Chaucer and Eliot: journey toward perfection

Mari Anne Hall
Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd
Part of the English Language and Literature Commons

Recommended Citation
https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd/6990

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and Dissertations at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Retrospective Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
Chaucer and Eliot: Journey toward perfection

by

Mari Anne Hall

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Major: English (Literature)

Major Professor: Susan Yager

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
2001
This is to certify that the Master’s thesis of

Mari Anne Hall

has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilgrimage as a Liminoid Phenomenon</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josef Pieper and the <em>Status Viatoris</em></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 2. GEOFFREY CHAUCER</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medieval Pilgrimage and Curiosity</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Voices of Chaucer</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Clerkly Voice</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pilgrim &quot;I&quot;</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Host</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tales</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 3. T. S. ELIOT</th>
<th>31</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journey Through <em>The Waste Land</em></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey Through <em>Ash Wednesday</em></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey Through <em>Four Quartets</em></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 4. PILGRIMAGE TODAY</th>
<th>51</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Personal Account</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| WORKS CITED | 57 |
CHAPTER 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

What serious Christian criticism can perhaps most usefully contribute, even to those who do not accept its premises, is an understanding of spirituality.

C. David Benson

As a reader and critic whose views are shaped by Christianity, I understand Geoffrey Chaucer and T. S. Eliot as Christian poets who, through their writing, address issues of faith and morals and encourage readers to look deeply into their own hearts. Even though both poets were influenced by classical tradition, Chaucer’s medieval English background offers him a different intellectual perspective than Eliot’s 20th century Anglo-Catholic view. Chaucer, an overtly Christian poet, would see himself as being on life’s pilgrimage. Chaucer’s poetry expresses positive theology in the Judaeo-Christian tradition in that he cultivates relationships as an integral part of the approach to the divine. Eliot’s poetry, on the other hand, expresses negative theology, which is based on detachment from the world and concentration on the spiritual, that is, a profound personal experience of the divine. He juxtaposes negative and positive modes; the way down is the way of asceticism while the way up is the way of metaphor and imagination (Kearns 132). In the Western tradition, this form of Christian doctrine, Transcendence, characterizes the poetic and mystical vision of Four Quartets (Murray 258).

Although the Canterbury Tales is set within an actual Catholic pilgrimage, Chaucer focuses primarily on the inner journey of the pilgrims. According to Zacharias Thundy, this inner journey is made up of two dimensions of the medieval Catholic synthesis: the
pilgrimage from reason to faith and the pilgrimage from human love to divine love (70).

Chaucer begins this movement in the *Knight's Tale*, a tale of human reason, and moves the pilgrims toward the *Parson's Tale*, a tale of faith. In comparison, *The Wasteland, Ash Wednesday*, and *Four Quartets* can be examined as a record of Eliot's own inward journey from reason to faith. In *The Waste Land*, Eliot does not express a clear Christian perspective even through he draws on Chaucer. In his works that come after *The Waste Land*, however, Eliot eventually articulates a Christian mindset similar to that of Chaucer. Ultimately, both Chaucer and Eliot express the idea that life is a spiritual journey toward the desired end for which humankind has been created; in the Christian tradition, of course, that end is God. In other words, both authors imply that life, in its wondrous yet transitory condition, is a pilgrimage.

In the General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer creates a community of pilgrims, “wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye/ Of sondry folk” (ll. 23-24) and describes “al the condicioun/ Ofech of hem, so as it semed me/ And whiche they weren, and of what degree” (ll. 39-40). The Prologue outlines the work and introduces the speaker, who renders a lively report of the pilgrimage to Canterbury based on his own perceptions and invites us as readers or listeners to contemplate our own journey through life as we make our way from Southwark to Canterbury with Chaucer’s pilgrims. Once we are drawn into the variously comical, bawdy, and serious stories, we grapple with such important matters as natural and social order, moral character, and religion. The Prologue, with its description of the natural world, the assembled pilgrims, and the storytelling contest, explores the Christian concept of *status viatoris*, that is, a pilgrim in the state of being “on the way.” This state of being “on
the way” is not to be understood as a designation of place; rather, according to philosopher Josef Pieper, it refers to the innermost structure of the created nature of humankind, the inherent “not yet” of the finite being (On Hope 13).

In Eliot’s The Waste Land, the opening lines of The Burial of the Dead echo the General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales and invite the reader to locate the work in the context of goal-directed journeying and storytelling (Kinney 165). Like Chaucer’s pilgrims who are on a trip through the world in search of the divine, Eliot, too, journeys through The Waste Land, Ash Wednesday, and Four Quartets in search of meaning, understanding, and ultimately, God. Through the language, movement, and rhythm of his poetry, Eliot contemplates the existence of God, accepts his limited powers of understanding, and finally moves to a higher plane of spiritual awareness.

My longstanding interest in philosophy and theology has led me to study the writings of Pieper, a twentieth-century Catholic philosopher and theologian. In order to fully appreciate Chaucer and Eliot’s spiritual journeys and to support my stance that their literary and intellectual journeys can be understood as pilgrimages, I will use Pieper’s explanation of the basic Christian concepts of status viatoris and status comprehensoris. In addition, I plan to link Victor Turner’s theory of liminality to Pieper’s idea of status viatoris and to discuss both Chaucer’s and Eliot’s use of this concept in their literary works. To begin, I will examine pilgrimage through a theological and historical lens using Turner’s theory of pilgrimage as a liminoid phenomenon.
Pilgrimage as a Liminaloid Phenomenon

Turner's theory of liminality, of betweenness, is a tool to explore Christian pilgrimage as a spiritual journey and as a process that involves movement toward a goal, i.e., union with God. Since the term pilgrimage has multiple meanings, it is necessary to set parameters for this analysis. Pilgrimage is to be understood as an interior journey of the heart which gives the pilgrim hope and moves the pilgrim toward the heart's desire, which is the divine. Turner explains that on a religious pilgrimage, the pilgrim enters a deeper level of existence than he has known in the routines of his everyday life. In order to enter more fully this deeper level of existence, the pilgrim seeks release from the social structures that normally bind him, in preparation for participation in an afterlife of pure bliss (Turner 8-11).

According to Turner, pilgrimage has some liminal phase attributes such as release from structure, communitas, and movement in general (253-254). Since, however, it is a voluntary and not an obligatory social mechanism to mark the transition from one state to another, Turner explains that pilgrimage is liminoid rather than liminal. In other words, pilgrimage represents voluntary liminality, and the pilgrim follows the paradigm of the via crucis, in which Jesus Christ voluntarily submitted his will to the will of his father (Turner 9-10).

Turner claims liminality, the state of being between, is not only transition but also potentiality, not only “going to be” but also “what may be” (3). This idea of movement suggests a state of betweenness because the pilgrim has not yet arrived at the final destination, that is, the beatific vision. During this period, liminars (pilgrims on pilgrimage) are stripped of social status and authority (Turner 249). This stripping away of power leaves
the liminaries in the state of betweenness, where social structure, hierarchy, and rules are no longer applicable. This equalizing of status during the liminal state creates what Turner calls *communitas*, which he defines as relationships among people who are undergoing ritual transition and experiencing a sense of intimacy and equality.

David Carrasco explains that *communitas* can be *spontaneous*, *normative*, or *ideological*. *Spontaneous communitas* is an unplanned and direct confrontation of the people involved in the pilgrimage. According to Carrasco, these “happenings” result from the momentary sense of freedom from social norms and biases and take place through shared music and stories. While spontaneous events of bonding take place on pilgrimages, pilgrimage is characterized mainly by *normative communitas*, which means the organizing of resources such as food, lodging and transportation (Carrasco 16). The third type, *ideological communitas*, is the expression of symbols and images between human beings and between human beings and their gods (Carrasco 17). Carrasco states that *ideological communitas* may appear in scripture or poetry; examples of *ideological communitas* include images of Mary (which we see in Eliot’s *Ash Wednesday* and *Four Quartets*), shrines, and statues, which offer healing, forgiveness, and love to the faithful.

In *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer alludes to all three types of *communitas*. The Host, Harry Bailly, although not as high in social standing as the Knight, takes control of the journey, establishes guidelines for the trip, and sets the rules for the storytelling game. He creates what Turner refers to as *normative communitas* through his organization of the journey. At his tavern, the Tabard, we find knights, nuns, priests, monks, and merchants, a cross section of society, socializing with one another as they begin their journey to
Canterbury. Under different circumstances, these pilgrims would not socialize together since they are of several different social ranks. According to Virgil Elizondo, “the very nature of the pilgrimage allows ordinary social divisions to fade out as the great diversity of pilgrims experience a common bond based on the unifying experience of the pilgrimage” (viii).

Although spontaneous communitas takes place as the pilgrims tell their tales and human identities are confronted, the Parson, the model for all pilgrims, works toward building ideological communitas as he teaches the others about God’s forgiveness through the gift of reconciliation.

On a pilgrim journey, sacred symbols such as statues and shrines take on a new and deeper meaning as the pilgrim connects the sights to the transformative secrets of the heart and goes through a personal spiritual transformation. This transformation may inspire the pilgrim to reflect on the relationship between humankind and God, the transitory world and the eternal, and good and evil. The meaning behind, understanding of, and connection to the sacred object or site is based not only on the shared understanding of the community, but also on the personal spiritual experience of the pilgrim. Thus, for the Christian pilgrim, pilgrimage is both a shared religious experience, which implies communitas according to Turner’s definition, and a personal spiritual experience of the heart.

Josef Pieper and the Status Viatoris

Pieper claims the status viatoris, the state of being “on the way,” designates humankind’s natural state of being (On Hope 12). The “not yet” of status viatoris refers to the time of uncertainty between status comprehensoris (fulfillment) and eternal damnation,
which is the irrevocable fixing of the will on nothingness. Pieper explains that the orientation toward nothingness is not the proper movement of natural being, which is always directed toward existence; the orientation toward nothingness comes into existence through the rejection of this proper movement (On Hope 19). As long as one remains in the status viatoris, there is, however, the ever-present possibility of turning away from God to nothingness. Chaucer addresses the back-and-forth between being and nothingness in his description of the Pardoner, who exhibits movement toward nothingness, while Eliot addresses this nothingness in the emptiness of The Waste Land.

For the individual who experiences in the status viatoris the “not-yet” of his existence, Pieper claims there is only one answer to such an experience—hope. The theological virtue of hope is the virtue of the status viatoris, and in this virtue, a person understands and affirms that he or she is a being created by God (Pieper, On Hope 20-21). Pieper explains the virtue of hope is more than respectability and uprightness; it is the enhancement of the human person, the ultimum potentiae, the most a person can be, the realization of the potentiality for being, the movement toward good, i.e., God (On Hope 25).

In hope, Pieper maintains, “man reaches ‘with restless heart,’ with confidence and patient expectation, toward the arduous ‘not yet’ of fulfillment, whether natural or supernatural” (On Hope, 27). Chaucer’s Parson, the model pilgrim, offers hope for salvation to the other pilgrims. Eliot, too, offers a transcendent hope in the midst of despair in Little Gidding: “When the tongues of fame are in-folded/ Into the crowned knot of fire/ And the fire and the rose are one” (V.)
According to Pieper, both despair, an anticipation of the nonfulfillment of hope, and presumption, a perverse anticipation of the fulfillment of hope, destroy the pilgrim character of human existence in the *status viatoris* because they are opposed to man's true becoming (On Hope 47). (Although some readers may claim Eliot's *The Waste Land* is a poem of despair, I will argue that even in the barrenness of the wasteland, Eliot provides us with a glimpse of hope.) This definition of despair is not to be confused with the psychological state that one falls into against one's will. Pieper uses the term as a decision of the will and an act of the intellect, not a mood. He goes on to say that it is the attitude of one's will, either hope or despair, which determines one's conduct (On Hope 51-52).

Presumption, on the other hand, lies in the perverse anticipation of fulfillment (Pieper, On Hope 65). In other words, the pilgrim comes to believe that he can win eternal life by his own moral performance or that he has already attained the goal that lies in the future. Chaucer's Pardoner, for example, offers a false hope to the pilgrims and implies that salvation can be bought for a price. According to Pieper, absolute certainty of salvation destroys the true pilgrim character of Christian existence because the goal of salvation has already been achieved.

In *A Brief Reader on the Virtues of the Human Heart*, Pieper looks at the spiritual journey of a pilgrim as an interior journey of the heart where "only someone who is silent is listening, and only the invisible is transparent" (12). He goes on to say that this deep silence requires more abstention from speech; the interior speech must also become mute. The silence that Pieper describes is not an empty and dead soundlessness, for in this silence there is not only listening but also answering:
What the true listener forbids himself is simply this: neither to obscure the radiance of his own eye that gazes on the sun nor to allow the soul’s ability to answer to lapse into words. Thus, the world reveals itself to the silent listener and only to him; the more silently he listens, the more purely is he able to perceive reality. Since reason is nothing else than the power to understand reality, then all reasonable, sensible sound, clear, and heart-stirring talk stems from listening silence. Thus all discourse requires a foundation in the motherly depth of silence. Otherwise speech is sourceless: it turns into chatter, noise, and deception. (13)

Several of Chaucer’s pilgrims are prone to such idle “chatter, noise, and deception.” The Wife of Bath claims to be an authority on marriage and boasts of her many husbands and lovers. The Prioress, although she can chant the liturgy and speak French, lacks a true religious calling. Like the Prioress, the Monk is not well suited for religious life and demonstrates a mismatch between man and vocation in two ways, array and behavior (Hallissy 29): “He wears the fyneste [clothes] of the lond” (I.193) and enjoys “pricking and of huntyng for the hare” (I.191). Further, the Monk disregards the rules of his order, and, instead, follows the customs of modern times. The Friar, too, knows much of “daliaunce and fair langage” (I.211) and is a “smooth operator” with the ladies (Hallisy 33). And the Miller, who is loud and vulgar, tells a smuttystory of human behavior. Through the behavior of these pilgrims, Chaucer points out that idle chatter leads to deception and disorder. Eliot, through the disconnected voices in The Waste Land, implies that idle chatter leads to emptiness and chaos.
CHAPTER 2. CHAUCER

Medieval Pilgrimage and Curiosity

The medieval connotation of curiosity was exact: "the temptation of curiositas referred to any morally excessive and suspect interest in observing the world, seeking novel experiences, or acquiring knowledge for its own sake" (Zacher 4). In looking at the opposition between curiosity and proper motives for pilgrimage, it is important to consider the belief that curiosity was morally useless and dangerous, took the Christian’s gaze off focus on the eternal, and signified an unstable frame of mind (Zacher 21). The Augustinian view maintained that curiosity turned the pilgrim’s mind from heavenly contemplation and toward sensory enjoyment of worldly pleasures. In addition, curiositas led to the desire for intellectual knowledge for the sake of knowing, rather than for spiritual insight.

In “Landscape as Cartography in Early Christian Pilgrimage Narratives,” Blake Leyerle defines pilgrimage as “a serious spiritual undertaking” (121). He differentiates pilgrimage from travel and tourism even though pilgrims and tourists “share the same infrastructure of travel” (121); that is, they travel by the same means along the same terrain, and often they see the same sights. Ultimately, motivation for the journey separates the pilgrim from the tourist. However, since motive is not easily discernible, it is often difficult to differentiate a true pilgrim from a tourist, as Chaucer suggests in his Canterbury Tales. For the purpose of this paper, a pilgrim is one who searches for a mystical or spiritual experience. A tourist, on the other hand, looks at interesting sights that may have nothing to
do with a mystical experience. The pilgrim actively participates in the spiritual experience; the tourist observes the sights without undergoing spiritual enlightenment. In using a Christian lens, then, we can say that the pilgrim sees through the eyes of the heart, the tourist through the eyes only.

Unlike the Parson, who offers us an image of the ideal Christian pilgrim, Chaucer’s Pardoner appears to flip back-and-forth between pilgrim and tourist. In his prologue the Pardoner openly admits that he is “a ful vicious man” (VI.459); even so, he claims that he can still tell a “moral tale” (VI.460). Larry Benson’s reading of the tale indirectly addresses the Pardoner’s struggle between pilgrimage and tourism (Chaucer 15). Benson points out that the Pardoner’s Tale does have some of the characteristics of a sermon even though hatred sometimes motivates the Pardoner’s preaching—he stings his enemies with his “tonge smerte” (VI.413) and spits out his “venym under hewe/Of hoolyneese” (VI.421-422). Also, Benson claims that in the Pardoner’s story about the three rioters determined to find Death, the Pardoner emphasizes the theme that “greed is theroot of all evil,” which suggests a pilgrim mentality.

Margaret Hallissy, on the other hand, insists the Pardoner is “a conscious hypocrite perverting the good intentions of others to his ownevil end” (51). She claims that although the Pardoner may appear to be torn between pilgrim and tourist roles at times, he clearly uses his gift as a talented preacher to take advantage of his fellow pilgrims “by manipulating the simple faith of the poor” (51). Although the Pardoner assures his fellow pilgrims that he will not deceive them, in the end he abuses his ecclesiastical position for personal gain by
offering indulgences and fake relics and leads naïve pilgrims to believe the rich can buy their way to heaven.

Through the Pardoner’s struggle between the roles of pilgrim and tourist, Chaucer brings to light humankind’s struggle to find a proper balance between spiritual and worldly concerns, since both are basic to human existence. More importantly, Chaucer highlights humankind’s fundamental struggle between cupidity (selfish pleasure) and caritas (selfless pleasure) in the pilgrimage of life.

In the beginning of the General Prologue, the ideal Christian motive for pilgrimage is overshadowed by the image of spring and rebirth. Most of the pilgrims are too “perced to the roote” (I.2) by “Aprill,” “Zephirus,” and Aries, the sign of the “Ram,” to focus on the sacred shrine of Thomas à Becket (Zacher 92). According to Zacher (92), worldly longing is further accentuated by the “palmeres,” who “seken straunge strondes, / To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes” (I.13-14). Although Chaucer’s pilgrims seem to have less than ideal motives for going on the pilgrimage, they clearly exude an air of “felaweshipe” as they begin their journey. Zacher asserts, however, that “a more spiritual motivation for pilgrimage would have generated a true Christian fellowship among the pilgrims” (88). Zacher points out that Chaucer has already highlighted the disorientation that, in our own time, Thomas Merton addresses:

The geographical pilgrimage is the symbolic acting out of an inner journey.

The inner journey is the intrapolation of the meanings and signs of the outer pilgrimage. One can have one without the other. It is best to have both. (92)
Merton’s implication is that only the pilgrim who sees with the heart, like Chaucer’s Parson, is able to quiet the soul and find meaning in the sacred signs of the physical journey, even though, objectively speaking, all the pilgrims see the same sights. Ultimately, the degree and depth of one’s spiritual awareness dependents upon one’s own inwardness, which is, according to Paul Philibert “constituted by wonder, refection, contemplation, and surrender to intimacy with the God who reveals” (83).

According to David Walsh, “the world has never really been able to sever its links with the God who created it” (5). He makes the point that the world is not truly secular, not utterly cut off from the divine. In the Canterbury Tales, Chaucer portrays a modern vision of Christianity similar to that of Walsh, rather than the medieval thinking of his time, which maintained that curiosity led to sin, and that the transitory or temporal world was corrupt. Chaucer suggests that the struggle for the Christian pilgrim is not choosing between the eternal and the temporal, but in finding the imprint of the eternal in the temporal, that is, finding God in creation. Only when the pilgrim finds the proper balance between the two worlds can he or she see God and the temporal world in oneness and, ultimately, become a signpost to Christ, like the Parson. Thus, the pilgrim “on the way” must journey through the world with eyes and heart wide open in order to experience God in the world and in others, and in doing so, follows the example set by Christ.

Although Chaucer was mindful of the negative connotations associated with pilgrimage and curiositas, he did not use the frame of pilgrimage to reinforce negative sentiments. Rather, he used the frame of pilgrimage to show that human beings are constantly evolving spiritually—that, like Paul (Phil.3.8-12) we continue to move forward
toward the future with hope even in the midst of chaos. Both Chaucer and Eliot imply that we can learn from the knowledge gained from looking at the past, but the hope for good and for change always lies with the future. This process of movement toward the good is, for the pilgrim, what Chaucer and Eliot allude to as the pilgrimage of life.

The Voices of Chaucer

One way that Chaucer addresses issues of faith, describes the Christian concept of status viatoris, and mirrors the nature of the Christian self is via his three poetic voices that Barbara Nolan describes as the clerkly voice, the pilgrim “I”, and the host. We can see our own spiritual and temporal struggles reflected in the pilgrim “I,” who in his humanity tries to mediate and is sometimes torn between the clerkly voice, the voice of caritas, and the host, the voice of cupidity. Through these voices, Chaucer acts as our spiritual guide and exposes humankind’s inclination toward worldly pleasures in its struggle to know God.

The Clerkly Voice

The majority of medieval pilgrims could not read and did not have personal access to the Bible; they relied on the clergy for Christian instruction. In the medieval Christian tradition, clerics were considered authorities on the Bible and teachers of God’s word, and the Bible was presumed to be the authority on all matters of human endeavor and concern (Besserman 3). For Chaucer and his well-educated primary audience, however, Latin Bibles, gospel harmonies, concordances, and other biblically inspired works of literature in the vernacular were readily available (Besserman 8). Thus, Chaucer was able to draw on the
authority of the Bible and other religious books for the *Canterbury Tales*. This theological knowledge enabled him to create the clerkly voice in the General Prologue, which parallels the authorial voice of medieval Christian teaching and the voice of a well-formed conscience.

Chaucer's clerkly voice represents the voice of reason, which comes from the heart and leads the journeying pilgrim to God. (After the 17th century, however, the mind, which was considered the source of reason, and the heart were separated.) In the Augustinian perspective, the language of the heart is also the language of spiritual sight; the heart shifts the discourse in the direction of love, and God, who is both light and love, becomes the desired end (Klassen 9) The clerkly voice calls the pilgrim to transcend the temporal in the journey toward divine love. By analogy, this voice gives spiritual sight to the blind and teaches *caritas*, which is the basic lesson of Christianity.

In the opening lines of the General Prologue, Chaucer uses the clerkly voice, the voice of reason, knowledge, and authority, to call pilgrims to spiritual meditation and to explain the timeliness of the pilgrimage to Canterbury, which is symbolic of humankind's spiritual journey to God:

> Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote...
> Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
> Inspired hath in every holt and heeth...
> Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
> And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes. (I.1-13)

In this passage, Chaucer implies that humankind's spiritual awakening is reflected in the rebirth of Spring; he points out that man's higher nature, while in harmony with the
physical world, demands that man goes through spiritual rebirth (Williams 28-29). Through the image of spring and the symbol of pilgrimage, Chaucer prepares us to witness the spiritual progress of the travelers:

   To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
   And specially from every shires ende
   Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende
   The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
   That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke. (I.14-19)

According to Nolan, Chaucer uses the synecdoche of spring to imply a hierarchy in the universe, one that points inevitably to God as the source of love and order (158). Chaucer establishes a natural hierarchy by starting from the "flour" and moving on to the "smale foweles" and then to the "palmeres" and, ultimately, to God, through the pilgrimage to the "hooly blisful martir," St. Thomas à Becket. Nolan goes on to say that within this scheme, Chaucer emphasizes the movement of creation, imperfect and incomplete, toward completion and the fulfillment of longing. In other words, the movement of creation coincides with the Christian concepts of \textit{status viatoris} and \textit{status comprehensoris}.

The opening lines of the Prologue also echo the first story of creation (Gen.26-30), which establishes the order of hierarchy. According to Scripture, man is presented as the climax of God’s creative activity, and he resembles God primarily because of his ability to reason. Aquinas claims that humankind’s light of natural reason is nothing other than Divine Light’s imprint on us; therefore, it is humankind’s natural inclination to journey toward the
divine end for which it was naturally created (157-158). This natural voice of reason is expressed through Chaucer’s clerkly voice, which leads the journeying pilgrim to God.

The Pilgrim “T”

Nolan claims that the pilgrim “T” is privileged because “he is the ‘T’ from whom the other voices take their being, and he provides a moral center from which to judge the other voices” (155). In the pilgrim “I,” however, we do not hear the voice of the strict moralist observing human folly with clerical vigor (Nolan 161). The pilgrim “T” willingly engages in the fallen world’s illusions, opinions, and beliefs, questioning by his “pleye” their relation to truth (Nolan 163). Chaucer the poet shifts from the clerkly voice to the pilgrim “I” on the important word *bifil* (I.19), which signifies chance happenings, unexpected events occurring at random (Nolan 159). Nolan claims that this word is important because at this point we are jolted from the clerkly discourse (which is free of involvement in time or space and implies a transcendence of the temporal) to the pilgrim’s direct address to the other pilgrims and to the readers (159). Nolan goes on to say that the pilgrim “T” insists that his observations do not come from the superior vantage point assumed by the clerkly voice but from within:

So hadde I spoken with hem everichon
That I was of hir felaweshipe anon,
And made forward erly for to ryse
To take oure wey ther as I yow devyse. (I.31-34)

Furthermore, the pilgrim “T” submits himself to the demand and limits of the occasion “in that seson on a day” (I.19) (Nolan 160), which places the pilgrim within a temporal context.
The pilgrim “I” assumes the responsibility of telling us about the other pilgrims and their plans. Instead, however, of alluding to the authority of religious books as does the clerkly voice, the pilgrim “I” relies on his own observations:

Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
To telle yow al the condicioun
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me
And whiche they weren, and of what degree
And eek in what array that they were inne (I.37-41)

Through pilgrim “I” and his descriptions of the other pilgrims, Chaucer implicitly points out human limitations. According to Christian tradition these limitations are rooted in the fall of Adam, who struggled with his own ability to reason, his limited power of observation, his inclination for temporal pleasure, and his desire for God. As a result of his human limitations, pilgrim “I” is not an authority, for he uses only his powers of observation and reason to present the physical description, social rank, and the character of his fellow pilgrims.

Pilgrim “I” ranks the other pilgrims according to their degree, starting with the Knight and ending with the Pardoner. Helen Cooney claims that the social ranking is not the result of political or economic forces, but rather part of a universal and divinely established cosmic order—“as Dante believed, the reflection of a divine idea laid up in heaven which gives each man his place in an appointed hierarchy” (151). In medieval Christianity, one was to behave according to one’s degree, therefore establishing a kind of harmony between social and moral orders (Cooney 154).
In the descriptions of the other pilgrims, however, pilgrim “I” “pleyes” with the reader and implies that there may be a discrepancy between social and moral order. In other words, things are not always what they should be, and people do not always conduct themselves as they should. For example, references to the monk imply that he was not only a hunter of animals but also a sexual predator of women:

A Monk ther was, a fair for the maistrie,
An outridere, that lovede venerie...
Therefore he was a prikasour aright:
Grehoundes he hadde as swift as fowel in flight;
Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare. (I.165-192)

According to the pilgrim “I,” there is more to the monk than meets the eye. Chaucer the poet, however, suggests that as the audience, we should be careful whom we trust, including pilgrim “I.”

We begin to question the judgement of pilgrim “I” in the description he gives us of the Prioress because he seems to approve of her (Wilson 34). The pilgrim “I” gives us an exhaustive account of her looks, the way she eats, and her use of French. It is not until the end of the passage that the pilgrim “I” describes the condition of her conscience:

She was so charitable and so pitous
She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous
Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde....
And al was conscience and tendre herte. (I.144-150)
To weep over a mouse in a trap shows a silliness rather than a compassionate heart. Through this satiric description of the Prioress, Chaucer the poet warns us about the trustworthiness of pilgrim "T" and reiterates the theme that things are not always what they seem.

The disclaimer "so as it seamed me" (I.39), suggests that pilgrim "T" is going to do the best he can to accurately describe the other pilgrims; however, he can speak only from the authority of his own experience and perceptions, which may not be totally accurate. In addition, he apologizes if he has not put the other pilgrims in the proper order:

    Also, I prey yow to foryeve it me,
    Al have I nat set folk in hir degree
    Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde. (I.743-745)

According to Cooney, this passage implies that no man can fully comprehend the working of the great providential scheme of which the social order is part (153). Through the uncertainty of pilgrim "I," Chaucer suggests that because of limited perception, a pilgrim should not look to himself for truth. Rather, pilgrims should listen to the voice of reason and keep their eyes elevated to God in their spiritual journeys toward truth. Nolan claims that through the pilgrim "I," Chaucer crystallizes one of the most painful lessons of medieval Christianity: "that human beings in their condition of exile must depend for their knowledge on limited powers of observation, an imperfect understanding of events, and a language essentially different from, and inadequate to, the truth it seeks to express" (160). At the end of the General Prologue, pilgrim "I" acknowledges his imperfect condition and says "my wit is short, ye may wel understonde" (I.746).
The Host

Nolan claims the host, the third of these poetic voices, is like the pilgrim “I” in that he espouses fiction, but the host lacks pilgrim “I’s” acknowledgement of partiality, limitation, and absence (164). Taking Nolan’s claim a step further, it seems even the pilgrims do not recognize the host’s limitations. According to pilgrim “I,” the host is given authority because he is “Boold of his speche, and wys, and wel ytaught, / And of manhod hym lakked right naught” (I.755-756). The pilgrims collectively give the host the power to organize, judge, and comment on the tales:

Oure conseil was nat longe for to seche.
Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys,
And graunted hym withouten mooore avys,
And bad him seye his voirdit as hym leste....
And that he wolde been oure governour,
And of oure tales juge and reportour,
And sette a soper at a certeyn pris,
And we wol reuled ben at his devys
In heigh and lough; and thus by oon assent
We been acorded to his juggement. (I. 784-818)

The host ingratiates himself to the pilgrims and makes “greet chier” to “everichon” (I.747). He falsely claims that they can trust him because his is honest: “For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,” he swears (I.763). The word “if” implies that there is a possibility he
may lie. The host also claims that the pleasure that he will provide “shal coste noght” (I.768). However, the host really urges “greet chiere” and “pleye” for material profit:

And whoso wole my juggement withseye
Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye. (I.805-806)

Furthermore, his interest in tale telling coincides with his pleasure in drinking and his desire for money:

As evere mote I drynke wyn or ale,
Whoso be rebel to my juggement
Shal paye for al that by the wey is spent. (I.832-834)

In other words, the host pursues cupidty, which according to Augustine is a motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of one’s self, one’s neighbor, or any corporal thing for the sake of something other than God (Robertson 25).

The host, Harry Bailly, cajoles the other pilgrims into pursuing the pleasures of the world without a concern for truth. He rushes from one tale to the next so that there is no time for reflection and introspection. Unlike the clerkly voice, the host doesn’t allow the reality of the human condition to enter his thoughts and disrupt his pleasurable play. According to Nolan, through Harry Bailly, Chaucer calls attention to the common tendency to miss or set aside contemplation of the providential design of the universe and humanity’s place within it (165). Thus, Harry, by his pursuit of temporal pleasures or cupidty, demonstrates a turning to nothingness.

By using engaging stories to present reality, Chaucer is able to moralize without sermonizing. Through a clerkly voice, the pilgrim ‘I,’ and host, Chaucer emphasizes the
betweenness of the one “on the way.” The clerkly voice is concerned with hierarchy and order, the voice of the host with disorder and sexual exploits, and the pilgrim “I” is torn between these two voices of cupidity and caritas, as the Christian is in the journey toward perfection. Although the pilgrim “I” experiences turmoil and is pulled by the host into the world of fun and fiction, he is called to question what is true through the clerkly voice, the voice of reason and faith.

Finally, every human being is pulled into the world of fiction, the temporal world, in the journey toward perfection. Pilgrims, by their status viatoris, have not yet arrived at status comprehensoris, and so must journey toward God with hope since “both despair and the certainty of possession are in conflict with the truth of reality” (Pieper 20). Therefore, like pilgrim “I,” all human beings, with their limited power of observation and ability to reason, must struggle to find truth amidst opposing voices.

The Tales

Chaucer acknowledges the opposing voices of the pilgrims as they make their journey toward Canterbury. The Wife, the Pardoner, and the Monk seem to be journeying toward worldly pleasures (cupidity), while the Knight and the Parson are clearly moving toward the spiritual good (caritas). Through storytelling, Chaucer reminds the reader that curiosity can lead to great evils: harmful gossip, sexual promiscuity, forms of sensual indulgence, excessive eating and drinking, and the flaunting of clothing. Thus, Chaucer points out that in this transitory world, it is easy to fall from grace and turn to nothingness.
According to J. G. Davies, there was a medieval proverb that went “Go a pilgrim, return a whore.” Chaucer’s Wife, interested in “daliaunce,” may reflect this concern about women as she had been on three pilgrimages to Jerusalem and “hadde passed many a strange strem; / At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne, / In Galic at Seint-Jame, and at Coloigne./ She koude muchel of wandrynge by the weye (1463-467). The Wife turns the natural order of things upside down, conveniently forgets the wisdom of the past in favor of her personal experience, and uses partial truths to tell the greatest lies. According to Christian tradition, the world is in order when God is held above reason, reason is over sensuality, and sensuality is over the body of humankind. In her prologue, the Wife of Bath turns this world order upside down and makes herself an authority on marriage by right of experience:

    Experience, through noon auctoritee
    Were in this world, is right ynogh for me
    To speke of wo that is in mariag. (III.1-3)

Furthermore, she points out that experience and the ability to recite a few biblical passages gives her the wisdom to interpret Scripture:

    Men may devyne and glosen, up and doun,
    But wel I woot, expres, withoute lye,
    God bad us for to wexe and multiplye;
    That gentil text kan I wel understonde. (III.26-29)

The Wife also uses her limited knowledge of Scripture to justify consummating her sexual desires:

    For evere yet I loved to be gay,
And for to walke in March, Averill, and May,
Fro hous to hous, to heere sondry talys—
That Jankyn clerk, and my gossyb dame Alys,
And I myself, into the feeldes wente. (III.545-549)

She then goes on to say, “I hadde the bettre leyser for to pleye,/ And for to se, and eek for to be seye/ Of lusty folk” (III.551-553). She doesn’t try to hide her desire to satisfy her sexual appetite and openly admits, “As help me God, I was a lusty oon” (III.605). But rather than taking responsibility for her own behavior, she puts the blame on her birth sign, Venus, who “me yaf my lust, my likenousesse, / And Mars yaf me my sturdy hardynesse” (III.611-612).

According to the creation story in Genesis, God made Adam and Eve co-creators when he told them to be fertile and multiply and have dominion over all the living things. This does not mean that women are supposed to have dominion over men, as the Wife suggests. The Wife, however, is stubborn “as is a leonesse” (III.437) and admits “He [her husband] yaf me al the bridel in myn hond , / To han the governance of hous and lond,/ And of his tonge, and of his hond also” (III.813-815).

Once again the Wife turns the order of marriage upside down in her tale when the rapist knight announces that what women want most is “to have sovereignty/ As wel over hir housbond as hir love, / And for to been in maistrie him above” (III.1039-1040). Here the Wife contradicts Christian teaching concerning the order of marriage, not only in the hierarchical order of things, but also with the implication that women can have lovers as well as husbands:
Eek wel I woot, he seyde myn housbonde
Sholde lete fader and mooder and take to me.
But of no nombre mencion made he,
Of bigamye, or of octogamy;

Why sholde men thanne speke of it vileyne? (III.30-34)

The Wife fails to mention that Scripture states “and the two of them become one body” (Genesis 2.24). In Genesis, there is no mention of husbands in the plural sense, and when the Wife says “the wise kyng, daun Solomon; / I trowe he hadde wyves mo than oon” (III.35-36), she doesn’t mention that his many wives led him into idolatry. The moral advice the Wife gives is entirely out of balance with the Christian message, which counsels against setting one’s sights on the things of this world. According to her, one should “Wynne whoso may, for al is for to selle” (III.414). In other words, she claims everything has a price.

Although the Wife of Bath changes the natural order of marriage by putting sexuality over reason, she indirectly suggests that marriage should be based on mutual respect, trust, and submission. She explains that when the Knight put his trust in his wife and let her choose beauty or age and faithfulness, “she obeyed hym in every thyng/ That myghte doon hym plesance or likyng” (III.1255-1256). On the other hand, the Wife prays that God will send a pestilence to those men who are “olde and angry nygardes of dispense” (III.1263) and don’t respect their wives. Even through the Wife pushes the boundaries of marriage, Chaucer intimates that marriage is meant to be a sacramental union.

In the *Miller’s Tale*, John, the carpenter, “a riche gnof [churl]” (I.3188), falls from grace because, like the Wife of Bath, he is consumed by sexual desires and does not heed the
warning that “man sholde wedde his simylitude” (I.3228). He marries Allison, a young wife of eighteteene yeer” (I.3223) and “heeld hire narwe in cage, / For she was wylde and yong, and he was old / And demed hymself been lik a cokewold” (I.3224-3226). The marriage between Allison and John reflects selfish love, or cupidity, rather than selfless love, or true caritas.

In contrast to the Wife and the Miller, the good and loyal Knight shows how kindness and mercy can change lust to love. The Knight also restores order through the actions of Theseus, the valiant Duke. When Theseus confronts his enemies who have been fighting against him, he lets them live rather than having them killed. He again shows mercy when he finds Arcite and Palamon fighting in the woods. Theseus’ continuous acts of mercy and love transform Arcite and Palamon from childish boys consumed by “courtly love” into men of honor. Even though Arcite dies, Theseus points out that “a man hath moost honour/ To dyen in his excellence and flour, /When he is siker of his goode name; / Thanne hath he doon his freend, ne hym, no shame” (I.3047-3050). Unlike the Wife, who values sensuality above reason, Theseus places reason over sensuality. He encourages Emily and Palamon to make a “vertu of necessitee” (I.3042), in other words, to seek God’s will in divine providence. He advises them to “make of sorwes two/ O parfit joye, lastynge everemo” (I.3071-3072) and elevates marriage to a sacred bond. Order is finally restored when Palamon and Emily marry and live “in blisse, in richesse, and in heele” (I.3102).

The Parson, “a lerned man, a clerk, / That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche” (X.480-481), is the last of the pilgrims to speak and puts an end to the tale-telling. The Parson refuses to use the language of poetry and speaks in straightforward prose to
emphasize the seriousness of what he has to say. According to David Benson, The Parson’s Tale does not tell a story so that the reader can make, or rather discover, his own story. This tale encourages readers to examine their own lives and consciences and then tell their findings in confession in order to further their salvation. Benson proposes that the result will not be fiction, but rather the reader’s narrative of his or her moral state (20). He also points out that Chaucer trusts his readers because he assumes that they are searching to learn their doctrine—Christianity— and hopes the “goode God” will “make us alle goode men,/And brynge us to his heighe blisse” (VII.3845-3846). In other words, the reader must complete the Tales through the acts of reading and reflecting.

In the Parson’s Tale, Chaucer clearly indicates that faith is above reason. The Parson, although not learned in books, is portrayed as a peaceful man who is learned in the faith. According to Thomas à Kempis, “the man of peace can achieve more good than the man who has great learning” (50). At the end of his sermon, which Hallissy calls a road map that shows the Christian the true way to heaven (316), the Parson reminds his audience that the goal of the earthly pilgrimage is eternal bliss. Just as Chaucer’s pilgrims journey toward Canterbury, so the Christian pilgrim journeys toward the heavenly Jerusalem “where all harms are healed” (Hallissy 318).

Critics argue that Chaucer had not finished the Canterbury Tales at the time of his death, and that is why the pilgrims never reach Canterbury. Like Donald Howard, however, I propose that the Canterbury Tales is as complete as Chaucer meant it to be. I suggest that through the movement toward, but never reaching, Canterbury, i.e., completion, Chaucer acknowledges humankind’s inability to reach the status comprehensoris in the state of
journeying since completion can only be reached through physical death. And as shown by Chaucer's *curious* pilgrims, as long as we are in the state of journeying, there is that ever-present fear that we can turn to nothingness.

Chaucer's placement of the *Parson's Tale* at the end of the *Canterbury Tales* is also significant in that silence comes only near the end when the Host calls for quiet and the Parson preaches to the company (Zacher 49). Chaucer's emphasis on silence suggests that one must become quiet in order that "things might find their proper utterance" (Pieper, *A Brief Reader* 13). For the Parson, proper utterance lies in communicating reality through prose. His direct approach portrays prudence and uprightness; he speaks openly about God's gift of grace and humankind's need for reconciliation in order to reach "the endless bliss of Heaven" (X.1076).

Finally, since Chaucer is a "complex moralist," his tales invite continuing analysis (Zacher 89), much like our own journeys through life. According to Howard, each tale has a momentary interest that makes it seem to happen in the present (80). Through this "now," Chaucer links the remembered past and the unknown future for both his Canterbury pilgrims and his readers as they journey toward their goal. Thus, as long as we are pilgrims, viators "on the way," we will struggle to find wholeness, perfection, and completion in this liminal state of betweenness. Like the Canterbury pilgrimage, itself, the journey toward perfection is not only an individual but also a communal goal; Chaucer's vision of the "blisful compaigny that rejoysen hem everemo" (X.1078) encompasses his Canterbury pilgrims, his medieval audience, and his modern audience as well (Hallissy 318). And as Benson points
out, if rightly understood, the *Canterbury Tales* can help us today on our unfinished pilgrimage (22).
CHAPTER 3. T. S. ELIOT

Journey Through The Waste Land

For Eliot, poetry is a medium to describe his inner journey and reveal his spiritual progress. He suggests that since God is within, the perfect pilgrimage is to engage in an interior or spiritual journey. Eliot's poetic journey acts out his desire to internalize religion. By looking at Eliot by means of Turner and Pieper, we can see Eliot as a liminar in the state of betweenness; his mental state moves from doubt and questioning toward enlightenment or "becoming." Eliot's inward pilgrimage becomes a spiritual exercise of meditation, contemplation, and transformation.

In The Waste Land, the opening lines of The Burial of the Dead echo the Prologue to The Canterbury Tales and invite the reader to locate the work in the context of goal-directed journeying and storytelling (Kinney 165):

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

Eliot, however, inverts the Chaucerian prologue and invokes the sterility and spiritual emptiness of modern existence (Evans 41). The Waste Land implies that rebirth, whether physical or spiritual, is painful: "April is the cruellest month" (I.1). Cahill claims that for spiritual rebirth to take place in The Waste Land, there must be the spiritual equivalent of
sacrifice and death. The cost of renewal, however, makes the dwellers of *The Waste Land* reluctant to be renewed, or in terms of the poem, “so fearful of spring” (Cahill 40). The people in *The Waste Land* lack the will to live, the “courage to be” (Cahill 41). Fear paralyzes them, fear of the pain that comes with spiritual awakening, that is, fear of undergoing the crucifixion of the self.

Despite the darkness of death in *The Waste Land*, Eliot provides a glimmer of hope in the opening lines of *The Burial of the Dead*: there emerge “Lilacs out of the dead land” (I.2). In other words, death breeds sweet, fragrant life, as does “Aprill with his shoures soote” (Chaucer I.1). Eliot uses nature to suggest that, for the pilgrim, the journey from death to life is painful, not unlike the pain that nature goes through during April, the “cruellest month” (I.1), when all creation is groaning. Like Eliot, Chaucer, too, implies that, as *viators* “on the way,” all people must suffer into knowledge in their journey; as the Parson says, one may become spiritual through poverty, joyful through hunger and thirst, and thus find life through death (X.1076-1080). The hope that life comes out of death is reiterated at the end of *The Burial of the Dead*: “That corpse you planted last year in your garden/ Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?” (II.71-72). Eliot, like Chaucer, plants hope for rejuvenation and continuation.

Since both *The Waste Land* and the *Canterbury Tales* focus on humankind’s quest for spiritual meaning, the reader might expect *The Waste Land* to follow a conventional plot and move toward completion, like *The Canterbury Tales*. However, as a liminar moving between hope and despair, Eliot struggles to find meaning in an empty existence, antagonizes tradition, and offers no clear answer to the reader. *The Waste Land* breaks down the structure
of narrative into a set of lyric moments, that is, fragmented characters and discordant voices. These fragments seem to reflect the chaos of Eliot’s Europe, the constant chaos of humankind, and Eliot’s own struggle for perfection. Like The Waste Land, the Canterbury Tales is fragmentary in that the characters are not fixed or judged, and their pilgrimage is unfinished. And like Eliot’s voices, Chaucer’s multiple viewpoints create chaos and make the tales “seem a maze of contradictions in which the reader is left to find his own way” (Howard 189). In the midst of all this disorder, both Eliot and Chaucer search for a particular kind of order that can unify these scraps; they see what the crowd, represented by the many voices and viewpoints, do not.

Eliot uses fragmentation in The Waste Land to show the dissonance and detachment of a crowded London. In The Waste Land, voices talk past one another and at one another but never communicate with each another, as in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” Through the use of various voices, Eliot, too, includes a cross-section of society in The Waste Land. While Chaucer’s pilgrims experience a limited sense of community, Eliot’s speakers never establish what Turner defines as communitas. Along with Eliot, we are left to wonder how humankind has come to this point of isolation and indifference.

In The Waste Land, we see nothingness, the turning aside from the movement toward fulfillment (status comprehensoris) and a heading toward despair, portrayed through the voices of shallow characters. Pieper says that talkativeness and babble have always been regarded as a kin of despair. The first speaker, Marie, demonstrates this frenzy of idle talk as she shares treasured moments of her life and reminisces about her childhood, then abruptly changes the subject and says that she reads much of the night and goes south in the winter
(I.14-18). Marie’s disconnected thoughts suggest a lack of reasoning and a movement toward despair. After Marie, a prophetic voice cries out of the darkness:

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images. (I.19-22)

Through this prophetic voice, Eliot tries to wake humankind from a dead sleep, but no one seems to hear because no one changes; no one is transformed. There is no movement; there is only fear of fear (Cahill 40). Then the voice becomes more intense and warns us that everyone is going to die:

(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust. (I.26-30)

The voice sounds like that of a modern day Ezekiel, poking fun of man’s fear of his own shadow, yet stressing that we should fear death because eventually we will all return to dust. Anyone who has lost the will to live, however, does not fear death (Pieper, A Brief Reader 26). Although the prophet tries to rouse justifiable fear in the living dead, it appears his efforts are in vain. Through this prophetic voice, Eliot suggests it is not just physical death, the returning to dust, that should inspire fear in humankind; rather, humankind should fear
eternal damnation or the voluntary turning away from God, both of which lead to spiritual death.

These lines of true prophecy are played against the voice of the false prophet, Madame Sosostris (Martz 142), who, ironically speaking, is “known to be the wisest woman in Europe” (I.45). Like the voice of the prophet, she, too, says to “fear death” (I.55). Eliot states, however, that Madame Sosostris’s cards are “wicked” (I.46) because she believes that destiny, which is determined by Fortune’s Wheel (I.53), can be read in the cards. This type of curiositas, that is, the desire to know things beyond what is humanly knowable, turns humankind away from truth and toward destruction.

Eliot continues his search for spiritual meaning in *A Game of Chess*, an interpersonal game of skill, strategy, and control. The poem becomes a place of struggle, and the speaker cannot enter into dialogue with the nervous woman whose voice dominates this passage (Doreski 84). We feel the anguish of the woman as she hysterically pleads for a gesture of affection through the touch of words:

Speak to me, why do you never speak. Speak.

What are you thinking of? What thinking? (II.112-113)

When she demands, “I never know what you are thinking. Think” (II.112-114), she implicitly refuses the speaker speech; the speaker responds, “I think we are in rats’ alley/ Where the dead men lost their bones (II.115-116). The woman and man skillfully dismiss each other; the opportunity to be vulnerable and communicate is lost. The couple does not show a willingness to be wounded for the deeper gain of love. Finally, the game is forfeited, and both voices become, once again, part of the throng of the living dead.
According to Audrey Cahill, *The Waste Land* is a spiritual desert "in which the spiritual barrenness of the people is reflected in the barrenness of their sexual relations" (39), and Eliot clearly portrays this spiritual barrenness through various visions of sexual activity in *The Fire Sermon*. In one scene, the man and woman have just finished eating and the woman is now "bored and tired" (III.236). The man attempts to engage her in caresses, but she does not respond. Her unresponsiveness, however, doesn't stop him from satisfying his own physical desires:

> Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;  
> Exploring hands encounter no defence;  
> His vanity requires no response,  
> And makes a welcome of indifference. (III. 239-242)

Eliot continues to emphasize this indifference when the act is finished:

> She turns and looks a moment in the glass,  
> Hardly aware of her departed lover;  
> Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:  
> ‘Well now that’s done: and I’m glad it’s over.’ (III.249-252)

Cahill suggests that the characters’ misuse of their sexual identity is also the misuse of their spiritual capacity (39). Through the impiety of the couple, Eliot shows what love is not, and in doing so, makes an implicit connection between true caritas and selflessness. Finally, the casualness of the couple suggests that indifference is the greatest sin of humanity.

*The Waste Land* can be compared to Augustine’s “city of man,” the material changing world which opposes God. In the “city of man” there is love of self above all else, and man
glories in his own power. The "city of man" lays the foundation for chaos, fragmentation, and cupidity, elements that are clearly evident in Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. This cupidity, expressed through carnal acts of lust, keeps both Chaucer's pilgrims and Eliot's characters from moving toward true *caritas*.

In *What the Thunder Said*, Eliot argues for an abandonment of self. Eliot asks us as individuals and as community to account for missed opportunities to lovingly give ourselves to others, to sympathize with others, and to give control of our lives to a trusting, expert hand; that is, a divine hand. Eliot directly asks us "what have we given?" (V.402). He claims that in reality, we have existed by what we have given even though in our obituaries, we are remembered for what we have received (V.407-408). Eliot goes on to say that we are not only to give of ourselves, we are to also have mercy and compassion for others. This compassion, however, is not to be confused with the pity displayed by Chaucer's Prioress "if she saugh a mous/ Kaught in a trappe" (I.144-145). Rather, true compassion is an expression of selfless love. Eliot suggests that without compassion, humankind is in a prison "thinking of the key" (V.415). This mental picture suggests that unless there is submission and openness to God, we are in a prison. In order to be happy and fully alive, one must die to self and give control to God. Finally, the text presents an image of joyful submission:

> The boat responded
> Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
> The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
> Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
> To controlling hands. (V.419-423)
Hope seems somewhat elusive throughout *The Waste Land*. *What the Thunder Said* begins by considering the crucifixion as a finality and not as a prelude to resurrection (North 103):

He who was living is now dead. (V.328)

Next comes a long passage that emphasizes spiritual dryness and almost complete despair:

Here there is no water but only rock

Rock and no water. (V.331-332)

Even the thunder is “dry” and “sterile” (V.342), leaving no hope for rain. In desperation, Eliot tries to find hope:

If there were water
And no rock
And also water
And water
A spring
A pool among the rock
If there were the sound of water only…
But there is no water. (V.346-359)

Although this passage seems to express a turning toward despair, Eliot is really pointing out that it is hard to hope while in the midst of temptations to despair. Even the Israelites were discouraged though God promised to “put water in the desert and rivers in the wasteland” for his chosen people (Isaiah 43.20). In order to see if one’s hope is truly authentic, Eliot
suggests that one must turn from despair and bravely pass through the wasteland, the dry barren desert where God is hidden.

After passing through the dry rocks, the reader emerges onto the road to Emmaus, where the risen Christ is truly, though ambiguously present (North 103):

Who is this third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you. (V.360-363)

By his use of this particular part of the resurrection story, Eliot suggests that Christ is present in our very doubts and confusions about him (North 103).

In *The Waste Land*, Eliot struggles to find answers to life; this fact suggests that, for him, humankind has a desire for order and a desire to know God. *The Waste Land* shows the restlessness of lost souls in search of control, meaning, and something beyond this world.

Disorder, then, becomes not a fault to be overcome, but a necessary moment in the process of arriving at order (North 104). In his struggle to make sense of a senseless world, however, Eliot never arrives at order; he never reaches a clear resolution in *The Waste Land*.

*The Waste Land*, nevertheless, is not an end in itself, but rather the beginning of Eliot’s journey toward spiritual enlightenment. Even though *The Waste Land* is shadowed in despair, hope lies in the realization that, as a pilgrim, Eliot has reached the bottom, has seen the blindness of the heart of humankind, and is not overcome by despair. In the poems that follow *The Waste Land* in Eliot’s career, we see Eliot’s ascent out of spiritual darkness.

Thus, in the quest for spiritual meaning, there is hope that by journeying through the desert,
one will eventually come to the garden as Eliot implies in Burnt Norton: “Other echoes/
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?” (I.19-22).

**Journey Through Ash Wednesday**

Eliot further explores the concept of turning aside to nothingness in *Ash Wednesday*,
which suggests a turning point in his own spiritual journey. In Section I, Eliot says that he
does not hope “to turn again,” (I.1), implying that, in the past, he has turned to nothingness;
i.e., the temporal gratification of man. He repeats this idea more explicitly when he says that
he does not hope to turn “desiring this man’s gift and that man’s scope” (I.4) because he no
longer strives “to strive towards such things” (I.5). Finally, at the end of Section I Eliot
aspires to direct himself to God

I do not hope to turn again
Let these words answer
For what is done, not to be done again. (I.31-33)

Eliot reiterates this sentiment in Section VI of *Ash Wednesday*:

I do not hope to turn
Wavering between the profit and the loss. (94)

Through this repetition, Eliot confirms his desire not to sin, that is, to turn to nothingness.

This idea of turning to nothingness is once again addressed in *Ash Wednesday* when
Eliot prays to the “blessed sister, holy mother, spirit of the fountain, spirit of the garden”
(VI.29). “Blessed sister, holy mother,” refers to Mary, who in the Catholic tradition is the
perfect disciple and the mediatrix between humankind and Christ. According to Carlo
Martini, Mary is the first believer, and therefore the model for humankind’s earthly pilgrimage (17). Eliot then asks Mary to “Teach us to care and not to care/ Teach us to sit still” (VI.28-29). According to Cahill, this line reflects the heart of the Christian predicament (82); that is, the struggle to live in the world but not be of the world.

Throughout Ash Wednesday, Eliot suggests that the earthly pilgrimage is the time of betweenness, the status viatoris, the “waverer between profit and loss” (VI.4), “the dreamcrossed twilight between birth and dying” (VI.6) and “the time of tension between dying and birth” (VI.20). During this time of betweenness, the pilgrim struggles to find “peace in His will even among these rocks” (VI.3-32). In other words, the pilgrim struggles to embrace the difficulties of life as part of God’s divine plan, to be joyful in the midst of trials and hardships, dryness and rocks, and to be faithful and trust in God’s love and mercy. By accepting God’s gift of grace, however, the pilgrim is able to bend his or her will to that of God’s and complete the purpose for which he or she has been made, i.e., status comprehensoris.

As Martini points out, experience warns us that even where there is a firm, decided will, “the risk of falling is never absent because the human person is a reality in process, a complex, confused reality, composed of many levels” (25). Eliot claims that those who have fallen “walk in darkness both in day time and in the night time” (V.15-16) and that this world is “no place of grace for those who avoid the face” and “who walk among noise and deny the voice” (V.18). In other words, those who have turned to nothingness walk in darkness, for what is true is exposed in the light. Eliot implies that only those who contemplate hear the voice of God in the silence of their hearts. Finally, Eliot appeals to God “to have mercy upon
us" (I.27) and exposes his own penitent heart as he asks Mary to “pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death” (I.41-42) in hopes that “the judgement not be too heavy upon us” (I.34). Finally he asks Mary to “Suffer me not to be separated/ And let my cry come unto Thee” (VI.35-36). Eliot’s appeal for mercy for all humankind suggests a pilgrim spirit of *caritas* and penitence.

Critics may argue that Eliot’s reasoning the existence of God does not equal faith; Eliot himself says that he prays that he may forget “these matters that with myself I too much discuss/ too much explain” (I.29). Although Eliot suggests that a person can delve into the unknowable too deeply, Thomas Aquinas taught that a person’s ability to reason is in itself a gift from God and propels a person toward God. Eventually, Eliot reasons his way beyond doubt and desire and rejoices in “having to construct something/ Upon which to rejoice” (I.25-26), and that something is faith.

By looking at Eliot by means of Turner and Pieper, we can see that, as a liminar, Eliot moves toward the divine. Even though Eliot suggests that faith may be a necessary construction, this is a pivotal point for him. In reasoning the existence of God, he finally comes to the end of the intellectual process: “Because these wings are no longer wings to fly/ But merely vans to beat the air” (I.35-36). Eliot’s voice of reason echoes Chaucer’s clerkly voice; both voices lead the journeying pilgrim to God. Thus, reason, that is, the power to understand reality, moves the journeying pilgrim toward the desired end.

Comparing *The Waste Land* and *Ash Wednesday* reveals that Eliot, by this point in his career, has moved to a more enlightened plane of spiritual awareness. Cahill points out that in *The Waste Land* the choice is between a cynical indifference to self and to others and a
serious concern about them, or what Carrasco defines as ideological communitas; in Ash Wednesday, the choice is between attachment to the created world and detachment from it (82). She states that detachment is not indifference but rather “the condition attainable by those who, having learned to care for self and things and persons, have come to believe that this love is given its full meaning by God’s love from which it proceeds” (82). According to Cahill, those who have experienced caritas know that because God loved them first, they are able to love themselves, others, and the world God has created. Thus, all humankind is moved toward Love by Love.

Journey Through Four Quartets

Martini states that “the movement toward the union of humanity with God is the law of history, a law that is expressed, on the level of faith, and yet is also a physical and psychological law that governs the movement of the world” (23). In The City of God, Augustine combines history and theology and illustrates how God reveals himself to humankind through the narrative of events. Augustine insists that to separate history from God is to separate man from truth because man can only know absolute truth when he sees God as the ultimate cause of events in the world he ordered. In Burnt Norton, Eliot explores this concept of history and truth, that is, God acting in and on time:

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. (I.4-5)

Eliot's meaning is best understood in relationship to Pieper's explanation of the concept of time, in that time has to do with temporality. For humankind temporality has to do with becomingness, reaching the end-state, whether it be heaven or hell, life or death, or as Pieper puts it, "perfection or impoverishment" (On Hope 14). Eliot delves into the concepts of temporality and eternity and suggests that if all time is eternally present, there is no movement; what can be known is fully known. Eliot seems to be suggesting that since only God has no beginning, that is, God is, was, and always will be, only God is all-knowing and unmoving:

Love is itself unmoving

Only the cause and end of movement. (V.27-28)

Eliot claims time past, time present, and time future are intrinsically linked because they are all part of man's movement toward the end-state. And, as long as man is in the status viatoris "What might have been is an abstraction/ Remaining a perpetual possibility" (I.6-7) because hope, as Pieper points out, lies in the future. Martini explains that "we project this present into the future because man cannot understand his own present except in the springing up, the becoming, the dynamic toward a reality 'beyond'" (23). Furthermore, "each time we reduce life to a present not open to the future, we lock it into sadness, banality, distrust" (Martini 23), as Eliot suggests through the disconnected voices in The Waste Land. In using the words "a perpetual possibility," Eliot implies that hope is eternal as long as man is in the status viatoris. Thus, hope is only applicable in reference to time, for what could be or what we could become lies in the future.
In *Burnt Norton*, Eliot also grapples with the concept of eternity: “If all time is eternally present/ All time is unredeemable” (I.4-5). Eliot notes that when man reaches the state of *status comprehensoris*, he steps out of time, and he can no longer be redeemed. The Christian understands eternity not as an unlimited duration of time, but as Boethius says, “the perfect and complete simultaneous possession of unlimited life” (Pieper, *The End* 69). In other words, “eternity is the standing now, in which everything simultaneously is reality” (Pieper, *The End* 69).

Finally, in the beginning and again at the end of *Burnt Norton* Eliot concludes that “Only in a world of speculation/ What might have been and what has been/ Point to one end which is always present” (I). According to Paul Murray, this “end” is the actual present reality at any given moment in our lives: “It can be called unredeemable since it is impossible to consider it being other than in fact it is” (47). Murray goes on to say that this “one end” is made clearer later in the poem and refers to a passage from Augustine, which illuminates Eliot’s meaning:

They do not yet understand thee, O thou Wisdom of God and Light of our minds, nor yet do they understand how those things are made by thee and in thee....Who shall be able to hold and fix it, that for a while it may be still, and may catch a glimpse of thy every-fixed eternity and compare it with the times that never stand, that so he may see how these things are not to be compared together? That he may understand...that all which is both past and future is created and doth flow out from that which is always present. (Augustine, *Confessions* Book XL Ch. 11)
In support of this view, I again refer to Augustine's teaching "that our consciousness of both past and future exists only in the present; so there is a sense in which only the present is real" (Murray 47), or as Eliot says, "all is always now" (V). Eliot affirms Augustine's view and states, "Time past and time future/ Allow but a little consciousness" (I).

Murray explains that the phrase "that which is always present" does not refer to the present moment but to the presence of an eternity, which as an ultimate end, dictates what has been and what will be. This ultimate end also provides hope of our being drawn more and more closely towards some final meaning and redemption. Eliot returns to the theme of the "eternal end" in Section II 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. (II.21-24)

Eliot implies that this still point, which is neither flesh nor fleshless, is God. Eliot again addresses the theme of the eternal end in section V: "Love is itself unmoving, / Only the cause and end of movement" (V.27-28). Once again, Eliot affirms that the eternal end, the mover, Love itself, is God.

In East Coker, Eliot moves to a higher plane of spiritual awareness as he uses poetic language to explore the spiritual unknown. In section I, Eliot confirms his leap of faith when he twice declares "In my beginning is my end." According to Pieper, "the primal will for the good lives from the ongoing momentum of the original leap by which man, in answer to the
creative call of God, crossed over the chasm that divides nothingness from existence” (A Brief Reader 9). Thus, by stating “in my beginning is my end,” Eliot implies that he has found his end, God, in his first answer of “yes” to the gift of faith.

In section II can Eliot clearly move toward the eternal end; he puts faith over reason and tells us that “knowledge derived from experience” is “at best, only a limited value,” and states that “the only wisdom we can hope to acquire/ Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless.” In other words, humankind cannot know all there is to know; what cannot be explained is answered through faith. These words, coming from a great scholar, are profound; Eliot, like Aquinas, understands that in the end, what is known, what is reasoned, what is communicated is all “straw” when it comes to truly knowing God. Thus, to fully comprehend Eliot’s poetic journey as something deeply spiritual, the reader, like Eliot, must undergo spiritual enlightenment; in other words, the reader must see through the eyes of the heart.

In Section III of East Coker, Eliot takes us through the darkness of pilgrimage, not the darkness experienced in The Waste Land, but the darkness reserved for the chosen mystics who, like St. John of the Cross, have experienced the dark night of the soul where God remains hidden. Eliot suggests that here the mystic moves “Into another intensity/ For a further union, a deeper communion” (V) with God. Eliot wishes for a mystical experience of his own but realizes he can’t will its happening:

I say 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...
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 faith and love and the hope are all in the waiting...
So Darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.

Thus, one cannot hope for a mystical experience, an experience of true ecstasy, where the reality of God is made clear. Rather, Eliot suggests that one must “go by the way wherein there is no ecstasy” and suffer through the feelings of abandonment with patience. Eliot points out that the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love are perfected in the waiting, the time before status comprehensoris.

As Eliot continues through the dark night of the soul, he tells the reader that one must lose oneself to find oneself. While Eliot suggests our individuality, that is, self importance, must be obliterated, he implies that “you,” i.e., each one of us, must go through this spiritual experience individually:

In order to arrive at what you do not know
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.
In order to possess what you do not possess
You must go by the way of dispossession.
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
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not. (III)

According to Murray, the experience of vision within *Four Quartets* is dependent on a process of disciplined philosophical reflection and meditation; it is not obtained by a deliberate stripping of the mind of its rational modes of thinking in order to enter an immediate experience (258). Although the above passage seems to be a series of contradictions, it is really a puzzle of inversions that, when pieced together, reveal the steps of the mystic. Eliot implies that true understanding is found through the puzzle of inversions where the way up is the way down, the way in is the way out, the beginning is the end, and the end is found in the beginning. Although Eliot seems to know the steps of the mystic, he tries to rationalize the experience.

In section V, the opening line implies that Eliot, himself, is in the state of betweenness: “So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years” (1). In this passage Eliot also points out the inadequacy of language to communicate the truth it seeks to express:

Twenty years largely wasted, the years of *l'entre deux guerres*—

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…

And so each venture

Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate

With shabby equipment always deteriorating. (V)
In *Burnt Norton*, as in *East Coker*, Eliot also points out the incompleteness of words to express the fullness of truth:

Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
Decay with imprecision. (V)

Since words alone are insufficient, Eliot plays with the pattern of words to communicate meaning:

Only by the form, the pattern,
Can words or music reach
The stillness …

The detail of the pattern is movement. (*Burnt Norton* V)

In the above passage from *Burnt Norton*, Eliot suggests his own movement toward God. In *East Coker*, Eliot goes on to say, “We must be still and still moving “toward the end” (V).

Finally, Eliot makes a declaration of faith by inverting the pattern of words he used at the beginning of this poem. He changes “In my beginning is my end” to “In the end is my beginning” to announce his movement from reason to faith (V.41).
CHAPTER 4. PILGRIMAGE TODAY

According to Carlos Martini, pilgrims are not strangers or exiles; they are not vagabonds or wanderers. Pilgrims are, instead, persons who know very well where they are going, and for this reason, "they live and face the uncertainties of the journey, the darkness, the complications, and even the ambiguity of the pilgrimage" (Martini 44). For the Christian pilgrim, the goal of the journey is union with God. Since pilgrims often feel tired, turn back in their journey, take the wrong road, feel confused, understand nothing, and then find their way back once more, the image of pilgrimage is very complex. Moreover, as the world rushes from one new technological advance to another, there seems to be an increasing need for spiritual renewal, for quiet contemplation, for reflection, for pilgrimage.

Despite resemblances and historical connections between medieval and modern pilgrimages, Turner argues there is a significant difference between pilgrimages taken before and after the Industrial Revolution. He claims that pilgrimage has become a social commentary on the ills of the world (wars, revolutions, environmental damage) and isn’t tinctured with the obligatoriness found in earlier times (38). He goes on to say that emphasis on transcendental (as we see with Eliot), rather than mundane, ends and means, communitas, ancient roots, and vanishing virtues have also contributed to the dramatic resurgence of pilgrimage (39).

Pilgrimages to sacred sites are increasing, not just for Christians, but for all humanity. Greater numbers are flocking to the traditional sites such as the Holy Land, Compostela (Spain), and Tepeyac (Mexico), and to new ones such as Lourdes, Fatima, and Medjugorje.
It seems that in our fast-paced life, human beings have more of a need than ever to be grounded. For humankind, the idea of pilgrimage responds to the heartfelt need to go beyond the limits of worldly experience into a deeper realm where the heart contemplates the mysteries of the eternal beyond.

According to Virgil Elizondo, "the more knowledge, science, and information we have, the greater the quest of the soul for ultimate meaning...the more medical science accomplishes, the greater the search for miracles; and the more families break apart while churches become more rule-oriented, the greater the quest for an unconditional human community" (viii). This is why I think this approach to pilgrimage and literature is valuable. Both Chaucer and Eliot show a keen understanding of human beings, their nature, and their place in the universe. Their poetry expresses the idea that life is a pilgrimage and they draw from the experiential world of the past in order to link the past with direct experience.

Turner concludes that pilgrimage serves to promote a world where *communitas*, rather than a bureaucratic social structure, is preeminent and provides live metaphors for human truths which all people share (Turner 39). In this sense, pilgrimage encourages ecumenism, which moves people toward a more peaceful co-existence.

In the following section, I will briefly share my own experience of pilgrimage, both as a journey to a sacred site and as a spiritual journey. This experience has influenced not only my reading of Chaucer and Eliot, but also my understanding of life as a pilgrimage.
A Personal Account

Pilgrimage sites are privileged earth-places where one can recall and thus make present in one’s own life the great interventions of God on earth and within human history.

Virgil Elizondo

Thirteen years ago I made a pilgrimage to Medjugorje, Yugoslavia, during Holy Week. The trip was a gift from my brother, not something I had planned. I was apprehensive about leaving my five children for ten days and flying across the continent; in all honesty, I had many reservations about going. My husband, however, agreed to stay home and take care of our children so I packed a duffle bag and left for Medjugorje with a small group of pilgrims.

Reports claimed that Mary was appearing daily to six children from the village of Medjugorje to pray with them and give them messages for the world. In her messages to the world, Mary describes herself as the “Queen of Peace” sent by God to tell pilgrims about His great outpouring of grace, mercy, and love. These messages encouraged pilgrims to pray with the heart, fast for the world, and make their families cenacles of prayer.

Many miracles of healing are associated with Medjugorje. For example, there was a young woman, Jenni, who had a crippling disease. She could not walk without blistering on the inside of her body, so her husband carried her everywhere; he even carried her up Mt. Krusivc on his back. After an all-night session with a priest who was said to have the gift of reading souls, Jenni was able to follow Father Slavco, the local parish priest, up the mountain
by stepping in his footsteps. She claimed that she didn’t feel any pain for the first time in her life.

Then there was Fred, an extremely shy young man, who with tears in his eyes told our group this pilgrimage was his last chance. He had tried to commit suicide several times and had been institutionalized, put on medication, and had gone through counseling, but nothing had helped him. He was severely depressed. Every evening as we ate together, I couldn’t help but notice that Fred seemed to be less withdrawn. First he began to smile, then to talk, and eventually to laugh, a hearty belly laugh. One evening the designated “grandmother” of the group told Fred to say “I am a child of God, and my daddy owns everything.” That was the turning point for Fred. On our last day, Fred climbed Mt. Krusivec, barefoot, in the damp cold, with other young adults, all the while laughing and singing. Fred’s change seemed nothing short of miraculous.

According to Elizondo, pilgrimage sites are not ends in themselves; rather, they serve as thresholds into new stages of life. He goes on to say that pilgrimages are privileged experiences that change people in unsuspected and uncontrolled ways so that they return to ordinary life in a completely new way (ix). For me and for my family, my pilgrimage to Medjugorje was a turning point; after I returned from my trip, our family spirituality grew. By coming together in prayer and setting common goals, we began creating communitas within our family, which enabled us to get through many difficult situations. Even though I was the only one that actually made the pilgrimage to Medjugorje, we all experienced inner transformations.
Shortly after my pilgrimage to Medjugorje, I returned to college to finish my education. I focussed on literature classes where I studied pre-Christian and Christian literature. It was during this time that I came across the writings of Josef Pieper, a twentieth-century German philosopher. In my search to understand the relationship between philosophy and theology, I began to study Pieper’s writings and saw a philosophical connection among Pieper, Eliot, and Chaucer. Eventually I decided to ground my thesis on the works of these Christian writers. During my research, I found that the connection I made between Pieper and Eliot had, in fact, a stronger basis than I knew. Eliot not only had read many of Pieper’s essays, but also had written a seven-page introduction to Pieper’s Leisure: The Basis for Culture. The following is a brief excerpt from the book’s introduction, which sums up Eliot’s admiration of Pieper’s works:

The root cause of the vagaries of modern philosophy—and perhaps, though I was unconscious of it, the reason for my dissatisfaction with philosophy as a profession—I now believe to lie in the divorce of philosophy from theology. It is necessary to make clear what one means by the necessary relation between philosophy and theology, and the implication in philosophy of some religious faith. This I shall not attempt, because it is done very much better by Josef Pieper: I desire only to call attention to this central point in his thought. He himself is a Catholic philosopher, grounded on Plato, Aristotle and the scholastics, and he makes his position quite clear to his readers....For him, a philosophy related to the theology of some other communion than that of Rome, or to that of some other religion than Christianity, would still be a
genuine philosophy. The establishment of a right relation between philosophy and theology, which will leave the philosopher quite autonomous in his own area is, I think, the most important lines of investigation which Dr. Pieper has pursued. In a more general way, this influence should be in the direction of restoring philosophy to a place of importance for every educated person who thinks, instead of confining it to esoteric activities which can affect the public only indirectly, insidiously and often in a distorted form. He restores to their position in philosophy what common sense obstinately tells us out to be found there: *insight and wisdom*. (xiv-xvi)

Since there is a resurgence of interest in the idea of pilgrimage as a spiritual journey, I found it worthwhile to look at the works of Chaucer and Eliot in this context. Clearly, my own faith journey has deeply influenced my course of study, and what I have studied has also influenced my faith journey. Most of us at one point or another, feel the need to reflect on the mysteries of life and contemplate our place in the universe. Sometimes this inner journey is spurred by what we read, sometimes by what we experience. Whatever the impetus for our own inner reflection, we all travel through life as pilgrims of the inbetween. Life is a wondrous pilgrimage, a journey of exploration, where we ultimately come face to face with ourselves:

> 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. (Eliot, *Little Gidding*)
WORKS CITED


