CHAPTER - VI

THE GLORY

T.S. Eliot's magnum opus Four Quartets has, no doubt, become a landmark in English poetry of the twentieth century. It has also marked the culmination of the religious trends in the poetry of T.S. Eliot. It is a religious poem; its experience is religious; its symbolism is largely religious; its frame of reference is especially religious. Since the poet resorted to notable devices in stating the religious aspect in Four Quartets, it would be worthwhile to explain the poem with reference to these devices.

The term "quartet" is related to music and reminds one of Eliot's significant remark on the kinship of poetry and music:

> There are possibilities for verse which bear some analogy to the development of a theme by different groups of instruments; there are possibilities of transitions in a poem comparable to the different movements of a symphony or a quartet; there are possibilities of contrapuntal arrangement of subject-matter[1].

A 'quartet' in western classical music is a piece composed for four stringed instruments; it is divided into five sections called movements, each distinct in tempo; the movements are linked

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1. Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot, op. cit., p. 114.

by a recurring theme or themes, which are developed, often in a highly complex way, and then resolved. Helen Gardner has given a fair description of the structure of the Four Quartet[2], which may be briefly stated here.

Each poem of Four Quartets contains five movements, each with its own inner required structure. In each poem the first movement contains statement and counter-statement, or two contrasted but related themes, like the first and second subjects of a movement in strict sonata form. However, there is subtle variation in the treatment of the subject from poem to poem.

The second movement is constructed on the opposite principle of a single subject handled in two boldly contrasted ways. The effect is like that of hearing the same melody played on a different group of instruments; the movement opens with a highly poetical lyric passage, in a traditional metrical form, with varying rhyming schemes in different poems. This is followed immediately by an extremely colloquial passage, in which the idea which had been treated in metaphor and symbol in the first half of the movement is expanded and developed in a conversational manner.

The third movement is the core of each poem, out of this reconcilement grows : it is an exploration, with a twist, of the ideas of the first two movements. But the organization of the

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2. The Art of T.S. Eliot, op. cit., pp. 37-42.

movement itself is not fixed. Then comes the fourth brief lyrical movement, which leads to the fifth and the final movement. This movement recapitulates the themes of the poem with personal and topical applications and makes a resolution of the contradictions in the first.

Thus Four Quartets contains four poems in one and each poem is concerned with one of the four elements, air, earth, water and fire respectively. The four elements correspond to the four parts of human nature which may be described as mind, body, blood and spirit. Each poem is then taken up with one of the four concepts of time : time as memory; time as a cyclical pattern; time as flux; time as the revelation of the meaning of history. The four seasons, corresponding to the four stages in the life of man, are also present behind the meditations scattered in the poems which, however, have a cunningly contrived coherence.

An eminent critic observes that theology makes "the formal pattern" in the Quartets. He further writes, "Throughout the Quartets the poet seeks assurance that religion can fortify man against the most seductive of earthly delights, and against the most potent instruments of despair"[3]. Whereas this logic is not only applicable in case of the Quartets alone, since Eliot's other poems have also been written with a Christian background, it is certainly a significant point to explain the poem "as an organic whole"[4].

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3. D.E.S. Maxwell, op. cit., p. 157.
4. Ibid., p. 163.

Four Quartets is not merely musical and moral; it has metrical felicity, fluidity and skill, too. Helen Gardner comments: "The variety of the diction, the union of the common word and the formal, the colloquial and the remote, the precise and the suggestive, is made possible by the strength and flexibility of the metre— the characteristic metre of Four Quartets. The creation of this metre is perhaps Mr. Eliot's greatest poetic achievement"[5]. As it is stated above, the poem has a musical texture. Its language is "coloquial", as found in Eliot's plays, too. But the pattern of form has been a point of concern in the earlier poetry of T.S. Eliot; in his later poetry, especially in the Quartets he has been equally concerned with thought — "his later work is difficult in thought"[6]. This beautiful union of form and thought is to be seen in the Quartets, which in the final shape, emerges as "a complete consort dancing together".

The work, according to Eliot, has "contrapuntal arrangement of subject matter". The subject-matter and the material used in it are diversified and allusive of many preceding works, just as in The Waste Land. The diversity in it is no less than that in either The Waste Land or Ash-Wednesday. In this connection, M.C. Bradbrook has observed: "In these poems, Eliot meditates upon a wide diversity of material; his personal experiences as they have shaped themselves into a pattern; the pattern of history,

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5. Ibid., p. 15.
6. F.O. Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 193.

including the beginning of the war and the London blitz; the difficulties of a poet and the nature of language"[7]. Thus Four Quartets is a prism which may be seen and felt, not from one side alone but from all sides, and then, from underneath and overhead; and so seen the prism sparkles with changing lights and colours.

Harold F. Brooks has rightly said, "It remains the crown of Eliot's achievement in religious poetry; a religious poem ... that speaks not only to orthodox Christians, but to many who ... do not share their creed"[8]. The basic teheme of the poem is the exploration of the ways of passing from the flux of permanence; from the turning world to the still point; from the wheel of time to which man is tied to the point of intersection of time and eternity, which is Incarnation, the unspoken Word which became flesh and brought about the redemption of time. From the contemplation of the Word, symbol of stillness and stability the poet passes by natural transition towards, representing verbal flux and imprecision which are organized into a poem and given artistic significance and permanence. Thus the poem is "Eliot's search for religious truth, which leads finally to a new hope in the Christian idea of rebirth and renewal"[9]. Audrey F. Cahill has rightly stated, "The Christian interpretation of life, negatively implied in the searchings of The Waste Land, and made explicit in Ash-Wednesday, is central to Four Quartets"[10].

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7. T.S. Eliot (London: Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd., 1963), pp. 27-28.
8. "Four Quartets" : the structure in relation to the ememes, Eliot In Perspective : A Symposium (ed by G. Martin (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 132.
9. E. Albert, A History of English Literature (Calcutta :Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 536.
10. T.S. Eliot And The Human Predicament (Cape Town University of Natal Press, 1967), p. 127.

So the four poems of Four Quartets are one thematically and essentially. The common theme is religious, and concerned with the discovery of meaning in a "twittering world", the discovery of peace in the flux of time, where "houses rise and fall", the discovery of joy among "the strained time-ridden faces", the discovery of God "here, now, always". His own remark sums up the thematic concerns of Four Quartets, where he says that the task of each age, enchart, each individual, is to try to adjust "the delicate relation of the Eternal to the Transient"[11].

The poet has presented the main theme under contemplation not systematically but tentatively, in a manner frankly artless and engaging, because apparently free from dogmatism. This main theme is suggested through key-symbols in a movement which is not progressive —— a linear movement from one point to another —— but rather circular and vertical, up and down and down and up and coming back to the starting point but with deeper intensity.

The start is made with the two epigraphs from Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher. The first epigraph may be rendered thus : "Although the Law of Reason (logos) is common, the majority of people live as though they had an understanding (wisdom) of their own"[12]. The second says, "The way up and the way down are one and the same"[13]. These two epigraphs that introduce the whole poem indicate

11. The Criterion, October, 1932.
12. Cited by George Williamson, op. cit., p. 208.
13. English rendering quoted from E.M. Parsons, Notes on Poetry of T.S. Eliot (London : Methuen, 1978), p. 53.

the influence of Heraclitus's philosophy on Eliot. Eliot relates the Heraclitean philosophy of tension and reconciliation to the wisdom and dogma of Christianity in order to transcend the flux and tension of the Greek philosopher. The basic conception of Heraclitus is that the universe is in a perpetual flux suspended as it were by a tension which is the governing principle of all experience, and the very being of the universe. The principle that controls the process of growth and decay is conceived as the Logos of the law of reason[14]. He has seen a kind of unity, a balance, a stillness, almost suggesting that the flux has its origin in the potentiality of the stillness. Man can attain wisdom only through an understanding and empathy with the reason of the whole which ought to be a general heritage of all people. But most people, the quotation goes on to say, interpret their understanding of Logos as if they had a private wisdom of their own.

Heraclitus has found that there are two ways of reaching the Divine. As the Logos or God who is life itself is the principle sustaining the universe, man can have access to It by an affirmative response to the call of life; at the same time, because of its elusive spiritual quality It can be possessed through a deliberate renunciation of all that is mundane and earthly. The first of these is "the way up", the second "the way down" — the descent into the

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14. Gerhard Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of The New Testament (Michigan : WMB Berdmans Publishing Company, 1942), p. 80.

dark night of the soul described by St. John of the Cross. Eliot has explored both these ways in his Four Quartets.

I

Burnt Norton is a country house in Gloucestershire near the market town of Chipping Camden. It was in summer of 1934 when Eliot visited an uninhabited mansion, erected on the site of an earlier country house which was burnt two hundred years back, and wandered in its deserted formal garden. The poem is the record of the reflections of the poet in a garden. It opens with a reflection on time - past, present and future.

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future
> And time future contained in time past
> If all time is eternally present
> All time is unredeemable[15].

If past and present are always with man, time is indeed unredeemable for the simple reason that it is eternally what it is. It reminds the Biblical words ; "That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past"[16]. Eliot has probably drawn upon St. Augustine's observation:

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15. CPP., p. 171.
16. Ecclesiastes, 3:15.

> For if there are times past and future, I desire to know where they are. But if as yet I do not succeed, I still know, wherever they are, that they are not there as future or past, but as present ... Although past things are related as true, they are drawn out from memory - not the things themselves, which have passed, but the words conceived from the images of the things which they have formed in the mind as foot prints in their passage through senses. My childhood, indeed, which no longer is, is in time past, which now is not; but when I call to mind its image, and speak of it, I behold it in the present, because it is as yet in my memory[17].

This simultaneous presence of past, present and future creates the revolving wheel of time, which Eliot accepts tentatively, as is suggested by the word "perhaps". This theory of time leaves no room for its redemption. So the poet says that what was only thought of or desired "point to one and the same 'end', which is always present", that is, they both are past redemption. But "end" is one of the echoing words in the poem, and means "completion" or "fulfilment" also. In this sense the line will suggest that "what has been" and "what might have been" both point to the Eternal always present in the flux where their completion, fulfilment or redemption is possible:

> Footfalls echo in the memory
> Down the passage which we did not take
> Towards the door we never opened
> Into the rose-garden[18].

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17. Sir Tobie Matthew, trans., St. Augustine's Confessions (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1948), p. 310.

18. CPP., p. 171.

The poet recalls a personal experience of "what might have been". He seems to hear the footfalls in the memory and to discover the way leading to the closed door which might have opened the rose garden. The "rose-garden" is a symbol of those temporal experiences which reveal most poignantly the immanent character of the ultimately real. It is the memory of the ecstatic experience in the rose garden which prompts him to re-order his attitude to time. The role of light in the rose-garden, accompanied by the laughter of the unseen children and the music of the bird, suggests to the poet the innocence and bliss of "our first world".

After giving the idea of the Christian Paradise, suggested by the rose-garden, the poet has unobtrusively moved to the lotus in the garden. The associations of the "lotus" are usually religious, for example:

> In the centre of the castle of Brahman, our own body, there is a small shrine in the form of a lotus flower, and within can be found a small space. We should find who dwells there, and we should want to know him... It is Atman whose love is Truth, whose thoughts are truth[19].

Eliot may also have had in mind the way in which the "lotus" transcends the elements - air, earth, water and fire. During the blissful moment in the garden, the dry concrete pool seems to be filled with water in the shape of sunlight and the lotus is seen rising above it slowly and quietly. It is the point where the

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19. Chandogya Upanishad, 8.1.

temporal and the eternal meet; a moment of illumination which affords a brief respite from the clustches of the temporal world. However, the poet is still behind the closed door unable to face the impact of reality ; "Go, go, go said the bird ; human kind/ Cannot bear very much reality"[20].

II

In the second movement the poet has made use of a series of images to present ideas of the growth and decay of civilizations as part of a timeless pattern. The Heraclitean "flux of life" finds expression in the pulsing of the blood, in the mud and the "sodden floor" where the process of decay and growth simultaneously takes place; human existence is found as part of the cosmic movement "figured in the drift of stars". But this dance of the Heraclitean universe can offer no hope of release from the tyranny of the whirling wheel because there is no centre of calm of which all motions can be related. So the poet passes from the contemplation of this dance to "the still point", the centre of the wheel, the Logos or the Word where all motions end. He writes:

> 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,

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20. CPP., p. 172.

Where past and future are gathered.

Neither movement from nor towards,

Neither ascent nor decline[21].

The eclecticism of the "Still point" in "Burnt Norton" and its organic growth in relation to the "turning world" become apparent after the study of the significance of the image in its earlier stages. In The Waste Land the movement of the turning wheel suggests "birth, compulation and death". Asceticism and penance alone can save man who is burning in the sin of lust from the torment of life. Again this wheel image with its centre appears in Ash-Wednesday in a different form. Here the discord is between the silent Word and the whirling world : "Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled/About the centre of the silent Word"[22]. The lines, hortatory and importunate in tone, are an indication of the disjunction between the Logos and the unstilled world. The first two passages of Ash-Wednesday brings out the idea that the concerns of the Word are quite different from those of the world; either one accepts the Word or not at all.

It is Eternity which is the "still point" and around which a human existence in time revolves. An eminent critic has stated that Eliot "symbolises the eternally decreed pattern of suffering, which is also suffering by the image of the wheel which always turns, yet

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21. Ibid., p. 173.

22. Ibid., p. 96.

at the axis, always remains still"[23]. This still point is the moment in the rose garden, bringing release from all that produces pain, leading one to a vision which is in itself a beatitude and an ecstasy and a new realization dawns:

> But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
> The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
> The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
> Be remembered; involved with past and future.
> Only through time time is conquered[24].

Only things that have existed in time and undergone the pain of living will be eternal and only the present moment, the eternal moment, can bring to life "the moment in the rose-garden".

III

In the third movement, the poet has proceeded to explore the "way down" not in the Heraclitean sense but in accordance with the mysticism of St. John of the Cross. He puts forward the obstacles to the conquest of time and the means with which they can be overcome. These obstacles spring from the spiritual dryness of the world which can be surmounted only by the purgatorial system of the St. John of the Cross — "the descent into darkness and perpetual solitude.

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23. P. Marudanayagam, "Four Quartets and the Last Plays of T.S. Eliot: A study in organization, Theme and Imagery". Paper read at USEFI Regional Seminar on American Literature for South Indian Universities, Coimbatore, June 2-6, 1969.

24. CPP., p. 173.

In this mystic system the "way up" is the way of light and illumination, described in the first two parts of this movement, but the "way down" is the path of negation, of detachment, a descent into the dark night of the soul, which is identical in its spiritual effect with the "way up". Here the words of a critic deserve mention: "As the image of light is the natural image for the poet in his record of an experience of joyful revelation, so the image of darkness will be a needful image in his record of what the way of discipline involves"[25]. But before taking up the consideration of this genuine darkness, which generates light, the poet has briefly alluded to the pseudo-darkness pervading the London underground railway platform crowded with men of business, office clerks and managers. This crowd corresponds to the ghostly multitude passing over the London Bridge in foggy atmosphere, in The Waste Land.

> 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[26].

The poet then describes the second way of release from the servitude to time, the way of Negation. This way leads through the darkness, but it is a deeper darkness than that of the twilight world of the underground. In order to escape from this nightmarish world of modern civilization, one must go down into the world "which

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25. Harry Blamires, Words Unheard: A Guide Through Eliot's Four Quartets (London: Methuen, 1969), p. 26.
26. CPP., p. 174.

is not world", the world of unworldliness, the world of detachment from all that the world stands for:

> Descend lower, descend only
> Into the world of perpetual solitude
> World not world, but that which is not world,
> Internal darkness, deprivation
> And destitution of all property ---[27]

For this purgative darkness one has to descend into the depth of the soul itself and reach a world which is a negative of the world of the "time-ridden faces". It is the world of "the dark night of the soul" described by the mystics like St. John of the Cross. It is the outcome of the total renunciation of the world and its property, of the world of sensuous delights, the world where fancy has its play and the world even of spiritual dreams and desires, for a person who enters this darkness has schooled himself into an attitude "to care and not to care; to sit still and rest in God". Lord Krishna exhorts Arjuna to renounce all duties and occupation and rest in Him alone. "Abandoning all duties, come to Me alone for shelter. Be not grieved, for I shall release thee from all evils"[28]. Again, St. Thomas in Murder in the Cathedral learns before his martyrdom that martyrdom means divine "election", a design of God, not the choice of man and it involves an absolute surrender of the human will to the Will of God. This is the "way down" which corresponds

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27. Idem.

28. S. Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavad Gita, op. cit., p. 378.

to the "way up" in St. John of the Cross's — " Ten Stairs of Meditation" — "upon this road to go down is to go up and to go up is to go down". One who has conquered all his desires, desires even of heaven and beatitude, has liberated himself from the whirling wheel of the world, and while men around him are rushing along "the metalled road of progress" impelled by their desires and appetities, he is "still and still" moving round the still point of the wheel.

IV

In the opening of the fourth movement the poet has referred to St. John's Dark Night of the Soul the day darkened by the hidden sun whose outcome is an anxious inquiry "whether life, rebirth will come to one who waits in the prescribed passivity of purgation"[29]. These lines glance back to the scene in "the rose garden where the pool was filled with the sunlight, but became empty as a cloud passed over and hid the sun. There may also be a pun on "Sun" and "Son" implying the mortality of Christ, Son of God, who became the son of man to undergo the doom of Crucifixion and burial in the sepulchre. So man has to answer the question if the darkness of death has to be his final end or it is only a stepping stone to reality of eternal life. According to the natural cycle of death and rebirth, whatever dies is reborn in the form of plants and flowers, but the question is if such plants and flowers will interwine with the "sunflower" and "clematis" or better still, if sunflower

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29. Leonard Unger, T.S. Eliot: Moments and Patterns (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), p. 81.

and clematis will grow out of the dead bodies and clutch them with their roots. "Sunflower" and "Clematis" are associated with Christ and Virgin Mary respectively and the rebirth of human corpses in the form of such flowers will mean a rebirth after physical death, a passage from darkness to light.

But one cannot be assured of the fact whether one will have this rebirth or only the cold fingers of yew may be curled down on the dead bodies, leading to no resurrection. However, the yew tree is generally planted in the Churchyard and is patently associated with death, but because it is an ever-green tree it symbolizes immortality also. In this connection, Harry Blamires says: "There is probably ... reference to the Church in the image of "the kingfisher's wing"[30]. For example, he quotes the following lines:

> ... 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[31].

These lines echo the following: "The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"[32]. Although the universe and human existence move through

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30. Op. cit., p. 33.
31. CPP., p. 175
32. St. John, I, 8-9.

alternate light and darkness, the uncreated Ligh, i.e., God, the creator, is "still" unchangingly at the centre. It is His presence that dominates this lyric and gives significance to "Burnt Norton" as a whole.

Again an eminent critic has associated the "kingfisher" with the Fisher King of The Waste Land "which will be redeemed by a divine act"[33]. So the passage implies that it is through contact with the "still point" alone, which is accomplished through Grace, can there be a re-birth from death which is the birth-right of man. Thus it passes from the description of men and bits of paper whirled by the cold to the still point of the turning world.

V

God is the Creator and the "still point" of creation that is always in a state of flux. And the poem naturally moves from God to the poet, creator of a permanent pattern out of a "Shabby instrument constantly deteriorating:

> Words move, music moves
> Only in time; but that which is only living
> Can only die[34].

The poet says that words and notes in music move in time, that is, they follow each other in succession. They have life only so long as they are audible and then are lost in silence. But they can be permanent in the form, the organized structure of these perishable

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33. L. Unger, op. cit., p. 81.
34. CPP., p. 175.

elements, which is a poem or a symphony. It is in the organized form, the artifact, that movement and stillness are blended, as, for example, in a Chinese jar which moves still in stillness. Here Harbert Read's observation in the Meaning of Art deserves mention:

> A Greek vase is a static harmony, but the Chinese vase, when once it has freed itself from the important influences of other cultures and other techniques, achieves dynamic harmony; it is not a relation of numbers, but also a living movement. Not a crystal but a flower[35].

The dynamic stillness of the Chinese jar is further defined in contrast with the violin which is "still" while the note lasts. This stillness is not permanent, because the notes moves in time and lack that simultaneity which the pattern confers upon them. In the pattern beginning and end are blended or the end precedes the beginning. In a poetical or musical composition, with an organic unity, the whole comes first and the parts later on, just as the seed comes first and the growth and proliferation of the tree emerge out of it. So the "pattern" or the "whole" is always present, while the words or the separate notes only live and die. The separate words suffer from weakness, which is two-fold : first, they are too weak to carry the burden of meaning they are expected to bear, and, secondly, they are constantly changing, decaying and losing

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35. Cited by Daniel O'Connor in his Four Quartets: A Commentary (New Delhi: Aarti Book Centre, 1969), pp. 58-59.

their force and precision under the stress of destructive forces. They are in a constant flux and have no permanence. Even the archetypal word, Christ himself, was assailed by "voices of temptation", the "sneer and snarl" of shadowy figures at the reality of his meditation and the lament of melancholy monster to betray him with despair.

In this verse paragraph Eliot has analyzed the nature of the union and stillness by an analogy provided by the mystical concept of the ten stairs in the process of St. John of the Cross. St. John of the Cross writes : "But, speaking now somewhat more substantially and properly of this ladder of secret contemplation, we shall observe that the principal characteristic of contemplation, on account of which it is here called a ladder, is that it is the science of love - for it is love alone that unites ... we observe, then, that the steps of this ladder of love by which the Soul mounts one by one to God, are ten[36]. In order to reach the still point the mystic must move up and down the ten stairs, each leading him nearer to the point of eternal repose. In the same way, desire is movement undesirable for the peace of the soul, but desire for God, the embodiment of love, means a motion towards something which is unmoved itself. This Love is timeless and free from desire but it may incarnate itself as a human being caught in the flux of time and the limitations of the mortal flesh, the divine in a mortal form. One may also conquer time in time, when in a moment of sudden illumination, crossing the flux of time and the motions of the "dusty" body,

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36. The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Chapters 18 and 19.

the soul is able to glimpse the vision in the rose-garden and listen to the "hidden laughter" of children in the foliage. These are the significant moments in human life, the precious oases in the desert of time, stretched before and after them, the vast tract of time which one devotes to the worldly pursuits, "distracted from distraction by distraction". These points of light may be fleeting like flashes of lightning, but they are eternal.

Thus the poem that begins with the assumption that time is incapable of being restored ends on the positive note that "in time alone time may be conquered", through the perception of the Reality immanent in the flux of time itself.

East Coker

Eliot's second quartet "East Coker" is named after a small village in Somerset, a rural area in the West of England. It was the ancestral village of the poet, from which, one of his forebears, Andrew Eliot, emigrated to America in 1667 for the foundation of the American branch of the family. Earlier still, in the late fifteenth century (1490), a more remote forebear, Sir Thomas Elyot, author of, among other works, The Boke named the Gouvernour (1531), had been born there. The poet visited the place one late summer afternoon and realized the process of death and rebirth there. "Burnt Norton" deals with the moment which comes and goes, revealing reality to every one, whether or not he recognizes it or makes it a point of departure. The subject matter of "East Coker" is the personal and social time; the life time of a man, and the succession of men's

life times. The cue pattern of life, from birth to death, with new-born generations to succeed the old, carries meaning and value. But in the natural order, death denies as much as birth affirms, and the generations face extinction. The liberating possibility is the opportunity a man has, during his life span, of a transformation that will allow the divine to incarnate itself, as far as it may be, in his life. Thus the regent in "East Coker" is God the Son, who was incarnated perfectly in Jesus; who, in his Incarnation and Passion, bridged the gulf between the human and the divine natures; and who, in the span of his single life-time and in his death, transformed, by becoming a member of it, the whole series of human life times and deaths[37].

I

The First movement begins with the reversal of the motto of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots — "In my end is my beginning" which is, however, restored at the end. The device is to stress the idea that life moves towards death, but death is simply the commencement of the process of a new life. Here death has been associated with "earth", the main element in this quartet, just as "air" has been in the previous quartet. The earth is not just the respository of dead organisms; it also nurtures new life. A famous critic observes

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37. Harold F. Brooks, op. cit., p. 141.

"Birth and death — or death and birth - begin to be seen as manifestations of a single process"[38]. For this reason,

> ... 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 by-pass[39].

Stones of old houses are used for the compositions of new ones; old timbers kindle new fires and old fires turn to ashes and ashes are absorbed into the earth. And this earth itself is composed of decayed matter from vegetable, animal and human life — bone of man and beast, corn and leaf. Thus houses follow the rhythm of life and death. The following lines recall the Biblical words:

> To everything there is a
> Season, and a time to every purpose
> under heaven; a time to be born, and a
> time to die; a time to ---[40]

The poet then contemplates his personal experience during his visit to the village of East Coker. He has descended into the deep lane shaded by the net-work of leafy branches, obstructing the streaming sunlight, so that while the fields outside are flecked with light the lane is dark in the afternoon like the underground tube-stations in London. He is observing the strange symptoms of the unusual atmosphere, as he leans on the bank, while a van passes by him. The shimmering and sultry light has created "a warm haze"

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38. Derek Traversi, T.S. Eliot : The Longer Poems : The Waste Land, Ash-Wednesday, Four Quartets (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), p. 89.

39. CPP., p. 177.

40. Ecclesiastes, 3, 1-2.

which the gray stone simply absorbes but does not refract to create the vision of water filling the pool in the rose-garden. In this atmosphere "the dahlias" lie asleep in the silent vacancy of the place, waiting, as it were, for the sound of the early owl. Thus the stage has been set for the vision which marks a momentary transcendence of the process of time and the labyrinth of birth and death.

The open field then becomes the scene of the visionary picture of the communal life in the remote past. It differs from the vision in the rose-garden and has the shadowiness of distance in time and place. It is the dim picture of a summer midnight when the village community is assembled for some celebration with music and dance. The conjunction of man and woman in dance, holding each other by the hand or the arm, signifies harmony, not only the harmony which was symbolized by the sacrament of marriage, but the larger harmony or order, which the people in those days posited in the universe at large, in the world of human society, as well as in the microcosm, the particular universe of each individual, where mental health was supposed to be the outcome of the proper harmony among the four elements that compose his or her mind. It was the impulse of life which pricked the village couples to move,

> Round and round the fire
> Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,
> 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[41].

41. CPP., p. 178.

Their dance was a symbol of succession, part of the rhythm of their life, of the succession of the seasons in nature, of the dance of stars in the heavens above. It was a particular phase of life, a moment of life in the flux where everything has its proper time, a time for milking a time for reaping, a time for the coupling of man and woman as well as of animals. But this rhythm has a particular end also and it is death.

In this way the vision of the past fades, the night of visionary rejoicings is over and the dawn of another normal day greets the eyes of the poet and promises a return of heat and silence at noon. Out at the sea dawn wind "slides" over the calm water and fills it with "wrinkles". The poet momentarily recalled his beginning but could not get out of the end to which it points. His personal experience, thus, changes into everyman's experience.

II

The first movement has dealt with the rhythm in the life of man, corresponding to the rhythmic alternation of life and death, growth and decay, sowing and reaping in nature. The dance "feet rising and falling", symbolized harmony, of course, but, underlined, at the sametime, the process of the flux, driving the dancers into the darkness and silence of the grave, but converting their flesh and bones into the nourishment of plants and flowers growing over them. This inexorable law of succession is contradicted by the second movement of the poem which describes a state of confusion in nature arising from the encroachment of one season into the

domination of another:

> Thunder rolled by the rolling stars
> Simulates triumphal cars
> Deployed in constellated wars
> Scorpion fights against the Sun[42].

This picture of the universe on the point of dissolution is apt to recall the Biblical vision of the doomsday : "... the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken ... then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire"[43].

The passage may be, on a deeper level, interpreted as the poet's comments on the nature of the progress in history which started with the advent of the Renaissance world, which rejected the central position of God in the universe and made man the sole measure of all things. The "progress" of this world has turned out to be an advance into decay and death. The poet wonders if "elders", who spoke so quietly but firmly and confidently, were self-deceived in their exaggerated inflamation of the human mind, or they were just deceiving their successors by transmitting to them, what they secretly knew to be a false hope, a formula or philosophy which has set in motion a mirage of progress which recedes further and further as man advances toward it.

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42. Idem.
43. St. Mark, 13.24-5; Peter 3:10.

The poet then attempts to analyse the actual achievement of "humanism" which started with high expectations and confident optimism. It has not brought man mental tranquility but only mental dulness, insensitiveness and torpidity, which is "deliberate", that is, result of over-exertion; the dulness of a mind "overtaxed". His wisdom has turned out to be the knowledge merely of dead of fruitless secrets, useless either because they had no inner illumination to pierce to the heart of the darkness enshrining these secrets, or they turned their gaze away from it. Here Eliot suggests that the secular humanism either took a shallow view of the mysteries of life and of nature or ignored them altogether. Therefore, the conclusion is inevitable that the knowledge gained from experience is bound to be limited and shallow because,

> 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[44].

However, the "knowledge of dead secrets" cannot harm man.

He has generalized the personal remark of Dante to describe the benighted condition of the proud man who is lost not only in the middle of his life, but for the entire length of it, in the wood, dark and dense with brambles, on the edge of a miry wilderness with no secure foot-hold, haunted by monsters and the will of the wisps and fear of hallucinations and chimeras. This is the picture of the secular civilization lost in a labyrinth of errors, illusions and

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44. CPP., p. 179.

delusions, pursuing the mirage of truth which leads the way from the light divine into the mire of death and destruction. It has deviated from the straight path leading to Heaven and has wandered into a land of enchantment where fireflies lure and mock at all his efforts to light upon the right track. This civilization has rested upon the central doctrine of Humanism that an individual or a race progresses towards wisdom as it advances in years. So the poet says:

> Do not let me hear
> Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly,
> Their fear of fear and frenzy, their fear of possession,
> Of belonging to another, or to others or to God[45].

The old men have deceived man by their posture of wisdom, which was folly in reality, a deceptive mask to hide their fear of death and their frenzy born of "the fretful stir unprofitable and fever of the world", their fear also of losing their isolated individuality by surrendering themselves to love for other people or for God.

As the poet has condemned the humanistic doctrine of knowledge as a synonym for wisdom, he asserts his own conviction that the only wisdom which the mortal man with his limited power and erring mind can expect to acquire is humility, the full acknowledgement of his own littleness and the immeasurable might of God. The reach of humility is "endless", stretching from the earth to heaven and the throne of God. It is endless also in the sense that while knowledge and pride in empirical experience are doomed to be absorbed

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45. Idem.

in the "flux" of the world, humility, which is spiritual as opposed to naturalistic, is not to end in the flux. It is again endless, because it has no end of its own; it is not egoistical but altruistic; it has no will of its own, but rests in the will of God.

III

This movement of "East Coker", like its counterpart in "Burnt Norton", distinguishes the naturalistic darkness in which men of all ranks are lost, the darkness of the grave, and the mystic darkness which is spiritual, the darknight of the soul which borders upon light.

The movement begings with the following words:

> O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark,
> The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into the vacant,
> The captains, merchant bankers, eminent men of letters[46].

The first sentence alludes to Samson's lament at his blindness in Milton's Samson Agonistes. Modern civilization like blind Samson, is physically strong but spiritually blind and can, therefore, display its strength in a destructive and self-destructive way, by pulling down the structure and gaining triumph by undoing himself. The second sentence "They all go into the dark" is a parody of the opening line in Henry Vaughan's "Ascension Hymn", "They are all gone into the world of light". The worship of matter and

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46. Ibid., p. 180.

constant calculation of profit and loss have frozen all that was sensitive and human in them, transforming them into living graves. The common crowd find pleasure in following eminent leaders in a funeral procession, as it were, which concerns, however, not the funeral of one dead man, but the funeral of the whole society which is spiritually dead. It is a total death in which there is no survivor to bury the dead; and the dead are alive physically, but defunct only spiritually, so that there can be no burial in the usual sense. This is the darkness of death or of life-in-death and the so-called progress of the society is really a funeral march towards the void which yawns at the end of its 'metalled' road. The poet has fully appreciated this and addresses his own soul: "I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you/which shall be the darkness of God"[47]. He then becomes aware of the necessity of withdrawing himself from the funeral procession of "the vacant into the vacant" and to wait patiently for "the darkness of God" to descend upon it. This kind of darkness is essential for the purification of the soul.

In order to have the darkness of God, which is light, to descend upon him, he realizes the need to divest himself of all hopes for he might hope for the wrong thing:

I said to my soul, he 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 ...[48]

47. Idem.
48. Idem.

So this kind of hope, which would be for satisfaction or fulfilment, for improvement and well-being, in temporal affairs, may not be bad in itself but becomes a hindrance if not controlled in its excessive craving. Christian hope demands the laying aside of this kind of "hope". It involves a trust which would survive the defeat or disappointment of all earthly hopes. In the same way man must divest himself of love which means the pursuit of a desired object or attachment to a desired man as the provider or guarantee of one's own happiness. Christian love demands the transcending of this kind of love. It is based on a principle of self-sacrifice bynwhich what guarantees one's own happiness must not be cherished on those terms. It is only faith which is entirely undemanding as a personal attitude and is his sustaining principle. "Love" and "hope" in so far as these virtues, Christianly understood, cleansed of all elements of desire and, therefore, of all movements towards a wanted future, constitute a condition of "waiting".

This waiting requires the cessation of all mental activities, a perfect mental poise without any "looking before and after". In this spiritual condition the waiter will find that the momentary darkness settled on his soul will suddenly be pierced by shafts of light and his stillness will change into a dance round "the still point". And then the moment in the"rose garden", the unheard music and "the grace in sense", laughter of children hidden in the wild shrubbery and the echoed ecstasy filling the air, will revive charged with a deeper significance. It will not be lost, but will become a part of one's mental attitude, paving the way for the realization that this ecstasy to be permanent must originate from the agony of

spiritual rebirth, which is negatively a pang of death — death of the worldly self and the re-birth of the soul in the love of God.

It is not Eliotic that in order to possess life one must lose it. It is propagated through Christ's life and teaching. This exposition of the negative way is almost a literal rendering of a passage from St. John of the Cross's treatise The Ascent of Mount Carmel. Here St. John emphasizes the individual need to discipline himself by self-surrender in order to achieve self-fulfilment:

> In order to arrive at having pleasure in everything,
> Desire to have pleasure in nothing,
> In order to arrive at possessing everything,
> Desire to possess nothing.
> In order to arrive at being everything,
> Desire to be nothing[49].

Man can mould himself in the image of God only through suffering and pain. Anguish and agony strip and empty the human heart so that it becomes capable of perceiving what is the essence of being. The path of self-understanding and subsequent transcendence is the same; the particular manner of embracing the cross is alone the difference in each life. The way to this, according to Eliot, is St. John's The Dark Night of the Soul, as the poet has explained in the oncluding lines of section III:

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49. St. John of the Cross, The Complete Works, trans. & ed. E. Allison Peers (London : Burns and Oates, 1964), p. 59.

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[50].

In case, one wishes to know, one must know nothing; in the same way, to live one must die. Helen Gardner here observes that " 'East Coker' is far more concerned with the response made to experience than 'Burnt Norton' is; and the experience to which response has to be made is a tragic one, of loss and deprivation and hopelessness"[51]. Insecurity is a necessary condition of the act of faith by which one must live. In Ash Wednesday he prayed: "Teach us to care and not to care/Teach us to sit still"[52]. The injunction "to sit still" in the sense exhorted by St. John of the Cross is essential step for self-purification. The reason is that "Eliot feels with St. John of the Cross that we must undergo not only the purification of the flesh by The Ascent of Mount Carmel but also the trials of The Dark Night of the Soul, before we can hope for that perfect union of the soul with God in love ..."[53]

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50. CPP., 181
51. Four Quartets : A Commentary", T.S.Eliot:A Study of His Writings by several Hands, ed. B. Rajan, (1947, rpt. London: Dennis Dobson, 1948), p. 66.
52. CPP., p. 90.
53. J.J. Sweeney, "East Coker : A Reading", T.S. Eliot : Four Quartets, ed. B. Bergonzi (1969; rpt. London & New York: Macmillan, 1977), p. 50.

The previous movement began by distinguishing between the "vacant" darkness of spiritual death and "the darkness of God" which is a way to spiritual regeneration; it then developed the latter in the form of a discourse on the purgative way. In this movement the poet discloses that it is Christ who is at work in this "way", and that his Passion and Death are the archetype of it. Christ's death is presented as the "only" means to man's salvation from sin and death. This idea is conveyed in an extended metaphor, in which the human condition is a sickness and the whole earth is a hospital. It implies that for the Christian this Hospital is also a purgatory where the soul is put to purgation through fire and ice.

The soul, as St. John of the Cross has put it, during the Dark Night, is "under medical treatment for the recovery of its health, which is God himself". The "wounded surgeon" of the sinful souls is Christ, who was wounded and nailed on the Cross and assumed the mortal form to undergo all the trials and indignities incidental to the state of man and whose heart was lacerated by passion. Critics like J.J. Sweeney has quoted a partinent observation of Pascal: "Jesus suffers in his Passions in torments which men inflict on Him; but in His agony He suffers the torments He inflicts on Himself"[54].

As the surgeon himself is wounded and performs his operations with "bleeding hands", he is possessed of two important qualities -

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54. Pensus No. 552.

his deep knowledge of the nature and depth of the disease with which the patients are affected; and his love and sympathy for the patients whose disease mercilessly probes and cauterizes.

The phrase "Sharp compassion" is pregnant with meaning; it stands for "self-forgetful compassion, of suffering united with the power to help and comfort sufferers, of generosity without limit"[55]. Only the Infinite can possess such qualities. H.P. Mohanty observes : "Christ, as it were, strikes one into the agony of illuminating, elevating self-transformation"[56]. It is only this kind of surgery that can resolve the enigma of the fever chart. The only aim of the surgeon is to diagnose the fever of the soul, whose rise and fall is carefully charted for effecting the proper cure. It is paradoxical enough that this disease becomes the only hope for the recovery of the patient's spiritual health, since the soul must suffer that it may become worthy of the divine love.

> Our only health is the disease
> If we obey the dying nurse
> Whose constant care is not to please
> But to remind of our, and Adam's curse,
> And that, to be restored, our sickness must grow worse[57].

Here the "dying nurse" is a figure of the Church, herself involved as a human society in the clutches of mortality, but

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55. Helen Gardner, op. cit., p. 66.

56. "A Controversial Passage in Four Quartets", Bulletin of the Deptt. of English, Calcutta University, 13, No. 1 (1977-78), p. 54.

57. CPP., p. 181.

offering, by virtue of her divine foundation, the prospect of "health" to those who are aware of their sickness. But the Church also reminds one that "to be restored our sickness must grow worse", because the suffering of the soul is purgatorial in its effect and the more a soul passes through the fiery ordeal of suffering caused by the consciousness of its sin the greater grow its chances of complete recovery from its "distemper". The first step in the process of cure is the consciousness of the disease on the part of the patient and some Christians were so taken with the close connection between the sin of man and the grace of God that they were disposed to multiply it in order that the divine grace may descend upon them in a shower strong enough to wash away all the stains of their soul.

The poet has compared man's life on earth to that of a patient in a hospital.

> The whole earth is our hospital
> Endowed by the ruined millionaire,
> Wherein, if we do well, we shall
> Die of the absolute paternal care
> That will not leave us, but prevents us everywhere[58].

An eminent critic states that the "image directly challenges prevailing humanistic and scientific notions of human independence and progress"[59], apart from God. Perhaps Eliot has borrowed the conceit of the hospital-surgeon-patient from Lancelot Andrewes.

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58. Ibid., p. 181.
59. Harry Blamaires, op. cit., p. 68.

Andrewes used the metaphor "physician" in his sermons. Eliot changes it to "Surgeon", thereby bringing in a new set of meaning. Again St. John of the Cross has made use of the same image in The Living Flame of Love : "For the healing of love is to hurt and wound once more that which has been hurt and wounded already, until the soul comes to be wholly dissolved in the wound of love. And in this way, when it is now completely turning into a wound of love, it regains its perfect health, and is transformed in love and wounded in love"[60]. The following stanza is a progression of this experience:

> The chill ascends from feet to knees,
> The fever sings in mental wires
> If to be warmed, then I must freeze
> And quake in frigid purgatorial fires
> Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars[61].

"The chill" and "the fever", though paradoxical, stand for the initial stage of spiritual experience. Since Pascal used the same terms which signify purification and annihilation, this is not a wholly original idea of Eliot.

In accordance with the sections of the Bhagavad Gita which Eliot uses in the Four Quartets, it is mainly anger and lust that must be overcome; these are the painful briars that one would wish to escape through suffering. Except the unfailing assistance of grace, none can on his own cross a purging flame. It is this flame

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60. St. John of the Cross, Complete Works, op. cit., p. 38.
61. CPP., p. 181.

which breaks the distempered part and burn away the last residue of wrong orientation of love; then "the flame is roses" and one desires nothing more, for the quest has been fulfilled.

In this vast hospital where all the children are doomed to live as patients the only healthy food and drink conducive to the health and welfare of man's sick soul is the body of Christ crucified with blood dripping from the nailed hands and from the flesh wounded by hostile spears. This communion between the Christian and his Saviour is celebrated in a Church ceremony known as Eucharist, in which the sacramental bread and wine are partaken of as the flesh and blood of Christ. Jesus himself enjoined upon his disciples : "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Who so eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hat eternal life"[62].

The emblem of Christ is the bird Pelican which feeds her young ones on her own blood. But man in his ignorant stupidity sticks to the belief that he is healthy, sane and sound by depending on the ordinary natural diet which satisfies the needs of the mere creatures of flesh and blood. He does or would not think that by nourishing his body he is simply starving his soul, which requires a diviner diet. Even today the death of Christ is celebrated on Friday and the day is called "Good Friday" because the Passion and Crucifixion of Christ led to the purgation of the sin of Adam and the rede ption of his children. The death of Christ, as Thomas

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62. St. John, 6:53-54.

Becket asserts in his Christian sermon, in Murder in the Cathedral, is a token of God's love for mankind and a prefiguration of the soul's passage to eternity through death. This Good Friday note in "East Coker" celebrates the culmination of suffering and purgation, and an anticipation of the Resurrection.

V

In the final movement of "East Coker" one finds a personal note in a more relaxed style. Here the poet illustrates the failure of the idea of the progress from his own personal career as a practitioner of the poetic craft for about twenty years, during which he has progressed in years, but not in wisdom or skill:

> ... having had twenty years —
> Twenty years largely wasted, the years of
> l'entre deux guerres
> Trying to learn to use words...[63]

The poet has to work in a flux under which not only things, but the poet himself and his verbal instrument are constantly changing. So every attempt is a fresh beginning rather than a forward step; and the failure it meets with is an altogether new failure. For by the time he has mastered the words for saying something, he finds that he is no longer willing to speak about it at all, to speak in a manner he had previously thought to be unfit. So each poetic attempt to express emotions which are, by nature, inarticulate, is a beginning, where no precedent has yet been established:

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63. CPP., p. 182.

> And so each venture
> Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
> With shabby equipment always deteriorating
> In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,
> Undisciplined squads of emotion[64].

Eliot agrees with T.E. Hulme on the point that a man "can only accomplish anything of value by discipline ... ethical and poetical. Order is not merely negative, but creative and liberating"[65]. Therefore, he has to give strength through discipline, strength not productive of pride, but of humility, for humility overweighs individualism and material success. His business is only to try with sincerity, patience and perseverance, remembering the old dictum that strife itself is good for mortals. The rest is not his business. He must be continually striving "to recover what has been gained and lost again and again". Thus the progress is actually a retreat, not a forward movement towards a destination ahead but a going back to the point of origin or beginning. Here the sailor does not voyage away from home but towards it.

As he advances in years, he develops a keener insight into the pattern of life where the past and the present, the old and the new, are interwined to make the fabric of life complex and intricate. He is troubled by distractions and materialistic pursuits in course of time, but "Love is most nearly itself/when here and now cease

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64. Idem.

65. T.S. Eliot, Journaux In times cited by James Johnson Sweeney, op. cit., pp. 54-55.

to matter"[66]. It does not matter whether one is here or there for love, as St. John of the Cross states, is a living flame which keeps on ascending until it is absorbed in the centre of the sphere. True love is spiritual and not temporal. Consequently his earlier desire to abstain from movement while the world moves, is altered into "we must be still and still moving"[67]. Derek Traversi argues that "The human obligation at any given moment is to advance towards 'a further union', along a path likely to involve the reverse of facile comfort (the spiritual landscape is that implied in the reference to 'the dark cold and the empty desolation', the comfortless, infinite water of the open sea which will play an important part in the next quartet), but which is now seen as a condition of continuing and expanding life"[68]. The poem ends with the poet's recollection that his end, his death, is his true spiritual beginning; consequently there is a significant inversion of the dead Queen's motto : "In my end is my beginning".

In this way the traditional doctrine of the Negative Way of St. John of the Cross in "Burnt Norton" acquires a new, a fully personal and contemporary meaning in "East Coker". Eliot has been deeply indebted to St. John of the Cross in his search for belief and the latter initiated him into the mystical path of union with God. In his poetry, especially in the later poetry, the human person

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66. CPP., p. 182.
67. Ibid., p. 183.
68. Derek Traversi, op. cit., p. 151.

is challenged to process of awakening and purification, making him more and more capable of possessing God. St. John has described the movement towards God as an entry "into complete detachment and emptiness and poverty, with respect to everything..."[69] And Eliot has depicted this kind of movement in "East Coker" III, where he writes:

> In order to possess what you do not possess
> You must go by the way of dispossession[70].

Certainly the journey which is ahead will bring darkness and pain but ultimately it will take him to the desired end. It is a process of holding back desires, of permitting God to enter one's life, of losing some of self in order to merge into the greater self of God. St. John observes that in order to reach God" the will has rather to be continually detaching itself from everything detectable and pleasant than to be conceiving an attachment to it. In this way it completely fulfills the precept of love, which is to love God above all things; and this cannot be unless it can have detachment and emptiness with regard to them all"[71].

In order to possess everything, one must want nothing and have nothing. God makes the soul die to all that He is not; He strips one of all that is not Himself. There are two kinds of life according to St. John of the Cross. One consists of the vision of

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69. St. John of the Cross, Complete Works, op. cit., p. 58.
70. CPP., p. 181.
71. Op. cit., pp. 170-171.

God, which must be attained by natural death; "the other is the perfect spiritual life, the possession of God through union of love ..."[72] This union is what Eliot is looking for when he says:

> We must be still and still moving
> Into another intensity
> For a further union, a deeper communion
> Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,
> The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters
> Of the petrel and the porpoise[73].

The spiritual exploration to which man is called is conveyed in the beautiful image of a voyage through the night. They way is "through the dark ... and the empty desolation", the way of self-abnegation, but it is a way "through" to the unimaginable possibilities contained in "beginning". So, in the concluding line of the poem, the determinist theme with which "East Coker" opens, is inverted. The meaning is that, for the man who has recognized and confessed his own complete inadequacy, that he cannot heal himself, and is prepared to wait upon God, submitting himself to the "sharp compassion" of "The wounded Surgeon", a new life is offered.

The Dry Salvages

"The Dry Salvages" is named after a small group of rocks off the north-east of Cape Ann, Massachusetts, St. Ann being the mother of Virgin Mary. In this poem, one finds a harsher and more

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72. Ibid., p. 141.
73. CPP., p. 183.

painful portrayal of the human condition than in the other poems, but, on the other hand, perhaps because of this, a thoroughly unequivocal expression of dependence upon the divine grace revealed in the Incarnation. The dominant element here is water, which some Greek philosophers thought was the primitive material out of which the world arose. Eliot writes of the sea with great freedom and power, with beautiful effect, and in rhythms which seem to have been conditioned by the poet's early environment.

I

The first movement of this quartet presents two contrasting ideas of the process of time by means of two different, though connected metaphors — the river and the sea. The significance of the river for Eliot shows in what he wrote to a St. Louis paper in 1930: "I feel that there is something in having passed one's childhood beside the big river, which is incommunicable to those who have not. Of course my people were Notherners and New Englanders, and of course I have spent many years out of America altogether; but Missouri and the Mississippi have made a deeper impression on me than any other part of the world"[74].

Although the civilized man has no belief in gods, the poet rightly conjectures that in the eye of a primitive man a mighty river must have the awful shape of a "strong brown god". The river is a symbol of life, denoting movement in time, whereas "the sea

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74. Cited by F.O. Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 186.

is the greater reality which surrounds us, the 'eternity' which we only penetrate at the moment — and at the cost — of dying"[75]. The sea marks the end of land and, therefore, the limits of man's empire and sovereignty. The destructive function of the sea has been going on since the dawn of the creation. In the landlocked pools formed by its receding tides a keen observer may discover such delicate creatures as "algae" and "the sea anemone" representing the primitive stages of organic evolution. The sea waves also toss up the things lost by the sailors and fishermen who ply their precarious trades on its perilous waters — "shattered lobsterpot", broken oar and "the gear of foreign dead men". The sea has many voices, representing its various moods, and this led the classical imagination to create one sea god for each mood of the sea, so that its vast realm was populated by a host of deities.

Again, the two lines "the salt is on the briar rose,/ The fog is in the fir trees"[76]. Underline the power of the destructive sea to affect the growth of things associated with love, joy and beauty and also fruitful thought, action and endeavour, clouding the clean mind and arresting the human will in its progress along definite lines.

Apart from the river and the sea, the bell too plays a part in the development of this quartet. In this case, it is the "tolling bell", instructing man about the reality of death in which all human

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75. Derek Traversi, op. cit., p. 153.
76. CPP., pp. 184-185.

efforts and aspirations come to an end and with which man must ultimately come to terms. At a later stage it will merge into the Angelusbell, proclaiming the Annunciation and the birth of the new life which may come into being from accepted death:

> And under the oppression of the silent fog
> The tolling bell
> Measures time not our time, rung by the unhurried
> Ground swell[77],...

Death, however, is not the only certainty as the prayer book states. David Ward has rightly observed " 'the ground swell, that is and was in the beginning' is entirely appropriate, bringing us back to the long view of life and time and reality in the Christian tradition"[78].

The "morning watch" has been generally held to be a time favourable for revelation, for the discovery of some fundamental reality which man in his preoccupation with "the rush and hurry" of his business hours is apt to forget. The phrase "that is and was from the beginning" implies that time is a divine ordinance, a condition to which the Creator has subjected his creation. Through the beautiful yet awe-inspiring imagery of the river and the sea, the poet unites the two currents — the temporal and the timeless — emphasizing the reality of the timeless which can be apprehended through the flux of the temporal things.

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77. CPP., p. 185.

78. T.S. Eliot. Between Two Worlds: A Reading of T.S. Eliot's poetry and plays (London and Boston, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 258.

II

In this movement the poet contemplates the tragedy of human life and articulates a feeling of despair and frustration, which has a genuine personal ring as well as a universal implication.

> ... the soundless wailing,
> The silent withering of autumn flowers
> Dropping their petals and remaining motionless.[79]

It is a moment of agonizing calamity when man is left no choice but submission to the will of God. But such a prayer to be effective requires complete trust, otherwise it is bound to remain unprayable. The word "annunciation" has an obvious religious overtone and recalls to one's mind the Annunciation made by the angel to Virgin Mary that God has selected her for the Immaculate conception whose womb will give birth to the Saviour, who was destined to suffer the pangs of Passion and Crucifixion for the redemption of mankind. The bell in the Church daily rings the Angelus to remind the faithful of the Annunciation of God's will and of the duty of man to submit to it without any hesitation. So the phrase brings in the double association implicit in the poem - Virgin Mary, the regent of the poem, and the concept of Incarnation, the point of intersection of time and the timeless.

In this second movement of "The Dry Salvages" there is a number of annuciations which may be the annunciation of death, if one emphasizes the reality of the temporal, or, the annunciation

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79. CPP., p. 185.

of rebirth and life if God is the only reality in man's life. In the flux

> 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 drifting wreckage,
> The bone's prayer to Death its God[80].

Since Adam's sin there is no end to the recurring cycle of birth, procreation and death. The reason is that the temporal preserves its own destruction, though timeless in character with its burden of sin and death. The bell forwarns its hearers that timeless must be sought within the flux of time. The Church bell is used at other occasions apart from the funeral: "The silent listening to the undeniable/Clamour of the bell of the last annunciation"[81], leading to "Only the hardly, barely prayable/Prayer of the one Annunciation"[82].

People hear the Angelus daily recalling the Annunciation — the angel's announcement to the Virgin Mary that she was to conceive and bear the Word in flesh. The presence of the Virgin Mary in the background of "The Dry Salvages" is most appropriate as she is considered Stella Maris, the pole star which guides the voyagers from peril and danger. In this connection David Ward writes that

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80. Ibid., p. 186.
81. Idem.
82. Idem.

the Annunciation "is the ultimate purpose which lies behind the world of time, and in the sense that it offers the Christian the means by which he may achieve a life which is not in the scale of time, by sharing in the resurrection"[83].

But, as the poet is overburdened by a sense of the sin and foibles of the world which he cannot assimilate in prayer, he finds no "end", no purpose and no cessation — in what remains in the flux. He thinks that he is a slave to temporal succession : "There is no end, but addition; the trailing/Consequence of further days and hours ..."[84] One may ask whether the poet is near despair. Again David Ward observes "it is the Leaden Echo of the Four Quartets, approaching closely to the final horror that within this endless repetitive pattern of time even prayer becomes impossible and destructive ..."[85] In this background one may have the reminder of the moments of happiness ... the sudden illumination" that promise relief from the shackles of time:

> ... I have said before
> That the past experience revived in the meaning
> Is not the experience of one life only,
> But of many generations[86].

The "pattern" in history personal or racial, which an old man is expected to discover consists of "the moments of happiness". This "happiness" is associated with the moments of sudden illumination when one transcends time and its tyranny, and perceives the

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83. David War, op. cit., p. 259.
84. CPP., p. 185.
85. David Ward, op. cit., pp. 258-59.
86. CPP., pp. 186-187.

underlying sequence of life with a naked eye. So a new awareness dawns that the quality of one's life is what makes each life, however, humble, important and meaningful.

This restored experience is not an isolated even in the life of a single individual only, but something shared by the generations constituting his family history or the history of the race. In this way, through the process of dying in time one discovers life and ultimate bliss:

> Time the destroyer is time the preserver,
> Like the river with its cargo of dead negros, cows
> and chicken coops,
> The bitter apple and the bite in the apple[87].

Here one may notice that the phrase "time the destroyer is time the preserver" echoes P.B. Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind". Although it destroyes men, monuments and joys and hopes, it also carries certain memories of ectasy and agony. Like a river it carries on its surface the dead bodies of negroes and "cows and chicken coops", relics of man's injustice to man and cruelty to animals. But it also conveys from one generation of Adam's sons to another the memory of "Man's first disobedience, and the fruit/Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste/Brought death into the World, and all our Woe"[88]. Along with this memory of the Original Sin, it also carries

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87. CPP., p. 187.

88. M. Macmillan, (ed.), Paradise Lost : Books I and II (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1961), p. 1.

the memory of the sacrifices made by Christ who came "amid our woes" to redeem the sinful mankind and purchase their salvation with his own blood. His all embracing love is manifest in His Church - the Rock:

> 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 seamark
> To lay a course by ; but in the sombre season
> Or the sudden fury, is what it always was[89].

The poet's description of the Church as a "ragged rock" is reminiscent of John Donne's description of the crucified Christ as "ragged and torn", in his poem "Good-Friday, 1613, Riding Westward". The Church stands like a rock amid the restless waters of time, exposed to the onslaught of waves, and hidden in fog till man finds his noble mission in his step for the spiritual vision. Thus, though the rocks are sometimes obscured by the waters of time, sometimes almost ignored, "merely a monument", they have an absolute permanence which makes them an invaluable guide.

III

In the third movement the poet explains the point that he has previously wanted to impress upon the reader with the help of the exhortation of Krishna to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita. In the relevant portion of the Bhagavad Gita to which Eliot refers, Arjuna

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89. CPP., p. 187.

has questioned his rightness of becoming involved in the battle which will cause him to fight against his own kith and kin. So Krishna has explained the nature of action itself. He advocates the philosophy of disinterested action, of doing one's duty without any thought for the fruit, reward, success or failure. It will mean concentration on the present moment in total disregard for the past and the future both of which are equally out of place. Krishna says that "action rightly performed" or "rightly renounced" brings with it a freedom which cannot be attained by mere evading a choice and shunning an action. He goes on to say: "Though I am its creator, know Me to be incapable of action or change. Works do not defile me: nor do I have yearning for their fruit. He who knows Me thus is not bound by works"[90].

Krishna the Word releases man from work and if this release takes place, future and past become indistinct from each other, the future like a keepsake of memory:

> ... a faded song, a Royal Rose or a lavander spray
> Of wistful regret for those who are not yet hereto regret,
> Pressed between yellow leaves of a book that has never
> been opened[91].

Eliot has made clear here, as elsewhere, that the full weight of spatial reference is relevant when speaking of the centrality of the present. He presses the full signification of the circularity

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90. S. Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavad Gita, op. cit., pp. 160-161.

91. CPP., p. 187.

symbol upon man once more. According to Heraclitus, the way up and the way down are the same. They are the same because, for Eliot, centrality is not just an intellectual position and a cultural position; it is also a moral position, and a spiritual position. An eminent critic observes, "The Way of Affirmation and the Way of Negation are one way. They way of given illumination and the way of self-discipline are one way"[92]. This finds expression in the single line, "And the way up is the way down, the way forward is the way back" '. In this way the poet again refers to the doctrine of the Bhagavad Gita:

> 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[93].

The moment of death is all inclusive; what one is then and what one thinks of at that moment one remains henceforth. But, at sametime, it is not an exclusive concern with the individualistic soul to be freed from the transitory and to be united with the One and All, but "it shall fructify the lives of others" in that it aspires, influences and benefits others so that the possession of the eternal moments may become the one necessity in their lives too:

> And do not think of the fruit of action.
> Fare forward[94].

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92. Harry Blamanres, op. cit., p. 104.
93. CPP., p. 183.
94. Ibid., p. 188.

Thus, real movement of the soul is the continual growth of its consciousness of the supernatural sphere above and behind man's sublunary sphere of time and flux. Man will attain to that sphere of being, as Krishna says, if his desire is fixed upon that goal at the moment of death.

This discipline, based upon action in detachment, that is, action without any desire for its fruits, for success, rewards or personal gain and gratification, will prompt actions of people in general. But this disciplined action is not entirely fruitless in as much as it inspires, influences and benefits others and finds its consummation in their lives. So the poet exhorts the voyagers on the sea of life, whether they survive the trials of life or succumb to them, to fix their gaze upon the supernatural sphere of being and advance steadily towards it to liberate their souls from the bondage of the past and the future:

> Not fare well,
> But forward, voyagers[95].

This spiritual advancement is distinct from the well-being of body and mind arising from material prosperity and success. It is a rose to be picked from thorns, a bliss to be attained through sweat, tears and blood.

IV

In the lyrical fourth movement the poet invokes Virgin Mary, the regent of the poem, which is concerned with the total submission

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95. Idem.

of human will to the will of God:

> Lady, whose shrine stands on the promontory,
> Pray for all those who are in ships, those
> Whose business has to do with fish . ...[96]

She is the "Lady" who gave birth to the Saviour to redeem the sinful mankind from total death. She is the eternal mediatrix who intercedes for the pilgrim soul before the throne of God. She is also one " 'who walked, between the violet and the violet' — at once the 'figlia del tuo figlio', Queen of Heavens, and one's earthly intercessor and means of salvation, found wherever the spirit can know and chose her"[97].

Her shrine stands on a promontory, a junction of earth and water or a point of intersection of time with Eternity. The shrine is above the flux and convulsions of the destructive waves, which dash against its base and recoil from it ineffectually. She is prayed to by sea-faring men as Stella Maris, the Star of the sea and in the first the sea-faring men are clearly categorized.

Dante describes Virgin Mary as Figlia del tuo figlio, "daughter of thy own son", daughter of God who conceived godhead. As the mother of Christ crucified she acquires the title of Mater Dolorosa, the "sorrowing mother", a patron of those anxious and worried women whose sons and husbands go on voyages and do not return.

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96. Ibid., p. 189.

97. Philip Wheel Wright, "Eliot's philosophical Themes", T.S. Eliot: A Study of His writings by several Hands, op. cit., p. 105.

She is the "Queen of Heaven" as her son, Christ, rose from his sepulchre after — his crucifixion and burial and ascended to Heaven. The Church offers the Easter prayers to her as the "Queen of Heaven".

The blessed Lady is implored to pray for those sailors who died at the sea. The dead sailors are those whose naked bodies were cast on the sandy shore; and those who were destroyed by the fatal touch of the caressing waves; and those whose lifeless bodies were sucked into the bottomless abyss and found a watery grave, and lastly those who sank into the dark depth along with the sinking ship. The sailors who die and sink to the bottom of the sea are beyond the reach of "the sea bell's perpetual angelus"; that is "the calamitous annunciations", warnings of death and dangers sounded by sea bells.

But "angelus" is also the prayer in the Church to commemorate the great "Annunciation" made to Mary, and her unreserved submission to the will of God brings in the overtone of the way for conquest of death and time. The last line lends an emphatic justification to the poet's choice of Virgin Mary as the regent of this poem of sea and sea-farers. The great "Annunciation" reached her and she responded to it fittingly. So man who sails on the sea of life hears the perpetual warning of death and danger, to which the only effective human response is the submission of man's will to the will of God. Humility is, therefore, the only fruitful weapon to defend man against the tyranny of time and the sting of death.

V

In the fifth movement the main idea of the poem, and indeed of the four poems, namely, the way of transcending the tyranny of time and discovering a meaning in history, personal and racial, has been brought to a climax and satisfactorily resolved for the faithful Christians in particular and readers of other persuasions or no persuasion, in general. Spiritual liberation from the bondage of the world of flux and enchanment of past and future woven into the human flesh is experienced through the perception of "the intersection of the temporal and the timeless", which is the still point round which the world wheels and whirls. In terms of the Christian belief, the permanent symbol of this intersection is Incarnation, the coming of Christ to the earth as a mortal man to suffer and die for the redemption of the "seeds of Adam". However, this Incarnation is not a mere abstraction or ideal dream, but a possibility within the reach of man.

But man has always been a victim of the pride of intellect and irrepressible curiosity. So he has resorted to numerous devices and practices, ranging from primitive magic to the scientific and clinical studies of psychoanalysts and psychiatrists. All his curiosity, however, has proved an alluring mirage, a vain pursuit of mere illusions, while the true way of humility and spiritual discipline was lying all the time open before him. For this the poet begins the movement with a starting drop from the prayer to the Blessed Virgin into a satiric exposure of false witness:

> 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[98];

The modern world is the world of make - believe, discord and confusion. The Word is to be born anew in this world. This is Eliot's depiction of the "modern mind", a mind enveloped by the temporal and the fleeting and without "the historical sense".

In the above quotation, "To communicate with Mars" denotes disaster; and conversing with spirits would mean a lack of communication with the real Spirit, leading to tragic consequences. However, the Annunciation keeps recurring, as the timeless enters time because of the constant presence of the Holy spirit at every point of time:

> ... But to apprehend
> The point of intersection of the timeless
> With time, is an occupation for the saint[99].

Against this the rest of the poem has been concerned with time present and time future where the poet reflects on the various ways in which palmists and clairvoyants probe into the past or future. By contrast, the apprehension of eternity in time is the vocation of the saint through "a life time's death in love/Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender"[100]. It is an extreme form of humility

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98. CPP$_2$, 189.
99. Ibid., pp. 189-90.
100. Ibid., p. 190.

for "he attributes a heroic purity of selflessness to the saint that he does not claim for himself"[101].

As the realization of the supreme reality, "The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation", is sporadic and momentary, it must be sustained by prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action. One may note that Eliot's emphasis on the doctrine of the Incarnation was a reaction against the 19th century's romantic heresies which welcomed great men as saviours. It is in the Incarnation of Christ that the very existence of man begins to have an eternal value, reconciling the otherwise irreconciliable opposites — death and lasting life, time and eternity, the flux and the stillness:

> Here the impossible union
> Of spheres of existence is actual,
> Here the past and future
> Are conquered, and reconciled[102].

The poet has not only found redemption but he has also known that the entire human race will find its meaning and reconciliation in eternal time. Here the opinion of Thomas R. Rees deserves mention: "The last moment in the garden, the great moments of history, the poet's struggle for existence against the erosion of time — all will be preserved in the poet's immortal memory, for Christ has come with

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101. F.R. Leavis, The Living Principle 'English' as Discipline of Thought (New York University Press, 1975), p. 246.

102. CPP., p. 190.

his promise of redemption, and the mind embracing these memories will be redeemed in eternity"[103].

The determination to achieve redemption must be unstinted, a condition of magnanimous simplicity —"costing not less than everything" in the words of "Little Gidding". As Krishna has taught let there be right action, independent of"fruits" and freed thereby from servitude to past and future. The heart must be purified in order to see God. It is an uphill task for people of this vacillating world but made possible through the operation of Grace:

> We, content at the last
> If our temporal reversion nourish
> (Not too far from the yew-tree)
> The life of significant soil[104].

Here A.D. Moddy comments that the nourishing of the significant soil "is to attach a value to living and dying in time beyond the mere dust, as in the end of 'Burnt Norton' and beyond the ashes in the earth of 'East Coker' "[105]. The yew-tree is always close at hand: it should be one's concern to cultivate and set in order the land on which it grows. This is the means, the only means which must necessarily entail constant striving to free one's self from the shackles of time and to accept one's destiny to live in time, "Not too far from the yew-tree" of immortality. "The life of significant

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103. The Technique of T.S. Eliot : A Study of the Orchestration of Meaning in Eliot's Poetry (Paris: Monton, the Hague, 1974), p. 345.

104. CPP., p. 190.

105. Thomas Stearns Eliot Poet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 237.

soil" is more than "the corn", and recalls the reference in the important passage in the third movement about right action which "shall fruitify in the lives of others".

Just as in "East Coker" with its earth imagery, the concluding lines, as if in preparation for "The Dry Salvages", were about water, so at the end of this poem about the sea and the river, there is a shift to earth imagery in preparation for 'Little Gidding" — though it is to be an earth transfigured by pentecostal fire.

Little Gidding

The poem is named after a small country Church beside a farm which is on the site of an earlier manor house, a little north of London, in Huntingdonshire. Little Gidding, Church and manor, was the location in the seventeenth century of one of the most unusual ventures in the spiritual life ever known in Christianity. To this place, Nocholas Ferrar (1531-1637), "One of the most saintly men that has ever adorned the Church of England" withdrew in 1626 from a busy and highly successful life in London to form, with some thirty of his relations, adults and children, a religious community devoted to a life of "waiting upon God" in worship and meditation. Eliot visited this place on one winter day to offer his prayer. And it is this place which fires the imagination of the poet to write a poem to sum up and complete his meditations on "what might have been and what has been", placing his personal history within the context of the history of his adopted country. The poem was to be

about 'now and England' "[106].

"Little Gidding" refers to the day of the Pentecost, or Whit Sunday, which celebrates the appearance of the Holy Ghost, third person of the Blessed Trinity, descended on the Apostles in the form of flaming tongues of fire. The Pentecost fulfills Christ's promise that he would intercede with the Father to send the Comforter to be with Christ's disciples after his death. "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them"[107], so that fire becomes at once comfort and fulfilment.

The main element that permeats the poem through and through is fire, a complex and ambivalent symbol. In The Waste Land fire is a destructive symbol of passion in which the whole creation is burning, but in the present poem its counterpart is the fire emitted by "the dark dove" from the Heaven upon the Earth. This destructive flame is contrasted with the purgatorial fire of suffering which drives out the passionate flame that sets the body and mind on fire. This purgatorial fire melts into the alter fire or pentecostal fire, reminding man of the love of God as the only remedy against the torturing flames of Hell. And finally the flame of divine love blends with the multifloliate Rose in Dante's Paradiso.

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106. Helen Gardner, The composition of the Four Quartets (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 58.

107. Acts, 2:3.

I

The first movement presents the moment of illumination, of incarnation in the life of a pilgrim who is on his way to a house of God. The poem is deeply rooted in a definite place and time yet everything is transfigured into something eternal by the pentecostal light.

The movement begins with the following lines that describe the winter landscape:

> Midwinter spring is its own season
> Sempiternal though sodden towards sundown,
> Suspended in time, between pole and tropic[108].

This transfiguration resulting from the reconciliation of the opposites has made the scene a part of the pattern of the timeless. So it has been called "sempiternal" or eternal. Besides, the scene is suspended in time, between "pole and tropic" which means that the moment is outside the "flux" of time, a symbol of the soul "suspended between life and death, neither flesh nor fleshless". It also symbolises that spiritual state when the opposites are blended and reconciled, as the short winter day is brightest with frost and fire (Sun's blaze) and the brief sun blazes on the ice "on pond and ditches" and the light mirrored in water creates a glare in the early afternoon that dazzles the eyes of the human observer and renders them blind. One may contrast this light with the darkness

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108. CPP., p. 191.

of the three earlier quartets, it may also refer "to the blinding light, increasing in intensity, as Dante ascends the Mount of Purgatory and then through the successive heavens to the final brightness of the vision of God"[109].

This naturalistic description gives the readers a faint idea as to what happens in the cold heart as it is invaded by the Holy Spirit with many tongues of fire. The heart must be "cold", dead to worldly pleasures and carnal appetites, if it is to respond to the warmth of love which the spirit radiates : Describing the quality and effect of this blinding glare the poet remarks that it has a glow more intense than "blaze of branch and brazier", "Branch" here refers to "a golden bough growing on a tree in a dark wood" described by Virgil in his Aeneid (VI).

The next passage begins with an alternative season for the journey to Little Gidding, a time when the country side is beautiful in a different way: "... If you came this way in may time, you would find the hedges/White again, in May, with voluptuary sweetness"[110]. It leads one from vision to reality. One can almost see the place as the poet describes it:

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109. Philip R. Headings, T.S. Eliot (New York : Twyane Publisher, Inc., 1964), p. 137.

110. CPP., p. 191.

> ... When you leave the rough road
> And turn behind the pig-sty to the dull facade
> And the tombstone[111].

This reminds one of the ravages wrought by Cromwell's men at Little Gidding. The recollection of Charles I who came to Little Gidding after his defeat at Naseby deserves mention : after his defeat and humilation, he learnt the valuable lessons of humility and love so often generated in the Christian tradition in the fall of pride and power. An eminent critic writes that in a "more profound sense the humility Eliot prescribes arises from a loss even more complete, of continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality"[112].

Then the quiet, intense solemnity of the sequestered Church of Little Gidding inspires the poet. So, in a reverential tone, he speaks of man's inevitable and ultimate return to a religious conviction and God:

> You are not here to verify,
> Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
> Or carry report. You are here to kneel
> Where prayer has been valid[113].

One may note that prayer in Ash-Wednesday is a conscious observance of the instructions laid down in St. Swithurn's prayer book and other Catholic manuals, but in "Little Gidding", Eliot observes prayer

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111. Ibid, pp. 191-92.
112. David Ward, op. cit., p. 269.
113. CPP., p. 192.

to be "more/Than an order of words, the conscious occupation / Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying"[114]. It is really a whole hearted and complete surrender to God, a dedication of every hour of life to the contemplation of His greatness in contradistinction with human littleness, and, above all, a silent spiritual communion with the devout dead who have lived, worked, prayed and knelt upon the holy ground : "the communication/Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living"[115]. The dead speak of the Word and for the Word "their communication is their 'one action', perfected and fructifying in the lives of others"[116]. The Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles as tongues of fire on Pentecost day continues to descend on the Church even today. Thus a place like Little Gidding is symbolically a point of intersection of time and timeless moments.

II

The poet has returned from the point of intersection of time with timeless moments to the world in time in this movement of "Little Gidding". Here he contemplates the scene of death wrought by the destructive elements — air, water earth and fire that ultimately disintegrates by contact with another. The poet has dealt with the emptiness of mundane things and the hollowness of life for those who have no other concern than the temporal:

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114. Idem.
115. Idem.
116. A.D. Moddy, p. 245.

Ash on an old man's sleeve
Is all the ash the burnt roses leave
Dust in the air suspended
Marks the place where a story ended[117].

The first image, it appears, present an old man poking his garden bonfire, as the poet reminds that, like the house timbers of "East Coker", the roses of "Burnt Norton" end in ash. The puff of dust is an allusion to the Ascension when the Lord returned to His Heavenly Father and a cloud hid Him from the view of His disciples. One may think that Eliot was much concerned in this poem with the scene of the war-stricken areas of London when the clouds of dust marked the points of destruction where houses had been hit. It is evident that the background of this section is that of the apparent collapse of civilization, the destruction and desolation of war. There is also, a more immediate reference to the ruin of the Chapel at Little Gidding, the drenched and smoking ruins of a London Church and to the destruction of the values and beliefs for which they stood once.

The concluding part of this movement marks a transition from speculation upon the death of the elements foreboding the dissolution of the modern civilization to a concrete dramatic situation fit for the effective enforcement of the lesson which man must learn to escape the burning flames of Hell. The time is the "uncertain hour", before the advent of morning, which seems to be endless, troubled by the recurrence of the air-raids. And the poet writes,

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117. CPP., p. 192.

> After the dark dove with the flickering tongue
> Had passed below the horizon of his homing
> While the dead leaves still rattled on like ...
> Before the urban dawn wind unresisting[118].

The "dark dove" is a complex phrase. Eliot has apparently referred to the German war plane Taube which in English rendering becomes "Dove". It also reminds one of the Biblical Dove bringing down the fire of Heaven for the transfiguration of man.

The opening words of the Bhagavad Gita describe the field of battle as the field of religious speculation or introspection. This is the situation in one of the war ravaged spots in London when the poet has caught sight of a figure walking, "loitering and hurried". The figure is a compound ghost, composed of the traits of a good many poets, native and continental whose presence are felt by the poet in his bones. As the poet asks the ghost to speak even though his speech may not be understood and remembered by the poet, he speaks about the kinship between himself and his interlocutor which is to refine the current common speech and make it a fit instrument for the expression of the reality of life and truth of human nature.

The entire speech on unredeemed old age, the last phase of a life lived purely on the naturalistic plane, is fraught with bitter irony. Old age is the time when body and soul begin to fall apart and "the final consummation" is within sight; the senses fail and become cold and life can offer no pleasure to enchant them.

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118. Ibid., p. 193.

Desires and appetites tease them but friction does not produce any heat in the cold heart, which finds no promise in the shows of things. Secondly, old age also means intellectual decline and inertness. The old man is over conscious of the follies of man, and is to railing at them, but his spleen is impotent. He can fret and fume only, as he has no strength to face them actively —— "to take up sword against a sea of trouble".

The ghost, therefore, concludes with a solemn warning that the spirit of the old man is doomed to remain tied up to the burning wheel of the painful remembrance of things past, turning round and from one wrong to another. The only way to redemption and restoration to health and tranquility is to refine the fire of repentance, prayers and spiritual discipline which consumes all the stains of sin and provides a centre of stability round which the soul moves with measured motion like a dancer. Only the person who humbly leans on God will penetrate the mystery of suffering. Only such a person will become strong in the spirit to immerse himself in suffering in union with the crucified Lord. This is the point where humanity touches divinity : suffering is a sacrament. John Ferguson opines that it "is divine and holy since Christ suffered and we unite our pain to his and through his to others in a dynamic network of anguish"[119]. It is through suffering that one may attain one's redemption and that of the entire creation. With these parting words, uttered by a tongue touched with the Pentecostal fire, the ghost faded as the day breaks and the Siren sounded "all clear".

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119. The Place of Suffering (London: James Clarke and Co., 1972), p. 128.

III

The third movement carries the idea of redemption forward in a released, discursive and abstract style. But as the poet moves deeper into the heart of his argument and presses into service the personal experiences of the old mystics, the manner acquires a lyrical beauty and penetrating authenticity of tone as well as verbal felicity.

The poet here states that there are three conditions of the soul, deceptively alike, but completely different from each other, like flowers of different shapes blooming on the same hedgegrow. The first is attachment to self and to things and to persons in which a person is guided by self-interest and looks upon persons and things as instruments of his own well-being and pleasure and profit. Life can be lived on this plane with a good deal of fervour fret and excitement. Detachment, opposed to attachment, does not imply self-love, but altruism, in which man is actively engaged in activities, conducive to the betterment, prosperity and welfare of others. It is a life of self-sacrifice for the common good and may be described as a life of expansion as distinguished from the life of contraction or self-centredness. In between the two lies indifference, apathy towards person and things, towards self-satisfaction as well as the good of others, which is a symptom of world-weariness, of disillusionment and lassitude of body and mind. It is a mark of death as the first two, attachment and detachment, are marks of life and vitality, as they prick man to move forward and never stop. The attached and the detached are men immersed. To be immersed is to be either completely engrossed or totally withdrawn. " 'To care and not

to care' is a great school for the consciousness because it requires intense effort, constant attention and awareness"[120]. Eliot, too, considers tetachment "a form of love, and of an expanded love freed by the exercise of memory from desire ..."[121]

> For liberation - not less of love but expanding
> Of love beyond desire, and so liberation
> From the future as well as the past[122].

In this expansion the mind of man transends the limits of attachment to past and future, transforming personal desire into general love. The poet has clarified this point with the help of an example. A man may be attached to a special field of action at a particular place. But this attachment may be gradually expanded into the love for the whole country. This expansion, of course, does not mean the diminution of the original love for one's action or di indifference towards it. It is only sub-ordination of sometning small and narrow to something large, wide and more important. Personal love becomes a part of patriotism and is, thus, reduced to its proportions.

The contemplation of history through the spectacles of attachment and personal desire tends to enslave the mind to the past, but its perusal in a spirit of detachment, with an open, impartial and enlightened mind, conduces to mental freedom. Through the operation of detachment the persons and places to which one was excessively

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120. Constance de Massirovich, On the Four Quartets of T. S. Eliot (1953; rpt. London: Vincecent Stuart, 1965), p. 59.

121. A.D. Moody, op. cit., p. 254.

122. CPP., p. 195.

attached, gradually melt away along with the narrow self which prompted and put them into operation. So man should not deny earthly love but try to transform it into the higher love of God. An eminent critic observes that "the earthly love is purged of its dross and it is redeemed from fire by fire' — from the fire of lust by the purgatorial fire"[123], to become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern".

The poet then uses the words of Dame Julian of Norwich, a fourteenth century mystic, who recorded her visions and her soul's dialogues with Christ in her Revelations of Divine Love:

> Sin is Behovely, but
> All shall be well, and
> All manner of things shall be well[124].

Sin which here means the incapacity of man to escape from that part of his life which leads to suffering, is a necessary part of the existence of all men. "Sin is Behovely" because "it is the preliminary step in the building up of personalities"[125].

Dame Julian was perflexed with the vexed problem, which harasses the mind of every lover and devotee of God, the problem, namely, of the justification of sin and evil in the universe created by God, the supreme embodiment of love, justice and mercy. So Christ said in a vision that sin is an essential part of the pattern of the

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123. D.E.S. Maxwell, op. cit., p. 178.

124. CPP., p. 195.

125. Fayek M. Ishak, The Mystical Philosophy of T.S. Eliot (New Heaven : College and University Press, 1970), p. 56.

universe, "but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well". The Christian argument refers to the Fall of Adam as the first cause of sin in the world which God created in six days and found to be good. But God in His infinite love for the weak mankind sent down His own son in a human form to wash away the stain of sin with his own blood. Dame Julian tells: "Because of his tender love for all those who are to be saved our good Lord comforts us at once and sweetly as if to say, 'It is true that sin is the cause of all this pain; but it is all going to be alright; it is all going to be alright; everything is to be alright"[126]. The redemption thus effected through the love of God has transformed the transgression and fall of man into a happy Fall O felix Culpa.

This fact lends justification to the poet's interest in the dead men associated with Little Gidding. Man has inherited something equally from both the victorious and the defeated parties in the civil war. For they both have a symbolic significance:

> 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.[127]

It means that the human enmities and divisions are ultimately "folded into the unity of death". They are momentary eddies on the surface of a little life, which is rounded with sleep. Eliot, again,

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126. Revelations of Divine Love, trans. Clifton Walters (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 212.

127. CPP., p. 196.

quotes the words of Dame Julian on the love of God which resolves all contradictions and fills man with hope and joy. Christ assures her: "I am ground of thy beseeching; ; first it is my will that thou have it; and after, I make thee to will it; and since I make thee to beseech it and thou beseechest it, how should it then be that thou shoudst not have thy beseeching?"[128]

The poet, however, underlines the basic condition necessary for such a fruition; it is the purification of will, the purgation of all that is selfish, egoistic and wordly. It is the outcome of complete surrender to the will of God. When the devotee offering prayer to God is free from all desires and motive of profit, reward or advantage accuring to him from his prayer, he has attained "the purification of the motive" and in this spiritual state any desire arising in his heart during the prayer is prompted by the will of God and is sure to be granted.

IV

This movement of "Little Gidding" clearly reminds one of the devotional poems of George Herbert who was well acquainted with the inhabitants of Little Gidding. Here the poet seems to strike the kind of religious idea that was peculiar to Herbert whose poems were a blend of erudition and serene humility, passionate emotion and gentle acceptance of fear and doubt resolving into complete acquiescence:

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128. Dame Julian, loc. cit.

The dove descending breaks the air ...
The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre —
To be redeemed from fire by fire[129].

In the second movement, The "dark dove" is the harbinger of death; the dove of the Holy Spirit is the bearer of life. The dove of heaven brings the flame of purifying fire, the fire of liberation and fortitude, a dove still terrible, but at least to be recognized as Love. This lyrical movement introduces the Holy Spirit as the corresponding movement of "Burnt Norton", "East Coker", and "The Dry Salvages" that deal with God, the Creator, Christ the Redemmer and the Virgin Mary. The fire of God's redeeming love alone can burn away the dross of man's worldliness and sinfulness. "To be redeemed from fire by fire" refers to the choice man makes between a surrender to the all consuming fire of God's love and the miserable fires of his self-love and egotism."This is the moment of action — the one right action, which is every moment, and the moment at once of time and of eternity — which the whole work has been affirming and striving towards"[130]. So one should be ready to forgo nothing less than everything surrendering one's will to that of the divine for it entails the annihilation of the whole self; a losing oneself in that of the divine self that one may find oneself whole and entire.

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129. CPP., p. 196.
130. A.D. Moody, op. cit., p. 256.

The hope of redemption from the pyre or bone-fire is to give oneself upto it as to the fire of love:

> Who then devised the torment? Love.
> Love is the unfamiliar Name
> Behind the hands that wove
> The intolerable shirt of flame
> Which human power cannot remove[131].

Love, "the unfamiliar Name" is the driving force that motivates the sacrificial process of purification. Dame Julian in her fourteenth Revelation concerning prayer heard these words: "I am ground of thy be seeching". As she states, she keenly tried for fifteen years to find out the meaning of what she had heard and seen. She was at last answered : "You would know our Lord's meaning in this thing. Know it well. Love was his meaning. Who showed it to you? Love. What did he show you? Love. Why did he show it? For love. Hold on to this and you will know and understand love more and more"[132]. To hear these words uttered in the stillness of man's heart is to know the real terror. It is because they, like any human love, requires a commitment of his very being. But, unlike human love, their demands on man is an infinite one. He is asked to surrender himself utterly to those divine hands, to withhold nothing. He is afraid of such a love:

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131. CPP, p. 196.

132. Julian of Norwich, Revelation of Divine Love, op. cit., p. 212.

For though I knew His love who followed,
Yet was I sore adread,
Lest, having Him, I must have nought beside[133].

Love is God. It is this love that asks man to die to everything but itself, to be willing to abandon every possession, every security, every earthly thing and to leap into the dark from which God calls to him, asking him to seek Him in whom alone the human heart finds its rest, life and fulfilment.

This Love is the main idea of this movement. For a religiously oriented view of life, this reality is Love; and man must add, to live is quite simply to be capable of loving. Man cannot help loving; his choice is between the fire of self-love and the fire of the love of God. Dame Julian, St. John of the Cross and the other Christian mystics generally declare the torments "woven into the weakness of the changing body" to be the creative work of divine love. The "intolerable shirt of flame" which Hercules put on unconsciously was prepared for him by the human passions of love and jealousy; his only way to remove it was to commit himself to the flames of his own funeral pyre. The use of the word "pyre" may also reminds one of Dido's self-immolation in the fire which saved her from the torments of the thwarted passion. The presence of the Nessus shirt and the inability of human power to remove it are indicative of the necessity of suffering in life for

We only live, only suspire
Consumed by either fire or fire"[134].

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133. Francis Thompson, The Hound of Heaven, ed. George Kaitholil (Allahabad: St. Paul Society, 1972), p. 17.

134. Ibid., p. 196.

Sometimes God's love envelops the soul as an "intolerable shirt of flame" which cannot be removed without divine assistance. So man's choice lies "through accepted pain, through the recognition of a need to 'live' or 'suspire', like the small souls in Dante's purgatory by a choice between the fire of destruction, which is one with that of passionate self-affirmation, and the burning away of spiritual impediment of self-love on an accepted sacrificial pyre"[135]. William Law an eighteenth century English mystic, provides an illuminating commentary on this lyrical movement : "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 strength of the soul is sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb (Christ), 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 those flames of love that wait about the throne of God"[136].

V

The fifth and final movement of "Little Gidding" takes up one of the basic ideas of the whole Four Quartets, namely, the equation of beginning and end, life and death, which operates alike in life and art and reaches its point of culmination in the concept of God as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of all things. The most obvious illustration of this idea, of course, is the Christian concept of the process of life as the process of death,

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135. Derek Traversi, Op. cit., p. 207.

136. Cited by Helen Gardner in The Art of T.S. Eliot, Op. cit., p. 182.

and death, the end of one existence, is the beginning of another life. So the word "end" in the conclusion of the opening sentence may mean the goal, final purpose or objective towards which man directs his life.

The dictum may be applied to a poem an artefact, which is a pattern of words and sentences, right words in their right places and each word significant in itself, but also contributing to the meaning and significance of the whole verbal design of which it is a unit or constituent. Every phrase and every sentence when completed and placed at its proper position loses its individual isolation and becomes an inseparable part of a pattern:

> Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,
> Every poem an epitaph[137].

A poem is an epitaph of its composer in the sense that its composition is a continual self- sacrifice on the part of its author, who surrenders his private self, his personality, to the larger personality of the dead authors composing the poetic tradition which transends the barriers of place, nationality and time.

This principle holds good in respect of life also, where every action and motion apparently significant of life is ultimately an advance towards the final end, common to all earthly things, namely death. But "man dies in commitment of himself to the divine

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137. CPP., p. 197.

incursion which is a spiritual impregnation by the living word, the divine seed, and thus becomes a partner in the work of the creative God"[138]. Thus, the silent poem and the accomplished action acquire their significance in the eternal scheme of things and become timeless symbols of contemplation and right action of the soul in union with God. A.D. Moody writes : "And that is what the poet would have 'England' to be now — 'a people ... redeemed from time' because wholly concentrated in his 'timeless moments', and a community because in communion with God"[139].

This leads one to the single, isolated but impressive line, "With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this calling", which is a direct quotation from the second chapter of The Cloud of Unknowing, mentioned in the introduction to this movement. An understanding of these words in their original context will clarify their meaning in the context of Eliot's poem, and their function as a link or bridge between the two parts of the movement.

The Cloud of Unknowing was written by a spiritual teacher for his disciple, a young man who has adopted the life of a solitary contemplative, "the singular vocation of anchorite" It outlines the stages of progress in this discipline, described as the four ways of living, Common, Special, Singular and Perfect. Three of these begin and end here, but the fourth begins on this earth, ends in heaven with the attainment of beatitude. The preceptor here exhorts

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138. Harry Blamires, Op. cit., p. 176.
139. Op. cit., p. 258.

the novice to remember that God, in His love and mercy, has kindled in his soul a desire for this spiritual ascent and pulled him up to the third stage. He concludes his exhortation with a stirring reminder to the novice:

> Look up now, thou weak wretch, and see what thou art, and what hast thou deserved, thus to be called by our Lord? What weary wretched heart and sleeping in sloth is that, which is not wakened with the drawing of this love and the voice of this calling"[140].

The "drawing" and the "calling", then, in "Little Gidding" are God's calling of a man to that transfigured state, the state of perfection, which may be begun in this life but which extend beyond it into "the bliss of heaven". Within Eliot's poem, one is to see the poet's apprehensions of "timeless moments", whether in the garden at Burnt Norton, negatively at East Coker, in the vision of "the ragged rock", the Dry Salvages, "in the restless waters", or on a winter's day visit to Little Gidding, as God "of his great mercy" calling and leading the poet "unto him". Out of this conviction, the assurance and tranquillity of the closing lines of the poem emerge.

The quotation explained above again throws an interesting light upon the meaning of the spiritual progress which Eliot has opposed to the scientific progress which Renaissance humanism initiated, when it replaced the Augustinian concept that God is the

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140. The second chapter of The Cloud of Unknowing, op. cit., passim.

measure of all things by the classical concept that man is the measure of all things. This involves man's effort to conquer and subdue matter for his own comfort and convenience, and treasure his knowledge as the instrument of his power. This is the horizontal progress, advance in a straight line which has brought man away from God and nearer to the dust. Spiritual progress, on the contrary, is vertical and God-ward, and its basis is humility and simplicity rather than intellectual pride and arrogance. Progress along this path is possible only when man, in full recognition of his own weakness, relies solely on the strength, love and mercy of God and submits to the upward pull and the divine call "to look up, not down".

This is the path of spiritual exploration, as contradistinguished from the physical and intellectual exploration. For this exploration the poet asks man to direct his ceaseless effort:

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time[141].

This kind of exploration is a homeward journey, a movement back to the home from which man was banished for the sin of Adam. He has remained in banishment so long and drunk such a deep draught of the worldly life that the cannot recognize his old home. However, through spiritual exploration, he can purify the vision of his soul and recognize the place, with all its value and significance, as it

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141. CPP., p. 197.

were, for the first time. This is his entry into the first Garden, Eden, where man once lived within the daily sight of God's glory, and its earthly equivalent is the rose garden of childhood innocence.

The "perpetual possibility" must be converted into a permanent possession through spiritual discipline so that the rose garden may become his first garden. The last thing left to discover for man, the crowning achievement of all his exploration, is the discovery of the place which was the beginning of his history, namely, the Garden which God planted for man. Voyaging along "the longest" river of life man must reach its source, the childhood mankind, and then he will come within the hearing distance of the hidden water-fall, which Henry Vaughan, a 17th century mystic poet, has described very vividly in his poem, "The waterfall", flowing out of God's throne.

On reaching the home, the archetypal garden, one can be with children present in the apple tree, as a token of the validity of Christ's promise that the kingdom of heaven is meant for those who are pure and simple like children. The image of children recalls the picture of the rose garden in "Burnt Norton" symbol of the childhood of the individuals: "Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,/Hidden excitedly, containing laughter"[142].

But the bird also warns that human kind cannot bear very much reality. So the glimpse of this earthly paradise is a rare experience of man, which comes suddenly and takes him unawares in

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142. Ibid., p. 172.

the brief moment of spiritual tranquillity, between "the two waves of the sea", that is, the past and the present, the memories and desires which occupy man's mind for the most part of his life.

However, the enchainment of the past and future does not permit any fuller apprehension of these moments of illumination, which are handsome anticipations of the happy "garden", the ultimate end of human exploration. After this disciplined quest when man reaches his goal, with his vision purified and undimmed and his ear sharpened in sensitivity, he is able to see clearly and understand fully what was only "the unattended/Moment, the moment in and out of time/The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of Sunlight"[143]. The hidden music unheard or half heard before now becomes clearly audible and the experience in the rose-garden is now not the intense moment isolated, with no before and after, but a life time burning in every moment. This is the fruit of the saintly discipline; the fleeting point of light, flashing and fading quickly, becomes the perpetual light of the soul; the spirit attains to a condition of "complete simplicity", different from the natural simplicity of a child, because it is not something "given and taken", but something acquired by sacrificing everything else in life, by "a lifetime's death in love/Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender"[144]. Through this discipline man discovers the truth of Christ's promise to Dame Julian that "all shall be well", that is, human life with all its stains and lapses, sin and evil, passion and lust, is capable of being purged and

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143. Ibid., p. 190.

144. Idem.

redeemed by the love of God. This supreme reconciliation is described by Eliot as the blending of fire and rose, both of which are frequently — used symbols of complex and rich connotations, which range from the earthly to the heavenly love.

The condition of complete simplicity attained through spiritual exploration in response to the divine call and upward pull, is the condition of fire and fire, as St. John of the Cross has put it, is the best symbol of love, because "it ever rises upward with the desire to be absorbed in the centre of the sphere". It means that the worldly fire of desire and lust, which appeared to the Buddha as well as St. Augustine, as the destructive flame enveloping the fallen man, and the incendiary tongues of fire emitted by the dark dove are finally merged into the sacred flame of the Holy Ghost and become one party as they are "in-folded into the corwned knot of fire". The "corwned knot of fire" is also "a Trinity-knot, being the Sailor's knot of three stands". Trinity is obviously the term signifying what Donne has called the "three-personed God, God, the Father, God the son and the Holy Ghost, which is the Dove descending with tongues of fire. The author of the Cloud of Unknowing is also convinced that man's simplicity and humility can ultimately knit the ghostly knot of burning love between man and his God.

Again, "in-folded" is connected with Dante's paradisal Rose which is the ultimate analogue for the "crowned knot of fire" in which the human and the divine are united together. Heraclitus used fire as a symbol of God, its light being the effluence of that divine love which pervades Heaven and "kindles the universe" created by Him.

In Paradiso Dante describes the vision of Heaven as a place where the presence of God is constantly felt in the light which pervades it. In this all pervasive light he could see the countless multitude of saints and blessed spirits, in folded, as it were in a snow-white rose.

It is now apparent that the Four Quartets is a religious poem, and is concerned with the discovery of meaning in a "twittering world", the discovery of peace in the flux of time, where "houses rise and fall", the discovery of joy among "the strained time-ridden faces", the discovery of God "here, now, always". Eliot admirably sums up his thematic concerns, when he remarks that the task of each age, each art, each individual, is to try to adjust "the delicate relation of the Eternal to the Transient"[145]. In his working out of the central theme of the Four Quartets, he enriches the statement of what appears to be his own religious experience with the teaching of the past, in particular that of St. John of the Cross, a Spanish mystic of the sixteenth century, and of an English mystic of the fourteenth century, Dame Julian of Norwich.

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145. The Criterion, October, 1932.