

**Nearing the post-secular: Unity of Being in the later poetry  
of T.S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats**

**C Swanepoel**

 [orcid.org/0000-0002-9362-7675](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9362-7675)

Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of *Master of Arts in English* at the North-West University

Supervisor: Professor J.E. Terblanche

Co-supervisor: Professor N.C.T. Meihuizen

Examination: April 2019

Student number: 24142298

Although we break rock open to find life,  
We cannot stare the strangeness from the leaf.

We cannot stare the strangeness from the leaf,  
And so we spin all difference on a wheel  
And blur it into likeness.

—Mark Jarman, 2000



W.B. Yeats & T.S. Eliot, circa 1925

(Photo by Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>IV</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>VI</b>
<b>OPSOMMING</b> .....	<b>VIII</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE</b> .....	<b>X</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Contextualisation .....	3
<b>CHAPTER 2: UNITY OF BEING</b> .....	<b>12</b>
2.1 Introducing the opposites .....	12
2.2 The eudaimonic value of Unity of Being.....	14
2.3 A Framework.....	17
2.4 Unity of Being and Yeats’s antinomial vision .....	21
2.4.1 Unity of Being in Yeats’s later poems .....	31
2.5 Unity of Being and Eliot’s dialectical imagination .....	41
2.5.1 Unity of Being in the later Eliot.....	49
<b>CHAPTER 3: THE POST-SECULAR</b> .....	<b>72</b>
3.1 Post-secular Yeats and Eliot .....	72
3.1.1 Toward definitions of the post-secular .....	75
3.1.2 The historical context of post-secularism .....	80
3.1.3 Modernism and post-secularism .....	82
3.2 Post-secular poetry .....	88
3.3 Yeats and religion.....	92
3.3.1 Nearing the post-secular: Yeats’s later poems.....	95
3.4 Eliot and religion.....	105
3.4.1 Nearing the post-secular: The Later Eliot .....	110
3.5 Conclusions .....	119
<b>CHAPTER 4: A POST-SECULAR POETICS</b> .....	<b>120</b>

4.1	Nearing the post-secular: the quest for Unity of Being.....	120
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>123</b>

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In Alfred de Musset's *The Confession of a Child of the Century* (1836), Desgenais encourages Octave, the young failed Romantic, with talk of infinity (37):

Open your window, Octave; are you not seeing infinity? Don't you sense that the sky has no limits? Does not your reason tell you that it is so? But can you really grasp the idea of infinity? Can you, who were born yesterday and will die tomorrow, have any idea of something that is without end? This glimpse of immensity has driven people raving mad in every country in the world. It is where religion spring from. It was to lay hold on the infinite that Cato cut his throat, that Christians confronted lions and Huguenots faced up to Catholics. All peoples who on earth have dwelt have stretched out their arms to the immensity of space and attempted to fly up and be absorbed into it...Use your brains, you simpleton, you who sit there looking out of a window no bigger than a man's hand and see infinity!

De Musset's Desgenais, still in love with the grandeur of the Romantic age, will be happy to know that that "glimpse of immensity" still drive people "raving mad in every country in the world". We still long to "lay hold on the infinite", to extend ourselves beyond the boundaries of our time and place. The present dissertation is the product of wanting to understand and honour that same drive. It is my belief that this drive to understand ourselves and the world we inhabit, to search for and or create meaning in existence is a scientific quest that need not exclude the call of the numinous. In this sense, I am completely post-secular. Desgenais, too, is post-secular when he wants Octave to acknowledge the limitlessness of the sky through "reason", to "see infinity" by using his "brains". Yeats and Eliot also sensed that something was missing in their time and laboured tirelessly to reconcile the antinomies of human existence and looked to both the worldly and the otherworldly in their pursuit of knowledge, hence their proto-post-secular quest for Unity of Being. We are undoubtedly indebted to poets and scholars such as Yeats and Eliot in our awareness of the one mind that the secular and the transcendent share.

Like Octave, I am grateful to a great many Desgenais, for encouraging me to open my window. I have done none of this alone and would like to thank the following people for their immeasurable support:

My gratitude to my supervisor, Prof J.E. Terblanche, for his patience, keeping me challenged, and reminding me that academia is ultimately "a democracy" and life, a "team sport". He has my deepest respect. I am grateful to my co-supervisor, Prof N.C.T. Meihuizen aka (Lord Titherley), for being the voice of wisdom throughout my studies. I cannot imagine my scholarly career taking the route it has without his support. I'd also like to thank Prof Attie de Lange for

always opening his heart and mind to anyone who needs a guiding hand. He has and continues to be a formidable teacher and force of inspiration.

I am also grateful for the Research Unit: Language and Literature in the South African Context at the Potchefstroom Campus of the NWU for their financial assistance and for supporting my study in more ways than I thought possible. A special thanks to Prof Phil van Schalkwyk, Prof Johann van der Walt, Ms Elsa van Tonder, and Ms Nicoline Gerber for encouraging me whenever I turned up looking for hope. I am also grateful to my colleagues at the Centre for Academic and Professional Language Practice at the NWU who have taught me so much and continue to humble me. In this regard, thank you especially to Mariska Nel, Kristien Andrianatos, and Jaco Fourie.

Thank you to my friends for their constant support and belief in the excellent qualities which I ultimately do not possess. A special thanks to my closest confidants Frankie Bielfeld (Jackie Dup), Gert Coetzer, Moynenne Mortimer, Ruan Fourie, Jansen Vermeulen, E. L.V. Else, Charl Blignaut, and Willie van den Berg. Finally, I must end at my beginning and thank my father H.P. Swanepoel for a lifetime of love, unwavering support, and for giving me the gift of an open mind.

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the ways in which the quest for Unity of Being in the later poetry of W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot anticipate what is now known as the “post-secular”. The term “Unity of Being” is drawn from Yeats’s understanding of this phrase, and this study attempts to connect it to Eliot’s thoughts on unity and his dialectical imagination. The focus on unity in their later works invite just such a comparison. Unity of Being, as Yeats understands it, is an all-inclusive, co-existent wholeness energised by an antinomial engagement of opposites. This wholeness may be understood in comparison to concepts such as oneness, harmony, wholeness, and interconnectivity. In order to compare and examine Yeats and Eliot’s shared quest, a three-point model outlining Unity of Being is tested against their later works. These points include 1) a grappling with opposites, 2) ensuing inarticulacy, and 3) a capacity for eudaimonic incarnation.

The aim of Yeats and Eliot’s quest is to attain glimpses of Unity of Being, the unity they perceive as the underlying current of life which is nonetheless only partially attainable within life. Their quest involves a sometimes-violent grappling with the opposites that hold eudaimonic potential; it leads to realisation, wholeness, even joy. The study of Yeats and Eliot’s quest towards Unity of Being therefore relates to eudaimonic studies, that is, it is concerned with investigating configurations of well-being attainable through the warring of the opposites. By employing a “hermeneutics of affirmation” instead of Paul Ricoeur’s infamous “hermeneutics of suspicion” and its demystification strategies, this study will investigate Yeats and Eliot’s unique quest for Unity of Being by considering certain markers of well-being, specifically those shaped by the secular-transcendent dichotomy.

In their questing, Yeats and Eliot grapple with the secular and the religious, concepts commonly thought to be directly opposed. This secular-transcendent intermingling is at the heart of current post-secular studies, which question the sharp distinction between the secular and the religious, a distinction resulting from the process of secularisation. The mid-twentieth century was dominated by the advancement of scientifically dominated standards that awaited the decline of religion’s significance in society and academic practice. In the early twenty-first century, however, the religious turn in the humanities renewed interest in traditionally religious concerns, initiating a collective attempt to establish a renewed synthesis between secular and transcendent ways of seeing. The dissertation will focus on the important recognition that Yeats and Eliot’s exploration of the relations between the secular and the religious anticipate this post-secular synthesis. The nature of their quest and the pressures of Modernism anachronistically pushed them in the direction of this development. As Modernists, Yeats and Eliot wrote during the “Age of Anxiety” and partook in its

religious crisis and the ensuing syncretic search for religious experience. Their syncretic search also gave way to a pursuit of secular concerns alongside religious and transcendental beliefs.

**Key words:** W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Unity of Being, Modernism, post-secularism, eudaimonia

## OPSOMMING

In hierdie verhandeling word daar ondersoek ingestel na die wyse waarop die soeke na Eenheid van Syn in die latere werke van W.B. Yeats en T.S. Eliot as 't ware hedendaagse post-sekularisme verwag of voorspel. Die term "Eenheid van Syn" is afgelei vanaf Yeats se begrip daarvan, en hierdie studie poog om Yeats se verstaan daarvan met Eliot se benaderinge tot eenheid en sy dialektiese verbeelding te vereenselwig. Beide Yeats en Eliot se latere werke verlang juis so 'n vergelyking. Eenheid van Syn verwys, volgens Yeats, na 'n alomvattende onverdeeldheid wat deur antinomiese worsteling aangedryf word. Eenheid van Syn kan vergelyk word met konsepte soos eenheid, harmonie, heelheid en samehang. Gekose voorbeelde uit Yeats en Eliot se latere werke word ondersoek aan die hand van 'n driepuntmodel wat die basiese elemente van Eenheid van Syn uiteensit. Die driepuntmodel se punte behels: (1) 'n worsteling met teenoorgesteldes, (2) die daaropvolgende onsamehangendheid, en (3) 'n kapasiteit vir eudaimoniese inkarnasie.

Hoewel beide Yeats en Eliot die uiteindelijke verwesenliking van Eenheid van Syn ag as iets wat onbereikbaar is binne die ruimte van menslike bestaan, is die doel van hul soeke om oomblikke daarvan waar te maak. Hul soeke behels 'n (by tye) gewelddadige stryd met die teenpole wat eudaimoniese waarde inhou en lei na bewuswording, heelheid, of selfs geluk. Die studie van Yeats en Eliot se soeke na Eenheid van Syn is dus ook 'n eudaimoniese studie; dit wil sê, dit stel ondersoek in na die welstandskonfigurasies wat deur die stryd teen teenoorgesteldes bereikbaar is. In stede van Ricouer se bekende hermeneutiek van agterdog en die strategie van demistifisering maak hierdie studie eerder gebruik van die hermeneutiek van bevestiging om Yeats en Eliot se unieke soeke na Eenheid van Syn te identifiseer en te vergelyk.

In hul soeke na Eenheid van Syn worstel beide Yeats en Eliot met die sekulêre en die religieuse, konsepte wat oor die algemeen as teenstrydig beskou word. Die skerp onderskeid tussen die sekulêre en die religieuse (en transendentale) wat weens die proses van sekularisasie ontstaan het, word in hedendaagse post-sekulêre studies bevraagteken. Die mid-twintigste eeu is gekenmerk deur die bevordering van wetenskaplik gedomineerde standaarde, wat die kwyning van religie se beduidendheid in die samelewing sowel as in die akademie aangespoor het. In die vroeë een-en-twintigste eeu was daar egter 'n oplewing in belangstelling in tradisionele godsdienstige belange in die geesteswetenskappe, wat 'n kollektiewe poging tot gevolg gehad het om 'n sintese tussen die sekulêre en die transendentale te vestig; gevolglik ontstaan die post-sekularisme. Yeats en Eliot se Modernistiese ondersoek na die verhouding tussen die sekulêre en transendentale antisipeer hierdie post-sekulêre sintese. Beide digters was aktief betrokke in die letterkunde gedurende 'n tydperk wat

as die “Era van Angs” bekend staan, en het dus ook gedeel in die religieuse krisis en die daaropvolgende sinkretiese soeke na religieuse ervarings.

**Sleuteltermes:**

W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, Eenheid van Syn, Modernisme, post-sekularisme, eudaimonia

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The following abbreviations are used for frequently cited works by W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot.

### W. B. Yeats

<i>Au</i>	<i>Autobiographies</i> , London, 1955.
<i>AV</i>	All references to <i>A Vision</i> is from <i>A Vision B</i> (1937), London, 1926.
<i>CP</i>	<i>Collected Poems</i> . Edited by Richard J. Finneran. New York, 1996.
<i>E&amp;I</i>	<i>Essays and Introductions</i> . London, 1961.
<i>Ex</i>	<i>Explorations</i> . London, 1962.
<i>TL</i>	<i>The Letters of W.B. Yeats</i> . Edited by Allan Wade. London, 1954.
<i>Myth</i>	<i>Mythologies</i> . London, 1959.

### T. S. Eliot

<i>CPP</i>	<i>The Complete Poems and Plays</i> . London, 1969.
<i>CP</i>	<i>The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: The Critical Editions</i> , Volumes 2-4, Maryland, 2015.
<i>KE</i>	<i>Knowledge and Experience in the philosophy of F.H. Bradley</i> . London, 1964.
<i>TL</i>	<i>The Letters of T.S. Eliot. Volume 5: 1930-1931</i> . Edited by Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden, Maryland, 2014.
<i>SP</i>	<i>Selected Prose</i> . Edited by Frank Kermode. New York, 1975.

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: The changing pattern in <i>Four Quartets</i> .....	53
Table 2: Quartets summation from "Little Gidding" with corresponding text parts.....	68

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1: “Discord” and “Concord” cones from Yeats’s <i>A Vision: A Reissue. With the author’s final revisions</i> , Macmillan, 1975, pp. 68, 71. ....	22
Figure 2-2: Superimposed gyres (adopted from Yeats’s <i>A Vision: A Reissue. With the author’s final revisions</i> , Macmillan, 1975, pp. 68, 71).....	23
Figure 2-3: “The Historical Cones” from Yeats’s <i>A Vision: A Reissue. With the author’s final revisions</i> , Macmillan, 1975, p. 266.....	24
Figure 2-4: “Great Wheel of lunar phases” from Yeats’s <i>A Vision: A Reissue. With the author’s final revisions</i> , Macmillan, 1975, p. 81.....	27

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

This dissertation examines how the quest for Unity of Being in the later poetry of W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot anticipates current post-secular concerns. In their later poems both Yeats and Eliot strove towards an ineffable state of unity to be reached through a struggle of opposites resulting in moments of deep understanding, interconnectivity, and wholeness, that is, Unity of Being. In their quest for glimpses of this Unity of Being, Yeats and Eliot also engage with the commonly perceived opposites of the secular and the religious. By integrating opposites such as these Yeats and Eliot anticipate current post-secular concerns that question the sharp divide between secular and religious beliefs.

Since it aims to outline the ways in which wholeness is approached, the present analysis of Yeats and Eliot's proto-post-secular quest for Unity of Being will emphasise the second step of Paul Ricoeur's conception of hermeneutics, a "hermeneutics of affirmation". Ricoeur's ideas are occasionally only half-understood as comprising a one-sided "hermeneutics of suspicion" that seeks to expose the underlying ideological or psychological illusions of a text. Instead, Ricoeur contends that hermeneutics "involves two complementary steps", the "hermeneutics of suspicion" as well as the "hermeneutics of affirmation" (Dey & Steyaert 236). Indeed, Ricoeur asserts that all hermeneutics is animated by a "double motivation: willingness to suspect, willingness to listen; vow of rigor, vow of obedience" (27). In contrast to this, literary scholarship appears all too willing to be suspicious of a given author's intent, bound only by the vow of rigour. However, in line with the eudaimonic turn in literary studies that encourages alternative hermeneutics, the present study will take seriously Yeats and Eliot's dedication to the search for Unity of Being by pointing towards the means through which they achieve or attempt to achieve instances of and glimpses into such unity.

Subsequently the present study begins with a brief overview of the concept of Unity of Being and how it relates to eudaimonia (the investigation of human flourishing) followed by the discussion of a three-point model that aims to frame the main elements of Unity of Being as found in Yeats and Eliot's later poems. This model is then applied through "close-readings" of selected later poems by Yeats and Eliot. This type of close-reading entails a "detailed analysis of the complex interrelationships and ambiguities (multiple meanings) of the verbal and figurative components within a work" (Abrams & Harpham 242). The similarity of Yeats and Eliot's quest for Unity of Being will be further demonstrated by a comparative study of the ways in which they engage with the concept of opposites, namely: Yeats's antinomial vision and Eliot's dialectical imagination.

Yeats's "antinomial vision", as Yeats scholar George Bornstein terms it, involves unification into "a whole maintained by the internecine warfare of its parts" (384). For Yeats, "vision consisted in accepting the full dialectic, not merely half of it" (Bornstein 384). Similarly, Eliot's dialectical imagination, as referred to by Eliot scholar Jewel Spears Brooker, is grounded in the principle that "contradictions are best understood dialectically, by moving to perspectives that both include and transcend them" (Brooker *DI* 1). Both poets' approaches clearly hinge on the potential that results from the joining of opposites, inviting an antinomial-dialectical comparison.

Furthermore, the study will demonstrate that, despite indications of a secular age, Yeats and Eliot's quest for Unity of Being involves a syncretic exploration of religious experience (the combination of dissimilar beliefs) alongside secular configurations of worldly experience. A comparison between Yeats and Eliot's respective religious explorations will be employed to achieve this, dispelling views of Yeats's poetry as that of an occultist and Eliot's as that of a conventional Christian. The study posits that both poets acknowledge multiple paths to truth and stresses the importance of the interconnected nature of belief and the questions it seeks to answer.

Moreover, through analyses of selected later poems, this study pursues Yeats and Eliot's integration of secular and religious beliefs as part of their attempt to fill the void left by the epistemological collapse that characterised what we now term the Modernist period, during which time these poets wrote their work. The conclusion will be reached that Yeats and Eliot's awareness of the porous boundaries between the secular and religious in their search for Unity of Being serves as an early example of the post-secular approach that emerges more fully in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This proto-post-secular perception underscores the current need for alternative hermeneutics that not only suspects but attempts to affirm. This view is further supported by the eudaimonic turn in literary studies that takes shape at around the same time that post-secular studies are being developed.

## 1.2 Contextualisation

Like many poets and authors before and after them, W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot share a distinctive concern with opposites and the stark poetic command of contraries. The fact of the “opposites” came into recorded view more or less with the pre-Socratic philosophers, the Pythagoreans, who established the opposites as important entities in a so-called table of opposites (Edinger 12). More recently, we are also familiar with the structuralist idea that binary oppositions are “central to the human brain and to human mental functioning” (Arkins 2). Since its establishment, the opposites have been studied at length as antithetical forces, and, at different times, perhaps because of its innateness, as working in concert, in unison. Indeed, Yeats and Eliot’s later work utilises this engagement with opposites in pursuit of a unity that resolves and transcends. Consider the following exemplary lines from Yeats’s poem “Vacillation”:

Between extremities  
Man runs his course;  
A brand, or flaming breath,  
Comes to destroy  
All those antinomies  
Of day and night;  
The body calls it death,  
The heart remorse.  
But if these be right  
What is joy? (CP 249)

The inevitability of opposites is explicitly stated here: “Between extremities / Man runs his course”. Yeats believes our lives governed by “those antinomies / Of day and night”. Explaining his “private philosophy” in a letter to Ethel Mannin a mere year before his death, Yeats writes: “To me all things are made of the conflict of two states of consciousness, beings or persons which die each other’s life, live each other’s death. That is true of life and death themselves” (TL 918). Clearly, in Yeats’s last years and his last writing, he is immensely aware of the dynamism in our ability to engage with opposites. Even more significantly, antinomies, or opposites, can be transcended; in “Vacillation”, it is “A brand, or flaming breath” that “Comes to destroy / All those antinomies / Of day and night”. Yeats suggests that the destruction, or transcendence of opposites is a purging act reminiscent of Biblical purification.

Where Yeats's treatment of opposites prefers a vacillation, a toing and froing, Eliot's conception of opposites is often informed by a relativity. The following lines from "The Dry Salvages" illustrate disconnect between here and now experience and the delay of interpretation:

The moments of happiness – not the sense of well-being,  
Fruition, fulfilment, security or affection,  
Or even a very good dinner, but the sudden illumination –  
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. (CPP 186)

Disconnect between experience and meaning can be resolved through approaching the meaning of the experience in a new and different form. Engaging with these relative opposites, that is, the experience (present) and the meaning it holds (which can only occur in the future), lead to moments that are "beyond any meaning / We can assign to happiness". To Jewel Spears Brooker, these lines are illustrative of transcendent experience since it takes us "beyond the relational level where we are aware of assigning meanings to happiness" (*ME* 187). Therefore, for both Yeats and Eliot, grappling with the opposites allows for the transcendence of opposites. The kind of grappling with the opposites and relativity apparent from the above-mentioned extracts is at the core of Yeats and Eliot's quest for Unity of Being. The back and forth engagement with opposites in their poetry is not merely an attempt to fragment the nature of reality, as is often thought of Modernist poetry since "the fragmentation of a [M]odernist poem can connect as much as it separates" (Howarth 17). Yeats and Eliot's engagement with opposites is indeed an attempt to unite the fragments of a dispensation in cataclysmic disorder. Of this disorder and the mythical method<sup>1</sup> that responds to it Eliot writes in "Ulysses, Order, and Myth" (*CP* V2 478):

It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. It is a method already adumbrated by Mr. Yeats, and of the need for which I believe Mr. Yeats to have been the first contemporary to be conscious.

Clearly, Eliot is aware of the "shape" and "significance" that is searched for through fragmentation and opposition, the unity made possible by illuminating division. He is aware, too, of Yeats's need to do the same, to control, order, give shape and significance to the disorder of their

---

<sup>1</sup> The mythical method claims that "the chaos of the modern world becomes more comprehensible when understood as a perpetual reenactment of ancient archetypes" (Booth 30).

time by means of conjoining opposites. Yeats, for instance, engages the opposites of past and present, in accord with Eliot's thoughts on the mythical method that "literature dwindles to a mere chronicle of circumstance, or passionless fantasies, and passionless meditations, unless it is constantly flooded with the passions and beliefs of ancient times" (*EI* 185). The goal of fragmentation through binaries is therefore not the perpetuation of disjunction but indicators of the search for unity. Unity can be seen as the coming together of aspects of varying degrees of opposition, and Yeats and Eliot's dexterous treatment of these degrees will be one of the main foci of the argument to follow.

Unity is synonymous with oneness, togetherness, wholeness, unification, union, agreement, harmony, and accord (*Roget's Superthesaurus* 625). Unity of Being, then, entails wholeness of being, of the self, its constituents, as well as its place in still larger contexts of wholeness such as one's culture, human community, and the cosmos. On another level, "unity" as a kind of oneness, overlaps with "being" since the notion of being one person or one entity is "perhaps, our most fundamental notion" (Priest xv). We cannot "say anything, think anything, cognize anything, without presupposing it" (Priest xv). Unity of Being can simply be interpreted as "unity". However, since grappling with opposites is significant with relation to "being" in Yeats and Eliot's search for wholeness, the term Unity of Being is preferable. *Ergo*, the quest for Unity of Being involves joining various parts of "being" into a state of unison which, as this study will show, includes secular reasoning alongside religious or transcendental beliefs. To grapple with opposites in the way that Yeats and Eliot do in their quest for Unity of Being is not necessarily only a symptom of the Modernist epistemological collapse but also a practice innate to the human condition.

Historically, probably the most notable questers for unity were the Alchemists. In alchemical symbolism, once opposites unite a mysterious entity called the *coniunctio* emerges, which is an image of complete unity (Edinger 18). Later, during the Renaissance, Nicholas of Cusa advanced the idea that God is *coincidentia oppositorum*, a truly infinite being; he includes all the opposites, he is all things, and none of them (Priest & Berto *SEP*). In more recent times Hegel based his dialectic process on the dynamic relation between opposing forces that give rise to "instances in which we are forced to believe both of two contrary propositions true" (Muscio 522). More recently still, Carl Jung coined the term Individuation, marking a process that aims to integrate the various and opposing parts of the psyche into a unified whole (Lawson 21). Individuation is generally understood as "the attainment of the self". Individuation moreover involves the integration of the conscious and unconscious through the agency of various archetypes (Meihuizen *YJI* 101). All these unifying developments are part of the tradition of the human search for wholeness in which Yeats and Eliot partake; it affirms William Blake's much celebrated phrase "Without contraries is no progression".

At its heart, then, the quest for Unity of Being necessitates the combination, integration, and transcendence or attempted transcendence of concepts that may appear to be binary opposites, such as the self and the other, darkness and light, wrong and right, male and female, secular and sacred and so forth. Yeats and Eliot are especially attracted to this search for unity due to the insistence on a “both/and” rather than “either/or” logic that constitutes a foundational pattern in Modernist art and thought (Brooker *TR* 55). In his prose Yeats uses the term “Unity of Being” as an expression of man’s longing to unite the various elements of his nature, and although Unity of Being can only be fully attained beyond the limits of material existence, we can nevertheless “strive to approach it, to achieve it as nearly as possible within ourselves in this world” (Bohlmann 89). In Eliot’s prose, too, there is a concern with the nature of unity; in his PhD. on the philosophy of F.H. Bradley, for instance, Eliot wrote extensively on the concept of unity with regard to Bradley’s philosophy of “immediate experience”.

While there is no explicit reference to the term “Unity of Being” in Eliot’s writing, there is undoubtedly a similar quest which unfolds. This is especially evident in *Four Quartets*: Eliot writes in “East Coker” that “In order to arrive at what you are not / You must go through the way in which you are not / And what you do not know is the only thing you know” (*CPP* 181). Paradoxes such as these are repeated throughout *Four Quartets*, they bind the quartets together by establishing a rhythm that reflects a search for wholeness which is realised in the final quartet with the fusion of fire and rose.

As it proffers glimpses of Unity of Being, the grappling with opposites in Yeats and Eliot’s quest is often a strong one. However, grappling with opposites is also an act that holds eudaimonic value; it leads to realisation, wholeness, even joy. The study of Yeats and Eliot’s quest towards Unity of Being is therefore also a eudaimonic study, that is, it is concerned with investigating the eudaimonic elements within the later poems; elements such as joy, blessedness, love, wonder, a sense of belonging to the connectedness which makes up human existence. By outlining the quest for Unity of Being this study makes use of a “hermeneutics of affirmation” rather than a “hermeneutics of suspicion”. Instead of detecting hidden realities beneath textual illusions, it seeks to affirm the truth value of the quest for Unity of Being.

This study therefore forms part of recent critiques of the “suspicious” model. By the end of the twentieth century, literary scholars began to question the hermeneutics of suspicion, that led to an interdisciplinary focus on the configurations of human flourishing called the eudaimonic turn (Pawelski & Moores 3). Eudaimonia (εὐδαιμονία) is a Greek term that signifies “a condition of human flourishing” that relays “connotations of a blessed life” and that has been translated into

English as “happiness” and “flourishing” (Pawelski & Moores 2; Vittersø 7). The possible eudaimonic aspects of human experience are however not limited to concepts such as joy, happiness, and positivity. They include interrelated concepts such as beauty, wonder, goodness, health, interconnectedness, balance, wholeness, fullness, gratitude, and so forth.

Moreover, eudaimonic studies will not only emphasise the expressed positive aspects of a text; but can also focus on the means by which mournful or troubling aspects of life function eudaimonically. Indeed, the eudaimonic turn in literary studies has shifted its focus to instances in which a speaker or persona “experiences an insight or epiphany that results from suffering, or grows in significant ways as a result of tragedy or some other adverse event” (Moores 42). What leads to a state of eudaimonia for Yeats and Eliot is their warring with the opposites and the experiences of Unity of Being that result from exploring opposition. Analyses of the quest for Unity of Being in Yeats and Eliot’s later poems within the present study will therefore indicate eudaimonic markers reflective of each poet’s idea of attaining wholeness, of self-remaking and of Incarnation.

One of the most significant sets of opposites that these poets grapple with in their search for Unity of Being is that of the secular, phenomenal world and the otherworldly realm of religion. This conjoining of the secular and the religious is the basis of what is now known as the “post-secular”. It is commonly accepted that the Enlightenment left a divide between science and religion, which left secular and religious (or transcendental) views of the world in opposition to each other. Although the term “secular” tends to suffer from connotations of the blasphemous, the anti-religious, or the unspiritual, a peculiar relationship between this kind of secularity and its opposite is emerging. John McClure, for instance, observes that “over the last twenty years, several influential secular intellectuals — including leading figures in movements such as feminism, cultural studies, critical theory, discourse analysis, and deconstruction — have begun to reopen negotiations with the religious” (334).

In contemporary literary theory the post-secular, sometimes also referred to as the “new visibility of religion”, entails renewed interest in the co-existence of the secular and the religious. Although some take the stance that the post-secular heralds the return of religion and some interpret it as the fall of secularism, at its simplest the post-secular is a “synthesis between secular and sacred ways of seeing” (McClure 334). This synthesis reveals the porous boundaries between the secular and its opposite. For instance, the term “secular” is descriptive of notions belonging to the world as opposed to what lies beyond it, and it may indicate a more scientific approach to understanding the world instead of simply and superficially implying the anti-religious. Religious and transcendental beliefs, too, often deviate from the conventional or the institutionalised and may share or resemble sentiments with the commonly misconstrued secular. Post-secular readings consequently destabilise

our understanding of the terms secular and religious by incorporating aspects of both philosophies and providing us with something new, which is the knowledge that there is, or ought to be a vital coexistence of both.

Post-secular theory offers a hermeneutic with which to read texts from the past as well. However, most literary studies that deal with the post-secular “focus on contemporary literature” (Corrigan *TPL* 2015). This study therefore addresses the important prospect of utilising the contemporary understanding of post-secular theory to look back. By applying this contemporary theory in the reading of Modernist poetry, the present study illuminates the historical movements that underpin it. Post-secular thought develops from the desire to resist master narratives, whether they are narratives of secularisation or those of the return of religion (Kaufmann 68). The post-secular is therefore distinctly contemporary yet not uniquely contemporary since the relationship between the secular and the religious had always existed and current emphasis on it was therefore to be expected (Corrigan *TPL* 2015). Post-secular theory moreover develops from the religious turn in the humanities during the 1990s and early 2000s (Branch & Knight 494). It strongly questions what Jolyon Agar calls the “epistemological superiority of scientistically informed normative values” endorsed by radical secularists but also all narrow transcendent worldviews (47). Any post-secular literary study should therefore avoid arguing apologetically for either secular or religious (or transcendental) ways of reading.

The purpose of this study is likewise to illuminate the porous boundaries between the perceived polarities of the secular and the religious (or transcendental) and to claim that both are necessary if we are to embrace a post-secular methodology in the literary studies of our secular age. By identifying Eliot and Yeats as precursors of post-secular thought I also aim to provide a more significant understanding of post-secular development since these kinds of advances in the exchange between secularism, religion, and literature are becoming increasingly thought provoking.

As if foreseeing the current post-secular emphasis on the porous boundaries between the secular and the religious, Yeats in 1937 is convinced that “in two or three generations it will become generally known that the mechanical theory has no reality, that the natural and supernatural are knit together” (*EI* 518). The conjoined nature of the natural and the supernatural embodies the antinomial vision so characteristic of Yeats’s later works. His antinomial vision is “firmly rooted in a Blakean model of conflict and discord” (Cuda 58). Like Yeats, Eliot displays an awareness of the intertwined nature of the secular and the religious. Eliot nearly echoes Yeats in his 1939 essay “The Idea of a Christian Society” when he writes: “We may say that religion, as distinguished from modern paganism, implies a life in conformity with nature. It may be observed that the natural life and the supernatural life have a conformity to each other which neither has with the mechanistic

life” (SP 290). This affirmation of interconnectivity between the things of this world and whatever lies beyond it is resonated, again, in the paradoxes that run throughout *Four Quartets*.

As this study will show, both poets engage an awareness of the connections made possible between secular and religious knowledge and they both create an intricate amalgamation of secular and sacred images to portray their quest for Unity of Being. The argument will centre largely on the later works of Yeats and Eliot since these best illustrate their pursuit of Unity of Being. Although it is possible to find instances of the quest towards Unity of Being in the early works by Yeats and Eliot, the most significant representations of its realisation appear in their later works. It is, of course, a process that intensifies gradually. For Eliot, the need for such a quest begins with the devastation and entombment within *The Waste Land* (1922) and its subsequent call for renewal. In *Ash-Wednesday* (1930) the call becomes clearer and the need for salvation from the Modern mind more urgent. The quest for Unity of Being is finally affirmed in *Four Quartets* (1942) and realised especially in the final lines of “Little Gidding” that unite what seem to be opposites: “And the fire and the rose are one” (CPP 198). Vincent Leitch, however, divides Eliot’s work into “the early secular poetry” and “the later poetry of religion” (35). I argue that, instead of two mutually exclusive periods, Eliot’s later “religious” poetry is but an amalgamation of his secular and religious modes; a post-secular turn in and of itself. Eliot’s conversion later in life was also not a sudden declaration of faith, but an affirmation of a long process of religious exploration.

Yeats also only later comes into a more defined pursuit of Unity of Being, which is “the cardinal principle of his late doctrine” (Ross 571). Unlike Eliot, the progression of such a quest from early to later Yeats is far less visible. Perhaps the first distinct occurrences of a move towards the meeting of the secular-religious/transcendent dichotomy in the later poems appear in “Ego Dominus Tuus” (1919), “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” (1928) and “Vacillation” (1932). From this point on the quest matures in *Last Poems and Two Plays* (1939), especially in poems such as “News for the Delphic Oracle” in which Yeats envisions a world beyond death that includes both the eternity of the soul and the physical constraints of the body (Rosenthal 335). The poems analysed in this study similarly lend themselves to the post-secular by containing within them a combination and-or synthesis of seemingly secular and transcendent conceptions.

Against this background, the dissertation will investigate the nature of the quest towards Unity of Being in the later poems of W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot, outlining the ways in which their quest informs what is now commonly known as the post-secular. Moreover, through combining the faculties associated with both secular and transcendent beliefs, post-secular texts accentuate wholeness consistent with the eudaimonic turn in literary studies, which also allows for a eudaimonic reading of the quest for Unity of Being as manifested in the later works by Yeats and

Eliot. It is within this context that the dissertation's main questions emerge, this study therefore intends to identify the configurations of the quest for Unity of Being apparent in the later poetry of W. B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot. It will furthermore address how Yeats and Eliot's quest for Unity of Being anticipate and illuminate an understanding of the post-secular approach to literary texts.

The aim of this study is to identify and compare the quest for Unity of Being in selected later poems by Yeats and Eliot to examine the ways in which this quest anticipates post-secular approaches. Moreover, this study aims to explore the unique connections that Yeats and Eliot establish between secular and religious beliefs. With this in mind, the following aims have been identified:

1. To identify the configurations of the quest for Unity of Being apparent in the later poetry of W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot.
2. To demonstrate how Yeats and Eliot's quest for Unity of Being anticipates and illuminates our understanding of post-secular phenomena.

The dissertation, then, asserts that Yeats and Eliot's later poetry invite comparative analysis regarding their quest for Unity of Being. The argument will illustrate that despite holding different beliefs and philosophies, Yeats and Eliot were both sensitive to the need for what is now termed eudaimonic pursuits, that is, pursuits that investigate that which is constitutive of well-being. The dissertation subsequently argues that Yeats and Eliot's understanding of Unity of Being anticipates post-secular phenomena. This will be illustrated by considering the ways in which opposing notions, especially notions of the secular and the religious (or transcendental), meet in Yeats and Eliot's later poetry. Based on these analyses, the study will provisionally conclude that Yeats and Eliot's Modernist anticipation of current post-secular concerns indicates a need for the eudaimonic embracing of secular and transcendent truth.

The research design of this study is based on hermeneutic and eudaimonic methods, where the investigations associated with hermeneutics are reinforced by a eudaimonic approach that aims to counteract the negative critical trends of recent decades. The concept of Unity of Being is particularly suited to eudaimonic reading, since its quest forms part of what James Pawelski and D.J. Moores consider to be "complex configurations of eudaimonia" (32). Instead of a "hermeneutics of suspicion", this study will pursue "a hermeneutics of affirmation", which seeks to establish the eudaimonic potential of the quest for Unity of Being. The dominant analytical method involves close readings of the selected poems as primary sources. Secondary texts such as Yeats and Eliot's notes, essays, and prose are assimilated into the analysis to provide a varied and comprehensive

examination of their quest. The research conducted will furthermore include engagement with theoretical frameworks that attempt to delineate the development of literary history, especially with regard to discussions of how the post-secular is anticipated by the Modernist Yeats and Eliot. These discussions will address the generalisations bound up with the periodisation of literary history.

While chapter one identifies the research problem and subsequent research questions and aims, chapter two provides the theoretical basis for the concept of Unity of Being and constructs a framework with which to read and analyse configurations of the quest for Unity of Being in Yeats and Eliot's later poetry. Applying this framework through close-readings of selected poems shows the similarities and differences between Yeats and Eliot's quest with the purpose of illustrating how their search for Unity of Being anticipate post-secular thinking. Chapter three conceptualises the post-secular in historical and poetic terms before attempting to determine its anachronistic presence in Yeats and Eliot's later poetry. Chapter three also contextualises Yeats and Eliot's syncretic religious explorations within the Modernist era. The final chapter concludes with a summary of the findings in terms of the identified aims of the study and suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER 2: UNITY OF BEING

### 2.1 Introducing the opposites

In his August 1919 essay, “If I were Four-and-Twenty”, Yeats sketches the origins of his quest for Unity of Being (*Ex* 263):

One day when I was twenty-three or twenty-four this sentence seemed to form in my head, without my willing it, much as sentences form when we are half-asleep: ‘Hammer your thoughts into unity’. For days I could think of nothing else, and for years I tested all I did by that sentence.

Considering his intense devotion to the opposites, the interaction between them, and the antinomial vision apparent in his poetry, Yeats did indeed test all he did by that sentence. In order to “Hammer your thoughts into unity” one has to join concepts that were divided since “unity” itself assumes a set of opposites and is generally understood as the coming together of contraries. It may appear illogical, however, when one attempts to conjoin opposites such as left and right, or up and down, since one cannot simply be the other. It is when such logic is applied that Unity of Being is often dismissed as mystical, as beyond or contrary to human understanding and thus also beyond definition. How, then, does one talk about and define unity if it cannot be talked about, if it exceeds expression within the limits of language? These kinds of questions are valuable in conveying the intellectual engagement necessary in uncovering Unity of Being. It would be unprofitable, though, and perhaps unnecessarily cynical to exclude the numinous nature of the concept. Scholarly humility is required to accept that there are different and extensive definitions of the term “Unity of Being” across disciplines. In this dissertation, the most definitive understanding of the term comes from the works of Yeats and Eliot themselves. Unity of Being will then be approached from a literary point of view, as found in the poems under discussion; such an approach will naturally not exclude its numinosity.

Moreover, Unity of Being may be compared to concepts such as “oneness”, “harmony”, “balance”, and “interconnectivity” since it, too, can be reached through addressing duality. Yeats is well known for doing just that. Virginia and Raymond Pruitt call Yeats the “devoted apostle of the antinomies” with “a lifelong addiction to the identification and organisation of polar qualities” (37). Yeats distinguishes most prominently, for instance, between sets of opposition such as self and soul, body and mind, material and spiritual, and so forth. While Yeats prefers the term “antinomies”, Brian Arkins argues that opposites are “central to the human condition, whether we call them by the structuralist term binary oppositions, or by the terms polarities, antitheses, dualities, or antinomies”

(1). Since an awareness of opposites is therefore innate to thought, one expects similar instances of grappling with the opposites throughout history.

Though it may be impossible to determine the historical emergence of the concept of opposites, some of the first extensive analyses were conducted by the pre-Socratic philosophers, the Pythagoreans, for whom the most prominent opposites were limited/unlimited, odd/even, one/many, right/left, male/female, resting/moving, straight/curved, light/dark, good/bad, square/oblong (Edinger 12). The earliest forms of alchemy, Egyptian and Western, also shared a strong dedication to the opposites. “In both laboratory [that is, material] and inner [that is, spiritual] alchemy, the concept of bringing opposing forces together is at the foundation of the work” (Martin 23). It is well known that the alchemists wanted to transmute ordinary metals into the most perfect metal, gold, but their primary aim was “to make the soul progress from its ordinary state to one of spiritual perfection” (Powell 8). Here we already see an interaction between the secular and the transcendent bound with the quest for Unity of Being; not only did the alchemists work towards transcendence of opposites such as base metals and gold, but they also worked towards the coming together of the physical and the spiritual, the secular (the worldly) and the otherworldly or the transcendent.

Later, Heraclitus and the Milesian philosophers of the sixth century B.C. presented Unity of Opposites as a principle, arguing that an object is determined by its internal oppositions (McGill & Parry 418). The quest for Unity of Being, in whatever capacity, has evidently continued across history in many different mythologies, theologies, philosophies, and the like. Some of the best-known attempts to reconcile such dichotomies include Buddhism’s middle way, Aristotle’s golden mean, the rational antinomies of Kant, Hegel’s dialectic, Marx’s dialectical materialism, Freud’s Eros and Thanatos, Ricœur’s tension between suspicion and belief, and Derrida’s *différance* (Marlan 150).

In Yeats and Eliot’s own time, the modern psychologist Carl Jung devoted much of his research to the same pursuit. Jung’s psychology deals with “the conflicts and dissociation of psychic life and attempts to bring about the mysterious ‘unification’ he calls Wholeness” (Marlan 10). The “complete self”, as Jung conceived it, held that “all the opposing forces in human nature, conscious and unconscious, had become reconciled so that the person was at one with himself” (Neil Powell 128). For Jung, Yeats, and Eliot part of the search for Unity of Being can be ascribed to what Jewel Spears Brooker calls the Modernist insistence on a “both/and” logic (55), along with the need to reconstruct meaning from fractured ontologies left by the violence of the First World War (1914–18). Hence, the notion in Yeats and Eliot’s later works to draw from opposing springs of knowledge in order to reach an ideal state of growth, prosperity, and wholeness. Both poets are undoubtedly questing for a Unity of Being.

## 2.2 Eudaimonia and Unity of Being

The study of Yeats and Eliot's quest toward Unity of Being is also a eudaimonic study since the aim of their questing is to achieve an ideal state of growth, prosperity, and wholeness. These are all ideals endorsed by the eudaimonic turn in literary studies, a turn that manifests as a "search for and embrace of various alternative hermeneutics" (Moore 26). Thus, through exploring the eudaimonic potential of Yeats and Eliot's questing, this study challenges the one-sided use of a "hermeneutics of suspicion" and suggests, along with Ricoeur, that the interpretative task is completed by the "second function of the hermeneutic imagination", by what has been called a "hermeneutics of affirmation" (Kearney 74).

The phrase "hermeneutics of suspicion" was coined by the philosopher Paul Ricoeur to "capture a common spirit that pervades the writings of Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche", the architects of a style of interpretation characterised by the evasion of the obvious with the aim of exposing "less visible and less flattering truths" (Felski 2012). The masters of suspicion, writes Ricoeur, practise a "destructive critique", they are inventors of an art of interpreting that tears off masks and reduces disguises (33). In eudaimonic terms, a "hermeneutics of suspicion" is often too focussed on the "demystification of a given author, whose texts and contexts can be shown, through the use of a suspicious reading strategy, to be complicit in forces that antagonise people and thus obstruct their eudaimonia" (Moore 27). In contrast to the "hermeneutics of suspicion", the "hermeneutics of affirmation" is what Ricoeur terms "postcritical faith", a faith that is no longer "the first faith of the simple soul, but rather the second faith of one who has engaged in hermeneutics, faith that has undergone criticism" (28). Ricoeur argues that despite their use of "procedures of demystification", Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche, the masters of suspicion, through their critical method point toward a "hermeneutics of affirmation" (35):

Yet there is perhaps something they have even more in common, an underlying relationship that goes even deeper. All three begin with suspicion concerning the illusion of consciousness, and then proceed to employ the stratagem of deciphering; all three, however, far from being detractors of "consciousness", aim at extending it. What Marx wants is to liberate *praxis* by the understanding of necessity; but this liberation is inseparable from a "conscious insight" which victoriously counterattacks the mystification of false consciousness. What Nietzsche wants is the increase of man's power, the restoration of his force; but the meaning of the will to power must be recaptured by meditating on the ciphers "superman," "eternal return," and "Dionysus," without which the power in question would be but worldly violence. What Freud desires is that the one who is analysed, by making his own the meaning that was foreign to him, enlarge his field of consciousness, live better, and finally be a little freer and, if possible, a little happier.

From this excerpt it is discernible that Ricoeur perceives the positive, eudaimonic aims of the suspicious model. Suspicion initiates affirmation. Richard Kearney, the chief contemporary translator of Ricoeur's texts on hermeneutics, also refers to "hermeneutics of affirmation" as "hermeneutics of hope" (75). By recollecting meaning after the suspicious interpretation has unmasked and destroyed, a "hermeneutics of affirmation" completes the interpretive task through "extending", "restoring", and "recapturing", through affirmation. Though in conflict, the "hermeneutics of suspicion" and the "hermeneutics of affirmation" are not representative of distinctly separate ways of reading but are complementary and necessary aspects of Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics (Dey & Steyaert 236). To "destroy the idols, to listen to symbols—are not these, one and the same enterprise?" (Ricoeur 54).

Despite Ricoeur's insistence on the cooperative relationship between these two styles of interpretation, there is nonetheless an emphasis on suspicion in critical theory. Eliot was also aware of this imbalance when he contended that "it is easier for readers to apprehend the destructive than the constructive side of an author's thought" (*SP* 277). Too often suspicious readings only "enable us to see what is wrong" with a text; a suspicious eye is forever on the lookout for "diseased psychodynamics and/or participation in undesirable ideologies, such as racism, sexism, neuroses, false consciousness, heterosexism, patriarchy, imperialism, and the like" (Moore's 27). There are, for instance, extensive studies on the anti-Semitic nature of Eliot's writing, such as Anthony Julius's *T. S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism, and Literary Form*. Likewise, Brian Arkins argues that the sexual drive of Yeats's later work exhibits "an element of Freud's polymorphous perversity" (60). While perspectives such as these are valuable and representative of the rich legacy the suspicious model has left in the form of critical theory, they fall short when the interpretive moment calls for a "hermeneutics of affirmation" (Moore's 27). By the end of the twentieth century, Ricoeur already asked: "does not this discipline of the real, this asceticism of the necessary lack the grace of imagination, the upsurge of the possible?" (36). Yeats and Eliot's quest for Unity of Being calls for precisely such an upsurge, a "hermeneutics of affirmation" that, as the phrase implies, seeks to complete the task of interpretation through affirmation.

A "hermeneutics of affirmation" is especially significant in the twenty-first century as scholars across disciplines are "increasingly focussing their attention on the immediate constituents of well-being, attempting to identify and investigate those aspects of the human condition widely accepted to be at the centre of human flourishing" (Pawelski & Moore's 3). This development is what Pawelski and Moore's call the "eudaimonic turn". In literary studies, the eudaimonic turn is manifesting in three interrelated ways (Moore's 26-27):

(1) as a growing dissatisfaction with critique as it is commonly understood; (2) as a search for and embrace of various alternative hermeneutics; and (3) as a direct move toward the investigation of the eudaimonic aspects of human experience.

This present study finds itself in line with the third of these manifestations as it seeks to establish the quest toward Unity of Being as an eudaimonic one, one that affords Yeats and Eliot expressions of deep understanding, joy, blessedness, and the like. Eudaimonia, as translated from the Greek, refers to “the things that make life most worth living and thus enable human beings to thrive” (Pawelski & Moores 7). Of its origin, the Encyclopedia Britannica (“Eudaemonism”) says:

eudaimonia means literally “the state of having a good indwelling spirit, a good genius”; and “happiness” is not at all an adequate translation of this word. Happiness, indeed, is usually thought of as a state of mind that results from or accompanies some actions. But Aristotle’s answers to the question “What is eudaimonia?” (namely, that which is “activity in accordance with virtue”; or that which is “contemplation”) show that for him eudaimonia was not a state of mind consequent on or accompanying certain activities but is a name for these activities themselves. “What is eudaimonia?” is then the same question as “What are the best activities of which man is capable?”

However, even in Aristotle’s time, there was “considerable disagreement” about what constitutes eudaimonia and those debates did not die out, but instead “formed the basis of a rich conversation that has endured throughout the ensuing millennia and continues to inform academic work in a variety of disciplines today” (Pawelski & Moores 3). Today, the eudaimonic turn entails an increased interest in “well-being, human flourishing, and thriving”, particularly in approaches that may include concepts such as “joy, love, tranquillity, wisdom, creativity, optimism, inspiration, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life, life satisfaction, and play” (Pawelski & Moores 7). One way eudaimonic critics challenge suspicious readings of literature is by “pointing to several markers of well-being” within the text (Moores 28). However, the significance of aspects of well-being are often called into question when exposed to “the heat of various critical methodologies” resulting in an “interpretative paradigm in which anything other than suspicion becomes the antonym of informed, sophisticated reading” (Moores 30). Yet, reading affirmatively can be “just as complex, if not more so, than reading suspiciously” especially since a “hermeneutics of affirmation” aims to extend the interpretative endeavour initiated by suspicion (Moores 30).

Moreover, it is important not to view the affirmation of “the good or the positive as a sign of dispensing with the bad or the negative” since “the concept of well-being includes not only love and happiness but also negative or adverse circumstances that can, in the right circumstances, result in eudaimonic growth and transformation” (Pawelski & Moores 8, 41). This is especially the case in Yeats and Eliot’s quest for Unity of Being where wholeness is pursued through Yeats’s re-making disposition and Eliot’s notion of Incarnation. Both poets see a purgative process of incarnation, or

embodiment, as inextricably bound to the attainment of Unity of Being and its eudaimonic possibilities. There is undoubtedly a violence and a sense of suffering in their warring with the opposites; in “Under Ben Bulben” Yeats asserts that “Even the wisest man grows tense / With some sort of violence / Before he can accomplish fate, / Know his work or choose his mate” (*CP* 326) and in *Ash-Wednesday* Eliot writes of a time “of tension between dying and birth” (*CPP* 98). As this study aims to show, their grappling with opposites leads them to, sometimes short-lived, instances of eudaimonic incarnation. Incarnation, per the OED (“incarnation, n. 1c”), involves the “putting into, or assumption of, a concrete or definite form; ‘embodiment’”. Yeats and Eliot are thus able to embody, to transform the eudaimonic gains that result from their post-secular questing into the form of poetic expression.

### 2.3 A Framework

This thesis takes its understanding of Unity of Being firstly from Yeats’s, and attempts to relate it to Eliot’s, since their quest for Unity in their later work invites comparison. At the heart of their quest is a struggle with opposition and an exploration of the tension that arises from such grappling. Both Yeats and Eliot find different ways of expressing their sometimes-ineffable, yet similar quest. For the sake of clarity though, I begin this section with a synthesis of its findings, a framework with which to read the poems included in this study.

In Yeats and Eliot’s later works, Unity of Being involves a three-pronged quest. This quest almost always includes 1) a grappling with opposites, 2) ensuing inarticulacy, and 3) a capacity for eudaimonic incarnation. In identifying these aspects, a broader context is created that sheds light on the ways in which Yeats and Eliot engage with the secular and the transcendental in their anticipation of the post-secular. Firstly, at the core of all questing for unity, there is a grappling with the opposites. For Eliot scholars, this is the “dialectical imagination”, as is notably expressed by Jewel Spears Brooker, and for Yeats scholars, this is the “antinomial vision”. Both poets engage in a “dance of opposites”, but the outcome, or turn, of this dance differs for Eliot and Yeats. For Eliot, the end of our searching results in a dissipation of opposites, a fusion. For Yeats, the opposites remain in tension, always. For Yeats, Unity of Being is always only almost there, it is rarely a surety in the same sense that it is for Eliot at the end of *Four Quartets*.

Secondly, Unity of Being is essentially ineffable and so leaves one stuck and unable to communicate the gist of what the term holds. At the beginning of this chapter I asked, “How do you talk about and define Unity if it cannot be talked about, if it exceeds expression within the limits

of language?” Unity of Being is, however, not conditioned by a mere frustrated sigh at the failure of language. I argue that Yeats and Eliot’s brand of Unity of Being affirms that the struggle of language can aptly convey mystical experience; something of the incommunicable is indeed expressed in the performance, even ritual, of the struggle to communicate significance within language. Moreover, this struggle with the ineffable encourages exchanges between the secular, worldly, realm of language and the transcendent realm of ineffable spiritual experience. The exchange can ultimately lead to eudaimonic value for the individual who may choose to develop a state of well-being that addresses both secular and transcendent beliefs.

Thirdly, both Yeats and Eliot imply that the attainment of Unity of Being demands a select individual capacity for incarnation and “self-remaking”. In “The Dry Salvages”, for example, Eliot writes:

But to apprehend  
The point of intersection of the timeless  
With time, is an occupation for the saint—  
No occupation either, but something given  
And taken, in a lifetime’s death in love (CPP 189)

In order to fully conceptualise the conjoining of opposites such as “time” and “the timeless”, Eliot requires “the saint” to engage in constant purgative incarnation (“a lifetime’s death in love”), a constant becoming. Yeats, too, requires a select “self-remaking” kind of man for the quest for Unity of Being. Although Yeats associates Unity of Being with Phase 15 of the phases of the moon, a phase that supports no human life, it is of Phase 17 that Yeats writes “Unity of Being, and consequent expression of Daimonic thought, is now more easy than at any other phase” (*AV* 141). “Daimonic thought”, as it relates to the *Daimon*, *Ghostly Self* or anti-self, expresses the “ultimate self” of any one man (Yeats *AV* 83). “All things are present as an eternal instant to our *Daimon* [...] but that instant is of necessity unintelligible to all bound to the antinomies” (Yeats *AV* 193).

Later, in Part 3 of “The Great Wheel”, “The Twenty-Eight Incarnations”, Yeats assigns examples of people to these lunar phases and lists Dante, Shelley, and Landor at Phase 17. Yeats writes of Dante (*AV* 144):

Yet Dante, having attained, as poet, to Unity of Being, as poet saw all things set in order, had an intellect that served the Mask alone that compelled even those things that opposed it to serve, and was content to see both good and evil.

For all his love of Shelley, Yeats contends that he “lacked the Vision of Evil, could not conceive of the world as a continual conflict, so, though great poet he certainly was, he was not of the greatest kind” (*AV* 144). Although both Shelley and Dante are of Phase 17, where Unity of Being is most attainable, it is only Dante who could remake himself through strife with the opposites, through incarnation, and “the Vision of Evil” to reach Unity. By embodying that which he was not, Dante became his “ultimate self”, a “Daimonic man”. “Though he does not say so in *A Vision*, Yeats considered himself a man of Phase 17, the phase of ‘Daimonic Man’ in which Unity of Being and ‘consequent expression of Daimonic thought’ is most easy” (Ross 422). We may then assume that Yeats considered himself to hold a select individual capacity for incarnation and “self-remaking”, allowing him to attain through his poetic craft, even if only momentarily, Unity of Being.

There is also more to be said on the nature of the Unity of Being quested after by Yeats and Eliot. At first it may appear that there are three, if not more, kinds of Unity in Eliot’s and Yeats’s quest. The most apparent are 1) a unity that transcends, 2) one that diminishes difference, and 3) one that fluctuates between opposites. The first kind, a unity that transcends, entails a unity that reaches beyond the difference of its opposites and results in a new actuality that is different from its parts. Unity that merely diminishes difference does not give way to any new reality but serves only to equate the opposites at play by exposing their inherent likeness. A unity that fluctuates does not lead to any resolution of the opposites but is bound to a toing and froing. These are all, however, best understood as the same Unity of Being; it is only the implications of the seemingly different forms of Unity that differ. While Eliot is more inclined to envision a transcendent end of Unity, and Yeats is more inclined to a vacillation, or a Unity of irresolution, both poets make use of all three of these types of outcome at one point or another in their later poems. Here briefly follows an example of each. At the end of “East Coker”, for instance, Eliot declares that:

Here and there does not matter  
 We must be still and still moving  
 Into another intensity  
 For a further union, a deeper communion (*CPP* 183)

The “further union, a deeper communion” Eliot evokes here, is brought about by the conjoining of the opposites of stillness and movement. These opposites are combined to reach a Unity that is beyond the difference of these two states, pointing to a transcendence, an attainment of Unity of Being. Earlier on in “East Coker”, perhaps in preparation of such a transcendent moment, Eliot presents a list of paradoxes that expressly places oppositions in such proximity that by reading them as such, the mind wants to equate what “is” with what “is not”:

In order to arrive at where you are not

You must go through the way in which you are not.

And what you do not know is the only thing you know

And what you own is what you do not own

And where you are is where you are not. (CPP 181)

Some of the most discernible instances of Unity through fluctuation take shape in those poems by Yeats that directly address or announce the engagement of two distinctively opposing concepts, poems such as “Ego Dominus Tuus”, “Michael Robartes and the Dancer”, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul”, and “The Man and the Echo”. In these poems, seemingly opposing personas include: Hic and Ille, He and She, My Soul and My Self, as well as Man and Echo. This strategy of fluctuation is also famously stated by the poet in “Vacillation”; “Between extremities / Man runs his course” (CP 249). Moreover, these vacillations are intensified through mention of an in-between state or half-ness throughout Yeats’s oeuvre. I think of “The Double Vision of Michael Robartes” in which Yeats explains himself as “Being caught between the pull / Of the dark moon and the full” (CP 170), and in “Demon and Beast”, where he writes “Though I had long perned in the gyre, / Between my hatred and desire” (CP 185). Whether it be between two sides of the moon, hatred and desire, or any such extremities, the swing from and to these states is always nearing a Unity of Being.

At times, this kind of vacillation is made more firm through an integration instead of a rhythmic toing and froing. In “A Prayer for my Daughter”, for instance, Yeats imagines future years dancing out of a sea that he describes as having a “murderous innocence” (CP 188). The interaction between opposites is less of a vacillation and more of a conjoining. The sea is at once both “murderous” as well as “innocent”. There is not necessarily a flux but a co-existence. The sea’s murderous innocence relates to “That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea” between the living and the dead from “Byzantium” (CP 248) and the “brute dolphins” that plunge in “ecstatic waters” and “Those Innocents” that “re-live their death” in “News for the Delphic Oracle” (CP 337). The sea is murderous in the sense that it symbolically initiates a purgatorial process and links the dimensions of life and the afterlife.

Yeats’s quest is evidently not limited to a vacillating one. Although the dominant questing involves a back-and-forth, there are undoubtedly instances in which the poems directly attempt to diminish the difference between opposites, instances in which Yeats appears to express an attainment of a kind of Unity of Being within life. Perhaps the most notable of these is the second stanza of the 4<sup>th</sup> movement of “Vacillation”:

While on the shop and street I gazed  
My body of a sudden blazed;  
And twenty minutes more or less  
It seemed, so great my happiness,  
That I was blessed and could bless. (CP 251)

For Yeats, these moments are but brief visitations of Unity that may occur within life, his antinomial vision, however, conceives of complete Unity of Being only within the context of an unnameable state that is free from the cycles of life and death.

## 2.4 Unity of Being and Yeats's antinomial vision

In Yeats's poetry, there is undoubtedly a keen awareness of opposites and the tension sparked from placing them in constant conflict. Indeed, in *A Vision* Yeats claims that "My instructors identify consciousness with conflict, not with knowledge, substitute for subject and object and their attendant logic a struggle towards harmony, towards Unity of Being" (214). To be conscious is, therefore, also to be in conflict and this conflict is the mechanism of Unity of Being. At the root of Yeats's dialectical sensibility is an understanding of Empedocles's concept of Discord and Concord, along with Heraclitus's and Blake's thought; what Anthony Cuda calls "a Blakean model of conflict and discord" (58). Also in *A Vision*, Yeats writes: "my mind had been full of Blake from boyhood up and I saw the world as a conflict" (AV 72).

Blake's well-cited quotation from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*—"Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion. Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence"—, is indeed an undercurrent of Yeats's own thought. In Blake's poetry, as in Yeats's, "contrary possibilities coexist, with different plays and shades of emphasis in different poems" (Damrosch *et al.* 177). For Blake, this antinomial vision is best exemplified in his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* in which opposites are placed in relation to each other, not within single poems but across a sequence of poems.

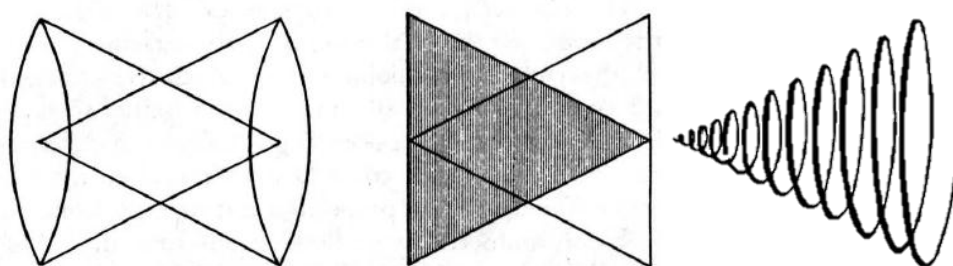
Yeats explains his use of the term "Unity of Being" in the first book of *The Trembling of the Veil* as follows (EI 190):

I thought that in man and race alike there is something called "Unity of Being", using the term as Dante used it when he compared beauty in the *Convito* to a perfectly proportioned human body. My father, from whom I had learned the term, preferred a comparison to a musical instrument so strung that if we touch a string all the strings murmur faintly.

Nicholas Meihuizen indicates that the “perfectly proportioned human body” in Dante is Christ’s, thus, underlining “the sacred nature of Yeatsian unity” (67) and also, as we shall see, the post-secular nature of Yeatsian unity. One should not, however, derive from this description of the “perfectly proportioned” entity that Unity of Being is a “perfect” or even final concept. Yeats’s second comparison that likens Unity of Being to a musical instrument indicates its energy and should be considered with equal attention. Evan Radcliffe argues, for instance, that Yeats’s *A Vision* (1938) and *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1918) show that Unity of Being should also be viewed as a quest and not simply a static ideal (110). This much indicates that, to Yeats, Unity of Being is not something that is attained through vigour; and glimpses of it are attainable along the journey.

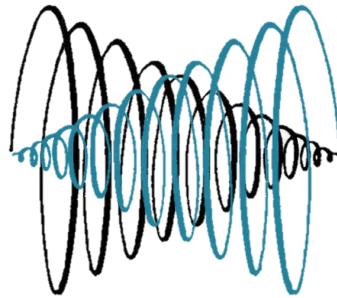
The vitality of Unity of Being is especially evident in Yeats’s system of gyres. In the notoriously difficult and nearly impenetrable *A Vision*, Yeats extensively expounds on this system and asserts that gyres are the “fundamental symbol” of his “Instructors”. These “Instructors” or “Communicators” are those numinous forces that spoke to Yeats through his wife, George Yeats, in their automatic writing sessions and whose revelations were fundamental to the system constructed in *A Vision* (Arkins 84). Yeats, a secular, and “worldly” human being, is constructing his mythology with the help of the “otherworldly”; he is conjoining two opposing forces in search of Unity.

As Yeatsian symbol, the gyre represents the interplay of opposites and gives form to his antinomial vision. Gyres, much like circular ocean currents with the same name, are often viewed as the form of a thread-like spiral, cone, or vortex characterized by its vitality (impressively animated versions of these can be seen on [www.yeatsvision.com](http://www.yeatsvision.com), as curated by Neil Mann). Perhaps best understood in opposition to one another, gyres are lines or cones spiralling up or down, depending on perception, as they move into one another (see Figure 2-1). In book one of *A Vision*, “The Great Wheel”, Yeats introduces the gyre through referring to Empedocles’s concept of Discord and Concord and from there takes up the image of widening and narrowing double gyres (*AV* 68).



**Figure 2-1: "Discord" and "Concord" cones from Yeats's *A Vision: A Reissue. With the author's final revisions*, Macmillan, 1975, pp. 68, 71.**

A single gyre either spires from its narrowest point to its widest, or from its widest to its narrowest, from either left or right. A double gyre contains two opposing gyre systems moving each in the opposite direction within one another. When two gyres are superimposed upon each other, to form a double gyre, it becomes clear how utterly intertwined such a construction can be; how much one opposition can resemble another (see Figure 2-2).



**Figure 2-2: Superimposed gyres (adopted from Yeats's *A Vision: A Reissue. With the author's final revisions*, Macmillan, 1975, pp. 68, 71).**

At first, Yeats uses the image of a gyre as symbol for man's inner spiritual workings and later, in book five of *A Vision*, "Dove or Swan", it is used to inform Yeats's view of historical processes. To Yeats, the movement of history also fits into the spiralling image of a gyre: "The application of phases to history takes place over what constitutes the most macroscopic use of the wheel, which is the Great Year, [...] considered as twelve 2,150-year cycles or smaller wheels" (Gibson 115). In "The Second Coming" Yeats envisioned the end of an era with the coming of a "Rough Beast", "A shape with lion body and the head of a man" that "Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born". This "Rough Beast" will bring the Christian era to a conclusion in, roughly speaking, AD 2000 (Arkins 14; DeForrest 143).

### THE HISTORICAL CONES

The numbers in brackets refer to phases, and the other numbers to dates A.D. The line cutting the cones a little below 250, 900, 1180 and 1927 shows four historical *Faculties* related to the present moment. May 1925.

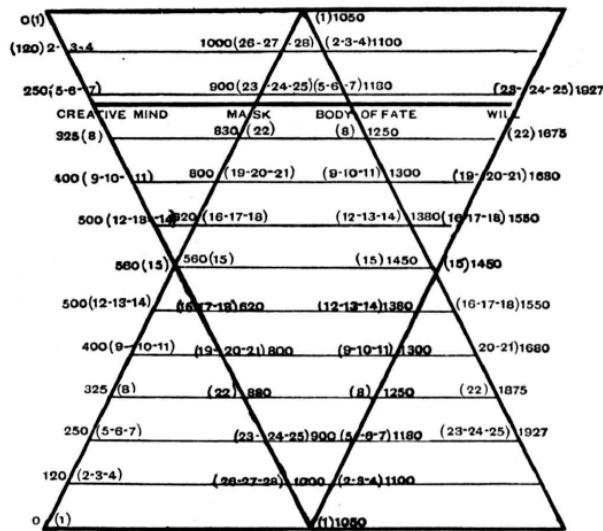


Figure 2-3: “The Historical Cones” from Yeats’s *A Vision: A Reissue. With the author’s final revisions*, Macmillan, 1975, p. 266.

Yeats’s ideas regarding gyres and history are put forward in poetic form throughout his career. In one of his early poems, “The Two Trees”, Yeats anticipates his later pre-occupation with the symbol of the dynamic circle, spiral, or gyre when he writes of:

The Flaming circle of our days,  
 Gyring, spiring to and fro  
 In those great ignorant leafy ways; (CP 48)

Perhaps the best-known example from his later work is “The Gyres”. As in “The Second Coming”, the poem “The Gyres” embodies Yeats’s spiring conception of history and envisions the end of a period, the turning of a gyre, or gyres; since “Things thought too long can be no longer thought”, a new period must take its place. In the three stanzas of “The Gyres”, Yeats repeats the phrase “What matter” four times (lines 9,11,15,18). At first the phrase is posed in a questioning way, and finally as an exclamation, “What matter!”, affirming through this shift an excited participation in the inevitability of the fact that “[A]ll things run / On that unfashionable gyre again”. “What matter” no longer questions significance, it is an affirmation of wonder at the dance of opposites.

Whether imagined as symbol of the spirit of man or symbol of history, the gyre is a vital symbol due to its awareness of and constant fluctuation between opposites. Harold Bloom believes Yeats took this dance of opposites “too literally” and that it is “only a metaphor of the process of

self-remaking and not the process itself” (283). However, as Meihuizen argues, it is “*process* which gives significance to the sacred in Yeats” (5) (my italics), hence what Arkins calls Yeats’s “obsession with opposites” (8), be it of the self or the transcendent, is at the heart of the process of self-remaking and would naturally include a somewhat literal emphasis on the dance, the back and forth, the vacillation. If Yeats takes the dance of opposites too literally, he does so with intent. The composition of poetry itself, is a type of ritualistic embodiment of this dance and, for him, necessary for transformation in the quest for Unity of Being. This much is evident in the style of Yeats’s poems as well. Arkins observes, for instance, a dominant stylistic device in Yeats’s poetry, the “all-pervasive use of embedded sentences, a form of syntax in which one sentence is contained within another” (8). Even on sentence level, then, the antinomies meet. As we see in Yeats’s “Politics”, the “duality of poet and girl” is stressed by the embedded phrase “that girl standing there” (Arkins 8).

How can I, that girl standing there,  
 My attention fix  
 On Roman or on Russian  
 Or on Spanish politics [...] (CP 348)

Yeats’s “process of self-remaking” is of course, central to the quest for Unity of Being. In “An Acre of Grass”, he declares, “Myself must I remake / Till I am Timon and Lear / Or that William Blake / Who beat upon the wall / Till truth obeyed his call” (CP 301). There is indeed a sense of violence in this process reflective of Yeats’s earlier realisation of his having to “hammer” his thoughts into Unity, making a more “literal” approach more likely. In one of his last poems, “Under Ben Bulben”, Yeats declares that “Even the wisest man grows tense / With some sort of violence / Before he can accomplish fate / Know his work or choose his mate” (CP 326).

In the later essay, “A General Introduction for My Work”, Yeats approaches Unity of Being with a greater sense of potency than he approached that half-formed notion of hammering his thought into unity from “If I were Four-and-Twenty”. Yeats now elevates that hammering to divine status and declares: “[m]y Christ [...] is that Unity of Being...” (EI 518).

I was born into this faith, have lived in it, and shall die in it; my Christ, a legitimate deduction from the Creed of St. Patrick as I think, is that Unity of Being Dante compared to a perfectly proportioned human body, Blake’s “Imagination”, what the Upanishads have named “Self”: nor is this unity distant and therefore intellectually understandable, but imminent, differing from man to man and age to age, taking upon itself pain and ugliness, “eye of newt, and toe of frog”.

When Yeats argues that unity “[takes] upon itself pain and ugliness”, one accepts that it is at times free from this, especially since it has been likened to Christ and “a perfectly proportioned

human body". Unity of Being is, however, not divine in the sense that the Christian god is divine, since it is not readily observed as an entity itself and is better understood as comprising the nature of all things, seen from a particular state of consciousness. Yeats again describes his "God", Unity of Being, in his September 12<sup>th</sup>, 1930 diary entry (*Ex* 320):

Berkeley in the *Commonplace Book* thought that "we perceive" and are passive whereas God creates in perceiving. He creates what we perceive. I substitute for God the Thirteenth Cone, the Thirteenth Cone therefore creates our perceptions—all the visible world—as held in common by our wheel.

If Yeats's Christ is Unity of Being, then he must also mean, in this instance, that he "substitutes for God" Unity of Being. It is inadvisable, though, to assume that Yeats uses Unity of Being interchangeably with the Thirteenth Cone. Neil Mann explains that the majority of critics regard the Thirteenth Cone as "Yeats's idiosyncratic perception of the divine being" while others attempt to see it as "a version of the Christian God, or further religious, gnostic, or philosophical conceptions" (160). In *A Vision* the Thirteenth Cone, or "phaseless sphere", is described as "a symbol" of what Yeats calls the "ultimate reality" (*AV* 193). The Thirteenth Cone is "that cycle which may deliver us from the twelve cycles of time and space" and that which can provide "the deliverance from birth and death" (*AV* 210; 240). Yeats believes the Thirteenth Cone to be a symbolic form of "the ultimate reality", which is "neither one nor many, concord nor discord". But because "all things fall into a series of antinomies in human experience", once the ultimate reality is thought of, it becomes the Thirteenth Cone (*AV* 193). The antinomies of human experience and human thought leave us ignorant of the fact that "All things are present as an eternal instant to our *Daimon*" (*AV* 193). As that eternal instant is made sense of through the many phases and antinomies of human thought, the Thirteenth Cone therefore "creates our perceptions" in the same way that Berkeley's God creates "what we perceive".

The Thirteenth Cone becomes the mouthpiece of the ultimate reality, of Unity of Being, through allowing at least some conception of that "ultimate reality"; as Neil Mann puts it (160):

The "phaseless sphere" denotes a completeness that goes beyond all experience, change and sequence, beyond idea and form. Outside of time, space and consciousness, it comprehends and reconciles all antinomies, in what Nicholas of Cusa called "the coincidence of opposites".

The fact that the Thirteenth Cone is a "phaseless" one that is beyond all experience creates the impression of unattainability. As Meihuizen points out, *A Vision* distinguishes between two types of unity, "a transcendent unity beyond the cycles of life and death, and a temporal unity, achieved within the bounds of life" (*YDS* 86). I would argue, however, that these are indeed the same type of unity and it is only its attainability that differs. Otto Bohlmann, too, notes that although Unity of

Being “can occur only beyond the physical world, [...] we can nevertheless strive to approach it, to achieve [it] as nearly as possible within ourselves in this world” (89). In the “Great Wheel of lunar phases”, for example, Yeats describes the cycles of life and death from which Unity of Being could free us. It is these cycles that we are bound to by our mere existence. Phase 15 of this wheel is representative of that brief spark of Unity of Being that may be attainable in life:

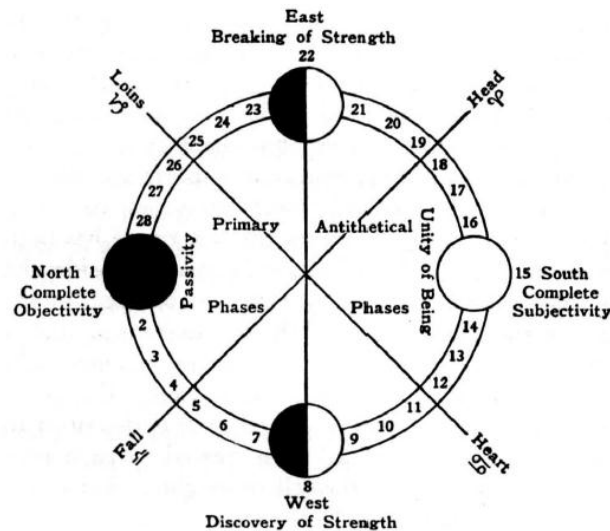


Figure 2-4: “Great Wheel of lunar phases” from Yeats’s *A Vision: A Reissue. With the author’s final revisions*, Macmillan, 1975, p. 81.

In *A Vision*, Yeats explains that (AV 81):

This wheel is every completed movement of thought or life, twenty-eight incarnations, a single incarnation, a single judgment or act of thought. Man seeks his opposite or the opposite of his condition, attains his object so far as it is attainable, at Phase 15 and returns to Phase I again.

In this complex system Unity of Being is, however, attainable at different instances of the wheel and fades again at other phases. Most importantly though, this Unity of Being, attainable in life, is “a temporal state” that is “conditioned by strife and effort” (Meihuizen YDS 91). Not only can the phases be navigated from either primary or antithetical phases, but Yeats clarifies that “Every phase is in itself a wheel” (AV 89):

Every phase is in itself a wheel; the individual soul is awakened by a violent oscillation (one thinks of Verlaine oscillating between the church and the brothel) until it sinks in on that Whole where the contraries are united, the antinomies resolved.

Yeats’s Unity of Being is therefore an all-inclusive, co-existent wholeness energised by antinomical engagement. Unity of Being then also relates to different dimensions of existence. In *A*

*Vision*, Yeats elaborated, for example, on Unity of Individuals and Unity of Culture (“differing from man to man and age to age”). From reading Yeats’s later letters, essays and poems it becomes clear that he is, for the most part, convinced that true and final Unity of Being is only, if ever, attainable in death. Unity of Being requires the conjoining of both a life lived and death realised. As we shall see in the second half of this chapter, for Eliot, on the other hand, contemplative moments of Unity of Being are far more attainable in this life, and perhaps even assured through a process of purgation. Where Yeats is set on a self-remaking, Eliot insists on a purgation through both destructive and cleansing fires throughout *Four Quartets*. Consider these lines from “Little Gidding”:

The only hope, or else despair  
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre—  
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

Who then devised the torment? Love,  
Love is the unfamiliar Name  
Behind the hands that wove  
The intolerable shirt of flame  
Which human power cannot remove.  
We only live, only suspire  
Consumed by either fire or fire. (CPP 196)

The fires Eliot so masterfully juggles here are, first, a Biblical, Pentecostal fire, which offers redemption from a second kind of fire, a worldly fire. The worldly fire, that “intolerable shirt of flame”, an image which, Murphy suggests, is taken either from the mythic Greek hero Herakles, Euripides’s *Medea*, or a moment from the London blitz (192-193). Whichever allusion one prefers, what they all have in common is the self-destruction caused by human desire, be it the desire for one another, war, or conquest. Human flesh itself, “rife as it is with the heat of desire and passion that is manifested in the blood coursing through one’s veins and arteries, is an ‘intolerable shirt of flame’” (Murphy 193). Our only hope, writes Eliot, is “To be redeemed from fire by fire” (CPP 196). The “fire of purgation and purification redeems the fire of desire and lust and greed and gluttony” (Atkins LP 122). The fiery purgation culminates in a transcendent Unity of Being hinted at by the end of “Little Gidding” when the opposites of fire and rose are renewed through Pentecostal “tongues of flame” as affirmed by Julian of Norwich’s mystical mantra that declares the oneness of “All manner of thing”:

All shall be well and  
All manner of thing shall be well  
When the tongues of flame are in-folded  
Into the crowned knot of fire  
And the fire and the rose are one. (CPP 198)

*Four Quartets* ends on this strong affirmation of a time in which the opposites, after a process of purgation, are “one”. Although Yeats lacks this kind of surety in his quest for Unity of Being, it is possible that he recognised something of his own struggling in Eliot’s. In the 1936 essay, *Modern Poetry: A Broadcast*, Yeats quotes from “Burnt Norton” and argues that Eliot conceives of reality as “expressed in a series of contradictions, or is that unknowable something that supports the centre of the see-saw”:

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless,  
Neither from nor towards, at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor  
towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance. (EI 503).

In Eliot’s lines, Yeats sensed the same warring of opposites that, in *A Vision*, his instructors identified with consciousness. Though this may be considered later Yeats commenting on later Eliot, what Yeats relates to here is the guiding principle of his thought; conflict is the mechanism of Unity of Being. Even in Yeats’s earlier poems from *The Rose*, such as “To the Rose upon the Rood of Time”, mention is already made of the opposites meeting. In the first stanza of this poem, for instance, Yeats writes, “I find under the boughs of love and hate, / In all poor foolish things that live a day, / Eternal beauty wandering on her way” (CP 31). In just three lines there is a conjoining of the opposites love and hate, things that live but a day and eternity, as well as foolish things and wandering beauty. The initial and last line refrain of the poem too, suggest a dialectic, since the Rose of all his days is both proud and sad: “Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days” (CP 31). In “The Rose of Peace” another kind of unity is hinted at when “Heaven and Hell are met,” and Michael, an angelic being, becomes enamoured of a human being, causing God to make “A peace of Heaven with Hell” (CP 36).

As George Bornstein notes, Yeats notably moved from an Intellectual to an antinomial vision of life after 1903 and “built his new aesthetic upon the tension between balanced contraries”

(382). From here on out, Yeats is actively bringing the ideal to Earth; the antinomial vacillation system is underway. This system is often actualised in Yeats's concept of the *Daimon*, or the anti-self. According to Arkins, Yeats "believed that every creative person possesses a complement who is an ideal counterpart, an intimate double, an anti-self or Mask, in whom every characteristic is the opposite of that person's own" (16). The *Daimon* should furthermore not be misunderstood as the better, or *ideal* form of someone. The *Daimon* is not our *perfect* form, but our other, all that we are not. In *A Vision*, Yeats describes the *Daimon* as the opposite of memory, containing "within it, co-existing in its eternal moment, all the events of our life, all that we have known of other lives, or that it can discover within itself of other" (*AV* 192). As is typical with the dance of opposites in this quest for Unity of Being, there is a tension arising from the engagement of antinomies. In his essay *Anima Hominis*, Yeats explains the *Daimon* thus (*Myth* 336):

I think it was Heraclitus who said: the *Daimon* is our destiny. When I think of life as a struggle with the *Daimon* who would ever set us to the hardest work among those not impossible, I understand why there is a deep enmity between a man and his destiny, and why a man loves nothing but his destiny.

This passage reveals Yeats's understanding of the quest for Unity of Being as a violent one, a "struggle with the *Daimon*". When expanding on the idea of Discord at the beginning of *A Vision*, Yeats equates it with war in stating that: "It was this Discord or War that Heraclitus called 'God of all and Father of all'" (*AV* 67). The violence originating from opposites engaging also involves a purgation of all that is not essential to our destiny, our destiny being "the *Daimon*". In our workings to attain our destinies, that which we desire for ourselves, we are moved to, like Yeats, constantly re-make ourselves, to be "self-born, born anew".

One of Yeats's first poems to markedly address this *Daimonic* destiny is the poem that prefaces *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, "Ego Dominus Tuus". The poem presents a friendly argument between two alternative poetic selves called, somewhat absurdly, 'Hic' and 'Ille' (Latin for "This One" and "That One") (Rosenthal 192). While *Ille* dominates the poem, *Hic* appears to be the more sober character and questions *Ille*'s walking in the moon and tracing magical shapes, questioning the mystical thought of Yeats himself. Besides *Hic* and *Ille*'s opposing and complementary nature, *Ille* also explains how he calls upon his *Daimon*; "By the help of an image / I call to my own opposite, summon all / That I have handled least, least looked upon" (*CP* 160). "Here the image conjures that which is most unlike the self, in the embrace of which the self transcends the mire of self-consciousness" (Ross 93), the *Daimon*. The same tête-à-tête tone and style continue in later poems such as "A Dialogue of Self and Soul", sections of "Vacillation", and "Man and the Echo". These vacillations within poems are themselves tangible performances of Yeats's quest for Unity of Being.

### 2.4.1 Unity of Being in Yeats's later poems

Clearly, Yeats had been perusing the same passion all his life and called this one urge "Unity of Being", and he was still looking for this when he died (Watkins 475). From reading his last letters, one gets the sense that in the last four months of his life Yeats was distinctly aware of his own looming death. In October, 1938, in a letter to Ethel Mannin regarding her novel, *Darkness my Bride*, Yeats writes in great detail about the concept of death (TL 917):

According to Rilke a man's death is born with him and if his life is successful and he escapes mere 'mass death' his nature is completed by his final union with it. Rilke gives Hamlet's death as an example. In my own philosophy the sensuous image is changed from time to time at predestined moments called *Initiationary Moments* [...] One sensuous image leads to another because they are never analysed. At *The Critical Moment* they are dissolved by analysis and we enter by free will pure unified experience. When all the sensuous images are dissolved we meet true death. [...] A German philosopher has said that men in Italian portraits seem to wait an accidental death from the blow of a dagger, whereas the men painted by Rembrandt have death already in their faces.

True death, "pure unified experience", suggest the transcendent, the unity beyond life and death. True death is attained when all the antinomies of life (in the above example sensuous vs. analytical) have met at *The Critical Moment*. In the *Initiationary Moments* sensuous images are freely associated and never analysed; at *The Critical Moment* sensuous images are analysed and so dissolved; as a consequence, we are no longer bound by sensuous images, but enter pure unified experience, 'true death', beyond all contraries. A type of purgation of the sensuous images takes place through spiritual analyses, resulting in pure unified experience; thus, the *union* of one's life with one's death is achieved, a completion of one's nature, a state of transcendence untrammelled by the baggage of past experience.

As a consequence, death is essentially redefined by Yeatsian Unity of Being; death is not a mere end of life nor is it the attainment of a religiously nuanced eternal paradise but a state of completion, a fulfilment to be reached. The opposites must dance their dance to end at a place of union that is beyond, yet bound to the nature of those opposites. In January the following year we hear echoes of this antinomial philosophy of death in Yeats's final letter to Lady Elizabeth Pelham (TL 922):

...I know for certain that my time will not be long [...] I am happy, and I think full of an energy, of an energy I had despaired of. It seems to me that I have found what I wanted. When I try to put all into a phrase I say, 'Man can embody truth but he cannot know it.' I must embody it in the completion of my life

In both these last letters, Yeats pictures death contained within life and vice versa. We see Yeats wanting to finally master the ultimate opposites of life and death within his philosophy of

Unity of Being. There is also something of the unattainable in his inability to embody truth and a hint of doubt whether death will result in the Unity of Being Yeats has been questing for. Yeats writes that he “*must* embody it [truth]” and not that he *will* indeed embody truth. Since Yeats expressly and more urgently probes into the attainment of a complete Unity of Being later in life, pressed by deteriorating health and old age, his most arduous questing occurs in his later works. In the poem “The Apparitions” from *Last Poems*, Yeats presents the reader with this “naked personal confession of need for strength” (Rosenthal 349).

When a man grows old his joy  
Grows more deep day after day,  
His empty heart is full at length  
But he has need of all that strength  
Because of the increasing Night  
That opens her mystery and fright. (CP 344)

Yeats’s last verse is nevertheless undeterred in facing “the increasing Night” and her “mystery and fright”. Late Yeats roughly covers the years 1920-39 (Vendler 77). It is also in this period that Yeats “grows into one of the most important poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the publication of *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), *The Tower* (1928), and *The Winding Stair* (1933)” (Wynne-Davies 1037). The Yeats Society Sligo (yeatssociety.com) argues that “The final phase of Yeats’s poetry begins with *The Tower*” and that in this period Yeats “contemplates old age and its difficulties, and meditates on the function of art in life”. From *The Tower* on, Yeats indeed produces poems such as “Youth and Age”, “A Man Young and Old”, “At Algeciras— a Meditation upon Death”, “Quarrel in Old Age”, “A Prayer for Old Age”, “The Four Ages of Man”, and “What Then?”, of which the titles speak for themselves.

In “After Long Silence” from *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*, for instance, Yeats addresses old age and touches on the function of art in life:

Speech after long silence; it is right,  
All other lovers being estranged or dead,  
Unfriendly lamplight hid under its shade,  
The curtains drawn upon unfriendly night,  
That we descant and yet again descant  
Upon the supreme theme of Art and Song:  
Bodily decrepitude is wisdom; young  
We loved each other and were ignorant. (CP 265)

“It is right” then, to discuss the “supreme theme of Art and Song” in old age, “after long silence”, since Yeats presents the idea that “Bodily decrepitude is wisdom” as factual. The important matter of “Art and Song” requires the wisdom of time. Later, in *Last Poems*, Yeats very clearly states the function of art in life in “Under Ben Bulbin” when referring to Michelangelo’s artistic ability:

Proof that there’s a purpose set  
Before the secret working mind:  
Profane perfection of mankind. (CP 326)

The function of art, “Profane perfection of mankind”, also closely relates to Yeats’s description of Unity of Being as something that is similar to Dante’s comparison of beauty to “a perfectly proportioned human body” (EI 190). We may expect Yeats’s later work to be more vocal on this point and on the questing toward such a perfection. The following exploration of Unity of Being in Yeats’s later work will, therefore, centre on these publications and focus on works after *The Tower*, especially the very last *New Poems* (1938) and *Last Poems* (1938-1939).

Reminiscent of “Ego Dominus Tuus”, Yeats’s “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” appears much later in his career and follows the same style of discussion in its exposition of the foremost element of the quest for Unity of Being, that is, a grappling with opposites. In this instance, “My Soul” and “My Self” are caught in a dramatic exchange of which Self gets the last say in an astonishing four-stanza reply that pronounces the Self’s acceptance of what the Soul wants deliverance from, “the crime of death and birth”. Much like Ille’s seeking of the anti-self in “Ego Dominus Tuus”, the Self in this dialogue takes up the quest of navigating between the opposites of life and actively expresses a desire for constant vacillation and not necessarily an eternal release from such reincarnation. Consider David Ross’s poignant description of “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” (82):

The poem returns to the essential confrontation of Yeats’s entire thought, the dialogue of self and soul, out of which come the antinomies of the natural and the supernatural, the immanent and the transcendent, the active and the visionary, the primary and the antithetical, day and night, ditch and tower.

Throughout the poem, “My Soul” attempts to convince “My Self” to ascend “the winding ancient stair”, to “That quarter where all thought is done”. And since that quarter contains no thought, and since it is the analytical nature of thought that separates all things into antinomies, we may accept that this “ancient winding stair” leads to a Unity of Being. “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” opens with “My Soul’s” beckoning to undertake this quest:

*My Soul.* I summon to the winding ancient stair;

Set all your mind upon the steep ascent,  
Upon the broken, crumbling battlement,  
Upon the breathless starlit air,  
Upon the star that marks the hidden pole;  
Fix every wandering thought upon  
That quarter where all thought is done:  
Who can distinguish darkness from the soul?

(CP 234)

The Unity of Being Yeats envisions here is also linked to a certain darkness; the last line, “Who can distinguish darkness from the soul?” identifies the soul with “ancestral night”. “My Soul’s” second reply explains how through “ancestral night”, Unity of Being could be attained if the imagination could reject its earthly constraints and the intellect could cease its vacillation between antinomies:

Think of ancestral night that can,  
If but imagination scorn the earth  
And intellect its wandering  
To this and that and t’other thing,  
Deliver from the crime of death and birth.

(CP 235)

“My Self” responds with a description of the ceremonial, consecrated Japanese sword which, according to Finneran, was presented to Yeats by Junzo Sato in March 1920 (499). Sato’s sword is wrapped in a piece of old flower-patterned embroidery that protects it still:

*My Self.* Montashigi, third of his family, fashioned it  
Five hundred years ago, about it lie  
Flowers from I know not what embroidery—  
Heart’s purple—and all these I set  
For emblems of the day against the tower  
Emblematical of the night,  
And claim as by a soldier’s right  
A charter to commit the crime once more.

(CP 235)

Sato’s wrapped sword, emblematical of the day, is set against that “ancestral night” as claim to “commit the crime once more”, “the crime of death and birth”. “My Self” does not seek deliverance from the cycles of life and death: “What matter if I live it all once more?” (CP 236), and

may even be said to find a joy in the vacillating states as he declares “I am content to live it all again / And yet again” (CP 236). “My Self” therefore prefers the questing in life toward Unity of Being, the warring for glimpses thereof and not its final attainment in the rich dark nothing of death. Sato’s blade itself is a set of opposites, a *bob* sword and an old embroidery “torn / From some court-lady’s dress”. In “Symbols”, Yeats writes of himself as wandering fool carrying Sato’s sword, silk and blade, “Beauty and fool together laid”:

A storm-beaten old watch-tower,  
A blind hermit rings the hour.

All-destroying sword-blade still  
Carried by the wandering fool.

Gold-sewn silk on the sword-blade,  
Beauty and fool together laid. (CP 239-240)

Moreover, dialogue poems such as these embody the value Yeats finds in the human ability to convey meaning through language and poems, in that dialogue allows for a back-and-forth, a vacillation. Yet even here, Unity of Being evades clear definition. The last we hear from “My Soul” is a rejection of the desire for an eternal stasis and a frustrated acknowledgement of ineffability: “But when I think of that my tongue’s a stone”:

*My Soul.* Such fullness in that quarter overflows  
And falls into the basin of the mind  
That man is stricken deaf and dumb and blind,  
For intellect no longer knows  
*Is* from the *Ought*, or *Knower* from the *Known* –  
That is to say, ascends to Heaven;  
Only the dead can be forgiven;  
But when I think of that my tongue’s a stone. (CP 235)

The sheer fullness of the state of unity reached through ancestral night is inexpressible, it causes man to be “stricken deaf and dumb and blind”, and the intellect “ascends to Heaven”. Soul’s tongue turned to stone also stands in direct opposition to Self’s “We must laugh and we must sing,” at the end of the poem. Dialogue poems such as “Ego Dominus Tuus” and “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” offer a rhythm with which to stage the struggle between antinomies but are just one of Yeats’s

approaches to the toing and froing of his quest. The vitality of Yeats's Unity of Being is again affirmed later in "Blood and the Moon" where he explicitly states that the Tower, gyring symbol, is *bis*:

I declare this tower is my symbol; I declare  
This winding, gyring, spiring treadmill of a stair is my  
ancestral stair; (CP 237)

The Tower and "the ancestral stair", like "spiring" gyres, are yet further embodiments of a vitality that empowers antinomies to dance their way to Unity. The rich sound pattern of "declare" and "stair" appear as sonic steps themselves. In the poem "Mohini Chatterjee", for instance, Yeats almost playfully fluctuates between antinomies via the Indian Brahmin, Mohini Chatterjee. The Brahmin advises the speaker to say every night in bed: "I have been a king, / I have been a slave, / Nor is there anything, / Fool, rascal, knave, / That I have not been". Opposites such as "Grave is heaped on grave" and "Birth is heaped on birth" mount up to an instance that "May thunder time away"; and then finally:

Birth-hour and death-hour meet,  
Or, as great sages say,  
Men dance on deathless feet. (CP 247)

The unity strived for in this instance, does not end with a vacillation between antinomies but hints at the possibility of a transcendent unity with the final line "Men dance on deathless feet". Although a "king/slave", "fool/knave" kind of vacillation is indeed the mechanism of this unity, since the hours of birth and death finally meet, Yeats, as in his thought about the *Critical Moment*, reaches beyond this back and forth. The unity hinted at comprises "Men", living human beings, that have "feet" with which to dance. These feet are "deathless" but should, however, not be interpreted as simply symbolic of eternal life or engaged in dancing that reflects an initial one-ness of existence, since this *living* dance is informed, or even tainted, by *death*. The opposites of life and death here, are not equated, but presented together in a new pairing that is perhaps more than its constituents. Yeats is here still speaking through "great sages" such as Mohini Chatterjee and will turn to something more of himself as we shall see in "Vacillation" when "the body" and "the heart" speculate on the destruction of antinomies. In "Vacillation" Yeats unmistakably orchestrates, even in its first section, the gyre-like meeting of antinomies and man's fate:

Between extremities  
Man runs his course;  
A brand, or flaming breath,  
Comes to destroy  
All those antinomies  
Of day and night;  
The body calls it death,  
The heart remorse.  
But if these be right  
What is joy?

(CP 249)

In this initial section of the poem all three of the outlined essential elements of Unity of Being are present. The struggle of antinomies is very overtly stated as “Between extremities / Man runs his course”. There is also an indication of incarnation through the fiery images that do away with “all those antinomies” (reminiscent of Eliot’s “to be redeemed from fire by fire” (CP 196)). There is furthermore an inarticulacy that evades a definite meaning of the unity reached after the antinomies have been destroyed; the body calls it one thing and the heart another, leaving the poet questing still.

Furthermore, parts IV and V of the “Vacillation” sequence depict the poet in opposite conditions. At first, in part IV, in a “crowded London shop”, the poet experiences an epiphany-like moment in which his “body of a sudden blazed” and, overtaken by happiness, the poet feels “That I was blessèd and could bless” (CP 251). This happy moment is contrasted to the despondency that characterises the two stanzas that follow in part five, in which the poet is weighed down by responsibility and “Things said or done long years ago, / Or things I did not do or say / But thought that I might say or do” (CP 251). As separate sections, these poems present a mere vacillation, but these opposite states are reconciled or are transcended to a certain extent when we consider that in the very next sequence, Yeats introduces the lord of Chou’s cry “Let all things pass away” and states that:

From man’s blood-sodden heart are sprung  
Those branches of the night and day  
Where the gaudy moon is hung.  
What’s the meaning of all song?  
‘Let all things pass away.’

(CP 252)

This stanza brings together the antinomies posed in sections IV and V while still participating in that violent Yeatsian struggle with opposites; both night *and* day springs from man's heart. The strong image of man's "blood-sodden" heart from which branches are sprung maintains the vitality and force that informs the quest that dances between opposites such as night and day. Yet, the final two lines point toward a transcendent unity that reaches beyond vacillation and later resonates with the epitaph on Yeats's grave that ends the poem:

Cast a cold eye  
On life, on death.  
Horseman, pass by! (CP 328)

From these examples emerges a motto that encourages one to accept that "all things pass away", that "Gyres run on", that despite opposites such as night and day and life and death, we too, must reach beyond vacillation and "pass by". Indeed, every section of "Vacillation" grapples with antinomies in one way or another. In Harold Bloom's words: "Yeats is never finer as a poet than when he vacillates, when he suffers uncertainty, and severely doubts his own mythologies" (393). Self-doubt is indeed inherent in Yeats's antinomial vision that must serve the Mask and seek the opposite of itself to validate the *Daimon*.

Moreover, another late poem, "An Acre of Grass", portrays all three aspects of Unity of Being as outlined in the framework. First, there is a grappling with the opposites: "loose imagination" is, for example, cast against "the mill of the mind"; the creativity and freedom of human imagination stands in contrast with the strict and formal structures of conventional thinking. Secondly, neither the imagination nor the mind "Can make the truth known", leaving the poet frustrated with the inability to express "the truth" or Unity of Being. And lastly, Yeats again declares himself a *Daimonic* man with that "re-making" will, a man devoted to incarnation, and, like Dante, "content to see both good and evil". "Yeats endeavoured to find within himself another Yeats: he aspired to be 'self-born, born anew'" (Pruitt & Pruitt 37).

Here at life's end  
Neither loose imagination,  
Nor the mill of the mind  
Consuming its rag and bone,  
Can make the truth known.

Grant me an old man's frenzy.  
Myself must I remake

Till I am Timon and Lear  
Or that William Blake  
Who beat upon the wall  
Till truth obeyed his call; (CP 301)

Yeats realises that even “Here at life’s end” true and complete Unity of Being is essentially unattainable and ineffable, that, for him, the struggle between antinomies did not “make the truth known”. Unity of Being could only ever be reached at and attained in epiphany-like moments; true unity would remain always just out of reach. As expressed in “Gratitude to the Unknown Instructors”, “All things hang like a drop of dew / Upon a blade of grass” (CP 254). Yeats would have to continue to remake himself, recalling the Self’s acceptance of the unresolved questing for unity in “A Dialogue of Self and Soul”: I am content to live it all again / And yet again...” (CP 236):

I am content to follow to its source  
Every event in action or in thought;  
Measure the lot; forgive myself the lot!  
When such as I cast out remorse  
So great a sweetness flows into the breast  
We must laugh and we must sing,  
We are blest by everything,  
Everything we look upon is blest. (CP 236)

It strikes one here, as it did in “Vacillation”, how Yeats associates the violent struggle of opposites with happiness and blessedness, how there is joy in the brief moments that appear to be an acceptance of a kind of Unity of Being within life: “We must laugh and we must sing / We are blest by everything, / Everything we look upon is blest”. However, these moments remain qualified by the constraints of life. In this instance, for example, Yeats’s sense of blessedness is not indicative of a transcendence or an affirmation of that “phaseless sphere”, since the stanza is part of a larger response to “My Soul”. The discussion-like back-and-forth pattern of the poem is broken and “My Self” ends the poem defending a vacillation akin to rebirth: “What matter if I live it all once more?”, “I am content to live it all again”, “I am content to follow to its source / Every event in action or in thought” (CP 236). It is in this reaction that the purgative and regenerative value of the quest for Unity of Being is realised and which, as will later be expounded, holds eudaimonic implications for poet and reader.

Perhaps the most pivotal poem from Yeats’s later work, “Under Ben Bulbin”, is often compared to a last will and testament containing final advice to poets and a reflection of ancient

knowledge. The connotation is especially apt since the poem also ends with the epitaph that would be cut on Yeats's grave at the foot of the Irish mountain Ben Bulbin. The first section of the poem sketches the necessary background by introducing us to the supernatural sources behind the poem's meaning. These sources include "the wondrous heroine of Shelley's 'The Witch of Atlas' (as interpreted [...] by mystical Egyptian devotees he [Yeats] calls the 'Sages') and the immortal Sidhe of Irish tradition" (Rosenthal 344). Those horsemen and women whose "Complexion and form prove superhuman" and whose "company airs an immortality" have all attained a Unity of Being. They have won "Completeness of their passions" (CP 325) and Yeats encourages us to strive to attain the same for ourselves through a dedication to "the gist of what they mean".

The second section of "Under Ben Bulbin" starts to set out this "gist of what they mean" and immediately poses the antinomies of life and death in an affirmation of the churning dance of reincarnation: "Many times man lives and dies / Between his two eternities" (CP 325). Death is described as a temporal state, just one turn of a particularly violent gyre:

A brief parting from those dear  
Is the worst man has to fear.  
Though grave-diggers' toil is long,  
Sharp their spades, their muscles strong,  
They but thrust their buried men  
Back in the human mind again. (CP 325)

In the third section of this poem, Yeats justifies the violence of the quest for Unity of Being and envisions a sudden self-realisation in which one "For an instant stands at ease, / Laughs aloud, his heart at peace" (CP 326). It is clear that an intense, purposeful experience is required to reach this state, "some sort of violence" is required to allow for the influx of the *Daimon*, a Unity of Being:

Even the wisest man grows tense  
With some sort of violence  
Before he can accomplish fate  
Know his work or choose his mate. (CP 326)

Ross notes that "in the moment of violence [...] man 'completes his partial mind' and discovers his destiny [...] In this moment, everything adventitious and accidental falls away and he discovers, if only momentarily, the joy of Unity of Being" (267). It is these moments that Yeats continued to quest for in his later poems, and it is with these moments Yeats kept evading complete transcendence from the cycles of life and death and it is also these moments he mimics in his art.

## 2.5 Unity of Being and Eliot's dialectical imagination

It is useful to see both Yeats and Eliot as forming part of the twentieth century revolt against dualism, which tries to “discredit the dualism that arbitrarily splits the world into pieces” (Brooker *ME* 175). The obvious link between Yeats's antinomial vision and Eliot's dialectical imagination is therefore their interplay or struggle with opposites with the aim of reaching a form of Unity of Being as conceived by each poet. Since it provides such a succinct classification of the quest for unity, the Yeatsian term “Unity of Being”, when applied to Eliot's dialectical imagination, allows for effective comparison and additional levels of interpretation.

Eliot's dialectical imagination is thoroughly explored by Jewel Spears Brooker in her book *T.S. Eliot's Dialectical Imagination* (2018) and her earlier publication *Mastery and Escape: T. S. Eliot and the Dialectic of Modernism* (1994). In the most recent of these publications, Brooker argues that the dialectic (as inspired by F. H. Bradley) and relativism (as inspired by J. G. Frazer) constitute the basis of a continual reshaping of Eliot's imagination (*DI* 2). The principle of the dialectic, as previously put forth in *Mastery and Escape*, sees the movement of Eliot's mind as a pattern involving “a play between opposites that moves forward by spiralling back (a return) and up (a transcendence)” (Brooker *ME* 3). As is the case with Yeats, the movement of Eliot's mind is informed by the various philosophies of his time. These influences include, among others, philosophers such as Kant and F.H. Bradley, along with Eliot's knowledge of Indic studies. Eliot's sensibility of opposites and their role in the quest for unity is particularly philosophical, even academic. According to Brooker and William Charron, (*T. S. Eliot's Theory of Opposites: Kant and the Subversion of Epistemology*) Eliot wrote three papers at Harvard University for a 1913 graduate seminar on Kantian Philosophy in which he advanced “pieces of a provocative and sophisticated theory of opposites” while trying to find the “corrective to Kant's absolute distinctions” (48). In this case, Eliot's ideas take on a “relativism” from which his theory of opposites follow (Brooker & Charron 49):

The first point in Eliot's theory of opposites is that [...] pairs of core predicates are neither contradictory nor contrary; rather, they are correlative, that is, they are mutually implicating. The second point in Eliot's theory is that these opposites are predicates of degree—that is, depending on various contingencies, they must be predicated not as absolute terms, but as terms qualified by more or less. The third point in this theory is that all opposites are relative to some point of view; thus, they are co-ascribable to the same object, considered from varying angles of vision.

These concepts are unmistakable in Eliot's prose and poetry. The degree relativity of Eliot's theory along with his relativistic emphasis on point of view are also addressed in Eliot's essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent”. In it, Eliot is after uniting thought and feeling within an impersonal framework: he argues that no writer can be described as “totally impersonal or totally

personal” and that the same writer can be described as impersonal or personal depending on point of view (Brooker & Charron 58). Consider also that in this essay Eliot “analyses a number of other pairs normally thought to be antithetical— past/present; mind of Europe/individual mind; community/individual; impersonal/personal; and in every instance, he concludes that the terms are correlative, that one requires the other” (Brooker & Charron 58). Personal and traditional, for both Eliot and Yeats, appear to be another misconstrued duality. In Eliot’s own words at the end of “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (CP V2 112):

The emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done. And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living.

These lines immediately remind one of the juxtapositions that would follow in *Four Quartets*: “Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future / And time future contained in time past” (CPP 171). The characteristics of his theory of opposites are also reflected in Eliot’s studies on F.H. Bradley a few years later. Eliot wrote his Ph.D. dissertation, *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, on Bradley’s epistemology in 1915 and 1916, explaining and defending to some extent Bradley’s theory of knowledge that stresses the difficulty and even impossibility of having an epistemology since it warrants dualism and “dualism always leads to self-contradiction” (Brooker ME 178). In *Knowledge and Experience* Eliot writes that: “As to the problem of knowledge, we have found that it does not exist” (KE 154). This leaves little room for any theory of knowledge. Eliot goes on to argue for the invalidity and incompleteness of knowledge (KE 156):

No theory of knowledge, consequently, can establish itself on a firm foundation by defining the sort of relation that knowing is, for knowing is not a relation; in order to give any account of knowing we must bring in the terms which are related, and these terms are only provisionally definable. We can only define the thing as known and the knower as knowing, and yet both things and knower imply a transcendence of these limitations, a transcendence which has no end.

Clearly, Eliot’s own philosophical and poetical theorising is informed by his studies of Bradley’s epistemology (which is essentially not an epistemology since it denies epistemology as such), and thus also by the great “revolt against dualism”. Brooker (ME 18) explains that:

analytical thinking produces the endless list of opposites—subject and object, mind and matter, real and ideal—that people deal with in their waking lives. Eliot argued that all such opposites are artificial and that the urge to choose one over the other should be resisted. Binary oppositions, in fact, are mutually dependent and reciprocally defining.

If all opposites are artificial we may assume that everything is undivided. Eliot consequently agrees with the central Bradleyan insight that “everything is connected to everything else in a

systematic way and that everything is part of a single all-encompassing whole” (Brooker *ME* 176). By the end of his dissertation on Bradley’s epistemology, Eliot moreover affirms certain Bradleyan positions which highlight his awareness of the value of wholeness and oneness (Brooker *ME* 181). The first of these Bradleyan principles, “Reality is experience”, is a strong feature in Eliot’s understanding of Unity of Being. With “experience” Bradley means “a complex that encompasses experiencer and experienced” and that occurs on three levels: immediate experience, relational experience and transcendent experience (Brooker *ME* 177, 184).

Immediate experience does not relate to the mere immediacy of time but rather points towards an initial, or unseparated nature. Daniel Albright calls immediate experience “a condition prior to the existence of either subject or object, knower or known” and notes that “no one has ever had an immediate experience [...] [it] takes place before there existed a *you* capable of experiencing anything at all” (226). However, this does not mean that immediate experience cannot be drawn on since this is precisely what Eliot intends to do via the intersections presented in *Four Quartets*. Immediate experience reminds one, again, of Yeats’s declaration of Unity of Being as his “faith” (*EI* 518):

my Christ [...] is that Unity of Being Dante compared to a perfectly proportioned human body, Blake’s “Imagination”, what the Upanishads have named “Self”: nor is this unity distant and therefore intellectually understandable, but imminent, differing from man to man and age to age, taking upon itself pain and ugliness, “eye of newt, and toe of frog”.

This passage suggests that Yeats and Eliot agree on the aspect of experience or knowledge (which is also unity) as “imminent” (the Yeatsian term) or “immediate” (the Bradleyan term). Yeats describes Unity of Being as a unity undefinable by the intellect in the same way that Eliot understands immediate experience as experience that “has not been mediated through the mind” (Brooker *ME* 184). Yeats’s imminence that differs “from man to man and age to age” also corresponds with Eliot’s relative points of view as predicates of degree, as apparent in his theory of opposites. The second of Bradley’s levels of experience, relational experience, is experience that follows the dissolving of immediate experience into the dualities of the intellect (Brooker *ME* 185). This is the level of experience of everyday life in which we, as the term implies, create relations through comparison, or rather, division: “Between extremities / Man runs his course” (Yeats *CP* 249).

Yeats’s understanding of Unity of Being also relates to Eliot’s understanding of Bradleyan transcendent experience, since it is deeply at work with the opposites. Transcendent experience “permits a return *of sorts* to the wholeness and unity of immediate experience” (my emphasis) (Brooker *ME* 186). This return to the unity of immediate experience functions as a glance and does

not signify a return to a state prior to existence, a reversal of knowledge and experience, but conjoins the unity of this state with the intellect of relational experience. As we age, experience accumulates, and we drift further away from the unseparated nature of immediate experience; yet moments of transcendent experience allow us to obtain a unification of immediate and relational experience. This unity, Brooker explains, “is a complex of feeling and thinking in one” (*ME* 187). It is also this unity, I argue, that Eliot is primarily questing for in *Four Quartets* and which he especially focusses on in “Little Gidding”.

Eliot’s dialectical imagination is evidently based on intricate principles from his own scholarly background. However, for Eliot, “No doctrine is more important than the doctrine of wholeness” (Brooker *ME* 182). Unity is the driving force of his questing. Brooker says that Eliot’s “attempt to escape dualistic categories through discipline and mastery is, in fact, at the heart of his later verse, especially *Four Quartets*” and that he “readily confesses [...] that the transcendence of analytical thinking would not be easy; on the contrary, it would be as difficult and as necessary as rebirth” (*ME* 18). The need for transcendent experience at the heart of his later verse is directly connected to the exploration of the dualistic categories of the secular and the transcendent, through a kind of post-secular dialectic imagination. Although his post-secular dialectical imagination only reaches maturity in his later works, his dialectical vision is indeed operative throughout Eliot’s œuvre.

From as early as the poems Eliot wrote in youth there appears an awareness of the opposites and their importance. In “A Lyric”, for instance, Eliot writes “The butterfly that lives a day / Has lived eternity” (*CPP* 590) and in its reworking, “Song”, Eliot writes “The fly that lives a single day / Has lived as long as we” (*CPP* 591). In “Before Morning” we see a foreshadowing of the mantra-like, repetitive phrases Eliot would regularly employ in his later career as poet:

This morning’s flowers and flowers of yesterday  
Their fragrance drifts across the room at dawn,  
Fragrance of bloom and fragrance of decay,  
Fresh flowers, withered flowers, flowers of dawn. (*CPP* 597)

Clearly, even in the short pieces written in his youth, Eliot’s quest for unity is apparent in the tension created by the back-and-forth of opposites. “Eliot’s poetic works can be divided into two groups: the earlier poetic works (from 1917 to 1925) and the later poetic works (from 1926 to 1958)” (Sarker 55). Parts of the vision Eliot would ultimately give voice to in his last works are already present in his earliest; in his own words: “In my beginning is my end”. In earlier poems, such as “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”, even the famed simile that compares an etherised patient

to the evening sky appears to be steered towards unity, since it joins the confines and structure of the body with the freedom and openness of the sky. Here, Eliot also discusses time in relation to a series of juxtapositions expressive of his early Kantian view of contradictions as correlative:

There will be time, there will be time  
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;  
There will be time to murder and create,  
And time for all the works and days of hands  
That lift and drop a question on your plate;  
Time for you and time for me (CPP 14)

Sets of opposites such as “murder” and “create”, “lift” and “drop”, and “you” and “me” create a rhythmic tension that has the reader contemplating the nature of the difference between these opposites. The reader might experience that the proximity of oppositions within lines increases an awareness of their likeness in much the same way one’s mind automatically completes word fragments or corrects misspelt words. These lines, like much of Eliot’s poetry, require careful and multiple reading. What this passage conveys is that there is a mutually implicating connection between the face that you prepare to meet other faces with and these other faces. Each is defined and supported by the other.

On another level, this passage also conveys that there is indeed a time in which opposites exist simultaneously, a state of undividedness. Eliot is already anticipating the Unity of Being at which he arrives in *Four Quartets*. “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” does not, however, end with a resolution of opposites, since “human voices wake us, and we drown”. Here, the return to reality “drowns the inner life” and “the divided self is submerged again, not resolved” (Williamson 65). Manju Jain, too, argues that, “The ambivalent suggestions of both waking and drowning offer no possibility of escape— either way we drown, when indulging in dreams of escape, and when we inevitably awaken to the sound of human voices” (54). Prufrock cannot reach a wholeness, cannot remake himself in the Yeatsian way because of his suppressed self; one cannot summon the *Daimon* without knowledge of one’s self.

Albright, on the other hand, interprets the characters of *The Waste Land* as ones who “seem to fear *and* to crave a new subaqueous life” (my emphasis) in a poem that is about “dying of thirst” and “drowning” (235). One may also, then, interpret Prufrock’s “drowning” as a glimpse of a life-seeking submersion into an unconscious state that is at once blissful (as can be derived from the tone of the last lines: “We have lingered in the chambers of the sea / By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown” (Eliot CPP 17)), as well as frightening, as drowning naturally is. This

simultaneous state of fear and want already hints at the connectedness of opposing forces that Eliot would come to focus on more intensely in his later verse.

Eliot's quest for Unity of Being is especially apparent in works that express a lack of unity, works that display a yearning for unity and wholeness amidst fragmentation. Brooker notes that "the Harvard masterpieces— 'Portrait,' 'Preludes,' 'Prufrock,' 'Rhapsody'— all exhibit consciousness of broken connections" (123). One of the most notable instances of this fragmented questing has remained *The Waste Land*. The poem in its entirety explores the difficulties of the "Son of man" who knows only "A heap of broken images" in a Dantesque, and quite exactly, *wasted* land. "The area of feeling which the poem inhabits is that of guilt, fear, dread; the presence of disgust, including self-disgust" (Donoghue 110). The poem, in its many voices, emphasises the need for the purgation of a world of disunity and calls for a wholeness, and to be united by "The Peace which passeth understanding".

One of the most apparent oppositions grappled with in *The Waste Land* is that of water and stone, wet and dry: "the dry, unchanging desert contrasts throughout the poem with life-giving rain and the drowning sea" (Davidson 125). These states of drought and drowning also function on a metaphorical level as expressions of the world's spiritual thirst. R. E. Murphy writes of this thirst (445):

If *The Waste Land* is a wasteland, the reader comes to feel that it is one because there has been no life-giving rain, there is no water in it, nothing of that sweet liquid that can restore the dead land. That water is the life-giving water celebrated in countless myths from countless human cultures over countless ages, every one of which associates life with the supple and the quickened, and death with the dried out or desiccated and the dulled, the numbed.

By the end of *The Waste Land*, "as the reader hears the injunctions from the Upanishads in 'What the Thunder Said', there can be no doubt that the thrust of the poetry has been moved wholly into spiritual realms—but not the realm of what is normally perceived of as religion or the religious" (Murphy 56). What the poetry has moved into, is undoubtedly a post-secular sphere in which the secular and the transcendent intermingle. In a poem that has largely been about a worldliness ("Unreal City") in need of spiritual rejuvenation, a notable participation of spiritual concepts is activated near the end, through the presence of that which is not of the world: namely, injunctions from the Upanishads. The focus of the poem had concomitantly been on the spirit too, of course, through its emphasising the lack and need of this spiritual component. Yet by conjoining this need with a reference to what is considered to be spiritual or religious, the poet creates something of a post-secular space. The implications of such a space are that, one finds in the same poem something

as worldly as “London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down” alongside something as transcendent as “Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata” and “Shantih shantih shantih”.

This important ending of *The Waste Land* is consequently best understood as a moment of questing for unity by means of the opposing forces of the secular and the transcendent. As Etienne Terblanche observes, “Important critics ignore that the poem arrives at a critical moment not of nihilism, but charged nothing—the kind of nothing that brings clarity” (135). *The Waste Land* does not give up with “Shantih shantih shantih” but “actually reaches into the silence embodied in blank space” and already contains the unifying conclusion of *Four Quartets*: “That ‘all shall be well’ therefore begins in *The Waste Land*” (Terblanche 143). The Sanskrit forms concluding *The Waste Land* and Julian of Norwich’s motto concluding *Four Quartets* should therefore be viewed with an equal spiritual or religious gravity in the questing for Unity of Being. Both conclusions offer or are part of a set of oppositions that are explored for the sake of unity.

Wit Pietrzak argues that *The Waste Land* “primarily seems to enact a memory’s search for a [U]nity of Being as understood on the intersection between Yeats’s Unity of Being and Heidegger’s unconcealment” (259). Heidegger uses the terms *Wahrheit* (truth) and unconcealment interchangeably, and uses unconcealment to point out “very different elements contributing to our overall engagement with the world, or of different ways that things are made available to us in our dealings” (Wrathall 17). In Jussi Backman’s *Complicated Presence: Heidegger and the Postmetaphysical Unity of Being*, the “truth of being” is explained thus (129):

All meaningful presence, all explicit disclosure and unconcealment (*Un-verborgenheit, a-lētheia*), is “warranted” by [...] a foregoing and surrounding implicit context of closure and concealment (*Verborgenheit, lēthe*), i.e., of nonpresence or inaccessibility. What makes phenomenal meaningfulness—the basic form of “truth” in its traditional senses—possible is an un-phenomenal background from which phenomenality becomes differentiated and thereby “warranted.”

Unconcealment, or truth, then, requires that which is to be unconcealed to be “determined in relationship to a privative state” (Wrathall 18). “Something is privative when it can only be understood and specified in relation to what it is not [...] For example, imperfection can only be understood by reference to perfection— if you do not know what it would be for something to be perfect, then you could not know what is at stake in calling it imperfect” (Wrathall 17). Heidegger’s concealment can therefore also be applied to Yeats’s questing for Unity of Being that explores the tension between antinomies. Both Yeats and Heidegger endeavour to understand being in relation to its opposite state. As we have seen, Yeats’s Unity of Being constitutes an all-inclusive, co-existent wholeness energised by antinomial engagement, and Heidegger’s unconcealment entails the study of being premised on moments of antinomial interplay.

We must derive from Pietrzak's observation— that there is in *The Waste Land* an enactment of “a memory's search for a [U]nity of Being as understood on the intersection between Yeats's Unity of Being and Heidegger's unconcealment” (259)— that one of the most important factors of the poem is therefore often overlooked. The key issue of *The Waste Land* is certainly not the fragmentation alone, but also the search, the quest, for wholeness. In fact, Lawrence Rainey argues that the problem with *The Waste Land* “is not, as so often said, that the poem is ‘too disconnected’ or ‘fragmentary’” but that the poem's syntactic and lexical features cause the poem to “suffer from an excess of connectedness, it is hyperbolically over-connected” (73). Over-connectedness should however not point towards a definitive attainment of Unity of Being. Manju Jain, reminds us that (136):

To read *The Waste Land* [...] as a poem in which the several voices and points of view merge into a single identity would be to discount its complexity of tone and feeling. The text is a site where a plurality of voices and meanings cross and recross without necessarily being resolved into a unity in which differences are submerged.

Allyson Booth, too, argues that a “half dead-half-not-quite-dead state”, an “experience that hovers between life and death, neither one nor the other, but somewhere in between” is “one of the poem's persistent patterns, troubling many of its characters and inflicted by multiple causes” (21). Although there is clearly a questing for spiritual meaning in an early poem such as *The Waste Land* it is in the later works that Eliot fully addresses the complex secular-transcendent dichotomy with the intention of attaining Unity of Being and not only to trace the absence thereof. In *Ash-Wednesday* and *Four Quartets*, for instance, unity is actively sought out, whereas *The Waste Land*'s greater focus is on exposing the lack thereof, presenting fragments. Of *The Waste Land*, Harriet Davidson writes (123):

While the poem provides an emotional and often visceral critique of the state of human life, it equally provides a critique of the desire to transcend and escape that life, and it offers no alternatives beyond that life or the persistence of that desire.

Despite his critique in *The Waste Land* of the many ways in which we seek to transcend and escape the state of human life, Eliot does indeed answer the call to transcend in *Ash-Wednesday* and *Four Quartets*. The following exploration of Unity of Being in Eliot's later work therefore centres on *Ash-Wednesday* and *Four Quartets* with the aim of identifying the aspects of Unity of Being against the framework of the present dissertation. These two poems are analysed for their ability to each “express a new phase in Eliot's spiritual evolution” (Pratt 572). Furthermore, the later works also present us with an intermingling of the sacred and the transcendent, opening the discussion to post-secular issues.

### 2.5.1 Unity of Being in the later Eliot

Almost all Eliot scholars have pointed to the line of progression from *The Waste Land* to *Ash-Wednesday* and from *Ash-Wednesday* to *Four Quartets*. What occurred from *The Waste Land* to *Ash-Wednesday*, is a more unity-orientated approach to the poetry. This is not to say that *The Waste Land* is not about unity; since it is especially occupied with the loss of unity in modern life, it is also about unity. Whereas *The Waste Land* seeks to express a longing for unity by way of fragmentation and an exploration of the parts of the whole (every fragment points to an implicit wholeness), *Ash-Wednesday* and *Four Quartets* are more concerned with a dedicated questing for unity. Brooker argues that while Eliot focuses on “fragments and on the reconstructions they make possible” in *The Waste Land*, in *Four Quartets*, he focuses “not on fragments or experiences or ideas, but rather on relations between them, on the gaps opened by intersection and difference” (ME 146).

It is in *Ash Wednesday*, Murphy notes, that “Eliot, who until now had been the great poet of chaos and of disjunction and the fragmented, is [actively] trying to effect a new goal for his poetry, balance” (58). Balance refers to an essential aspect of Eliot’s vision: “[t]hat *harmony of soul*, or *balance*, is what all great art and artists seek to achieve and to exemplify” (emphasis added) (Murphy 58). Clearly Eliot’s search for “harmony of soul” is a form of Unity of Being that profoundly resembles Yeats’s own quest. Consider, for instance, that both *Ash-Wednesday* and *Four Quartets* grapple with opposites (such as time and timelessness, dying and birth, and so on), to reach a state that appears to be ineffable yet illustrative of wholeness. In both *Ash-Wednesday* and *Four Quartets*, Eliot struggles to convey this unity through language; I think of the frequently cited “lost word” stanza that opens part five of *Ash-Wednesday*, and even part five of “Burnt Norton” that proclaims:

And all is always now. Words strain,  
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,  
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,  
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,  
Will not stay still. [...]

(CPP 175)

The opening section of part V of *Ash-Wednesday* presents all three of the essential elements of Unity of Being as outlined in our current framework. There is, firstly, a struggle with opposites; concepts such as “light/darkness” and “Word/world” are explored as opposites. “Word” is spelt with a capital “W” throughout, leading the reader to connect it to the “Word” of God; it is thus also in direct opposition to the world of man:

V

If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent  
If the unheard, unspoken  
Word is unspoken, unheard;  
Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,  
The Word without a word, the Word within  
The world and for the world;  
And the light shone in darkness and  
Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled  
About the centre of the silent Word.

O my people, what have I done unto thee. (CPP 96)

Secondly, this section also expresses the ineffability of Unity of Being by gesturing toward it through poetic language. Eliot tells us that the Word (capital W), holy in its relation to the Christian God, is both “unheard, unspoken” and “unspoken, unheard”. This Word, as it occurs within the noise of human thought and the poet’s craft is ineffable, it is “without a word” and avoids definition within language. Anticipating Incarnation, the final Biblical line, that gives voice to a compassionate God: “O my people, what have I done unto thee”, reconsiders the renunciation of the Virgin’s blessed face and voice (Schuchard 159). This final line is repeated two stanzas on when Eliot asks if the veiled sister will pray for both those “who choose thee and oppose thee”. Eliot asks if her mercy extends to both believers and unbelievers alike:

Will the veiled sister between the slender  
Yew trees pray for those who offend her  
And are terrified and cannot surrender  
And affirm before the world and deny between the rocks  
In the last desert between the last blue rocks  
The desert in the garden the garden in the desert  
Of drouth, spitting from the mouth the withered apple-seed.

O my people. (CPP 97)

It is as though the question Eliot poses to the veiled sister is answered by another voice at the end of *Four Quartets*, that of another mystical figure, Julian of Norwich. Julian’s motto, “And all shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be well”, affirms that the veiled sister will indeed pray, affirming also Eliot’s questing for Unity of Being. The “withered apple-seed” spat from the mouth

at the end of this question of salvation holds the potential for spiritual growth and finds fruition in *Four Quartets*. This withered apple-seed, suggestive of the apple in the Garden of Eden that resulted in the Fall of Man, holds the promise that man's sinful nature will nevertheless be redeemed, that the veiled sister will pray, and that "All manner of thing shall be well".

*Ash-Wednesday* is therefore an important point of progression from *The Waste Land* to *Four Quartets* as it frames more clearly the need for spiritual wholeness. Though *Ash-Wednesday* certainly is a plea, it "is not prayer, nor is it poetry about the need for prayer or to pray", it is "about what conditions are most conducive to the human capacity for prayer" (Murphy 75). Also in part five of *Ash-Wednesday* Eliot asks, "Where shall the word be found, where will the word / Resound?". He then answers that it will not be found here, in the "unstilled world":

...Not here, there is not enough silence  
Not on the sea or on the islands, not  
On the mainland, in the desert or the rain land,  
For those who walk in darkness  
Both in the day time and in the night time  
The right time and the right place are not here (CPP 96)

With *Ash-Wednesday*, Eliot succeeds in defining "the general problem of belief in the modern world" by "simultaneously commenting on the problem while illustrating the problem" (Murphy 75). It is at this transitional instance, a transition from the awareness of the problem of belief in *Ash-Wednesday* to an attempt to bridge the gap between the secular and the sacred in *Four Quartets*, to quest for unity even further, that we detect hints of the post-secular in the later Eliot. Mapping Eliot's quest for Unity of Being and the ways in which it informs our understanding of the post-secular, therefore requires an emphasis on *Four Quartets*.

## *Four Quartets*

*Four Quartets* can be read as the manifesto of Eliot's vision of experience as an always moving, always becoming pattern that affirms the vitality of Unity of Being through its dynamic grappling with opposites. What is meant with "Eliot's vision of experience" is his Bradleyan understanding of the levels of experience that constitute reality. In part II of "East Coker", for instance, Eliot writes:

[...] There is, it seems to us,  
At best, only a limited value  
In the knowledge derived from experience.  
The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,  
For the pattern is new in every moment  
And every moment is a new and shocking  
Valuation of all we have been [...] (CPP 179)

In this instance Eliot is describing how relational experience (the state after intellect has dissolved immediate experience) acts as a barrier between the experiencer and the immediacy of life. The difficulty of interpretation from relational experience appears especially within language: the method by which we process and articulate knowledge. For Eliot, language, as it figures in relational experience can be a trap, it can falsify to the same degree that it can alleviate or salvage. The knowledge gained from experience, as filtered through the mind, "imposes a pattern", but it also falsifies *that* pattern because the imposition lapses behind the newness of actual experience (it is "new in every moment"). As expressed near the end of "Burnt Norton": "The detail of the pattern is movement" (CPP 175). The struggle of *Four Quartets* is therefore with fixity: "And do not call it fixity, / Where past and future are gathered" (Eliot CPP 173). Language, especially when printed, tends to fix things, whereas *Four Quartets* must at all costs remain with the movement of the meaning if it is to succeed at all. This idea of a becoming pattern is addressed throughout the quartets as an ever-changing concept (see table 1).

At the start of the poem we are introduced to the pattern once we enter the garden, "our first world", and move "in a formal pattern", then move "above the moving tree" where "the boarhound and the boar", too, "Pursue their pattern as before" (CPP 171-172). Even words and music follow a pattern, "Only by the form, the pattern, / Can words or music reach / The stillness, as a Chinese jar still / Moves perpetually in its stillness" (CPP 175). In the second and third quartets Eliot expresses the changeable nature of the pattern, how it "becomes stranger", "more complicated" (CPP 182) and "ceases to be a mere sequence— / Or even development" (CPP 186).

Accepting the pattern in *Four Quartets* as a static construct would be to miss the point of Eliot's embrace of change. The final quartet reveals that the pattern, though "new in every moment", consists of "timeless moments".

**Table 1: The changing pattern in *Four Quartets***

Quartet in question	Pattern
"Burnt Norton"	"Only by the form, the pattern, / Can words or music reach / The stillness..." "The detail of the pattern is movement"
"East Coker"	"As we grow older / The world becomes stranger, / the pattern more complicated / Of dead and living"
"The Dry Salvages"	"It seems, as one becomes older, / That the past has another pattern, and / ceases to be a mere sequence—"
"Little Gidding"	"To become renewed, / transfigured, in another pattern" "A people without history / Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern / Of timeless moments"

On another level, the emergence of a pattern is asserted even before the poem begins. Eliot prefaces "Burnt Norton" with two quotations from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, which roughly translate as follows (Wessels 572):

"Although the *logos* is universal, most people live as if they had an understanding of their own"

"The way up and the way down are one and the same"

While the second part of this preface introduces the dialectical imagination with which Eliot is to navigate the quartets, the first refers to the pattern of existence. What Heraclitus intends with "logos" is that although constant change characterises existence, "there is nevertheless a universal, identifiable *logos*, a form, or harmony, or pattern, imminent in existence" (Wessels 572). It is this "logos" that Eliot embodies in the quartets. The pattern emphasises the vitality of the quest for Unity of Being as it underlines its dialectical back-and-forth. In the play "The Rock", for instance, Eliot writes of an unchanging battle within the constantly changing world:

The world turns and the world changes,  
But one thing does not change.  
In all of my years, one thing does not change.  
However you disguise it, this thing does not change:  
The perpetual struggle of Good and Evil. (CPP 148)

The remainder of this chapter provides a quartet-to-quartet identification of the three essential elements of Unity of Being as outlined in this thesis. First, Eliot's interplay of opposites is pointed out, then his struggle with the inexpressibility of unity followed by an analysis of the incarnate, eudaimonic capacity that this process holds.

### **“Burnt Norton”**

Already in the first movement of “Burnt Norton” Eliot introduces the toing and froing of opposites that would run through the entire *Four Quartets*. “Burnt Norton” starts with one of the main concerns, the opposition within the concept of time that dictates experience:

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future  
And time future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present  
All time is unredeemable. (CPP 171)

To Eliot, concepts such as past and future should not be interpreted as diametrically opposed but as correlative since they are interconnected in an all-encompassing whole. Eliot argues that “If all time is eternally present”, that is, if all the components of time (past, present, and future) are “present”, in the sense that they exist together, then “All time is unredeemable”. If time is something that needs to be redeemed, we may suppose that it, or parts of it, had been lost or wasted, especially considering the last three lines of this first quartet:

Quick now, here, now, always—  
Ridiculous the waste sad time  
Stretching before and after. (CPP 176)

The time that stretches “before and after” the eternal present is a wasted and sad time. The past and future is lost before and after. If time is not divided up into increments, what are we to make of our constructions of it, what is to become of regret or potential? The Christian interpretation here, as Andries Wessels argues, is that we need sequential time to attain redemption

from “the construction of time, which is mortal life”; consider that “if all sin is eternally present, all sin remains unredeemable” (573). The process of redemption cannot be fulfilled outside of time, a purgative alternative that incorporates both time and timelessness is required. This alternative is presented by the end of the second section of “Burnt Norton” when Eliot, again, addresses the redemption of time:

Time past and time future  
Allow but a little consciousness.  
To be conscious is not to be in time  
But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,  
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,  
The moment in the draughty church at smokefall  
Be remembered; involved with past and future.  
Only through time time is conquered. (CPP 173)

Manmade constructions of time “Allow but a little consciousness” and as the bird from the first section of “Burnt Norton” professes, “human kind / Cannot bear very much reality” (CPP 172). The reality that cannot be borne is 1) spiritual, 2) material and 3) where they meet, confirming again the struggle with opposites at the heart of the search for Unity of Being. For Eliot, consciousness is outside of time and must be involved with time in order to achieve a sense of unity, an intersection. Eliot specifically names this an intersection in “The Dry Salvages” when he states that the apprehension thereof is the work of saints:

But to apprehend  
The point of intersection of the timeless  
With time, is an occupation for the saint— (CPP 189)

Experiences such as “the moment in the rose-garden”, “The moment in the arbour where the rain beat”, and “The moment in the draughty church at smokefall” can be redeemed from time through memory. By recalling the past, in the present, and in relation to the future, an intersection emerges. Brooker argues that moments like these are sudden illuminations, “timeless moments in time” that allow one to momentarily experience the pattern of existence, and that “provide for Eliot the means to conquer time” (ME 150). Later, in “The Dry Salvages”, Eliot explains that these moments are “only hints and guesses / Hints followed by guesses” and that “The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation” (CPP 190). Through half guesses and half understanding an impossible and vital meeting becomes actual: the meeting of spirit and flesh, which is a meeting

beyond humdrum or false everyday modern perceptions that miss the unity by only seeing in halves, either too much flesh, or too much spirit. For Eliot, then, as for Yeats, Unity of Being is thus visible in life in brief moments, or intersections where the opposites converge.

Eliot's grappling with opposites is perhaps the most prominent feature of *Four Quartets*. One of the most significant and in-depth instances of this interacting occurs in the second movement of "Burnt Norton":

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor  
towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance. (CPP 173)

This passage, too, centres on the intersection of time and timelessness, "Where past and future are gathered"; the meeting of opposites. Eliot presents a rhythmic dance of paradoxes with opposing forces such as still/turning, from/towards, arrest/movement, and so forth to describe that place "Where past and future are gathered" (CPP 173). The unity inferred here appears to both integrate and transcend the opposites it contains. "At the still point of the turning world" for instance, "there the dance is", but this dance is characterised by "neither arrest nor movement". Eliot's dialectical imagination noticeably "nudges the mind to move beyond contradictions" (Brooker *DI* 120). This dance, this pattern in existence, appears to be other than the opposites of stillness and movement. If so, is it less than arrest and movement, more than arrest and movement, or merely akin to both a stirring *and* a staying? The uncertainty is perhaps indicative of a state that transcends these concepts while integrating, or preserving them at the same time. This may be a state where "There would be no dance, and there is only the dance", an intersection of arrest and movement where the dance plainly is *and* isn't.

A similar "here nor there" argument is made in Eliot's thesis on the philosophy of F.H. Bradley. Eliot gives the following explanation for Bradley's use of the term "feeling" (KE 20):

We stand before a beautiful painting, and if we are sufficiently carried away, our feeling is a whole which is not, in a sense, our feeling, since the painting, which is an object independent of us, is quite as truly a constituent as our consciousness or our soul. The feeling is neither here nor anywhere: the painting is in the room, and my "feelings" about the picture are in my "mind".

The rhythmic dance continues throughout *Four Quartets* and matures in the final quartet, “Little Gidding”, which combines all the quartets into a whole and foresees a dissipation of the opposites (see Table 2 below). From the discussion of opposites intersecting thus far, it is clear how Unity of Being can evade unambiguous articulation, and Eliot knows this. Later, in part five of “Burnt Norton”, and at the end of each quartet, we see this ineffability tirelessly challenged:

[...] Words, after speech, reach  
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,  
Can words or music reach  
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still  
Moves perpetually in its stillness  
.....  
[...] Words strain,  
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,  
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,  
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,  
Will not stay still [...]

(CPP 175)

Eliot is concerned with the ability to convey meaning, to convey the ineffable Unity of Being, through language and particularly his own ability to do so as poet, since the matter is addressed in the poetry itself. Kenneth Kramer argues that Eliot’s grapple with words affirms “both the impossibility of transcending the limits of language and the drive to do so despite that impossibility” (59). Eliot’s approach to the limits of language does, however, seem to be more enlivened in the final quartet, which suggests that a resolution or success is arrived at through the quartets themselves.

### “East Coker”

The second quartet announces a set of opposites which are repeated, yet inverted, in the last line of the poem, indicating a reversal and a sense that the poem has come full circle. “East Coker” opens with the statement, “In my beginning is my end” and ends with “In my end is my beginning” (CPP 177, 183). What follows this first striking line is a rhythmic listing of more opposing or correlating concepts— such as “Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended” and “Are removed destroyed, restored” (CPP 177)— that all share the same “silent motto”, “In my beginning is my end”, pointing to a continued repetition of that pattern Eliot is so aware of. That pattern, as it is for Yeats, is a painful, purgative one. Reminiscent of Yeats’s gyres, the second section of “East Coker”,

for instance, deals with natural and cosmic opposites and refers to “Thunder rolled by the rolling stars” that are “Whirled in a vortex”:

Hunt the heavens and the plains  
Whirled in a vortex that shall bring  
The world to that destructive fire  
Which burns before the ice-cap reigns. (CPP 179)

In the same way that Yeats’s gyres give way to renewal, Eliot’s whirling vortex brings the world “to that destructive fire”. To David Ward, this “destructive fire” is the fire “which shall end the world” while the “purgatorial fires” that follow in “East Coker” are refining fires that cure by burning (265). Throughout the quartets, and to varying degrees, fire is inextricably linked to the struggle with opposites and Incarnation. The poem, in fact, “never takes you— or allows you to roam— far from Incarnation” of which the “purifying agent” is fire (Douglas 31). Consider the following lines from “East Coker” that move between the opposites of warmth and cold to signify an incarnation through “purgatorial fires”:

If to be warmed, then I must freeze  
And quake in frigid purgatorial fires  
Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars. (CPP 181)

The image of fire is “destructive and yet creative, full of the most terrible pain and distress, but leading to the most exquisite beauty— ‘Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars’” (Ward 265). These “purgatorial fires” along with the roses and briars referred to here, allude to Christian symbolism of Incarnation and deliverance. Surprisingly, the flames of the “purgatorial fires” are “roses”. As Christian symbol, George Ferguson notes, “before it became one of the flowers of the earth, the rose grew in Paradise without thorns” and “only after the fall of man did the rose take on its thorns to remind man of the sins he had committed and his fall from grace” (37). As for the smoke of these rose-flames, they may very well be briars from the “purgatorial fires”. Roses alongside briars, again call to mind the image of a rose encrusted with thorns, and since it carries with it the message of Original sin it also reminds us of Christ’s incarnation and death upon the cross to redeem mankind. Quoting from Isaiah 9, verse 18, which closely resembles Eliot’s evocation of Incarnation above, James Smith argues that, in Isaiah, “briars/thorns are associated with the consequences of sin” (90):

For wickedness burns like a fire; briars and thorns it consumes; it kindles the thickets of the forest, and they roll together upward as smoke. (Isaiah 9:18 qtd. in Smith 90)

Isaiah's briars and thorns reaffirm the implication of sin in Eliot's "purgatorial fires". Yet rose and briar are as inseparable as flame and smoke are, the one is not without the other. As is customary in this dance of opposites, Eliot describes these "purgatorial fires" as "frigid" and states that he must "quake" therein to be warmed in the same way that "The soul's sap quivers", "Between melting and freezing" later in "Little Gidding" (CPP 191).

There is a certain vitality in the warming through freezing and quaking in frigid fires that is similar to a Yeatsian vacillation between opposites, but what Eliot also does in *Four Quartets* is to take a literal approach to his dialectical imagination. Instead of toing and froing, what Eliot often does is to equate opposites, to establish a oneness that diminishes difference. For instance, in part three of "East Coker", darkness and light as well as stillness and dancing, like the fire and the rose at the very end of the Quartets, are one:

So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.  
Whisper of running streams, and winter lightning.  
The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry,  
The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy  
Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony  
Of death and birth. (CPP 180)

This passage also lists moments echoed from "Burnt Norton" and its rose-garden, and announces that they are "Not lost", like unredeemable time, "but requiring", always becoming and "pointing to the agony / Of death and birth". For Eliot then, as for Yeats, there is a violence inherent in the struggle between opposites and the quest for Unity of Being since these echoed moments point to "the *agony*" (my emphasis) of "death and birth" in the same way that, in "Burnt Norton", such moments "Point to one end, which is always present" (CPP 171). The "Whisper of running streams", "winter lightning", "wild thyme unseen", "wild strawberry", and "laughter in the garden", are all hints of incarnation, of the opposites meeting, "Of death and birth". These seemingly opposing forces, death and birth, are painful events, interlinked, and "always present". It is notable that Eliot may have in mind the Christian usage of the word "Incarnation", meaning the incarnation of God as man in Christ. Nearing the end of *Four Quartets*, a similar religiously nuanced image of unity is called up in "Little Gidding" when death and birth are symbolised by rose and yew: "The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree / Are of equal duration" (CPP 197). The equality of this relationship is what the saint grasps when he is to "apprehend / The point of intersection of the timeless / With time" (CPP 190).

As for the inarticulacy that surrounds conveyance of Unity of Being, already in part two of “East Coker” the challenge of putting into words the quest for unity emerges:

That was a way of putting it — not very satisfactory:  
A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion,  
Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle  
With words and meanings. The poetry does not matter. (CPP 179)

Much like the straining and cracking words of “Burnt Norton”, in “East Coker”, language proves to be “not very satisfactory”. The tension generated from the interaction of opposites is transferred to the efficacy of language as well, a wrestling with words and meanings; and then comes the notorious statement that “The poetry does not matter”. If “The poetry does not matter”, then the present poem and all its concerns also do not matter. How seriously, though, does Eliot want to be taken when he says that “The poetry does not matter”? Kramer argues that Eliot’s statement indicates that “More important than the poetry itself, behind the words that the poet cannot speak lies the divine mystery” (78). John Cooper also claims that “The poetry does not matter”, “because individuals ought to be directed to other ends which poetry cannot fully comprehend” (105). This statement, then, has mystical connotations and may also hold significance in the Buddhist tradition of detachment, which Eliot would be aware of considering his interest in and studies of Buddhist theory. According to Paul Murray, although Eliot “does believe that detachment ‘from self and from things and from persons’ is necessary, he does not recommend to us for a moment an attitude of indifference” (150). Eliot is not jokingly encouraging his reader to give up the task of reading poetry, of reading his poetry, he is instead implying an interconnectivity of all things.

Poetry, as type of speech, is the opposite of silence and as we know from “Burnt Norton”, “Words, after speech, reach / Into the silence” (CPP 175). The “division” does not matter because everything is one, a greater whole, “And all is always now” (CPP 175). “The poetry does not matter” does not mean that we should not be mindful of the value of poetry as a “raid on the inarticulate” and, as chapter four explores, a eudaimonic tool capable of refining human wholeness. “The poetry does not matter” in the same sense that, later in “East Coker”, “Here and there does not matter”:

Here and there does not matter  
We must be still and still moving  
Into another intensity  
For a further union, a deeper communion (CPP 183)

“East Coker” ends with this affirmation of the intersection of opposites, a kind of unity that reaches beyond difference, “a deeper communion”. This union poses post-secular concerns, seeing that “time becomes redeemable as the temporal becomes immersed with (sic) the sacred” (Kramer 100). Where we are, “Here and there”, becomes intermingled with “another intensity” that Eliot likens to “communion”, something generally coupled with the spiritual or religious. The result of the dance of opposites is therefore undoubtedly an intersection, an opening for Incarnation, a matter Eliot profoundly meditates on in “The Dry Salvages”.

The ending of “East Coker” is thus charged with an impression of Unity of Being despite the “intolerable wrestle / With words and meanings” (CPP 179), and despite the famous “raid on the inarticulate” that preceded it just a few lines earlier:

Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt  
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure  
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words  
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which  
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture  
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate  
With shabby equipment always deteriorating  
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,  
Undisciplined squads of emotion [...] (CPP 182)

Unlike the inarticulacy expressed in “Burnt Norton”, in “East Coker” the “raid on the inarticulate” advances the idea of the unreliable nature of words and explores the added worry of timing and intent. By the time (if at all) we have managed to express ourselves through language, the thing in need of expression has passed or we are no longer inclined to express it. And so, every attempt “to learn to use words” is an attempt to articulate that which evades clear description, which returns us to the question that opened this chapter: How, then, do you talk about and define Unity of Being if it cannot be talked about, if it exceeds expression within the limits of language? Eliot’s answer, at this point of *Four Quartets*, appears to be that “For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business” (CPP 182). This “trying” does not just include the speech with which we communicate, or attempt to, but also includes our poetic attempts such as Eliot’s lines themselves.

## “The Dry Salvages”

Part one of “The Dry Salvages” is concerned with the dialectics of time in a particularly aquatic way. The poem starts with a description of the river as “a strong brown god” contrasted to “worshippers of the machine”. Then follows an affirmation of the wholeness of the earth’s water sources that intensifies the way “The tolling bell” is heard clanging above and despite the different voices and times of the river and sea at the end of part one:

The tolling bell  
Measures time not our time, rung by the unhurried  
Ground swell of time  
Older than the time of chronometers, older  
Than time counted by anxious worried women  
Lying awake, calculating the future,  
Trying to unweave, unwind, unravel  
and piece together the past and the future,  
Between midnight and dawn, when the past is all deception,  
The future futureless, before the morning watch  
When time stops and time is never ending;  
And the ground swell, that is and was from the beginning,  
Clangs  
The bell. (CPP 185)

As in the previous two quartets, Eliot questions manmade constructions of time and reveals a different kind of time that is “not our time”, time that cannot be measured nor counted in any human way. This time is, of course, another intersection. This time is measured by the bell which clangs “Between midnight and dawn” and “When time stops and time is never ending”, that is to say, when time and timelessness meet. This tolling bell is clanged by “the unhurried / Ground swell of time” which reminds us of “the agony / Of death and birth” (CPP 180) from “East Coker”. If Eliot’s use of the word “swell” is seen in the light of unwanted inflation, say of a wound, it appropriately accompanies the images of “death and birth” as the heaped ground above a grave (Ground swell) or the ballooned belly of an expectant mother (another swell). The “unhurried / Ground swell of time”, like a pendulum, clangs the bell that keeps the time of the intersection of opposites.

At the end of “The Dry Salvages”, Eliot turns again to timeless moments in time. At this point, we already know that “to apprehend / The point of intersection of the timeless / With time,

is an occupation for the saint". What value is there, then, in the intersection for those that are not saints? Here, Eliot says that "For most of us, there is only the unattended / Moment, the moment in and out of time" (CPP 190). However, these moments are only "hints and guesses":

[...] These are only hints and guesses,  
Hints followed by guesses; and the rest  
Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.  
The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.  
Here the impossible union  
Of spheres of existence is actual,  
Here the past and future  
Are conquered, and reconciled, (CPP 190)

If, through "prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action" these intersection moments can be "half guessed", if this "gift" can be "half understood", one would acquire Incarnation. What Eliot means by Incarnation then, is knowledge of the "point of intersection of the timeless / With time", a deep understanding of the "impossible union" where "past and future / Are conquered, and reconciled". This conception of Incarnation is also informed by the Christian doctrine of incarnation that sees divine being become incarnate, embodied in human form. About Christ's incarnation, the Council of Chalcedon, for instance, "stated that the two natures of Christ, divine and human, were perfectly blended" (Bassuk 8):

...one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ.

This description strikingly resembles the aims of Eliot's quest for Unity of Being. In the same way that Christianity combined divine and human, Eliot combines time and the timeless, and in each case the opposites are united in such a way that distinction is "in no way annulled by the union". For Eliot, Incarnation is a reversed form of the Christian version; instead of God becoming man, while still being God, man must blend with the divine, with timelessness, with eternity, while remaining human. However, in *Four Quartets*, Incarnation "takes broader associations, not just Christian, not even just religious" (Kramer 255). In essence, Incarnation assures an intimate apprehension of the renewal and relief from the confines of dualism that lies in the reconciliation of opposites, in Unity of Being. Incarnation is a glimpse of the absolute.

But Eliot, as does Yeats, conceives of Incarnation, and of Unity of Being, as attainable in our lives only in brief epiphany-like moments; “For most of us, there is only the unattended / Moment, the moment in and out of time” (*CPP* 190). In Brooker’s words: “since individuals live and have their being only in fragments, they can never quite know the whole pattern, but in certain moments they can experience the pattern in miniature” (*ME* 150). These moments in which we experience the pattern of existence that is both in and out of time, are at the heart of the quest for Unity of Being since Eliot too, does not see complete attainment of such unity within life. In life, we can only experience short stays of “a deeper communion” and only dedicated individuals can come to know the workings of these experiences. Consider Eliot’s insistence on words such as “apprehend” and “half understood” when describing Incarnation: “But to *apprehend* / The point of intersection of the timeless / With time, is an occupation for the saint” (my emphasis) and again, “The hint half guessed, the gift *half understood*, is Incarnation” (my emphasis) (*CPP* 190). It could be said then, that Incarnation is not a matter of dissolving opposites, but *understanding* what happens there where the opposites meet and this knowledge, Eliot says, is reached through “prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action” (*CPP* 190).

Despite an unattainability of Unity of Being in life and the dedication required to become knowledgeable about Incarnation, that “impossible union” remains the aim. In the final lines of “The Dry Salvages” Eliot gives the impression that, much like Yeats’s vacillation between antinomies, we keep up the struggle with opposites, with trying to conquer time and with the inarticulate, always in pursuit of brief moments enriched with incarnation; true attainment, however, remains out of reach: “Never here to be realised”:

For most of us, this is the aim  
Never here to be realised;  
Who are only undefeated  
Because we have gone on trying;  
We, content at the last  
If our temporal reversion nourish  
(Not too far from the yew-tree)  
The life of significant soil. (*CPP* 190)

The aim, for most of us, is to reach the end of the quest for Unity of Being, to reach the “impossible union of spheres of existence”. This aim is nevertheless “*Never* here to be realised” (my emphasis) and we are content if our bodies, through “temporal reversion”, should nourish the earth in death: “Not too far from the yew-tree”. Another sense of Incarnation is evoked by the image of our human bodies— returned to the earth after trying to follow in life hints and guesses of

Incarnation— nourishing the soil and restarting another pattern, finding at the end, the beginning. Life and death are thus dialectical, in the same pattern in which the past and the future are wound, a pattern that Brooker defines as “a pattern at once in time, continuously changing until the supreme moment of death completes it, and also out of time” (*ME* 150). The idea that true, and final Unity of Being is reached perhaps only in death brings to mind Yeats’s final letter to Lady Elizabeth Pelham: “‘Man can embody truth but he cannot know it.’ I must embody it in the completion of my life” (*TL* 922).

### “Little Gidding”

As is evident from the study thus far, in *Four Quartets*, from start to finish, Eliot “forces his reader to attend to opposites, to paradoxes, puzzles, and contradictions”; this is apparent from the first lines of “Burnt Norton”— “Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future”— and the last line of “Little Gidding”: “And the fire and the rose are one” (Brooker *ME* 155). Some of the final quartet’s most intriguing interactions with dialectical concepts occur in part five, which Eliot starts by recalling the lines from “East Coker”, “In my beginning is my end” (*CPP* 177), by reintroducing the same concern: “What we call the beginning is often the end / And to make an end is to make a beginning. / The end is where we start from” (*CPP* 197). Later, Eliot introduces the concepts of life and death in a similar manner:

We die with the dying:

See, they depart, and we go with them.

We are born with the dead:

See, they return, and bring us with them.

The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree

Are of equal duration. [...] (CPP 197)

The opposing concepts in this instance are correlative in the sense that they are defined by one another and imply a correlative occurrence. Life, for instance, is defined by and followed by death, while death is defined by and preceded by life. “The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree” as symbols of life and death are equated by their identical duration. The one is as much part of the other as the other is of it. Here we see Eliot starting to explain, or attempting to explain the oneness of Unity of Being instead of explaining how to get to that state. Perhaps the climax of this attempted affirmation appears in the final lines of *Four Quartets*:

A condition of complete simplicity  
 (Costing not less than everything)  
 And all shall be well and  
 All manner of thing shall be well  
 When the tongues of flame are in-folded  
 Into the crowned knot of fire  
 And the fire and the rose are one. (CPP 198)

Eliot's description of "A condition of complete simplicity" does not appear to involve the explorations of intersections that the *Quartets* have produced up to now; it is thus not another "raid on the inarticulate", but a representation of the unity beyond the words themselves. Not the questing and the process of coming to and apprehending the meeting of opposites, but their reconciliation is presented: "And the fire and the rose are one". "And all shall be well" when the fire, which is synonymous with purgation, Original sin, and Incarnation throughout the quartets, is one with the rose, a symbol of tenderness from the garden of "Burnt Norton". Brooker notes, "The knotting of the fire and the rose binds life and death, whispering that pain is part of birth and death part of life" (FR 84). After "a lifetime's death in love", and through the different types of fire, the purifying agent of Incarnation, there is Unity of Being.

This affirmation is maintained also by Eliot's use of the phrase, "And all shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be well" which are words derived from the writing of Julian of Norwich, a 14<sup>th</sup> century anchoress. Julian is best known for her works *A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman* and *A Revelation of Love*. In each of these she conveys a vision of Christ that came to her when she was extremely ill. This vision involves the sculpted image of Christ's head, fixed to a crucifix held before Julian as she lies dying; scenes of Christ's Passion play out before her and, still on the cross, Christ comes to life and makes a mysterious promise (Watson & Jenkins 1). Christ tells Julian that:

"sinne is behovelye [fitting]...Botte [but] alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thinge shalle be wele". (Vis. 13.45, 61 qtd. in Watson & Jenkins 1)

The message put across is that, despite sin— though it be fitting, perhaps even necessary, all shall be well. And when all things are "well", the opposites are reconciled, "the fire and the rose are one".

The "impossible union" of past and future, life and death, fire and rose, and speech and silence is established through experiencing *Four Quartets* and its refusal to "cease from exploration". Eliot is attentive to his role as poet, to using a medium through which unity is to be expressed in words; in the final section of the poem, just after the last discussion of inarticulation, Eliot places a

line apart for emphasis: “With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling” (CPP 197). This line, Murray explains, is quoted from the English medieval text *The Cloud of Unknowing* and “emphasises the dimension of grace and the aspect of love” (150). It also indicates that Eliot is mindful of his craft, of his task as poet, “the drawing of this Love”, and his “Calling” since:

With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling  
  
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 197)

For Eliot, his “Calling”, then, is to journey through language, the dialectics of experience, and Incarnation to ultimately convey through his work a Unity of Being. The poet’s job is to raid the inarticulate, to devote one’s self to the exploration of that which cannot be spoken. In “Little Gidding”, the inarticulacy associated with part five of each of the quartets is suddenly replaced with a description of how perfectly language can allow one to communicate exactly what is meant, how the poet is a conductor of “The complete consort dancing together”:

[...] And every phrase  
And sentence that is right (where every word is at home,  
Taking its place to support the others,  
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,  
An easy commerce of the old and the new,  
The common word exact without vulgarity,  
The formal word precise but not pedantic,  
The complete consort dancing together)  
Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,  
Every poem an epitaph. [...] (CPP 197)

The sudden shift of point of view indicates that Eliot nonetheless has a belief in the capacity for communication that language can provide, and that the struggle with words throughout the previous three quartets may lead to a sense of fruition in the final quartet. This mastery of words and communication also holds eudaimonic implications for both poet and reader. Considering eudaimonic aspects allows us to ask questions regarding the value of such poetry for our (reader and poet’s) well-being. Chapter four will provide a closer look at these possibilities.

Even though the last quartet functions as the movement that is to bring all the quartets together— the quartets, like language, become “The complete consort dancing together”— the echoes of each quartet within the others is so prominent that it is as though Eliot starts summarising each quartet within the other from the first movement on. In the second quartet, we already hear the poet ask “You say I am repeating / Something I have said before. I shall say it again. / Shall I say it again?” (CPP 181). Eliot’s ability to interweave the quartets is especially evident in the last section of the last quartet (see table 2). In this last section of “Little Gidding”, Eliot presents elements from the previous three quartets that the reader now easily recognises. Some of the lines I’ve assigned to certain quartets in the table below can, however, be identified throughout and, as is true to the Bradleyan, Eliotesque form, can be related to other sections and other points of view.

By summarising, as it were, some of the main concerns of the quartets Eliot emphasises their connectedness, their capacity for achieving wholeness in the quest for Unity of Being since, as Brooker indicates, “The basic principle in *Four Quartets* is repetition, the function of which is to permit the emergence of a common pattern beneath particulars” (ME 146). This repetition is only evident in the overall skeleton or frame of *Four Quartets* (Brooker ME 152). It is for this reason that I tabulate appropriate examples from each of the quartets to indicate the efficacy of “Little Gidding” to return the reader to the place from which he or she started “And to know the place for the first time” (CPP 197):

**Table 2: Quartets summation from "Little Gidding" with corresponding text parts**

<b>Last section of <i>Little Gidding</i></b>	<b>Part of text resembled</b>	<b>Quartet in question</b>
“We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring”	“Old men ought to be explorers”  “Fare forward travellers!”	East Coker  The Dry Salvages
“Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time.”	“In order to arrive where you are not / You must go through the way in which you are not”  “Home is where one starts from”  “The end is where we start from”	East Coker    Little Gidding
“Through the unknown, remembered gate”	“Through the first gate, / Into our first world, shall we follow / The deception of the thrush?”	Burnt Norton

Last section of <i>Little Gidding</i>	Part of text resembled	Quartet in question
“When the last of earth left to discover / Is that which was the beginning;”	“In my beginning is my end”  “What we call the beginning is often the end / And to make an end is to make a beginning”	East Coker  Little Gidding
“At the source of the longest river”	“I think that the river / Is a strong brown god”  “The river is within us, the sea is all about us”	The Dry Salvages
“The voice of the hidden waterfall / And the children in the apple-tree / Not known, because not looked for”	“For the leaves were full of children, / Hidden excitedly, containing laughter”	Burnt Norton
“But heard, half-heard, in the stillness / Between two waves of the sea.”	“Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply / That it is not heard at all, but you are the music / While the music lasts. These are only hints and guesses, / Hints followed by guesses; and the rest / Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action. / The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.”	The Dry Salvages
“Quick now, here, now, always —”	“There rises the hidden laughter / Of children in the foliage / Quick now, here, now, always —”	Burnt Norton
“A condition of complete simplicity / (Costing not less than everything)”	“But to apprehend / The point of intersection of the timeless / With time, is an occupation for the saint — / No occupation either, but something given / And taken, in a lifetime’s death in love, / Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.”	The Dry Salvages
“And all shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be well”	“Sin is Behovely, but / All shall be well, and / All manner of thing shall be well.”	Little Gidding
“When the tongues of flame are in-folded /	“The communication / Of the dead is tongued with fire	Little Gidding

Last section of <i>Little Gidding</i>	Part of text resembled	Quartet in question
Into the crowned knot of fire”	beyond the language of the living”	
“And the fire and the rose are one.”	“If to be warmed, then I must freeze / And quake in frigid purgatorial fires / Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars”	East Coker

The last of the quartets is therefore the definitive précis of the thought that produced the *Four Quartets*. “Little Gidding” also proves to be something of a resolution and assertion of Incarnation. First, there is the Christ-like “familiar compound ghost” who urges the spirit to be “restored by that refining fire” (CPP 195), then the sudden success of the “raid on the articulate”, and the refrain that declares “And all shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be well / By the purification of the motive / In the ground of our beseeching” (CPP 196). Julian’s memorable words signify a sense of hope “within the context of religious faith”. Ruth Caspar says of this hope, “it is a hope that extends beyond the moment into the eschaton and beyond the limits of anyone’s world of experience to the cosmos as a whole” (140).

The repetition throughout the quartets, the many endings that are beginnings and beginnings that are endings, is the rhythm of the dance of opposites that points to a greater whole. The end of “Little Gidding” is an affirmation of that greater whole. Barbara Newman argues that Eliot was immensely pressured to end *Four Quartets* with an affirmation, “at least gesturing toward a possible *Paradiso*” (429):

Not only would this poem be the last quartet and thus the consummation of all four but, in all likelihood, Eliot knew it was the last major poem he would ever write [...] Moreover, the devastation and terror of the Blitz virtually demanded of any poet with a claim to spiritual wisdom that he provide more than yet another cause for gloom.

It is no wonder that Brooker reads “Little Gidding” as a war poem (FR 1). Although the social climate inspired or even urged Eliot to end *Four Quartets* with an affirmative, transcendent tone, the ending is by no means forced upon the previous three quartets. In fact, the presence of war in “Little Gidding” enforces the theme of violence that is required for Incarnation, the redemption of fire: “There is only the fight to recover what has been lost / And found and lost again and again”, “a lifetime burning in every moment” (CPP 182).

## 2.6 Conclusions

Although Yeats and Eliot have different impressions of Unity of Being and its attainability, they have in common the search for a transcending wholeness. While Yeats's conception of Unity of Being is based largely on spiritual experiences with his "unknown instructors" and some of his own esoteric and poetical reading, it seems that Eliot's sense of unity is largely informed by his philosophical and religious sensibilities. Though Eliot never explicitly uses the term "Unity of Being", as Yeats does, there is undoubtedly a similar process at work in his poetry. In this chapter, Unity of Being, as it is striven towards in Yeats and Eliot's later poetry, has been analysed along the lines of a framework that identifies three essential elements of Unity of Being. These include 1) a grappling with the opposites, 2) a struggling to articulate Unity of Being and the questing it requires, along with 3) a capacity for eudaimonic incarnation which may or may not give way to a final attainment of Unity of Being.

From the analysis of these three elements, it is clear that Yeats is less inclined to express a final, attained Unity of Being than he is to gesture towards the process through which it may be reached. Yeats's process is a vacillating one driven by a back-and-forth between antinomies. Eliot, on the other hand, is more prone to grapple with the opposites by revealing their correlative nature and by the end of *Four Quartets* Eliot does indeed venture into the inarticulate, does put into words his understanding of a Unity of Being. Both Yeats and Eliot suggest that true attainment of Unity of Being is most likely when life has been completed by death. Overall, it also appears that Yeats is more focused on this unattainability of Unity of Being in life, while Eliot is more focused on the ineffability thereof. It is not possible, however, to surmise that Yeats did not believe in an ultimate Unity of Being, and that Eliot did. What is clear though, is that both poets share in common a quest for unity in which they seek to move beyond binary thinking, to do away with the illusion of separation. To Yeats and Eliot, all things are one, be it in a mystical, philosophical, or religious sense. For this reason, both poets draw on a wide range of knowledge in their questing which leads them to conjoin a specific set of twins thought to be directly opposed, the secular and the transcendent. The next chapter is devoted to this peculiar conjoining, referred to in recent times as post-secularity.

## CHAPTER 3: THE POST-SECULAR

“Today, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud are all dead but God is doing just fine, thank you very much.”

—John D. Caputo, *On religion*. 2001, p.64

“We seem to have only two choices: God— a transcendent being outside space and time— or man as the measure of all things. We cannot believe that such a God exists, and man on his own is a horror.”

—Bruce Ledewitz, *Hallowed Secularism*. 2009, p.4

### 3.1 Post-secular Yeats and Eliot

Much of Yeats and Eliot’s grappling with the secular and the transcendent springs from their engaging with the natural and the supernatural and the oppositions of life and death since this dichotomy raises the kinds of question that religion generally seeks to answer. It is this explorative matching of both traditionally religious as well as secular, or non-religious, concerns that is generally regarded as the foundation of post-secularity, therefore opening the discussion to Yeats and Eliot’s proto-post-secular quest for Unity of Being.

To start with, Yeats’s quest for Unity of Being is prototypical of post-secular approaches since the later poems participate in a quest that combines the secular and the transcendent. In the opening lines of “Vacillation”, for instance, Yeats declares that “Man runs his course” “between extremities” and that the result of this vacillation is a “brand, or flaming breath” that “Comes to destroy / All those antinomies / Of day and night” (*CP* 250). What remains after the antinomies have been destroyed is a kind of unity: “The body calls it death, / The heart remorse”. Since Unity of Being is largely unattainable in life, Yeats hopes that it may be realised to a greater extent after death; later on, in “Vacillation”, and in preparation for this death, Yeats writes:

Test every work of intellect or faith  
And everything that your own hands have wrought,  
And call those works extravagance of breath  
That are not suited for such men as come  
Proud, open-eyed and laughing to the tomb. (*CP* 250)

Here, Yeats is very much aware of the life’s work that is the completion of the self. One’s own work as well as “every work of intellect or faith” should be tested for their ability to complete

the kind of man that bravely faces death, “Proud, open-eyed and laughing”. The completeness of man is sought through testing “every work of intellect *or* faith” (emphasis added). Note that Yeats recognises both “intellect” and “faith” as viable means; here the conjunction “or” serves a combining rather than an excluding function. The instruction to “test”, appears post-secular since it urges a secular type of scepticism while at the same time it very much resembles the Biblical proverb: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (*King James Version*, 1 Thessalonians. 5.21). Yeats implies that the secular-transcendent dichotomy is therefore instrumental to the quest for Unity of Being since it can lead us to hold fast “that which is good”. With “Test every work of intellect or faith” Yeats consequently means to say, “test *everything*”, be it of a secular or transcendent nature, and hold fast to what is most conducive to the quest for Unity of Being. This testing is evident in Yeats’s own life as well, considering his many different spiritual, mystical, and magical pursuits.

In Eliot’s questing the secular and the transcendent meet in similar ways. “The Dry Salvages”, for example, expresses a scientific understanding of the evolution of nature, a largely secular concept, alongside a spiritual connectedness to it:

The river is within us, the sea is all about us;  
The sea is the land’s edge also, the granite  
Into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses  
Its hints of earlier and other creation:  
The starfish, the horseshoe crab, the whale’s backbone:  
The pools where it offers to our curiosity  
The more delicate algae and the sea anemone.  
It tosses up our losses, the torn seine,  
The shattered lobsterpot, the broken oar  
And the gear of foreign dead men. The sea has many voices,  
Many gods and many voices. (CPP 184)

It is in lines like these that “the evolutionary sense of unity finds multivalent and colourful expression” (Terblanche 171). The river and sea within and all about us lays bare “Its hints of earlier and other creation”, of evolution, “indicating that we are kin with the apparently most basic forms in existence” (Terblanche 171). At the time of Eliot’s writing, ideas of the theory of evolution were very likely in opposition to Christian beliefs of God’s creation. And yet, to Eliot there remains a deep sense of spiritual connectedness to the complex patterns of the natural world; the river is “within us”, the sea “all about us”, it “offers to our curiosity” and it “tosses up our losses”. This

kind of language is easily associated with the conventionally religious too; we may think of God or the Holy Spirit that is “within us”, “all about us”, as “offering to our curiosity” or even tossing up our losses. The secular, phenomenal world is dealt with in a transcendent language. The sea (of the phenomenal world), as it feeds rivers, “has many voices, / Many gods and many voices” (of the religious transcendent sphere).

Furthermore, the plurality of “Many gods” affirms a syncretic search for spiritual meaning and recalls the many Hindu gods or avatars and their strong connection to the holy river Ganges. All rivers are sacred in Hinduism, but the water of the Ganges is especially sacred since it is worshipped as the goddess Ganga, the personification of the Himalayas (Wilkinson 209). It is also this holy river that, in *The Waste Land*, nearly dries up: “Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves / Waited for rain” (CPP 74). The connection between evolution and the spiritual deepens when we consider the view that the Hindus were evolutionists “many centuries before the doctrine of evolution had been accepted by the scientists of our time, and before any word like evolution existed in any language of the world” (Monier-Williams xii). For centuries, the Hindus believed that their one god constitutes and identifies with everything and “is for ever evolving itself out of its own inner substance; like a vast tree” (Monier-Williams, xii), a tree resonant of Eliot’s “bedded axle-tree”, his “moving tree” in “Burnt Norton” which, too, indicates an awareness of the patterns of existence. This intricate intermingling of natural and supernatural illustrates Eliot’s awareness of the need for spiritual re-evaluation in the face of secularisation; he is nearing the post-secular and its confirmatory discourse.

Eliot begins “The Dry Salvages” with: “I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river / Is a strong brown god”, a god that has been neglected in modern times, “Unhonoured, unpropitiated / By worshippers of the machine”. Here we see a reflection on the modern secular-transcendent split that has kept us from appreciating the spiritual value of the phenomenal world. Both Yeats and Eliot refer to secular *and* religious or transcendent beliefs in their explorations of the interconnectivity that underlies the human experience. And as we shall see, Yeats and Eliot’s Modernist engagement with the secular-transcendent dichotomy already hint toward the present-day renewal of questions that address the need for a more integrated methodology. A post-secular methodology is aimed at synthesising the secular and the transcendent, it hopes to remedy the disjointed relationship between established knowledge and belief. This transformation invites the question: what change has taken place from Yeats and Eliot’s Modernist period to our own? And what does a new synthesising interpretative stance hold for literary studies? This chapter will therefore consider the nature and development of post-secularism as it relates to Yeats and Eliot’s shared quest for Unity of Being.

### 3.1.1 Toward definitions of the post-secular

The concept of the post-secular is a controversial one. Views on the issue vary from the hostile, with scholars such as the notorious Slavoj Žižek (1999) calling the post-secular, “post-secular crap”, to more conservative views such as those of John Caputo, who regards post-secularism as something of a religious Renaissance. There is certainly widespread confusion across disciplines as to what exactly the term post-secular denotes. To start with, as most “post” prefixes do, the “post” in post-secular seem to indicate that the post-secular must denote something that occurs *after* the very broadly defined “secular”, or that it stands opposed to this “secular”. Exactly what the secular is and when it came, since the term implies that it must now be over, is also a subject of dispute and the most appropriate point at which to start post-secular analyses.

The term secular was “originally used in church texts to distinguish between those who were subject to monastic orders (referred to as ‘regular’) and those who were not (referred to as ‘secular’)” (Krüger *et al.* 269). Secular also came to mean “world” from the Latin *saeculum*, meaning the span of a human life (Ledewitz 1). The early development of the word therefore indicates a worldliness, a sense of the ordinary and the material. Any post-secular discussion will consequently centre on not only the secular and its opposite, but also the worldly, on the one hand, and the otherworldly on the other. Of course, since *saeculum*, the meaning of the term has expanded and taken on broader connotations. The OED (“secular, adj. 2a”), for instance, defines “secular” as follows:

Belonging to the world and its affairs as distinguished from the church and religion; civil, lay, temporal. Chiefly used as a negative term, with the meaning non-ecclesiastical, non-religious, or non-sacred.

And also as follows (“secular, adj. 2c”):

Of literature, history, art (esp. music), hence of writers or artists: Not concerned with or devoted to the service of religion; not sacred; profane.

These definitions point to a secularity at odds with the sacred and, particularly, the religious. What post-secular studies make abundantly clear, however, is that “religion” is a thorny term, one nearly impossible to define. At best, what can be said of religion is that it is not a “stable category”, that it is defined in different ways in different places based on the kinds of power that are in play” (Cavanaugh 126). We would therefore be mistaken to think that “there is something readily identifiable as ‘religion’ out there that forms a binary with readily identifiable ‘secular’ phenomena” (106). Yet, despite any clear definition of either religion or the secular, “the secular as it is most commonly thought is a remainder concept; it is defined over against religion, as the opposite of that which is religious” (Cavanaugh 106). Not only is the secular understood as the opposite of religion,

but it is also “anti” religious or “non” religious and even “profane”. Thus, a very narrow, “either-or” definition of secularism has “sadly seeped into the mainstream and is now almost an unspoken principle in much of the academy and wider society” (Agar 4). The post-secular emphasises the falsity of this secular-religious distinction and announces a new understanding of secularity that merges, or rather re-unites, our conceptions of the secular and the religious. Charles Taylor refers to this newfound secularity as an awareness of “a condition in which our experience of and search for fullness occurs; and this is something we all share, believers and unbelievers alike” (19).

The secular-religious distinction is thus post-secularism’s first problem. A colloquial, anti-religious understanding of secularism evidently proves to be a limited one; if the secular is merely the opposite of religion, then we are again forced to the infamously difficult question of what is and what is not considered to be a religion. It is interesting also that the term religion “comes from the Latin term *religio*, which included cultic observances, some of which were directed toward gods, but also included civic oaths and family rituals, which modern Westerners would label ‘secular’” (Cavanaugh 111). There are consequently many such rituals at the heart of the definition of religion that are not uniquely religious in the sense that we understand the word today, causing a blurring of the lines between religious practice and those practices that are perhaps purely cultural.

Cavanaugh therefore considers the secular-religious distinction to be invented, “created in the course of a contingent set of events that marked the transition from the medieval to the modern” (105). Whether the secular-religious distinction has been constructed or not, and despite the lack of consensus of definitions, the divide is still commonly acknowledged in the broader context of society. “A truly critical investigation” of the secular should, however, not take the categories of religion and the secular at face value (Cavanaugh 121). Often these categories separate the secular and the religious into realms; the secular is associated with “a realm of disenchanting and mundane reason” while religion is associated with “a realm of enchanted, otherworldly, non-rational belief and behaviour” (Cavanaugh 121). However, since the religious is often categorised as being organised or institutionalised, it might also be viewed in terms of “mundane reason”. For this reason, instead of the slippery term “religion”, the term “transcendental” may be more appropriate and inclusive as the opposite of the secular, and therefore also closer to an indication of the porous boundaries between them. Roget’s Superthesaurus considers “transcendental” synonymous with the supernatural, otherworldly, spiritual, mystical, and metaphysical (604). This dissertation will therefore refer to a secular-transcendent dichotomy in its post-secular analyses.

The sharp distinction between secular and transcendent that prevents scholars from engaging with the ways in which these definitions can permeate each other is exacerbated by the secularisation process, or, the secularisation thesis largely framed by sociology. It is useful to

distinguish between secularisation and secularism since literary studies will be primarily concerned with the latter: “*secularisation* describes a process whereby a society or people becomes progressively more secular, and *secularism* denotes an ideology upholding the pre-eminence of secular reasoning, institutions, and authorities” (Barbieri 131). Secularisation is thus “the process by which secularism is growing” (Ledewitz 21). Since the mid-twentieth century, the secularisation thesis “has been the dominant paradigm for understanding religion in modernity, asserting that religion’s social significance declines as its roles diminish due to modern social differentiation, societalisation, and rationalisation” (Branch & Knight 494). Since the Age of Enlightenment with its famous blows against religion, theories on the nature and cause of secularism developed across disciplines and now the process itself is under scrutiny. Gorski *et al.*, for instance, offer this condensed view of critique since the Enlightenment (6):

The view that reason would replace religion and, more fundamentally, that reason is opposed to religion—the conventional wisdom among right-thinking intellectuals just a generation ago—is now being called into question. Perhaps it was the secularists rather than the religionists who were blinded, not by darkness, but by *les lumières* of Enlightenment reason.

The advancement of the hard sciences during the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution is conventionally understood as the origin of the secular mind (King 118-119). To the advancement of science, Ledewitz adds the contributing forces of globalisation and the conservative beliefs of religion itself (22). The resolute adherence to the laws of reason that followed so strongly reflected conventional wisdom that religious views of the world and any views that resisted scientific methods were deemed ineffectual. Indeed, “philosophers of the radical Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment, such as David Hume and Friedrich Nietzsche, have tended to view religion and other beliefs associated with transcendence as, in all probability, false in terms of their truth claims and even potentially dangerous to human well-being” (Agar 4). A contemporary upsurge of these Enlightenment ideas resulted in the “unacknowledged belief in the epistemological weakness of religion and transcendent metaphysical truth claims” (Agar 4). Studies that explore these concepts are consequently often dismissed as lacking scholarly integrity since they cannot be examined as effectively through trusted scientific methods.

However, during the 1990s and early 2000s, there occurred a “religious turn” (the break in scientistically dominated academic practice) in the humanities, and post-secular studies marks its coming-of-age (Branch & Knight 494). The religious turn did not “lead back to already existing faith systems”, instead, scholars and writers attempted to “work out some kind of synthesis between secular and sacred ways of seeing” (McClure 334). One of the most interesting of these syntheses is Bruce Ledewitz’s proposition of a “new kind of secularism”, one that will “establish a closer

relationship between secularism and religion”, one he calls a “Hallowed Secularism”. Ledewitz argues that secularism “failed to establish a ground for human existence” since it cannot “answer questions like, what is the purpose of human life? or, what may I hope for?” (36). In this case, while the forces of secularism displace religion, they do not replace it since they “do not lead us to abundant life” (Ledewitz 22). While I don’t fully agree with Ledewitz that forces of secularism cannot lead one to an abundant life, I find it almost certainly true that a colloquial secularity often discards spiritual or metaphysical claims (claims that are fundamental to one’s well-being) along with the traditionally religious.

Conversely, the humanist, Richard Norman, argues that what we have come to understand as distinctively religious attitudes (such as humility, hope, awe, and thankfulness – attitudes put forward by John Cuttingham as distinctly religious) can be made sense of in secular terms since these attitudes are “deeply rooted in the experience of all or most human beings” (189). To Norman, this implies that we can recognise these religious attitudes “without already assuming a framework of religious belief”. Yet, not assuming a framework of belief does not also mean that we cannot learn from or adapt some of the meaningful insights and tenets that most of us come to know through religious systems in the first place. Especially since the religious underpinning of these attitudes is so great, I do not think that the secularisation process has been completed to the extent where a people can successfully make sense of them in a purely secular context. In a sense, then, the works of religion cannot be undone entirely. These kinds of discussions are exactly that “coming-of-age of the humanities’ ‘religious turn’” that Branch and Knight identify as post-secular studies proper. As our understanding of the post-secular develops, these discussions are undoubtedly increasing and crossing disciplines allowing the mutually exclusive view of the secular and the religious to gradually recede. As Bruce Ledewitz suggests, “secularism has to get beyond its juvenile hostility toward religion” (7). The same is inversely true for religious fundamentalism.

It seems that the willingness among scholars to facilitate an accordance between religion and secularism starts with a reappraisal of the labelling and characterising of the secular and the transcendent and is especially evident in more recent attempts to define the post-secular. Zhange Ni, for instance, states that “a better way to define the post-secular is to see that religion and the secular are not polar opposites but have always been interdependent since their coemergence in the modern West” (51). The perceived conflict between these concepts is approaching a resolution; the one-sided acceptance of either a secular or strictly religious view of the world is, at the very least, thought of as radical. In post-secular discussions, the anthropologist, Talal Asad, is often quoted from his book *Formations of the secular* (2003) stating that “the concept of the secular cannot do without the idea of religion” (200). As even these few pages on post-secularism have shown, one cannot talk

about the secular and its origins or effects without also paying attention to religion and the ways we define these two concepts. Mike King's concept of "spiritual difference" is a useful way of connecting this secular-transcendent dichotomy. King sees religion, or spirituality, "as an expression of a wide range of spiritual impulses, some of them congenial to science and rationalism, and some of them deriving instead from the devotional, the moral, the intuitive, the poetic, and the aesthetic" (5). Central to post-secularism, are non-devotional spiritual impulses that "have been more or less lost to popular Western consciousness as *philosophy*" (King 63).

Non-devotional spiritualism has no less right to being considered as spiritual discourse due to its lack of overtly religious content, but very closely resembles it and sometimes draws from it. Seeing the possibility of variation within religion and spirituality moreover allows for variation within its connectedness to secularity. For instance, Jolyon Agar introduces "two subdivisions into post-secularism", namely, immanent post-secularism and meta-post-secularism (4). The fundamental difference between these two divisions is their view on the "rational truth content of transcendence". Immanent post-secularism accepts the falsehood of metaphysical and transcendent belief systems while still acknowledging aspects thereof, "for example, their moral value or social utility" (4). Meta-post-secularism goes further and takes seriously the "rationality of transcendence" and aims to "reintroduce enchanted views of reality" (47). Subdivisions like these are key examples of how the post-secular represents "a renewed interest in matters that have traditionally been considered the domain of religion" (Corrigan *TPL* 2015). In short, the post-secular marks the reintroduction of discourse that incorporates both the commonly misconstrued secular as well as that which is perceived to be its opposite, the transcendent.

Although there are serious doubts as to the "intellectual power, import or utility" of the post-secular as a critical concept (Parmaksiz 98), it is clear that "from different directions, and in different registers, a set of critiques and alternative vistas has emerged that calls the secular into question, and that together raise the banner of the post-secular" (Barbieri 130). The term "post-secular" is used in this dissertation because of its ability to reveal something of the unlikely relationship that it represents. I do, however, believe that the post-secular is still a term in the making, an umbrella term, a term that sprouts different sub-terms and that will continue to change as the literature is explored. The scholars Lori Branch and Mark Knight, for instance, prefer the term post-secular to mere references to religion and secularism since it "enables a critical perspective on secularism and an awareness of the persistence and transformation of religion in modernity" (495). These perspectives "can help scholars working on religion move beyond the seemingly endless need for basic refutations of the secularisation thesis and onward to conversations that can help humanists of many stripes better understand and speak to complex iterations of religion,

spirituality, and secularism at work in the literatures and cultures we study” (Branch and Knight 495). The post-secular allows the secular to include, seriously, matters of spirituality, mystery, and the numinous, while the religious, for its part, might include matters of reason, science, and humanism.

The result is the rise of post-secular questions such as these: Stephen Batchelor, in writing “Secular Buddhism: Imagining the Dharma in an Uncertain World” (2015), asks if we might still be able to “recover from the teachings of the Buddha a vision of human flourishing that is secular rather than religious in orientation yet without compromising the integrity of the dharma” (ix). We are now beginning to see how the secular can draw on religious and transcendent beliefs such as the dharma, the “cosmic law by which all things are governed in their places” (Campbell *ML* 38), “the sense of duty, the knowledge of one’s duty and the will to abide by it” (Campbell *MG* 466). Secular views of the world can certainly benefit from traditional religious and transcendent beliefs such as these in their structuring and understanding of the individual within society. Yet, as Batchelor rightly enquires, what happens to the religious when its teachings are extrapolated? Is a world where the secular and transcendent interact and exchange values a viable one? Likewise, Ledewitz wonders if secularists can have “a source of power, order, and beauty outside humans themselves”, “without the traditional God?” (4). His answer is yes. These are contemporary questions, yet similar post-secular questions arise from reading the later Yeats and Eliot, who are Modernist poets; so, what, then, are we to make of post-secular’s placing in terms of history?

### **3.1.2 The historical context of post-secularism**

Because of its “post” prefix, the post-secular is largely thought of as part of postmodernism or contemporary concepts such as post-postmodernism or metamodernism. The prefix, with its buzzword qualities, complicates the definition by implying that it is somehow brand new. However, as Corrigan notes, “while the post-secular is distinctively contemporary, it turns out not to be uniquely contemporary” since “the post-secular is less something new than a renewal of something that has never stopped in literature” (*TPL* 2015). It would be uncritical, then, to understand post-secularism as merely part of or following post-modernity. The post-secular perhaps only appears to be something new because we have been hard wired by the secularisation process to expect the disappearance of religion and its transcendent discourse. If, at its core, post-secular poetry entails a poetry that reflects on elements of both the secular and the transcendent, then post-secular poetry could have been composed at any point in history and need not be limited to works composed during the 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Moreover, Graham Ward argues that literature, especially, will

always resist “a secularising process, resist the erasure of religion, because intrinsic to its nature, even when handling the most mundane matters, it points towards an horizon of transcendence” (74).

Although closely related, the secular and the transcendent persist through and perhaps also because of their apparent opposition. Morozov, for instance, believes that the secular and religious “will continue to coexist until the end of history, sometimes in conflict, sometimes existing in parallel, and sometimes in fruitful collaboration” (44). Corrigan further contextualises this transhistorical view as follows (*TPL* 2015):

[N]either the sacred age nor the secular age ever happened. At all times, there have been elements of both and the apparently postsecular moment we are experiencing now, in a resurgence of religion in the public sphere, is not the undoing of secularism but the latest swing of the “pendulum”.

This view of the post-secular supports critique of the periodisation of literary history, what Mattix calls, “cutting up the past into manageable sections” (695). Though the case against the teleological imperative of literary history writing is best made, for example, by scholars such as Thomas Vaessens in his “*Geschiedenis van de moderne Nederlandse literatuur*” (2013), one can easily infer that a rigorous adherence to period terms such as “Romanticism” and “Modernism”, limits analysis and reduces the complexities of history. Bergonzi also aptly states: “Literature that is worth reading is worth reading in its own terms and not as a pointer to something else” (408). Yeats and Eliot’s engaging with what authors had always been engaged with, along with their anticipation of the “renewal” of these secular-transcendent concerns, illustrates the density of historical connections in literary studies. Despite the confusion its prefix may cause, “the great promise of post-secular studies” lies in this “post” since “it has new eyes to see modern manifestations of faith and secularism that previous paradigms had rendered invisible, and it is developing new vocabularies and frameworks for raising previously unasked questions about the complex connections between religion and secularism in modernity” (Branch & Knight 494).

### 3.1.3 Modernism and post-secularism

This dissertation would argue against itself if it were to be limited to a period study of Yeats and Eliot's post-secular questing for Unity of Being. There are, nonetheless, certain aspects of literary Modernism that prove insightful to post-secularism, such as the need for religious syncretism and the replacement of religion, as discussed here.

Though they are not limited to the Modernist Period, Yeats and Eliot are generally regarded as Modernist poets, that is, broadly speaking, poets writing during "the early twentieth century (Abrams & Harpham 225), "a period of significant upheaval worldwide" (Kleiner 836). What "transformed the cultural landscape and created what seemed [...] to be a distinctively modern consciousness" was the "invention and popularisation of the telephone, the cinema, the automobile and the aeroplane, together with what we might think of as intellectual inventions, such as Freud's psychoanalysis and Einstein's theory of relativity" (Beasley 19). The early twentieth century saw scientists challenging the mechanistic conception of the universe provided by the Enlightenment, amounting to "a second scientific and technological revolution" (Kleiner 841). This "second" revolution redefined science and "shattered the existing faith in the objective reality of matter and, in doing so, paved the way for a new model of the universe" (Kleiner 841). Thus, the new model announced a disorientating "paradigmatic epistemological shift"<sup>2</sup>, marking a time "in which the epistemological skeleton of the culture collapsed, a time with no broadly shared or shareable religion, no common philosophy, no framework for thought", resulting in the "Age of Anxiety" (Brooker *ME* 125). In the play "The Rock", published just a year before "Burnt Norton", Eliot seems to capture the Modernist crisis precisely:

But it seems that something has happened that has never happened  
before: though we know not just when, or why, or how, or where.  
Men have left GOD not for other gods, they say, but for no god; and this  
has never happened before  
That men both deny gods and worship gods, professing first Reason,  
And then Money, and Power, and what they call Life, or Race, or  
Dialectic.  
The Church disowned, the tower overthrown, the bells upturned, what  
have we to do  
But stand with empty hands and palms turned upwards  
In an age which advances progressively backwards? (CPP 161)

---

<sup>2</sup> According to Thomas S. Kuhn a 'paradigm shift' is when our sense of the very nature of a subject and its possibilities and limitations changes radically (Bergonzi 408).

Eliot is clearly concerned for the state of belief, of religion, and of the church. He is perceptive of the secularisation process through which God is abandoned “not for other gods”, “but for no god”. The “Age of Anxiety” as portrayed in “The Rock” brought about a desperate search for something else to worship, be it “Money”, “Power”, “Life”, “Race” or “Dialectic”. As Modernists, then, Yeats and Eliot are also thought of as having participated in the crisis for meaning and its ensuing “crisis of institutional religion and a search for new forms of religious experience typical of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (Lewis 19). Indeed, Lewis cites Eliot’s *The Waste Land* as “a good example of the role of religious crisis in [M]odernism”, especially since, in *The Waste Land*, Eliot invokes “the New Testament, the sermons of the Buddha, and the Hindu Upanishads, exemplifying the syncretic tendencies of [M]odernist religious exploration” (Lewis 23). Syncretic, in the sense that Lewis uses it here, is a term which, in comparative religion, refers to “a process of religious amalgamation, of blending heterogeneous beliefs and practices” (Van der Veer 196). Though not bound to Modernism, religious crises of this sort are perhaps among the greatest forces behind Yeats and Eliot’s quest for Unity of Being and their consequent exploration of the secular and the transcendent. Yeats, like Eliot, had a syncretic approach in his search for meaning: “in spiritual matters, all was grist to Yeats’s mill: central traditions such as Christianity, Neoplatonism, and Hinduism keep company with Theosophy, the Order of the Golden Dawn, and magic” (Arkins 29). For both poets there is evidently not only an exploration of the secular alongside the transcendent, but also an exploration of the many, apparently incompatible, religious ideas on the spectrum of the transcendent. It is in this syncretic questing that the seed of the post-secular lies.

Consider Brooker’s comment on Eliot’s changing mind in his quest for truth: “[c]hange does not superannuate either humanism or aestheticism or Buddhism, but includes them, at least residually, in an ever increasing complexity of intelligence and feeling” (*ME* 139). In agreement with his thoughts on relativism as explored in chapter two, Eliot does not completely abandon the pathways to truth that he has found valuable, he “steadfastly maintained there are many truths” (Brooker *ME* 210). Similar syncretic ideas are expressed by Yeats in some of the “Estrangement” diary extracts (*Au* 470):

All my life I have been haunted with the idea that the poet should know all classes of men as one of themselves, that he should combine the greatest possible personal realisation with the greatest possible knowledge of the speech and circumstances of the world. [...] Some day setting out to find knowledge, like some pilgrim to the Holy Land, he [the artist] will become the most romantic of characters. He will play with all masks.

For Yeats, as for Eliot, there is no one route to truth, and no one side to the attainment of a Unity of Being. This notion is in part due to their predispositions for seeking out unity, and in part

due to the religious crisis of Modernism which resulted in an eager intermingling of many different beliefs that could replace the “mythic vacuum” that for millions were “filled by political theories, especially when a prophet or saviour figure like Mussolini, Stalin, or Hitler did the preaching” (Brooker *ME* 126). For the politically unconvinced, the arts may have appeared more favourable and to the more sceptical still, there may have been nothing to replace the “mythic vacuum”, hence, the emergence of nihilists such as Kafka and Nietzsche.

Both Yeats and Eliot, however, seemed to have replaced religion with even more religion, as is evident from their syncretic religious explorations. Furthermore, Eliot’s reputation as poet is nearly inseparable from his conversion and the religious nature of his final poems. Brooker roughly classifies Eliot’s substitutes for religion as “erotic, religious, aesthetic, and philosophical” (*ME* 127). The same can be said of Yeats in his own words (*Au* 116):

I am very religious, and deprived by Huxley and Tyndall, whom I detested, of the simple-minded religion of my childhood, I had made a new religion, almost an infallible Church of poetic tradition, of a fardel of stories, and of personages, and of emotions, inseparable from their first expression, passed on from generation to generation by poets and painters with some help from philosophers and theologians.

These statements point towards the religious power of literature as redemptive art. Though there be an element of truth to it, Anthony Domestico warns against the idea that, “the modernists created a religion of art”, as it is “one of the most frequently offered clichés about modernism” (39). Instead, he says, “many [M]odernists, even committed atheists such as Woolf, looked to art to provide the ritualistic, aesthetic, and even spiritual values that religion had offered in the past” (39). Art did not become a religion in the same way that organised religion provides its followers with a deity and structured systems of belief; rather, art became a guiding force and tool with which to explore humanity. Yet, the “religion of art” cliché draws one back to the difficult task of defining what is and what is not considered to be a “religion”. A better way to think of the Modernist relationship with transcendent beliefs is to see religion as a doctrine either taken seriously or reinvented in the quest for syncretic truth in a world that had become devoid thereof.

One such example of the Modernists’ exploration and reinterpretation of religion can be seen in their use of prayer. Many Modernists wrote “poems in the form of prayers”; Yeats wrote four poems explicitly called “prayers” and Eliot directly quoted the Ave Maria in *Asb-Wednesday* (Lewis 23). Moreover, Lewis argues that they did so to “invoke the tone and imagery of Christian prayer in order to make their own poems serve the existential and aesthetic functions that prayer [could] no longer fulfill for many of their readers”, to “recapture the power of prayer” (23). Naturally, recapturing the power of prayer in such a way, also changes the traditional and dogmatic

strength with which it had been associated. In “A Prayer for my Son”, for instance, Yeats contemplates the parental role of protecting his son in conflation with the flight of the Holy Family:

And when through all the town there ran  
The servants of Your enemy,  
A woman and a man,  
Unless the Holy Writings lie,  
Hurried through the smooth and rough  
And through the fertile and waste,  
Protecting, till the danger past,  
With human love. (CP 212)

By merely mentioning the possibility that “the Holy Writings” may lie, Yeats evokes a secularity that transforms the traditional substance of prayer. Likewise, the Christ child’s protective parents, “A woman and a man”, “Protecting till the danger past” do so, “With human love” and not through divine direction. “Even at his most prayerful, Yeats cannot give unqualified assent to orthodox belief” (Greene 151). Though not unqualified, there remains some assent, in what may be thought of as a post-secular prayer. In the third stanza of “A Prayer for Old Age”, Yeats writes: “I pray – for fashion’s word is out / And prayer comes around again” (CP 283), admitting to his use of prayer as a device that may vary in popularity and from time to time. Part of replacing the vacuum left by the religious crisis of Modernism, then, includes harking back to religion, or, at least, attempting to harness the power it seemed to give its followers. Raising the corpse of religion, as it were, without renewing it absolutely foresees current post-secular perspectives that question the secular-transcendent dichotomy.

Eliot, on the other hand, in his lifetime became more traditionally religious and perhaps valued prayer with a greater gravity in both his personal and poetic life. Once, while visiting Virginia Woolf, Eliot was asked about what he experienced while praying, to which he responded by describing “the attempt to concentrate, to forget self, to attain union with God” (Kramer 145). Indeed, in “Little Gidding”, Eliot writes that “prayer is more / Than an order of words, the conscious occupation / Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying” (CPP 192). A notably “prayerful” example of Eliot’s poetry is apparent in *Ash-Wednesday*, which, though more complicated than traditional forms, is “essentially a prayer” (Sawyer 264). In *Ash-Wednesday* Eliot not only directly quotes from the Ave Maria (“Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death”), he also directly addresses God: “And [I] pray to God to have mercy upon us / And I pray that I may forget / These matters that with myself I too much discuss / Too much explain” (CPP 89). Yet, “for

all the constraints of its religious overtones, [it] is as open to interpretation as any other of Eliot's poetry" since its focus is on the "permanent *human impulses* the religious context allows the poet to explore and express" (my emphasis) (Murphy 55).

The "human impulses" Eliot explores in *Ash-Wednesday* are those of the "Age of Anxiety": the rapid acquisition of knowledge ("Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope" (CPP 89)), the tangible and relative nature of reality ("And what is actual is actual only for one time / And only for one place" (CPP 89)), and the crisis of religion ("Will the veiled sister pray / For children at the gate / Who will not go away and cannot pray: / Pray for those who chose and oppose" (CPP 96)). "*Ash-Wednesday* should rather be seen as a reflection, not of Eliot's beliefs, but of his vision of the world and of the individual's place in it" (Murphy 58). In a letter to M.C. D'Arcy, Eliot writes: "I leave *Ash Wednesday* in your hands with confidence, to interpret to Oxford. But please don't let the young men call it 'religious' verse" (TL 201). Like Yeats, Eliot employs the method of prayer to serve and explore the ways through which the "mythic vacuum" of Modernism can be filled.

Consequently, despite its religious overtones, there is also a deep awareness of a secular reality in *Ash-Wednesday*, a time-bound world at odds with religious and transcendental revelation. The final section of the poem, after "extreme development of the difficulty of turning to God", turns to the temporal, "the appeal of the world returns to him" (Williamson 182). Eliot does not urge us here to turn away from the worldly, but to turn towards it and to recognise it as "a manifestation of the unspoken Word" (Atkins PC 54). Atkins suggests that "the answer to our dilemma as 'in-between' creatures lies not in either/or choice but in the both/and represented in 'impossible union,' 'necessary conjunction,' and the full understanding of Incarnation" (PC 54). Returning to the phenomenal reality at the end of *Ash-Wednesday* also holds eudaimonic significance since a deeper understanding of human existence is fostered through the interaction of worldly and otherworldly.

While in the first section of the poem Eliot declares: "I cannot drink / There, where trees flower, and springs flow, for there is nothing / again" (CPP 89); in the last section, he is again drawn to the natural world and finds not "nothing", but a renewed sense of "the salt savour of the sandy earth":

From the wide window towards the granite shore  
 The white sails still fly seaward, seaward flying  
 Unbroken wings  
 And the lost heart stiffens and rejoices  
 In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices  
 And the weak spirit quickens to rebel  
 For the bent golden-rod and the lost sea smell  
 Quickens to recover  
 The cry of quail and the whirling plover  
 And the blind eye creates  
 The empty forms between the ivory gates  
 And smell renews the salt savour of the sandy earth (CPP 98)

*Ash-Wednesday*, then, as a proto-post-secular prayer poem, ends in the realisation of a worldliness that is less secularly charged than Yeats's "human love", his doubting of the "Holy Writings", since Eliot retains, by means of his prayerful tone throughout, the longing for religious renewal. Eliot's secular emphasis on "earth" in this final section has to do with its contrast to the spiritual, and otherworldly, such as the vision-like, Biblical second poem of *Ash-Wednesday* with its shining bones and feeding leopards under the juniper tree. The opposite of such religious experience, is the world of the body and the senses, the world that we know from *Four Quartets* to be the world that "moves / In appetency, on its metalled ways / Of time past and time future" (CPP 174). Yet, by the end of *Ash-Wednesday*, one sees Eliot wanting to recapture the power of prayer in the face of the temporal anxieties that afflicted his age. The poem ends in prayer while remaining haunted by the reality of the phenomenal world: "Sister, mother / And spirit of the river, spirit of the sea, / Suffer me not to be separated / And let my cry come unto Thee". Of *Ash-Wednesday's* ending, Kwan-Terry writes (138):

The last line of the poem ("And let my cry come unto Thee."), normally the ritual response in a Catholic mass to the phrase "Hear my prayer, O Lord," taken from Psalm 102, becomes, instead, the cry of an individual who finds out the finitude of personal experience in the face of the power of the time-filled realm of the temporal.

It is clear that the aspects of Modernism discussed here had a great influence on Yeats and Eliot's search for religious significance and Unity of Being, but these aspects are perhaps not unique to their time. The need for religious syncretism, to acknowledge multiple ways to truth, and the attempted replacement of religion are, again, occurrences not bound to time. Moreover, in line with criticism of periodisation, Davis and Jenkins argue that "the temporal boundaries of the [M]odernist

era are permeable” (2). Literary Modernism is constantly being redefined in its relation to post-modernism and contemporary literary movements. Domestico reviews the current state of Modernism as follows (38):

Moving beyond the Woolf/Eliot/Joyce nexus, critics now see modernism as a description of all literature, experimental and traditional, written roughly between 1890 and 1945; or, of all literature that reflects upon the crises of modernity; or, of literature exhibiting certain stylistic characteristics - fragmentation and juxtaposition, namely - regardless of time period; or, of literature that more generally calls into question representational norms, whether or not this literature does so by the specific means of fragmentation and juxtaposition.

If a literature that “more generally calls into question representational norms” can be identified as Modernist, then the historical context of the early twentieth century also becomes less relevant to the term itself. The definition of literary Modernism has thus been opened to a broader historical framework that can be supplemented by post-secular studies such as this one. What makes post-secular studies so suitable to literary Modernism is that the “anxiety of our age extends from the anxiety of Eliot’s and Yeats’s age; both anxieties have the same roots”. Brooker aptly pinpoints the origin of our shared anxiety thus (234):

In the early twentieth century, [...] and now, [...] the danger is related to incredible advances in knowledge, and at the same time, a loss of cultural memory, a collective forgetfulness about basic spiritual and humanistic resources and values.

### 3.2 Post-secular poetry

Although the post-secular is mostly associated with sociology, political theory, and religious studies, it is increasingly drawn into literary analysis. Some of the most frequently mentioned authors in this regard include Don DeLillo, Suzanne Collins, and Zadie Smith. Zhange Ni briefly summarises post-secular development in literary studies (52):

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, scholars such as John McClure and Amy Hungerford began to read contemporary American literature as a terrain for tentative, open-ended ‘partial faith’ or ‘belief in belief’ rather than in God. In the second decade, a new wave of scholarship further broadened the scope to read world literature, postcolonial literature, popular literature, and various non-Western national literatures in relation to diverse projects of religion-making and secularism.

In the same tradition, this dissertation aims to deepen our understanding of the nature and possibilities that post-secular literary studies may hold through a post-secular reading of Modernist poets such as Yeats and Eliot. Literary scholars generally ask these five questions regarding the post-secular (Corrigan *WA* 19):

1. what is the relationship between the religious and the secular in post-secular literature?
2. where, or when, should post-secular literature be located with respect to literary history?
3. how does the post-secular represent a methodology for reading literature?
4. what is the relationship between the post-secular and literary form? and
5. what positive contribution does post-secular literature make?

Some of these questions have already been addressed in the present study. Chapter two already dealt with some of the eudaimonic significance regarding the quest for Unity of Being and similar eudaimonic markers in this chapter may identify the positive contribution post-secular literature offers. How the post-secular represents a methodology for reading literature will also become apparent in the remainder of this chapter. Up to now, this chapter has aimed at defining the post-secular as well as exploring its origin and historical context. We must now consider the post-secular in a poetic context. Since the post-secular involves a cognisance of the ways in which the secular and the transcendent complement each other despite our being in a secular age, then a post-secular poetry should share the same cognisance.

In some of his post-secular analyses of Emily Dickinson's poems, Corrigan describes the post-secular approach as one that "engages with traditional religion in a way that revises but does not, technically, contradict it", that offers lines that "flirt with blasphemy by suggesting so close a correspondence between nature and the divine" (*WA* 34). The post-secular poet "sets aside the institutional trappings of religion in order to better get at something at the spiritual heart of religion" by "using traditional religious imagery to try to express what that something is" (*WA* 34). We have already seen instances of this rethinking of religious customs in the Modernist use of prayer in Yeats and Eliot's later poems anticipatory of the post-secular.

A contemporary example of the post-secular kind of poetry that Yeats and Eliot are hinting towards can be seen in the Scottish poet Don Paterson's 2009 poem, "The Circle", in which the secular and transcendent converge as a young boy paints "the comets, planets, moon and sun", "in one great heavenly design", but "his hand shakes, and he screws it up" (10-11):

My boy is painting outer space,  
and steadies his brush-tip to trace  
the comets, planets, moon and sun  
and all the circuitry they run

in one great heavenly design.  
But when he tries to close the line

he draws around his upturned cup,  
his hand shakes, and he screws it up.

The shake's as old as he is, all  
(thank god) his body can recall  
of that hour when, one inch from home,  
we couldn't get the air to him;

and though today he's all the earth  
and sky for breathing-space and breath  
the whole damn troposphere can't cure  
the flutter in his signature.

But Jamie, nothing's what we meant.  
The dream is taxed. We all resent  
the quarter bled off by the dark  
between the bowstring and the mark

and trust to Krishna or to fate  
to keep our arrows halfway straight.  
But the target also draws our aim -  
our will and nature's are the same;

we are its living word, and not  
a book it wrote and then forgot,  
its fourteen-billion-year-old song  
inscribed in both our right and wrong –

so even when you rage and moan  
and bring your fist down like a stone  
on your spoiled work and useless kit,  
you just can't help but broadcast it:

look at the little avatar  
of your muddy water-jar

filling with the perfect ring  
singing under everything.

Paterson's poem presents the very worldly reality of his boy's medical difficulties in the context and tone of religion re-imagined. A deity, such as Krishna, or spiritual force, such as fate, for instance, keep our arrows only "halfway straight"; this is only half the equation. Jamie is told that we are nature's "living word", and that he broadcasts it even in his fit of rage: "our will and nature's are the same". So, Krishna or fate is one half of the human journey, the other half is nature, the secular, the worldly, nature's "fourteen-billion-year-old song". Paterson's reference to "fourteen-billion" years as the age of the cosmos is indeed one not readily associated with traditional Western religious ideas regarding the creation and existence of the universe.

Despite the obvious secular inclination that questions the power of traditional religion with statements such as "we are its living word, and not / a book it wrote and then forgot", the poem ends with the assertion that, like the circuitry of outer space, the "one great heavenly design", there is "the perfect ring / singing under everything". There is indeed a certain transcendent connotation to "the perfect ring" left by Jamie's "muddy water-jar" since it symbolises nature's "living word", the signature of all things, as it were, "singing under everything". As a post-secular poem, Paterson's "The Circle", therefore emphasises the tension and accordance of the secular and the transcendent.

Though instances that conjoin secular and transcendent views are not as explicitly expressed in Yeats and Eliot's later works, there are certainly noticeable indications towards this type of merging. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to tracing these indications of a post-secularity, especially as it emerges in the quest for Unity of Being in the later poetry of Yeats and Eliot.

### 3.3 Yeats and religion

There was a woman who talked perpetually of ‘the divine spark’ within her, until Madame Blavatsky stopped her with, ‘Yes, my dear, you have a divine spark within you and if you are not very careful you will hear it snore’.

—Yeats, *The Trembling of the Veil*, Book One. 1955, p.180

Yeats is a proto-post-secular poet in his efforts to navigate between the secular and the transcendent and to strike something of a unity between them. Since the quest for Unity of Being necessitates a grappling with the opposites, it is only to be expected that Yeats should also investigate the perceived opposites of the secular and the transcendent. These opposites appear increasingly important in old age as questions of life and death become more pressing. As already discussed, Yeats’s participation in the Modernist religious crises resulted in an exploration, and sometimes even substitution of religion. By his own admission, Yeats had created for himself “a new religion”, a type of renewed aesthetic inheritance. I cite again (Yeats *AN* 116):

I had made a new religion, almost an infallible Church of poetic tradition, of a fardel of stories, and of personages, and of emotions, inseparable from their first expression, passed on from generation to generation by poets and painters with some help from philosophers and theologians.

Yeats did indeed create for himself, as Blake had done, his own religion with the help of “poets and painters” and “philosophers and theologians”. To this list we may add many more. We may even say that Yeats was a man of many religions since his religious exploration is so immensely syncretic. Yeats’s religious questing, part of that “fardel of stories, and of personages”, included, among others, explorations of Christianity, Hinduism, Theosophy, Spiritualism, Magic, Platonism, Neo-Platonism, Greek mystery religions, and various occult philosophies (Arkins 3-47). Additionally, Stephen Cheeke provides the following list of theosophical speculations Yeats absorbed and studied, all of which had an influence on his personal religion (2016): Esoteric Buddhism, The Tibetan Masters, The Vedas & Upanishads, History of Alchemy, The Kaballah (Jewish Mysticism), and Colour symbolism. Alongside these pursuits of religious knowledge, Yeats also shows an awareness of the relations between the secular and the transcendent and addresses these opposites in his 1909 diary extracts (*AN* 467):

The most fundamental of divisions is that between the intellect, which can only do its work by saying continually ‘thou fool’, and the religious genius which makes all equal. That is why we have discovered that the mountain-top and the monastery are necessary to civilization. Civilization dies of all those things that feed the soul, and both die if the Remnant refuse the wilderness.

From this extract, it is discernible that Yeats values the connectedness between secular and transcendent beliefs. Religious and spiritual practises that occur on “the mountain-top” or in “the monastery” are necessary to the worldliness and diversity of civilisation. If the Remnant<sup>3</sup> refuses its religious asceticism, its “wilderness”, its “mountain-top and the monastery”, civilisation and the soul die. This death may be due to the errors Yeats describes in the next extract entry when he argues that the “very preoccupation of the intellect with the soul destroys that [spiritual] experience, for everywhere impressions are checked by opinion” (*Au* 467). Civilisation and the soul therefore wither without the religiously devout, those capable of affirming spiritual experience. “All civilization”, Yeats writes later in the same diary extracts, “is held together by the suggestions of an invisible hypnotist—by artificially created illusions”; “The knowledge of reality is always in some measure a secret knowledge. It is a kind of death” (*Au* 482). The “secret knowledge” of reality, then, is to be interpreted by the devout since civilisation is already dying “of all those things that feed the soul”, dying of the intellect’s preoccupation with the soul.

These observations furthermore shed light on one of Yeats’s fundamental set of opposites, feeling and intellect. The secular, as dominated by the intellect, is placed in direct contrast to transcendence, the “religious genius”. “Quite early in life Yeats felt himself destined to lead ‘the revolt of feeling against the intellect’” and “in doing so he explored every avenue of religious truth, being constantly drawn to Eastern mysticism, studying the most ancient texts of Europe and Asia, and attempting to reconcile the experiences of Buddhist ascetics to the miracles of the saints in Western Christianity” (Watkins 487). A syncretic exploration of religion thus allowed Yeats’s “revolt of feeling against intellect”, not as an outright denial of reason, but as affirmation of that “religious genius” and spiritual experience, which, he warns, should not be mistaken for “a philosophical idea” (*Au* 467). Yeats’s “revolt of feeling against the intellect” is therefore not an exclusion of the intellect and its reasoning power. Indeed, Yeats says of himself, in a letter to Ethel Mannin nearly less than a month before his death (*TL* 921):

Am I a mystic? — no, I am a practical man. I have seen the raising of Lazarus and the loaves and fishes and have made the usual measurements, plummet line, spirit-level and have taken the temperature by pure mathematic.

Here, Yeats is “a practical man”, a post-secular practical man, who acknowledges Christian miracles alongside scientific methods, emphasising the interconnectedness of natural and supernatural. Those entities that form part of reality and can be measured by such means as “plummet line, spirit-level” are considered natural; that which is ordinary and accepted, is to Yeats,

---

<sup>3</sup> According to the OED (remnant, n. and adj. 2d<sup>3</sup>), the term delineates “a small religious group or minority whose members regard themselves as adhering to the true tenets of a faith from which the majority have deviated”.

not far removed from the supernatural. As Yeats has Ribh, the Christian-Druidic hermit, declare in the poem “Ribh denounces Patrick”: “Natural and supernatural with the self-same ring are wed” (CP 284). Yeats is also suggesting that miracles such as “the raising of Lazarus and the loaves and fishes” are part of “the usual measurements”, a science itself. Yeats clarifies his belief in a natural-supernatural, and by extension, a secular-transcendent co-existence in “A General Introduction for my Work”, (EI 518):

I am convinced that in two or three generations it will become generally known that the mechanical theory<sup>4</sup> has no reality, that the natural and supernatural are knit together, that to escape a dangerous fanaticism we must study a new science; at the moment Europeans may find something attractive in a Christ posed against a background not of Judaism but of Druidism, not shut off in dead history, but flowing, concrete, phenomenal.

Driven by his belief that “the spiritual world penetrates, is close to, and overlaps with, the real world” (Cheeke 2016), Yeats’s thinking is proto-post-secular, as is evident from the abovementioned reworking of a Christ informed by Druidism. This Druid-like Christ, unlike the traditional one, is not “shut off in dead history” but at once both “flowing” as well as “concrete”. The Druidist background against which this Christ is posed, however, permits the contradiction. Yeats’s use of “flowing” with reference to Druids appears in the early poem, “Fergus and the Druid”, where Fergus follows a Druid who has “changed and flowed from shape to shape” (CP 32). These Druid shape-shifting abilities may breathe a flexibility into Yeats’s new Druid-like Christ. Furthermore, Classical texts describe Druids as “philosophers, teachers, judges, the repository of communal wisdoms about the natural world and the traditions of the people, and the mediators between humans and the gods” (Cunliffe 3). In the sense that Druids are guides of both the natural world and the godly, they suit Yeats’s post-secular need for “a new science”. Yeats applies this new science especially in his later poems when he “brings a pagan strength to the poems which deals directly with Christianity, and he brings Christianity to his poems of pagan theme” (484).

Certainly, at the end of Yeats’s life, he was “neither a Christian believer nor yet a disbeliever in *any* revelation whatsoever, including the Christian” (Bloom 463). Apart from his exploration and expression of many different beliefs, the closest Yeats comes to a doctrine of his own is expounded on in his writing of *A Vision*. As discussed in chapter two, in *A Vision* Yeats identifies what he calls the “Thirteenth Cone” (sometimes seen as God) which he believes to be the focal point of the “ultimate reality” that reconciles all antinomies. The closest Yeats comes to God, in the conventional sense, is the quest for Unity of Being itself. Through the grappling of opposites, Yeats is capable of incarnation, a process of self-remaking, a “struggle with the *Daimon*”. In his grappling

---

<sup>4</sup> Scientific materialism divorced from spiritual sensibility.

Yeats draws on a syncretic search for religious and transcendent knowledge alongside realisations of the phenomenal, secular world.

The following analyses of the secular-transcendent dichotomy in Yeats's later poems demonstrate this unique ability to study and reconcile many different religious and transcendent beliefs and to reveal their connectedness to the secular.

### 3.3.1 Nearing the post-secular: Yeats's later poems

Eliot wrote of the later Yeats's progression from the earlier twilight-like style that characterised "Mr Yeats's Autobiographies" (*CP* V4 679):

He was very much fascinated by self-induced trance states, calculated symbolism, mediums, theosophy, crystal-gazing, folklore and hobgoblins. Golden apples, archers, black pigs and such paraphernalia abounded. Often the verse has an hypnotic charm: but you cannot take heaven by magic, especially if you are, like Mr. Yeats, a very sane person. Then, by a great triumph of development, Mr. Yeats began to write and is still writing some of the most beautiful poetry in the language, some of the clearest, simplest, most direct.

Eliot had clearly been impressed with Yeats's deviation from what he considers to be the mumbo-jumbo that dominated his earlier writings. Yeats's later work is undoubtedly less clouded by his fascination with the occult but is no less supernaturally and spiritually inspired. Perhaps what Eliot senses is a godliness in the later Yeats that forms "the source of the poem's intensity" (Watkins 488). This godliness is frequently united with the phenomenal world in Yeats's quest for Unity of Being and its untiring grapple with the opposites.

For instance, in the playful and short, "A Stick of Incense", Yeats insinuates that the worldly, sexual ways of the body are the origin of the holy infant Christ in what Corrigan would call a "flirtation with blasphemy":

Whence did all that fury come,  
From empty tomb or Virgin womb?  
St Joseph thought the world would melt  
But liked the way his finger smelt. (*CP* 341)

Yeats penned another short rhyme in a letter to Dorothy Wellesley in 1937 that resembles the style and tone of "A Stick of Incense". In the letter Yeats relates how a priest had told his sister that "when he confessed a convent of nuns he felt as if he had been eaten alive by ducks. Think of all those blunt bills" (*TL* 903):

Unlike that soul of fire  
Sir John —  
I but raise your finger tip  
To my lip:

(*TL* 903)

The short poem is charmingly completed with Yeats's concluding address to Dorothy: "and remain yours affectionate". Intensely religious figures, Yeats believes, ought not to deny their human nature, which is not to exclude the body and its worldly sins. As Yeats says of the oscillation by which the soul is awakened in the Great Wheel: "one thinks of Verlaine oscillating between the church and the brothel" (*AV* 89). However, Yeats's post-secular misgiving about the Immaculate Conception is perhaps not a downright dismissal. In "The Mother of God", written just a few years prior to "A Stick of Incense", Mary exclaims "The terror of all terrors that I bore / The Heavens in my womb" (*CP* 249). Whether immaculately conceived or not, Yeats does not deny that Mary bears "The Heavens" in her womb. "The Mother of God" reimagines Mary's suffering and "is voiced as a postpartum complaint almost wry in the disjunction between its domestic context and its epochal subject matter" (Ross 160). Mary says:

Had I not found content among the shows  
Every common woman knows,  
Chimney corner, garden walk,  
Or rocky cistern where we tread the clothes  
And gather all the talk?

(*CP* 249)

Mary seems to question how her provincial, secular life led her to the "three-fold terror of love", to bear the Heavens in her womb. Had she not been satisfied with shows, garden walks, and the local chatter of women? Mary's complaint appears to be in contrast with the Biblical account of her response to the angel Gabriel when he foretold the birth of Jesus: "And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her" (*King James Version*, Luke. 1.38). Yeats portrays Mary rethinking her consent as handmaid of the Lord:

What is this flesh I purchased with my pains,  
This fallen star my milk sustains,  
This love that makes my heart's blood stop  
Or strikes a sudden chill into my bones  
And bids my hair stand up?

(*CP* 249)

Here, Yeats reimagines the religious and supernatural terror of Mary's conception amid her ordinary, secular life, emphasising both the restrictive views of orthodox religion with regard to man's natural state and the limitations of a secular-transcendent dualism.

Yeats's understanding of the connectedness of seemingly opposing views of the world is again affirmed by the irony at the end of "Vacillation" as Yeats sends Von Hügel, a man of God, away with secular blessings:

### VIII

Must we part, Von Hügel, though much alike, for we  
Accept the miracles of the saints and honour sanctity?  
The body of Saint Teresa lies undecayed in tomb,  
Bathed in miraculous oil, sweet odours from it come,  
Healing from its lettered slab. Those self-same hands  
perchance  
Eternalised the body of a modern saint that once  
Had scooped out pharaoh's mummy. I — though heart might find  
relief  
Did I become a Christian man and choose for my belief  
What seems most welcome in the tomb — play a predestined  
part.  
Homer is my example and his unchristened heart.  
The lion and the honeycomb, what has Scripture said?  
So get you gone, Von Hügel, though with blessings on your  
head.

(CP 253)

Here Yeats admits having in common with the Catholic mystical theologian, Von Hügel, the acceptance of miracles and the fact that they both "honour sanctity", yet Yeats rejects Von Hügel and embraces instead Homer and his "unchristened heart". Yeats, unlike Von Hügel and Christian saints, plays "a predestined part", he must be a poet of Homer's kind. And "since art has no interest in sinlessness, the artist would be prevented from creating" if the soul was to be purified of life's complexities in Christian heaven (Liebregts 167). "Yeats respectfully renounces the faith of his own grandfather and accepts the Homeric faith of his own father, a belief in action and the poetry celebrating action" (Bloom 389). Yeats's view is that "one advances farther toward creative transcendence by the pagan and half-secular way of myth and art than by the ascetic path of

orthodox Christianity” (Rosenthal 314). The quest for Unity of Being therefore, once more, necessitates interaction with both the secular, phenomenal world, and the transcendent.

Hence, Homer “and his unchristened heart” is what Yeats must live by. Homer provided Yeats with a life-affirming philosophy and to “affirm life fully is to go on living, to survive, although all things pass away, for Homer became immortal by his celebration of life” (Liebregts 167). Yeats then goes on to affirm his Homeric views through the language of Von Hügel’s beliefs by referring to the parable of the lion and the honeycomb: “‘out of the strong came forth sweetness’ (Judges 14.14): the honeycomb is lodged in the decayed body of the dead lion” (Grene 214). Yet, this sweetness originates from the physical, which “unlike the miraculously undecomposing body of St Teresa referred to some lines earlier, is susceptible to death and decay” (Grene 214). And it is through death and decay, the antinomy of life, that Yeats envisions the recurring cycles of life and death, the sweetness of his constant vacillating quest for Unity of Being, which would cease in Christian eternity. Furthermore, it is not just that “out of the strong shall come forth the sweet, but that out of death and our foreknowledge of it comes the mysterious counterlife of song” (Bell 168). And it is through song that Yeats is able to capture his quest for Unity of Being and to join the lineage of Homer.

The poem ends with Yeats sending Von Hügel away, “though with blessings on your head”. Though there is an irony in Yeats’s half-secular greeting, his blessing “signifies the interdependence of antinomies” and by “embracing the pattern of vacillation, Yeats transcends it and achieves the very blessedness he has renounced” (Ross 278). Through re-making himself as poet by exploring with themes and beliefs Yeats is able to both agree and disagree with Von Hügel in a way that affords him a eudaimonic upper hand, he becomes a more whole man. Indeed, according to Nicholas Grene, the irony of Yeats’s greeting is a “deliberately poised irony, a claim to sanctity for the blessedness of the man in the teashop set against that of the saints and martyrs” (214). Yeats explains this “claim to sanctity” in his later essay “An Indian Monk” when he declares that all “are equal to the eye of sanctity” (*EI* 436):

Our moral indignation, our uniform law, perhaps even our public spirit, may come from the Christian conviction that the soul has but one life to find or lose salvation in: the Asiatic courtesy from the conviction that there are many lives. There are Indian courtesans that meditate many hours a day awaiting without sense of sin their moment, perhaps many lives hence, to leave man for God. For the present they are efficient courtesans. Ascetics, as this book tells, have lived in their houses and received pilgrims there. Kings, princes, beggars, soldiers, courtesans, and the fool by the wayside are equal to the eye of sanctity, for everybody’s road is different, everybody awaits his moment.

Yeats makes this claim to sanctity especially in the later poems, poems such as the “Crazy Jane” and “Ribh” poems, that have the religious and the worldly seemingly at odds with one another, yet undeniably entwined. Ribh, Yeats’s “Christianised Celtic hermit-magician” (Moore as qtd. by Ross 237), criticises “Christian doctrine as an insufficient expression of what Yeats likes to call the ‘whole man’—‘blood, imagination, intellect, running together’” (Ross 239; *EI* 266). A post-secular Crazy Jane, for instance, as her name implies, is portrayed as one who would be considered morally corrupt and sexually impure yet she pronounces significant spiritual truths.

In “Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop”, Jane’s views contrast with the Bishop’s conservative views on physical appearances. The Bishop appeals to Jane to turn from her bodily lowliness and depravity:

‘Those breasts are flat and fallen now,  
Those veins must soon be dry;  
Live in a heavenly mansion,  
Not in some foul sty.’ (*CP* 259)

To this, Jane replies that “Fair and foul are near of kin, / And fair needs foul”, voicing that primary element of Unity of Being, Yeats’s devotion to the tension between antinomies. She continues to defend her worldly ways: “A woman can be proud and stiff /When on love intent” and in a post-secular move, takes over from the Bishop “the privilege of citing the New Testament to support a moral position” (Rosenthal 316). Jane says:

But Love has pitched his mansion in  
The place of excrement;  
For nothing can be sole or whole  
That has not been rent.’ (*CP* 259)

Jane has replaced the Bishop’s heavenly mansion with that of “Love” (capitalised in the religious fashion) and its place is not the heavens but “The place of excrement”. Jane embraces both the excremental and the sacred, both the whole and the rent as the “inextricable duality that patterns the richness of the universe” (Ross 298). Through Jane, Yeats asserts his belief in the tightly knit existence of the phenomenal, secular world of the body, alongside the transcendent, spiritual world. Jane illustrates how the quest for Unity of Being, for wholeness, requires a violent struggle with the opposites; Jane has been physically rent, in both senses of the word, yet she ponders deeply on matters of love (“Crazy Jane Reproved”, “Crazy Jane Grown Old Looks at the Dancers”), and religion (“Crazy Jane and the Bishop”, “Crazy Jane on God”). Crazy Jane is therefore emblematic of

Yeats's revolt against the secular-transcendent split as she calls for a post-secular perspective. Indeed, she exclaims in "Crazy Jane on the Day of Judgement":

Love is all  
Unsatisfied  
That cannot take the whole  
Body and soul' (CP 257)

Crazy Jane and Ribh are both believers in this kind of wholeness and in consequence "enemies of the Christianity that Ribh calls an 'abstract Greek absurdity'" (Ross 296). In "Ribh denounces Patrick", we see Ribh rejecting a "Trinity that is wholly masculine" insisting, instead, on a familial rendition of the trinity that consist of the father, the mother, and the child:

An abstract Greek absurdity has crazed the man,  
A Trinity that is wholly masculine. Man, woman, child  
    (a daughter or a son),  
That's how all natural or supernatural stories run. (CP 284)

Through replacing the Holy Trinity with living people, Ribh attempts to "naturalise the divine" (Bloom 409). Yeats expresses, as he does through Crazy Jane, that traditional doctrine, if it is to conjure unity and wholeness, must readopt the phenomenal world since "That's how all natural and supernatural stories run", secular and transcendent alike. Moreover, Yeats's inclusion of "a daughter or a son" in Ribh's version of the Trinity is indicative of the procreative power of man (and woman); conceiving a child is indeed a godlike act of creation. The remainder of the poem centres on this creative power as Yeats attempts to elevate "bodily passion as a metaphysical principle" (Ross 238), in what is perhaps some of Yeats's most obscure lines. Bloom even ventures to refer to them as "nonsense, but good Hermeticism" (410):

Natural and supernatural with the self-same ring are wed.  
As man, as beast, as an ephemeral fly begets, Godhead begets  
    Godhead,  
For things below are copies, the Great Smaragdine Tablet said.  
Yet all must copy copies, all increase their kind;  
When the conflagration of their passion sinks, damped by the  
    body or the mind,  
That juggling nature mounts, her coil in their embraces  
    twined. (CP 284)

To start with, Yeats asserts that what man, beast, fly, and Godhead have in common is their reproductive powers, and that “the sexual dynamic and the procreative urge govern the entire chain of being, making no distinction between mortal and immortal, physical and spiritual” (Ross 239), since “Natural and supernatural with the self-same ring are wed”. Godhead, as Yeats uses it here, is synonymous with the Trinity mentioned at the start of the poem, even God multiplies, perhaps echoing some of his misgiving regarding the Immaculate Conception put forth in “Mother of God”. Yeats then indicates that all begetting is due to what “the Great Smaragdine Tablet said”, which is a Hermetic axiom taken from Madame Blavatsky and her teachings of the Theosophical Society (Blavatsky as qtd. by Harper 165):

Tradition declares that on the dead body of Hermes, at Hebron, was found by an Isarim, an initiate, the tablet known as the Smaragdine. It contains, in a few sentences, the essence of the Hermetic wisdom . . . ‘What is below is like that which is above, and what is above is similar to that which is below to accomplish the wonders of one thing’

The axiom is notably similar to the Heraclitean opposition that Eliot prefaces *Four Quartets* with: “The way up and the way down are one and the same”. What causes the begetting of all things is therefore the likeness of above and below, the paradox of antinomial oneness at the heart of Unity of Being, that which incites “religious genius which makes all equal” (*Au* 467). In our questing to “accomplish the wonders of one thing” we make copies, “all increase their kind” through the merging of man and woman (antinomies of each other) in the conception of a child. Yet this sexual merging of oppositions only approaches Unity of Being momentarily as “conflagration of their passion sinks” and “juggling nature mounts, her coil in their embraces”. Reminiscent of the serpent that divided Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, human nature draws lovers from their joint quest for “the wonders of one thing”:

The mirror-scaled serpent is multiplicity,  
 But all that run in couples, on earth, in flood or air, share God  
                   that is but three,  
 And could beget or bear themselves could they but love as He. (CP 284)

The serpent’s mirrored scales show us ourselves, dividing again one from the other into the world of opposites, the world of multiplicity. “Ribh denounces Partick”, ends by affirming that despite any and all begetting, we cannot “love as He”, until we can beget or bear ourselves, to unite with the otherness within us, which is to say, until we can make of our individual selves - a Trinity that encompasses all things. The ultimate love, that we can only mimic through multiplicity, remains that of God’s, making Ribh’s complicated Hermeticism partly Christian, yet “more esoteric and ‘gnostic’ than St. Patrick’s Roman variety” (Ross 238). Ribh’s syncretic religious search shows

Yeats's belief in a flesh-religious, worldly-otherworldly intermingling and the need of opposition in the quest for Unity of Being. Yeats is perhaps also sensitive to the persistence of transcendent beliefs, despite secularisation, in his suggestion that all things continually make copies as they strive to "love as He", yet "all that run in couples, on earth, in, flood or air" share a divided God, a "God that is but three", that natural Trinity of father, mother, and child. Our divided world will therefore always rely on a transcendence of antinomies in its mimicry of Godly love. A love, which Crazy Jane says, remains unsatisfied if it does not embrace both "Body and soul".

Much like Ribh's attempt to "naturalise the divine" in "Ribh denounces Patrick", in "News for the Delphic Oracle", Yeats introduces the material world to the otherworldly by imagining an afterlife of both spiritual and physical reality against the one foreseen by the Oracle in the earlier "The Delphic Oracle upon Plotinus":

There all the golden codgers lay,  
There the silver dew,  
And the great water sighed for love,  
And the wind sighed too.  
Man-picker Niamh leant and sighed  
By Oisín on the grass;  
There sighed amid his choir of love  
Tall Pythagoras.  
Plotinus came and looked about,  
The salt-flakes on his breast,  
And having stretched and yawned awhile  
Lay sighing like the rest. (CP 337)

Here, stately figures like Niamh, Oisín, Pythagoras, and Plotinus are imagined as "golden codgers" sighing and laying about in what appears to be an unsatisfactory afterlife. The scene is less pastoral and more of a tiresome waiting about, placing the constraints of the material alongside the supernatural. On another level, the phrasing "stretched and yawned awhile", symbolises for Yeats "consummated sex" thus depicting Plotinus in the next world as "sighing, like everybody else, for sex" (Clark 45; Arkins 11). If heaven includes sexual activity, then the purely spiritual realm of life after death is imbued with the bodily reality of life, as it is known before death. The final stanza vividly explores such an erotic encounter between Peleus and Thetis and nymphs and satyrs:

Peleus on Thetis stares,  
Her limbs are delicate as an eyelid,  
Love has blinded him with tears;  
But Thetis' belly listens.  
Down the mountain walls  
From where Pan's cavern is  
Intolerable music falls.  
Foul goat-head, brutal arm appear,  
Belly, shoulder, bum,  
Flash fishlike; nymphs and satyrs  
Copulate in the foam.

(CP 338)

Indelicate as the scene may be, it succeeds in merging the disenchanting realm of the phenomenal with the enchanted, and otherworldly. Yeats makes the case for an embodied spirituality as the human and divine meet in scenes that show the “power of sex in shaping our construction of paradise as well as life here on earth” (Rosenthal 337). “News for the Delphic Oracle” therefore encompasses a reality in which “the sacred and profane, the spiritual and the sensual, the contemplative and the violent, exist in some obscure but necessary duality” (Ross 172). Perhaps a subtler engagement with the secular-transcendent duality appears in “Politics”, the final poem of *Last Poems*, in which the speaker is distracted from a discussion on politics by “that girl standing there”; he wishes that he was young again and could hold her in his arms, could love youthfully. The poem addresses the Thomas Mann quotation with which it opens: “In our time the destiny of man presents its meaning in political terms”:

How can I, that girl standing there,  
My attention fix  
On Roman or on Russian  
Or on Spanish politics,  
Yet here's a travelled man that knows  
What he talks about,  
And there's a politician  
That has both read and thought,  
And maybe what they say is true  
Of war and war's alarms,  
But O that I were young again  
And held her in my arms.

(CP 348)

From the talk of travelled men and politicians, Yeats surmises that World War may again be looming, a matter that ought to concern him, especially since he was involved in Irish politics all his life, serving as senator of the Irish Free State from 1922-1928 (Hennessey 109). This short poem was written in “May 1938, the year that was to climax in Munich”, a time where “there would have been plenty to talk about relating to Roman, Russian, or Spanish politics” (Greene 31). Thomas Mann’s vision of man’s destiny “in political terms” is therefore not unusual. Thomas Mann, a Nazi refugee, “staring into the ugly face of fascism in Spain, Italy and Germany, as well as communism in Russia, couldn’t help but conclude that everything that people used to call ‘private’ was becoming political” (Leeman 56). Yeats does not forthrightly oppose Mann’s political statement since similar travelled men and politicians predict war and have travelled and “read and thought”; they are by no means uninformed. Instead, Yeats laments these political terms of man’s destiny and suggests that the secular world of “politics are hardly the whole of life” (Rosenthal 337). Yeats is lamenting an earlier time where the destiny of man was not expressed through politics, but by the pursuit of love. A time when the man’s intentions were not decided by war and its alarms, but by “The young / In one another’s arms, birds in the trees, / —Those dying generations—at their song” (“Sailing to Byzantium” *CP* 193).

### 3.4 Eliot and religion

Identifying hints of the post-secular in Eliot's poetry requires a different approach since the poet's position on religion is more traditionally pronounced than the wide-ranging and intensely individualist views that Yeats reflected. On the whole, as Murray perhaps too sharply notes: "on the question of religion and the occult in general Eliot was never to be reconciled to Yeats's 'wanderings among Oriental philosophies and dubious mysticisms, journeys unsafe for any but the Christian'" (160). Though there certainly is in Eliot's poetry also a syncretic religious exploration, he is more readily associated with what is considered to be conventionally religious. Eliot's Christianity was, however, not at all conventional. As Daven Kari argues, "any attempt to link Eliot with a strictly orthodox variety of Christianity is likely to fail...In fact, Eliot was very much his own person, especially as a Christian" (qtd. by Germer 16).

Eliot's 1928 "conversion" to Anglo-Catholicism is often brought up as cause of the spiritual weight in his later works. However, "not only did Eliot not undergo a conversion experience, but he firmly deprecated the idea, both with regard to his own religious experience and to any influence that his faith or his references to it in his work might have on others" (Spurr 187). Instead, Eliot's announcement of his Anglo-Catholic position was only part of his "slowly developing apprehension of the intimations of religious truth" and "cannot be reduced to a simplistic chronological narrative of pre- and post-conversion" (Spurr 188). In Crawford's biography of Eliot, he notes that Eliot, "the grandson of a preacher whom Ralph Waldo Emerson considered to be a true 'Saint'", had from boyhood, "a fascination with asceticism and religious experience which became increasingly important" (8). At the age of thirty-nine, the year prior to his "conversion, Eliot was convinced that belief as a whole should not be viewed as a static experience, but as something that "has been in constant mutation" (*CP* V3 19):

I am convinced – even from the study of the history of poetry alone – and I think that the history of Christian dogma could be made to support the view – that belief itself has been in constant mutation (not always progress, from any point of view) from the beginning of civilisation.

Eliot's religious sensibilities in the later poems discussed here, is therefore not considered as products of the poet's newfound commitment but as part of his life-long quest for spiritual meaning and Unity of Being. Although Eliot was already received into the Church of England in 1927, his announcement of faith a year later had nonetheless marked a public view of Eliot as a religiously renewed man in an increasingly secular world (Kramer 4). Ezra Pound's reaction was particularly elegant:

In any case, let us lament the psychosis

Of all those who abandon the Muses for Moses

(qtd. in Kramer 4)

Eliot joined the Church of England “with the belief that he had chosen a faith that was ‘less false’ and that balanced his ‘profound scepticism with the deepest faith’” (Kramer 5). Eliot found the middle ground he longed for in the Anglican Church that “embraces a wide diversity of perspectives and opinions” (Germer 16), making his conversion not a conversion, but rather an affirmation. What Eliot hoped to achieve was “dogma without dogmatism; he wanted his mind to reflect what Keats called ‘negative capability’, the ability to be at home with ambivalence, to be able to say yes without being sure” (Brooker *DI* 119). In his own words: “doubt and uncertainty are merely a variety of belief” (Eliot *CP* V3 19).

Moreover, at the basis of Eliot’s religious sensibility are “the realisation of the *miseria hominis*, the degradation of man through Adam’s sin, and the consequent necessity of divine grace and redemption” (Germer 22). Eliot’s Anglican and Catholic Christianity thus gave him Original Sin and the doctrine of Incarnation, providing him with the dichotomy of the phenomenal world of man on the one hand, and the transcendent, redemptive world of the spirit on the other. “Eliot’s faith, like his art, was never static but always dynamic, mirroring a constant struggle within himself between soul and body, self and world, the human and the divine, with no certainty about the outcome” (Pratt 573). To a certain extent, Eliot, like Yeats, vacillates between these opposites in his constant effort to integrate them. There is a similar effort in his need to reconcile the spirit and the intellect; for Eliot, “mystical spirit without intellectual activity lacks creativity, self-reflection, and meaning, and intellectual activity without mystical spirit lacks fullness and depth” (Kramer 15). In these opposites lie a unifying understanding of the secular-transcendent dichotomy.

As we have seen from chapter two, Eliot took from Bradley’s philosophy the doctrine of degree of reality, the idea that “all imaginable truth is partial, although some truths are fuller than other truths” (Brooker *ME* 181). Hence, Eliot’s keen awareness of the relationality between opposites allowed him to see that “the movement toward truth involves, not only development of one point of view but also migration from one interpretation to another, occupation of as many perspectives as possible” (Brooker *ME* 188). Similarly, Eliot’s study of Indic philosophy also taught him “that scepticism implies not simply the incredibility of all beliefs, but also their equivalent conventional validity” (Perl 92). In “Religion and Science: A Phantom Dilemma”, for instance, Eliot asserts that the “intellectual case for Christianity is very strong indeed” and yet “there is a good case to be made out for atheism as well” (*CP* V4 441). Therefore, despite his affirmation of faith, to Eliot “religious belief was in constant tension with scepticism” (Spurr 189). Of Bertrand Russell’s “What I

Believe”, Eliot says: “Mr. Russell believes that when he is dead he will rot; I cannot subscribe with that conviction to *any* belief” (CP V3 46). Furthermore, in “A Note on Poetry and Belief” that responds to I.A. Richards’s commentary that Eliot succeeds in separating poetry and beliefs in *The Waste Land*, we see something of Eliot’s struggle with “the complication of belief” (CP V3 20):

The majority of people live below the level of belief or doubt. It takes application, and a kind of genius, to believe anything, and to believe anything (I do not mean merely to believe in some ‘religion’) will probably become more and more difficult as time goes on. But we are constantly being told how much more difficult in other ways – telephones, wireless, aeroplanes and future inventions to try our nerves – life is becoming; and the complication of belief is merely another complication to be put up with. We await, in fact (as Mr. Richards is awaiting the future poet), the great genius who shall triumphantly succeed in believing *something*. For those of us who are higher than the mob, and lower than the man of inspiration, there is always *doubt*; and in doubt we are living parasitically (which is better than not living at all) on the minds of the men of genius of the past who have believed something.

It is worth considering that Eliot published this note a mere six months before his reception into the Church of England (Spurr 189). It is perhaps this short time between pronouncements of doubt and devotion that lead commentators to think of Eliot as “converting” or suddenly “joining” Anglo-Catholicism. William Pratt argues that Eliot manages to resolve his doubt into the devout faith of his later poems (586), however, I think Eliot’s doubt was as deep and profound as his religious devotion and that converting did not put an end to his questioning since it is indeed the result thereof; it is through “a process of spiritual and intellectual elimination and evaluation” that Eliot announced himself a religious man (Kramer 5). Still, if one does not consider the development of his beliefs, it may seem like two different Eliots writing, for instance, “The Hippopotamus” and *Asb-Wednesday*, ten years apart:

From "The Hippopotamus"

I saw the 'potamus take wing  
Ascending from the damp savannas,  
And quiring angels round him sing  
The praise of God, in loud hosannas

Blood of the Lamb shall wash him clean  
And him shall heavenly arms enfold,  
Among the saints he shall be seen  
Performing on a harp of gold.

He shall be washed as white as snow,  
By all the martyr'd virgins kist,  
While the True Church remains below  
Wrapt in the old miasmal mist.

(CPP 50)

From *Ash-Wednesday*

Let these words answer  
For what is done, not to be done again  
May the judgement not be too heavy upon us

Because these wings are no longer wings to fly  
But merely vans to beat the air  
The air which is now thoroughly small and dry  
Smaller and dryer than the will  
Teach us to care and not to care  
Teach us to sit still.

Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death  
Pray for us now and at the hour of our death.

(CPP 90)

It is not surprising that Pratt conceives of Eliot's doubt as resolved into the later poems since there is clearly a richer religious language and tone employed in *Ash-Wednesday* than there is in "The Hippopotamus". The latter poem presents a somewhat surreal scene in which something as natural (belonging to the secular world) as a hippopotamus, ascends to heaven (the supernatural world). Unlike the ironically upper cased "True Church" that is "out of touch with matter", whose spirituality "has become so esoteric as to be gray and meaningless", the hippo will ascend to heaven "because it is true to its material existence" (Terblanche 93). Here Eliot already touches on the post-secular divide between the secular and the transcendent world. Clearly, "The Hippopotamus" "privileges the natural and evenhanded goodness of the godhead and of creation at the expense of a rigorously exclusive system of faith" (Murphy 250). Ten years later, in *Ash-Wednesday*, the reader is presented with a plea from out of and for the "True Church", which is really a false one, "Wrapt in the old miasmal mist". It is as though the wings with which the hippo ascended "from the damp savannas" are mirrored in *Ash-Wednesday*, yet they are "no longer wings to fly / But merely vans to beat the air". The speaker then justifiably asks that Mary teach us and pray for us, evoking the prospect of salvation.

Whereas "The Hippopotamus" serves as critique of the church, *Ash-Wednesday* attempts to address its spiritual dilemma. As we know, later in *Ash-Wednesday*, the speaker asks Mary to pray not only for "us", but also for "children at the gate / Who will not go away and cannot pray: / Pray for those who chose and oppose" (CPP 96). There is mercy, then, even for those who oppose the

Virgin. Eliot was distinctly aware of the place of doubt in belief considering the tendency of his time towards disbelief, which he called “progressive spiritual deterioration” (*CP* V4 439). Eliot was therefore not only mindful of the church’s “old miasmal mist”, he was also concerned with the question of religion as a whole. Of this spiritual deterioration Eliot asks in “Religion and Science: A Phantom Dilemma” (*CP* V4 439):

How then has it come about that religious faith has altered and weakened since the Middle Ages, until it is no longer the rule and standard of social as well as individual life, but a mere extra, like French and Music, which a minority of people treat themselves to?

This spiritual void is indeed felt throughout Eliot’s oeuvre. Consistent with his search for a “dogma without dogmatism”, in exploring the question of spiritual deterioration, Eliot emphasised that the scientific advancement of the secular world is not to blame for the weakening of religious faith: “it is not science that has destroyed religious belief but our preference of unbelief that has made illegitimate use of science” (Eliot *CP* V4 439). “Our preference of unbelief”, Eliot argues, is due to “a line of least resistance”, the general tendency toward disbelief itself appears to those who are uncritical as evidence that religion is failing to provide the means through which the world is made sense of. There are, of course, also the destructive effects of modern man’s “absorption in discovery and invention”. Our assumption of progress leads us to believe that to “improve from generation to generation is natural to man; and when doubt is cast on this belief that things will get better just of themselves, people are apt to fall back into despair” (Eliot *CP* V4 441). It is therefore not the scientific enquiry of a “secular” world and the benefits it brought that has left us the hollow men that we are. “The actual question is: now we have gained these benefits, are we worthy to use them?” (Eliot *CP* V4 439).

Whether Eliot’s doubt is resolved entirely in the later poems, as Pratt envisions, is unknowable, yet they certainly exhibit a greater acceptance of the limits of human knowledge; as Eliot writes in “East Coker”: “The only wisdom we can hope to acquire / Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless” (*CPP* 179). Like Yeats, Eliot can be considered proto-post-secular by drawing on the knowledge of both the religious and the secular world. The following analyses of the secular-transcendent dialectic in Eliot’s later poems therefore aim to demonstrate Eliot’s concern with the phenomenal world in conjunction with the spiritual and the supernatural.

### 3.4.1 Nearing the post-secular: The Later Eliot

As the discussion regarding Unity of Being in Eliot's later work has shown, there is from *The Waste Land* to *Ash-Wednesday* and *Four Quartets* a decisive move toward the conception and achievement of unity in lieu of *The Waste Land's* focus on the lack thereof. Connections made between fragments in *Ash-Wednesday* and *Four Quartets* are not connections that point to the need of unity, but connections that decidedly take part in Eliot's quest for Unity of Being. Some of the most intriguing of these connections are between the secular and religious or transcendental beliefs. Though Eliot's quest for Unity of Being is more distinct in *Four Quartets*, *Ash-Wednesday* can be seen as something of a catalyst for the incarnational intersections that Eliot aims to verify.

In *Ash-Wednesday*, there are three fields of diction: "(1) religious texts, (2) texts from European literature and (3) the common worldly language of reference and appreciation" (Donoghue 152). The joint expression of religious and worldly language is already indicative of Eliot's ability to break down the barriers between secular and transcendental beliefs. Of the Ariel poems on the whole Donoghue writes (153):

Eliot is using the common words for time and place, landscapes and seascapes, journeys and returns, words for playing-cards and kings and queens, and testing them to see how far they can also suggest states of beatitude and the obstacles to such states. He is seeing these words, too, in a light greater than that of daylight and ordinary denotation.

This suggestive and experimental use of language is part of Eliot's "raids on the inarticulate", his attempts to talk about the Unity of Being that evades human expression. Instances of Eliot engaging with secular and religious language is especially creative in part five of *Ash-Wednesday* where Eliot makes the distinction between "the Word" and "the world", symbols of the religious and the secular: the way or the word of God as opposed to the way of the world. Eliot directs his reader to the warring opposites of Word and world by indicating how "the world exiles us from the Word" and leaves the transcendental unrealised (Williamson 183). At the same time, worldly diction alludes to the otherworldly. From world-words such as trees, and bones, and sand, there emerges for instance the scattered bones lying under the juniper-tree that by "the blessing of sand" are able to forget "themselves and each other" to be "united" (CPP 92). The worldly is consequently continually reaching toward more than it is, asking almost prayer-like to transcend.

*Ash-Wednesday* has already been discussed as a prayer poem that addresses the human impulses at the heart of Modernism's epistemological breakdown and we know that Eliot did not intend for it to be seen as "religious verse" (Eliot TL 201). Nevertheless, the view that *Ash-Wednesday* is Eliot's great conversion poem and the start of a new Christian poetry in Eliot's career persists. Readers often mistake the religious focus of *Ash-Wednesday* as one that requires of the

reader “a particular religious bias in order to decipher the poetic moment” (Murphy 56). While the poem does perhaps originate from a religious creative moment for the poet, it is, in fact, “a poem devoid of dogma”, a poem primarily concerned with “the painful processes of becoming, and with the subtle permutations of the changed and changing self” (Kennedy 89). This “painful process of becoming” develops from the quest for Unity of Being, its grappling with the opposites, its consequent inarticulacy, and the prospect of eudaimonic incarnation. Conflict and suffering are indeed “sources of eudaimonic transformation” (Pawelski & Moores 42). *Asb-Wednesday* answers *The Waste Land*'s call for a greater wholeness in the face of extreme disunity and begins the difficult process of establishing that unity.

In this sense, *Asb-Wednesday* is a journey that “participates in the literary tradition of ‘journeys toward understanding’” (Atkins 47). Eliot’s journeying toward understanding and unity is affirmed in *Four Quartets*; as he declares in “Little Gidding”, “We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time” (CPP 197). The quartets reveal that “to know the place for the first time” is to realise “the ‘impossible union’ of contrary points of view” (Kramer 269). In *Asb-Wednesday*, the journey lies in the contraries of the phenomenal world and the spiritual and its central realisation that to “overcome the impact of the ‘Waste Land’ on the human soul involves sinking downward more deeply into the darkness” (Kramer 53). This darkness is embodied through St John’s negative way, which involves the spirit’s purification in darkness. Eliot was indeed a committed follower of St. John and the way of contemplation, “a way that necessitates moving through the dark night of sense and desire, and purging the memory and the will, in order to attain the divine union” (Schuchard 155).

Although the journey through darkness is a downward one, in the third poem of *Asb-Wednesday*, for instance, Eliot’s speaker ascends a twisting staircase when a similarly purgative darkness draws near: “There were no more faces and the stair was dark, / Damp, jagged, like an old man’s mouth” (CPP 93). The scene on the staircase is adopted from Dante’s Purgatory; Daniel Arnaut’s “vision of a virtuous ascent of the spiritual stair toward divine union ‘al som de l’escalina’ has become displaced by a nightmare struggle on treacherous stairs inhabited by grotesque faces” (Schuchard 157). The speaker continues to climb despite this despair and at the next stair he meets with images of desire, a “slotted window” appears, “bellied like a fig’s fruit”, calling up “the image of a pregnant woman about to give birth, in keeping with the processes of a spiritual rebirth which the speaker is undergoing” (Murphy 65).

At the first turning of the third stair  
Was a slotted window bellied like the fig's fruit  
And beyond the hawthorn blossom and pasture scene  
The broadbacked figure drest in blue and green  
Enchanted the maytime with an antique flute.  
Blown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown,  
Lilac and brown hair;  
Distraction, music of the flute, stops and steps of the mind over the  
    third stair,  
Fading, fading; strength beyond hope and despair  
Climbing the third stair.

Lord, I am not worthy

Lord, I am not worthy

    but speak the word only.

(*CPP* 93)

The speaker further sees these images of desire, formations of the secular world, as a distraction on the way toward Unity of Being and as he feels his strength and resistance fading, he calls upon the Lord to intervene through the words of a Centurion who appeals to Jesus to heal his servant:

The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

(*King James Version*, Matthew. 8.8)

The speaker on the stair is similarly asking to be healed from hope, despair, memory, and desire and believes that the Lord can heal his afflictions through merely uttering the word, can speed him up the spiritual stair by willing it so. Imploring the Lord to “speak the word only” can also be interpreted as “a request verging on demand”, a frustrated plea from the same speaker who earlier in *Ash-Wednesday* rejoiced that “things are as they are” in acceptance of man’s fallen nature (Atkins *RT* 52; Atkins *PC* 58). However, this frustration is part of the eudaimonic struggle toward Unity of Being and emblematic of the darkness through which the unity of God is reached since the phrase is also a pronouncement of humility in view of the purgative ascension (or descension) of the spirit.

Only at the end of *Ash-Wednesday* does a more pronounced synthesis between the secular and the transcendent occur. In the final poem Eliot asserts the tensional state of human existence,

he “represents humankind as ‘in-between,’ pulled toward both immanence and transcendence” (Atkins *PC* 53).

Wavering between the profit and the loss  
In this brief transit where the dreams cross  
The dreamcrossed twilight between birth and dying  
(Bless me father) though I do not wish to wish these things  
From the wide window towards the granite shore  
The white sails still fly seaward, seaward flying  
Unbroken wings (CPP 98)

Within the temporal world we are therefore “wavering”, much like Yeats’s notions of vacillation, between “the profit and the loss”, between “birth and dying”. We cannot, as Eliot says in “Burnt Norton”, “bear very much reality” (CPP 172). Our tensional nature keeps us from complete revelation and though we may not “wish to wish” such things we are lost to complete Unity of Being. The next few lines indicate this worldly lostness of the human heart: “the lost heart stiffens and rejoices / In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices”. Humanity’s lost state is however also representative of “the ground of our redemption” through incarnation, “‘the world,’ while ‘lost,’ is nevertheless ‘intersected’ by the Word, time by timelessness, flesh by spirit, man by God” (Atkins *RT* 58). Eliot explores the nature of these intersections at length in *Four Quartets* as they form the basis of his quest for Unity of Being. The following analysis of *Four Quartets* centres on the intersections made possible between the secular and the religious or transcendental.

*Four Quartets* is perhaps Eliot’s most definitive poetic expression of his life-long syncretic search for religious experience. In these four poems Eliot speaks to the universal experience of human existence through a poetic language that “both avoided a deliberately liturgical use of Christian language and employed a universal range of symbolic articulations of human-divine encounter” (Hughes 103). Throughout the quartets there is for example “no mention of Jesus by name, nor is the garden explicitly referred to as Eden, nor is Adam identified, though all are present under allegorical cover in section IV of ‘East Coker’” (Ellis 107). Instead, the quartets are informed by Eliot’s “wide reading in different literatures, including the sacred writings of the East and the West” (Dhar 181). Indeed, “beyond their Christian dimension of symbolisation, the poems of the quartets draw explicitly from Buddhist, Hindu, and Platonic or Neoplatonist traditions and language, and their evocations of mystical and meditative experiences are clearly intended to suggest a global range of references” (Hughes 102). In its avoidance of adhering to only one religious philosophy,

*Four Quartets* becomes a proto-post-secular expression of the interconnected nature of the secular and the religious and proves how such interaction can be of eudaimonic significance.

To begin with the first quartet, “Burnt Norton”, there is a strong contrast established between the world of the rose-garden, “our first world”, and the “twittering world” of modern reality. The rose-garden is entered through the intersection of the temporal and the visionary, while the “twittering world” is “Only a flicker / Over the strained time-ridden faces”, and “empty of meaning” (*CPP* 174). At the opening of “Burnt Norton” Eliot introduces the reader to the possible intersections within our conceptions of time and proposes the notion of a time that is “always present”. The poem goes on to present an intersection with a speculative past where “Footfalls echo in the memory / Down the passage which we did not take / Towards the door we never opened / Into the rose-garden” (*CPP* 171). The rose-garden is entered “Through the first gate, / Into our first world” where the natural world intermingles with the visionary:

So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,  
Along the empty alley, into the box circle,  
To look down into the drained pool.  
Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,  
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,  
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,  
The surface glittered out of heart of light,  
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.  
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty. (*CPP* 172)

Here we see the phenomenal world of “alley”, “box circle”, and “drained pool” joined by the transcendent when the “pool was filled with water out of sunlight” (an intersection itself) and “the lotos rose”: a symbol of religious enlightenment. Eliot’s placement of the word “rose” in this instance causes a noun-verb obfuscation. It “becomes a hybrid word that plays on our deep-seated expectation that ‘rose’ is a noun, a kind of flower”, but Eliot’s placement grammatically reads that “the lotos *rose* quietly, and a verb takes the place of a noun” (Terblanche 121). “Just as the lotus functions as a central symbol in Hindu and Buddhist traditions, the rose has come to occupy a central place in traditional Christian poetry” (Kramer 42). There is consequently not only a joining of the phenomenal world and the transcendent, but a syncretic exploration of religious truth. The lotos rising from the pool that glitters “out of the heart of light” creates an epiphany-like moment of wonder.

The intersection moment in the garden ends when the phenomenal world throws its shadow over the scene: “a cloud passed, and the pool was empty”. The visitors are urged out of the garden and back into the phenomenal world: “Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind / Cannot bear very much reality” (CPP 172). The “twittering world” that stands in contrast to such mystical intersections as the rose-garden is, of course, the secular Modernist world of “The Hollow Men” and *The Waste Land*, a world which is:

[...] Only a flicker  
Over the strained time-ridden faces  
Distracted from distraction by distraction  
Filled with fancies and empty of meaning  
Tumid apathy with no concentration  
Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind  
That blows before and after time,  
Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs  
Time before and time after. (CPP 174)

The destitution of this world is already known to the reader of *The Waste Land*. There are no transcendent pursuits for the men who like “bits of paper” are “whirled by the cold wind”, who are stuck in the slices of time before and after. The only possible escape from this “twittering world” is, in keeping with Eliot’s model of mastery and escape, to go down deeper into it. In the next stanza Eliot alludes again to the way of contemplation, St John’s “darkness to purify the soul”, and toward Unity of Being: the speaker says, we must “Descend lower, descend only / Into the world of perpetual solitude, / World nor world, but that which is not world” (CPP 174). Much like *Asb-Wednesday*’s whirling Word/word interplay, “World” and “world” implies a similar worldly/otherworldly dialectic.

The darkness that may “purify the soul” appears again in part three of “East Coker”, the second of the quartets. “East Coker” opens with a funerary darkness that becomes, or rather, merges with “the darkness of God” which later eudaimonically leads to the resolving phrase “So the darkness shall be the light”:

O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark  
The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into the vacant,  
The captains, merchants, bankers, eminent men of letters.  
.....  
And we all go with them, into the silent funeral,

Nobody's funeral, for there is no one to bury.

I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you

Which shall be the darkness of God. As, in a theatre,

The lights are extinguished, for the scene to be changed (CPP 180)

These lines move from the darkness into which all men go to the “darkness of God”, combining at once “the modern secular world and the world of interior self-negation and contemplative stillness” (Murray 74). Beneath the “desiring chatter of the mind, the contemplative spirit sinks to the deepest and most silent place of the soul” (Kramer 87). The “darkness of God” also introduces the potential for purification through incarnation; in the same way that the theatre is best viewed when “The lights are extinguished”, descent into the self and the spiritual is not necessarily illuminating, as is often thought, but darkening. Divine union with God requires an even deeper descent, “a deliberate withdrawal of sense, reason, and will”; yet the “darkness of God is a necessary stage in the soul's progress toward purification, the stripping away of self-satisfactions” (Kramer 85). In line with his dialectical imagination, the “visionary despair” in section three of “East Coker” leads to a “vision of new hope and new illumination” (Murray 252):

I said to my soul, be still and wait without hope

For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love

For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith

But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.

Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:

So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing. (CPP 180)

This new illumination negates “discursive reflection, illusory hope and false love”, it employs the ascetical schema of St John's dark night of the spirit (the plan, that is, which involves the purification of faith, hope and love) as an instrument for spiritual growth (Murray 93). Eliot proposes that faith, hope, love and thought, through “waiting” shall offer up a state of Unity of Being in which “the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing”. Later in part five of “The Dry Salvages” Eliot addresses that “hope for the wrong thing”, “love of the wrong thing” through the religious crises of the Modernist period and lists the means through which people attempt to fill the “mythic void” left by the epistemological collapse of their time:

To communicate with Mars, converse with spirits,  
 To report the behaviour of the sea monster,  
 Describe the horoscope, haruspicate or scry,  
 Observe disease in signatures, evoke  
 Biography from the wrinkles of the palm  
 And tragedy from fingers; release omens  
 By sortilege, or tea leaves, riddle the inevitable  
 With playing cards, fiddle with pentagrams  
 Or barbituric acids, or dissect  
 The recurrent image into pre-conscious terrors—  
 To explore the womb, or tomb, or dreams; all these are usual  
 Pastimes and drugs, and features of the press:  
 And always will be, some of them especially  
 When there is distress of nations and perplexity  
 Whether on the shores of Asia, or in the Edgware Road.  
 Men's curiosity searches past and future  
 And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend  
 The point of intersection of the timeless  
 With time, is an occupation for the saint—

(CPP 189)

Eliot regards these religious explorations with dissatisfaction, they are “Pastimes and drugs” of a one-sided and curious clinging to the past or the future. In the speaker's voice these substitutes are very clearly a hope for and a love of “the wrong thing”. In “Religion and Science” Eliot wondered whether this kind of deterioration of religious faith had indeed been a necessary development (CP V4 439):

[...] it is necessary at times that humanity should worship false gods and demi-gods, though how to square that with the salvation of individual souls I do not know. Better to say, perhaps, that even the wisest of human beings is so muddleheaded, without God, that he cannot destroy an evil without destroying some good, or grasp at some good without grasping at some evil.

This excerpt moreover illustrates Eliot's belief in the close-knit relation between the evil-good, secular-transcendent dichotomy. Throughout his questing for Unity of Being, Eliot asks whether each of the localities of *Four Quartets* is “a place where the spirit can leap from the foundation of physical experience into communion with the transcendental” and it is in “Little Gidding” that such a communion is realised (Korg 57). It is foreseeable, then, that the reader of *Four Quartets* may come to “Little Gidding” and find the poem's tension traded in for religious

affirmation. At the end of part one of “Little Gidding”, Eliot urges the reader to “put off / Sense and notion”, to kneel “Where prayer has been valid” (*CPP* 192). In the context of prayer as a religious act, one may assume that what Eliot suggests putting off, in this instance, is its secular opposite, “Sense and notion”. “Notion” is understood here as being synonymous with thoughts and ideas. On another level, we must consider the way in which the word “notion” relates to an impulse, instinct, or belief. Not necessarily belief in its most religious sense, but belief as something other than secularism. Instead, what Eliot urges, is that we must “put off” the dualism of such concepts in an attempt to apprehend the intersection of opposites.

### 3.5 Conclusions

Against the background of Unity of Being, this chapter endeavoured to define what is meant by the post-secular, how it came about and what a post-secular poetry may look like. The post-secular marks a cognisance of the ways in which the secular and the transcendent complement each other despite the secular age in which we live. The Modernist period in which Yeats and Eliot wrote shaped their religious exploration in a way that links with current post-secular studies. Yeats and Eliot's quest for Unity of Being is a result of an absence at the heart of the crises of modernity, an absence of wholeness; "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold" (Yeats *CP* 187). Their awareness of the interconnectedness of human beliefs enables these poets to disregard the apparent dualism of secular and transcendent beliefs, and in doing so, they anticipate current post-secular challenges.

As it transpires in Yeats and Eliot's later poems, intimations of the post-secular grapple with the natural and the supernatural, oppositions such as the body and the soul, life and death. Yeats and Eliot attempt to do away with the false oppositions apparent here by exposing the porous boundaries between that which is usually regarded as devoted to the service of religion and that which is not. This chapter has therefore endeavoured to highlight Yeats and Eliot's views of religious and transcendent beliefs along with the ways in which the secular-transcendent dichotomy in their later poems points to the post-secular.

Yeats often employs the bodily, and the sexual, to oppose orthodox views that exclude it. His syncretic search for spiritual experience leads him to challenge, for instance, Christianity and Greek mythology, as can be seen in "Ribh denounces Partick" and "News for the Delphic Oracle". In *Ash-Wednesday* Eliot is more conventionally religious than Yeats in his grappling with the opposites of the secular and the religious yet in *Four Quartets* Eliot's syncretic religious exploration accomplishes a great level of integration. In the same way that Yeats is an "apostle of the antinomies", Eliot believes that our worldly struggling is only redeemed by its intersection with the transcendent.

## CONCLUSION: A POST-SECULAR POETICS

“Revelation characterises the world just as much as natural laws do”

—Michael Bakhtin, *Lectures and comments*. 2001, p.219

### 4.1 Nearing the post-secular: the quest for Unity of Being

A post-secular interpretation of the poets studied in this dissertation begins with the affirmation that W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot were both drawn to the notion of a unity that could resolve the disparities of their time. In the later poetry of both poets there is a unique attempt to establish moments of deep understanding, interconnectivity, wholeness, and transcendence, a Unity of Being. In the context of this comparative study, the concept of Unity of Being develops from Yeats’s antinomial vision and Eliot’s dialectical imagination. The most fundamental point of Yeats and Eliot’s questing for Unity of Being, as the word “unity” presupposes, is a joining of opposites. Conjoining opposites in this way, confronts our dualistic thinking with the inarticulate and it is these “raids on the inarticulate” that animate a constant becoming and “self-remaking”.

As revealed by the first main question posed in this study, Yeats and Eliot’s quest can therefore be divided into these three interconnected aspects: 1) a grappling with opposites, 2) inarticulacy, and 3) a capacity for eudaimonic incarnation. Although there are many other contributing factors in the acquisition of wholeness, these three aspects are what Yeats and Eliot have most in common in their respective quests for Unity of Being. Since their questing involves the pursuit of “eudaimonia”, that which assures human flourishing and cultivates significance in the human condition, this study employs a “hermeneutics of affirmation” that completes the interpretative task through affirmation. The quest for Unity of Being is a quest for affirmation, a quest that confirms the interconnectedness that underpins existence. As their quest takes shape in the later poems it is clear that Yeats’s questing is primarily a vacillating one enabled by a back-and-forth of antinomies. Eliot on the other hand grapples with the opposites by revealing their correlative nature. Moreover, while Yeats is more concerned with the unattainability of Unity of Being within life, Eliot is more often focused on the ineffability thereof.

Yeats and Eliot’s quests are in part due to their own inclinations and influences and in part due to the Modernist Zeitgeist. The immense upheavals of the early twentieth century had left in their wake an epistemological collapse that radically challenged traditional conceptions of reality and man’s place therein. Meaning-making frameworks had been shattered, leaving society, as Eliot

proclaimed in *Four Quartets*, to “explore the womb, or tomb, or dreams” (CPP 189). To fill the “mythic vacuum” left by the crisis in religious belief, Modernists participated in a syncretic search for transcendent experience. Yeats and Eliot’s different philosophical, religious, occultist, and spiritual explorations are indeed illustrative of this crisis.

Yeats and Eliot’s integration of secular and religious, or transcendental beliefs thus anticipate current post-secular approaches that seek a similar integration. The post-secular approach, as it develops from the religious turn in the humanities, is not a new phenomenon in literary history. Rather, the relations between the secular and the transcendent have always existed and scholars have always been drawn to this interplay. In effect, what the post-secular achieves is a cognisance of the ways in which the secular and the transcendent complement each other despite indications of a secular age. Furthermore, Yeats and Eliot’s engagement with post-secular concerns in their quest for Unity of Being is instrumental to the search for wholeness and fulfilment.

As Tracy Fessenden suggests, the post-secular is sometimes “offered as a solution to the problem it names: intimations of secular emptiness, become post-secular occasions for fullness, the crisis of disenchantment, an invitation to re-enchantment, the absence of belief itself, an object of belief” (00:10:42-00:11:00). In this sense, the post-secular is given as “an interpretive stance, a skill set, a hermeneutic, a tonic, above all, a discovery” (Fessenden 00:11:01-00:11:11). This redemptive function that underlies the post-secular is especially appropriate in view of the eudaimonic turn which seeks out a “hermeneutics of affirmation” in order to enrich and complete, as it were, the suspicious method. To the problem of secular emptiness, for instance, Bruce Ledewitz poses the idea of a “Hallowed Secularism”. Consider Ledewitz’s ultimate question, “can a secularism of holiness contribute to the flourishing of the human spirit?” (4). The answer is, of course, yes. Yes, it can. As we have seen, Yeats and Eliot, in their own ways, have shown how a secular-religious reunification can benefit our understanding of ourselves and our place in existence. They have shown how many different traditionally religious ideas alongside non-religious, and secular ideas inform and enrich the human spirit.

Post-secular studies such as these effectively open discussions about the nature of the secular-transcendent dichotomy that has shaped literary studies, especially in the past decade. Post-secular studies are also starting to address important issues such as the value of spirituality; Richard Norman, for instance, expresses the need for a more nuanced understanding of belief (142):

If you say that you do not need spirituality and do not recognise it, you risk incurring the charge of superficiality. You appear to confine life to the shallow and the trivial. If you say that you of course recognise the importance of the spiritual side of life, you risk being told that you are really ‘religious’ after all.

Clearly, such an uncompromising secular-religious divide is a cruel limitation of the human need to reach beyond the scope of reason and to explore the spirit. It is precisely this unyielding duality Yeats and Eliot advises against through illustrating in their poetry the significance of a post-secular poetics. As this dissertation has demonstrated, the later poetry of W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot anticipates our current post-secular concerns through the poets' eudaimonic quest for Unity of Being. A renewed awareness of the interconnected nature of the secular and the transcendent is already felt in the Modernist period, and perhaps even earlier. Further research into the secular-transcendent dichotomy present in the works of other poets and authors writing during the 20<sup>th</sup> century will certainly shine greater light on the co-development of religious and non-religious ideas, especially as they are formed since the Enlightenment.

Furthermore, since our present age extends from Yeats and Eliot's, their anticipation of a post-secular questioning of the sharp distinction between the secular and transcendent confirm that we, too, can benefit from more closely studying the secular-transcendent dichotomy. And by allowing these apparently opposing approaches to enrich our understanding of the literature that comes from both spheres we will have certainly quested as Yeats and Eliot had.

Yeats and Eliot's explorations show the intensity that a post-secular approach can take in relation to our understanding of existence; their commitment to overcoming and employing the dichotomy enriches our understanding and experience of the interpretation of the secular and transcendent and serves as a foundation or standard for further explorations.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Texts

- Eliot, Thomas Stearns. *The Complete Poems & Plays of T. S. Eliot*. Faber and Faber, 1969.
- . *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot. The Critical Edition. Volume 2: The Perfect Critic 1919-1926*. Edited by Anthony Cuda & Ronald Schuchard, vol. 2, Johns Hopkins UP & Faber & Faber, 2015.
- . *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot. The Critical Edition. Volume 3: Literature, Politics, Belief, 1927-1929*. Edited by Francis Dickey, Jennifer Formicelli, & Ronald Schuchard, vol. 3, Johns Hopkins UP & Faber & Faber, 2015.
- . *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot. The Critical Edition. Volume 4: English Lion, 1930-1933*. Edited by Jason Harding & Ronald Schuchard, vol. 4, Johns Hopkins UP & Faber & Faber, 2015.
- . *The Letters of T.S. Eliot. Volume 5: 1930-1931*. Edited by Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden, vol. 5, Yale UP, 2014.
- . *Knowledge and Experience in the philosophy of F.H. Bradley*. Faber and Faber, 1964.
- . *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*. Edited by Frank Kermode, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975.
- Yeats, William Butler. *Autobiographies*. Macmillan, 1979.
- . *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*. Edited by Richard J. Finneran. 2nd ed., Simon & Schuster, 1996.
- . *Essays and Introductions*. Macmillan, 1961.
- . *Explorations*. Macmillan, 1962.
- . *The Letters of W.B. Yeats*. Edited by Allan Wade, Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954.
- . *Mythologies*. Macmillan, 1959.
- . *A Vision: A Reissue. With the author's final revisions*. Macmillan, 1975.

## Secondary Texts

- Abrams, M.H. and Harpham, Geoffrey Galt. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 10<sup>th</sup> ed., Wadsworth, 2012.
- Agar, Jolyon. *Post-Secularism, Realism and Utopia: Transcendence and immanence from Hegel to Bloch*. Routledge, 2014.
- Arkins, Brian. *The Thought of W.B. Yeats*. Peter Lang, 2010.
- Asad, Talal. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford UP, 2003.
- Atkins, George, Douglas. *Literary Paths to Religious Understanding: Essays on Dryden, Pope, Keats, George Eliot, Joyce, T.S. Eliot, and E.B. White*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- . *Reading T.S. Eliot: Four Quartets and the Journey towards Understanding*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- . *T.S. Eliot: The Poet as Christian*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Backman, Jussi. *Complicated Presence: Heidegger and the Postmetaphysical Unity of Being*. SUNY Press, 2015.
- Barbieri, William, A. "The Post-Secular Problematic." *At the Limits of the Secular: Reflections on Faith and Public Life*, edited by William A. Barbieri Jr., William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2014, pp. 129-161.
- Bassuk, Daniel, E. *Incarnation in Hinduism and Christianity: The Myth of the God-Man*. Macmillan, 1987.
- Batchelor, Stephen. *Secular Buddhism: Imagining the Dharma in an Uncertain World*. Yale UP, 2017.
- Beasley, Rebecca. *Theorists of Modernist Poetry: T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme and Ezra Pound*. Routledge, 2007.
- Bell, Vereen. *Yeats and the Logic of Formalism*. U of Missouri Press, 2006.
- Bergonzi, Bernard. "Late Victorian to Modernist." *The Oxford illustrated history of English literature*, edited by Pat Rogers, Oxford UP, 2001, pp. 379-430.
- Blake, William. "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell." *The Longman Anthology of British Literature: The Romantics and Their Contemporaries*, edited by David Damrosch, Kevin J. H. Dettmar, Susan Wolfson, and Peter Manning, 5<sup>th</sup> ed, vol. 2A, 2012.
- Bloom, Harold. *Yeats*. Oxford UP, 1972.
- Bohlmann, Otto. *Yeats and Nietzsche: An Exploration of Major Nietzschean Echoes in the Writings of William Butler Yeats*. Macmillan, 1982.
- Booth, Allyson. *Reading The Waste Land from the Bottom Up*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Bornstein, George. "The Aesthetics of Antinomy." *Yeats's poetry, drama, and prose: A Norton Critical Edition*, edited by James Pethica, W.W. Norton & Company, 2000, pp. 382-386.
- Brooker, Jewel Spears. *Mastery and Escape: T.S. Eliot and the Dialectic of Modernism*. U of Massachusetts P, 1994.

- . "The Fire and the Rose: Theodicy in Eliot and Julian of Norwich." *Julian of Norwich's Legacy: Medieval Mysticism and Post-Medieval Reception*, edited by Sarah Salih and Denise N. Baker, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 69-86.
- . "Transcendence and Return: T. S. Eliot and the Dialectic of Modernism." *South Atlantic Review*, vol. 59, no. 2, 1994, pp. 53-74.
- . *T.S. Eliot's Dialectical Imagination*. Johns Hopkins UP, 2018.
- Brooker, Jewel Spears and Charron, William. "T.S. Eliot's Theory of Opposites: Kant and the Subversion of Epistemology." *T.S. Eliot and Our Turning World*, edited by Jewel Spears Brooker, Palgrave, 2001, pp. 47-62.
- Brown, Dennis. "T.S. Eliot's 'Ash-Wednesday' and *Four Quartets*: Poetic Confession as Psychotherapy." *Literature & Theology*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2003, pp. 1-16.
- Campbell, Joseph. *Myths to live by*. Bantam, 1973.
- . *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*. Secker & Warburg, 1960.
- Cavanaugh, William, T. "The Invention of the Religious-Secular Distinction." *At the Limits of the Secular: Reflections on Faith and Public Life*, edited by William A. Barbieri Jr., William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2014, pp. 105-128.
- Corrigan, Paul. "The Postsecular and Literature: A Review of scholarship." *WordPress*, 17 May. 2015, [www.corriganliteraryreview.wordpress.com/2015/05/17/the-postsecular-and-literature/](http://www.corriganliteraryreview.wordpress.com/2015/05/17/the-postsecular-and-literature/). Accessed 3 March 2017.
- . "Wrestling with Angels: Postsecular Contemporary American Poetry"
- Crawford, Robert. *Young Eliot: From St Louis to The Waste Land*. Vintage, 2015.
- Cuda, Anthony. "W. B. Yeats and a Certain Mystic of the Middle Ages." *Julian of Norwich's Legacy: Medieval Mysticism and Post-Medieval Reception*, edited by Sarah Salih and Denise N. Baker, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 49-68.
- Cunliffe, Barry. *Druids: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2010.
- Davis, Alex, and Jenkins, Lee. Introduction. *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Poetry*, edited by Alex Davis and Lee Jenkins, Cambridge UP, 2007, pp. 1-10.
- DeForrest, Matthew. "W. B. Yeats's *A Vision*: 'Dove or Swan.'" *W.B. Yeats's A Vision: Explinations and Contexts*, edited by Neil Mann, Matthew Gibson, and Claire V. Nally, Clemson University DP, 2012, pp. 136-158.
- Dey, Pascal, and Steyaert, Chris. "Tracing and theorizing ethics in entrepreneurship: toward a critical hermeneutics of imagination." *The Routledge Companion to Ethics, Politics and Organizations*, edited by Alison Pullen and Carl Rhodes, Routledge, 2015, pp. 231-248.
- Dhar, Amar Nath. *Mysticism Across Cultures: Studies on Select Poets and Saints*. Atlantic Publishers, 2009.

- Domestico, Anthony. "Modernism and Religion." *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Religion*, edited by Mark Knight, Routledge, 2016, pp. 38-47.
- Donoghue, Denis. *Words Alone: The Poet T.S. Eliot*. Yale UP, 2002.
- Edinger, Edward, Ferdinand. *The Mystery of the Coniunctio: Alchemical Image of Individuation*. Edited by Joan Dexter Blackmer. Inner City Books, 1994.
- Edson, Gary. *Mysticism and Alchemy through the Ages: The Quest for Transformation*. McFarland & Company, 2012.
- Ellis, Steve. "Four Quartets." *The New Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, edited by Jason Harding, Cambridge UP, 2017, pp. 103-115.
- "Eudaemonism" *Encyclopedia Britannica*, October 2018,  
<http://www.britannica.com/topic/eudaemonism#ref273308>. Accessed 28 October 2018.
- Felski, Rita. "Critique and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion." *M/C Journal*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2012.
- Ferguson, George. *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art*. Oxford UP, 1961.
- Fessenden, Tracy. "The Problem of the Post-secular." *Youtube*, uploaded by University of Richmond, 11 December 2012, <https://youtu.be/hj6zX911dbU>.
- Furani, Khaled. "Is There a Postsecular?" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 83, no. 1, 2015, pp. 1-26.
- Germer, Rudolf. "'Journey of the Magi' in the Context of T.S. Eliot's Religious Development and Sensibility." *T.S. Eliot and Our Turning World*, edited by Jewel Spears Brooker, Palgrave, 2001, pp. 15-26.
- Gibson, Matthew. "'Timeless And Spaceless'?—Yeats's Search For Models Of Interpretation In Post-Enlightenment Philosophy, Contemporary Anthropology And Art History, And The Effects Of These Theories On 'The Completed Symbol,' 'The Soul In Judgment' And 'The Great Year Of The Ancients.'" *W. B. Yeats's 'A Vision': Explications and Contexts*, edited by Neil Mann, Matthew Gibson, and Claire Nally, Clemson University Digital Press, 2012, pp. 103-135.
- Gorski, Philip, S, et al. "The Post-Secular in Question." *The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Society*, edited by Philip S. Gorski, David Kyuman Kim, John Torpey, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, New York UP, 2012, pp. 1-22.
- Greene, Nicholas. *Yeats's Poetic Codes*. Oxford UP, 2008.
- Harper, Margaret, Mills. "Yeats and the occult." *The Cambridge Companion to W.B. Yeats*, edited by Marjorie Howes and John Kelly, Cambridge UP, 2006, pp. 144-166.
- Hennessey, Oliver. *Yeats, Shakespeare, and Irish Cultural Nationalism*. Farleigh Dickinson UP, 2014.
- Howarth, Peter. *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernist Poetry*. Cambridge UP, 2012.
- Hughes, Glenn. *A More Beautiful Question: The Spiritual in Poetry and Art*. U of Missouri Press, 2011.

- Jain, Manju. *A Critical Reading of the Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot*. Oxford UP, 1991.
- Jung, Carl, Gustav. *Four Archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster*. Translated by R. F. C. Hull, Routledge, 2003.
- Kaufmann, Michael. "Locating the postsecular." *Religion & Literature*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2009, pp. 68-73.
- Kearney, Richard. *Poetics of Modernity: Toward a Hermeneutic Imagination*. Humanity Books, 1999.
- Kennedy, Sarah. "“Let These Words Answer”: *Ash-Wednesday* and the Ariel Poems." *The New Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, edited by Jason Harding, Cambridge UP, 2017, pp. 89-102.
- King, Mike. *Secularism: The Hidden Origins of Disbelief*. James Clarke & Co, 2007.
- Kleiner, Fred. *Gardner’s Art through the Ages: A Global History*. 14<sup>th</sup> ed., Wadsworth, 2013.
- Kramer, Kenneth, Paul. *Redeeming Time: T.S. Eliot’s Four Quartets*. Cowley Publications, 2007.
- Lafford, Erin and Mason, Emma. "Falling from Trees: Arborescent Prosody in John Clare’s Tree Elegies." *The Eudaimonic Turn: Well-Being in Literary Studies*, edited by James O. Pawelski and D.J. Moores, Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2013, pp. 97-114.
- Lawson, Tom. *Carl Jung, Darwin of the Mind*. Karnac Books, 2008.
- Ledewitz, Bruce. *Hallowed Secularism: Theory, Belief, Practice*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Leeman, Jonathan. *Political Church: The Local Assembly as Embassy of Christ’s Rule*. InterVarsity Press, 2016.
- Leitch, Vincent. "T. S. Eliot’s Poetry of Religious Desolation." *South Atlantic Bulletin*, vol. 44, no. 2, 1979, pp. 35-44.
- Lewis, Pericles. "Religion." *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture*, edited by David Bradshaw and Kevin J.H. Dettmar, Blackwell Publishing, 2006, pp. 19-28.
- Liebregts, Peter. "Yeats and Homer." *The Clash of Ireland: Literary Contrasts and Connections*, edited by C.C. Barfoot and Theo D’haen, Rodopi, 1989, pp. 153-170.
- Mann, Neil. "The Thirteenth Cone." *W.B. Yeats’s A Vision: Explications and Contexts*, edited by Neil Mann, Matthew Gibson, and Claire V. Nally, Clemson University DP, 2012, pp. 159-193.
- Marlan, Stanton. *The Black Sun: The Alchemy and Art of Darkness*. Texas A&M UP, 2005.
- Martin, Sean. *Alchemy and Alchemists*. Pocket Essentials, 2006.
- Mattix, Micah. "Periodization and Difference." *New Literary History*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2004, pp. 685-697.
- McClure, John. "Post-Secular Culture: The Return of Religion in Contemporary Theory and Literature." *Cross Currents*, vol. 3, 1997, pp. 332-347.
- Meihuizen, Nicholas. *Yeats and the Drama of Sacred Space*. Rodopi, 1998.
- . "Yeats, Jung and the Integration of Archetypes." *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, vol. 80, pp.101-116.

- Monier-Williams, Monier. *Brāhmanism and Hindūism, Or, Religious Thought and Life in India: As Based on the Veda and Other Sacred Books of the Hindūs*. Macmillan, 1891.
- Moore, Donald. "The Eudaimonic Turn in Literary Studies." *The Eudaimonic Turn: Well-Being in Literary Studies*, edited by James O. Pawelski and D.J. Moore, Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2013, pp. 26-63.
- Morozov, Aleksandr. "Has the Postsecular Age Begun?" *Religion, State & Society*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2008, pp. 39-44.
- Murphy, Russell Elliott. *Critical Companion to T. S. Eliot: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*. Facts On File, 2007.
- Murray, Paul. *T.S. Eliot and Mysticism: The Secret History of 'Four Quartets'*. Macmillan, 1994.
- Muscio, Bernard. "The Hegelian Dialectic." *Mind*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1914, pp. 522-541.
- Neary, John. *Like and Unlike God: Religious Imaginations in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*. American Academy of Religion, 1999.
- Ni, Zhange. "Postsecular Reading." *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Religion*, edited by Susan M. Felch, Cambridge UP, 2016, pp. 51-68.
- Norman, Richard. *On Humanism*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Routledge, 2012.
- Olson, Carl. *Religious Studies: The Key Concepts*. Routledge, 2011.
- Parmaksiz, Umut. "Making sense of the postsecular." *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2016, pp. 98-116.
- Paterson, Don. *Rain*. Faber and Faber, 2009.
- Pawelski, James, and Moore, Donald. Introduction. *The Eudaimonic Turn: Well-Being in Literary Studies*, edited by James O. Pawelski and D. J. Moore, Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2013, pp. 1-64.
- Perl, Jeffrey. *Skepticism and Modern Enmity: Before and After Eliot*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1989.
- Powell, Neil. *The Supernatural: Alchemy, the Ancient Science*. The Danbury Press, 1978.
- Pratt, William. "To Doubt yet be Devout: The Lesson of the Later Eliot." *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 75, no. 4, 1992, pp. 571-586.
- Priest, Graham. *One: Being an Investigation into the Unity of Reality and of its Parts, including the Singular Object which is Nothingness*. Oxford UP, 2014.
- Priest, Graham and Berto, Francesco. "Dialetheism." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, [www.plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/dialetheism/](http://www.plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/dialetheism/). Accessed 19 June 2017.
- Pruitt, Virginia., and Pruitt, Raymond. "W. B. Yeats on Old Age, Death and Immortality." *Colby Library Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1988, pp. 36-49.
- Radcliffe, Evan. "Yeats and the Quest for Unity: 'Among School Children' and Unity of Being." *Colby Library Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 3, 1985, pp. 109-121.

- Rainey, Lawrence. "With Automatic Hand: The Waste Land." *The New Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, edited by Jason Harding, Cambridge UP, 2017, pp. 71-88.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*. Translated by Denis Savage, Yale UP, 1970.
- Rosenthal, Macha Louise. *Running to Paradise: Yeats's Poetic Art*. Oxford UP, 1994.
- Ross, David. *Critical companion to William Butler Yeats: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*. Facts on File, 2009.
- Sawyer, F. "A reading of T.S. Eliot's Ash-Wednesday." *Koers*, vol. 75, no. 1, 2010, pp. 245-265.
- "Secular, 2a." *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, April 2018, <http://oed.com.nwulib.nwu.ac.za/view/Entry/174620?redirectedFrom=secular#eid>. Accessed 03 April 2018.
- "Secular, 2c." *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, April 2018, <http://oed.com.nwulib.nwu.ac.za/view/Entry/174620?redirectedFrom=secular#eid>. Accessed 03 April 2018.
- Smith, James, E. *Isaiah, A Christian Interpretation*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Lulu.com, 2016.
- Spurr, Barry. "'Anglo-Catholic in Religion': T.S. Eliot and Christianity." *The New Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot*, edited by Jason Harding, Cambridge UP, 2017, pp. 187-201.
- Terblanche, Etienne. *T.S. Eliot, Poetry, and Earth*. Lexington Books, 2016.
- The Bible*. King James Version 1611, Bible Society of South Africa, 2001.
- "Transcendental." *Roget's Superthesaurus*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 2003.
- Van der Veer, Peter. "Syncretism, multiculturalism and the discourse of tolerance." *Syncretism / Anti-syncretism: The politics of religious synthesis*, edited by Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw, Routledge, 2005, pp. 185-200.
- Vendler, Helen. "The later poetry." *The Cambridge Companion to W. B. Yeats*, edited by Marjorie Howes and John Kelley, Cambridge UP, 2007, pp. 77-100.
- Ward, David. *T.S. Eliot Between Two Worlds: A Reading of T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays*. Routledge, 2016.
- Watkins, Vernon. "W. B. Yeats-The Religious Poet." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1962, pp. 475-488.
- Wessels, Andries. "Heraclitean logos and flux in T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets: 'cosmic consciousness' and 'the still point of the turning world.'" *Koers*, vol. 66, no. 4, 2001, pp. 571-584.
- Wilkinson, Philip. *Myths and Legends: An illustrated Guide to Their Origins and Meaning*. Dorling Kindersley, 2009.
- Williamson, George. *A Reader's Guide to T. S. Eliot: A poem-by-poem analysis*. Thames and Hudson, 1976.

Wynne-Davies, Marion. "Reference Section". *Bloomsbury guide to English Literature*, 1992. Bloomsbury, pp.293-1041.

Žižek, Slavoj. "Human Rights and Its Discontents." *Lacan.com*, [www.lacan.com/zizek-human.html](http://www.lacan.com/zizek-human.html). Accessed 21 March 2018.

**Sources consulted but not cited**

Vaessens, Thomas. *Geschiedenis van de moderne Nederlandse literatuur*. Vantilt, 2013.