suggests primitive Christianity. The Baptized God is half in and half out of water. The image represents man in Christ and Christ in man. The 'unoffending feet' of the Christ are in sharp contrast with the 'muddy feet' of the common people in "Preludes". Another religious painting depicts the purgation of sinful man by burning into the purgatorial fire. This image of the true purgation is contrasted with the image of the young man hoping to get salvation through 'Collection Money', an easy penance for modern churchgoers.

'Seraphim' as one of the guardian angles was supreme in his comprehension of God the Father. He may thus provide a contrast to the Alexandrian theologians with their elaborate and arduous reasoning about his nature. The 'Sapient Suttlers' fail in their function of coming to terms with the God by their mere wordiness. The 'Sable Presbyters' fail more completely still in their function of spiritual salvation and merely feed themselves. And so, the Church as an institution fails completely in theory as well as in practice. Weakened theology has led to vulgar materialism.

The final stanza introduces 'Sweeney', an ordinary sensual man. According to David Ward, he is the focus of all metaphysical and theological problems. Though mortal in flesh, Sweeney is worthy of salvation. His 'stirring water in the bath' mocks at the stirring water controversies of the theologians. Sweeney's 'Hans' in the bath water are contrasted with the unoffending feet' of Christ. Audrey Cahill points out that the two poems, i.e. "The Hippopotamus" and "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service", talk about outwardly religious people failed to hear the Word, or who having heard, haven't obeyed. Their condition is worse than Gerontion's, for they do not recognise its seriousness but are content with their limited vision of a world whose potential sacredness they do not see. With their



formal submission to a Lord, they have ignored a real challenge. Human life is divided into two realms :The sacred and the secular. Religion is separated from other aspects of life to which it is apparently irrelevant. In both cases, the apparent spirituality of the Church is really a form of inverse materialism revealing an outlook which fails to see the meeting point or any possible connection between the divine and the secular. The tragedy of the 'religious' in these two poems is very like the tragedy of the 'irreligious' in Gerontion and "Thapsody on a Windy Night". It is a tragedy no more and no less dreary than a life in which an 'imagined' meaning is divorced from reality. Both present prospects of futility and they are two sides of the same coin.

In this sense, both the 1917 and 1920 sections of poems have a cause - effect relationship. The poets need images to express the full complexity of their moods and use them more freely to convey the special thrill which they regard as their special function. Eliot in these poems, is trying to convey not only moods but thoughts by means of imagery, thus emulating the recreation of thought into feeling.

"Whispers of Immortality" is divided in two sections. The basis of these two sections is either a contrast or a parallelism. In the first section, Webster's preception of death is symbolised by his seeing beneath the flesh to

the skeleton, whose bones endure larger than the flesh that covered them. And around these bones clings thought more lasting than either. Donne and Webster were concerned with matters more significant and more enduring than any that could arise from preoccupation with the purely material side of carnal attraction. In the second section, the sensual imagery is represented by the existence of Grishkin. Both these images interrelate to emphasize the affairs of the mind and those of the body are similar. The important point implied by the imagery is that thought is described as being felt just as material reality is felt. This is the real issue of the poem.

'Skull beneath the skin', 'breastless creatures underground', 'sockets of eyes' and skeleton are the images of death. They have a capacity to present the stark fearfulness of death. But the death imagery in Portrait of a Lady is subtle, suggestive and significant. The image of 'Juliet's tomb' indicates a death-bed atmosphere. The lilac-stalks being twisted by the lady are suggestive of the lady's death. Besides, the peculiar phrases such as 'buried life' and 'journey's end' also suggest death. Thought is described as 'Hightening its lusts and luxuries'. It has also a sensual element. Webster knew that thought embraces physical death while intensifying its lusts.

Grishkin, the Russian lady in the second section is the image of a sensual world. But just as Webster's world of thought is dead, so also Grishkin's purely sensuous world is powerless to <sup>be</sup> born. Her uncovered bust gives the promise of 'pneumatic' bliss. The word 'pneumatic' evokes the things of the spirit thereby uniting the physical and the spiritual. The 'Corched Brazilian Jaguar' and 'the maisonette' represent Grishkin's challenging charm. The imagery of smell repeats itself after the 'female smells in shuttered rooms' in "Rhapsody" with Grishkin's 'feline smell'. The last stanza summarises the problem of abstraction to conceive any life beyond the physical. The challenge of Grishkin or flesh personalised is common to both parts which is not solved by the dry ribs of abstraction. Just as the fleshliness of the hippopotamus is a necessary condition for its absurd ascension to heaven, similarly Webster and Donne were capable of seeing that the metaphysical imagination will only come to life through sensual experience and not through a chaste ascetic withdrawal from the world of senses.

In this section of 1920 poems, Eliot has developed a systematic methodological activity by which he goes on interlinking these two apparently contrary but in fact supplementary aspects of life: thoughts and senses. In Gerontion for example, he thinks of history as a harlot who deceives and

whose 'giving famishes the craving', the hippopotamus gets salvation due to his sensuality. The 'sapient suttlers' of the Lord are the 'religious caterpillars' who with their 'hairy bellies' pass the pollen from staminate to pistillate in "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service". All these images are realistic in the sense that they are constructed out of fact and reflected by words that attest to the substantiality of fact.

"A Cooking Egg" is an egg which is used when a strictly fresh egg is not required. This suggests that the poet speaks about his middle-age. The poem is divided into three parts of which the first presents the reality, the second his unrealised hopes and the third bewails their unfulfillment. The first section opens with 'Pipit'. If we regard her as a little girl, the name has a note of fondness. But as the following lines tell us about her knitting, the pictures on the wall and her sitting upright in the chair, they give an impression not of a little girl but an old fashioned aristocratic lady who has a panorama of ancestors on her mantelpiece. This is further emphasized by one touch of middle-class romance : 'An Invitation to the Dance'. She may be the old nurse of the poet. The only object personal to the speaker is 'the views of Oxford Colleges' which evokes his past and the expectations that are developed in the second part. All these images define English upper-class security, continuity and assurance. For Miss Nancy

Ellicott's aunts, traditional values were embodied in the figures on the glazed shelves of Matthew and Waldo, 'guardians of faith', for Pipit, they are similarly embodied in the pictures on the mantelpiece of her dear relatives.

In the second part, Eliot speaks about his early hopes now unrealized and deferred. His heaven contains Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Alfred Mond. Modern idols are more clearly satirised in the appearance of Madame Blavatsky. With the mention of Coriolanus, the realisation comes that something is lacking in the surroundings. The escapist world whose only traditional values are represented by the security of the decorative 'daguerrotypes and silhouettes on the mantelpiece, is in fact entirely insufficient.

The third part is a lamentation by the speaker on the present despairing state of things. The 'naive' image of the penny world brings about the pettiness of the modern world. The 'penny world' can be compared with the phrase 'measuring life with coffee spoons' in Prufrock. The penny world expresses excitement and faith of childhood and its confidence that its immediate desires are in themselves always and ultimately desirable. The pathos lies in the contrast between this excitement and the general sense of failure in the poem. The eagles and the trumpets represent a vanished vigour and vitality. The 'weeping multitudes' weep over a vaguely discerned sense of loss of values. It has a note of compassion

and suggests the possibilities of fulfilment denied.

"A Cooking Egg" and Burbank with a Baedeker :  
Blestein with a Cigar", explore the modern consciousness in relation to temporal and spiritual affairs. "Burbank" summarizes impressions of Venice by means of its two tourists. Burbank is a sort of symbolical 'decent chap', who stands for the sentimental element in modern civilization. He is Antony, whom the god Hercules had left. Princess Volupine represents the degenerate aristocratic romanticism of Venice. The 'defunctive music' which accompanies Burbank's affair looks back to " . . . the ariettes/of cracked cornets" in Portrait of a Lady.

The image of the horses beating the dawn with even feet may refer to the horses of the 'Sun', as there is a reference to 'dawn'. They may also mean the horses carved on both sides of the gondola as there is a reference to Cleopatra's 'barge burning on the water'. The imagery of the different parts of the body recurs in the meagre, blue-nailed pthistic hand of Princess Volupine. The hand is associated with the 'braceleted hands' of the rich ladies in Prufrock.

Blestein, who provides a contrasting point of view is indifferent with a cigar in his mouth. The 'saggy bending of his knees and elbows', and his 'palms turned out' makes us interpret Blestein in terms of animal imagery. His 'lustreless.

and portrusive' eye that stares at a Canaletto soon declines as it has only commercial interests. The 'smoky candle-end of time' refers to the rich cigar in Blestein's mouth, while 'the burnt-out ends of smoky days', in 'Preludes', refer to a useless end to a useless day. Robert Graves and Lewis-Williams interpret the image of the Jew by saying that Sir Ferdinand Klein is Blestein in person. Blestein succeeds where Burbank fails, thereby implying that the Jew is not an individual but a symbol of modern civilization.

In the last stanza, the lion's wings stand for the Winged lion of St. Mark, the patron saint of Venice, but also the British lion whose wings have been clipped by the Jew. The lion as an animal image stands for the elegance of arts in Venice and for material wealth in Britain. Fleecing the ramp and paring the claws of the lion indicate the deprived beauty of the lion who is an image of the past glory of Venice. Eliot in this poem not only thinks about the vanished glory of Venice alone, but the decayed modern civilization as a whole. In the first part of the poem, the images are totally allusive and have a far-fetched effect. But in the second part, Eliot returns to his own familiar method of imagery where animal imagery and imagery of different parts of the body reappear.

Animal imagery which starts with the 'fog-cat' image of Prufrock, ends with the Sweeney poems. Sweeney is the

SAHIL BHARGAVA  
SHIVAJI UNIVERSITY  
MUMBAI

animal in man. The first stanza of "Sweeney among the Nightingales", portrays in a succinct and precise manner Sweeney in terms of animal imagery'. He has an ape-like neck. He has stripes like the Zebra. When Sweeney laughs, he spreads his knees and lets down his arms, gestures which suggest his brutal sexuality and his total insensitivity to finer feelings. He is clearly a blood-brother to the Hippopotamus. His connection with the Yahoo, a pure natural man and his role as the guardian of the 'horned gate' reveal that Sweeney is the image of the original fall of man.

The second stanza at once sets the mood and atmosphere of the poem. It is the atmosphere of death and doom, and gives a sense of foreboding. Sweeney is threatened by death. The imagery of planets contributes significantly to the creation of this atmosphere. The planets are placed in unusual positions and they are associated in one way or the other with past events illustrating violent acts of murder. The moon is circled with rings of glow. Its sliding westward suggests a dark and stormy night. The 'River Plate' may be the name of a Planet towards which the moon is sliding. Death is personified as a planet which moves along with Raven, a group of stars associated with murder and unnatural death. The image of the 'horned gate' also adds to the warning of death as it refers to the gate of lechery and death in Virgil's 'Aeneid' and also to the gate erected by Clytemnestra to welcome Agamemnon home where she put him to death. Orion and the Dog are stars which from one



constellation. They are associated with fertility myths of ancient Egypt. The gloominess of the star Orion suggests death and sterility and the veil over the Dog is the veil of clouds reinforcing the atmosphere of impending doom. Further the sea imagery is associated with the astronomical imagery to strengthen the effect of death and disaster. The seas are 'hushed', strangely silent and shrunken.

The astronomical imagery appears for the first time in Gerontion where Gerontion refers to the 'Shuddering Bear'. The Bear is a constellation in the Northern Hemisphere. The Shuddering Bear is a part of the nature imagery which Eliot uses to signify the destruction of the modern man. Discussing this image which he originally found in a play by George Chapman who in turn probably took it from Seneca, Eliot speculated from his own experience that the imagery had some personal saturation value, so to speak, for Seneca another for Chapman and another for himself. He stressed that the feelings awakened by the imagery were possibly too obscure for the authors to know quite what they were.

The person in the 'Spanish Cape' who is bold enough to sit on Sweeney's knees can be compared with the woman in "Rhapsody". Both of them have the same intention of sexual seduction. But the sartorial images differentiate them. The woman in the Spanish Cape suggests her own superiority in relation to the 'torn, stained' dress of the

woman in "Rhapsody". Her gestures like yawning and drawing a stocking up, suggest her sexual readiness as well as her boredom.

To Williamson, 'the silent man in Mocha Brown' is Sweeney himself. Sweeney's gestures are typically animal like. He sprawls and gapes at the window sill. He also 'contracts, concentrates, withdraws 'like an animal smelling danger. The waiter bringing in 'Oranges, banana figs and hothouse grapes', refers to the debased version of offering to the Egyptian goddesses. This reference to the Egyptian rituals as well as to the planets Orion and the Dog, point to 'The Waste Land', where Eliot fully exploits the Egyptian rituals and legends.

Rachel nee Rabinovitch is a carnivorous animal personified. Her 'tearing at the grapes with murderous paws', is a clear indication of the coming bloodthirsty action. The propriety of the Agamemnon myth lies in the fact that in the past, Agamemnon's love was betrayed. In the modern world, Sweeney will be betrayed in the same fashion.

The 'nightingales' constitute a rich, composite images. On one hand, the nightingale is an image of betrayal, as Philomela was betrayed and turned into a bird. On the other hand, the image is contrasted with modern nightingales who

have lost any sense of good and evil. The nightingales sing near the convent where fertility is denied. The association also implies that the convent represents a distortion of values. This is a reference to the Puritanical traditions of Eliot's New England background which was not at this time been replaced by his later religious preferences. He says, " . . . just as a culture which is only accessible to the few is now deprecated, so was the enclosed and contemplative life condemned by extreme protestantism, and celibacy regarded with almost as much abhorrence as perversion."<sup>11</sup>

Further, the image of the nightingale is a deliberate break from the conception of the bird as having beautiful, melancholy voice. P.G.Mudford says, "The Stiff dishonoured shroud' acts as a metaphor for the violation that exists in Sweeney's dream-world." The excreta that fall on it, not only provide a comment on its dishonour but communicate the poem's grasp of that area of mind where the sacred and the profane touch each other closely."<sup>12</sup>

The imagery in "Sweeney among the Nightingales", which creates atmosphere and leads to the action and gives it the form of a one-act play. Nevertheless, the poem does not end in any act of violence because it is not concerned with any event, but a state which is summed up and commented upon in the last eight lines. The power and the suggestiveness of the imagery is extraordinary and it succeeds in conveying

the poet's dilemma. In the words of P.G. Mudford, "What in the world of Greek Tragedy meant the fall of a royal house, had become by the end of the first world war, a chimerical and pervasive darkness that menaced a man from within."<sup>13</sup>

"Sweeney Erect" is an ironic comment on Emerson's definition of history. There is a reference to Emerson's essay "Self-Reliance", where Emerson discusses man's fulfilment. He who knows that power is inborn, stands in the erect position, commands his limbs just as a man who stands on his feet is stronger than a man who stands on his head. Sweeney as a human animal, human by scientific definition as an 'erectus', is a creature walking upright in contrast to the stooping stance of the anthropoid and higher orders of the ape family. Eliot wants to suggest that though Sweeney walks upright, he cannot be called a man fulfilled.

Eliot also comments upon Emerson's definition of history. To Emerson, an institution is the lengthened shadow of a man. For Eliot, the reverse is true. The natural man or ego is the shadow of an institution. Sweeney's 'Silhouette' reminds us of the pure natural man. What Emerson wanted to say was that the genuine personality is the concrete man. He is a man in the contexts of certain social institutions, whether nation, church, culture or social class. But Eliot points out that <sup>the</sup> ego is an abstraction and a parasitic by

by- product of the genuine personality. It is anti-cultural and anti-traditional. Sweeney is a sub-human ego.

The use of myths for elaborating a point of view is made for the first time by Eliot in Sweeney poems. This is an advancement towards The Waste Land, the masterpiece based on Egyptian fertility myths. Here the myths together, besides relating the past and the present, point to the common character of both the worlds: the degradation of love to animal like relationship. The sea-imagery in the beginning of the poem co-relates with the mood of the speaker, whose love is betrayed. The sea is stormy and fearful. The sea-shore is cavernous and waste. The rock imagery, which signifies dryness, magnifies itself in The Waste Land.

The image of the wind is one of the prominent images in Gerontion, where it stands for purposelessness and lack of direction. Here in 'Sweeney Erect', Aeolus, the god of wind, who 'Swells with haste the perjured sails', is a partner in the game of betrayal. The next two stanzas give a vivid picture of the sordid. The sickle motion of Sweeney's thighs, his cleaving at the pillow slip, gashing with eyes, cropped out teeth describe brutal, harmful action. Sweeney's testing the razor on his legs suggests his indifference to human feelings. The animal imagery is highly picturesque and significantly serves its purpose.

Northrop Frye comments, "the world of Sweeney and his woman is brutally limited, almost apish, for all its humanity and 'naturalness', but the dream of a world in which Theseus and Ariadne conduct themselves with tragic splendour has a way of turning artificially pretty. If there is in the Ariadne story at its best a suggestion of human possibilities which make Sweeney's world look brutish, there is in Sweeney's story an honesty about the primitive foundations of man's nature which make very clear the affection of the Ariadne story at its worst."<sup>14</sup> The 1917 volume of poems begins with Prufrock, a typical, sophisticated and aristocratic character on his way to one of the routine tea-parties. The 1920 volume of poems ends with Sweeney who is the symbol of the primitive man. From the gentility of Prufrock to the vulgarity of 'Sweeney', it seems to be a reverse process. Eliot perhaps wants to suggest that every personality betrays animal characteristics.

The 'Corridors' in the next stanza makes us remember the 'contrived corridors' of Gerontion. The 'ladies of the Corridor' can be related to the image of history as a harlot in Gerontion. But Doris is an appropriate mate for Sweeney and she interprets the hysteria as a physical condition that will respond to stimulants. All these actions and interpretations are part of what it means to see 'Sweeney straddled in the Sun', as a reflection of history. Williamson remarks, "This image, by prolonging Polyphemus, transforms a maid's tragedy into an

epileptic fit. It is a picture of horror and the import of history where seen as 'the Silhouette of Sweeney'.

The only remedies produced by Doris are sea volatile and neat brandy.<sup>15</sup>

Compared with "Sweeney among the Nightingales", the imagery in "Sweeney Erect" lacks a dramatic touch. It is no doubt visually vivid while describing Sweeney's gestures and features, but it doesn't create a gloomy atmosphere of the other poem.

To sum up, the imagistic patterns in the 1920 volume of poems suggest a predominant religious tone which Eliot discovered for the first time in the unpublished poems. Again the mode of the presentation of imagery shows an interesting collapsing of the opposites. For instance, the religious imagery is combined with secular imagery on one hand and the animal imagery on the other. The astronomical imagery, signifying the cosmic is juxtaposed with animal imagery signifying the earthly. Like the astrological imagery, the sexual imagery forms one of the important imagistic patterns in this volume. The sexual imagery has always subtle spiritual connotations. Closely connected with this spiritual tone is the death imagery, another prominent pattern in the volume. Further the sea imagery is associated with the astronomical imagery to

strengthen the effect of death and disaster. The imagery of smell, the imagery of the different parts of the body and the imagery of history recur in the contrastive context. Thus there are some significant differences in the imagistic patterns in these two volumes of poems. In the 1917 poems, the imagery shows the dominance of the sordid city life and the imagery in the 1920 poems has a strong religious meaning. There are also found subtle differences in the treatment of images. For instance, the sea imagery in *Gerontion* is highly realistic as compared to the sea imagery in Prufrock.

It is a way of imaginary escape from the monotony of this world for Prufrock, whereas for *Gerontion*, it is a way to destruction. But inspite of the differences the interconnections between the imagistic patterns in these two volumes are worth noting. Eliot doesn't seem to be bent upon introducing entirely new imagistic patterns in the 1920 poems. On the other hand, certain imagistic patterns recur and Eliot seems to be more interested in giving them new contexts. Sometimes the interlinks are surprising. For instance, the animal imagery which starts with the 'fog-cat' image in Prufrock ends in the Sweeney poems in the 1920 volume of poems. The animal



imagery display a continuity throughout the two volumes. In the earlier poems, Eliot used it with the purpose of degrading man to the level of animals. In the Sweeney poems, Sweeney is the animal personified in man. Thus the complexity of the imagistic patterns in Eliot's early poetry lies in these multiple interconnections between these patterns.