Dan Hassin

11/13/14

# Between Two Worlds: Mysticism in *Four Quartets*

T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* is a masterpiece set of four poems, each with five movements that are thematic, cohesive, self-referential, and together embody the interplay of a halo of concepts that dialogue intellectually and spiritually with the reader. The text wrestles with the traps, downfalls, and limitations of attempting to fulfill both of these human aspects – intellect and spirit – contemplating the existential questions of finding truth, love, and peace against the currents of time. The nature of time for Eliot begins undeniable and unredeemable, impenetrable to restoring the past nor affecting future, and almost never aiding in human pursuits. But like the cluster of rocks of *The Dry Salvages*, time can both reduce unsuspecting ships into wreckage and also guide them to shore. *Four Quartets* looks to do the latter – to redeem time. We shall see that this cannot be done via *escape* to 'the timeless moment,' the basis for Eliot's mystical experiences, as they are merely ephemeral glimpses and the paradoxes that arise when attempting to reconcile them are unending – even "at the still point, there the dance is," for instance (BN II). Liberation therefore relies on engagement with – not escape from – time, occurring somewhere *between* the timeless stillness and the active present and therein forming the relationship between human and divine, one and one's world. Thus, we shall see that Eliot's liberation is not "the still point of the turning world" (BN II), but the reconciliation, the coexistence, and eventual unity, of both the stillness and the turning.

While Eliot stated that in his poetics he stove for "poetry so transparent that in reading it we are intent on what the poetry points at, and not on the poetry, […] to get beyond poetry, as Beethoven, in his last works, strove to get beyond music," at times *Four Quartets* seems to do the direct opposite (Murray 17). G. Douglas Atkins felt that

> Eliot—at pranks, perhaps—sought to frustrate his reader, to embody a poetics of difficulty and adversity, to make his essay poem too strange for misunderstanding. That he was well aware of the likelihood and dangers of misappropriation and of accommodation appears, for instance, in his reiterated representation, in the work, of the slipperiness of words, of various enchantments, temptations, and seductions, and of man's tendency toward the one dimensional. (Atkins 2)

The struggle with the meaning of words, and as we shall see, with experiences in general, proves to be yet another theme of the *Quartets*. Eliot laments on the words of the poem itself, dialoguing with the reader and asking, for instance, whether or not to repeat or clarify certain ideas. In doing so, Eliot actively toys with his reader, drawing attention to and encouraging fixation upon the meanings or poetics of one passage in particular, after which the poem most often changes direction, either contradicting or bringing new meaning to this point or others. The reader-critic is constantly "seduced" by attempting to unify the poem piece by piece, and is exposed first-hand to one of the poem's key lessons:

> …our reading strategy is often implicitly progressive, linear, and piecemeal. Eliot thwarts this effort, no doubt intentionally. Words move in time, he insists, refusing to stay still and thus greatly complicating the task of understanding. In a very real way, Eliot teaches in and through the poem how to read it—reading this poem becoming, then, an analogue of the attempt to understand "the world." (Atkins 29)

In the reader's mind, the perpetually evolving and reshaping meanings of *Four Quartets* makes it essentially incomplete. But Eliot's recurring paradox is that its very incompleteness and openness *makes* it whole. Therefore, an attempt to fully comprehend and unify the *Quartets* may be a futile and misappropriated task, but the exploration of its various interconnected themes and motifs may perhaps elucidate Eliot's *process* of coming to understand himself, the world around him, and beyond.

Evidently, Eliot was greatly influenced by mystics such as Evelyn Underhill, St. John of the Cross, Julian of Norwich, and Heraclitus. While writing the *Quartets*, Eliot once remarked that "he was seeking to express equivalents for small experiences he had had, as well as for mystical insights derived from his reading" (Kramer 15). Certainly *Four Quartets* recalls several mystical experiences, but they are notably *not* his liberation. Nor are mystical experiences the core or focus of the *Four Quartets*. The work does not claim or advocate the life of the mystic, or one who is perpetually in state of unity and ecstasy. For Eliot, and most likely for most, mystical experiences inspire and illuminate, but in the end are "only hints and guesses" (DS V) as unity dissolves in multiplicity, or a "cloud pass[es], and the pool [is] empty" (BN I). It is difficult for Eliot to reconcile mysticism with being engaged in the world, as, in his own words, "I don't think I'm a mystic at all, though I have always been much interested in mysticism […] A great many people of sensibility have had some more or less mystical experiences. That doesn't make

them mystics. To be a mystic is a whole-time job–so is poetry" (Murray 1). The liberation that is carefully cultivated in *Four Quartets* is not in itself mystical, neither divine nor earthly, but as we'll see, relies in the coexistence, the co-fulfillment, of both.

The process of bifurcation and eventual resolution is a theme pervasive throughout the *Quartets*. We will begin with analysis of Eliot's main tormenting dichotomy – between time and the timeless, the mystical and the ordinary – and then examine the paradoxes that abound in the attempt for its resolution – the twofold fulfillment of intellect and desire. Finally, we'll see how Eliot finds liberation in the 'impossible' space between each dichotomy, uniting both desire and object as one.

**Reflections on Time and Memory: the 'Mystical' vs. the 'Ordinary'**

The discord between Eliot's mystical experiences and the banalities of ordinary life is the subject of many of the *Quartets*' expositions on time, usually found in the first and second movements of each one. Eliot feels "enchained" within time and is temporarily released via moments of "sudden illumination," (DS II) after which he struggles in attempting to reproduce ('redeem') the experiences via memory or spiritual practice.

In *Burnt Norton*, Eliot experiences an insight of "the still point of the turning world" – or the eternal, unchanging truth behind a world constantly in flux and changing in appearances through time (BN II). Outside of time, Eliot feels "inner freedom from the practical desire, / The release from action and suffering" of the "enchainment of past and future / Woven in the weakness of the changing body" (BN II). And where time seems to be the source of struggle, time is also crucial to the existence of the timeless moment of release and of consciousness in general – what would human consciousness be without memory of the past, without time? – "only in time can the moment […] be remembered; […] Only through time time is conquered" (BN II). Memory, consciousness's temporal faculty, seems then to play a crucial role in consciousness, that which means to "not be in time," according to Eliot (BN II). Here we encounter another bifurcation, a split between human consciousness of the present moment and the machinations of memory, including not only the memory of past situations but also the "speculation" of "what might have been" – the memory's application to the present moment – and therefore a look into the future with desire (BN I). The relationship of time and memory in regards to the present moment is revisited in the second movement of *The Dry Salvages*.

*The Dry Salvages* makes the analogy of the sea to time and the Dry Salvages (the group of rocks after which the poem is named) to memories of moments scattered throughout. 'Time past,' therefore, is not a linear progression for Eliot: "It seems, as one becomes older, / That the past has another pattern and ceases to be a mere sequence– / Or even development: the latter a partial fallacy / Encouraged by superficial notions of evolution, / Which becomes, in the popular mind, a means of disowning the past" (DS II). Ironically, that which necessarily *sourced* the present moment and its culminated conscious identity seems to alienate the individual and cause him or her to 'disown' it. What, then, can the past be if not "a mere sequence"? Perhaps, like the ocean, it is an expansive field, and navigable – interactive. Eliot says the following regarding the memory, which as we've seen, is to make a statement about the past: "The moments of […] sudden illumination– / We had the experience but missed the meaning, / And approach to the meaning restores the experience / In a different form, beyond any meaning / We can assign to happiness" (DS II). For Eliot, the recollection of memories necessarily blends with one's immediate experience, not fully recreating the past experience, but providing insight into one's present situation, an idea reminiscent of Kierkegaard's notion of "recollecting forward," or the "fare forward" refrain in the following movement (III). Here, however, the apparent duality between a recollection of a seemingly stable event and the ever-changing present – the past of so-called "mere sequence" and the "evolved," "developed," and Other present sense of self – is only explored. *Little Gidding*'s fifth movement later reveals this function of memory explicitly: "This is the use of memory: / For liberation — […] From the future as well as the past."

Eliot's mystical insight comes at the end of the movement in his statement "Time the destroyer is time the preserver" (DS II). He makes an analogy to the referent of the poem's title, seeing a rock of the Dry Salvages like the memory of a past experience: "On a halcyon day it is merely a monument" – on a good day, the past is a proud symbol of one's present achievement – "In navigable weather it is always a seamark / To lay a course by" – when action is needed, the past is called upon for better judgment – "but in the sombre season" – living without diligence or purpose – "Or the sudden fury" – when sudden, unanticipated circumstance strikes – "is what it always was" – a treacherous, "ragged rock," wrecking ships on their way to shore (DS II). Crucially, the outcome of each of these scenarios, whether the moment remembered is happy or agonizing, relies on the interpretation and then reapplication of the memory, but outside of judgment, they are all the same. A question of judgment implies a question of meaning, which

we've seen was the approach of conscious recollection of the past: "We […] missed the meaning, / And approach to the meaning restores the experience / In a different form, beyond any meaning / We can assign to happiness" (DS II). It is perhaps the intellectual recollection of an experience, with analysis and comparison to the current situation, which recreates it in an affective light, where one expected an intellectual, conceptual category. With this, we reach the next major bifurcation in the poem: the search for knowledge vs. wisdom, the 'common' vs. the 'particular' *logos*.

**The Intellect: Search for Truth**

The first of Heraclitus epigraphs at the beginning of *Four Quartets* highlights the dilemma of intellect: that although *logos* – the abstract notion of a universally true, ordering, absolute wisdom – is common, existing among everyone *a priori*, "we live as if by our own wisdom" (Kramer 27). Intellect is a fascinating aspect of human nature, as while practical, it also alienates humans from the rest of the world by allowing them to scrutinize it from a seemingly separate point of view. Heraclitus observes that individual wisdoms and intellects are the cause of this anguish, especially in conjunction with human proclivity to desire more and accumulate, as alienation accumulates with intellect. Eliot perceives the desire for individual wisdom as "voices of temptation," distracting away from the absolute wisdom: "The Word [logos] in the desert / Is most attacked by voices of temptation, […] The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera" (BN V). Eliot was very skeptical of the wisdom of others, which he saw as being held close to them like possessions, and ultimately detrimental to his own pursuit of the common *logos*: "What was to be the value of the long looked forward to, / Long hoped for calm, the autumnal serenity / And the wisdom of age? […] Do not let me hear / Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly, / Their fear of fear and frenzy, and their fear of possession, / Of belonging to another, or to others, or to God" (EC II). Rather, as we shall see, Eliot sees the intellect only truly being fulfilled through *humility*, feeling that "old men ought to be explorers," acknowledging that mystery still abounds behind every statement of individual wisdom (EC V).

Eliot discusses his own poetry – and thus his own individual wisdom – in relation to the great poets and philosophers before him in an analogy of war, surely reflective of the historical context of the piece. He laments that those before him have already 'conquered' the territories of knowledge he fights for: "And what is there to conquer / By strength and submission, has already

been discovered / Once or twice, or several times, by mean whom one cannot hope / To emulate–" but that truly there is no competition – only finding again for oneself what has been lost: "but there is no competition– / There is only the fight to recover what has been lost / And found and lost again and again" (EC V). Eliot himself is not outside of this process, finding meaning which must be found again by the reader. Therefore, as if a means for finding one's individual wisdom, he notes that whether something is gained or lost by the reader's interpretation is of no concern to the poet, as it is no longer the same wisdom – what matters to the poet is the attempt: "But perhaps neither gain nor loss. / For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business" (EC V).

Even finding meaning through direct experience, Eliot claims, is inadequate so long as the search is intellectual. In *East Coker*, Elliot is cautious about the meaning that can be derived from such experiences, claiming that knowledge – a set patterns perceived based on experience – is falsely grounded in that which is ever-subject to time and thus is ephemeral: "There is […] only a limited value / In the knowledge derived from experience. / The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies, / For the pattern is new in every moment" (EC II). His mystical insight shows him that "the only wisdom we can hope to acquire / Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless" (EC II). Eliot's use of the word *wisdom*, as opposed to his notions of ephemeral, falsified *knowledge*, reminds us that it is not truth-seeking like knowledge, but is rather an acknowledgement of the human limits of understanding, or, more precisely, the limits of the human act of understanding (as full 'understanding' is never possible).

The "wisdom of humility" is therefore a submission *to* time, rather than an attempt to transcend it in the search for meaning. Paradoxes abound here: as in the observations on memory in *Burnt Norton*, it is this very inextricability from time that makes the wisdom timeless (perhaps, in existing with time always), and is thus called "endless" much like *Burnt Norton*'s "still point." Moreover, no matter how much Eliot (now to us another one of his "old men") distinguishes 'wisdom' from 'knowledge,' this articulation is undeniably yet another "wisdom [that is] only the knowledge of dead secrets / Useless in the darkness into which they peered / Or from which they turned their eyes" (EC II). Eliot seems to hypocritically fall into the same trap as those "quiet-voiced elders," but we are reminded that the poem doesn't end there. As we shall see, these moments of illumination merely provide the "hint," the "gift" in his understanding of Incarnation: "the hint half guessed, the gift half understood" (DS V). Given that the undeniable

nature of human beings attracts them toward neat bits of "truth," the "wisdom of humility," falling directly into the very paradox it attempts to solve, can never be attained as a being engaged in the world, and thus we see that the mystical insight is not Eliot's ultimate key to liberation.

In *Little Gidding*'s Dante-esque second movement, Eliot dialogues with a "familiar compound ghost" who takes the form of one of Eliot's mystical experiences while walking "in the uncertain hour before the morning" (LG II). The ghost, used as a device for self-reflection, informs Eliot about age and its effects on the relation between meaning, conceptual understanding, and language. After meeting the ghost, and transcending to the mystical realm, he remarks, "the wonder that I feel is easy / Yet ease is the cause of wonder" (LG II). The 'noetic' wonder of his mystical experience seems to flow with clarity and ease with the world, and yet paradoxically the ease and wonder cannot be separated – each causes the other, providing him no clear way to reenter this state from ordinary life. Eliot therefore asks the ghost to explain this phenomenon: "Therefore speak: / I may not comprehend, may not remember" (LG II). Already Eliot anticipates that its answer may not be intellectually 'comprehensible' – that the nature of his experience is ineffable, and therefore is unable to be carried over after its disappearance via memory, which we've seen is most often approached with intellect. The ghost replies exactly to this point: "I am not eager to rehearse / My thought and theory which you have forgotten. / These things have served their purpose: Let them be" (LG II). Eliot does convey, however, that "thought and theory" – conceptualization, intellect – have (pragmatic) purpose, but that on their own they should not be conflated with the common *logos*. The ghost speaks similarly about speech and language, as "our concern," and goes on to describe the shortcomings of living trapped within time.

While thus far Eliot seems skeptical of faltering powers of intellect, concept, and language, *some* form of communication is vital for him in his relationship with God. This is evident in his view of prayer, which he explains via negation: "…prayer is more / Than an order of words, the conscious occupation / Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying. / And what the dead had no speech for, when living, / They can tell you, being dead: the communication / Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living" (LG I). The paradox is that while 'valid' prayer transcends words and in the end communicates, or is receptive to, "the communication of the dead," it still must leverage words to achieve that end.

"Tongued with fire" refers to the tongues of pentecostal fire said to have descended the Holy Spirit directly upon the Apostles of (the dead) Jesus Christ, also only made possible via language. Here we see a clear attempt by Eliot to use language toward realizing the common *logos*, which necessarily implies the existence the 'personal' *logos*, as even when "the Spirit gave them utterance […] when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:4-6).

One's desire for intellectual satisfaction is introvertive, as intellectual fulfillment requires the acquisition and retention of wisdom and experience. But there is of course also an extrovertive desire, *will* – that which, in time, drives action toward an object external to oneself. Just as Eliot's premise of the intellectual dilemma was paradoxical – 'knowing not to know' – the pursuit of the will, as we shall see, is similarly binding.

**The Will: The Goal and the Journey**

The second of the Heraclitus epigraphs introduces the bifurcation between receptivity and activity. It says that "the way up" and "the way down" are one and the same. In contrast to the first epigraph of the intellect, this one speaks to the will – to the active drive toward an external object of desire (perhaps liberation) – the 'drive,' or the 'path' itself being the spiritual way. Eliot elucidates Heraclitus' cryptic statement by offering a 'way' of spiritual practice in the third movement of each poem:

> *Burnt Norton* offers the 'way of darkness,' a purgative path that empires one of self-will and opens one to God. *East Coker* fosters the 'way of stillness,' a method of withdrawing from the whirl of the senses to an inner tranquility. *The Dry Salvages* proposes the 'way of yogic action,' a mode of acting in the world without selfishly grasping. *Little Gidding* explores the 'way of purification,' a focus on humility and a generous-hearted trust before God. (Kramer xvii)

Rather striking is that the action described by the first two quartets is rather *inaction* — they instruct the reader and Eliot to be contemplative, within the darkness, and still. They embody descent into oneself, or 'the way down.' The last two quartets encourage action in ascent, to "fare forward" and seek redemption – 'the way up.' One approach in no way dominates the other – as we have seen, Eliot's vision is in the reconciliation of the two, but furthermore, recognizing as in Heraclitus' statement, that together they are indeed one. Before truly and fully experiencing light, one must plunge into darkness, recalling St. John of the Cross' "Dark Night of the Soul." But

these movements have less to do with the intellect of theory and explanations of metaphysics, and more with applicable spiritual development.

In *Burnt Norton*, Eliot describes people he sees in the London underground that are enchanted by the worldly, at the whim of time, constantly distracted without ever collecting themselves: "strained time-ridden faces / Distracted from distraction by distraction / Filled with fancies and empty of meaning…" (BN III). He then urges to "descend lower […] Into the world of perpetual solitude, […] Internal darkness, deprivation / And destitution of all property, / Evacuation of the world of fancy…" where one can come into contact with a more deeply resonating current of the universe (BN III). The theme of darkness is revisited in *East Coker*, where 'the way' is stillness, within "the darkness of God" (EC III). Eliot makes an analogy to the darkness of a play in between the change of scenes, when props and backdrops are moved around, conveying the relinquishing of control of the outside world to God and time, and suggests that the world seen is not entirely genuine – that people deceive themselves by the surroundings as if enchanted by the set of a play.

*East Coker* then calls for a receptive mode of consciousness, in which love, faith, and hope cannot be sought out directly, but must be waited *upon*, not *for* (Kramer 87): "…wait without hope / For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love, / For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith / But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting" (EC III). Again Eliot suggests abandoning the attempts to control life and time, but he also subtly transitions into the paradox that pervades the fulfillment of the will, which is that the journey *is* the destination. Love, faith, and hope, in themselves, cannot be *goals*, for then they are "for the wrong thing." Love breaks down when the object of love is fully acquired and possessed, faith cannot merely be willed, but brings one *through* difficult times, and 'having' hope is no longer truly hope, merely a delusion; these are all *processes* that emerge in the waiting, and yet paradoxically, are the object of the will.

*The Dry Salvages* explores a similar paradox in the reference to Krishna's admonishing of Arjuna in the *Bhagavadgita*. It is approached, however, from the opposite direction – the 'active' way. Krishna tells Arjuna "do not think of the fruit of action. / Fare forward" (DS III). "The fruit of action" – the object of desire – will only bring suffering: either when it is not attained, when it is attained but not what one truly desired, or when it was desired but eventually goes away, a standard Indic trope regarding desire. Rather, Krishna makes the rather complex

argument that one should act in line with one's *dharma,* or one's principle ordering force, the actions set for that individual. The paradoxical nature of fulfilling the will emerges again – that of actively pursuing the state of non-pursuit (reminiscent of *Burnt Norton* II's "at the still point, there the dance is"). Thus, Eliot says "Not fare well, / But fare forward, voyagers," because faring well is to achieve some end – faring *forward* is to continue the journey with vigor and engagement – truly the end in itself (DS III). In *Little Gidding*, thematically centered around purgation, the third movement also focuses on the motive of action: "And all shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be well / By the purification of the motive / In the ground of our beseeching" (LG III). The ongoing process of purification of the will – for Eliot, prayer – is what makes all well, and in the end means that even "Sin is Behovely" (LG III).

But the paradox of the journey recurs more explicitly in the opening movement of *Little Gidding*: "And what you thought you came for / Is only a shell, a husk of meaning / From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled / If at all. Either you had no purpose / Or the purpose is beyond the end you figured / And is altered in fulfilment" (LG I). Not only does Eliot denounce 'meaning' as the culprit for misdirection, but he critically remarks that the purpose can end up "beyond the end you figured." In this sense, Eliot reminds us of the unredeemable nature of time, which never stops at one definitive end, but rather whose permanence lies in its indefinite capacity for perpetual change. Reaching one 'end' is merely the 'beginning' of another, echoing the refrain of *East Coker* I: "In my beginning is my end." The teaching of *The Dry Salvages* III is also harkened, with the 'voyage' now understood to be the journey of life, and the past and future not being true reflections of the voyager: "Fare forward, you who think that you are voyaging; / You are not those who saw the harbour / Receding, or those who will disembark […] consider the future / And the past with an equal mind." And finally, in the last movement of the poem: "We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started" (LG V).

**The Fire and the Rose**

Two very prominent symbols in *Four Quartets*, among others, are the fire and the rose. Fire is found most frequently in *Little Gidding*, and is said to be redeeming of all torments regarding time by the 'compound ghost': "From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit / Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire / Where you must move in measure, like a

dancer" (LG III). Recalling the ocean's "tolling bell [that] / *Measures* time not our time, rung by the unhurried," compared to the "time *counted* by anxious worried women" (DS I; emphasis added), movement in measure is being together with the flow of time and the world, rather than the attempt to control it. That the fire is what drives this dance brings to mind its role as catalyst in the cycles in *East Coker*, driving the natural order of the earth: "Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires, / Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth" (EC I). But most poignantly parallel to the statement of the ghost is the sacramental dance of the married couple later in that movement, which culminates to the very propagation of time as it applies to the cycles of universe: "…see them dancing around the bonfire / the association of man and woman […] Round and round the fire / Leaping through the flames […] Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes, […] lifted in country mirth / Mirth of those long since under earth / Nourishing the corn. Keeping time, / Keeping the rhythm in their dancing" (EC I).

Fire also represents the pentecost, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, which also catalyzes the completion of a cycle – that of redemption, bringing sin to salvation within humans. But in the fourth movement of *Little Gidding*, Eliot perverts the image of redemptive fire with that of a bomber jet's "flame of incandescent terror / Of which the tongues declare / The one discharge from sin and error." Fire does not merely represent redemption, but is also sin, and therefore "the only hope, or else despair / Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre– / To be redeemed from [sinful] fire by [redemptive] fire" (LG IV). Thus, it is evident that Eliot's fire can be called neither good nor bad, but is rather the very *process* of life manifest on Earth, reliant on time and yet through its permanence, independent from it. In humans, fire is the twofold desire expressed both externally (i.e. dancing) and internally (i.e. purgation).

The rose, therefore, we can attribute to the *object* of desire, in both the intellectual and spiritual sense. The rose first appears in *Burnt Norton* I as a symbol of Earthly beauty: "…the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses / Had the look of flowers that are looked at" (BN I). The roses, then, "as our guests, accepted and accepting," lead Eliot to his vision of the light-filled pool, becoming the objects of the mystical experience that sit tentatively between divine and human realms. The vision of the rose garden, recollected via intellect, then became the object of intellectual desire. Throughout the rest of the *Quartets*, we see each Heraclitian element somehow affect the rose, constructing and becoming a part of the object of beauty itself. In *East Coker*, "late November" throws "hollyhocks too high / Red into grey and tumble down / Late

roses filled with early snow" (EC II). In *The Dry Salvages*, one of the "many voices" of the sea is that of "the salt […] on the briar rose" (DS I). In its third movement, Eliot uses a 'Royal Rose' as the fruitful future Krishna abdicates – the "wistful regret" of a future that is merely anticipated: "I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant– […] That the future is a faded song, a Royal Rose or a lavender spray / Of wistful regret for those who are not yet here to regret, / Pressed between yellow leaves of a book that has never been opened" (DS III). Finally, where fire depends on and feeds on time, the rose, an abstract, unachievable end, is timeless – as we have seen with the paradox of will, it cannot be achieved no matter how much time given: "The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree / Are of equal duration" (LG V).

Therefore, in the final verse of the poem, Eliot's moment of true liberation is revealed "when the tongues of flames are in-folded / Into the crowned knot of fire / And the fire and the rose are one" (LG V). Eliot's paradoxes are finally resolved, in the impossible fulfillment of desire with object, but no longer perceived as such – now they "are one." The mystery of this union immediately calls to mind Eliot's "Incarnation," both human and divine embodied in one: "The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation. / Here the impossible union / Of spheres of evidence is actual" (DS V). Both receptive *and* active, outside from *and* submissive to time, "in the stillness / Between two waves of the sea," (LG V) *Four Quartets* concludes without any particular "solution" to the struggles with an existence fettered with dichotomy, but suggests that liberation mysteriously lies *between*, *within* the dualities of human experience.

**Bibliography**

Atkins, G. Douglas. *Reading T.S. Eliot:* Four Quartets *and the Journey toward Understanding*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York. 2012.

Eliot, T.S. *Four Quartets.* A Harvest Book; Harcourt, Inc: New York. 1943.

Kramer, Kenneth Paul. *Redeeming Time: T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets*. Cowley Publications: Lanham, MD. 2007.

Murray, Paul. *T.S. Eliot & Mysticism*. St. Martin's Press: New York. 1991.