T.S.Elliot:

**Notas de clase:**

Something with religion.

Ordinary life and how bring is. It’s a shit. Can be a spiritual poetry. Want to look for some consolation.

Left wind poet.

What have in common Elliot and Ezra Pound? The common is that his poetry is really hard to understand. An object for meditations: poems themselves are meditations.

What are these images and how they relate to each other’s? Cultural disorientation: where am I? Cultural corruption.

Elliot used to work in a bank.

In the period of “The Waste Land” he also wrote dramas.

Pound is a fashionist. Elliot is more a conservative because he doesn’t like changes.

In many cases modernism = conservatism.

Poems is based in Elliot.

Way of finding redemption.

Elliot is interested in existential and spiritual issues. Not social problems like abortion.

///Look at the catholic faith to give a sense to the life. 1930s life. Nostalgic/sentimental for the medieval past: the church believes were common. Times now are empty, meaningful: people is just happy taking drugs and being drunk. We need fun to forget about destruction///.

James Parison: how different countries develop their values. Inspired by nature: Hellenists.

The Waste Land

*FOR EZRA POUND*                                IL MIGLIOR FABBRO

*I. The Burial of the Dead*

  April is the cruellest month, breeding

April = memory and love. Spring rain = painful past. Winter = warmer because the snow covered the ground and memories.

Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

Memory and desire, stirring

Dull roots with spring rain.

Winter kept us warm, covering

Earth in forgetful snow, feeding

A little life with dried tubers.

Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee

With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,

And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,

And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.

Bin gar keine Russin, stamm’ aus Litauen, echt deutsch.

And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke’s,

My cousin’s, he took me out on a sled,

And I was frightened. He said, Marie,

Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.

In the mountains, there you feel free.

I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

  What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow

Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,

You cannot say, or guess, for you know only

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,

And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,

I will show you how to fear the shadow of death. Desolate and empty is the sea.

And the dry stone no sound of water. Only

There is shadow under this red rock,

(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),

And I will show you something different from either

Your shadow at morning striding behind you

Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;

I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

*Frisch weht der Wind*

*Der Heimat zu*

*Mein Irisch Kind,*

*Wo weilest du?*

“You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;

“They called me the hyacinth girl.”

—Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,

Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not

Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither

Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,

Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

*Oed’ und leer das Meer*.

  Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante,

Had a bad cold, nevertheless

Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,

With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,

Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,

(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)

They are reading.

Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,

The lady of situations.

Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,

And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,

Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,

Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find

The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.

I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.

Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone,

Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:

One must be so careful these days.

  Unreal City,

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,

In this unreal city.There were so many people; I did not realize just how many people were isolated, alienated, beyond reach.

The importance of soul, that is salt without water, and water is God.

The symbols of the Tarot.

I had not thought death had undone so many.

Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,

And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.

Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,

To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours

With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.

There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: “Stetson!

“You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!

“That corpse you planted last year in your garden,

“Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?

“Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?

“Oh keep the Dog far hence, that’s friend to men,

“Or with his nails he’ll dig it up again!

“You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!”

*II. A Game of Chess*

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,

Glowed on the marble, where the glass

Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines

From which a golden Cupidon peeped out

(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)

Description of the place with the lights and the smells. Importance of the senses: “And drowned the sense in odours”.

Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra

Reflecting light upon the table as

The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,

From satin cases poured in rich profusion;

In vials of ivory and coloured glass

Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,

Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused

And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air

That freshened from the window, these ascended

In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,

Flung their smoke into the laquearia,

Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.

Huge sea-wood fed with copper

Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,

In which sad light a carvéd dolphin swam.

Above the antique mantel was displayed

As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene

The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king

So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale

Filled all the desert with inviolable voice

And still she cried, and still the world pursues,

Conversation: nerves = anxiety. Tarot cards.

Dialog between a person who speaks a lot and other that doesn’t speak. (Some people prefer not to think). What comes through? Nothing.

Neurotic conversation. HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME: its apocalyptic.

Dentist. Taking the teeths of before having sex: not a romantic scenario. Vulgar. Finish with a romantic line that is ironic.

Dinner. Abortion.

“The Great civilization”.

He is talking with the tapestry.

“Jug Jug” to dirty ears.

And other withered stumps of time

Were told upon the walls; staring forms

Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.

Footsteps shuffled on the stair.

Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair

Spread out in fiery points

Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

  “My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.

“Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.

  “What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?

“I never know what you are thinking. Think.”

  I think we are in rats’ alley

Where the dead men lost their bones.

  “What is that noise?”

                          The wind under the door.

“What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?”

                           Nothing again nothing.

                                                        “Do

“You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember

“Nothing?”

       I remember

Those are pearls that were his eyes.

“Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?”

                                                                           But

O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag—

It’s so elegant

So intelligent

“What shall I do now? What shall I do?”

“I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street

“With my hair down, so. What shall we do tomorrow?

“What shall we ever do?”

                                               The hot water at ten.

And if it rains, a closed car at four.

And we shall play a game of chess,

Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.

  When Lil’s husband got demobbed, I said—

I didn’t mince my words, I said to her myself,

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Now Albert’s coming back, make yourself a bit smart.

He’ll want to know what you done with that money he gave you

To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.

You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,

He said, I swear, I can’t bear to look at you.

And no more can’t I, I said, and think of poor Albert,

He’s been in the army four years, he wants a good time,

And if you don’t give it him, there’s others will, I said.

Oh is there, she said. Something o’ that, I said.

Then I’ll know who to thank, she said, and give me a straight look.

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

If you don’t like it you can get on with it, I said.

Others can pick and choose if you can’t.

But if Albert makes off, it won’t be for lack of telling.

You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.

(And her only thirty-one.)

I can’t help it, she said, pulling a long face,

It’s them pills I took, to bring it off, she said.

(She’s had five already, and nearly died of young George.)

The chemist said it would be all right, but I’ve never been the same.

You *are* a proper fool, I said.

Well, if Albert won’t leave you alone, there it is, I said,

What you get married for if you don’t want children?

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot gammon,

And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot—

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight.

Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.

Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.

*III. The Fire Sermon*

  The river’s tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf

Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind

Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.

Descriptions with weird details.

Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,

Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends

Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.

And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors;

Departed, have left no addresses.

By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept . . .

Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,

Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.

But at my back in a cold blast I hear

The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

A rat crept softly through the vegetation

Dragging its slimy belly on the bank

While I was fishing in the dull canal

On a winter evening round behind the gashouse

Musing upon the king my brother’s wreck

And on the king my father’s death before him.

White bodies naked on the low damp ground

And bones cast in a little low dry garret,

Rattled by the rat’s foot only, year to year.

But at my back from time to time I hear

The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring

Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.

O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter

And on her daughter

They wash their feet in soda water

*Et O ces voix d’enfants, chantant dans la coupole!*

Twit twit twit

Jug jug jug jug jug jug

So rudely forc’d.

Sounds.

Again the unreal city with descriptions.

The time is advantageous.

He talks about a vision that is a woman waiting for his husband and then he rapes her.

He makes his move; his wandering hands receive no resistance; he is so vain he does not care that she does not respond to his advances with enthusiasm.

Talking about the city: with directions…

Talks about the river.

Pessimism

Tereu

Unreal City

Under the brown fog of a winter noon

Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant

Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants

C.i.f. London: documents at sight,

Asked me in demotic French

To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel

Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back

Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits

Like a taxi throbbing waiting,

I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,

Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see

At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives

Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,

The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights

Her stove, and lays out food in tins.

Out of the window perilously spread

Her drying combinations touched by the sun’s last rays,

On the divan are piled (at night her bed)

Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.

I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs

Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—

I too awaited the expected guest.

He, the young man carbuncular, arrives,

A small house agent’s clerk, with one bold stare,

One of the low on whom assurance sits

As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.

The time is now propitious, as he guesses,

The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,

Endeavours to engage her in caresses

Which still are unreproved, if undesired.

Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;

Exploring hands encounter no defence;

His vanity requires no response,

And makes a welcome of indifference.

(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all

Enacted on this same divan or bed;

I who have sat by Thebes below the wall

And walked among the lowest of the dead.)

Bestows one final patronising kiss,

And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit . . .

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,

Hardly aware of her departed lover;

Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:

“Well now that’s done: and I’m glad it’s over.”

When lovely woman stoops to folly and

Paces about her room again, alone,

She smoothes her hair with automatic hand,

And puts a record on the gramophone.

“This music crept by me upon the waters”

And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.

O City city, I can sometimes hear

Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,

The pleasant whining of a mandoline

And a clatter and a chatter from within

Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls

Of Magnus Martyr hold

Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.

               The river sweats

               Oil and tar

               The barges drift

               With the turning tide

               Red sails

               Wide

               To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.

               The barges wash

               Drifting logs

               Down Greenwich reach

               Past the Isle of Dogs.

                                 Weialala leia

                                 Wallala leialala

               Elizabeth and Leicester

               Beating oars

               The stern was formed

               A gilded shell

               Red and gold

               The brisk swell

               Rippled both shores

               Southwest wind

               Carried down stream

               The peal of bells

               White towers

                                Weialala leia

                                Wallala leialala

“Trams and dusty trees.

Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew

Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees

Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe.”

“My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart

Under my feet. After the event

He wept. He promised a ‘new start.’

I made no comment. What should I resent?”

“On Margate Sands.

I can connect

Nothing with nothing.

The broken fingernails of dirty hands.

My people humble people who expect

Nothing.”

                       la la

To Carthage then I came

Burning burning burning burning

O Lord Thou pluckest me out

O Lord Thou pluckest

burning

*IV. Death by Water*

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,

Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell

And the profit and loss.

                                   A current under sea

Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell

He passed the stages of his age and youth

Entering the whirlpool.

                                   Gentile or Jew

O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,

Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.

*V. What the Thunder Said*

  After the torchlight red on sweaty faces

After the frosty silence in the gardens

After the agony in stony places

The shouting and the crying

Prison and palace and reverberation

Descriptions: Just rocks, agony about the rocks. In spring he was alive, now he is dead. Who were alive, now they are dying slowly. Now there is no water (water=life, happiness?). Death everywhere. Again there is no water.

Water as a cultural inspiration.

Human concerned: son of man. Talking about Christianity. Is God that is not answering. You pray with your own counciesness.

A good Christian will never think that they have for sure the redemption.

“I will show you fear, in a – of life”.

Of thunder of spring over distant mountains

He who was living is now dead

We who were living are now dying

With a little patience

Here is no water but only rock

Rock and no water and the sandy road

The road winding above among the mountains

Which are mountains of rock without water

If there were water we should stop and drink

Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think

Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand

If there were only water amongst the rock

Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit

Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit

There is not even silence in the mountains

But dry sterile thunder without rain

There is not even solitude in the mountains

But red sullen faces sneer and snarl

From doors of mudcracked houses

                                      If there were water

   And no rock

   If there were rock

   And also water

   And water

   A spring

   A pool among the rock

   If there were the sound of water only

   Not the cicada

   And dry grass singing

   But sound of water over a rock

   Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees

   Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop

   But there is no water

Who is the third who walks always beside you?

When I count, there are only you and I together

But when I look ahead up the white road

There is always another one walking beside you

Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded

I do not know whether a man or a woman

—But who is that on the other side of you?

What is that sound high in the air

Murmur of maternal lamentation

Who are those hooded hordes swarming

Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth

Ringed by the flat horizon only

What is the city over the mountains

Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air

Falling towers

Jerusalem Athens Alexandria

Vienna London

Unreal

A woman drew her long black hair out tight

And fiddled whisper music on those strings

And bats with baby faces in the violet light

Whistled, and beat their wings

And crawled head downward down a blackened wall

And upside down in air were towers

Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours

And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells.

In this decayed hole among the mountains

In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing

Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel

There is the empty chapel, only the wind’s home.

It has no windows, and the door swings,

Dry bones can harm no one.

Only a cock stood on the rooftree

Co co rico co co rico

In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust

Bringing rain

Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves

Waited for rain, while the black clouds

Gathered far distant, over Himavant.

The Ganges River was dry, and limp leaves waited for rain, while storm clouds gathered distantly over the snowy Himalayas.

The jungle crouched, humped in silence.

Then spoke the thunder

DA

*Datta:* what have we given?

My friend, blood shaking my heart

The awful daring of a moment’s surrender

Which an age of prudence can never retract

By this, and this only, we have existed

Which is not to be found in our obituaries

Should he restore the order to his kingdom?

Why then I will accommodate you. Hieronymo's crazy again. Give. Sympathize. Control. Peace, peace, peace.

Penultimo paragraph: spiritualism. Semi -spiritual activities that people want to believe. Table turning. Tarot. People searching for something to give sense in these hard times of war. People needs for spiritual believes.

Then we move to London, an unreal city.

Agricultural society: crop.

Anthropological investigation.

Explicit spiritual: it begins with the possibility of the death of Jesus.

Thunders are very important.

Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider

Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor

In our empty rooms

DA

*Dayadhvam:* I have heard the key

Turn in the door once and turn once only

We think of the key, each in his prison

Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison

Only at nightfall, aethereal rumours

Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus

DA

*Damyata:* The boat responded

Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar

The sea was calm, your heart would have responded

Gaily, when invited, beating obedient

To controlling hands

                                    I sat upon the shore

Fishing, with the arid plain behind me

Shall I at least set my lands in order?

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down

*Poi s’ascose nel foco che gli affina*

*Quando fiam uti chelidon*—O swallow swallow

*Le Prince d’Aquitaine à la tour abolie*

These fragments I have shored against my ruins

Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo’s mad againe.

Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

                  Shantih     shantih     shantih

The Waste Land can be viewed as a poem about brokenness and loss. numerous allusions to the First World War suggest that the war played a significant part in bringing about this social, psychological, and emotional collapse. People’s lives in general are lacking spiritual significance.

The poem’s references to the Buddhist Fire Sermon suggest that before we will become worthy of salvation, we must first learn to curb our worldly desires and passions in order to attain spiritual enlightenment.

The Waste Land begins with a reference to a ‘heap of broken images’ and ends with a collage of quotations taken from various poetic traditions, as well as a snippet from the nursery rhyme ‘London Bridge is falling down’. Art, literature, oral and written culture – civilisation itself – seem to be under threat. Can we do anything other than shore up the ruins? The breakdown of the poem into a confused medley of semi-coherent quotations implies that after the war, such peace remains a far-off dream.

Four Quartets

Quartet 1: Burnt Norton

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.  
What might have been is an abstraction  
Remaining a perpetual possibility  
Only in a world of speculation.  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.  
Footfalls echo in the memory  
Down the passage which we did not take  
Towards the door we never opened  
Into the rose-garden. My words echo  
Thus, in your mind.  
                              But to what purpose  
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves  
I do not know.  
                        Other echoes  
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?  
Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,  
Round the corner. Through the first gate,  
Into our first world, shall we follow  
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world.  
There they were, dignified, invisible,  
Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,  
In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air,  
And the bird called, in response to  
The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,  
And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses  
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.  
There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting.  
So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,  
Along the empty alley, into the box circle,  
To look down into the drained pool.  
Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,  
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,  
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,  
The surface glittered out of heart of light,  
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.  
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.  
Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,  
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.  
Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind  
Cannot bear very much reality.  
Time past and time future  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.

Particular conception of time: “If all time is eternally present/All time is unredeemable”.

Through this conception of time, the lyrical voice explores the possibility that men can only control the present.

The poem describes a rose garden, that evokes the garden of Eden. Related to Christianity?

Ignorance. The poem is that talking to the people, like whispering us.

II

Garlic and sapphires in the mud  
Clot the bedded axle-tree.  
The trilling wire in the blood  
Sings below inveterate scars  
Appeasing long forgotten wars.  
The dance along the artery  
The circulation of the lymph  
Are figured in the drift of stars  
Ascend to summer in the tree  
We move above the moving tree  
In light upon the figured leaf  
And hear upon the sodden floor  
Below, the boarhound and the boar  
Pursue their pattern as before  
But reconciled among the stars.

Fragmentary?

At first, connection of images, but then it focuses on meditation of consciousness and living, (Time past and time future/Allow but a little consciousness./To be conscious is not to be in time”) that goes back to the idea of coexisting temporalities in the present.

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.  
I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where.  
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.  
The inner freedom from the practical desire,  
The release from action and suffering, release from the inner  
And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded  
By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving,  
Erhebung without motion, concentration  
Without elimination, both a new world  
And the old made explicit, understood  
In the completion of its partial ecstasy,  
The resolution of its partial horror.  
Yet the enchainment of past and future  
Woven in the weakness of the changing body,  
Protects mankind from heaven and damnation  
Which flesh cannot endure.  
                                          Time past and time future  
Allow but a little consciousness.  
To be conscious is not to be in time  
But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,  
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,  
The moment in the draughty church at smokefall  
Be remembered; involved with past and future.  
Only through time time is conquered.

III

Here is a place of disaffection  
Time before and time after  
In a dim light: neither daylight  
Investing form with lucid stillness  
Turning shadow into transient beauty  
With slow rotation suggesting permanence  
Nor darkness to purify the soul  
Emptying the sensual with deprivation  
Cleansing affection from the temporal.  
Neither plenitude nor vacancy. Only a flicker  
Over the strained time-ridden faces  
Distracted from distraction by distraction  
Filled with fancies and empty of meaning  
Tumid apathy with no concentration  
Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind  
That blows before and after time,  
Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs  
Time before and time after.  
Eructation of unhealthy souls  
Into the faded air, the torpid  
Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of London,  
Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney,  
Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate. Not here  
Not here the darkness, in this twittering world.

“A place of disaffection”.

The lyrical voice relates to this modern world and self with numbness and lack of spirituality.

    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,  
Desiccation of the world of sense,  
Evacuation of the world of fancy,  
Inoperancy of the world of spirit;  
This is the one way, and the other  
Is the same, not in movement  
But abstention from movement; while the world moves  
In appetency, on its metalled ways  
Of time past and time future.

IV

Time and the bell have buried the day,  
The black cloud carries the sun away.  
Will the sunflower turn to us, will the clematis  
Stray down, bend to us; tendril and spray  
Clutch and cling?

Description and movement of time.

Many images of nature.

“Fingers of yew be curled /Down on us?”) that belongs to the yew tree, also known as the “tree of death”,  brings the possibility of a spiritual rebirth.

Sor of melody.

    Chill  
Fingers of yew be curled  
Down on us? 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.

V

Words move, music moves  
Only in time; but that which is only living  
Can only die. Words, after speech, reach  
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,  
Can words or music reach  
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still  
Moves perpetually in its stillness.  
Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts,  
Not that only, but the co-existence,  
Or say that the end precedes the beginning,  
And the end and the beginning were always there  
Before the beginning and after the end.  
And all is always now. Words strain,  
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,  
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,  
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,  
Will not stay still. Shrieking voices  
Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering,  
Always assail them. The Word in the desert  
Is most attacked by voices of temptation,  
The crying shadow in the funeral dance,  
The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera.

Again: the movement of time and how it can be addressed. “Words move, music moves/ Only in time”.

Love, as the relation of the themes and the poems itself to Christianity suggests, is related to religion and devotion, and it is a central element for remaining conscious and present.

“Words move, music moves/ Only in time”: relation of tiem and his capacity to become eternal (Chinese jar).

The final lines of the poems return to the laughing children in the rose-garden, asserting the circularity of the poem: “There rises the hidden laughter/Of children in the foliage”. Yet, the laugher becomes a mocking laugher, related to the slavery of modernity.

    The detail of the pattern is movement,  
As in the figure of the ten stairs.  
Desire itself is movement  
Not in itself desirable;  
Love is itself unmoving,  
Only the cause and end of movement,  
Timeless, and undesiring  
Except in the aspect of time  
Caught in the form of limitation  
Between un-being and being.  
Sudden in a shaft of sunlight  
Even while the dust moves  
There rises the hidden laughter  
Of children in the foliage  
Quick now, here, now, always—  
Ridiculous the waste sad time  
Stretching before and after.

Quartet 2: East Coker

I

In my beginning is my end. 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.  
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,  
Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth  
Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,  
Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf.  
Houses live and die: there is a time for building  
And a time for living and for generation  
And a time for the wind to break the loosened pane  
And to shake the wainscot where the field-mouse trots  
And to shake the tattered arras woven with a silent motto.

Houses are built, restored, destroyed, or replaced; time marches on; the landscape changes with the succeeding generations.

Eliot imagines the simple lives of the peasants who would have lived in the village at that time.

Transcens time.

    In my beginning is my end. Now the light falls  
Across the open field, leaving the deep lane  
Shuttered with branches, dark in the afternoon,  
Where you lean against a bank while a van passes,  
And the deep lane insists on the direction  
Into the village, in the electric heat  
Hypnotised. In a warm haze the sultry light  
Is absorbed, not refracted, by grey stone.  
The dahlias sleep in the empty silence.  
Wait for the early owl.

                                    In that open field  
If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close,  
On a summer midnight, you can hear the music  
Of the weak pipe and the little drum  
And see them dancing around the bonfire  
The association of man and woman  
In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie—  
A dignified and commodiois sacrament.  
Two and two, necessarye coniunction,  
Holding eche other by the hand or the arm  
Whiche betokeneth concorde. 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. Keeping time,  
Keeping the rhythm in their dancing  
As in their living in the living seasons  
The time of the seasons and the constellations  
The time of milking and the time of harvest  
The time of the coupling of man and woman  
And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.  
Eating and drinking. Dung and death.

    Dawn points, and another day  
Prepares for heat and silence. Out at sea the dawn wind  
Wrinkles and slides. I am here  
Or there, or elsewhere. In my beginning.

II

What is the late November doing  
With the disturbance of the spring  
And creatures of the summer heat,  
And snowdrops writhing under feet  
And hollyhocks that aim too high  
Red into grey and tumble down  
Late roses filled with early snow?  
Thunder rolled by the rolling stars  
Simulates triumphal cars  
Deployed in constellated wars  
Scorpion fights against the Sun  
Until the Sun and Moon go down  
Comets weep and Leonids fly  
Hunt the heavens and the plains  
Whirled in a vortex that shall bring  
The world to that destructive fire  
Which burns before the ice-cap reigns.

the order and pattern of the world – the seasons, the country dances, the ceremony of marriage – break apart, and we have a picture of confusion: the seasons are lumped together, and the cycle of nature has fallen away.  Eliot then critiques his own ‘way of putting’ this, rejecting his poetic style as ‘worn-out’ and self-consciously examining and analysing.

    That was a way of putting it—not very satisfactory:  
A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion,  
Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle  
With words and meanings. The poetry does not matter.  
It was not (to start again) what one had expected.  
What was to be the value of the long looked forward to,  
Long hoped for calm, the autumnal serenity  
And the wisdom of age? Had they deceived us  
Or deceived themselves, the quiet-voiced elders,  
Bequeathing us merely a receipt for deceit?  
The serenity only a deliberate hebetude,  
The wisdom only the knowledge of dead secrets  
Useless in the darkness into which they peered  
Or from which they turned their eyes. There is, it seems to us,  
At best, only a limited value  
In the knowledge derived from experience.  
The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,  
For the pattern is new in every moment  
And every moment is a new and shocking  
Valuation of all we have been. We are only undeceived  
Of that which, deceiving, could no longer harm.  
In the middle, not only in the middle of the way  
But all the way, in a dark wood, in a bramble,  
On the edge of a grimpen, where is no secure foothold,  
And menaced by monsters, fancy lights,  
Risking enchantment. 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.  
The only wisdom we can hope to acquire  
Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless.

    The houses are all gone under the sea.

    The dancers are all gone under the hill.

III

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,  
The generous patrons of art, the statesmen and the rulers,  
Distinguished civil servants, chairmen of many committees,  
Industrial lords and petty contractors, all go into the dark,  
And dark the Sun and Moon, and the Almanach de Gotha  
And the Stock Exchange Gazette, the Directory of Directors,  
And cold the sense and lost the motive of action.  
And we all go with them, into the silent funeral,  
Nobody's funeral, for there is no one to bury.  
I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you  
Which shall be the darkness of God. As, in a theatre,  
The lights are extinguished, for the scene to be changed  
With a hollow rumble of wings, with a movement of darkness on darkness,  
And we know that the hills and the trees, the distant panorama  
And the bold imposing facade are all being rolled away—  
Or as, when an underground train, in the tube, stops too long between stations  
And the conversation rises and slowly fades into silence  
And you see behind every face the mental emptiness deepen  
Leaving only the growing terror of nothing to think about;  
Or when, under ether, the mind is conscious but conscious of nothing—  
I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope  
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love,  
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith  
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.  
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:  
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.  
Whisper of running streams, and winter lightning.  
The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry,  
The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy  
Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony  
Of death and birth.

the dark night of the soul, which is again depicted by way of modern experience – specifically, a theatre when the lights go out.

 This is the kind of darkness – what has been called ‘the way of negation’ – that Eliot believes we should embrace, as a way of reaching God.

                                    You say I am repeating  
Something I have said before. I shall say it again.  
Shall I say it again? In order to arrive there,  
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,  
    You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.  
In order to arrive at what you do not know  
    You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.  
In order to possess what you do not possess  
    You must go by the way of dispossession.  
In order to arrive at what you are not  
    You must go through the way in which you are not.  
And what you do not know is the only thing you know  
And what you own is what you do not own  
And where you are is where you are not.

IV

The wounded surgeon plies the steel  
That questions the distempered part;  
Beneath the bleeding hands we feel  
The sharp compassion of the healer's art  
Resolving the enigma of the fever chart.

    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.

    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.

    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.

    The dripping blood our only drink,  
The bloody flesh our only food:  
In spite of which we like to think  
That we are sound, substantial flesh and blood—  
Again, in spite of that, we call this Friday good.

V

So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years—  
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of l'entre deux guerres  
Trying to use words, and every attempt  
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure  
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words  
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which  
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture  
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate  
With shabby equipment always deteriorating  
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,  
Undisciplined squads of emotion. And what there is to conquer  
By strength and submission, has already been discovered  
Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope  
To emulate—but there is no competition—  
There is only the fight to recover what has been lost  
And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions  
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.  
For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.

Eliot confessing that he has tried, and failed, to wrest words into new meanings during the two decades between the two World Wars.

He feels he has failed; but still one has to try.

Home is where one starts from. As we grow older  
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated  
Of dead and living. Not the intense moment  
Isolated, with no before and after,  
But a lifetime burning in every moment  
And not the lifetime of one man only  
But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.  
There is a time for the evening under starlight,  
A time for the evening under lamplight  
(The evening with the photograph album).  
Love is most nearly itself  
When here and now cease to matter.  
Old men ought to be explorers  
Here or there does not matter  
We must be still and still moving  
Into another intensity  
For a further union, a deeper communion  
Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,  
The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters  
Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning.

Quartet 3: The Dry Salvages

(The Dry Salvages—presumably les trois sauvages—is a small group of rocks,  
with a beacon, off the N.E. coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts.  
Salvages is pronounced to rhyme with assuages.  
Groaner: a whistling buoy.)

I

I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river  
Is a strong brown god—sullen, untamed and intractable,  
Patient to some degree, at first recognised as a frontier;  
Useful, untrustworthy, as a conveyor of commerce;  
Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges.  
The problem once solved, the brown god is almost forgotten  
By the dwellers in cities—ever, however, implacable.  
Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder  
Of what men choose to forget. Unhonoured, unpropitiated  
By worshippers of the machine, but waiting, watching and waiting.  
His rhythm was present in the nursery bedroom,  
In the rank ailanthus of the April dooryard,  
In the smell of grapes on the autumn table,  
And the evening circle in the winter gaslight.

Water

The Dry Salvages, as Eliot’s note tells us, is probably derived from the French *les trois sauvages*, and is a small group of rocks off Cape Ann in Massachusetts.

comparative analysis of the river and the sea.

River: as served as a frontier and as a conduit for commerce. But unlike the river, which is within us, the sea is all about us. The river is a ‘god’, but the sea has ‘many gods’ and ‘many voices’: a polytheistic force of nature.

    The river is within us, the sea is all about us;  
The sea is the land's edge also, the granite  
Into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses  
Its hints of earlier and other creation:  
The starfish, the horseshoe crab, the whale's backbone;  
The pools where it offers to our curiosity  
The more delicate algae and the sea anemone.  
It tosses up our losses, the torn seine,  
The shattered lobsterpot, the broken oar  
And the gear of foreign dead men. The sea has many voices,  
Many gods and many voices.  
                                              The salt is on the briar rose,  
The fog is in the fir trees.  
                                        The sea howl  
And the sea yelp, are different voices  
Often together heard: the whine in the rigging,  
The menace and caress of wave that breaks on water,  
The distant rote in the granite teeth,  
And the wailing warning from the approaching headland  
Are all sea voices, and the heaving groaner  
Rounded homewards, and the seagull:  
And under the oppression of the silent fog  
The tolling bell  
Measures time not our time, rung by the unhurried  
Ground swell, a time  
Older than the time of chronometers, older  
Than time counted by anxious worried women  
Lying awake, calculating the future,  
Trying to unweave, unwind, unravel  
And piece together the past and the future,  
Between midnight and dawn, when the past is all deception,  
The future futureless, before the morning watch  
When time stops and time is never ending;  
And the ground swell, that is and was from the beginning,  
Clangs  
The bell.

II

Where is there an end of it, the soundless wailing,  
The silent withering of autumn flowers  
Dropping their petals and remaining motionless;  
Where is there an end to the drifting wreckage,  
The prayer of the bone on the beach, the unprayable  
Prayer at the calamitous annunciation?

    There is no end, but addition: the trailing  
Consequence of further days and hours,  
While emotion takes to itself the emotionless  
Years of living among the breakage  
Of what was believed in as the most reliable—  
And therefore the fittest for renunciation.

    There is the final addition, the failing  
Pride or resentment at failing powers,  
The unattached devotion which might pass for devotionless,  
In a drifting boat with a slow leakage,  
The silent listening to the undeniable  
Clamour of the bell of the last annunciation.

Life is hard, and the sea becomes a symbol for the hardships of all human life.

Life is all hardship, and death awaits us all at the end: we are all destined to be bones.

The second half of this second section then contemplates the past, and rejects the Whiggish idea that the only purpose served by the past is as a means to get to the present.

Often, when remembering something from our past, we realise that it contained meaning and significance which was hidden from us at the time – and the memory takes on a new form as a result.

    Where is the end of them, the fishermen sailing  
Into the wind's tail, where the fog cowers?  
We cannot think of a time that is oceanless  
Or of an ocean not littered with wastage  
Or of a future that is not liable  
Like the past, to have no destination.

    We have to think of them as forever bailing,  
Setting and hauling, while the North East lowers  
Over shallow banks unchanging and erosionless  
Or drawing their money, drying sails at dockage;  
Not as making a trip that will be unpayable  
For a haul that will not bear examination.

    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. Only the hardly, barely prayable  
Prayer of the one Annunciation.

    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.  
The moments of happiness—not the sense of well-being,  
Fruition, fulfilment, security or affection,  
Or even a very good dinner, but the sudden illumination—  
We had the experience but missed the meaning,  
And approach to the meaning restores the experience  
In a different form, beyond any meaning  
We can assign to happiness. I have said before  
That the past experience revived in the meaning  
Is not the experience of one life only  
But of many generations—not forgetting  
Something that is probably quite ineffable:  
The backward look behind the assurance  
Of recorded history, the backward half-look  
Over the shoulder, towards the primitive terror.  
Now, we come to discover that the moments of agony  
(Whether, or not, due to misunderstanding,  
Having hoped for the wrong things or dreaded the wrong things,  
Is not in question) are likewise permanent  
With such permanence as time has. We appreciate this better  
In the agony of others, nearly experienced,  
Involving ourselves, than in our own.  
For our own past is covered by the currents of action,  
But the torment of others remains an experience  
Unqualified, unworn by subsequent attrition.  
People change, and smile: but the agony abides.  
Time the destroyer is time the preserver,  
Like the river with its cargo of dead negroes, cows and chicken coops,  
The bitter apple, and the bite in the apple.  
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.

III

I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant—  
Among other things—or one way of putting the same thing:  
That the future is a faded song, a Royal Rose or a lavender spray  
Of wistful regret for those who are not yet here to regret,  
Pressed between yellow leaves of a book that has never been opened.  
And the way up is the way down, the way forward is the way back.  
You cannot face it steadily, but this thing is sure,  
That time is no healer: the patient is no longer here.  
When the train starts, and the passengers are settled  
To fruit, periodicals and business letters  
(And those who saw them off have left the platform)  
Their faces relax from grief into relief,  
To the sleepy rhythm of a hundred hours.  
Fare forward, travellers! not escaping from the past  
Into different lives, or into any future;  
You are not the same people who left that station  
Or who will arrive at any terminus,  
While the narrowing rails slide together behind you;  
And on the deck of the drumming liner  
Watching the furrow that widens behind you,  
You shall not think 'the past is finished'  
Or 'the future is before us'.  
At nightfall, in the rigging and the aerial,  
Is a voice descanting (though not to the ear,  
The murmuring shell of time, and not in any language)  
'Fare forward, you who think that you are voyaging;  
You are not those who saw the harbour  
Receding, or those who will disembark.  
Here between the hither and the farther shore  
While time is withdrawn, consider the future  
And the past with an equal mind.  
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:  
And do not think of the fruit of action.  
Fare forward.  
                      O voyagers, O seamen,  
You who came to port, and you whose bodies  
Will suffer the trial and judgement of the sea,  
Or whatever event, this is your real destination.'  
So Krishna, as when he admonished Arjuna  
On the field of battle.  
                                  Not fare well,  
But fare forward, voyagers.

Eliot turns to consider the Hindu god Krishna, who teaches that the future and the past are the same – the future is, in a sense, already past.

When we depart on a voyage, we are not the same people who left the harbour or who will reach their destination: living the present.

IV

Lady, whose shrine stands on the promontory,  
Pray for all those who are in ships, those  
Whose business has to do with fish, and  
Those concerned with every lawful traffic  
And those who conduct them.

    Repeat a prayer also on behalf of  
Women who have seen their sons or husbands  
Setting forth, and not returning:  
Figlia del tuo figlio,  
Queen of Heaven.

Catholic prayer commemorating the Incarnation

    Also pray for those who were in ships, and  
Ended their voyage on the sand, in the sea's lips  
Or in the dark throat which will not reject them  
Or wherever cannot reach them the sound of the sea bell's  
Perpetual angelus.

V

To communicate with Mars, converse with spirits,  
To report the behaviour of the sea monster,  
Describe the horoscope, haruspicate or scry,  
Observe disease in signatures, evoke  
Biography from the wrinkles of the palm  
And tragedy from fingers; release omens  
By sortilege, or tea leaves, riddle the inevitable  
With playing cards, fiddle with pentagrams  
Or barbituric acids, or dissect  
The recurrent image into pre-conscious terrors—  
To explore the womb, or tomb, or dreams; all these are usual  
Pastimes and drugs, and features of the press:  
And always will be, some of them especially  
When there is distress of nations and perplexity  
Whether on the shores of Asia, or in the Edgware Road.  
Men's curiosity searches past and future  
And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend  
The point of intersection of the timeless  
With time, is an occupation for the saint—  
No occupation either, but something given  
And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,  
Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.  
For most of us, there is only the unattended  
Moment, the moment in and out of time,  
The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,  
The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning  
Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply  
That it is not heard at all, but you are the music  
While the music lasts. These are only hints and guesses,  
Hints followed by guesses; and the rest  
Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.  
The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.  
Here the impossible union  
Of spheres of existence is actual,  
Here the past and future  
Are conquered, and reconciled,  
Where action were otherwise movement  
Of that which is only moved  
And has in it no source of movement—  
Driven by daemonic, chthonic  
Powers. And right action is freedom  
From past and future also.  
For most of us, this is the aim  
Never here to be realised;  
Who are only undefeated  
Because we have gone on trying;  
We, content at the last  
If our temporal reversion nourish  
(Not too far from the yew-tree)  
The life of significant soil.

reeling off all of the ways in which mankind has attempted to divine the future.

So long as the world remains confusing and unpredictable, and the future uncertain, such acts of (attempted) divination will continue.

Eliot concludes by saying that, like the saint, we need to step outside of time and the temporal and gain a sense of the eternal and timeless.

‘The Dry Salvages’ concludes with the intimation that such knowledge may be beyond most of us, who simply live without ever having attained this sense of the eternal, before dying and nourishing the earth.

*before* such knowledge, what forgiveness? As ever with Eliot’s poetry, especially his later work, there can be no easy answer to this question.

Quartet 4: Little Gidding

I

Midwinter spring is its own season  
Sempiternal though sodden towards sundown,  
Suspended in time, between pole and tropic.  
When the short day is brightest, with frost and fire,  
The brief sun flames the ice, on pond and ditches,  
In windless cold that is the heart's heat,  
Reflecting in a watery mirror  
A glare that is blindness in the early afternoon.  
And glow more intense than blaze of branch, or brazier,  
Stirs the dumb spirit: no wind, but pentecostal fire  
In the dark time of the year. Between melting and freezing  
The soul's sap quivers. There is no earth smell  
Or smell of living thing. This is the spring time  
But not in time's covenant. Now the hedgerow  
Is blanched for an hour with transitory blossom  
Of snow, a bloom more sudden  
Than that of summer, neither budding nor fading,  
Not in the scheme of generation.  
Where is the summer, the unimaginable  
Zero summer?

 ‘Little Gidding’ is slightly different: it was the name of a small religious community formed in Huntingdonshire (now part of Cambridgeshire) shortly before the English Civil War of the 1640s.

We are in the middle of winter, yet there is a sense of spring even during the depth of this cold season. You come to Little Gidding to pray, to present yourself before God.

              If you came this way,  
Taking the route you would be likely to take  
From the place you would be likely to come from,  
If you came this way in may time, you would find the hedges  
White again, in May, with voluptuary sweetness.  
It would be the same at the end of the journey,  
If you came at night like a broken king,  
If you came by day not knowing what you came for,  
It would be the same, when you leave the rough road  
And turn behind the pig-sty to the dull facade  
And the tombstone. And 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. There are other places  
Which also are the world's end, some at the sea jaws,  
Or over a dark lake, in a desert or a city—  
But this is the nearest, in place and time,  
Now and in England.

              If you came this way,  
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,  
At any time or at any season,  
It would always be the same: you would have to put off  
Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,  
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity  
Or carry report. You are here to kneel  
Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more  
Than an order of words, the conscious occupation  
Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.  
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.  
Here, the intersection of the timeless moment  
Is England and nowhere. Never and always.

II

 The ostensible subject is the destruction of English houses and other buildings during the aerial bombing raids by the Germans during the Second World War.

Like Dante, there was a sense that Eliot wanted his work to be a coherent whole which expressed a unified worldview.

Eliot stages a modern-day encounter between him and a mysterious other in the early hours of the morning during an air-raid patrol. Eliot’s model for this section is an episode from Dante’s *Inferno* when the poet meets Brunetto Latini. But whom does Eliot meet?

This other figure has been variously interpreted as Eliot’s earlier self, as the spirit of some past poet (Ezra Pound?).

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.  
Dust inbreathed was a house—  
The walls, the wainscot and the mouse,  
The death of hope and despair,  
       This is the death of air.

There are flood and drouth  
Over the eyes and in the mouth,  
Dead water and dead sand  
Contending for the upper hand.  
The parched eviscerate soil  
Gapes at the vanity of toil,  
Laughs without mirth.  
       This is the death of earth.

Water and fire succeed  
The town, the pasture and the weed.  
Water and fire deride  
The sacrifice that we denied.  
Water and fire shall rot  
The marred foundations we forgot,  
Of sanctuary and choir.  
       This is the death of water and fire.

In the uncertain hour before the morning  
     Near the ending of interminable night  
     At the recurrent end of the unending  
After the dark dove with the flickering tongue  
     Had passed below the horizon of his homing  
     While the dead leaves still rattled on like tin  
Over the asphalt where no other sound was  
     Between three districts whence the smoke arose  
     I met one walking, loitering and hurried  
As if blown towards me like the metal leaves  
     Before the urban dawn wind unresisting.  
     And as I fixed upon the down-turned face  
That pointed scrutiny with which we challenge  
     The first-met stranger in the waning dusk  
     I caught the sudden look of some dead master  
Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled  
     Both one and many; in the brown baked features  
     The eyes of a familiar compound ghost  
Both intimate and unidentifiable.  
     So I assumed a double part, and cried  
     And heard another's voice cry: 'What! are you here?'  
Although we were not. I was still the same,  
     Knowing myself yet being someone other—  
     And he a face still forming; yet the words sufficed  
To compel the recognition they preceded.  
     And so, compliant to the common wind,  
     Too strange to each other for misunderstanding,  
In concord at this intersection time  
     Of meeting nowhere, no before and after,  
     We trod the pavement in a dead patrol.  
I said: 'The wonder that I feel is easy,  
     Yet ease is cause of wonder. Therefore speak:  
     I may not comprehend, may not remember.'  
And he: 'I am not eager to rehearse  
     My thoughts and theory which you have forgotten.  
     These things have served their purpose: let them be.  
So with your own, and pray they be forgiven  
     By others, as I pray you to forgive  
     Both bad and good. Last season's fruit is eaten  
And the fullfed beast shall kick the empty pail.  
     For last year's words belong to last year's language  
     And next year's words await another voice.  
But, as the passage now presents no hindrance  
     To the spirit unappeased and peregrine  
     Between two worlds become much like each other,  
So I find words I never thought to speak  
     In streets I never thought I should revisit  
     When I left my body on a distant shore.  
Since our concern was speech, and speech impelled us  
     To purify the dialect of the tribe  
     And urge the mind to aftersight and foresight,  
Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age  
     To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort.  
     First, the cold friction of expiring sense  
Without enchantment, offering no promise  
     But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit  
     As body and soul begin to fall asunder.  
Second, the conscious impotence of rage  
     At human folly, and the laceration  
     Of laughter at what ceases to amuse.  
And last, the rending pain of re-enactment  
     Of all that you have done, and been; the shame  
     Of motives late revealed, and the awareness  
Of things ill done and done to others' harm  
     Which once you took for exercise of virtue.  
     Then fools' approval stings, and honour stains.  
From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit  
     Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire  
     Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.'  
The day was breaking. In the disfigured street  
     He left me, with a kind of valediction,  
     And faded on the blowing of the horn.

III

There are three conditions which often look alike  
Yet differ completely, flourish in the same hedgerow:  
Attachment to self and to things and to persons, detachment  
From self and from things and from persons; and, growing between them, indifference  
Which resembles the others as death resembles life,  
Being between two lives—unflowering, between  
The live and the dead nettle. This is the use of memory:  
For liberation—not less of love but expanding  
Of love beyond desire, and so liberation  
From the future as well as the past. Thus, love of a country  
Begins as attachment to our own field of action  
And comes to find that action of little importance  
Though never indifferent. History may be servitude,  
History may be freedom. See, now they vanish,  
The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved them,  
To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern.

opens with a discussion of three stages of spiritual development: attachment to people and things; detachment *from*people and things; and, finally, indifference to such temporal and material things, and a devotion to the spiritual and eternal.

Sin is Behovely, but  
All shall be well, and  
All manner of thing shall be well.  
If I think, again, of this place,  
And of people, not wholly commendable,  
Of no immediate kin or kindness,  
But of some peculiar genius,  
All touched by a common genius,  
United in the strife which divided them;  
If I think of a king at nightfall,  
Of three men, and more, on the scaffold  
And a few who died forgotten  
In other places, here and abroad,  
And of one who died blind and quiet  
Why should we celebrate  
These dead men more than the dying?  
It is not to ring the bell backward  
Nor is it an incantation  
To summon the spectre of a Rose.  
We cannot revive old factions  
We cannot restore old policies  
Or follow an antique drum.  
These men, and those who opposed them  
And those whom they opposed  
Accept the constitution of silence  
And are folded in a single party.  
Whatever we inherit from the fortunate  
We have taken from the defeated  
What they had to leave us—a symbol:  
A symbol perfected in death.  
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.

IV

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

‘Flame of incandescent terror’ is both the Holy Spirit *and* the German planes terrorising London with bombing raids.

The fires of hell can only be overcome by the fires of religious fervour or Pentecost.

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

V

What we call the beginning is often the end  
And to make an end is to make a beginning.  
The end is where we start from. And every phrase  
And sentence that is right (where every word is at home,  
Taking its place to support the others,  
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,  
An easy commerce of the old and the new,  
The common word exact without vulgarity,  
The formal word precise but not pedantic,  
The complete consort dancing together)  
Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,  
Every poem an epitaph. And any action  
Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat  
Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start.  
We die with the dying:  
See, they depart, and we go with them.  
We are born with the dead:  
See, they return, and bring us with them.  
The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree  
Are of equal duration. A people without history  
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern  
Of timeless moments. So, while the light fails  
On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel  
History is now and England.

The fifth and final section of ‘Little Gidding’ ends by contemplating and analysing the role of endings themselves – and beginnings.

Medieval mysticism.

History does not reside solely in the past, but in the present, at a place like Little Gidding where the traditions of seventeenth-century high Anglicanism are kept alive.

So it is with ‘Little Gidding’ itself, in the last analysis: it is a poem about traditions in the present, and a present-day poem that absorbs past traditions. The poem did, as Eliot said, set a crown upon his lifetime’s effort. After this, he would never write another great poem.

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

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.  
Through the unknown, remembered gate  
When the last of earth left to discover  
Is that which was the beginning;  
At the source of the longest river  
The voice of the hidden waterfall  
And the children in the apple-tree  
Not known, because not looked for  
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness  
Between two waves of the sea.  
Quick now, here, now, always—  
A condition of complete simplicity  
(Costing not less than everything)  
And all shall be well and  
All manner of thing shall be well  
When the tongues of flame are in-folded  
Into the crowned knot of fire  
And the fire and the rose are one.

Notes

There are several internet sites offering online texts of the "Four Quartets". I do not know which site was the first; but its author saved his successors much work, for they evidently copied his text exactly — including his errors of spelling, punctuation, and even his missed lines. This is amusing inasmuch as these sites were presumably constructed as the result of genuine enthusiasm for Eliot's poetic masterwork. But it is saddening to see basic standards of academic accuracy disregarded thus; moreover, these sites remain uncorrected. (They are welcome to take my own source code, which will enable them to amend their errors without much effort.)

I have omitted line numbers in the texts at this site; they can easily be added if the documents are opened in any good word processor.

FRONT PAGE

The two extracts from the Fragments of the Presocratics (Herakleitos or Heraclitus) by H. A. Diels are presented here in the Greek and in an English translation.

BURNT NORTON

Written in 1935.

Burnt Norton is a manor in Gloucestershire visited by Eliot in 1934. Its rose garden suggested the imagery of the opening section.

Part II  
"Erhebung"  
Elevation/exaltation (German).

Part V  
"As in the figure of the ten stairs"  
The Dark Night of the Soul by St. John of the Cross states that "there are ten steps on the mystical ladder of divine love." Other references to St. John of the Cross are scattered throughout the poem.

EAST COKER

Written in 1940.

East Coker is a village near Yeovil, Somerset, Eliot's ancestral home. Andrew Eliot left East Coker for the New World in about 1669.

Part I  
"In my beginning is my end"  
Cf: "In my end is my beginning" in Part V. The latter is the motto of Mary Queen of Scots ("En ma fin est mon commencement").

"The association of man and woman  
In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie..."  
This passage is taken from The Boke Named the Governour (1530) by Sir Thomas Elyot, an ancestor of T.S. Eliot.

THE DRY SALVAGES

Written in 1941.

"The Dry Salvages—presumably les trois sauvages—is a small  
group of rocks, with a beacon, off the N.E. coast of Cape Ann,  
Massachusetts."  
Eliot's family spent time in this area during his childhood.

By his own reckoning (in a speech given upon receiving the Emerson-Thoreau Medal from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1959, at which he read this poem), the poem begins where Eliot began (St. Louis, the Mississippi River) and ends where he expected to end (a parish church of a village in Somerset).

(from an Internet page of [notes](http://www2.bc.edu/~constas/four_quartets_notes.html) to the Quartets)

Part III  
Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield: in the Mahabharata, the discourse known as the Bhagavad Gita.

Part IV  
"Figlia del tuo figlio"  
"Daughter of your son" (i.e. Mary and Jesus); from Dante's Paradisio.

LITTLE GIDDING

Written in 1942.

Little Gidding is a village in Cambridgeshire visited by Eliot in 1936. It was the home of a religious community established in 1626. In 1633 Charles I visited the community; in 1646 he returned, fleeing Parliamentary troops who broke up the community.

Part III  
"Sin is Behovely, but  
All shall be well, and  
All manner of thing shall be well."  
Dame Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love, the 13th revelation; a modern translation of which might read "Sin was necessary, but it is going to be well, everything is going to be well".

"By the purification of the motive  
In the ground of our beseeching."  
Dame Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love, the 14th revelation.