

"Only through time time is conquered": A Study on T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets

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ABSTRACT

In the *Four Quartets* (1943), T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) resumes his spiritual journey from the abyss of Hell, passing by Purgatory, and ending up in Paradise. This poem is thus divided into five sections, linked by frequent themes which are developed in complex ways and are eventually resolved. Majorly, the *Four Quartets* is concerned with the search for meaning in the chaos of modernism, the quest for peace and joy in the flux of time and the discovery of God in permanence. Thence, Eliot makes of the delicate relation of the Eternal to the Transient as the central theme of the *Four Quartets*.

In the *Four Quartets* (1943), T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) resumes his spiritual journey from the abyss of Hell, passing by Purgatory, and ending up in Paradise. In Western classical music "a Quartet is a piece written to be played by four stringed instruments" (Sen, 264) This poem is divided into five sections, linked by recurring themes which are developed in a complex way and is then resolved. Majorly, the *Four Quartets* is concerned with the search for meaning in the chaos of modernism, the quest for peace and joy in the flux of time and the discovery of God in permanence. Thus, Eliot makes of the delicate relation of the Eternal to the Transient as the central theme of the *Four Quartets*.

The epigraph of the poem is taken from Diel's edition of the writings of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus (500 BC.). The first epigraph is: "Although the word "Logos" is common to all, most people live as if each one of them had a private intelligence of his own". Logos here means the Word that should be common to all humanity. The second is "The way upward and the way down are one and the same". As far as the second epigraph is concerned, Eliot's interpretation of the way upward and the way down are the same" is not that of Heraclitus. To Eliot the world means the exploration of all the human emotional equivalents of birth-day, war-peace, day-night, high-depth, heat-cold, movement-stillness leads to the discovery that all the "ways" lead to the "life" in the centre, and to the revelation of the "truth" of that symbol. It is the revelation in "the turning world" of "the wound which is common to all". (Cooper, 97)

The structure of the *Quartets* is enormously complex. First, the *Quartets* have a synopsis structure in which each represents a sonata form composed in turn of specific movements. The general music is the music of speech. Eliot has discovered how to vary the music of speech ranging from the colloquial to the formal. Second, the poem develops gradually from theme exposition to the theme development. Thirdly, the poem consists of a contrapuntal arrangement of subject matter corresponding with the musical structure of the verse. As the title views, the poem is divided into four quartets. Some critics see in the poem a reflection of Dante's *Divine Comedy*; literal, allegorical, moral, and mystical levels. Furthermore, each of the sections corresponds to a season of the year and to one of the basic

elements,"earth, water, air, and fire"(Drew, 146) in addition to that, each quartet creates different ways of looking at time: time as memory; time as a cyclical pattern, time as flux; time as the revelation of the meaning of history. (ibid, 146-7)

The first part of the *Four Quartets* is entitled *Burnt Norton* (1935). It is entitled as such after a ruined country house in Gloucestershire which was burnt 200 years before Eliot's visit to this place and then it was reestablished. (Cooper, 92) This quartet focuses on time as an abstract principle; the past and the future are always contained in the present. In the garden of this house, there is a bird, a thrush, which serves as the poet's guide, to bring him to the garden, showing him the place around and saving him from the despair at not being able to reach:

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?

(BN, I)

The poet roams "Into the rose- garden" and "Into our first world" which serves as a reference to the biblical garden of Eden from which both Adam and Eve were expelled because of their sins of disobedience.

The second section of *BN* starts with a song that moves from downward upward; from mud to stars. This section also includes the image of the "axle-tree" which would appear to be Yggdrasil. This tree is rooted in earth but reaches to heaven. Thus, this tree might be a linkage between earth and heaven. This idea is reinforced by Eliot as he links between "Clot the bedded axle-tree / The trilling wire in the blood". The Blood here refers to the blood of Christ which is "reconciled among the stars"(BN, II) this reconciliation is also depicted as fulfilling compensation with "the wars of the past". This lyric is followed directly by lines that are lengthier and more philosophical by exploring the notion of timeless movement of the human life. These lines have meditative tone in order to sort out the difference between consciousness and living in time, for "To be conscious is not to be in time" (II). (Kenner, p. 264)

Eliot concept of timelessness is "the still point". This point is not a fixed one; rather, it can be located at any place in creation "Similarly, all who practice the Transcendental Meditation technique experience a state of Transcendental Consciousness parallel to Eliot's still point within the boundaries of their own ever-changing selves wherever and whenever they sit to meditate" (Fairchild, 63-4) Eliot's still point is the point at which one is freed from normal human constraints, a point of pure consciousness in which one sees into the life of things and understands both the ecstasy and horror of the world. According to Eliot, Man is usually protected from a full realization of heaven and hell by transience; the passage of time and the changes to which the human body is subject. The movement of pure consciousness is outside the process of time, but time remains important to Man so as to remember such movement:

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.

(BN, II)

In the third section of *BN*, time shifts from the still point to "time before and time after" (BN, III). Eliot here focuses on the condition of modern life which is actually in a state of "half life". The transience here takes the form of physical and spiritual discrimination. Human souls pass by spiritual darkness: "Over the strained time-ridden faces". Significantly, (Man and bits of paper" are both blown by the wind for they move with "unearthly souls" and are all enveloped in darkness. Taking London as an example, Eliot describes the "tube" passengers as anxious but they lack all sense of purpose. It is a city of pollution by the blenching of unearthly souls. Meanwhile, Eliot proposes away to escape from such struggle with darkness and the horrors found in life by adopting negativeness. In this perspective, Eliot seems to be alluding to St. John of the Cross' treatise of mysticism *The Dark Night of the Soul* which suggests that to ascend, we need to descend and to live a life of self-denial, solitude, darkness, living a life of asceticism and to forego all sensual desires to attain spiritual ascendance. One has to fall deeper to rise higher. (Fairchild, 63)

Images of darkness and stillness continue with the fourth section of *BN* which though it is short; yet it consists many points of juxtapositions especially between those of light and darkness. The sunset is presented in relation to funeral terms in relation to "bell", "buried", and "black", still, light is present "at the still point of the turning world"(IV) this means that both light and darkness are important in this universe. Thus, this part consists can be read as both; positive and negative. (Lall, 120)

With the fifth section of *BN*, Eliot gets back to the garden of the first section, to return to reality which announces that despite the apparent vitality of words and music, they must die for "The end and the beginning were always there/ Before the beginning and after the end" (V). One thing remains unchanging; time's enslavement of Man. Everything in Man's life is temporal and doomed to an end as long as there are living entities, there should be an end or death even "Words, after speech, reach / Into the silence"(V) The only entity that, according to Eliot is able to defeat time and death is art, using the "Chinese jar" as a metaphor to any sort of art can defeat time by their physical existence. In this consideration poetry may also achieve transcendentalism by its powerful resistance of time:

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.

(BN, V)

Then, there is the figure of "the ten stairs", an allusion taken from St. John of the Cross' again and his book the *Dark Night of the Soul*. St. John's ten stairs are revealing the image if the

relationship between the soul and God. In the *Four Quartets*, Eliot exceeds this image to adhere to the nature of love and desire in relation to time and movement. Meaning that desire is a matter of non satisfaction, so it moves towards love which instigates it. While love means stillness, perfection and timelessness but the problem is in this world of time; love suffers the limitation of time in this world. As a whole, this first part of the *Four Quartets* is related to how one must burn all types of weaknesses and to get a rebirth, just like the phoenix. One should rise from the ashes to get new beginning and new life and to rise from the ashes of decay, loss, and destruction. (Kenner, 265)

The second quartet is entitled *East Coker* (1940). It is entitled as such after the name of a small village near Yeovil on the borders of Dorset and Somerset in the south west of England. This place is important to Eliot as it was the place of Eliot's ancestors before their emigration to New World around 1669. Thus, this part recalls a significant event in the Eliot family for it was both their end and their beginning as Eliot tries to declare:

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

(*EC*, I)

EC has a distinctive uniqueness of being a personal poem Eliot has ever written "though it is characteristic that he is not being personal about a purely private experience. He speaks as an individual member of society totally involved in the same problem" (Drew, 162)

The first section is majorly describing the processes of renewal and decay as Eliot sees it. Houses and other signs of human habitations become empty fields or freeway overpasses. In these fields and in summer, if one listens carefully enough, s/he can hear the sounds of the simple rural life of the past, with an emphasis on natural cycles of harmony. Time here is less cyclical than linear: "In my beginning is my end". The condition of stillness is altered through various juxtapositions between "beginning, end", "rise, fall", "destroyed, restored", "old, new", and "live, die". The world is full of these juxtapositions and contradictions. Houses, buildings, cities, civilizations are all subjects of rise and fall. Man is no exception to this rule. Man's life leads him to death; the rise leads man to fall. Everything moves in a closed circle even the lines of this section are repeated so as to emphasize such fact. (Fairchild, 66)

The second section of *EC* opens with a condition of universal chaos through images of earth and sky, focusing on the destruction and horror of WWII. Because of war, everything in chaos, on earth the seasons are confused, winter is connected with spring and summer, and the flowers of the different seasons, snow drops, summer hollyhocks and winter roses, appear to bloom simultaneously. It is as if there is a war going on in heavens in an echo to earthly war: (ibid, 67)

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

(EC, II)

The sound of thunder imitates the sound of war, filling the world with "destructive fire". The dilemma here is a universal one. The war led to disasters.

Eventually, the tone of this poem is altered to be concerned with the human rather than with cosmic issues. The question raised by Eliot here is of the traditional value of the past whether it is a real reflection of serenity and wisdom or it is equal to stupidity in its serenity and to useless facts in its wisdom. Eliot thus proposes certain idea that instead of allowing the past to influence our views of the present, we should let the present revise our view of the past. So the past is turned in this stage to be no more than a series of traditional illusions. Alluding to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Eliot uses a metaphor of loss in a dark wood as a symbol of one's loss in the philosophy of middle ages, announcing that the only thing man has got from the past is fear. According to Eliot, old age used to be afraid of passion, of enchantment, of attachment to any being even if it were God:

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.

(EC, II)

This section ends up with the cure to compensate with life; it is humility that represents the only source of wisdom for it is "endless" in its effect.

That dark wood of the second section is transformed into a condition of utter repeated darkness by the third section of *EC*. This section even begins with a lamentation of an old man for he is forbidden to see the light due to his blindness. Of course Eliot's mentioning of darkness is very much attached to the darkness of the world. At the same time, this condition of darkness reminds us of St. John's *The Dark Night of the Soul* concerning the way man should cross darkness so as to be united with God through his waiting for this union. Eliot links this waiting with three different images. The first image is that of the theatre which reveals how darkness can sometimes be an interval during which necessary changes occur. The audience in the theatre know that they have to wait in darkness to see the next scene. The second image is that of "underground train" when it passes a tunnel, there is a condition of stillness and inaction merged with waiting in darkness. While the third image is rather a Prufrockian one which is related to the darkness of the soul that seems just like a patient etherized on a table, thinking of nothing and for nothing. The soul should pass by these different stages of utter darkness to attain the "light", stillness should be still to attain the "dance". (Drew, 145)

The fourth section of *EC* shifts to another subject; it serves as an explicit reminder of the horrors of war and the blood imagery related to it. Eliot uses the "hospital" metaphorically to refer to a double meaning. The first metaphor of the hospital is used to highlight the horrors

of war; the hospital is staffed by a "wounded surgeon" and "a dying nurse". In this consideration the patients in this hospital are not healed; rather, they pass through a very painful illness to death. The second use of the image of hospital is that this hospital may represent the world and that God is taken care of man for those who should do the task are crippled. Whether Eliot's intention is the first or the second metaphors, he combines this image of unhealthiness to Christ's crucifixion. What Eliot tries to communicate here after all is that anything worthy should come through suffering, forbearance and total surrender to higher authority. This surrender can be attained through purgation and purification of fire. Eventually, this purgatorial fire is transformed into an image of beauty. (Fairchild, 68)

The final section of *EC* focuses on Eliot's realization of his failure as a poet. He shows how he has wasted his youth and how this has led him only to articulate ideas that are no more useful. As the first section of this poem begins with beginning and end, the last section ends up likewise but in a reversed way "In my end is my beginning" (*EC*, V) as Eliot feels the urge need to get back to his ancestors homeland. In this consideration, the Home is seen as the place from which one begins life's journey as Eliot's ancestors have done, and Eliot in turn should go back at the end to home to find new beginning.

With the third quartet the *Dry Salvages* (1941), Eliot explains his choice of such a title. Eliot's family went to the coast of Cape Ann in the summer when he was a boy to escape from the heat of St. Louise, Missouri. This quartet departs from the pessimism and human ruins of the other three quartets to consider humanity as an entity with a unified subconscious and memory through introducing a mythical structure. Thus, humanity is placed in a level with the natural world as it is related to the cycles of rebirth and renewal. (Drew, 176-7)

The first section of *DS* quartet shows a comparison between the river and the sea as two models for the unknown. A river, while it represented always a prominent figure in human mythologies, is something that can be crossed and conquered. It represents an endless reserve of depth and mystery; as such man can never master it. According to Eliot, the river has a major function of splitting primitive man from natural elements surrounding it. Hence; the river might be viewed by this primitive man as a powerful god which has human moods but is beyond human control:

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,

(*DS*, I)

Eliot summarizes in these lines the history of the river. The river serves as a natural boundary to early settlers, then it developed to be a means of transport to traders, and finally this river turned to be regarded only by engineers. Eventually, as cities were established day after day by the river, the city dwellers "choose to forget" this river. But this river, however, keeps reminding those people by its existence from time to time by flooding. The image of the river is thus related to the cycle of life, to childhood, to sleep and waking, to spring flowers and autumn fruits. (ibid, 177)

Meanwhile, Eliot presents the image of the sea which he depicts it as vaster and incomprehensible than the river. Unlike the river, the sea declares its superiority to human race in the casual, off land manner in which it threw back what it has destroyed. This section also focuses on the time motif. Time in this section is presented through abstract images of time. Time here emphasize poverty and paltriness of human life which is described as a continuous process of mending and making.

The image of the sea continues with the second section of *DS* as it depicts the horror and boredom of human life in relation to sea imagery. There are three images of the influence of the sea on the vegetable, inanimate and animate entities. The sea will never be either a blank state or an easily circumscribed pond for "there is no end of it" (*DS*, II). To Eliot, man must attain good faith. Time destroys but it also preserves and just as there is no mastery there is no escape for "there is no end, but addition"(II). Eliot also introduces the image of fishermen referring to humanity as a whole that should sail into the futureless-future in a fog-bound ocean "littered with wastage"(II). Time is thus turned to be the endless sea which is full corrupted desires and feckless actions. Whether it is past, present or future, man is sailing in this endless sea of time. This part also juxtaposes what is mentioned previously of the benefit of the past. To Eliot, the past has a great benefit in its tradition, in the experiences "of many generations-not forgetting/ Something that is probably quite ineffable"(II). This section concludes that past should be merged with the present and future for there is an important fact; time is never-ending: "Time the destroyer is time the preserver"(II) (Fairchild, 74)

By the third section of *DS*, Eliot retains to the east and Krishna's Bhagavad-Gita,
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.
(*DS*, III)

In a world of change, time cannot be arrested, it keeps slipping into something else; the future into the present, the past into the past, the past into remote past, and the remote past into forgetfulness. In this consideration, the world can be seen only as a transitory world; events exist before they actually occur, they fade before being conceived and turn into remembrance before happening. Time enslaves the world by its strangeness, thus, life is turned to be a flux, and precise continuity in human interaction may seem to but does not actually exist. Everything is a matter of change and because of this change, man does not notice the continuous cycle of time. Existence is in state of constant decay and renewal and in spite of the discrepancies between what we see, what we remember, what we anticipate, there is only the eternal moment which is past, present and future. (Maxwell, 157-8) These three entities are tied to thinking of the temporal world as a continuum live a delusion of time from which they cannot free themselves. Eliot sympathizes with their ignorance, but in the words of Bhagavad-Gita he pleads with them:

consider the future
And the past with an equal mind.
At the moment which is not of action or inaction
.....
Which shall fructify in the lives of others:
And do not think of the fruit of action.
.....
'this is your real destination.'
So Krishna, as when he admonished Arjuna
On the field of battle.

(*DS*, III)

The movement between action and inaction is for Eliot the "real destination" of all journeys, of life itself. To reach this destination Eliot invokes Krishna's warning "do not think of the fruit of action"(III). This is a statement of warning not to look for success in the field of action but to be in the field of Transcendence. This section ends up with Krishna's advice to humanity not to "farewell" but to "fare forward".

The fourth section of *DS* transforms us to a prayer dedicated to Virgin Mary who is figured as a statue watching over the sea, asking her to pray for those who voyage on the sea and to those who wait for them at home. The sailors or voyagers and their loved ones stand for humanity that is faced with uncertain conditions and a lack of knowledge:

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.

(*DS*, IV)

The final section of *DS* begins with a series of various ways of esoteric which are all inadequate manners in dealing with time such as astrology, séances, handwriting analysis, palmistry, reading tea leaves, and modern psychology. All these are occults or pseudo-science that attempt to arrest the past or divine the future. People look for such means to comfort themselves in times of personal troubles or universal disasters as it happened at the time of WWII. During this time, people turned to all kinds of fortune-tellings since their sole concern was life in time. The war is linked to Christ's prophecy of the end of the world. This biblical reference is mentioned here so as to make a comparison between the transitions of the life of the saint in contrast with the lives of ordinary man. Only saints are interested in the relationship between time and timelessness, for those saints major concern is the total sacrifice of the self for the sake of the love of God. The real intersection between time and timelessness, which we cannot fully comprehend, is the Incarnation. The union of time and timelessness, which seemed impossible previously, occurs when God becomes man. God is visualized here as the Unmoved Mover participating in the world of action. To act rightly is to be unconcerned with temporal things, to achieve "yoga", to be unlike the anxious women of *DS I*. Most people aspire to this way of life rather than actually achieve it. Success must be measured in terms of effort and not achievement so that hope will "bear fruit to one's life"(V). (Fairchild, 77-8) Thus, *DS* ends up with a note of hope.

The fourth of the *Quartets* is entitled *Little Gidding* (1942) after the name of a village in Huntingdonshire where, in 1626, Nicholas Ferrer established a Christian community of thirty-five to forty persons of both sexes and from all ages. This community aimed at establishing the "Christian Family" and to make a combination of regular religious devotion with intellectual and moral labours and provided a social service for the neighborhood. This community was visited by King Charles I two times, in 1633 and in 1642. After his defeat of his cause at Naseby in May 1646, the king made his way there, looking for a refuge.

The first section of *LG* begins with "a midwinter spring", a season of "its own season". Everything is dead in this strange sunny winter day, everything is blazing by the sun's ray which is akin to fire; "the brief sun flames the ice". It is a season of opposites, varying between cold and heat, pole and tropic, frost and fire, flame and ice, external cold and the heart's heat. In addition to that, Eliot describes a condition of being which is in time but not of time. The opposing forces of "frost and fire" literally represent the seasons of winter and summer and their harsh characteristics. Metaphorically speaking, both seasons are the means

of brining eternal spring into being. Meanwhile, summer turns into a zero summer because it transcends human imagination. It is full of ripeness of spiritual awakening that the poet longs for, a summer that exceeds the still point and the midwinter spring, embracing all life in the warmth of eternity. As a matter of fact, Eliot mentions the "zero summer" which stands metaphorically for the monastery of Little Gidding as the end of the spiritual journey for this monastery stands for Paradise on earth. A spiritual pilgrim travelling the route to Little Gidding would find the "Voluptuary sweetness" of May. The journey may stand for anywhere in the world for recalling this monastery represents the end of the world itself. Eliot states that the route to the zero summer can be done through prayer, but it is important that this "prayer is more/ Than an order of words"(I), it is a means of Transcendence to "the intersection of the timeless movement/ Is England and nowhere. Now and always"(I). (Harding, 125)

The second section of *LG* opens with three lyrics on the death of the four elements; air, earth, water, and fire. These elements have been figured out in the previous quartets. The first lyric visualizes the choked air of London's fire bombings during the war. The "death of air" is the suffocating ash and dust that had been the walls of home and structures of former lives. Ash is "what the burnt roses leave", it conflates the entire range of human existence. Thus, the ash is the sobering destiny of all lives lived in time.

The second lyric is related to water and earth but it is "dead water" and "dead sand". Humanity for Eliot fouls the air and water and reduces life to ash and dust through wars and other thoughtless actions. These elements change in turn, wear away all that exists including Time and this is the subject of the third lyric. The scene then shifts to the poet's description of being walking at dawn. While he is walking, he meets a ghost of some former master whom he does not quite realize. The two speak and the ghost gives the poet the burden of wisdom; awareness of folly, a loss of perception of beauty, and shame at one's past deeds. The ghost also tells him that only if he is "restored by...refining fire", there will be no escape from all these curses. The ghost then leaves him with horn blows, which may stand for air-raid siren. Such meeting echoes Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the *Inferno*, Canto XV (Moody, 146):

***The Inferno*:** a company of shades came into sight
walking beside the bank. They stared at us
.....
Stared at us so closely by the ghostly crew,
I was recognized by one who seized the hem
of my skirt and said: "Wonder of Wonders! You?"
.....
I answered: "Sir Brunetto, are *you* here?"

Eliot's echo of Dante can be seen through the following extract:

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
.....
And heard another's voice cry: "What! are *you* here?"

(*LG*, II)

Section three opens with three moral lessons of Attachment, Detachment, and Indifference. All three look alike but Indifference comes only through exercise of memory to create abstraction. Attachment is related to "self and to things and to persons", Detachment is contrary; it means splitting "from self and from things and from persons"(III), while Indifference is "growing between them". As such, Eliot points out the vital role of memory in the growth of all three processes. Memory purifies love by freeing it from desire which is a form of Attachment. (Smith,94) By the passage of time love is purified of its selfish elements and this leads to Detachment and consequent Indifference. Eliot believes that people who come to Little Gidding are seeking spiritual renewal and peace; he realizes that the dead have left us only a "symbol", one that has been perfected but nevertheless it is still only a representation of an abstraction. (Harding, 126- 7)

The fourth section is a two stanzas piece. The first describes a dove with a tongue of fire, which both purifies and destroys. Traditionally, the dove is associated with the Holy Spirit who descended on the Apostle in the form of a tongue of fire which offers a kind of deliverance from sin. The second stanza considers love as the chief torment of man which can redeem as well as torture. Meaning the Holy Spirit is here given a traditional identification with love.

The final section of the poem, and of the whole of the *Quartets*, brings the spiritual and the aesthetic together in a final reconciliation. Perfect language results in poetry in which every word and every phrase is "an end and a beginning." The timeless and the time-bound are interchangeable and in the moment, if one is in the right place, like the chapel at Little Gidding. All will be well when the fires that both destroy and redeem come together to form a knot and "the fire and the rose"—divine wrath and mercy—become one (Maxwell, 166-7):

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.

(LG, V)

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الخلاصة

في قصيدته (الرباعيات الأربع ١٩٤٣) يستكمل تي. أس. إليوت (١٨٨٨-١٩٦٥) رحلته الروحية من أعماق الجحيم مروراً بالأعراف وانتهاءً بالجنة. لذا تقسم هذه القصيدة إلى خمسة أجزاء تربطها ثيمات تتكرر وتتشابك فيما بينها وصولاً إلى المنشود. كذلك تعنى قصيدة (الرباعيات الأربع) بصورة عامة بالبحث عن المعنى في ظل فوضى الحداثة والبحث عن السكينة والسلام من خلال تقدم الزمن ، محاولاً الشاعر بذلك فهم طبيعة الإلهية. يعتمد إليوت كذلك إلى فهم طبيعة الخلود لكون الحياة هي مجرد مرحلة انتقالية .

