T.S. ELIOT'S "FOUR QUARTETS":

THE FUNCTION OF THE TITLES

IN THE PATTERN OF THE POEM.

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Introduction

As one approaches the threshold of this, the largest of Eliot's poems and the most grandly designed, the eye is caught by two snatches of Greek lettering inscribed over the entry. Although they do not command attention in the manner of Mrs Sapsea's admonitory epitaph ("Stranger pause and consider ..."), and although many pass on in without giving them a second thought, or even a first, yet it might be well for us to devote a few brief moments here to a consideration of their import. In fact the epigraphs furnish a logical starting place for an examination of the Four Quartets and a convenient one for our purposes because they lead us right into a discussion of the nature of the poetry.

To occupy this eminent position, Eliot chose two fragments from Heraclitus which he said attracted him because of their poetic suggestiveness. However the two fragments are interesting in quite different ways. The quality of "poetic suggestiveness" is most apparent in the second of the two, which we may translate: "the way up and the way down are one and the same". Much of Eliot's poetry in the Quartets relies on the use of paradox and this fragment is such a natural vehicle for expressing paradox that it is felt to echo throughout the whole of the Quartet cycle. It functions as a kind of leit-motif to which the poem continually returns, appearing explicitly at some occurrences and at others only by implication. However these applications of the fragment are quite orthodox and call for no further comment here. It is the other fragment which is the most interesting of the two for present purposes.

This first fragment we may translate roughly
as follows: "although the Logos (the Word) is true for all men, most men act as if they had a wisdom all of their own". It is evident that in its application to the poem this Logos is to be understood in a specifically Christian sense - it is the word of God. This makes the fragment a simple enough thought in Christian terms and, one would have thought, not a particularly interesting one from a poetic point of view. However in this case it was not really the poetic suggestiveness of the fragment that Eliot was exploiting so much as its dramatic possibility. This will become clearer if we pause to consider for a moment the method of narration of the poem.

We are now accustomed to consider the poem as proceeding from a disembodied, depersonalised voice which does not prompt our curiosity to seek any personality behind it but which we accept as a mere convention enabling the poet to make his delivery. Hugh Kenner remarks: "of this Voice we may remark first of all its selflessness; it is Old 'Possum's last disappearing trick. No 'persona, Prufrock, Gerontion, Tiresias or the Magus, is any longer needed. The words appear to be writing themselves." While this seems eminently reasonable when applied to the passage that Kenner quotes, yet there are other sections of the poem which do come from an assured personality, as for example when Eliot addresses the reader in what seems like his own voice:

"So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years -
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of l'entre deux guerres -
Trying to learn to use words".

This is clearly not the same voice as the one Kenner was speaking of. It seems then that we cannot
assume any continuity between the narrative voices of different sections of the poem. In fact there seem to be different voices addressing us at different points in the poem - the whole thing becomes like a composite manuscript written by many hands. But this means that Kenner's model of a completely depersonalised Voice is no longer viable, because difference of voice implies difference of assumption and personality behind the voice.

Let us turn once again to the first section of Burnt Norton - the section to which Kenner was referring in his remarks. It is significant that the mode of the verse is such that Kenner felt it necessary to postulate a voice, although he denied any further evidence of a persona. Yet in other sections of the Quartets, notably the more "poetic" sections, such as the second section of Burnt Norton, "Garlic and sapphires in the mud Clot the bedded axle-tree", the question of a narrative voice simply does not arise, just as it does not arise in the poetry of Milton, say, or Tennyson. We accept the poetry as poetry and do not need a narrative medium. But here the fact is that verse of such a deliberate meditative prosiness inevitably suggests quite strongly the presence of an ordering mind behind it. We seem to see the mind feeling its way toward its conclusions. But it is the conclusions themselves which are arrived at that indicate most clearly that Eliot is indeed employing a dramatic persona here. Within five lines of the opening the speaker has already concluded that "All time is unredeemable" - a conclusion that Eliot himself would hardly have endorsed. Thus we must suppose a dramatic distance between the speaker in the opening of Burnt Norton and the author of the Four Quartets. Those who
see only a voice here, as Kenner does, are missing the full irony of the position and the full subtlety of the poet. The voice is actually a parody of the true voice of wisdom. Here then we have an application of the first Heraclitean epigraph - this is the wisdom of one man only whose conclusions can be sustained only by a wilful ignorance of the Logos, which is the will of God, and the ponderous deliberative style mocks the emptiness of the conclusions. Eliot wishes us to realise that this opening position is a false one because the rest of the movement, indeed the rest of the poem, proceeds to correct it. Thus there is very definitely a persona operating in the opening - to be sure the tone is impersonal but this does not mean that there is no personality behind the voice. In fact this very impersonality turns out to be part of the characterisation of the voice - it is after all seen to be merely a pose just as the serenity and wisdom of the "quiet-voiced elders" of East Coker was a deliberate hebetude.

The method we have used here to expose the speaker, to reveal him in his true colours, may - indeed must -- be applied to the whole of the Quartets. There are many speakers in the poem who offer us false ways just as this first speaker does, and we must be very careful in deciding where Eliot's positives lie. The game becomes one of flushing the 'possum out of the tree in which he is hiding, and in the process we shall discover all sorts of other unlikely animals hiding in there with him. As we are addressed by each speaker we are challenged to identify him and to check the assumptions from which he proceeds. If he is one who accepts the truth of the Logos, we can trust his conclusions and heed his advice; but if he is one who regards his own wisdom then we may be led into false conclusions by following him. Thus it is that the
poem is a dramatic rendering of the first Heraclitean epigraph: rather than merely expressing this idea in poetic terms, Eliot is fully dramatising it in his deployment of narrative voices. In fact it is the single most important idea in the Quartets, for not only does it present the Christian message but it also has this important structural role in the poem which may betray us into false conclusions if we fail to understand it.

In this way the poem becomes much more complex than it has hitherto been considered. Rather than the set piece which critics have been accustomed to consider it, it is very much a living work animated by a tension between narrator and reader; it is a life and death game of forfeit in which the reader stands literally to lose his soul. We must remember that Eliot, at this stage of his career, was very much in a proselytising frame of mind (witness the Choruses from "The Rock"), and the poem reflects this. It is Eliot's purpose to bring the reader eventually to an acceptance of the Logos but he realises this is not to be achieved by preaching. The reader must find his way to the correct conclusions on his own resources. The poem then becomes a progress through the wood of error - (the figure, borrowed from Dante, is an appropriate one - Eliot uses it himself). Along the way there are many traps laid for the unwary reader: the poem is thus a sort of test of the reader's faith, designed to sort the sheep from the goats. Yet there is a correct way and the reader is ushered along the path for the most part by the poet, but there are many voices which speak to him from the darkness. The reader must learn to distinguish the true from the false voice so that he can eventually arrive at the shrine at Little Gidding in the correct state of mind.
You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report. You are here to kneel
Where prayer has been valid.

However although it is essential first to est-
ablish the dramatic nature of Eliot's method in the
Quartets, yet this is only an introduction to the
complexity of the work. The discussion so far has
merely been by way of entry to the poem and we must
now pass on to what is the real concern of this
paper - the personal element in the Quartets. We
have already noted that at some places the voice
seems to be Eliot's own addressing the reader direct-
ly. In fact for much of the poem Eliot is using
his own person as the narrative medium. Yet this
should not be allowed to obscure our view of the
essentially dramatic nature of the verse. For at
many points we cannot be sure if the poet is speaking
from a position of true faith. Often his tone is
disillusioned ("twenty years largely wasted"); more
frequently it is querulous and complaining ("the
intolerable wrestle with words and meanings").
The poet during the course of the poem is seen to
be undergoing changes of mood and to be making his
own way through the wood of error - at some places
we are dealing with an unregenerate Eliot where at
others he is secure in his faith. The poem is thus
not merely a spiritual exercise testing the reader's
faith - it is rather the personal document of a man
who has made his own way through this very same wood.

The personal element however not only informs
the poetry at a textual level - it also provides the
framework within which the whole poem was erected.
Eliot constructed the poem so that it effectually
mapped out the coordinates of the whole of his exist-
ence. Each of the quartets is named after a specific
place which had some personal significance in Eliot's
life and each of these places comes to assume symbolic proportions in a grand pattern which bestrides the whole of the *Quartet* cycle. The whole poem gravitates between these four poles which serve to delimit the universe of Eliot's experience. As we proceed through the poem, we realise that we are in a sense undergoing a reconstruction of the poet's life. Thus we accompany him as he revisits the scenes of his childhood and we re-enact his journey of expatriation across the Atlantic to England. But the poem includes more than Eliot's personal history – it also takes in the whole of the ancestral past of the Eliot family. Thus we also visit East Coker, the traditional ancestral seat of the Eliot family.

What the *Four Quartets* really represents then, is an attempt to make sense out of the unique position in the world of T.S. Eliot, poet. Thus it takes all the determining factors of Eliot's existence and examines them in an effort to see them in the correct perspective and to arrive at some estimation of the meaning of life. Yet although the poem is dealing almost exclusively with material from Eliot's own personal life experience, it is not really biographical in any sense. Rather it represents a deployment of biographical material in a way that transforms the material into a new form of artistic utterance. The personal material has all been assimilated and used in the poem to make a statement about the need for acceptance of the Christian way of life. The personal element therefore is subordinate to the proselytising motive behind the poetry. What Eliot has done is to take the elements of his own life and imbue each with a certain meaning so that the whole maps out a pattern which expresses the need for Christian acceptance of the will of God. While the poem is a faithful record of "all we have been", its more important message is of all that we might be, and indeed all that we must strive to be.
Thus when we follow through the poem, we are following him not only through his life's history, but also on a journey of spiritual progress towards the ultimate goal of the chapel at Little Gidding. The poem is a marvellous example of the use of the personal dimension in the creation of a poetry of universal effect. Although Eliot's message is one which is no longer tenable for many of his readers, yet one can nevertheless admire the achievement just as much from outside his framework of assumptions as one can from within. The poem remains an enduring monument to the man, the poet and the Christian - although we tend to admire it for its poetic qualities where Eliot would have prized it more for the Christian values it embodies.

There is one major difficulty arising in this thesis however. The problem is that in taking this view of the poem, we are committing ourselves to a restricted interpretation of the words which is always a highly dangerous procedure in Eliot. The poem is infinitely rich in its implications and Eliot's very technique with language generates endless possibilities for interpreting the lines. Once we decide to concentrate on the biographical material in the quartets, and once we decide that the poet is advocating a Christian message and we endeavour to pin him down to a specific meaning, we are automatically sealing ourselves off from hearing much of the more subtly scored music of the Quartets, and risking an interpretation that is at best unbalanced, and at worst completely false. Trying to pin the poet down to one specific interpretation of the lines is a task similar to that set Odysseus when he had to wrestle with Proteus. As we get a hold on the lines, we feel the poem changing shape within our grasp and eventually slipping away to elude explication in our terms. For this reason, this account will go wrong in places,
necessarily, because it is committed to too narrow an interpretation. And yet despite its inadequacies, it does in the end justify itself because of the harvest of results that it yields. For example, there is a richness of personality in the poem hitherto unsuspected in the criticism which this method reveals. A theory is to be judged by its fruits:—this paper has at least yielded sufficient nourishment to enable the writer to complete his investigation and to sit back afterwards with a certain well-fed satisfaction. Whether or not it is of any further interest to anyone else is entirely another question.
The first of the quartets was not actually written as one of four quartets at all, but was intended to stand alone as a hermetically complete work of art in its own right. Thus Eliot originally published it as the final poem in his 1936 volume Collected Poems 1909-1935. However the poem could not be left to stand alone Eliot found. There were certain residual considerations left unresolved in Burnt Norton out of which East Coker grew, and out of East Coker grew the idea of a cycle of four. The other three quartets were thus all at least implicit in Burnt Norton, and indeed most of the themes of the later poems were already present in embryonic form in the first. Thus Burnt Norton becomes a microcosm of the whole quartet cycle. What had happened was that the idea that Eliot was working with in Burnt Norton, like Topsy, had "growed", so that it was now too big for its first suit of clothes. Thus Eliot outfitted it anew in East Coker as he was to do twice more over the next few years before he was satisfied that it was fully presentable before the reading public. This rather frivolous analogy nevertheless does have its point, for, despite the growth and development of the ideas, the four poems are really one and the same poem merely dressed in different clothes: from quartet to quartet it is really only the externals which are changing, the underlying themes remaining constant throughout the whole cycle. Thus the Four Quartets has the structure of four quaternions, as has been fully documented by C.K. Stead, the four being complementary presentations of the same basic themes. Unity in the poem is achieved through unity of theme, complementarity through the use of such commonplace groups of four as the elements and the seasons of
the year which allow for the change of dress in each of the quartets.

However the structure of the poem is more complex than this. As well as this formal quadrangular pattern which derives from the older literary idea of elegant variation, there is another pattern which informs the poetry. This is the pattern of the titles which we have referred to in the opening remarks. Each of the places of the four quartets comes to assume some sort of symbolic significance which will gradually emerge as we look at each of the quartets in turn, and the four symbols interrelate to fulfil a meaningful pattern. As the cycle advances and the symbolic meaning of the places becomes apparent, the position with regard to this pattern advances too, so that there is also a pattern of growth within the cycle. It is not until Little Gidding that the poem attains its full maturity of growth and is finally seen to be correctly appointed in a suit of perfect fit:

"And every phrase
And sentence that is right (where every
word is at home,
Taking its place to support the others,
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,
An easy commerce of the old and the new,
The common word exact without vulgarity,
The formal word precise but not pedantic,
The complete consort dancing together)."

Of course Burnt Norton was written before any idea of a cycle of four, so that any symbolic meaning it has in the context of the whole cycle may not be immediately apparent. The first quartet had origins different in kind from the other three, so that we cannot begin immediately with this poem by talking about any grand plan informing the whole of the Four Quartets. The poem appears to have been occasioned by a visit Eliot paid in the summer of
1934 to a deserted manor house near Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire, where he had an experience which Kenner says "catalysed certain fragments which Murder in the Cathedral did not finally incorporate". The mansion stood on the site of an earlier country house that had been burned down some two hundred years before. Russell Kirk notes that "the formal garden and shadowy house of the poem are composites, doubtless". Eliot not only uses the particular house called Burnt Norton but draws on the whole of the district around Chipping Campden and Chipping Norton.

"In Chipping Campden, the shell of a ruined manor house of the sixteenth century stands near the church; Hidcote Manor, three miles away, has a famous garden, open to the public; at Great Tew, five miles from Chipping Norton, there had lived Lord Falkland, gathering about him in that house the scholars and poets whose company Eliot might have relished more than he enjoyed the communication of twentieth century intellectuals. All these scenes and memories lie back of Burnt Norton."

The whole of the area was obviously steeped in a sense of the past, but apart from this the place was not known to have any personal associations for Eliot. Yet in the poetry it becomes charged with significance, the rose-garden so fraught with suggestion that it prompts a mystical experience in which the poet feels himself in communication with mysterious presences who seem to represent the whole range of unrealised possibility in life. We wonder why it was that this place prompted such an experience if it had no personal significance for Eliot. This is the question we shall attempt to answer but yet we cannot do so before taking account of what the poetry itself is saying. The significance of the place will emerge from a study of the poem but we
must let it do so naturally and we must now move
closer to the text.

The poem opens with a dry prosy voice pondering
on the nature of time. The seemingly disembodied
voice offers for our consideration a possible view
of time which goes beyond our usual idea of a linear
chronological sequence. We are offered the concep-
tion of a past that contains both present and future,
and a future in which all past is immanently present.
Thus the present moment is a "loaded" one in which
all past and all future are implicit. This means
that at any given moment all time is "eternally
present" in that moment. This concept of time is
very much a predestinarian sort of philosophy which
implies that nothing in the past could possibly have
happened except what actually did happen, and that
everything that is to happen in the future necess­
arly must happen and that nothing else is possible.
Such a philosophy depends on the idea that at the
beginning of the world all the seeds of future time
were planted, and history is merely the coming to
fruition of those seeds. This condemns everything
that might have been, the whole range of unrealised
possibility in life, to a world of speculation only.
To subscribe to the view of time offered in these
opening lines is thus to espouse a rather unattract­
ive form of fatalism which eventually requires us
to believe that all time is unredeemable since all
time is eternally present. Since the past always
remains with us, there is nothing we can do to
expunge past errors, and anyway it would be futile
to try since we can do nothing that will change the
course of the future. This is all implicit in the
word "unredeemable".

However this word brings us to a halt in our
predestinarian tracks, because in view of Eliot's
other poetry, particularly Ash Wednesday and the Choruses from "The Rock", it is a patent falsity. It is not a view to which the poet subscribes because in Eliot's view time is redeemable by virtue of one moment in time through which time, and with it all such time-bound philosophies, was defeated. That moment was the Incarnation of Christ and it is recorded in the Choruses from "The Rock":

"Then came, at a predetermined moment, a moment in time and of time,
A moment not out of time, but in time, in what we call history: transecting, bisecting the world of time, a moment in time but not like a moment of time,
A moment in time but time was made through that moment: for without the meaning there is no time, and that moment of time gave the meaning."^6

Here is the moment of time which makes it possible for all time to be redeemed; here is the moment of time through which "time is conquered". Yet at this point the narrative voice does not recognize this. The moment of the Incarnation is a manifestation of the Logos which is true for all men, but which the voice ignores for the sake of its own wisdom. This is the first application of the epigraph and we note that it is being applied dramatically - the speaker here has reached an untenable position by ignoring the truth of the Logos and following his own wisdom.

However the speaker moves on from this position of fatalism to speculate on what might have been. We begin to suspect that the weariness of tone of the opening lines was a disguise for what now seems to be a sense of loss of all the unrealized potentiality that is implied in "what might have been". As indicated above, to endorse the opening remarks is to banish all the richness of possibility that
remains unrealized in life to a realm "of speculation only". The poet seems rather haunted by this sense of loss and begins to regret all the lost opportunities of his own personal past. This leads into a moment of reverie in which the unrealized possibilities of the past are recreated poetically.

"Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose garden."

The poet is obviously more attracted by the rich possibility of what might have been than by the rigid fatalism of the opening lines. But in view of the "wisdom" of the opening remarks, to indulge in such fantasies as this is futile self-deception since it is fleeing from and not facing up to the "reality" which was explored in the opening. Thus the poet half-hesitates before indulging his speculative imagination:

"shall we follow
The deception of the thrush?"

He does follow and experiences a mystic revelation which points towards a fuller sense of reality than he had at the beginning. The thrush at the end is no longer deceiving, but one who knows more about reality than we can ever do. He gives us the revelation which we cannot yet fully comprehend and then banishes us back to our time-bound world with

"human kind
Cannot bear very much reality."

It is we then who were deceiving ourselves when we mistrusted the "deception" of the thrush. By following the thrush we have had a vision of reality which goes far beyond our limited notions of determinism at the beginning. The change in attitude between the beginning and the end of the movement is pointed up in the repetition at the end of two lines which had been offered earlier but which have
now taken on a new and fuller meaning.

"What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present."

In the first utterance these lines had meant something like "no matter what did or did not happen in the past, it all led up to the present which is the dimension we are always condemned to inhabit". Now by virtue of the experience in the garden the lines have taken on new meaning. The revelation of what might have been and its relation to what has been points beyond both to that "end" which is eternally present in the world. This "end" is the divine purpose of God. In this experience we have had a vision of the completeness of God's purpose for the world. What we become aware of is

" both a new world
And the old made explicit, understood
In the completion of its partial ecstasy,
The resolution of its partial horror".

Thus what the experience in the rose-garden really represents is a manifestation of the godhead who ordains all history and conversely who redeems all time. The revelation has not been a specific one; we are merely "pointed" towards the will of God. The experience is by and large hints and guesses which are picked up later in the poem. The "heart of light" is a non-explicit indication of a transcendant reality which, at this point, we can only guess at the nature of. It is made clear in the second movement what this heart of light really represents. Here we do not fully comprehend the experience; our knowledge is only partial because "human kind cannot bear very much reality". This reality is the will of God which is also the Logos of the epigraph. It is now clear that the speculations opening the poem were the wisdom of one man only - in the idiom of East Coker the wisdom of eyes peering into the darkness.
Thus in the first movement of Burnt Norton we move from a position of limited knowledge and self-deception in the opening towards a fuller sense of reality at the close by virtue of an experience which contains an implicit revelation of the will of God. We are led to throw away our "wisdom" in acceptance of a transcendent reality larger than any one man can know. The message that the Quartets as a whole is inculcating is acceptance of the will of God - here is the message mapped out in miniature. In this way we can view Burnt Norton as a microcosm of the whole cycle - as we claimed earlier all the themes present in the whole cycle are at least implicit in Burnt Norton. In the three following quartets Eliot was really only elaborating and making more explicit what he had already incorporated in the first poem. Thus the first step towards acceptance of God's will is a movement towards humility. We must throw away our own wisdom and move towards humility because, as in East Coker

"The only wisdom we can hope to acquire

Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless".

This at any rate is Eliot's intended pattern in the first movement. But when we come to examine the rose-garden experience more closely, we begin to see that there is more to it than this - the poetry seems to have developed purposive intentions of its own here which are not recognised by and at odds with the purposeful intentions of the poet. There are implications in the poetry at this point which perhaps even Eliot himself did not recognise at the time of writing, and which only emerge when Burnt Norton is seen in context with the other quartets. At all events we must examine more closely the experience in the rose-garden as it is rendered in the poetry to see if it can carry the weight Eliot wishes it to do, or if it tends to make suggestions
in other directions, as I have implied.

It is now commonplace to talk about the experience in the rose-garden as an experience of what might have been. This phrase itself can be understood in two distinct senses both of which are important here. Firstly we recall Russell Kirk's note on the deep sense of the past on which Eliot was drawing in the poem. With all its historical associations, the place must have summoned up ghosts from the past for Eliot as he wandered about the district. As he lingered in the garden of the burned house, he seems to have been imaging forth a past in which these ghosts naturally took their place. The mysterious presences in the garden then are all the people who might have lived there at some time as they are present to Eliot's imagination. Kirk mentions the learned men of Lord Falkland's gatherings. It would be some satisfaction to Eliot to imagine himself in easy commerce with the ghosts of such men, "accepted and accepting", a healthy mutual respect on both sides.

This then is the past as it might have been, as it presents itself to the mind of the poet, and it is undoubtedly part of the experience; yet it is by no means sufficient to explain the experience. To begin with Eliot speaks of the visit to the garden as if it never really happened:

"Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden".

This entry into the rose-garden is a marvellous example of controlled poetry. There is something half suggestive about these lines, something which we seem to recognise immediately and yet cannot precisely identify. Perhaps it depends on the non-explicit recollection of all the passages and doors in Alice in Wonderland, a work that would surely
form part of the mental furniture of every native English-speaking reader, and yet something which few could recall in its verbal details. This causes us to locate the experience somewhere back in childhood, so long ago that it is almost, but not quite, forgotten. There is also an implicit connection between the rose-garden and Eden, "our first world", so that the whole becomes a sort of condensed archetypal image that speaks to something buried deep in our personal memories but also something that is larger than any personal memory. As well as this the poetry sets up reverberations in our minds of all that might have been in our own lives, but was never realised. Thus the power of the poetry: our childhood memories chime in, but we also experience a sense of something lost which depends on both an allusion to the lost innocence of Eden, and a recollection of all the lost opportunities of one's past life. We sense the poet digging back into our own personal past, but he is also going beyond this and digging back into that racial consciousness which is older than any of us and which breathes the vague sense of loss that is part of the human condition. With all these ideas reverberating in our minds it is almost a cheeky self-assurance in the poet to tell us barefacedly that

"Thus, in your mind."

My words echo

They do indeed. We can see now that the experience in the rose-garden goes far beyond a mere imagined reconstruction of the past. In fact, it touches intimate personal emotions in our own lives. We become aware of all the things which might have been but were not. The presences in the garden now become representative of all the possibilities never realised in one's own life: the children hidden in the shrubbery are children of the might have been in a very real sense -- they are possibly
the children Eliot never fathered.

In this way the Burnt Norton manor came to be some sort of ideal symbol of all that might have been in life. The question that arises is why this place, if it had no personal associations, came to have such significance for Eliot. Indeed the experience in the rose-garden is so central to the whole of the Quartet cycle that we are obliged to consider just why it was that this particular place triggered it off. What was it about the Burnt Norton manor that so strongly suggested all the reveries of what might have been?

Looking back at Burnt Norton from an overview of the whole Quartet cycle, we can see that Eliot was to become particularly concerned with making sense out of his position in the world, and in particular, out of his past—both his ancestral past and his own personal past. We can see too by his expatriation from America to England and his total embrace of the English way of life, that the United States, as a country, was congenial neither to his personality nor his poetry. He needed the orthodoxy and stability that England with its sense of tradition and its sense of history was able to give him. Thus Eliot had personally to undo the step taken by his ancestor Andrew Elyot when he decided to emigrate to America in 1667. It is clear that Eliot felt himself in the English tradition of letters and that he eventually considered himself not as an American but as an Englishman. We may conjecture that Eliot felt that it was some sort of historical "mistake" that had led to his having been born in America. Although he never forgot the scenes of his American childhood, which continued to inform his poetry, yet perhaps Eliot regretted the fact that he had not been born and raised in England. We have spoken of the Burnt Norton
manor as some sort of ideal symbol of what might have been for Eliot. We must remember that what might have been included for him the possibility that his ancestor never emigrated at all. Perhaps Eliot was conjecturing that the Gloucestershire manor was exactly the sort of place that the Eliot family might have ended up with if they had remained in England. We can now see Eliot viewing himself as a dispossessed ghost wandering about the garden he might have lived in, but for a mistake of history. The fact that the manor had been burned down in the eighteenth century probably struck a chord of response in Eliot's breast. The burning down of the house had effectively blotted out the rest of its history and dispossessed all its potential future inhabitants of their home: in a similar way, by severing the connection with England, Eliot's ancestor had blotted out the rest of the family's history in England, and dispossessed all his descendants of their English heritage. Thus Eliot feels a kinship with the dispossessed ghosts of the manor — he himself is also a ghost of the might have been. The burned manor is thus a symbol of the desolation of all that might have been in the past that was unrealised because of the actual course that history took.

Eliot of course never articulated explicitly what the Burnt Norton manor meant for him. It is clear that to have made such an interpretation explicit in the poetry would have destroyed much of the poetic impact of the passage. The poetry depends on the charged suggestion that the lines carry, the feeling that we do not completely understand the experience. Of course this particular interpretation of the experience is still only part of the story but it does suggest how the place came to prompt the experience. I offer the idea only as a motivating feeling behind the poetry — we
cannot consider it as a theory in any rational way. For Eliot of course had more than one ancestor and it is obvious that if Andrew Elyot had not emigrated, then there would have been no T.S. Eliot at all. It would after all take a considerable strain of circumstances to imagine the transference of the whole of one's ancestral line from one country to another. Thus any explicit presentation of this in the poetry would become nonsense rather quickly. Yet this is not to deny that the idea may be present. We may allow Eliot to conjecture on the possibility of his having been born in England without obliging him to arrange all the details.

This brings us however, to a further set of implications which have as yet remained unnoticed in the poetry. For there are dangers in all such speculation on what might have been. To admit the might have been as a real possibility is to deny that what has been was in any sense necessary. This is effectively to deny the necessity for one's own existence. When we consider the chance meetings in our ancestral line, all the hazards of conception and birth, all the near accidents that many have cut off the line at any point, we realise that our position in the world is the end result of a long chain of coincidence and chance. Aldous Huxley had a sense of this which he expressed in an amusing way:

"A million million spermatozoa,
All of them alive:
Out of their cataclysm but one poor Noah
Dare hope to survive.
And among that billion minus one
Might have chanced to be
Shakespeare, another Newton, a new Donne —
But the One was Me." 8

To speculate on what might have been makes us aware of our rather precarious position in the world — from this point of view each of us is unbelievably lucky to have even been born at all. When one
puts oneself on an equal footing with all the ghosts of the might have been, as Eliot does here, one is admitting that any of these ghosts could have usurped one's own place in the world. For implicit in all speculation on what might have been is the possibility that oneself might never have been born at all. All this means that the moment when the cloud passes and the pool is emptied is a charged moment indeed. From this point of view the moment could easily represent the annihilation of one's own personality. This makes the poetry resound with much larger implications than are apparent on the surface. The moment is a frightening one but it calls us back to the reality of our situation and we realise that the pool was not emptied of ourself but of the people of the might have been. Yet the moment has threatened our assurance of our own identity. If this is reality it is indeed hard to bear. The poet learns that toying around with what might have been can lead to doubts of a very real kind. If one's own existence is a matter of pure chance only, then one wonders where the meaning lies in life. It is this sort of underlying meaning which the poet probably never intended at the time, but which makes itself felt despite the poet. This is what I have referred to as the purposeful intentions of the poetry which seem to be straying from the purposeful intentions of the poet.

Of course Eliot would have had an answer to all this. For him, to speculate in this manner is futile and vain because again it is ignoring the Logos which is true for all men. It is through speculating on what might have been without taking account of the will of God that we have opened ourselves to a dangerous scepticism which deprives life of all its meaning. If we are led, as we may be, by the thrush to such a dark scepticism then we are erring because we are regarding only our own wisdom.
The answer is implicit in the "heart of light" which the pool showed us. This is picked up in the next movement when we are given assurance as to its meaning. However we cannot regard this heart of light for long: such moments of supercharged reality are hard to bear precisely because our flesh tends to lead us to doubt as we have done where we should rather render ourselves up entirely to the will of God.

Thus while the thrush does show us reality in that he frees us from the trap of fatalism, yet he also offers deception in that we may fall into the alternative pit of scepticism. The ironies involved in the terms "reality" and "deception" are by now quite profound. In the final analysis to navigate the straits between the Scylla of fatalism and the Charybdis of scepticism we have only one reliable guide which is implicit faith in the Logos, the will of God.
Movement 2

In the second movement Eliot is attempting to create a poetic representation of the idea of the godhead which for him was the whole purpose of life, the very centre of existence, in his own metaphor "the still point of the turning world". The second movement of each of the quartets is generally divided into two sections, the first of which is a "poetic" treatment ("one way of putting it") of something which is then approached in a more prosaic manner in the second section. The first section here is a very special type of poetry: it is a passage of charged language saturated with sense impressions and condensed images. The motivating idea behind the poetry seems to be an attempt to reconcile the two concepts of motion and stillness by means of examples which are familiar to our senses. Eliot's favourite example of a reconciliation between motion and stillness is of course the hub of the wheel which he uses in the second section of this movement. Although the wheel may be spinning very fast, there is one point at the very centre which is absolutely still. This becomes for Eliot a metaphor for God who remains still and unchanging in the flux of the world. It is God who is the point of all existence -

"Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance".

This idea of the still point of the turning world lies behind all the poetry of this second movement.

In the first section we are made to experience the conflict between the two ideas of stillness and motion through poetry which is heavily sense-saturated. Our own bodies provide examples: although we feel no motion within us there is
"The dance along the artery
The circulation of the lymph".

Our pulses race beneath our skins though the surface shows no trace of motion. The notion of the pulse is fused into another image which also reconciles stillness and motion - that of a vibrating wire which is moving very rapidly although it appears to be still:

"The trilling wire in the blood".

We now look above us to the stars which appear fixed in the sky although we know that they are really involved in gigantic motion. We are then laid down on our backs beneath a tree with clouds moving above the tree so that eventually we do not know whether it is we who are moving or the tree or the sky. Indeed we lose all sense of up and down and we think perhaps that

"We move above the moving tree".

All the time we hear beneath us through the unmoving ground, the rhythm and the movements of life:

"Below, the boarhound and the boar
Pursue their pattern as before".

At the same time we are bombarded with sense impressions that make us keenly aware of the very life in our own bodies. We taste, we see, we feel the

"Garlic and sapphires in the mud"

while we also sense the stilled force, the frozen impulse that the clogged axle-tree represents.

The whole effect of the passage is to evoke a sense of vibrancy in stillness. Although we may feel that the world around us is static, yet in reality everything is a pulse with the vibrancy of life. We are made to feel this pulse within us and all around us. This is the dance of life of which we are all part and which is ordered around the still point which is God. Thus the first section has prepared us for an examination of this still point. Having been made aware of the dyna-
mism and flux of the turning world, we must now turn to the central point of the flux which is what gives it its meaning.

"Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance."

The second section of the movement is more explicit in its reference. Where the first section was communicating by means of poetic images to create a sense of the vibrancy of life, the second section is concerned with a different method of communication, which is not so directly aimed at the senses. The poetry is aimed more at the rational or intellectual faculties although its communication is intended eventually to go beyond rational apprehension. We begin with the now familiar image of "the still point of the turning world" as a symbol of the godhead. Eliot now becomes concerned with creating a poetic representation of the idea of God. This is a difficult assignment for a poet: to attempt to incorporate in his verse a sense of that unknowable transcendent reality which is the Christian God. Traditionally poets faced with this problem have pleaded humility and written devout and humble hymns of praise. But Eliot is not playing the simple-minded believer; his aims are somewhat less humble. He treats the whole problem as a matter of technique and writes a type of poetry that is intended to be in some sense a mimetic representation of the idea of God. Thus he uses devices such as paradox. He piles one paradox on top of another in an attempt to represent the Supreme Paradox which is God. Eliot knows that he is dealing with something that is ultimately unknowable so that he uses poetry that cannot be literally understood. This means that the communication must take place on a level other than the rational. This by now a familiar tech-
nique of Eliot's: whenever he tries to represent God in his poetry, the words become charged beyond a rational level of apprehension so that the whole becomes almost incantatory. We recall his playing about with the word "time" in the Choruses from "The Rock" in an attempt to arrive at something which is beyond time, yet which includes all time. We also recall the punning word play in Ash Wednesday:

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

This again is almost incantation. We no longer try to "understand" the poetry but rather experience it on a level which is beyond the rational. The poetry is communicating beyond the literal meanings of the words. In the present passage in Burnt Norton the effects are similar. We can never really know anything about God, but if we can conceive of something which is neither flesh nor fleshless, neither ascent nor decline, neither from nor towards, neither arrest nor movement, ("and do not call it fixity"), in other words, if we can move out of the realm of rational understanding, then we can begin to approach the meaning of God. Thus Eliot is actually appealing to the intellect to show that what he is saying cannot after all be apprehended by the intellect.

In these techniques, Eliot is quite similar to John Milton. Consider Milton's invocation to
Light in *Paradise Lost*:

"Hail, holy Light, offspring of Heav'n first-born,
Or of th' Eternal coeternal beam
May I express thee unblamed? since God is light,
And never but in unapproached light
Dwelt from eternity, dwelt then in thee,
Bright effluence of bright essence increate.
Or hear'st thou rather pure ethereal stream,
Whose fountain who shall tell?"

Milton is addressing himself to Light, but he makes no distinction between the light which is God and the light which is present to our senses. He is not really concerned with speaking to the rational apprehension, but with evoking a sense of the unknowable "unapproachable" nature of God, by means of a poetry which becomes almost pure incantation. Certainly this passage of Milton's is much more successful than where he portrays God as a huge corporeal figure seated on a gigantic throne in the heavens. The passage is to the point here because Milton's Light which is God corresponds to the "heart of light" which Eliot referred to in the first movement. In fact the whole of the second movement is concerned with elucidating the meaning of that "heart of light" which we glimpsed in the first movement but did not really understand. Eliot is now assuring us that the heart of light was a manifestation of God. Our momentary glimpse was all that we are able to apprehend of what is really "a white light still and moving". The second movement thus supplies the absolute assurance in answer to all the doubts, hints and guesses of the first movement. The passage goes on to assure us that to trust in the will of God is to leave behind all the doubts and fears that flesh is heir to. In a moment of vision we are
given assurance that we live in a world which is ordained for the best by God. The might have been has its special place in the fullness of God’s pattern in the world. We become aware of

"And the old made explicit, understood
In the completion of its partial ecstasy,
The resolution of its partial horror".

The passage also explains why we are not able to live in a state of full knowledge of God’s purposes all the time. This is because flesh is too weak. Knowledge is knowledge of heaven and damnation which human kind cannot bear very much of. So we are protected in our time-bound cocoon of a world which knows little of eternity:

"The enchainment of past and future
Woven in the weakness of the changing body,
Protects mankind from heaven and damnation
Which flesh cannot endure".

Yet in our time-bound world we can recall the moments of revelation and realize their true meaning.

"Only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
The moment in the draughty church at smoke-fall
Be remembered; involved with past and future.
Only through time time is conquered.”
Movement 3

The third movement opens on a scene of "disaffection". This word establishes the mood which is quite wonderfully sustained throughout the whole passage. The metaphor which Eliot uses to convey the mood is that of the underground railway or "tube".

Only a flicker
Over the strained time-ridden faces
Distracted from distraction by distraction
Filled with fancies and empty of meaning
Tumid apathy with no concentration
Men and bits of paper, whirled by the
cold wind
That blows before and after time,
Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs
Time before and time after.
Eructation of unhealthy souls
Into the faded air, the torpid
Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy
hills of London,
Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and
Putney,
Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate. Not here
Not here the darkness, in this twittering
world."
The tone is perfect. The disaffectation is felt in every line. Here is not the "concentration without elimination" of the second movement but only "tumid apathy with no concentration". Here is not "the darkness which shall be the darkness of God" but only the flickering half-light of the underground railway station. Here is not the magnificent violence of Shakespeare's lines

"To be imprisoned in the viewless winds
And whirled with restless violence round about
The pondent world"
but rather

"Men and bits of paper, whirled by the
cold wind
That blows before and after time". This is not even hell, except in Pound's sense, a world "without dignity, without tragedy". C.K. Stead has called this particular passage "a piece of 'fine writing'" but "a false report, for it sells the world short in order that the world may be unlovable". This world is certainly unlovable but Stead is surely missing the point here. Eliot is not presenting his vision of the world, but only of the world of the "time-ridden", that is the world of those people whose lives are ruled by the clock and the calendar, who are so preoccupied with the "time" that they have no sense of the eternal. It is clear elsewhere in Eliot that there is much in the world that is lovable, that we can love the world because it leads us beyond to a love of God.

"Whisper of running streams, and winter lightning.
The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry,
The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy." The images are all drawn from our sensual experience of the physical world, but they all point beyond themselves to the reality of a transcendent God. It is clear from this poetry that there is ecstasy in life; it is part of our apprehension of God. It is only when we cut ourselves off from God that we are condemned to live in the "twittering" darkness of the underground world. For God is certainly "not here...in this twittering world"; but yet this twittering world is not the whole of the world. There are many men who are condemned to live in such a world because by immersing themselves completely in time and the things of this world they have cut themselves off from God. But if we can apprehend the eternity of God which is beyond time, then
we can escape this time-ridden world and share in the ecstasy. Eliot is not after all saying we cannot love the world, but we cannot love the world if we do not love God, which is a completely different thing.

The world of "disaffection" has an important place in Eliot's schema for the poem. Hugh Kenner has pointed out a structural pattern that recurs throughout the *Four Quartets* which is working here. The pattern begins with a pair of polar opposites which Eliot makes various attempts to reconcile in the poetry. The first attempt is generally a false or pseudo reconciliation which is shown to be inadequate; this is then transcended in a true reconciliation or synthesis which points beyond both elements towards God who is the ultimate reconciliation of all contradictions. Let us see how this pattern works in the passage. Firstly, the poetry is informed by the polar opposition of light and darkness; the underground world represents for Eliot a false reconciliation between the two. The light and darkness are fused in the flickering half-light of the underground railway, but there is a diseased quality about this fusion which partakes of, and contributes to, the prevailing mood of disaffection. The half-light of the underground is well caught in the lines

"Only a flicker

Over the strained time-ridden faces"

and again in the "twittering world". This underground half-light then represents a reconciliation of light and darkness which is entirely unsatisfactory and which does not possess the purity of either dark or light. But the underground world also represents a false reconciliation between the two notions of time and eternity which have informed much of the poetry of the first two movements. This world is a world completely concerned with
time, and yet it partakes of the eternal, because it is a world without end. We can imagine such a world going on forever; after each train there will always be another one due in next. The idea is rather similar to the passage in The Dry Salva-
ages which speaks of the fishermen "forever bailing". Here too is a world of time unending:

"There is no end, but addition". We can visualise no conclusion to such an existence, there will be no final train; but the words mean more than this. For there is no purpose ("no end") to such an existence, because it is a world bereft of God. The passage then represents a false recon-
ciliation of time and eternity, because although it partakes of eternity in the sense that it is a world unending, yet it has not managed to escape the limitations of time. An indefinite extension of the world of time is not a true eternity; we can only escape the time-ridden world through the eternity which is God.

We should note here that such a concept of time is not even as interesting as the fatalist's notion of a "loaded" and hence unredeemable time. Here time is merely a chronological succession, "time before and time after". Thus the train lines become a metaphorical rendering of this "linear" view of time:

" while the world moves
In appetency, on its metalled ways
Of time past and time future".

Probably in this passage Eliot was thinking of the Circle line of the London underground which would also represent a false reconciliation between motion and stillness: The trains are continually in motion but they are going nowhere, only moving around in an endless circle. There is certainly no still point in this turning world.

The whole passage then quite brilliantly pre-
sents a complex of pseudo reconciliations of all
these polarities which have their true reconcili-
ations elsewhere. We have already seen the true
reconciliation of motion and stillness in the
second movement; this is found in God, the prime
mover, who yet still remains still and unmoving
in the flux of the world. Eliot has also indic-
ated the true reconciliation between time and eter-
nity in the moment of revelation which was a
moment of time yet partook of eternity in that it
contained a revelation of God. Both time and
eternity are necessary elements in the synthesis
because we must live in time and only in time can
we apprehend the significance of the revelation:

"Only through time time is conquered."

Yet to live entirely in time is to cut oneself off
from the ecstasy that is God. Such a life is the
life of "disaffection" presented in the underground
passage. Thus the passage is not really a "con-
temptus mundi" piece intended to make us despise
the world, as Stead thought: rather Eliot is
pointing out a false way of living. There are
various ways of living but for Eliot this is the
way of the lost. We must all live in the world
because we are flesh. But we must not forget
that the physical time-bound world is not the whole
of life.

In the second part of the movement we are
shown the true reconciliation between the light
and the darkness. This reconciliation depends
on a doctrine of St John of the Cross. It is
the doctrine of asceticism: we must detach our-
selves completely from the things of this life to
achieve salvation, for the things of this life are
as nothing compared to the life to come. They
may distract us from our salvation which should
always be our prime consideration. Here Eliot
is moving closer towards a contemptus mundi which
tells us not to love the world for our aspirations are all beyond the world, but Eliot makes it clear this way is not for everyone. This is salvation à la Becket; it is "the one way", the way of the saint, but there is another way for the rest of us as we shall see. The way of the saint is the way of

perpetual solitude,
Internal darkness, deprivation
And destitution of all property,
Desiccation of the world of sense,
Evacuation of the world of fancy,
Inoperancy of the world of spirit;"

By emptying himself completely in this way the saint enters the true darkness in which he finds the true light which is God. Thus the light and the darkness are truly reconciled for the saint and they bring salvation where for others who dwell in the time-ridden world they are falsely reconciled in the underground metaphor and they represent perdition. The world of "perpetual solitude" of the saint is ultimately not as vacant as the world of the time-traveller containing a "mass of unhealthy souls" because the one world contains God where the other does not.

The way of the saint is a positive striving for purification of the soul that can be achieved by few men only: it is thus a way of movement. The other way for the rest of us is a passive receptivity to moments of revelation of the meaning of life such as we experienced in the rose-garden: it is a way of abstention from movement. But both ways lead to an acceptance of the will of God which shall be our salvation. It is only the time-travellers, those who ignore God who are lost. We are now able to receive the fullness of meaning of the conclusion of the passage:
"This is the one way, and the other
Is the same, not in movement
But abstention from movement; while the
world moves
In appetency, on its metalled ways
Of time past and time future".

Eliot's achievement in this underground passage is all the more laudable for the faithfulness with which he represents the physical reality of the London underground. The details of the poetry are all very much part of the physical reality of the tube railway, although they are used by Eliot to say much more. As we have already noted the half-light of the tube is well caught in the words "flicker" and "twittering". The "cold wind that blows before and after time" is the rush of wind that proceeds and follows the train as it hurtles out of the darkness into the underground station. Here "time" is debased to mean merely the time the train is due. This wind then is very much part of the physical reality, but of course Eliot makes it speak on other levels as well. "Before and after time" has much larger implications than the time-traveller knows of. The seven hills of London are listed off just like the names on the destination boards of the underground station. The world for the time-traveller is reduced to a list of destinations each to be reached at appointed times. The "metalled ways" of the railway, again very much part of the physical reality, are used to comment on the limitations of this world. They represent the narrowly blinkered "appetency" of a world confined in time. The crowds of commuters too are well caught:

"Eructation of unhealthy souls
Into the faded air".

Here we are reminded of some of Eliot's earlier poetry, particularly the Boston poems which were poems too of "disaffection";

"I am aware of the damp souls of housemaids
Sprouting despondently at area gates".  
The same tone of disaffection pervades both pieces but the difference is that Eliot in the underground passage is using the mood to a further artistic end. The earlier piece was merely an expression of the mood of disaffection. Here, by virtue of its place in the pattern, the passage is offered to us as a false way of living. We realise that this disaffection is the condition of lost souls; this is Eliot's vision of a hell "without dignity, without tragedy". The implications of the poetry are much larger than in the earlier piece. Unless one sees this, there is the danger of putting a lower value on the poetry than it deserves as Stead does.

Kenner has shown us that if we are very observant we may catch a glimpse of the poet himself sauntering through a corner of his scene á la Hitchcock, for Eliot used the tube to reach his office at Faber's on the Piccadilly line. This is quite in keeping with the Old 'Possum sense of humour that we have come to know. It also suggests that Eliot's control of his verse is now much more assured. The early Boston poems such as Morning at the Window and Aunt Helen depend on a heavy satire such as the poet can achieve only by distancing himself completely from his subject. Satire after all depends on the satirist's elevation above the follies of his target. But here Eliot can quite happily place himself in his own picture; after all we must all live in the world of time and the world of a bank clerk must be a time-ridden world indeed. We can only applaud the control of such poetry where the poet in his disaffection does not place himself on a superior moral level indulging in a cheap joke at the expense of the rest of the world. But of course although Eliot recognised that he too had to live in this time-
ridden world he saw beyond it. Eliot was much more than a bank clerk, and similarly the world is more than the twittoring darkness of the underground, although this is all some souls see of it. This is precisely the point we must take or else we shall fall into the trap that Stead fell into.
Movement 4

It has been noted that the fourth movement of each of the Quartets is a short lyric revealing one of the aspects of God. Thus God the Father appears in Burnt Norton, the Son in East Coker, the Holy Spirit in Little Gidding, while the fourth place, in The Dry Salvages, is occupied by the Virgin Mary who is our intercessor to God. It is probable that only in conceiving of the Quartets as a cycle of four did Eliot decide to divide God according to his trinal aspects in these lyrics. The Son in East Coker and the Holy Spirit in Little Gidding are immediately recognisable as presences while the lyric in The Dry Salvages is a devout prayer addressed directly to Mary for her intercession on our behalf. But the Burnt Norton lyric is less obvious as a revelation of God the Father. Probably had Eliot conceived of the whole cycle before writing Burnt Norton, God the Father would have been more manifestly present in this lyric. As it stands however Eliot had no need to locate God the Father explicitly here, so that the poetry remains poetry and not merely the working out of a schema as is the danger in the later lyrics.

The lyric begins by turning from this present life to enquire about the life to come. The poet wonders what comes after death; when our day is ended

"Will the sunflower turn to us, will the clematis
Stray down, bend to us; tendril and spray
Clutch and cling?"

It is made clear that the poet's questionings are answered explicitly in the following lines - Eliot actually uses the word "answer". The response is given in terms of light which had earlier been identified with God.
"After the kingfisher's wing
Has answered light to light, and is silent,
the light is still
At the still point of the turning world."

There is sufficient indication here to answer the query of the poet. The still point of the turning world we recognise immediately as a symbol of God. The kingfisher is a traditional symbol of God – and it recalls the fisher king of The Waste Land who was also the hanged god. Thus we are reminded of the sacrifice of the Son of God for our sins. The lyric then assures us both of the continuing presence of God the Creator in his creation ("the still point of the turning world") and of the redemption of our sins through the crucifixion of Christ. Thus when we think of the end of our lives, when the black cloud of death shall carry the sun away, we also think of the black cloud that was present at the crucifixion – a black cloud also carried the Son away. Finally the lyric ties together more firmly the two ideas of the heart of light and the still point of the turning world, from the first and second movements respectively, which we had already guessed were somehow related. We are now assured of the meaning of the heart of light of the first movement – it was indeed a manifestation of God.

The whole of this assurance is given in non-explicit terms. The answer to the questions is not supplied in a dogmatic way but is given through faith and belief in the moments of revelation we experience in this life. The poetry does not dogmatically assert but gives momentary glimpses and insights into the meaning of life. Thus the poetry always remains poetry. We are thankful that Eliot had no need to work out his schema in this lyric for it would surely have resulted in inferior poetry. To overschematise is to risk damage to the poetry.
and this is the danger in the later quartets. In East Coker at least it seems that the poetry did suffer. Here Eliot was concerned with explicitly locating the Son of God in the fourth movement and the results are not at all satisfactory. There is no quarrel with the fourth movements of either The Dry Salvages which is a beautifully devout prayer to the Virgin Mary, or Little Gidding which is an inspired poem charged with the dominant fire symbolism to represent the Holy Ghost. But it seems that God in his incarnate aspect always presented Eliot with peculiar problems. Generally he attacks the problem by evoking the paradoxical nature of the incarnation by building paradoxes into his language. Sometimes this works well as in the second movement:

"At the still point of the turning world.
Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered.
Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance." 1

But too often this can degenerate into a dreadful punning wordplay that becomes a travesty of good poetry as we saw in Ash Wednesday:

"Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled". 2

In East Coker he has opted for an elaborate "skull-and-crossbones" 3 metaphysical conceit which has been deservedly mauled by the critics. The whole of the clanking machinery that Eliot employed distracts one and indeed detracts from the importance of the presence of the Son of God in the poem. Eliot claimed elsewhere that "the poetry does not matter". 4
as he was striving to transcend mere aesthetic effects and reach what C.K. Stead called a fusion of the moral and the aesthetic. Yet aesthetic effects can only be transcended if they are first mastered and perfected. We can allow Eliot to say "the poetry does not matter" only if the poetry is in the first place faultless. Where it is not the poetry does matter because it becomes an obstacle to our passing beyond it to reach that fusion of the moral and the aesthetic towards which he was striving. In the East Coker lyric the poetry matters precisely because it is so bad. Here in the Burnt Norton lyric the poetry does not matter because it has done its job quietly and efficiently without bothering us with unnecessary and overflam- buoyant elaborations of form.
Throughout the poem Eliot has been insisting that there is no meaning to be derived from a conception of time as a linear chronological flow - the lost of the third movement are precisely those who live with this idea of time, who immerse themselves completely in the flow without ever looking beyond it. But such a life is one "Filled with fancies and empty of meaning" and Eliot rejected it in the conclusion of the third movement as the "metalled ways" of appetancy. The meaning of life, for Eliot, is not to be found in the time-ridden world, but is somehow associated with the given moments of revelation that we sometimes experience in life, such as the moment in the rose-garden. Such moments give life its meaning because they reveal momentarily the pattern which lies beneath the continual changes of the flux of this life.

In this fifth movement Eliot uses the analogy of art to throw some light on his meaning. When we experience an art that "moves" in time, such as music or poetry reading, we experience it not by virtue of its movement, but rather its stillness. That is to say the piece is meaningless to us as a flux - it is only through knowing the overall pattern that informs the work that we can appreciate it. The individual notes or words are meaningless in themselves - it is only inasmuch as they reflect the underlying pattern that they speak to us. Thus a word, a note or a phrase can come to have significance by virtue of its context. When we respond to a piece, it is not the persistence of the words or notes in our ear after we have heard them, "Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts", but our possession of the whole pattern while we listen -
Or say that the end precedes the beginning,
And the end and the beginning were always
there
Before the beginning and after the end",
which gives it its meaning. It is the presence
of the whole pattern ringing through individual
words or notes:

"And all is always now".
In a similar way there is a pattern underlying life
which can be felt to resound through certain individ-
ual moments. These moments give meaning to life
because in them we have access to the fullness of
God's pattern for the world, we see a vision of

"And the old made explicit, understood
In the completion of its partial ecstasy,
The resolution of its partial horror".²

In such moments indeed the whole meaning of life
becomes available to us:

"And all is always now".
This line represents a total transformation of the
earlier fatalistic view that all time is eternally
present and hence unredeemable. The outer shell
of sense of the line has been retained but now its
meaning has been wholly transfigured. Eliot bears
home the corpse of the earlier somewhat dismal
theme in a triumphant procession that is more re-
miniscent of Beethoven than any other poet. The
transformation of this theme which surrounds the
conclusion in triumph reminds one of nothing so much
as the conclusion of the fifth symphony.

The passage now continues the art analogy with
a consideration of the individual words of the poem.
Each word of a poem, being a word of current usage
in the language, is therefore constantly being
employed in a thousand different contexts. Each
use of a particular word affects and changes that
word to some degree so that in effect our whole language is constantly changing. Thus the poet finds the words are liable to

"slip, slide, perish
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
Will not stay still".

The individual words themselves are quite unstable - it is only the pattern of the poem which can give the stability to the work which the individual words do not possess. In the pattern is the stillness, where the words are in a continual state of flux. Eliot now begins to make clear the point of the artistic analogy. He moves from a consideration of words to a consideration of the Word - always a probable transition in Eliot. It is the Word, the Incarnation of God in the flesh, which gives meaning to our lives which of themselves lack stability and meaning, immersed as we all are in the flux. The occurrence of the Word here brings us back once again to the crucial lines in the Choruses from "The Rock":

"Then came, at a predetermined moment, a moment in time and of time,

.........
A moment in time but time was made through that moment: for without the meaning there is no time, and that moment of time gave the meaning". 3

We return quite naturally to these lines as they represent the still point of Eliot's verse: all his later poetry revolves around these lines. For here Eliot was evoking the Incarnation of God in the flesh, and just as that moment gave meaning to the whole flux of time and human history, so this moment of poetry gives meaning to the whole of Eliot's later poetry.

Christ, the Word, then appears here as that which gives meaning to life. Just as the pattern
of the work of art gives significance to the individual words, so Christ is the pattern who gives significance to our lives. He appears here as the Word in the desert assailed by voices of temptation. The artistic analogy is continued this far by Eliot - just as the words of the poet are constantly under attack by virtue of the life they have in their usage by men, so the Word is under attack from the voices of temptation by virtue of the life He has in the flesh. The attack is primarily from two quarters which are given in two lines which have occasioned much critical bewilderment:

"The crying shadow in the funeral dance,
The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera".

It is clear enough that the first is a figure of grief. Grief for departed loved ones is one of the major, but more subtle, temptations that man is subject to in this life - it is a frequent obstacle to belief and trust in God. We tend to put our love and need for those close to us on a higher plane than our love for God, which creates an obstacle to faith. For Eliot this is a result of placing too high a value on the life of this world at the expense of the next - a mistake to which our flesh is too prone. Christ, as he too was flesh, must have experienced this particular temptation. He must have been affected by the grief of his fellow men, "nearly experienced", although he had the strength to resist temptation that no man had.

The second figure is the really puzzling one. The fact that the chimera is "disconsolate" may perhaps suggest that it has just realized its own chimerical nature. Harry Blamires suggests that it is thus a figure of man as he realizes his own sinfulness - it is a figure of despair - and he quotes Sir John Davies as a possible source for the lines:
"As in the fable of that Lady fair
Which for her lust was turned into a cow;
When thirsty to a stream she did repair,
And saw herself transformed (she wist not how;)

At first she startles! then, she stands amazed!
At last, with terror, she from thence doth fly,
And loathes the wat'ry glass wherein she gazed,
And she shuns it still, though she for thirst do die,

Even so, Man's Soul, which did God's Image bear,
And was, at first, fair, good, and spotless pure;
Since with her sins, her beauties blotted were,
Doth, of all sights, her own sight least endure.

For even, at first reflection, she espies
Such strange chimeras and such monsters there!
Such toys! such antics! and such vanities!
And she retires, and shrinks for shame and fear."

The disconsolate sinner then, in his despair at his sins, also suffers from a lack of sufficient faith. He "shrinks for shame and fear" from trust in God, because he fears his sins are too great to be forgiven. This would be a neat interpretation of this otherwise quite puzzling line. We have then the Word in the desert most tempted by the voice of grief and the voice of the disconsolate sinner, which is the voice of despair. These are both voices of the flesh which would have been temptations
to Christ - perhaps they are the most subtle temptations of all. However they are voices that must be resisted. They are the result of a want of faith and consequently they reflect an imbalance in our attachment to this world at the expense of the next. Yet this is not simply an attachment to the things of this life, as for example the time-travellers of the third movement are attached to the things of this life. Rather it is a more subtle mistrust in God's grace and its power to redeem us. Eliot supplies the answer to these problems in the figure of Christ. It is through Christ that the redemption of our sins is possible and we must have more faith in Him. But He is also the pattern for our lives, on the analogy with the pattern of the work of art. Thus we must try to be more like Him - if we place our faith in Him we can find the strength to resist the temptation to grief and the temptation to despair as He did.

We may remark that here, perhaps, Eliot is coming much closer to the "contemptuus mundi" that Stead accused him of in the third movement. In shrugging off in two lines the great human dilemma between human love in this world and aspirations going beyond this world, and the ever continuing struggle between faith and despair, Eliot is perhaps treading dangerously close to an inhuman and unnecessarily harsh asceticism. The problem is not as easily solved as the poetry would have us believe. And yet Eliot realises this too. For though he goes on in the next section to speak of the way of the saint - using the figure he employed in Ash Wednesday of the staircase to symbolise the process of purification of the soul - yet it is clear that this is an ideal of human behaviour not to be realised in this world. For it is the peculiar human dilemma to be

"Caught in the form of limitation
Between un-being and being";
this life is only a half way house between the condition of un-being before birth and the true being that we enter on only after death. But although we may not be able to realise the way of the saint in our own lives, yet it is available to us as part of the pattern. If we can keep our eye on this ideal, we will remain in contact with the pattern and we will share in the knowledge of the will of God. As if to affirm that we indeed are on the right path, suddenly there is a flashback to the experience of the first movement:

"Suddenly a shaft of sunlight
Even while the dust moves
There rises the hidden laughter
Of children in the foliage
Quick now, here, now, always".

It is such movements that make

"Ridiculous the waste sad time
Stretching before and after"

and make even more ridiculous the time-travellers who know of nothing other than this waste sad time.

Thus it has taken the whole of the last four movements of the poem to draw out fully the meaning of the moment in the rose-garden. The moment is part of the pattern which gives meaning to life. It is ultimately linked with the one moment that gives meaning to all time - the moment of the Incarnation. Ultimately then all meaning in life is dependent on faith in God. This is the position we ought to have reached at the end of Burnt Norton. And yet having reached the end of the poem, we feel that the last four movements have still not said all there is to be said about the experience in the rose-garden. In reading the poem, it is evident that all the real life of the poetry resided in that passage, and that the remainder of the poem was really only an attempt to explain and illuminate the experience. But yet the experience seemed to open up more speculation than the explanations of
the next four movements have satisfactorily resolved. The experience prompts all sorts of questions which are rather inadequately answered by a dogmatic call for faith in God. If the rose-garden experience was an experience of what might have been which gave us a revelation of the meaning of life, what implications does this have in terms of the actual past? Does it mean that what actually has happened in the past is not sufficient to reveal the meaning of life? If we need to speculate about things that never happened to realise the meaning of life, does this mean that the past and indeed the present have no real meaning of themselves? There were also doubts about the significance of events which actually did happen in the past. If history is really only a chapter of coincidences and chances, if the might have been is as real as what actually has been, does this mean we are only accidental residents of this world? All these questions seemed to reverberate in the rose-garden experience and none has been answered at all by the four movements that followed it. Although Eliot was perhaps no closer to an answer at the end of Little Gidding - perhaps the questions were answerable - yet at least he did come to realise that there was more implicit in the poetry than he had seen at first and thus three more quartets were spawned by the need to make sense of it all.

We have noted that Burnt Norton originally had been intended to stand alone as a single poem and after completing it Eliot thought he had written a satisfactorily complete work of art. Thus he left it to stand as the final poem in the 1936 volume and proceeded to work for the next year or so on his drama. In 1953 Eliot remarked "Burnt Norton might have remained by itself if it hadn't been for the war, because I had become very much absorbed by the problems of writing for the stage and might have
gone straight on from The Family Reunion to another play. The war destroyed that interest for a time: you remember how the conditions of our lives changed, how much we were thrown in on ourselves in the early days? East Coker was the result and it was only in writing East Coker that I began to see the Quartets as a set of four. "The important phrase here is "how much we were thrown in on ourselves". For Eliot, Burnt Norton had been, in one sense, a personal meditation in which he had been trying to make sense of his own position in the world, which he attempted via a consideration of what might have been. But he was given more cause for personal meditation by those peculiar conditions of war which, as he says, threw him in on himself making for more searching self examination. The war had made the world even more confused and confusing and it had become more essential for Eliot to make sense of his position in the world. The new attempt was another personal meditation, East Coker, in which he attempts to see himself in relation to his ancestral past. Having been led right up to the brink of nihilism by his speculations upon what might have been, Eliot found it necessary to reassure himself of his own identity by examining what actually had been. It was in writing this poem, East Coker, that Eliot began to see the Quartets as a set of four. He had come to realise that perhaps not all the questions raised in Burnt Norton had been satisfactorily resolved there; in the experience in the rose-garden there were certain implicit considerations which had not been recognised by the resolution of that poem. There had to be more said after Burnt Norton because after all the poem had not managed to make adequate sense of its own dilemma. Perhaps it was inevitable that a poem which raised questions by way of what might have been, must have been answered by a series of examinations of what had been, what was,
and what was to be. These examinations were to be conducted in the three quartets to follow.
Movement I

In East Coker Eliot recalls his mind from its absorption in what might have been and turns his attention to the reality of the historical past, which includes the history of his own ancestral line. After the doubts and questionings of Burnt Norton which had led him ultimately right up to the brink of nihilism, it became necessary for him to reassure himself of the reality and significance of his own identity. Thus he is now concerned with verifying the roots of the family tree from which he had sprung. This "back to the roots" movement - standard procedure for one assailed by doubts - is proclaimed in the opening line of the poem:

"In my beginning is my end."

Accordingly we are taken in the course of the poem on a visit to East Coker, a village near Yeovil in Somersetshire where the Eliot family had had its seat centuries previously. It was from East Coker that Andrew Elyot emigrated to America in 1667, but the family had been established there for some centuries before that date. The earliest recorded reference to the Eliots would appear to be one cited by Croft in his note on the life of Sir Thomas Elyot to one Michell Elyot of Coker, who was the great grandfather of Sir Thomas, which would date Michell himself about the beginning of the fifteenth century. The family seat was here right up to the time of Andrew Elyot's emigration in 1667. Thus East Coker, as the earliest recorded residence of the Eliot family, indeed represents the beginning Eliot was in search of. For here is the recorded beginning of his own ancestral line.

But East Coker also represents another sort of beginning of which Eliot is to become aware in the
course of the poem. Andrew Elyot who left it to brave

"the dark cold and the empty desolation,
The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters
Of the petrel and the porpoise".2
taught Eliot that the important beginnings in life are not those of the historical records, buried deep in history and prehistory, but rather the beginnings one makes in one's own life. From his ancestor Andrew, Eliot learned that life is not a cosy and static domestic round, but a continuing and dynamic challenge: we must meet the challenge by constantly making new beginnings. Eliot learned in effect that

"Old men ought to be explorers".3

Thus although Andrew Elyot's emigration to America proved wrong for the poet and a step which he had personally to undo, yet it was right for Andrew Elyot. In his search for his beginning which was really a search for solace in his personal predicament, Eliot learned that the whole of life is a new beginning, and that the only solace to be found is in one's own repeated attempts to make sense of one's world:

"and every attempt
Is a wholly new start".4

This is the text which East Coker offers.

Eliot himself visited the place in 1937 and eventually came to love it so much that his ashes now lie there in the thirteenth century church of Saint Michael beneath the inscription:

"In my beginning is my end.
Of your kindness pray for the soul
of Thomas Stearns Eliot, poet.

In my end is my beginning."5

This inscription with its reversal of the sense of the line, is taken directly from East Coker and is, in a sense, a model for the poem. The opening
line recurs several times in the course of the poem and occurs in its reversed form as the final line. This reversed form as it closes the poem is actually the motto of Mary Stuart. Eliot, in reversing Mary's motto to open the poem, was working with a certain amount of ironic purpose. Beginning with the motto inside out, the whole aim of the poem becomes the restoration of its original form which is finally achieved at the close. There is a parallel here to the pattern we observed in Burnt Norton. We recall the rather limited position of the fatalist in the opening lines:

"If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable"  
which had given way to a fuller vision of reality by the end:

"And all is always now". Elizabethan remarks, "a rendering of the thoughts that led him to this conclusion". Thus East Coker, like Burnt Norton, is a poem of self discovery. This has been missed too often in the criticism, where the poems have generally been regarded as "set pieces": they are not in fact set pieces in any sense: rather the thought in them develops quite organically. In East Coker during the course of the poem Eliot has to learn that the important thing in life is not to identify one's ancestral beginning - it may be "here, or there, or elsewhere" - but rather to see that each individual life must be a wholly new start:

"We must be still and still moving
Into a further intensity"
For a further union, a deeper communion.7

However this mood of forward-looking optimism is not present in the opening lines - it is something which is only learned in the course of the poem and indeed takes some time to emerge. The predominant note of the opening is quite the reverse; it is one of stoical resigned acceptance of the toilsome round that is implied in the cyclical pattern of life. We have already noted a similarity between the openings of Burnt Norton and East Coker but we should also note some important differences. Both poems contain elements of fatalism in their openings but now the meditative tones of airy speculation of Burnt Norton have been replaced by a world weary tone of resignation that reminds us specifically of Ecclesiastes:

"One generation passeth away and another

generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever".8

The theoretical speculations about what might have been are replaced by a realisation of the actual rhythm of life which reaches right back through the generations. Thus the time scheme here is not on the grand scale of Burnt Norton ("time present and time past ... and time future") but rather is Sweeney's cycle of "birth, copulation and death".9

In Burnt Norton the prosy meditative voice quickly melted away into a charged passage of superbly suggestive poetry. The lightness of touch so remarkable in the Burnt Norton passage has here given way to a more earthy and insistently rhythmical verse. This is Eliot consciously working out his pattern: where the predominant element of Burnt Norton was air, we are now in the earth quartet and the verse becomes progressively more earthy until it positively clogs the very feet of the lines:

"Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,
Earth feet, long feet, lifted in country mirth
Birth of those long since under earth".

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The quality of suggestiveness of the Burnt Norton verse, the half-caught echo that leaves us unsure of what it reminds us, has also been replaced by a more direct method of borrowing from, or allusion to, works with a definite historical flavour, such as the Old Testament and Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Boke Named the Governor*. All these changes in technique correspond to the different weight of meaning which East Coker is to carry in Eliot's scheme of things.

Where Burnt Norton became an idealised symbol of what might have been, East Coker represents, in a real sense, what has been. It is a symbol of the reality of the historical past. Where Eliot had been attracted to the Burnt Norton manor for the ghosts and shadows of unrealised possibilities that it evoked, East Coker is significant to him because of the real role it has played in his past. Part of the charm of the place for him is that still today it remains untouched by modern progress, unlike the neighbouring market town of Yeovil. Russell Kirk notes that "East Coker has remained much as it appeared in the day of Andrew Elyot and earlier". Thus we have in the two opening poems of the quartet cycle two opposed symbols representing respectively what might have been and what has been. It seems clear that a consideration of the reality of the past was a much less attractive poetic prospect for Eliot than speculating on what might have been. Eliot seems subdued and resigned in this poetry where he was enormously stimulated by the richness of poetic possibility in the Burnt Norton passage. What has been seemed to Eliot quite limited in comparison with what might have been and thus the poetry is drawn in muted colours - these are the sombre shades of stoicism and resignation. This is of course not to say that the poetry of East Coker is inferior to that of Burnt
Norton, merely that it is poetry of a different kind, of a different inspiration. At all events the two ideas central to these two poems, what might have been and what has been, would seem to be ready-made raw material to fulfil Kenner's dialectic pattern. We should perhaps prepare to expect in The Dry Salvages a poem which represents a false reconciliation of the two ideas and in Little Gidding the eventual true reconciliation.

However this is to anticipate. For the present we must examine the poetry to see how it discloses the significance which Eliot intended East Coker to bear. The poem opens with a passage dealing with the cyclical pattern of life, and the cyclical movements of history. The whole of this passage is really a poetic expansion of texts from the book of Ecclesiastes. We have already quoted Ecclesiastes Chapter 1, verse 4:

"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever".

Compare the opening lines of East Coker:

"In succession
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
Is an open field, or a factory, or a bypass.
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,
Old fire to ashes, and ashes to the earth
Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,
Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf".

Compare also Ecclesiastes Chapter 13, verses 19-20:

"For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above
a beast: for all is vanity.
All go unto one place; all are of the
dust, and all turn to dust again".
The passage now modulates into an explicit imitation
of the manner of Ecclesiastes:
" there is a time for building
And a time for living and for generation
And a time for the wind to break the
loosened pane
And to shake the wainscot where the
field-mouse trots
And to shake the tattered arras woven
with a silent motto".
We note how the passage ends on a note of decay
and destruction. The whole mood evoked by the
passage is eventually one of frustration and resig-
nation. We begin to live only to begin to die.
Although there is a time for building, soon the
building shall crumble, and similarly we too must
all decay and die and return unto dust. This is
all implied in the opening line:
"In my beginning is my end".
Behind the poetry we hear the sombre tones that are
the keynotes of Ecclesiastes:
"What profit hath a man of all his labour
which he taketh under the sun?" 13
"I have seen all the works done under the
sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vex-
ation of spirit." 14
Thus the heavy reliance on Ecclesiastes in this
passage carries over into the poetry the mood of
world-weariness and resignation that is the pre-
dominant note in the Ecclesiastes verse ("Vanity
of vanities; all is vanity")15.

The next passage in the movement moves away
from the influence of Ecclesiastes but the mood
remains subdued and resigned. The passage opens
with a repetition of the opening line of the poem
but now with a more specific application. This passage presents Eliot's personal pilgrimage back to East Coker, the seat of his ancestors:

"In my beginning is my end".

The poet must pass down a passage as he did in Burnt Norton, but this passage is not alive with possibility as was the Burnt Norton one. There, we recall, the quality of the verse was its suggestiveness, its all-inclusiveness; every unrealised possibility in life was implicit in the verse. Here the whole range of possibility is limited to one particular direction which the poetry insists upon:

"the deep lane
Shuttered with branches, dark in the afternoon,
Where you lean against a bank while a van passes,
And the deep lane insists on the direction
Into the village".

Here the air is not vibrant as in the rose-garden but numbed, deadened -

"in the electric heat
Hypnotised".

There is no magical laughter of children in the shrubbery but only a drowsy somnolence:

"The dahlias sleep in the empty silence".

There are no mystical light effects, no vision of the heart of light, no unseen eyebeams crossing. Instead

"In a warm haze the sultry light
Is absorbed, not refracted, by grey stone".

The whole tone of the passage is muted and subdued. And yet, as if there were after all some possibility in this sleepy atmosphere, we are warned to remain awake and

"Wait for the early owl".

Now the poet does have his vision. It does not occur spontaneously at the height of the day as in
Burnt Norton but we must wait for nightfall. It is not a mystical transcendent experience involving disembodied ethereal presences, but rather a vision of a group of earthy peasants performing a dance in celebration of a marriage, a form of fertility rite. These are not ghosts of the might have been, they are real historical ghosts. They are the medieval ancestors of the twentieth century. They are explicitly the stock from which the poet himself sprang. To make the point that these are in fact his own ancestors, Eliot alludes to a work of one of his ancestors, Sir Thomas Elyot who was writing in the sixteenth century. Eliot includes a passage here which borrows directly from The Boke Named the Gouernour, retaining the medieval spelling to make sure we do not miss the point:

"The association of man and woman
In dawnsinge, signifying matrimonie -
A dignified and commodious sacrament.
Holding eche other by the hand or the arm
Whiche betokeneth concorde."

Sir Thomas Elyot had written:

"It is diligently to be noted that the associatinge of man and woman in dawnsing, they bothe obseruinge one nombre and tyme in their meuynges, was nat begonne without a speciall consideration, as well for the necessarye coniunction of those two persones, as for the intimation of sondry vertues, whiche be by them represented. And for as moche as by the association of a man and a woman in dawnsinge may be signified matrimonie, I coulde in declarynge the dignitie and commoditie of that sacrament make intiere volumes, if it were nat so communely knoen to all men, that almoste every frere lymitour carieth it write in his bosome."

These medieval ancestors of the poet are the real counter parts to the might have been ghosts of the Burnt Norton rose-garden. But their earthy
reality seems to disturb Eliot. He cannot help regretting the limitations of the actual past; it seems so clumsy and restricted in contrast with the rich and limitless possibilities of what might have been. What might have been to Eliot is "unheard music hidden in the shrubbery" and dignified invisible presences "moving without pressure over the dead leaves". In contrast the peasants whom Eliot chooses to represent what has been are not even allowed to stand in their own right but are heavily overdrawn by Eliot so as to become self-caricatures. They are in fact the medieval equivalent of that familiar stereotype, the yokel or country bumpkin.

"Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter
Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,
Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth
Mirth of those long since under earth
Nourishing the corn".

Between "unheard music" and "country mirth" there is no contest; "heavy feet in clumsy shoes" cannot possibly foot it with presences which move "without pressure over the dead leaves". The fun that Eliot pokes at these medieval rustics barely masks a deeply felt dissatisfaction with the reality of the past, springing out of a regret for all those things which might have been but were never realised which is carried over from Burnt Norton. All this must be purged away before the poetry can reach the affirmation that is implied in the restoration of Mary's motto. The passage now modulates once again into the manner of Ecclesiastes culminating in a Sweeney-like conclusion:

"The time of the seasons and the constellations
The time of milking and the time of harvest
The time of the coupling of man and woman
And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling,
Eating and drinking. Dung and death,"
The first movement is now rounded off with a further four lines. In considering these lines we can begin to draw together the various strands from the separate passages which make up the movement so that we can arrive at the overall meaning. Dawn arrives after the vision of the night and with it a repetition of the insistent light and heat of the earlier passage.

"Dawn points, and another day
Prepares for heat and silence."

Here the dawn is pointing out to sea. Eliot is thinking of the journey that his ancestor is to make over the sea in his transference to America. In terms of the time scheme of the poem, Eliot has been transported back into the past so that he is contemporaneous with his medieval ancestors. He is "in his beginning". Thus he is before his ancestor's emigration, but he has a God's eye view of history - he knows that history has marked out this course which inevitably must follow. Thus the course of history seems to Eliot insistent: like the deep lane insisting on the direction into the village, history insists on the course which has been laid down for the Eliot family and which each member of the ancestral line must act out, leading right up to the birth of the poet himself. Of course since Eliot is not born yet he cannot place himself in this scheme. He is

"here
Or there, or elsewhere. In my beginning".

What the whole movement expresses overall is a feeling of dissatisfaction, frustration and restriction in life by the very conditions of existence. This is articulated firstly by counterpointed contrasts with the corresponding movement of Burnt Norton. For the poet the actual past has no poetic quality such as the imagined realm of pure possibility has. On the contrary it can seem trivial
and senseless like a clumsy peasant’s dance. But the feeling is also articulated by means of inbuilt indications internal to the poem. The whole feeling of Ecclesiastes contributes to the mood. When we think of those medieval peasants who were our ancestors and who are now dead we think of the words of the Preacher:

"What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?"

"For there is no more remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? As the fool."

"Therefore I hated life; because the work that is under the sun is grievous to me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

But there is another means by which Eliot articulates his feeling in this movement - this is the characterisation of the heat and light as "insistent" and "pointing". This is all-important to our understanding of the poem. It is contrasted with the all-inclusiveness of the Burnt Norton verse. It is as if from all the possible directions in Burnt Norton one had to be chosen in East Coker. And this is exactly what the poetry is saying. There is only one possible course for history. In the realm of the might have been we can entertain an infinite number of possibilities but in the realm of the real there can be only one particular eventuality. Of all possible courses which history could take, it must take a particular one, and once this course has been taken it is irrevocable. When we look back at the course of history this is what impresses itself upon us - we see the ineluctable chain of events which nothing now can possibly change. History indeed insists upon its direction. Thus the poet feels too narrowly circumscribed by the one-dimensional property of history. He feels
himself placed in a false position by the course of history which has wronged him by removing him from his rightful context and planting him in America. This is why the dawn points out to sea at the end of the movement, because history has decreed that Andrew Elyot shall cross the Atlantic in his emigration to America. And thus too Eliot feels dissatisfied at the end of the movement in specific contrast to the feeling of plenitude and fulfilment at the end of the rose-garden experience. This also explains his rage against his ancestors which leads him to mock them as a group of earthy peasants - it was all the decisions of his forebears which determined the conditions of his existence with which he feels particularly dissatisfied.

Eliot then is still a long way from the affirmation that is implicit in the eventual restoration of Mary's motto. He is still dwelling on the sense of loss, the sense of opportunities missed and now gone forever, which overcame him in Burnt Norton. He is still regretting the course of events which lead to his having been born in America and not in England. He must learn to transcend these preoccupations and begin to concentrate on the possibilities inherent in his own life. He must realise that his life is in no sense restricted by what has happened in the past but that it is his own state of mind -- his committal to a philosophy of fatalism -- which is the real limitation of possibility. Once he can throw off the bonds of fatalism he can begin to experience some of the real possibility of life.
Movement 2

The second movement begins, as in Burnt Norton, with a "poetic" treatment of a theme that is then reexamined from a different point of view in the second section. The poetic treatment is conducted in terms of a disturbance in nature. The season of late Autumn is disturbed by a sudden access of the vitality of Spring.

"What is the late November doing
With the disturbance of the spring
And creatures of the summer heat,
And snowdrops writhing under feet
And hollyhocks that aim too high
Red into grey and tumble down
Late roses filled with early snow?"

This disturbance in the seasonal cycle is mirrored by a grand celestial war among the stars that climaxes in an apocalyptic vision of the end of the world.

"Scorpion fights against the Sun
Until the Sun and Moon go down
Comets weep and Leonids fly
Hunt the heavens and the plains
Whirled in a vortex that shall bring
The world to that destructive fire
Which burns before the ice-cap reigns."

All this is "explained" in prosaic terms in the next section: Eliot realises that such poetry, though richly evocative can miss its mark by not stating its own meaning clearly enough. The danger is in a periphrasis that loses the sense of what it is paraphrasing through overconcern with its own elaboration. It is

" a way of putting it - not very satisfactory:
A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion",

Eliot realises that mere aesthetic effects are not
so important as articulating clearly the message of
the poetry - "the poetry does not matter". Thus
he begins again. The metaphors had been intended
to communicate Eliot's feelings at having passed
middle age and yet still not experiencing what he
had always expected to feel with the onset of years
- the maturity, wisdom and serenity of old age.
Advancing years do not bring these qualities at all,
his finds.

"It was not (to start again) what one had
expected.
What was to be the value of the long
looked forward to,
Long hoped for calm, the autumnal serenity
And the wisdom of age?"

Age does not bring us into a season of mellowing
autumn which fades slowly into a peaceful winter;
rather we still experience the mixed emotions of
the spring of life. The indecisions, anxieties,
uncertainties of youth persist into and after the
middle years of life. The feeling is reminiscent
of Yeats and indeed the whole section points for­
ward to the passage in Little Gidding where the
dead master (who sounds a lot like Yeats) discloses
"the gifts reserved for age":

" First the cold friction of expiring sense
Without enchantment, offering no promise
But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit
As body and soul begin to fall asunder
Second, the conscious impotence of rage
At human folly, and the laceration
Of laughter at what ceases to amuse.
And last, the rending pain of re-enactment
Of all that you have done, and been; the
shame
Of motives later revealed, and the awareness
Of things ill done and done to others' harm
Which once you took for exercise of virtue.
Then fools' approval stings, and honour
stains."
From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire
Where you must move in measure, like a dancer! It is significant that the Little Gidding passage should end with the fire of purgatory which is "the one discharge from sin and error". For already in East Coker we have had a glimpse of the fire which awaits the sinner:

"that destructive fire which burns before the ice-cap reigns". This of course is not the "refining fire" of purgatory but the destructive fire of hell. The whole of Little Gidding turns on the difference between the different types of fire; in fact "The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre -
To be redeemed from fire by fire".
The present passage anticipates the later one with these forward pointing hints.

Eliot goes on in the passage to express anger at the facade of wisdom which old men erect and which had led him to expect it for himself as he grew older.

"Had they deceived us,
Or deceived themselves, the quiet-voiced elders,
Bequeathing us merely a receipt for deceit? The serenity only a deliberate hebetude, The wisdom only the knowledge of dead secrets Useless in the darkness into which they peered
Or from which they turned their eyes."
The use of "quiet-voiced" in this passage is interesting; it is carefully placed here and exemplifies the archness of Old ‘Possum. The word seems at
first a genuine Homeric-type epithet of respect, but there is at least a glance here at the lines from The Hollow Men:

"Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar". 3

The quiet-voiced elders are not the voices of wisdom at all. Wisdom is not to be derived from experience of the world, and any knowledge that we can derive from earthly experience is not to be confused with wisdom. For wisdom is ultimately from God. And knowledge of earthly things, ultimately, is useless because of the fact that the world is constantly changing, and with it our position in the world. This is made clear as the passage now modulates into an estimation of what we can call "the use of the past".

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

It is futile to try to impose a pattern on the flux from a position which itself is changing. The only possible pattern that can be discerned in the flux is the still point which is God. We have arrived back again at our Heraclitean epigraph - those who believe in the knowledge derived from experience, who "use the past" as a guide for their actions, are in fact ignoring the Logos and regarding their own "wisdom" which is really blindness and ignorance. This relates the passage not only to the overall pattern of the Quartets directed by
the epigraph, but also to its specific context in East Coker. For this discussion of the use of the past continues the preoccupation with the past which we noted in the first movement. Where we were led into a knowledge of the godhead by a consideration of what might have been in the corresponding movement of Burnt Norton, here we are warned against the dangers of becoming too concerned with what has been. For this can lead us into the heresy of regarding our wisdom above that of the Logos.

The phrase "all we have been", continuing the idea of what has been, also points forward to the Little Gidding passage where the reenactment of all we have been becomes some sort of excruciating torture. Here Eliot provides the perfect punishment for the heresy of having too much regard for the lessons of the past. One is condemned to live in what Tennyson called "the eternal landscape of the past".* Perhaps this is what Purgatory is all about: to relive continually all the moments of sin and selfishness, of neglect and deliberate hurt, "of things ill-done and done to others harm"; is a cruel reversal of the beauty of Tennyson's lines where

"  silent tracings of the past
  Be all the colour of the flower".†

We should also note the prosaic nature of Eliot's verse at this point. The tone is baldly conversational, but it is also quite boringly so. We suppress a yawn as he begins

"  There is, it seems to us
   At best, only a limited value
   In the knowledge derived from experience".

The prosiness here is an index to the limited nature of a view of life that considers life something which can be learned by experience, like a ball game, where we pick up the rules as we go along. The language here is a school teacherly sort of English and it sorts well with the school teacherly attitude
it is satirising - that life can be learned by rote like a textbook exercise. It is the school teacher who equates knowledge with wisdom. But of course life is not like this at all but rather a frightening experience

"new in every moment
And every moment is a new and shocking
Valuation of all we have been".

These lines indeed come as a shock to us after the chalk dust complacency of the preceding sentence. Life is not a boy scout map-reading exercise where we take bearings on our position in the world and map out our course. Because we are not in a world which is mapped and signposted but rather

"in a dark wood, in a bramble,
On the edge of a grimpen, where is no secure foothold,
And menaced by monsters, fancy lights,
Risking enchantment".

The passage here is reminiscent both of Dante and of Spenser. The allusion is a specific one; Eliot is making a point here at the expense of our post-Enlightenment world. It is only since the Enlightenment that men have come to hold this view of the world as something which is governed by physical laws and able to be investigated by science, something which is quantifiable, classifiable and able to be analysed down to the last subatomic particle. To people of Dante's time, and even Spenser's, the world had been an unfathomable mystery which it was blasphemous to try to penetrate. Inasmuch as there can ever be an "age of faith", the medieval age was such a world. The mystery of the world was a secret of God and no-one aspired to question why. The Renaissance represents the awakening of man's thirst for knowledge, but even at the height of the Renaissance there was a sense that there was a proper limit to the extent of man's aspirations after knowledge. Man must not seek knowledge with
a hydroptic thirst - there are certain questions which it is not lawful to ask. The whole tragedy of Faustus is that he placed his regard for knowledge on a higher level than his regard for God. In pre-Renaissance times however we are in a completely different universe. This was no "age of reason": the irrational, the supernatural had a power over the human mind that can hardly be appreciated today. Thus Eliot speaks of "monsters, fancy lights... (and) enchantment" - things which are pooh-poohed by the scientific twentieth century imagination but were very real to medieval times. Eliot uses these here as a figure for things that the tiny minds of men will never be able to accommodate - there are indeed more things in heaven and earth than can ever be comprehended by man. Thus the belief in the supernatural which was universal in the medieval world represents a much more healthy respect for the mysteries of God than the attitudes of the twentieth century. Eliot is in fact deploring the modern tendency to replace God by scientific formulae and technical explanation. In reality all this is folly: all we can learn on the schoolroom model of the world is

"knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word." 7

Eliot's lament in the Choruses from "The Rock" echoes through this whole section of the poem:

"Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?" 7

What the passage is really about is a form of hubris which is the besetting sin of the twentieth century. We have no longer any need for God. We have replaced Him with scientific explanations. We have set up our own system of values which leaves God...
entirely out of consideration. However the warning implicit in the "destructive fire" in the first section of the movement remains there to be heeded. For this is another way of the lost - the school-teacher too is of the kingdoms of this world.

The poetry now begins to pick up hints from the first movement. We are reminded of the lessons of Ecclesiastes which told us that all is vanity, for knowledge too is vanity. Thus Eliot says he does not want to hear

"Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of folly,
Their fear of fear and frenzy, their fear of possession,
Of belonging to another, or to others, or to God".

Old men do not have a monopoly on wisdom, because in fact wisdom is not something which comes from experience of the world. Wisdom is ultimately from God and knowledge, ultimately, is vanity. Thus we must not aspire to knowledge. We must rather, like Socrates, admit that the only thing we know is that we do not know anything.

"The only wisdom we can hope to acquire is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless."

Humility is endless where our aspirations to knowledge had an end in ourselves. By aspiring to wisdom we had been aspiring to raise ourselves above God which is a great sin. We have only one real need which is to acquire humility.

Finally we are explicitly linked with the first movement. We are aware of the Preacher of Ecclesiastes speaking behind these final lines. The peasants who had been so earthly alive in the first movement are now all dead. All their concerns, their hopes, fears, anxieties were ultimately all vanity. All came to nothing.

"The houses are all gone under the sea."
The dancers are all gone under the hill."
As they are all dead, so must we too all die.
This links us not only with the first movement, but also with the moment at the end of the first passage of the second movement - the vision of the end of the world which is also the moment of death.
It was the moment

"that shall bring
The world to that destructive fire
Which burns before the ice-cap reigns".
This also puts us in mind of the close of Ecclesiastes:
"for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil".
Movement 3

Following the hints at the end of the second movement pointing towards the end of the world and the coming of the day of judgment, the third movement accordingly opens by dropping the curtain on this life and ushering out of this world the many men who live in it. Just as the dancers of the first movement have all "gone under the hill", so too all the denizens of the twentieth century must pass on out of this life. Thus

"They all go into the dark,
The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into the vacant,
The captains, merchant bankers, eminent men of letters.
The generous patrons of art, the statesmen and the rulers,
Distinguished civil servants, chairmen of many committees,
Industrial lords and petty contractors,
all go into the dark,
And dark the Sun and Moon, and the Almanach de Gotha
And the Stock Exchange Gazette, the Directory of Directors,"

- a veritable Who’s Who of the twentieth century. These are the princes of the kingdoms of this world, the sought-after in the social round. But their social qualifications are all listed here ironically. For in the idiom of Ecclesiastes, this is all vanity. These men, industrial lords and petty contractors alike, are all bound for the "vacant interstellar spaces". What would seem to be a grand procession of nobilities is in fact a parade of nobodies. What would be big news in the social columns, maybe funeral of the year, is after all "Nobody’s funeral, for there is no one to bury".
This whole catalogue of contemporary colossi amounts after all to "no one to bury". The passage is of the same inspiration as that in the corresponding movement in Burnt Norton - these men are the equivalents in the upper social echelons of the time-travellers of the first quartet. Yet these too are numbered among the lost. They may be the leaders of this world but worldly qualifications count for nothing after this life and they are merely nobodies in the next. Where the time-travellers were those people who have lost any sense of the eternal in their preoccupation with time, these men are too much involved in the rewards of this life to know of any other system of values. To seek reward in this life in terms of social status is to relegate one's spiritual affairs to second place. But salvation of one's soul cannot take second place, so these social lions of the hour are all consigned to the darkness.

However Eliot is being much more than simple-minded about this. He does not place himself outside the system. If these men are socially lionised it is we who lionise them. Thus we too are implicated in the grand funeral and

"... we all go with them, into the silent funeral".

This then is the moment of death which we all must face sooner or later. We noted in Burnt Norton two distinct types of darkness. There was the false or "twittering" darkness of the underground which was a parody of the true darkness of God. There is a similar distinction here. When the procession of the dead marches into the dark, it is an utter darkness because it is devoid of God. These lost souls do not merely die, they are completely annihilated. Thus it is

"Nobody's funeral, for there is no one to bury".
But there is another darkness which does contain God. This other darkness offers us salvation from the fate of the lost and damned souls.

"I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you
Which shall be the darkness of God."

We note here that now there seems to be no third way for those of us who are neither saints nor of the lost. Eliot's doctrine seems to have become harsher than it was in the corresponding section of Burnt Norton. The doctrine is now one of pure ascetism; either we must abjure the things of this world and submit to the darkness of God, or we too shall be annihilated in the dead march. There are only two choices here -- the darkness of absolute nihilism or the darkness of the ascetic.

"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;

......
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing."

It seems that Eliot's dissatisfaction which we noticed in the first movement has now permeated so far into his poetry as to cancel out the possibility of the other way offered in Burnt Norton. There the possibility was that in moments of reverie, particularly in dwelling on things that might have been, we may be given a revelation of the godhead which could lead to salvation. Here however Eliot is no longer in the universe of what might have been, but is preoccupied with what has been. Perhaps Eliot thought there was precious little in the
realm of what has been which could prompt a revelation of God. At all events he is still in the state of despondency and resignation in which the opening of the poem found him. Perhaps this point is the nadir of his fit of depression where he can see no alternative for salvation but an absolute ascetism. This would be a dark night of the soul indeed. We must remember too that this is the earth quartet and the doctrines of the poem are that much harsher than those offered in the air quartet. This earthbound world committed to a literalistic interpretation of history which is the universe of this poem offers much less to Eliot than the rich world of poetic possibility of Burnt Norton. In East Coker there is nothing in this world for the poet to enthuse over—there is little indeed for the poet to enthuse over in his own lifetime:

"So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years—
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."

The poetry of East Coker thus remains unenthused and is therefore that much more ready to consign the whole of this world to the dark. In Burnt Norton the poet still felt a love for the world that would not let him come down on the ascetic's side of the fence, but here there is no love left for the world at all and it is consequently swept out of consideration in the manner of Dickens's Podsnap. It is only indeed in the prospect of an escape from this world into an absolute asceticism that the poet can arrive at enthusiasm for the first time in the poem.

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

The movement now closes with a repetition of
the catechism of the way of the saint:

"In order to arrive there,
To arrive where you are, to get from
where you are not,
You must go by a way wherein there is
no ecstasy.
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".

Thus must all the dwellers of this world become
nobodies before they can become anybody. The Direc-
tory of Directors and the Almanach de Gotha are
catalogues of what men have been in this world.
Such men as those listed at the beginning of the
movement are mindful of all they have been, but
another verse from the catechism of the saint might
well read "and what you have been is what you must
no longer be". If it is difficult for a rich man
to enter the kingdom of heaven, it is difficult too for a merchant banker or a distinguished civil servant to enter the Eliotean way of the saint.

But such social accomplishments are the things which it is easy for Eliot to cast off. If the world is limited to the sort of world inhabited by the citizens listed at the beginning of the movement then the way of asceticism is an easy one. But of course the world is much more than this. Eliot is still writing from the depths of despondency and here indeed it is true that he is writing down the value of the world so that we shall despise the world where it was not true in Burnt Norton. Where he leaves no way between that of the ascetic and that of the damned he is indeed giving a false report. But we must realise that Eliot is not a reliable witness here. He is in fact wandering in the wood of error which is made clear at the opening of the fifth movement. The first lines of that movement are a deliberate echo of the opening of Dante's Inferno where the author confesses himself "in the middle way of this our mortal life, in a gloomy wood" which wood is the wood of error representing spiritual alienation from God. Thus we cannot take these doctrines as the true word of God — they proceed from a man bitter at heart and alienated from his God. Here the poet is erring because he is paying too much regard to his own wisdom. Yet the poet's words do represent a half-truth. While they do not point out the true way, yet they do warn us of another false way which is that of the man whose aspirations are all worldly social ones. This like the way of the time-traveller is a way of the lost. If we can avoid these two traps indicated for us and remain with our poet-guide, we may not yet be out of the wood of error, but we are in the way of being saved.
The fourth movement introduces into the poem God wearing his filial hat. We have already glanced at the weakness of the poetry of this section which has been sufficiently discussed by the critics to need much discussion here. Perhaps Denis Donoghue puts it best:

"The analogies of health and disease, surgeons, patients, and hospitals are marginally appropriate, and are far too dependent on our reading 'the wounded surgeon' as Christ, 'the dying nurse' as the church, the hospital as the earth, 'the ruined millionaire' as God the Father, the briars as the thorns of Christ. When we have effected these translations little remains but the satisfaction of having done so." ¹

There is little more to be said about the poetry. The pity is that the whole thing seems so unnecessary. When we compare the vulgarities of this "much elaborated skull-and-crossbones conceit" ² with, for example, the devout simplicity of the lyrical prayer to the Virgin Mary in The Dry Sal- vages, we can only regret that Eliot felt a need to consciously "work up" a form capable of carrying the weight of the Son of God. Surely it would have been better in the presence of the Son of God to have heeded his own precept of humility (which he advocates in this very same poem) than to fiddle with these analogies in a manner that seems almost pleased with its own cleverness.

Before leaving this section however we should make one or two observations about the presence of the Son of God in the poem at this point. Clearly it was demanded by the pattern of the poetry that Christ should make a personal appearance here. We have observed the pattern whereby the aspects of God are distributed among the short lyrics of each
of the quartets. We have also referred to East Coker as the poem dealing with "what has been" — the reality of the past which encompasses all human history. At the intersection of these two patterns stands the figure of Christ. He represents the point of meeting of the godhead with the course of human history. But apart from fulfilling the expected pattern of the poetry, there is a more particular reason why Christ appears in the poem at this point. For here is the antidote (to continue the medicinal metaphor) to the tendency we have observed in the poet to dwell overmuch on the past: here indeed is the one point of the past on which it will prove profitable to dwell. It is the one moment "which shall fructify in the lives of others". Christ then supplies the turning point in the poem of the poet's fit of despondency, although he may not recognise it as such just yet. The poet, before the end of the poem, is to arrive at a position where he can recognise the possibility, indeed the necessity, for making new beginnings in life. In Christ we have the precise reason why new beginnings are possible in life. Through the Crucifixion and the Redemption it has become possible for man to begin anew in a life that has become stultified in sin and despair. Without Christ there would be no alternative for man but to continue in his old ways through the valley of the shadow of death. The significance of Christ in this movement is that through him life becomes alive with the continuing possibility of making a fresh start no matter what has been in the past. Christ then furnishes this world with some of the richness of possibility the lack of which Eliot has been regretting ever since Burial at Noroton. This is why the lyric centres around the Crucifixion because this has made possible the redemption of all men. Thus the way is now open for the redemption of the poet himself from his mood of despondency, which redeemp-
tion shall be effected in the fifth movement.

Thus the Son of God stands in the relation of a surgeon to the spiritually sick among mankind. The surgeon-sickness metaphor then is appropriate after all in the poem, but yet it remains only marginally so. What the poem should show is Christ ministering to one such of the ailing - the poet himself. But in fact the poet reaches his final affirmation in the next movement without any help from Christ. Thus the lyric is really just an inset piece which does not fulfil any function in the poem. We do feel compelled to recognise the necessity for Christ to make a personal appearance at this point, but we rather wish he did something more useful than his impression of Marcus Welby. And we wish that he had not felt it necessary to bring his whole travelling show with him complete with waxwork dummy patients and hospital surplus stage props.
Movement 5

The fifth movement opens with an echo of Dante which tells us something about Eliot's spiritual condition:

"So here I am, in the middle way ..."

Eliot began. Dante had opened the Inferno with these lines:

"Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura".
(In the middle of the way of our life
I found myself in a dark wood).

The implication of this echo is that Eliot himself is still involved in the gloomy "wood of error" which in Dante represents spiritual alienation from God. Instead of spelling it out specifically Eliot continues the sentence with a review of his poetic career to date

"having had twenty years -
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
For the thing one no longer has to say,
or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it".

This easy transition from a guarded reference to his spiritual condition, into a discussion of purely artistic concerns will become important shortly. Eliot's tone throughout this passage is still resigned and despondent, but we should note some positive signs here. For although Eliot regards these years as "largely wasted" and although each attempt seems to him now a "different kind of failure", yet each of these attempts has at least
wholly new start". Eliot recognises that he has lived his poetic life, at any rate, as a response to a challenge:

"And so each venture

Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate".

This marks the beginning of the turn-around in the poet's mood. For although he continues to complain about the shabbiness of the equipment of the poet (which has reference to the degeneracy of the language of current coin) and about the general difficulty of writing poetry at all in the twentieth century ("and now under conditions that seem unpropitious"), yet he does recognise that the task is an ongoing challenge which he is committed to continue to face. And although he feels that anything he can achieve will be as nothing alongside the achievements of such great poets as Milton and Shakespeare:

"And what there is to conquer

By strength and submission, has already been discovered

Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope

To emulate -- but there is no competition --

There is only the fight to recover what has been lost

And found and lost again and again", yet nevertheless he unquestioningly accepts the responsibility of carrying on his work:

"For us, there is only the trying". And while this may sound a rather barren sort of enthusiasm for his work, yet such unquestioning acceptance of his responsibilities in this context is a positive virtue and one that shall prove fruitful. For it is precisely this attribute which is lacking in his spiritual life at the moment. In his present state of mind he is not willing to face the continuing challenge of living in this world but
would rather prefer to abjure completely the realms of worldly considerations for the existence of the Christian ascetic. Thus his poetic career should have something to say to his spiritual life, if the two could be brought into dialogue. What is needed is a cross-fertilisation between the aesthetic and the spiritual areas of life. But in fact, a link between the two has already been established. We should note that throughout the Quartets there is to be observed in all Eliot's comments on literary and artistic questions a continuous running metaphor which parallels these artistic concerns with spiritual ones. Thus in Burnt Norton the form or pattern of the work of art became a type for Christ who is the pattern for all lives. We now recall the opening of the movement where we remarked the easy transition from spiritual concerns to artistic ones. In fact this whole passage is still dealing with spiritual questions. The remarks apply not only on an artistic level but also on a spiritual level. Thus the poet is complaining that the conditions of the day are unpromising not only for the writing of poetry but also for real religious feeling. What has been lost in the twentieth century and what we must strive to recover is not only the ability to write poetry but the capacity for experiencing God in a real way. Behind these lines we hear the complaint of the poet of the Choruses from "The Rock". In that work Eliot surveyed the whole contemporary scene: in the city he was told

"we have too many churches,
And too few chop-houses"; in the suburbs he was told

"We toil for six days, on the seventh we must motor
To Hindhead, or Maidenhead".

The saddened conclusion he reached was:

"And the Church does not seem to be wanted
In country or in suburb; and in the town
Only for important weddings".3

Unpropitious conditions indeed for a revival of religious feeling. In the present passage, what the running relationship between the aesthetic and the spiritual tells us is that the spiritual capital of the twentieth century is at a very low ebb. But this metaphorical relation is relevant also on a more personal level. For it says that the poet must bring to bear on his spiritual life all the dedication and application he has brought to his poetry. The answer is not to be found in a cloistered retreat from life, but in an honest face-to-face confrontation with its problems. He must learn to regard his life, like his poetry, as an ongoing struggle against "unpropitious" conditions. This is the realisation that comes in the second part of the movement, the final section of the poem.

He turns once more to consideration of the past - again he is concerned with his beginning. But now he locates his beginning not some centuries before his birth in a remote village with which his ancestors had connections, but interior to his own life. His beginning is the earliest surroundings he can recall - home, in fact. This marks the halfway stage in the reversal of Mary's motto: his beginning is no longer his end, but, quite simply, his beginning:

"Home is where one starts from".

Beginning then, from the familiar ground of home, the poet comes to realise his true position in the world. He now recognises that he is not only an artist battling with artistic problems, he is a man profoundly embroiled in a spiritual predicament which he must struggle to make sense of. Just as the poet is continually moving on in his poetic career constantly meeting new problems which become increasingly complex and require quite new solutions
"For last year's words belong to last year's language
And next year's words await another voice",
so too does the spiritual man move through a world which becomes increasingly strange and complex. The world of the child is a familiar world of home but

"As we grow older
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated".

This amounts to a complete reversal of the position which was set up to be knocked down in the third movement - the position of the schoolteacher who values the knowledge gained from experience. It is this coming up against the strangeness and newness of the world that marks the beginning of real religious feeling. This is why the quiet-voiced elders in the second movement were not wise men at all, but only hollow men, for they had grown quite accustomed to the world. For them the world had become "home" and not the new and frightening experience that it is to the truly spiritual man. The poet now realises through his own experience the meaning of the words he had merely mouthed earlier in the poem, that life is

"new in every moment
And every moment is a new and shocking
Valuation of all we have been".

But every moment is not merely a reappraisal of all we have been, but is also a constant challenge as to our immediate actions and our future course. The pattern new in every moment requires us to make new beginnings in every moment. This supplies life with all the richness of possibility which the poet has been pining for ever since he glimpsed it in Burnt Norton. But Eliot has been so pre-occupied with the "one-dimensional" nature of the past in this poem that he has been blind to all the richness of possibility inherent in the present moment.
And this richness is not merely that of a single "given" moment as in Burnt Norton, but in every moment of life.

"Not the intense moment
Isolated, with no before and after,
But a lifetime burning in every moment
And not the lifetime of one man only
But of old stones that cannot be deciphered."
The very intensity of the Burnt Norton experience meant that there had to be
"waste sad time
Stretching before and after"
to set it off. But such isolated moments are no longer sufficient and in fact we have already moved beyond this position. Now the whole of life is replete with possibility - every moment can be the moment of revelation in which the whole of life is comprehended, and indeed the whole of human history which goes far beyond the records of our ancestors right back to the dawning of man's intellect - to "old stones that cannot be deciphered".

We can now refer to a piece of Eliot's specifically literary criticism which nevertheless has relevance in this connection. Writing in an essay called Tradition and the Individual Talent, Eliot was dealing with the relation of a poet to the past:

"the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order".

This reads almost as a blueprint in the artistic
half of our running metaphor for the message Eliot is propounding here in *East Coker*: we are to absorb into ourselves the whole of the past going right back to the inexplicable druidical slabs of Stonehenge before we can proceed in this new and strange world. Eliot has now almost completed his volte-face. From a position where he regarded the past as a restrictive stultifying force which emotionally straitjackets a man in the here and now, he has now reached a point where he can receive the whole tradition of the past as a stimulating and vitalising force. If this sounds a little like the doctrine of the "use of the past" or the value of the knowledge gained from experience, yet it is quite different. This is clear from remarks made in the same essay:

"if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, 'tradition' should positively be discouraged".

This would amount to an effective amputation of the creative faculty and a virtual destruction of the self. Rather Eliot's doctrine involves a transcendence of self through an identification with a larger unity.

"What is to be insisted upon is that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and then he should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career.

"What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist" (and, we might add, by implication, the spiritual man) "is a continual self sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality." 

Through this continual self surrender, Eliot mana-
ges to escape the enchainment of the past which has enthralled him since the opening of the poem. The past which has laid like a dead hand on Eliot's life has now become transformed into a life giving force which prompts a new sense of adventure. Eliot has eventually learnt something which Jacob Bronowski expressed rather well - history "is here. It is now. History is not events but people. And it is not just people remembering, it is people acting and living their past in the present. History is the ... instant act of decision, which crystallises all the knowledge, all the science, all that has been learned since man began".  

With the dead hand of the past Eliot has thrown off the bonds of the here and now. He is no longer fretting about the accidents of history which have determined his particular position in the world, because it is not one's geographical location in the world which is important but one's mental attitudes. Now he can see

"Love is most nearly itself
When here and now cease to matter".

And two lines later he has the confidence to affirm that indeed

"Here or there does not matter".

Thus when Eliot suggests that

"Old men ought to be explorers"

he is not referring to a geographical exploration of the physical universe, but a mental voyage into the spiritual realm. If old men cease to "explore" they become like the hollow men of the second movement. In fact we can now read the second movement with increased understanding. The disturbances Eliot recorded in the opening lines we can now see was his heart speaking. We can now see that his desires for the wisdom of age were quite wrong-headed. At that point Eliot was seeking a place of repose in the flux. But this means that he was
in fact aspiring to the position of the hollow men. The disturbances he felt in his breast were the true response of the spiritual man seeking expression. Eliot now realises that we must not seek to lapse into the

"long looked forward to,
Long hoped for calm, the autumnal serenity
And the wisdom of age"  
but rather
"We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion".

Eliot now employs the image of the sea voyage as a metaphor for spiritual discovery. There is a long tradition in English poetry going right back to Anglo-Saxon pieces such as The Seafarer which expresses the human position in terms of a frail bark on the great ocean of the spiritual unknown. Perhaps Tennyson put it best:

"My will is bondsman to the dark
I sit within a helpless bark".  

Eliot's lines emphasise the frightening solitude of the spiritual adventure, and yet the lines also express an enthusiasm which has been evident nowhere else in the poem. Eliot is now enthused for the first time in a positive sense. The world now has something to offer him: he has discovered the spiritual adventure in life itself where before he could only find the spiritual in an escape from life. Until now Eliot has been so bogged down in the here and now and has felt so constricted by the dead hand of the past that he could not see any of the spiritual possibility inherent in life. He has been so narrowly blinkered by his dissatisfaction with the very conditions of existence that he felt fulfilment could only come through a complete abjuration of the things of this life. It is only when he realises that human life is the incarnation of the soul in the body and not the
incarceration, that he can dispense with all those ascetic doctrines aimed at the liberation of the soul from the prison-house of the flesh. For the soul is liberated not by denial of the flesh but by discovery of the spiritual adventure in life. Thus the end of this poem is indeed a true beginning: it is the beginning of Eliot's religious awakening which led him ultimately to the chapel at Little Gidding. The sea voyage at the end of this movement also serves to set us off across the Atlantic in the wake of Andrew Elyot to America where the opening of the third quartet finds us.
Movement 1

We can no longer read *The Dry Salvages* without being aware of it as the "problem poem" of the Four Quartets. Donald Davie was the first to make a systematic examination of its peculiarities and ever since Davie, any appraisal of the poem must take full account of these. Using Kenner's pattern of the false reconciliation of two opposed states followed by the true reconciliation, which is a kind of synthesis, Davie suggested that the very position of *The Dry Salvages* in the Quartets would make it likely that the poem in some sense represents a false reconciliation of ideas presented in the first two quartets. Accordingly he took the poem piece-wise and showed it to be "quite simply, rather a bad poem". Of course it is meant to be a bad poem: its conclusions are false ones which are corrected, indeed transcended, in the true reconciliation which comes in *Little Gidding*.

However, although Davie is enlightening on the defects of the poem, he does not have so much to offer in a positive sense. If we are to regard the poem as a false reconciliation we should at least make some attempt to identify what the poem is attempting to reconcile and to see why it has not succeeded. But Davie has not done this. He ignores the first two quartets and yet takes it as axiomatic that this, the third, will be an attempt to reconcile ideas presented in the first two. This enables him to characterise the whole poem as "parody" which is a convenient means of explaining away its difficulties and yet which leaves him no closer to understanding its place in Eliot's overall intention in the Quartets. Thus Davie remains uneasy with *The Dry Salvages* and attempts to turn the discussion away from the specific problem of the poem to a
consideration of the difficulties of Eliot's poetry in general.

"What kind of poetry is this, in which loose and woolly incoherent language can be seen to be - in its place and for special purposes - better than clear and closely articulated language? This is a question raised not just by the Quartets but by Eliot's work as a whole." 3

Davie eventually sees the problem as a clash between the "beautiful" and the "functional" in poetry. We shall not pursue him this far because it seems that he has not understood, in the first place, the function of this particular poetry in Eliot's design. And this is precisely what we must understand before we can proceed to a critical judgement. However Davie's original suggestion remains a valuable one, and one on which we are now fully equipped to capitalise. We have already examined the two first quartets and found them to be diametrically opposed symbols representing, on the one hand, what might have been, and on the other, what has been. We shall consider The Dry Salvages as an attempt to reconcile these two ideas.

Firstly however, we shall consider the locale of the poem and try to draw out its significance for Eliot. The poem is located in America, which marks it off immediately from the other quartets. The Dry Salvages themselves (or presumably "les trois sauvages"), as Eliot explains in a note, are a small group of rocks off the north-east coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts. This locates us in the scenes of Eliot's American childhood. In fact we are drawn into the scenes of his childhood right from the opening line of the poem, although this is not Massachusetts but Missouri. Both New England and the South-west however, were home to Eliot as a child. As he explains himself:
"My family were New Englanders, who had been settled — my branch of it — for two generations in the South West — which was, in my own time, rapidly becoming merely the Middle West. The family guarded jealously its connexions with New England; but it was not until years of maturity that I perceived that I myself had always been a New Englander in the South West, and a South Westerner in New England; when I was sent to school in New England I lost my southern accent without ever acquiring the accent of the native Bostonian. In New England I missed the long dark river, the ailanthus trees, the flaming cardinal birds, the high limestone bluffs where we searched for fossil shell-fish; in Missouri I missed the fir trees, the bay and golden rod, the song-sparrows, the red granite and the blue sea of Massachusetts."

Thus although the title is taken from New England and the opening lines from Missouri, yet the two are both mingled in Eliot's recollection of his childhood. Both sets of memories continued to inform his poetry — notably here in The Dry Salvages but elsewhere too. Eliot indulged his fondness for these American scenes in five short poems he called Landscapes and curiously lines from these shorter poems found their way into the Quartets. In particular the birds of Cape Ann would appear to have been the inspiration for the thrush in Burnt Norton.

"O quick quick quick, quick hear the song-sparrow,

......... Follow the feet
Of the walker, the water-thrush."

New Hampshire contains familiar sounding references to

"Children's voices in the orchard
Between the blossom- and the fruit-time",

and the children eventually

"Swing up into the apple-tree".

The long dark river features in Virginia while Usk
reminds us somehow of *Little Gidding*:

"Seek only there
Where the grey light meets the green air
The hermit's chapel, the pilgrim's prayer". 

Eliot's recollections of his childhood then provided him with much of the scenic detail which was to fill out his later poems. Here in *The Dry Sal­vages* the poetry contains all those things which Eliot recalled fondly in the passage quoted above. In the first movement we find the strong brown river, the ailanthus trees, the granite bluffs, the fossils, the fir trees and the blue sea of Massachusetts. The detail here however is not merely pictorial: this material recollected from childhood is now all being transformed into a form of poetic expression which plays its part in the fulfilment of Eliot's pattern. Let us consider the opening lines of the poem.

It is strange that these lines should have occasioned such range of critical comment. Davie notes that both Rajan and Leavis applauded the lines while "Helen Gardner was so misguided as to choose them for the basis of her claim for Eliot as a manipulator of language". But Davie himself feels uneasy with them.

"'I do not know much about Gods' — who could conceivably start a conversation like that without condemning himself from the start as an uncomfortable poseur? Is it not rather like

Poems are made by fools like me
But only God can make a tree?
What is it but a gaucherie?" asks Davie. But there does seem to be a rather simple answer to this, for is this not the wide-eyed innocence of the child as he stands on the bank gazing at the great brown river? Eliot has taken us back into the scenes of his childhood and he is recording for us his responses to the river. There is of course a double
focus here. The mature Eliot is present in these lines also; he is using the child's responses as his poetic raw material and using these responses to make a point. Thus he attempts to recreate for us, as adults who have lost the power of wonderment of the child, that feeling of awe for which the child had no words. The child senses that the river is "sullen, untamed, intractable", although he would certainly not have used these words to express his feeling. However this feeling of awe for the "strong brown God", mingled with a mistrust of his power, is slowly replaced as he is taught at school to regard the river as "at first .... a frontier", then a "conveyor of commerce", then "only a problem confronting the builders of bridges". The very sterility of the phrases (repeated again in "dwellers in cities" and "worshippers of the machine") seems to echo the schoolboy's essay. Here once again is the school teacherly tone which Eliot specifically despises.

The career of the responses of the growing boy also mirrors the changing attitudes of man as civilization proceeds. The awe with which primitive man regarded the great processes of nature eventually receded under the advance of the civilising process, until the modern analytical mind could file them all away as a "problem once solved". Yet although men prefer to ignore the great forces of nature, they remain "ever, however, implacable". Men may try to cut themselves off from their natural existence and become "dwellers in cities", yet there is a current of life which runs through all living things which cannot be denied. Eliot now shows just how much our lives are influenced by this natural "rhythm of life" in four lines which represent the "four ages of man". The common linking device in these lines is the flow of fluids through the body which Eliot refers to as the
rhythm of the river. The first stage is the infant who cannot control the flow of fluid through his body at all; thus the rhythm of the river
"was present in the nursery bedroom". The flow of sap in trees in the spring becomes a figure for the first awakening of the sexual life in the adolescent male; the rhythm is also seen in "The rank ailanthus of the April dooryard". In the third stage of life, the wine which the adult drinks during and after his meals gives him the illusion that he is now in full control of the flow of fluid through his body, though this is no more true than it ever was:
"the smell of grapes on the autumn table". Finally the tears of remembrance of the old man represent once more a loss of control over the bodily functions:
"the evening circle in the winter gaslight".

It is clear that we have no control over this flow of nature through our bodies. We are, in fact, in the grip of a force far greater than any man can command, and yet we continue to ignore this, although it has the power to destroy us at any moment. Later in the second movement it becomes clear that it is not nature that we cannot afford to ignore - it is God himself. God is symbolised in the poem by the "trois sauvages"; he is the
"ragged rock in the restless waters,
Waves wash over it, fogs conceal it;
On a haleyon day it is merely a monument,
In navigable weather it is always a
seawark
To lay a course by: but in the sombre
season
Or the sudden fury, is what it always
was".

The buried reference to the Trinity in the "trois
sauvages" makes it clear that the rocks stand for God, while the word "sauvage" makes an identification between the primitive forces of nature and the power of God. It is really the power of God which threatens to destroy us in the "sudden fury". The halcyon, of course, is the kingfisher, already used in Burnt Norton as a symbol of the immanent God—another buried reference to the Almighty which is quite apposite here. The school-teacherly tone is again mimicked in the lines

"In navigable weather it is always a sea-mark
To lay a course by"

but it is quite clear that this attitude will be sadly inadequate in the "sudden fury". We may be able to ignore God or to pay him mere lip-service while the world continues to run its course, but there will come a time when this will no longer be possible, will in fact be exposed as pure folly. Here is yet another reference to the judgement, this time expressed in terms of water, the appropriate figure for The Dry Salvages. The "sudden fury" is the "sauvage" power of God which will be unleashed at the Judgement. This points us forward to the apocalyptic vision in Little Gidding.

Looking back now at the first movement by the light of this crucial passage from the second movement, we can see that the poetry is really speaking of a wilful neglect of God. This is made quite explicit in the opening line: the poet uses the voice of the child to make the revealing admission

"I do not know much about gods".

It is surprising that so few critics have taken this statement at its face value. Eliot is here making the point that twentieth century man has no real knowledge of God. And yet it is not so surprising either, for these lines represent a masterly control over the idiom, so masterly in fact that the
reader is lulled into accepting a false position. The speaker here has so little knowledge of God that the only god he can conceive of is some sort of nature god. He worships the power of the primitive forces of nature without ever thinking of them as a manifestation of the power of God. It never occurs to him, when he speaks of gods, that there is also a God. He ignores God so naturally that we are led to go along with him. It is because we as denizens of the twentieth century are in the same position as the speaker here — we too do not know much about God — that we can miss the larger implications of the rather naive sounding statement "I do not know much about gods". This is actually a test of our own religious sense: the poet here has set a trap for us, and we fall, betrayed by our lack of true spiritual values.

The whole of The Dry Salvages in this way becomes a poem written in wilful ignorance of God. We have cut ourselves off by our own wilful act from God, and thus we remain alone in the world, dependent entirely on our own resources which in the event will prove woefully inadequate. This would serve to explain many of the inadequacies and false conclusions of the poem — left to our own resources we are bound to go wrong. God, then, appears in the poem only by implication: the ragged rock in the waters which is a symbol of God is there to remind us of what we continue to ignore, but yet God himself remains outside the universe of the poem. The fourth movement, significantly, is not addressed to God, but to the Virgin Mary, who is our intercessor to God. Where the short lyric in each of the other quartets is devoted to one of the trinal aspects of God, here we have only a human intercessor to pray to. Nevertheless if we are to be left to our own human resources in the
poem, Mary, who was called by God, is perhaps the best hope we have – we shall certainly need all the power of intercession that she can afford. Incidentally, this technique furnishes Eliot with a neat solution to a difficulty that arises out of his symbolism. In this way he is able to introduce the Trinity into a poem where the poetry is otherwise patterned on the number four. Kenner's dialectic pattern with its false reconciliation allows him to place a "dummy" figure in the vacant position that the Trinity makes for in the Quartet pattern.

This brings us to a consideration of the place of The Dry Salvages in Eliot's overall pattern in the Four Quartets. We have dealt with Burnt Norton in terms of what might have been, and East Coker in terms of what has been. Applying Kenner's pattern we must now see in what sense The Dry Salvages represents an attempted reconciliation between these two ideas. To this end we shall return briefly to two lines from Burnt Norton, already noted in their context as worthy of attention, and which seem to map out the pattern of the whole Quartet cycle:

"What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present".

We noted earlier that these lines could be read in two distinct senses. The simplest meaning could be restated as follows: whatever did or did not happen in the past, it nevertheless all led up to the present moment which always remains our immediate concern. But this of course is an entirely superficial reading. There is another possible reading of the lines and it depends on the other sense of the word "present". Beyond the "temporal" present there lies that which is "eternally" present – God. There is more to life than our immediate concerns in the present dimension; there are concerns which should always be present to us because they are our one hope of salvation. Thus the lines also mean that the pattern formed by all
that might have been and all that has been, points beyond both to the will of God, just as it did momentarily in Burnt Norton where we became aware of both a new world

And the old made explicit, understood
In the completion of its partial ecstasy,
The resolution of its partial horror.16

The two ways of reading the line correspond to the two ways of living this life. We can confine ourselves entirely to the present dimension and our own immediate concerns, as do the time-travellers of Burnt Norton, ("living and partly living") or we can have regard to the larger reality which lies outside time and which is God who is the only source of meaning in life. The first way is the way of the "temporal" present, while the second opens up to us an "eternal" present, the possibility we glimpsed in East Coker where every moment of life could be the moment of revelation. The Dry Salvages, thus, becomes the poem of the "temporal" present: the false reconciliation is seen to be this way of living for the present moment only without looking beyond the process of time to the transcendent reality of God.

Let us consider for a moment the first meaning which we gave for these lines. There is a clear application to Eliot's personal life. For whatever the Burnt Norton manor suggested to him in the way of what might have been, and whatever had really happened in the past going right back to East Coker, it nevertheless all led up to a present life that began for T.S. Eliot in America. Thus America becomes a symbol of the present moment to which all the circumstances of the past have led. This came to have a meaning for Eliot which went beyond the personal. For it seemed to Eliot that America had in some sense inherited the present from Europe, and in particular England, which came
to be identified more and more with the past. America had, in fact, become a symbol of the direction which the future course of civilisation was to take. Although he disliked the trend of what he referred to as "Americanisation", he could see it was a course which Europe and the rest of the western world would inevitably follow, a course which they themselves had originally begun.

"What are supposed to be the specifically American qualities and vices, are merely the European qualities and vices given a new growth in a different soil. Europe, therefore, in accepting American contributions ... has contracted a malady the germs of which were bred in her own system. Americanisation, in short, would have happened anyway; America herself has merely accelerated the process".15

In fleeing from America then, Eliot was really fleeing from the future, from the shape of things to come. This becomes clear when Eliot specifically identifies the aspects of the American way of life for which he felt a particular antipathy, as he does in After Strange Gods:

"I think that the chances for the re-establishment of a native culture are perhaps better here than in New England. You are farther away from New York; you have been less industrialised and less invaded by foreign races; and you have a more opulent soil".16

Eliot here reveals his distaste for the big city, foreign immigrants and the industrial based economy rather than the agriculturally based. But these three factors -- industrialisation, immigration and urbanisation -- were precisely the reasons that America had become the great and powerful nation she was in the twentieth century. This was the face of the coming America and to attempt to establish a "native culture" in spite of these was a
quixotic project indeed.

It was to escape this face of the modern America that Eliot expatriated himself to England. In doing so he was turning to a country that was imbued with a deep sense of the past, a country steeped in history and tradition that he could use to shore up against the ruins of his world. But this act was itself an anachronism. England herself was changing, and the England that Eliot strove to identify himself with was an England that no longer existed. Ferner Nuhn has said of Eliot that he "sought to make, apparently, a complete break with his American background, and pick up as it were the very threads of the tradition that his ancestors had dropped three centuries ago, when they left old England for New England". This is undoubtedly overstatement, as Alan Holder remarks, but nevertheless it remains true that Eliot's overreaction to the American way of life made his embrace of England rather too emphatic. It is strange to think that the pin-stripped suited bowler-hatted Eliot was after all American born. Holder noted that "he appeared intent on swallowing English tradition whole, on thrusting himself deeply into the English soil by sheer will. But of course there is something artificial in seeking to make a culture one's own, one's given, when indeed it has not been given at all but rather appropriated, deliberately selected."

Eliot obviously felt a deep and lasting antipathy to the American way of life. This is seen nowhere more clearly than in his eventual declaration for classicism, royalism and anglo-catholicism which he made in 1928 from the bosom of the English establishment. But it is also made clear in this poem. Although he found fault with much in the English way of life, yet he reserved for America one special brickbat. It was chosen in this poem as the symbol of a civilisation that has cut itself
off from God. It is clear that what Eliot really detested about the American way was the fact that she was managing to prosper extraordinarily well without any help from God. America had bypassed all spiritual questions in her determination to satisfy all man's material needs. But Eliot himself felt a deep spiritual need which America could not satisfy. And so he turned to England where he could find solace in the deep sense of tradition and the centuries of history which recorded a vital concern with spiritual questions. Of course as we have seen he was only fooling himself - England too had by and large turned away from God. But it was easier to sustain the illusion in England, and Eliot had at least escaped the more blatant facts of the American materialist culture.

Thus while the United States was very much the nation of the present moment, in the sense that she was right in the vanguard of western civilisation, she also becomes in the poem, the nation that lives only for the present moment. America's pragmatic materialistic culture became symbolic for Eliot of this way of living in what I have referred to as the "temporal" present. This is the sense in which the poem represents the false reconciliation: here is a culture which insists on living entirely in the present dimension without looking beyond it.

We have seen earlier in the poem example of lost souls, such as those people in the third movements of both Burnt Norton and East Coker, but in those cases there had always been some hope of salvation - we could find God even though it might mean a complete abjuration of the things of this life. But now we are seeing a whole civilisation that is lost - God is no longer present in this universe for men to turn to because they have alienated themselves so completely from Him. Thus the men of this poem are pictured as fishermen lost
on the face of the deep and forever having to bail out their boats. The fishermen are matched with anxious worried wives who lie awake at nights trying to make some sense out of such an existence:

"calculating the future,

Trying to unweave, unwind, unravel
And piece together the past and the future,
Between midnight and dawn, when the past is all deception,
The future futureless, before the morning

When time stops and time is never ending",

But there can be no sense out of an existence that dwells entirely in the present dimension. If one lives entirely for the present moment then the past and the future both become totally meaningless. The only meaning that can be found in life is in the pattern provided by God, and yet God is precisely what these people are deprived of. While the women spend wakeful nights in a futile endeavour to salvage some meaning out of the amorphous flux that is time without God, it is left to the reader to note the significance of the clanging bell. To the women it is merely another of the many voices of the sea. The sea, we are told, has

"many voices,
Many gods and many voices",

but of the one God these women know nothing and the one voice which does have meaning becomes just like all the other voices. We hear this one meaningful voice when

"the ground swell, that is and was from the beginning;

Clangs
The bell"

This bell is the bell of the Annunciation, and thus it points forward to the annunciations of the second movement. However for the people of this
world it announces only the approach of the moment of death, as this is the only annunciation that they will know. But of course it also signifies the Annunciation of Mary, and points forward to the fourth movement. Although these people remain unaware of this further level of meaning, in fact Mary is their only ray of hope in what is otherwise a completely benighted universe. For men who cannot help themselves, the only hope is by Mary's intercession to God on their behalf.
The first section of this movement shows us what it is like to inhabit the world of the "temporal" present. The people of this world are pictured in the characteristic metaphor of The Dry Salvages as fishermen sailing on the ocean of time and the physical universe. The picture of their lives is a dark and pessimistic one; it is a world without end in either sense of the word. The movement opens with a question "Where is there an end of it?" and the answer is not long delayed. In the first line of the second section we are told that "There is no end, but addition." We have already noted the double sense of the line; such a life is indefinitely extensible (endless) because one day is exactly the same as the preceding day, and the next will again be the same, so that we can conceive of such a succession going on forever, but it is also endless in the more important sense that there is no point or purpose to such an existence. This is the message which is repeated in each of the six sestinas which make up the first section of the movement.

But yet to regard this life as endless in either sense is really self deception. For it will come to an end for each of us in the moment of death, and we are all constantly moving towards that moment. Thus this life is really "The silent withering of autumn flowers"; it is being lost on the ocean of time "In a drifting boat with a slow leakage" which we must forever bailing, although we cannot bail so fast that we can put off the moment of death. The whole universe is running down in fact, and in particular the sands of our own time are fast running out. But we do not like to think of the moment of death. We are so bound to the
physical universe, so immersed in time, that we
cannot conceive of any life apart from this physi-
cal one —
"We cannot think of a time that is ocean-
less".
Our minds cannot pass beyond the blank wall of
death. We prefer instead to think of life going
on just as it has always done, even after our death;
"We have to think of them as forever
bailing,
Setting and hauling, while the North East
lowers
Over shallow banks unchanging and ero-
sionless
Or drawing their money, drying out sails
at dockage;
Not as making a trip that will be unpay-
able
For a haul that will not bear examination".
The last two lines here reveal the poet's true
state of mind. He cannot bear to think of the
moment of death, because he realises that then we
will be held to account for the life we have led.
And a life led in wilful negligence of God will
have little to show in the final analysis. Eliot
has made it clear earlier in the poem that we are
all to be held to account for our lives, by his use
of the double sense of the verb "to try". In East
Coker the secondary meaning of the word indicates
that we are all on trial in this world:
"For us, there is the only the trying".1
However for those of us who will produce only
"a haul that will not bear examination",
the moment of death becomes unthinkable. This is
the poet's plight and he turns away from thoughts
of death to immerse himself in the flux of time:
"There is no end of it, the voiceless
wailing,
No end to the withering of withered flowers,
To the movement of pain that is painless
and motionless,  
To the drift of the sea and the drift-
ing wreckage".
In such a state of mind the poet cannot even pray because he has resolutely closed his mind to God. Thus he leaves unvoiced "the unprayable
Prayer at the calamitous annunciation".

Yet there does remain one ray of hope in this gloomy picture. That hope is indicated in the raising to capitalisation of the word "annunciation" in the final line of the sixth sestina. It is no longer the annunciation of the moment of death which must come to all of us. It is now the Annun-
ciation of Mary, the one significant annunciation in human history. This was an act of intervention in human affairs by the immanent God. If we are to be left to our own human resources in this poem then perhaps the one person who can help us is Mary, who was called by God. Perhaps her inter-
cession may be our salvation; perhaps she may help us to form the words of the prayer which is no longer unprayable but is now the

"hardly, barely prayable
Prayer of the one Annunciation".
And indeed, by the fourth movement of the poem, this prayer for Mary's intercession has been made. But we must consider that in its place.

However we cannot pass on from this first part of the movement without noticing the rhyme scheme operating in these stanzas. Davie has pointed out the elaborate contrivance that has gone into the making of this scheme. By ending the lines of the first stanza on such difficult words as "motionless", "unprayable", "wreckage", Eliot has to go to absurd lengths to achieve a rhyme in the following five stanzas. Thus by using "motionless" in the first stanza he has to resort to coining such monstrosi-
ties as "emotionless", "devotionless", "oceanless" and "erosionless" which become progressively more nonsensical. Again "unprayable" invokes "reliable", "undeniable", "liable" and "unpayable" most of which make for cumbersome construction and haziness of thought merely to achieve the rhyme. The whole scheme is too elaborately contrived to be lightly passed over. It sticks out at elbows and knees so that we cannot help but regard it with misgiving. If Eliot really believed "the poetry does not matter" we wonder why he made the mechanical details of this section so conspicuously clumsy; we can only conclude that the verse was intended to be noticed by the reader in this way as an absurd chiming of repetitive and preposterous rhymes. In fact we begin to see Eliot's verse as a kind of mimesis of the sense of the lines. We are told of the fishermen leading pointless, repetitive, monotonous lives that ultimately lead nowhere. Eliot's poetry reflects this sense in its very sound. Beginning with a stanza whose lines end with distinctive and easily recognizable sounds, Eliot then reels off another five stanzas which repeat those sounds, as if he could just as easily reel off another five. The poet has achieved in his verse a similar monotony to that which he describes. His preposterous rhymes keep chiming in regularly in a pointless echoing monotony until we become positively weary of it. Just as we could conceive of the days of the fishermen trailing one another into eternity, so we become ready to believe that the poet could go on repeating his rhymes ad infinitum, or rather, which would come considerably sooner ad nauseam. It is indeed a relief to come to the end of the last stanza, not only for the slight ray of hope that it offers the fishermen in their nightmarish existence, but also as an escape from the tiredness of the verse.
The second section of the second movement, as in the two earlier quartets, sounds a new note. We have by now become used to the deliberative prosy voice which quietly ruminates on the meaning of the "poetic" lines. However this time we have no need for the voice to "explain" the preceding section: its meaning has been all too clear to us. We have become painfully aware of the futility and emptiness of an existence which is bereft of God. The speaker, then, makes a new departure and begins to talk about the past. We are inclined to agree because the words sound so much like what we have heard before:

"It seems, as one becomes older, that the past has another pattern, and ceases to be a mere sequence - or even development: the latter a partial fallacy. Encouraged by superficial notions of evolution, which becomes, in the popular mind, a means of disowning the past".

We nod as we read this because we have already in *East Coker* rejected the notion of the past as a meaningful pattern from which we can learn:

"For the pattern is new in every moment, and every moment is a new and shocking valuation of all we have been".3

As we rejected the notion of the past as a teacher by means of experience, we also reject the idea of the past as a development by means of evolution. It is not for these things that we value the past. The passage now proceeds in the direction we have been expecting it to take: the real meaning of the past is somehow bound up with those moments of revelation which we have experienced.

"The moments of happiness - not the sense of well-being, fruition, fulfilment, security or affection,
Or even a very good dinner, but the sudden illumination - We had the experience but missed the meaning, And approach to the meaning restores the experience In a different form, beyond any meaning We can assign to happiness.

And yet we begin to feel uneasy here. In the first place the poet has not been very positive in his description of these given moments of rare illumination. In Burnt Norton we were carried almost to a point of ecstasy by the poetry. But here the poet in his dull and prosy after-dinner voice can only refer to these as the "moments of happiness" and then proceed to theorise and intellectualise about them. He has no poetic inspiration to describe them and can do so only in negative terms. He does not mean

"the sense of well-being, Fruition, fulfilment, security or affection, Or even a very good dinner".

Of course not - we feel like breaking in - we know what you mean. After all we too have lived through such moments. Raymond Preston commends the "genial touch" in the mention of the very good dinner which he says throws the rest of the passage into relief; but the truth is that such a bathetic note here can only serve to belittle the value of the moments he speaks of. Eventually the poet settles on the phrase "sudden illumination" to characterise his moments, and then he proceeds to the theorising.

"We had the experience but missed the meaning, And approach to the meaning restores the experience In a different form".

We are aware of course that these moments are only to be remembered and valued in time ("Only through
time time is conquered”). But here we begin to feel that the poet has lost the sense of the real value of these moments in his theorising about them. Indeed the value of these moments was in their immediacy and life, their inspiration, the revelation they contained of the fullness and richness of life that pointed beyond the confines of this world to the pattern of God. But here the poet treasures up these moments not for the revelation of the will of God that they contained, but for their intrinsic value. He treasures them like old snapshots in a photograph album and like people who keep photograph albums, he has mentally pencilled a little paragraph under each one recalling its circumstances so that its "meaning" will endure. We seem at this point to have reached a stage of fossilisation of the value of the moments of revelation. The transcendent value of the moments has been lost and they are now treasured only for their intrinsic value. This corresponds to the position of the dwellers in the "temporal" present who have lost any sense of what goes beyond time. It amounts to a desacrilisation of the whole of life so that things are only valued in themselves, and not as they point beyond themselves to God. Where earlier we saw how the moments revealed their meaning to us: showing us

"both a new world
And the old made explicit, understood
In the completion of its partial ecstasy
The resolution of its partial horror".

Now we get only a theoretical explanation of the meaning of the moment, which really explains nothing:

"We had the experience but missed the meaning,
And approach to the meaning restores the experience
In a different form".
Further, the poet does not seem to recognise that the possibilities inherent in such moments are with us now in every moment, which was the lesson of East Coker. We recall that Burnt Norton gave us one specific moment which made "Ridiculous the waste sad time Stretching before and after".7

East Coker advanced on this position by showing that there was really no waste sad time: every moment was fraught with possibility, every moment could be the moment of revelation. Here however we seem to have regressed back even beyond the Burnt Norton position. We have had moments of revelation in the past but now we are content to live with a theorised version of these in memory. The poet likes to believe he is " beyond any meaning

We can assign to happiness", but in reality he is merely beyond any possibility of experiencing true happiness. In poetry one does not show one is beyond happiness by stating it to be so, and there is very little in the poetry of this section to show that this is so. In fact the poet at this point is showing himself to be a mere fossil man. He is content to live with his specific memories of the moments of happiness, but detached from their revelatory significance these are indeed

" a haul that will not bear examination".

He now proceeds:

" I have said before

That the past experience revived in the meaning

Is not the experience of one life only

But of many generations".

Indeed he may think he has said this before but what in fact he said before was

" a lifetime burning in every moment

And not the lifetime of one man only
But of old stones that cannot be deciphered"; which is a completely different way of saying it. Here again we see the fossilisation of the previous thought. The poet can recall vaguely the sense of what he has said before, but he can no longer recreate it poetically. Thus this whole poem represents a back-sliding from the ground gained in the first two quartets — we are worse off now than when we started. This corresponds to the atrophy of the spiritual impulse in the twentieth century. Where religion had been a vital inspiring thing to men of centuries before, now only the shell of religion remains. Religion in the twentieth century is a dead letter.

The poetry now, unexpectedly, runs bump into the spiritual impulse. For all his comfortable theorising, the poet is not free from a fear that these theories may not be sufficient to sustain him. He is conscious of

"Something that is probably quite ineffable:
The backward look behind the assurance
Of recorded history, the backward half-
look
Over the shoulder, towards the primitive terror".

This primitive terror was a healthy respect for the mysteries of the universe from which the spiritual impulse in man originally grew. Here the poet at least shows us that his rejection of the evolutionary model of the past was valid: he occasionally feels himself in the grip of this primitive terror that men like to think they have shrugged off in the "march of the mind". But the irony here is that the need or prompting for a living religion that comes from within men still lives while men try to pretend that they now can live without God. Man has replaced religion with intellectual theories, but yet these do not free him from the need for a living God. Man cannot stand alone: as we shall
see in the fifth movement, in the absence of God who is the true supernatural, man will turn for assurance to all sorts of fake supernatural phenomena. The immediate irony in this present passage is that where the theories of the poet have only led to a tedious and dull articulation that is hardly even poetry, the moment when the poet feels himself in the grip of the "primitive terror" inspires the poet to his best lines of the whole movement - the only true poetry of the movement.

There is another aspect to the poet's theories about the past which we must also look at. Along with the moments of happiness, the poet has also reserved a place in which he treasures the "moments of agony". We may perhaps experience a momentary hope that what the moments of happiness could not do for this man, the moments of agony may do. But we soon realise that the agony of which he speaks is really only the pain of disappointed hopes or misplaced fears:

"(Whether, or not, due to misunderstanding, Having hoped for the wrong things or dreaded the wrong things, Is not in question)"

Just as his moments of happiness were really parodies of the true moments of revelation, so too his moments of agony are really parodies of the supreme moment of agony, that of Christ on the Cross. In that moment we can find, if we care to look, the whole meaning and pattern of life. But the speaker here is too much bound up with his own personal existence to see the larger implications of his words. We see his moments of agony are also kept filed away in that compartment of the memory with the moments of illumination:

"the moments of agony
...... are likewise permanent
With such permanence as time has"

Not, we note, such permanence as eternity has.
In fact, these moments turn out to be not so permanent after all. We do not remember the moments of agony from our own lives.

"For our own past is covered by the currents of action",

and anyway often, what we took for a moment of agony worked out for the best. No, what we remember is other people's moments. Here again we are close to a snapshot attitude to the past. We recall other people in moments of agony and we like to think that in their case the agony has endured where it has not in our own.

"People change, and smile: but the agony abides."

We like to think of other people as carrying a burden of grief around in their hearts because it seems to express a moral lesson about life that does us good. And yet other people do get over their moments of agony just as we do, and by treasuring up such moments we are again deceiving ourselves. Thus the ideas by which the speaker rules his life are seen to be a set of empty meaningless platitudes.

And of course the whole passage is reverberating with larger implications because the one Agony which does abide, the passion of Christ on the Cross, is still ignored by the poet.

However he now does proceed to make a token reference to the spiritual condition of man. He speaks of the burden of grief of the past, first in a reference to responsibility for sins committed in history, in specifically American terms, then in a more general reference to the fallen condition of mankind:

"the river with its cargo of dead negroes,
cows and chicken coops,
The bitter apple and the bite in the apple."

Raymond Preston speaks of these lines as quiet understatement. Yet the lines are not so much under-
statement as again mere mouthing of what is no longer really believed in. We recall the lines from Burnt Norton which spoke feelingly of human grief and despair at human sin:

"The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera".10

This amounts to an almost insane grief and remorse for human sin. But in the present lines there is no real feeling of remorse for the sins of the past. The cargo of dead negroes which the river carries is recorded dispassionately as a historical fact - there is no feeling of responsibility or complicity in the wrong. And similarly the story of Adam is recalled as something which the Bible records but is somehow distanced from us - it no longer concerns us, just as the wrongs of the American past are now behind us. The Biblical story of the Fall is just a rather time-worn myth that is part of our religious heritage and like the other aspects of our religion, all the life has now departed from it and we are left with only the shell. The poet cannot see how he himself is implicated in human sin.

Thus it is entirely appropriate that the movement should now sweep into the passage we have already noted which is an indictment of our spiritual neglect of God. It is this passage which gives life to the movement, which shows up all the "waste sad poetry" around it. We are woken up abruptly from the doze we have been in as we hear the truth ringing out through the words:

"And the ragged rock in the restless waters,
Waves wash over it, fogs conceal it;
On a halcyon day it is merely a monument,
In navigable weather it is always a sea-mark
To lay a course by; but in the sombre season
Or the sudden fury, is what it always was".
Movement 3

Where the second movement had been ostensibly concerned with rejecting the idea of evolution as a model for the past, the poet now seems to be attempting in this movement to extend the thinking into the future. As we are not to regard the past as an evolutionary development, the culmination of which is the present moment, so we are not to conceive of the future as continuing the march of progress towards any sort of ideal state. The Utopian is ruled out of bounds in this movement where the evolutionist was in the last. This at least is a convenient starting point for a consideration of the movement, but we must look more closely at the poetry to see where the positive values reside.

The poet begins by pondering on some verses from the Bhagavad-Gita, although at this point he does not identify the specific verse he is thinking of:

"I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant —
Among other things — or one way of putting the same thing:
That the future is a faded song, a Royal Rose or a lavender spray
Of wistful regret for those who are not yet here to regret,
Pressed between yellow leaves of a book that has never been opened".

If indeed this is what Krishna meant, it does not sound a particularly promising suggestion to the reader. For this is an attitude to the future which mirrors exactly the attitude to the past which we had ultimately to reject as unacceptable in the second movement. There the past had been valued for the haul of "moments" that it yielded: certain moments, of happiness, and of agony, were preserved in memory for their intrinsic meaning, although the
poet was not able to express very clearly what that meaning was for him. Here we look forward to a future that will yield more of such moments, although now they have been debased to the level of mere sentimental or nostalgic interest. Is this what life is really all about? — a collection of memories salvaged from the surrounding "waste and sad time"? If the role of the future is really only to yield more of such moments then indeed it will be very little different from the past and "the way up is the way down, the way forward is the way back".

Here we encounter once again the Heraclitean epigraph, but this time it reflects ironically on the context of the poem, for this we recall is the universe bereft of God. If there is no God, there is no centre, no still point in the flux, and thus there can be no sense of direction at all. In the absence of God, all ways become the same, all leading nowhere, and we are all lost in the flux. The idea of direction is important right throughout the Quartets — an index to this importance is the weight of meaning carried by the word "point". God, who is the still point, is that which gives point to our existence; furthermore the value of the moments of revelation is precisely that they point us towards God:

"What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present".

But without God, this whole system collapses in on itself: there is no point to existence, and there is no sense of direction in the flux. The way up becomes the same as the way down, the way forward the same as the way back, the future the same as the past, and all are equally meaningless. We can now see that what the poet has taken as Krishna's meaning is merely another false way: it is once again a confinement in the temporal where we should be seeking the external. We must be wary
then of any conclusions which the poet arrives at in this movement - we have been warned by the irony implicit in the opening position.

However the opening remarks remain somewhat enigmatic and the poet's immediate task is to make them more meaningful to us by clarifying his attitude to the future. To this end he calls upon two of his favourite metaphors for man immersed in the flux of time - man as patient, and man as traveller. Thus the attention now shifts, rather arbitrarily we feel - there is no sense of the satisfactory association of ideas here - to the image of the patient as a figure for the human condition. Eliot has already used the figure of the patient - notably in the fourth movement of *East Coker* where it stood as a symbol of fallen man who needs the ministry of Christ - but also in the third movement of the same poem where it stood for the man who has delivered himself wholly up to God as one who awaits the knife of the surgeon:

"As ...... when, under ether, the mind is conscious but conscious of nothing -

I said to my soul, be still."²

Here however the figure is employed in a quite different sense and one more appropriate to the context of *The Dry Salvages*. It has now been emptied of all spiritual significance and becomes a self-dramatisation of the "temporal" man. The man who dwells in the present dimension only is likely to feel a sense of dissatisfaction with his life - (we recall the underground world which was a world of "disaffection"). When the past and the present have been largely unsatisfactory, man turns automatically to the future for hope of better things. Thus the future becomes a sort of "cure" for present ills. But Eliot is here concerned with rejecting this as an idea. Time which had been both "destroyer" and "preserver" in the second movement
is however "no healer" because
"the patient is no longer here".
We cannot regard ourselves as static "patients"
and time as something which washes over us to affect
a cure, because it is not really time which moves -
it is rather we who are moving. Man is not a
patient, he is an active participant in the world
and even in the act of diagnosing disease in him-
self he has altered his condition and passed into
a new state of being. Men do not remain static
but are continually changing and thus the patient
metaphor is no longer appropriate as an image of
man. Accordingly Eliot here whisks his hand
behind his back to effect a switch of glove puppets.
The remainder of the movement is devoted to develop-
ing the figure of the traveller as an appropriate
image of the human condition.

We cannot help noticing that this passage,
dealing with the metaphor of the traveller (and
particularly in terms of a sea voyage), seems to
have been deliberately planted in this position in
the poem so as to keep pace with the chronology of
Eliot's life. Since The Dry Salvages had opened
in America, the scenes of Eliot's boyhood, we must
act out the voyage of the poet back across the
Atlantic before we can resurface once again in Eng-
land where the final quartet is to open. Thus we
cannot help thinking in the present connection of
Eliot's expatriation to England. This move was
largely a specific reaction to the distaste he felt
for certain aspects of the American way of life,
which he thought to escape by transferring to Eng-
land. And yet, as we saw earlier Eliot realised
that after all the elements in the American way to
which he felt a particular antipathy were really
the symptoms of a more general spiritual malaise
that informed the whole of the twentieth century
world. There could be no escape from such a mal-
aise by a mere geographical transference. Thus
Eliot cautions us that we are not to consider the image of the traveller in a too simplistic sense: just as his expatriation was not really an escape from the spiritual ills of the twentieth century, so human life is not to be seen as a voyage which escapes from the past into a new life in the future. Eliot not only makes this point specifically, he repeats it in the passage:

"Fare forward, travellers! not escaping from the past

Into different lives, or into any future; and again:

"You shall not think 'the past is finished'

Or 'the future is before us' ".

In fact Eliot shows us that this simplistic application of the traveller image is a self-dramatisation that men are apt to adopt, just as the image of the patient was a self-dramatisation. Thus he speaks now to

"you who think that you are voyaging".

This image of the traveller is one which we all tend to use to figure our own position in the world and Eliot here is attempting to correct our own too facile self images. We tend to live our lives from moment to moment and often the present moment becomes merely a hiatus between one moment of fulfilment and the next anticipated moment. We also tend to live our lives with reference to times and dates so that we spend much of our lives "passing the time" between, so that our position is analogous to that of the traveller who is suspended in time,

"between the hither and farther shore".

In the image at this point there is actually the concurrence of several ideas which have occurred earlier in the poem. We recall the "metalled ways" of time past and time future in the third movement of Murat Norton. These were like the "waste sad time" which surrounded the moments of fulfilment in the final movement of the poem. Now the two ideas
are brought together. The traveller is seen as travelling along the metalled ways:

"While the narrowing rails slide together behind";
he is in effect journeying through time from one moment of fulfilment to the next.

But all this is a false view which must be corrected. The passage now modulates into the tones of a voice which is heard descanting at night-fall

"in the rigging and the aerial".
The voice begins:

"'Fare forward, you who think that you are voyaging;
You are not those who saw the harbour Receding, or those who will disembark.
Here between the hither and the farther shore
While time is withdrawn, consider the future
And the past with an equal mind.'"
The voyage has now become a figure for the whole span of human life and the "hither and the farther shore" assume larger significance in this larger context. However we recall that we have already come across the voyage as a model for human life earlier in the Quartets. This was in the conclusion of East Coker, but there the emphasis had been on the exploration and discovery implicit in voyaging. Here the voyage is seen merely as a period of transition between one state and the next, while "time is withdrawn". Once again we seem to have regressed in this poem to a point much less satisfactory than that we had attained in East Coker. Here we are going wrong; because we miss what was seen in East Coker, that life is not a series of isolated moments separated by waste sad time, but every moment is fraught with possibility. In fact time is never withdrawn: we can never seal our-
selves off into travelling compartments while we
journey through time from one moment of fulfilment
to the next. What we have to learn is that
"the time of death is every moment".

The climax of the passage comes when the poet
refers specifically to the lines of the Bhagavad-
Gita on which he had been pondering in the opening
of the movement.

"At the moment which is not of action or
inaction
You can receive this: 'on whatever sphere
of being
The mind of a man may be intent
At the time of death' — that is the one
action
(And the time of death is every moment)
Which shall fructify in the lives of others".

It is apparent that the sphere of action on which
our minds should be intent is that of God. It is
equally clear that we are to be held to account for
every moment of our lives and every thought and
every action, because every moment is the moment of
death. What is not so clear is whether the narra-
tor can see this application of the lines. The
idea is taken from these words of Krishna in the
Bhagavad:

"And whoever remembers me alone when
leaving the body at the time of death
attains to my status of being; there is
no doubt of that.

"Whatever state of being he remembers,
upon giving up his body at the end, to
that he attains." 3

The words have an obvious Christian application for
which Eliot uses them. But when we recall the con-
clusion that the speaker had drawn from them in the
opening of the movement we see that he has not seen
this Christian application. His conclusion was
nothing like the one the reader draws. Here then

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is one of the most audacious ironies in the whole poem. The speaker, who is a man wandering aimlessly through this temporal world, by chance blunders into a passage of quite obvious Christian worth which he finds in a pagan work. He sees fit to quote the passage to us but it is clear that he himself has missed completely the spiritual value of the passage. The lesson he draws from the text is that we must constantly "fare forward". Yet there is a profound irony here because earlier in the movement he had been led to conclude that there was no meaning in any sense of direction: in fact "the way forward is the way back". It seems that the poet is as lost as he has ever been. What should be a passage of positive spiritual worth is in fact the nadir of the poet's spiritual career. He is here at the dead centre of the wood of error. The ironies are exceedingly complex for while the positive Christian values of this movement are seen to reside in a pagan work, on the other hand, the speaker, a man who believes he is a Christian, is quite ignorant of the spiritual values which resound in the lines he quotes.

Yet it is difficult in the extreme for the reader to penetrate this far into the verse, because Eliot has covered his tracks so well. He uses the ploy of rejecting the stance of the utopian - we must not hope to "fare well" in the future - so that he can replace it with his advice to "fare forward". Because we are ready to reject the position of the utopian with him, we are too inclined to accept the position he offers to replace it with, without proper scrutiny of that position. But this position too is a false one - we must reject here not only what the poet rejects, but also what he espouses so that we can see the real positives of the movement. Yet this is not really so difficult to do: if we take a pace back from the poetry
and look at the message which the poet is ostensibly offering, it does become apparent that it is rather an inadequate one. After all his only positive message here can be summed up in two words: "fare forward". This once again is only a pale reflection of what had been said much more eloquently in *East Coker*:

"Old men ought to be explorers
Here or there does not matter
We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion".*

Once we have penetrated this elaborate smokescreen that Eliot has raised, we can truly receive this:

"on whatever sphere of being
The mind of a man may be intent
At the time of death' - that is the one action
(And the time of death is every moment)
Which shall fructify in the lives of others".

This is the real message of the movement which the poet affects not to see himself. Perhaps he is admitting this much when he says that the voice in the rigging speaks

"though not to the ear".

Is this Eliot's admission that the speaker in this movement does not hear the true message of the poetry?
Movement 4

The fourth movement is the only place in the whole of this poem where we can be sure that Eliot is being sincere. In this short lyric he offers a simple and devout prayer to the Virgin Mary for her intercession to God on our behalf. The voice is necessarily a different one from any that has yet spoken in The Dry Salvages: here the poet is breaking into the poem to speak in his own voice and to offer a prayer on behalf of the poor benighted inhabitants of the universe of The Dry Salvages.

This movement serves to highlight the problem which occurs not only in this poem, but throughout the whole Quartet cycle (although it is particularly taxing in The Dry Salvages) of determining exactly where the poet's real beliefs lie. So much of the poetry is deliberately false posturings and false leads that we can never be sure we are making the correct response. Of course this is actually a structural technique of the poem, as is indicated in Eliot's choice of epigraph:

"Although the Logos is true for all men, most men act as if they had a wisdom all of their own",

so that the whole poem becomes like a manuscript written by many hands, some of whom recognise the Logos and others of whom have regard only for their own wisdom. It then becomes the reader's responsibility to detect and reject the false note and to embrace the true. Eliot has given us another indication of the problematic nature of his poetry in a complex use of the word "deception" that we noticed in the first movement of Burnt Norton when we were asked

"Shall we follow
The deception of the thrush?"

One of the meanings of this line is addressed directly to the reader and concerns the peculiarities
of Eliot's verse. The whole of the poem is filled with echoes which beckon us down passages. However many of these echoes are mere deception and we must be careful not to follow any of these. But there are also true echoes, although even these can involve deception because we may hear the true echo but draw from it the wrong conclusion, which was a momentary possibility in the first movement of Burnt Norton. This was also what happened in the third movement of The Dry Salvages where the whole movement was devoted to developing false conclusions from a true lead. This is the most subtle heresy of all - the poet begins with a spiritually valuable thought and develops conclusions from it in what seems to be an eminently reasonable manner, whereas in reality he is going wildly astray. But there the position was ultimately betrayed as a false one by the apparent lack of spiritual motive behind the message. To "fare forward" considering the past and future with an equal mind sounds more like the stance of the speculative agnostic than the committed Christian.

It is by now clear that this poetry is anything but a simple-minded propounding of Christian dogma. The poetry in fact steers quite clear of dogma and meets the uncommitted reader on his own ground. It uses ideas which are quite familiar to the reader and winds him gradually into the poetry involving his own responses so that he is eventually called upon to endorse or reject the conclusions which are arrived at. Over many readings some of these conclusions which had at first seemed reasonable will gradually come to be seen as a gigantic hoax so that eventually the interested reader will come to a realization of the true location of the positives of the poetry. It is the hope of the poet that such a realization will bring acceptance of the values offered and thus conversion to the doctrines.
of Christianity. The whole poem then is an exercise in propagandist subtlety. The message is hidden so well at some points that it may remain undiscovered for many years, but this care in concealment makes the truth that much more potent when it is eventually seen.

The **Dry Salvages** involves the subtlest of these techniques. It has only gradually been seen that there is something wrong with the poem. Thus Davie confessed himself puzzled (and depressed) that no-one else had remarked on the peculiarities of the poem.² However once we notice these inadequacies we are then open to the influence of the propaganda. Once it is seen that the poetry is inadequate precisely because this poem is deprived of God, then it is clear what Eliot is up to. He is in fact using our emotional responses to the poetry as weapons of propaganda. When we are dissatisfied with the poetry Eliot is telling us we are dissatisfied because we are attempting to live without God. Thus where we may be able to shrug off the more obvious satirical passages aimed at the nonbeliever, such as the third movement of *Burnt Norton*, we may not see the trap laid for us here with considerably more subtlety until we are almost in it.

The whole of **The Dry Salvages** is such a trap, although in this fourth movement we have arrived at a point of repose from which we can regard the rest of the poem. We are here certain we are on safe ground, because of the undisguised sincerity and devotion of the lyric. Yet the position here is not without its ironies either. For this prayer was exactly what the poet had desperately needed to speak in the second movement of the poem. The only hope there had been in the

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"hardly, barely prayable
Prayer of the one Annunciation".³
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And now we see the prayer is being spoken. It
would seem that some sort of saving grace has been extended to enable the speaker to offer this prayer. But in fact this is not so. We are not to assume any continuity between the voices of the different movements of the poem. This prayer stands alone in the poem offered by the poet on behalf of all the erring men who inhabit the poem. We cannot imagine any of the voices of the movement so far speaking in this manner. The poet has broken in in his own voice with a tremendous burden of pity for these lost creatures. The fact that there is no God present in this movement serves to cut off these men even further from any hope of salvation. All they have is a prayer offered on their behalf to a human intercessor to God. It is not to be expected that salvation can come to men who have no strength of their own to pray. There must be a spiritual regeneration in man himself before salvation can come. Thus we do not really expect a triumph in the last movement as we have had in the two previous quartets.
We have been led to expect some sort of artistic analogy in the final movement of each of the quartets. The pattern is continued here as the movement opens with a catalogue of what Stead called the "false arts". These are used to make a comment on the state of our religion—the implication is that our religion as presented here is in some sense a false or pseudo religion. And this is exactly what the poetry itself leads us to conclude by the end of the movement.

However before we begin to look at the poetry, let us consider for a moment what becomes of a civilisation that has no real knowledge of God, which we have claimed is the condition of the universe of The Dry Salvages. As the religious sense becomes atrophied, men become involved in other more trivial pursuits. As they lose sight of God, they begin to turn to other areas for some sort of assurance from the supernatural. As they lose contact with the eternal, the flux of time becomes more and more meaningless: there will be less of the moments of revelation and consequently more "waste sad time". Men will find they need

"Pastimes and drugs ... "
that will take their minds from the emptiness of an existence bereft of God. Worship of God in such a world is eventually replaced by the Sunday newspapers:

"... and features of the press".
In such a world where there is no longer any sense of the eternal to lift us above the process of time, and where both past and present are largely unsatisfactory, the only place for men to turn is to the future:

"Men's curiosity searches past and future
And clings to that dimension".
Thus men become interested in fortunetelling.
They are searching for a sign that the future will supply all that they lack in the present. Thus they endeavour

"To communicate with Mars, converse with spirits,
To report the behaviour of the sea monster,
Describe the horoscope, haruspicate or scry,
Observe disease in signatures, evoke
Biography from the wrinkles of the palm
And tragedy from fingers; release omens
By sortilege, or tea leaves, riddle the inevitable
With playing cards, fiddle with penta­grams
Or barbituric acids, or dissect
The recurrent image into pre-conscious terrors —
To explore the womb, or tomb, or dreams".

All these effects are really the spasms proceeding from the nerves of the amputated religious sense. They are substitutes for a religion that is now dead. If man is deprived of God who is the true supernatural, he will turn to invent a variety of false supernatures to supply the vacancy left by God. Man is not sufficient in himself to stand alone. He needs the support of a belief in a reality larger than himself and thus he strives for some sort of dialogue with the supernatural. Once faith in God has died man places his faith in a hidden future which may hold happiness and fulfilment in store for him if he can only learn to read the signs. Hence all this strenuous activity, endeavouring to "riddle the inevitable". The poet notes that such activity will become even more hysterical in times of trouble, when men become more anxious about their precarious position in the world:
all these are usual
Pastimes and drugs, and features of the press:
And always will be, some of them especially
When there is distress of nations and perplexity
Whether on the shores of Asia, or in the Edgware Road.

The delightful touch of bathos in the last line catches our eye so that we are apt to miss the Biblical reference in the preceding line. Here Eliot echoes the gospel according to Saint Luke where Jesus spoke of the coming of the end of the world:
"And there will be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars: and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity".

Here then, amid all this frenzied effort to read the future, is a sign of the real future as revealed by God. Once again the poetry points forward to the judgment and to the apocalyptic vision in Little Gidding. We can now see that all these attempts to riddle the inevitable are really a cry for help from a dying civilisation. This is not a way of life—it is a way of death. It is civilisation that is dying and these are the death throes.

At the same time, we are to see this activity as a grotesque parody of true spiritual activity. For the aim of the truly spiritual man—the "occupation of the saint"—is to

"apprehend
The point of intersection of the timeless
With time".

But this is exactly what these people, in their own misguided fashion, are attempting to do. They are trying to reach beyond the flux of time, to make contact with something that is outside time, and
yet which comprehends all time. The questions they are asking are questions which really can only be answered by God. Their activities are essentially religious activities although the gods they are directed towards are grotesque parodies of the true God. There is in fact a counterpointed contrast between these people and the true saint. The concern of the saint - to apprehend the point of intersection of the timeless with time - is however "no occupation": it is rather

"something given
And taken, in a lifetime's death in love".

On the other hand, the activities of the people of this movement are an occupation only. They are pastimes, they are drugs, so that the people are

"Distracted from distraction by distraction".

Again where the saint is all

"Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender"
these people are not even single-minded in their pursuit of these ends. They are after all only "fiddling with pentagrams". Their ends are all selfish ones - the whole is merely an exercise in self-seeking. They are interested only in the gratification of worldly desires and the desire to foretell the future is only a form of delayed wish-fulfilment. Thus the spiritual impulse in the end has been distorted into a petty self-seeking.

What then does the poet advise as a way out of this hall of distorting mirrors? Significantly, Eliot has now abandoned his advocacy of the way of the saint as the only way to salvation. The saint is now seen as a being extraordinaire; he is above the realm of the mere mortal:

"For most of us, there is only the unattended
Momont, the moment in and out of time,
The distraction fits, lost in a shaft of sunlight,"
The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning
Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply
That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
While the music lasts".

However we should be extremely wary of this moment. Eliot has used the word "distraction" to characterise it, which is certainly a loaded word in the context of the Quartets. It should at least be a signal to us that the moment is not one of deep religious significance. And in fact the poet does not suggest that the moment has any transcendent meaning for him. It is described in completely sensual terms, visual and auditory images combined with light effects and the scent of the wild thyme, but the poet does not imply that the experience has gone beyond the sensual. The poet does still have moments of fulfilment such as we saw in Burnt Norton but he no longer sees through them to the pattern of God. The moment has indeed become desacrilised; it is now valued only as a special form of distraction. Just as has happened earlier in The Dry Salvages, the theme has now become only a pale shadow of what it was in Burnt Norton. The poet seems to be able to remember what he has said before but as he repeats himself all the life seems to have gone from the words. This reflects the way the religious sense has atrophied in the twentieth century - men can still remember the religious forms but there is no life in them any more. In this way the whole of The Dry Salvages becomes a mimetic rehearsal of this theme of the atrophied religious sense.

The poet does proceed to make some sort of perfunctory connection between these moments and the spiritual realm:

"These are only hints and guesses,
Hints followed by guesses; and the rest
Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action".

But this sounds a little like the
"Prayer wheels, worship of the dead,
denial of this world, affirmation
of rites with forgotten meanings"

of the Choruses from "The Rock". The religion
described there was a moribund religion and the
words quoted above were immediately followed by
"Waste and void. Waste and void. And
darkness on the face of the deep".

In a similar way our religion here is a moribund
one. As we are to learn in Little Gidding, "prayer
is more than an order of words, the conscious occu-
pation of the praying mind or the sound of the voice
praying". Here, by rejecting the ardour and self-
lessness of the saint as not for us, Eliot has put
us in the position of amateurs with regard to our
religion. We are not ardent and selfless like the
saint - we are only luke-warm and self-seeking.
Our religion has become only another pastime. We
are told to proceed by hints and guesses, yet
religion can never be a matter of guesswork. There
are ironies ringing through in almost every line of
this last movement.

Of course there is a hard core of truth to our
religion, indicated in the lines referring to the
Incarnation:

"Here the impossible union
Of spheres of existence is actual,
Here the past and future
Are conquered, and reconciled",

where there is no such core of truth to the false
religions listed at the beginning of the passage.
The poet can sense this core of truth but he is not
prepared to work at realising it in his life. Thus
he rejects the way of the saint that he has advoca-
ted in the earlier quartets. But the absolute
faith of the saint is an absolute prerequisite for true religion, although as we noted earlier, the asceticism of East Coker is not. In rejecting the way of the saint Eliot is here admitting that there is no longer any true faith in the world. In Little Gidding, the poem of reconciliations, we shall see the true reconciliation between the way of the saint and the way of affirmation which was associated with the moment in Burnt Norton. But such a reconciliation is really a synthesis and it depends on elements from both sides. Thus we cannot throw away the ardour and selflessness of the saint and hope to prosper in our religion by means of guesswork. We cannot hope that what we refuse to work for will be given to us. The way of the saint is a given way, but we will not be given what we have not earned. Thus the speaker at this point is a man who is defeated because he has given up trying:

"For most of us, this is the aim
Never here to be realised".

The next lines then become intensely ironic. The poet has just virtually admitted that he has given up, and yet now he boasts he is one of those

"Who are only undefeated
Because we have gone on trying".

The poem now concludes on an oddly unambitious note:

"We, content at the last
If our temporal reversion nourish
(Not too far from the yew-tree)
The life of significant soil".

If this is our only aspiration in life - to get in the end a reasonably green patch of turf in the churchyard - then it seems that indeed we are beaten. And this only a line or two after having boasted of being undefeated. A more defeatist attitude could hardly be imagined. The conclusion of this poem then presents a sad contrast to the fulfilment of the end of Burnt Norton, or the exhilaration of the
end of East Coker, or the triumph of the end of Little Gidding. A religion which gets us this far is about as valuable as haruspicate or scry. The poet's attitude to his religion then is ultimately a dead letter. What has become glaringly obvious in *The Dry Salvages* is the need for some sort of spiritual regeneration. This is what we must look for in *Little Gidding*. 
Little Gidding

Movement 1

Little Gidding is to be the poem of reconciliations. It is to gather in all the hints and guesses of the earlier poems and place them in the pattern it reveals, which shall be the pattern of God. It will correct all the false conclusions of the earlier poems and make for that spiritual regeneration which we came to see as necessary at the conclusion of The Dry Salvages.

Accordingly the poem opens with a passage replete with hints of reconciliations and with indications that we are now moving into a universe which has transcendent values. Where The Dry Salvages had remained resolutely entrenched in the here and now, refusing to recognise anything beyond the physical confines of time and place, we now become aware of a separate plane of existence which declares itself beyond the confines of this life. The opening lines recall the earlier disruption in the seasonal cycle of East Coker:

"Midwinter spring is its own season
Sempiternal though sodden towards sundown,
    Suspended in time, between pole and tropic.
When the short day is brightest, with
    frost and fire,
The brief sun flames the ice, on pond
    and ditches,
In windless cold that is the heart's heat,
    Reflecting in a watery mirror
A glare that is blindness in the early
    afternoon.
And glow more intense than blaze of
    branch, or brazier,
Stirs the dumb spirit: no wind, but
    pentecostal fire

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In the dark time of the year. Between melting and freezing
The soul's sap quivers. There is no earth smell
Or smell of living thing. This is the spring time
But not in time's covenant. Now the hedgerow
Is blanched for an hour with transitory blossom
Of snow, a bloom more sudden
Than that of summer, neither budding nor fading,
Not in the scheme of generation.
Where is the summer, the unimaginable Zero summer?"

There is a great difference of course between the feeling of the *East Coker* passage and the feeling here. In *East Coker* the feeling was one of confusion, of disappointment at defeated expectation of the comfortable continuance of the seasonal cycle. There is no such feeling here — the "mid-winter spring" is wholly accepted and welcomed in an ecstatic tingling of the soul —

"The soul's sap quivers".

(We may note here also the explicit contrast with the opening of *The Waste Land*:

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

The *East Coker* passage had eventually pointed beyond time to the end of time and the end of the world. The signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, according to the gospel of Saint Luke, were to prefigure the end of the world and thus in the last lines of the passage we were

"Whirled in a vortex that shall bring The world to that destructive fire Which burns before the ice-cap reigns".

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This had been a fearful and horrific vision not to be endured by man. But paradoxically, now that in Little Gidding we are coming closer to the apocalyptic vision of the end of the world, there is no fear, but rather there is this ecstasy of the soul that we have noted.

It is clear that the poetry of this passage is also intended to point beyond time: in the second line the season is described as "sempiternal" which already points to the intersection of the timeless with time. The time scheme of this poem goes far beyond the "temporal" present of The Dry Salvages and partakes of that which is "eternally present". Little Gidding then supplies the true way to the false way of The Dry Salvages. We are in this poem to become aware of a much larger context for human life than the ocean of The Dry Salvages stands for. We are to realize the fuller meaning of our key lines

"What might have been and what has been
Point to one end which is always present."

Thus the aim of the poetry here is to awaken us to the larger possibilities implicit in life. And it begins to work on us through typical poetic methods. The whole of the passage quoted in full above is shot through with indications that we are now in a universe of values which go beyond the here and now of the physical world. There is for example a whole series of images which can only be described as transcendental:

"The brief sun flames the ice, on pond
and ditches,
In windless cold that is the heart's heat,
Reflecting in a watery mirror
A glare that is blindness in the early afternoon."

And this glare is a
"glow more intense than blaze of branch,
or brazier".
There is also the transitory blossom of snow which
"...a bloom more sudden

Than that of summer".
All these images point beyond themselves to some transcendent reality which is beyond the physical world.

As well the poetry contains hints of the reconciliations to come - throughout this passage the poetry uses the idiom of reconciliation between opposing ideas. Thus the season is "midwinter spring"; it is "sempiternal"; it is suspended in time "between pole and tropic". The "windless cold" is also the "heart's heat", while the glare is so bright it is blindness. The very mode of the poetry is one of reconciliation by means of this uniting of opposed extremes.

The passage also tells us in more explicit terms that we are leaving behind the physical life. For here

"...There is no earth smell
Or smell of living thing".
We note immediately the contrast with the "dung and death" of East Coker. The blossom is

"Not in the scheme of generation"
just as the springtime is

"...not in time's covenant".
For this is the spring time of the human soul; it is the time of the spiritual regeneration that we have been looking for since The Dry Salvages, and thus it is not to be looked for in time's covenant because it involves an escape from the limitations of time. Just as the spring time frees us from the privations of winter this spring time of the human soul is to free us from the winter of discontent that was the vision of The Dry Salvages. But after spring we look for summer, and thus the passage leads us eventually to ask

"Where is the summer, the unimaginable
Zero summer".

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This summer is the bliss of the eternal life that can be found through God. The "midwinter spring" was a moment of transcendental experience in this life, which gave us a glimpse of the eternal bliss offering in the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus it is the achievement of the poetry to have awakened our spiritual feelings so that we are now led to seek the Kingdom of Heaven. This is what all the transcendental images of the passage have been pointing towards. One thing however remains puzzling: why is it the "zero summer"? I find it instructive to view this as a sort of Einsteinian metaphysical conceit. It depends on the idea that before we can experience the bliss of Heaven, time must be annihilated. To live in this world is to be

"Caught in the form of limitation
Between un-being and being"; it is the limitations of time which prevent us from experiencing true bliss in this life. Thus we can visualise a sort of Einsteinian relation operating here: as time collapses in on itself, which it shall do at the end of the world, as time tends to become zero, our bliss will correspondingly tend to become infinite. Thus only when time has been annihilated shall we experience complete fulfilment. At any rate whether or not we accept this idea, there is no doubt that the last lines of the passage point to the acme of human bliss, which is experience of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The passage with all its hints of reconciliation and its images of the transcendental has served ultimately to point us towards God and the Kingdom of Heaven, although this is not made explicit. The poetry although marvellously evocative, remains unexplained at present by the poet, and we now move on to a passage which has a more specific reference. We are taken on a pilgrimage from which the poem takes its name. Little Gidding is a village in
Huntingdonshire where Nicholas Ferrar had founded a religious community in 1626. It was a retreat of Anglican piety and was dissolved after Ferrar's death during the Civil War when the chapel was destroyed by Cromwell's troops. Ferrar was a man of genius yet he had renounced the world and withdrawn with his kinfolk "to undertake the life of spirit, most severely" at Little Gidding. But Little Gidding stands not so much for the renunciation of Ferrar as for the real spiritual feeling of these men. For Eliot, it was a place sanctified by the dead and all they had stood for. As Russell Kirk says: "during a time of destruction more ruinous still, Eliot chose Little Gidding as the paradigm of the charity of God that passeth all understanding".

Just as we had gone beyond the confines of time in the first section, here we are to go beyond our normal responses to things in the physical world. Firstly, it is not the physical look of the place that is important:

"It would be the same, when you leave the rough road
And turn behind the pig-sty to the dull facade
And the tombstone".

And secondly, the place takes us beyond our normal day-to-day rationale for action. The things that we have to do in the world have no relevance here - we are on a different plane of being:

"And what you thought you came for
Is only a shell, a husk of meaning
From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled
If at all. Either you had no purpose
Or the purpose is beyond the end you figured
And is altered in fulfilment".

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The third passage makes this even more explicit. We are not to respond to this place as we normally respond to things in the physical world. Man's rational mind is no longer appropriate here, for this is a holy place. And holiness is more than the keeping of Sunday observances. Thus when we approach we are to evacuate our minds of their rational faculties and of our habitual attitudes to religion: we are told to

"put off
Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report. You are here to kneel
Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more
Than an order of words, the conscious occupation
Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying".

Eliot states that there are other places that are sanctified places, which are also suitable for prayer

"some at the sea jaws,
Or over a dark lake, in a desert or a city",
all of which have been identified by the critics, but since it is not really the geographical location that is important, this, the nearest in place and time, will do. Of course this is not strictly true - we cannot imagine Eliot kneeling to pray anywhere in America. His sanctified place had to be in England, and Eliot states so unequivocally. For Little Gidding was significant to Eliot as much for its historical associations as for its spiritual ones. It partakes of the history and tradition of England which supplied a deep need in the rootless American. The historical associations of the place will become important in the
third movement. Here at least it is clear that we have much to learn from these men and what they stood for. They become a "symbol perfected in death":

"And what the dead had no speech for, when living, They can tell you, being dead: the communication Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living".
The second movement brings us closer to the climatic vision of the Apocalypse. Here in the three stanzas the poet speaks of death in terms of the four elements. This means that he is speaking not only of the death that is the end of human life, but also of the end of the world, when the whole universe shall once again be resolved into its elements which shall then be annihilated. The effect of the poetry is similar to an experience Eliot had described in *East Coker*. It is like being

"in a theatre,
(as) The lights are extinguished, for the scene to be changed
With a hollow rumble of wings, with a movement of darkness on darkness,
And we know that the hills and the trees, the distant panorama
And the bold imposing facade are all being rolled away –".

These lines are reminiscent of Prospero's words as he dissolves his vision:

"like the baseless fabric of this vision
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And like this unsubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind",

but where Shakespeare's little life was rounded with a sleep, Eliot's is closed with the ghastly physical reality of a death. Firstly he speaks of the death of vitality in the old man: as Raymond Preston puts it "human feeling, sensuous pleasure, love, have burned out, leaving only an old man's perishable memory". Thus it is that
"Ash on an old man's sleeve
Is all the ash the burnt roses leave". While the burnt roses recall Burnt Norton, the rest of this stanza reminds us of East Coker. Indeed the poetry now modulates back into the very idiom of the first movement of East Coker:
"Dust in the air suspended
Marks the place where a story ended.
Dust inbreathed was a house—
The wall, the wainscot and the mouse".
Resuming as it does the whole mood of resignation and frustration of East Coker, the stanza ends appropriately on a note of despair. For this is
"The death of hope and despair,
This is the death of air".
The second stanza now speaks of the physical reality of death. It is almost like being buried alive. If we are to believe in the resurrection of the body with the soul, we must first accept this horrifying vision of
"flood and drought
Over the eyes and in the mouth,
Dead water and dead sand
Contending for the upper hand".
But here it is not only the death of the human body. The water and the soil itself are dead and indeed the whole globe becomes like a skull as it
"Gapes at the vanity of toil".
The third stanza speaks of our neglect of the spiritual realm in life ("the sacrifice that we denied"). The
"warred foundations we forgot,
Of sanctuary and choir"
are those of the desecrated chapel at Little Gidding and this makes Eliot think of the many churches lost during the bombing of London in the Second World War. He was writing the poem in 1941-2 but the second section of this movement records the blitz
of 1940 when he had been an air-warden in Kensington. Thus the second movement passes on into London of 1940 just after another air raid has finished:

"In the uncertain hour before the morning
Near the ending of interminable night
At the recurrent end of the unending
After the dark dove with the flickering tongue
Had passed below the horizon of his homing".

The image of the dark dove with the flickering tongue, which is the German bomber, also functions on another level: in the fourth movement the dove has become the pentecostal messenger. Thus there is another dimension introduced into this picture of wartime London. It is also a Dantesque vision of an infernal underworld around which the poet is ushered by a figure who in some respects resembles Dante, just as Dante himself was ushered by Virgil. However although the passage has this double reference so that London is twinned with the underworld of Dante, yet there are some hopeful notes present at the beginning of the passage. Though it is the uncertain hour, it is nevertheless "before the morning" and "near the ending of interminable night". This suggests that we are about to come to a new plane of existence which shall be bright as this one is dark — perhaps even the unimaginable zero summer. But all the same this hopeful note remains undeveloped in the movement, for while the poetry does not dwell on the infernal aspect of this world, it does concentrate on the purgation that we must go through before we can even begin to fix our minds on salvation. It becomes clear that this lower world is not really the Inferno of Dante, it is rather the Purgatorio and it is the dead master who discloses what is to be the particular form of purgation marked out for the poet.
This figure is, as Eliot states specifically, a compound figure. We have already noted resemblances to Yeats and to Dante. The ghost also uses the words of Mallarme: he states that

"our concern was speech, and speech
impelled us
To purify the dialect of the tribe",
which translates exactly Mallarme's line:
"Donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la
tribu"."

We may also note that the figure resembles Eliot himself in his earlier years, and also his mentor associated with those earlier years, Ezra Pound, when he states:

"'I am not eager to rehearse
My thoughts and theory which how have
forgotten.
These things have served their purpose:
let them be.
So with your own, and pray they be forgiven
By others, as I pray you to forgive
Both bad and good. Last season's fruit
is eaten
And the fulfilled beast shall kick the
empty pail.
For last year's words belong to last
year's language
And next year's words await another
voice.'"

Thus the poet speaks of having passed on to new concerns in his poetry. We shall see the importance of this in a moment. The point about this compound ghost is that all the figures of which he is compounded are poets. The poetry here is evaluating the worth of a lifetime's effort in pursuit of aesthetic ideals. It tells us what a literary career will produce in the end. Thus the dead master discloses
"the gifts reserved for age
To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort.
First, the cold friction of expiring sense
Without enchantment, offering no promise
But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit
As body and soul begin to fall asunder.
Second, the conscious impotence of rage
At human folly, and the laceration
Of laughter at what ceases to amuse.
And last, the rending pain of re-enactment
Of all that you have done, and been;
the shame
Of motives late revealed, and the awareness
Of things ill done and done to others' harm
Which once you took for exercise of virtue.
Then fools' approval stings, and honour stains.
From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit
Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire
Where you must move in measure, like a dancer." "

The most interesting thing here is that the compound poet-ghost does not refer to any achievement in the literary field which we might have been led to expect from the words "the crown upon your lifetime's effort". In fact all literary achievements are ultimately nothing but "bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit". The ghost here is speaking about life itself, not about the life of art. Thus a life spent in pursuit of art and which ignores the human and the spiritual realms is one
doomed at the last to chew dust and bitter ashes, just as the angels who fell with Satan

"fondly thinking to allay Their appetite with gust, instead of Fruit
Chewd bitter Ashes, which th’offended taste
With spattering noise rejected."

This is what a lifetime’s devotion to artistic ideals will bring in the end – dust and bitter ashes. There are no laurels awarded after this life for poetic achievements here on earth. Aesthetic values then are not ultimate values. This is the message that the dead master has for us – quite a different message from what we should expect from a man with such obvious literary abilities.

The whole of this second movement was admirably summarised by D.W. Harding in his review in Scrutiny for Spring 1943:

"Section 2 can be regarded as the logical starting point of the whole poem. It deals with the desolation of death and the futility of life for those who have had no conviction of spiritual values in their life's work. First come three sharply organised rhyming stanzas to evoke, by image and idea but without literal statement, our sense of the hopeless death of air, earth, fire and water, seen not only as the elements of man's existence but as the means of his destruction and dismissal. The tone having been set by these stanzas, there opens a narrative passage describing the dreary bitterness in which a life of literary culture can end if it has brought no sense of spiritual values."

Indeed Eliot, looking back over his literary career, can be supposed to have regretted not putting more effort into inculcating the Christian message, now that at this stage of his life his
religion was the most important thing to him. Although Genesius Jones has showed that the whole body of Eliot's poetry depends on a religious stance that is always at least implicit, yet most of his early poetry was not what the later poetry had become—a proselytising verse. Most of his acclaimed poetry had been the earlier work and not the more serious Christian-minded pieces such as Ash Wednesday and the Choruses from "The Rock". We note in his earlier verse the very physicality of it: it is full of bodily images—the arms downed with light brown hair in Prufrock, the short square fingers stuffing pipes in Preludes, the lady's teeth in Hysteria, —one could go on and on. These images perhaps achieve their most physical expression in the Sweeney poems:

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

This heavily corporeal sort of imagery is in sharp contrast with his later poetry where the predominant mode has become effects of light and air which can be used more readily to express ideas which transcend the physical universe. Yet too often the poetry in both Ash Wednesday and the Choruses from "The Rock" degenerates into a meaningless incantation of words which only serves to alienate the reader. We feel the poetry is trying to achieve too much through mere verbal effects, when it has in fact strayed too far from the reality of the physical world. The early poetry by its very dependence on the solid reality of the physical world had achieved a vigour that was entirely wanting in the later verse, so that the popularity of the early poems totally eclipsed the later. Thus the Four Quartets represents a last tremendous attempt to write a poem which paid the fullest tribute to the spiritual life and yet which was to be so monumental
a work as to outshine the earlier poems. Thus as well as inculcating the spiritual message the poem had to be the finest poetry. It was, to be, as Stead noted, an attempt to fuse the moral and the aesthetic: it must then be superb poetry, but no mere aestheticism. The Herculean size of the task that Eliot set himself is a measure of his achievement, for the poem is an undoubted success. It is a thoroughly Christian poem which remains one of the great poems of the language. It is the sort of poetry that Dante had been able to write unself-consciously in an age of faith: how much more difficult was Eliot's task to write it in an age of scepticism.
Movement 3

The third movement begins to draw in the various strands that will be woven together into the crowning knot which is the conclusion of the poem:

"When the tongues of flames are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one".

Two of the most important strands that are to be tied together are the two ways of salvation we have noticed in the poem: The way of affirmation which we experienced in the rose-garden at Burnt Norton, and the way of negation which was the way of the saint. The poet opens the movement by talking of

"three conditions which often look alike
Yet differ completely, flourish in the same hedgerow:
Attachment to self and to things and to persons, detachment
From self and from things and from persons;
and, growing between them, indifference
Which resembles the others as death resembles life,
Being between two lives - unflowering,
between
The live and the dead nettle".

It is an obvious enough inference to make the identification between the condition of detachment and the way of negation, the ascetic way of the saint:

"detachment
From self and from things and from persons".

This condition is characterised as a living condition because it will ensure salvation. The way of attachment is the way of affirmation as in Burnt Norton, where we glimpsed the pattern of God through a sensual experience of the world. This too is a living condition: we can come to our salvation through an embrace of this life, by endeavouring to see through the things of this world to the pattern
of God which lies beyond. The third way however is a dead way. This is the condition of indifference, and it is indifference to that which is beyond this world. In both the conditions of attachment and detachment we had our eyes firmly fixed on salvation. But the third condition is indifferent to the spiritual aspect of life, and thus it is a way of death. We think back to *The Dry Salvages* where the condition of indifference prevailed. It would have been easy to confuse the condition there with that of attachment. In the second and third movements of that poem we had a difficult enough task to evaluate the speaker's position before we finally decided that it was a stance of superficial belief only. There was no real heart-felt belief underlying the words of the speaker. It was a mere mouthing of remembered ideas from which the life had long since departed. But it did resemble the other condition of attachment - indeed we could have been taken in by it, until we saw that it really only resembled the other

"as death resembles life".

This condition had involved a wrong use of memory, for memory had been used to prop up a position that was no longer believed in

"or if still believed,
In memory only, reconsidered passion".

Eliot now goes on to speak of the correct use of memory, for memory can also be a means of liberation - liberation from both past and future. We saw in *East Coker* how the dead hand of the past had lain on the poet's life so that he was emotionally paralysed, unable to act properly because of his frustration arising out of his dissatisfaction with the past. We saw also in *The Dry Salvages* how his dissatisfaction with past and present had caused him to look to the future with the blinkered appetency that hungers only for gratification of material
desires. Thus we must be delivered not only from the bondage of the past, but also from that consuming desire which will cast a blight over the future as well.

"This is the use of memory:
For liberation — not less of love but expanding
Of love beyond desire, and so liberation
From the future as well as the past".

Here however the poet is chiefly concerned with liberation from the bondage of the past. For

"History may be servitude, History may be freedom".

In East Coker history had indeed been servitude. Eliot's ancestors had seemed to him a troop of demanding spectres who, like Hamlet's father, had reached out from beyond the grave to lay their clammy touch on him — determining once and for all the conditions of his own existence through the decisions of their lives. But this is not the correct way to regard history. We must not see the people of the past as they affect our lives, but as they lived their own. We must see the pattern which they played out as they strove after their God, strove for their own personal salvation. Thus the past becomes not a dead influence lying on our lives, but a living pattern from which we could learn much.

"See, how they vanish,
The faces and places, with the self which,
as it could, loved them,
To become renewed, transfigured in another pattern".

As he sees this new pattern of the past, the poet has once again reached the point he attained in the conclusion of Burnt Norton, the realization that all the things of this world have their place in God's pattern. The poet can now see that the "partial horror" of this life — including knowledge of human sin which in Burnt Norton gave vent to that
almost insane cry of anguish of the despairing soul
"The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera"*
- is only part of God's pattern and by virtue of its place in that pattern is a necessary part of human life. Thus the poet can now affirm in the words of Saint Juliana of Norwich that
"Sin is behovely, but
All shall be well, and
All manner of things shall be well".

With the scales now fallen from his eyes the poet turns to think of the men who figure in the history of Little Gidding. The pattern of history here seems a little confused on the surface, but underneath it will be seen to reveal the clarity and simplicity of the pattern of God. Here there were many causes and many men, not all of whom acted out of the purest of motives. Here too sin had its place in the pattern, but the pattern does represent one thing above all others - that these men were all inspired by a profound spiritual feeling. Little Gidding commemorates men who were striving after their God. This is precisely why it has significance for the modern world, for the spiritual dimension is what has been lost in the world of the twentieth century.

"If I think, again, of this place,
And of people, not wholly commendable,
Of no immediate kin or kindness,
But some of peculiar genius,
All touched by a common genius,
United in the strife which divided them."

United because although they were at war with one another, their larger motives were the same - they were all striving for salvation, they were all striving after God. The poet now asks what is the reason for speaking of these old causes, for opening these "inveterate scars". He is not meaning to
revive the causes themselves:

"It is not to ring the bell backward
Nor is it an incantation
To summon the spectre of a Rose.
We cannot revive old factions
We cannot restore old policies
Or follow an antique drum".

Rather he mentions these men and their concerns because they represent a spiritual attitude from which the twentieth century could learn much. They have left us a lesson in living. Their lives become a symbol for us - a symbol perfected by death, because they have now all gone to their reward where we still remain in this lower world, which can be either infernal or purgatorial depending on our mental attitude toward it. These men are of the saved because of the strenuous application of their spiritual lives. They were truly undefeated because they went on trying. They are now all long since dead, but in thinking of them we should remember what they fought for, what their whole lives were lived for.

"These men, and those who opposed them
And those whom they opposed
Accept the constitution of silence
And are folded in a single party.
Whatever we inherit from the fortunate
We have taken from the defeated
What they had to leave us - a symbol:
A symbol perfected in death".

They accept the constitution of silence: they will not speak to us as did the ghost from the Purgatorio because they are now above this realm: they are of the saved. The ghost probably only spoke to us because he thought we too were of the lost, because none from that world ever returns back to life. But although they do not speak, they do leave a symbol which is for us to read. If we pay the correct attention we may learn indeed that
all shall be well and
All manner of things shall be well
By the purification of the motive
In the ground of our beseeching".
If we can attain to the purity of motive that these
men had, the single-minded striving after God, then
in our lives too, which the poet has shown to be not
quite satisfactory, all may ultimately be well.
Movement 4

Now comes the apocalyptic vision that has been anticipated so often in the course of the poem that we have been fearfully expecting its advent for some time. It comes in a moment of poetry that is intensely concentrated — a brief moment of "incandescent terror". The movement opens with the reappearance of the "dark dove with the flickering tongue" who descends from the skies bringing the flames that shall consume the earth. We look up in terror as the people of Herculaneum or Pompeii must have done — they must surely have thought that the end of the world was come. In this moment is implicit all that shall follow at the end of the world — our past lives flash before our eyes in hasty review as we think of the imminent Judgment. But the messenger here is not only the herald of the end of the world — it is also the pentecostal messenger. It is the Holy Spirit in His descent and His message is ultimately one of love. Those among us who dwell in true faith will have cause for fear at the end of the world because they shall then see the love that God bears to His true servants. This means that when the dove arrives he will give rise to either joy or terror — and the choice between the two is ours. Thus the moment of terror in the poetry passes quickly and we see the choice that we are faced with:

"The dove descending breaks the air
With flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.
The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre —
To be redeemed from fire by fire".

The dove then offers us redemption. It is redemption by fire, the refining fire of divine love which is made manifest in the flames of Purgatory. It is
redemption from fire, in two senses: from the infernal fire of eternal damnation, and from the fires which flame in the flesh. The "intolerable shirt of flame" is the body which torments the individual with the fires of fleshly desire. We must be consumed by this fire unless we give ourselves up to the divine fire of the Holy Spirit.

The second stanza reveals that human suffering is a manifestation of God's love. This is because it is through the suffering that we undergo in the body that we are prepared for our salvation. Love is the "unfamiliar name" behind the suffering because we do not usually see how suffering paradoxically reveals God's love for man. But suffering also has its place in the pattern, and this too will be resolved when the fullness of God's will is revealed:

"All manner of things shall be well".\(^2\)

The movement then represents the transformation of our view of human suffering into a realisation of the glory of God. Peter Milward quotes a passage from William Law's *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* which is to the point here:

"The dark disordered fire of our soul can as well be made the foundation of heaven as it is of hell. For when the fire and the strength of the soul is sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb, then its fire becomes a fire of light, and its strength is changed into a strength of triumphing love, and will be fitted to have a place among the flames of love that wait about the throne of God".\(^3\)

In this way the element of fire becomes the transforming element of the quartets, a symbolic role which it traditionally adopts among the four elements. It is fire which figures in the conclusion of the poem, when we see that the flames of Purgatory are actually folded in together so that the pattern they reveal is the pattern of the rose -
the symbol of love. And so human suffering is seen to be a manifestation of the love of God.
Movement 5

In the final movement of the poem, Eliot returns once more to the analogy of art, just as he has done in the final movement of each of the quartets, in order to interpret his position in the world. As C.A. Bodelson remarks, the movement is a coda and the opening lines "are part of the coda effect: an intimation that the poem is drawing to a close."

"What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from."
Indeed it is only as the poem is reaching its end that the poet has found a new beginning in his life. It is only now that he has seen the true end or purpose in his life. It is only now that he has seen the true end or purpose to his existence, and to see this end is indeed to make a new beginning. Thus the end is where he starts from. But he now speaks specifically about his poem:

"And every phrase
And sentence that is right (where every word is at home,
Taking its place to support the others,
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,
An easy commerce of the old and the new,
The common word exact without vulgarity,
The formal word precise but not pedantic,
The complete consort dancing together).
Every phrase and every sentence is an end
And a beginning,
Every poem an epitaph".
Where the poet had before presented his art in terms of an intolerable struggle by emphasising the problems of the artist and the sense of disillusion that often devolves upon him, the sense that he will never be able to approach the perfection to which he aspires, now he places before us a vision of achieved perfection which yet does not lose sight of the tech-
nical problems of the poet. He does not give us this vision in terms of ideal forms which leave behind the materials with which the poet must work, but rather concentrates on the words which before he had felt it so difficult to discipline and control. Where before the words had shown alarming anarchic tendencies to

"strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
Will not stay still."

now they are seen in terms of the traditional symbol of order and discipline, the dance. Now each word takes its place as the poem is seen to be the "complete consort dancing together". This ideal order that the poem has achieved is really referring, via the artistic parallel, to the vision of completeness and fulfilment that becomes available to the poet once he accepts the will of God. As he reaches this position the poet has at last recovered the experience of the Burnt Norton rose-garden for which he has been striving ever since the opening movement of the first quartet. But now the vision is not something given in a moment and then taken away just as abruptly, but something that endures. For he has here not only reclaimed the vision of

"And the old make explicit",
but he can now recreate it in his own terms. The whole movement then becomes a poetic recreation of the vision which was given momentarily in the rose-garden.

In this sense the end of the poetry is

"to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."
The momentary glimpse of fulfilment which we were given in the first quartet is now recreated with all
the permanence of a timeless work of art. The vision of the perfect poem given in the opening of the movement is Eliot's statement of the fullness that a life can achieve by delivering itself up to God. In this way the enduring permanence of the work of art comes to be a symbol of the external life to be found in God:

"The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree
Are of equal duration".
The rose, a symbol of poetry, and the yew-tree, a symbol of the realities of life and death, are linked here because the poetry itself has become a symbol of the bliss to be achieved after death in the eternal life of God.

As this movement is a coda, there are a number of lines occurring which resume earlier themes of the Quartets. The discussion of this movement could be extended indefinitely if we were to look at each of these echoes and to discuss the contribution each is making to the resolution of the poem. However this would be largely a wasted effort. The quality of the poetry of this movement is the sounding of familiar notes in quick succession without dwelling particularly on their meaning, so as to give the effect of a comprehensive resolution which resumes all the earlier themes and ties up all the loose ends of the earlier movements. We shall do much better merely to let the poetry wash over us and carry us on its current to the conclusion. The culmination of the poem comes when we are returned to the rose-garden at Burnt Norton although it is now seen to be different somehow. We seem to

"know the place for the first time".
For it is not only the rose-garden at Burnt Norton - it is now more explicitly the garden of Eden. Thus we pass

"Through the unknown, remembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning".
This explicit reference to Eden is reinforced by a series of images which seem to be aiming at the expression of the quality of archetypal innocence:

"At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea".

Such a condition is what we had glimpsed in the Burnt Norton experience; but more importantly it is something which is accessible through life itself. It is something which can be achieved by a full embrace of life because it is

"Quick now, here, now, always ...".

This is not to be achieved through the ascetic denial of life of the saint, rather it is only achieved through an enthusiastic participation in life. But on the other hand the absolute faith and devotion of the saint is an essential requirement, because it is something which must be pursued single-mindedly.

If we are to attain it then we can have no other object in life, because it is a

"condition of complete simplicity
(Counting not less than everything)".

Here then is the reconciliation between the two conditions of attachment and detachment. We must embrace life itself, but we must not be distracted by any of the external effects of this life, for the whole strength of our will must be engaged in the striving for the conditions of complete simplicity which is achieved by a total abandonment to the will of God. In this way we must be attached and yet detached; yet we must never be indifferent. Once we realise this condition then we can be assured that

"all shall be well and
All manner of things shall be well".

In this abandonment to the will of God it becomes
clear that all the suffering in the world is really a manifestation of the love of God. And as we watch, we are given a sign which is a miracle performed by God Himself. He reveals the love He bears towards mankind in a typically paradoxical manner: the flames of Purgatory begin to fold themselves in together so that they become like the petals of the rose:

"When the tongues of flames are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one."

The moment represents a sublime conclusion to the poem: it is a moment of absolute peace and harmony in which all reconciliation is implicit. After such a moment there is no more to be said.
Concluding Remarks

If there has been one thing which has emerged from this rather ill-organized and undisciplined account, it is that the structure of the poem is by no means simple. In fact we can distinguish in the Quartets two types of structural device quite different in kind from each other. Firstly there are what it is convenient to think of as the "static" patterning devices, those which C.K. Stead has carefully documented in his chapter on the Quartets in The New Poetic. These are all very interesting in a dry academic sort of way, but they do absolutely nothing to bring the poem to life. There was much of this sort of patterned poetry produced in the poetic flourish that was the Renaissance: one thinks of the endless "quaternions" based on the four seasons, the four elements, the four humours, the four ages of man, much loved in that period, and disregarded ever since. This sort of poetry was so widely accepted that it even made a rather surprising appearance in the wilds of seventeenth century America, from the pen of Anne Bradstreet, "the tenth muse". But verse of this sort, having long since gone out of fashion, remains unread today. Clearly it is not in these effects that the enduring value of the poetry resides. We must note the presence of such effects in the Quartets, but we must not stop there. Indeed if all that a study of the Quartets eventually yields is a chart of the type Stead has produced, then the average reader might well leave the poem in the hands of the academics and continue reading who-dun-its and westerns - which at least provide movement and life without pretension.

But of course the poem is more than this. As well as these static patterns there is a structural dynamic at work in the Quartets. Thus Eliot uses the figure of a progress (which often turns out to
be a regress) which relies not only on Bunyan's Pilgrim but also on Dante's progress through the three circles. The poem then becomes alive with its records of progress and its ironies of backsliding which the narrator does not recognise. Indeed the whole poem often comes to seem like the old arithmetical teaser of the snail who climbs upward at the rate of three inches a day, only to slip back two inches by night. For where we might end one poem on a note of fulfilment, such as in the conclusion of Burnt Norton, we are dismayed to find that the opening of the next quartet has lost all the ground we have gained and become involved in a mood of gloomy resignation. Again where East Coker eventually wins its way to an excitement of discovery of the spiritual dimension in life, this is all gone in the opening of The Dry Salvages which has lost sight of the spiritual altogether. But this is only part of the structural dynamic operating in the poem. As well as the figure of a progress internal to the poem, there is also a dynamic tissue of response which reaches out to engage the reader and to involve him in the issues of the poem. For the reader himself is implicated in the progress. He must be careful to evaluate each position reached in the poem and to detect any ironies implicit in the position, or he may be led into false conclusions by the poetry.

It is this pattern of vital concern, what I have called the dynamic tissue of response, which prevents the poem from lapsing into a dreary scholastical exercise in decorous patterning and transforms it into a vibrant and living work of art. If, viewed on Stead's model, it can easily come to seem too "architecturalool" (to borrow a phrase from Joe Gargery), yet nevertheless on the dynamic model it can be heard to resound with the rhythms of life itself. If I have been a little too enthusiastic with my descriptions of this dynamic quality
("a life and death game of forfeit in which the reader stands literally to lose his soul"), it is because I believe that the poem must somehow be rescued from a too static interpretation, and perhaps this can best be achieved by an over emphasis on the dynamic aspect of its structure, so that the two views can be balanced together and harmonised. Reconciliation after all is what the poem is all about. Perhaps we should take this leaf from the poet's book literally, and bring its lesson to bear directly on our interpretation of the poetry. At all events my point is made, I hope, clearly enough: the poem is too full of life to be condemned to the dissection table of the analytic scholar. Perhaps it is fitting that this protest against "scholarship" in the pejorative sense, should be conducted in a paper such as this which is regrettable anything but scholarly in the correct sense.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

Quotations from the Quartets themselves have been annotated only where they are external to the section under consideration. For example, in the discussion of the first movement of Burnt Norton, any quotations from the other three quartets, or from the other movements of Burnt Norton, will be annotated, while those from the first movement itself will not be, as they should be easily accessible. This should make for ease of reference without too much redundancy of annotation. Quotations from any of Eliot's other poetry all come from Collected Poems 1909-1962 (London: Faber and Faber, 1963).

Introduction

2 East Coker 5, 1-3.
3 Burnt Norton 2, 1-2.
4 Burnt Norton 1, 5.
5 Little Gidding 1, 43-46.
6 East Coker 5, 2.
7 East Coker 2, 3-4.

Burnt Norton

Movement 1

2 Little Gidding 5, 3-10.
3 Op Cit., p. 247.
5 Ibid., p. 290.
6 Collected Poems, p. 177.
7 East Coker 2, 47-48.
8 Fifth Philosopher's Song.

Movement 2
1 Collected Poems, p. 102.
2 Paradise Lost, Bk I, 1-8.

Movement 3
1 Burnt Norton 2, 28-29
3 Measure for Measure, I, i, 123-125.
4 Ezra Pound, Canto XIV
5 Stead, p. 185.

7 In The Invisible Poet. I refer in particular to Chapter VI: "Into Our First World".

8 The Dry Salvages 2, 7.
9 Burnt Norton 2, 43.
10 Morning at the Window, Collected Poems, p. 29.

Movement 4
1 Burnt Norton 2, 16-21.
2 Collected Poems, p. 102.
4 East Coker 2, 21.
5 see The New Poetic, Chapter 6.
Movement 5

1 Burnt Norton 3, 13.
2 Burnt Norton 2, 29-32.
3 Collected Poems, p. 177.
4 The Dry Salvages 2, 61.
6 Noose Tepsua, lines 113-128.

Movement 1

2 East Coker 5, 36-38.
3 East Coker 5, 31.
4 East Coker 5, 3-4.
5 Kirk, p. 296.
6 Burnt Norton 1, 4-5.
7 Burnt Norton 5, 13.
9 East Coker 5, 33-35.
10 Ecclesiastes, 1, 4.
11 Fragment of an Agon, Collected Poems, p. 131.
12 Kirk, p. 296.
13 Ecclesiastes, 1, 3.
14 Ecclesiastes, 1, 14.
15 Ecclesiastes, 1, 2.
16 The Boke Named the Gouernour, Chapter XXI.
17 Burnt Norton 1, 27.
18 Burnt Norton 1, 24.
19 Ecclesiastes, 1, 16-17.

Movement 2
1 Little Gidding 2, 78-93.
2 Little Gidding 4, 5-7.
3 Collected Poems, p. 89.
4 In Memoriam, XLVI, 8.
5 Little Gidding 2, 88.
6 In Memoriam, XLIII, 7-8.
8 Ecclesiastes, 12, 14.

Movement 3
1 East Coker 5, 1-4.

Movement 4
1 "T.S. Eliot's Quartets: a new reading" from Studies (1965), rpt. in Bergonzi's Casebook, p. 221.
2 Davie, p. 161.
3 The Dry Salvages 3, 37.

Movement 5
2 Ibid., p. 161-162.
3 Ibid., p. 162.
4 Little Gidding 2, 65-66.
5 East Coker 2, 35-37.
The Dry Salvages

Movement 1

1 Davie, pp. 153-167.
2 Ibid., p. 153.
3 Ibid., pp. 162-163.
4 Collected Poems, p. 205.
6 Collected Poems, p. 156.
7 Ibid., p. 152.
8 Ibid., p. 152.
9 Ibid., p. 154.
11 Ibid., p. 154.
12 The Dry Salvages 2, 70-75.
13 Burnt Norton 1, 45-46.
14 Burnt Norton 2, 29-32.
15 Eliot, preface to Mowrer, This American World, p. xi.

Ibid., p. 135.

**Movement 2**

1. East Coker 5, 18.
2. East Coker 2, 21.
5. Burnt Norton 2, 43.

**Movement 3**

1. Burnt Norton 1, 45-46.
2. East Coker 3, 22-23.

**Movement 4**

3. The Dry Salvages 2, 35-36.
Movement 5
1 Stead, p. 176.
3 Burnt Norton 3, 12.
4 Collected Poems, p. 177.
5 Little Gidding 1, 46-48.

Little Gidding

Movement 1
1 Collected Poems, p. 63.
2 see Luke, 21, 25.
3 East Coker 2, 15-17.
4 Burnt Norton 1, 45-46.
5 East Coker 1, 46.
6 Burnt Norton 5, 31-32.
7 Kirk, p. 306.
9 Little Gidding 3, 46.

Movement 2
1 East Coker 3, 13-17.
2 The Tempest, IV, i, 173-178.
3 Preston, p. 55.
4 Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe.
5 Paradise Lost, Bk X, 564-567.
7 Collected Poems, p. 44.
8 see Chapter VI The New Poetic.
Movement 3

1 Little Gidding 5, 44-46.
3 Burnt Norton 2, 31.
4 Burnt Norton 5, 22.

Movement 4

1 Little Gidding 2, 28.
2 Little Gidding 3, 19.

Movement 5

1 Bodelson, p. 121.
2 Burnt Norton 5, 13-17.
3 Burnt Norton 2, 29-30.
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