



About the Author

Terry Fairchild received his B.A. from the University of Nevada in 1975, his M.A. from the University of Utah in 1983, and his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa in 1990. He has been an Assistant Professor of Literature at Maharishi University of Management (formerly Maharishi International University) since 1990 and is currently serving as the department's Associate Chair. His primary areas of interest are Modern and Contemporary literature, drama, and critical theory. Dr. Fairchild has published articles on Frank Waters, T.S. Eliot, William Stafford, and "Literature and Consciousness" and has presented conference papers on Waters, Eliot, Bernard Malamud, Nabakov, Toni Morrison, Thomas Pynchon, and Post-Modernism. He is currently writing articles on Thomas Pynchon, "Infinite Correlation in Crying of Lot 49" and Sophocles, "Oedipus Rex: Sins of the Fathers." With Susan Setzer he is preparing a literature textbook from the perspective of the Science of Creative Intelligence. Professor Fairchild also serves as the Executive Editor of Modern Science and Vedic Science, an academic journal dedicated to connecting the modern knowledge of the West to the traditional knowledge of the Veda and Vedic Literature.

Address correspondence to: Department of Literature
Maharishi University of Management, Fairfield, IA 52557
Modern Science and Vedic Science, Volume 9, Number 1, 1999
©1999 Maharishi University of Management

TIME AND ETERNITY IN ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

Time is the moving image of eternity
Plato

The mystery of dismemberment is life in time
Joseph Campbell

Time is a conception to measure eternity
Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

**Time, Eternity, and Immortality
in T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets***

Terry L. Fairchild

Maharishi University of Management
Fairfield, Iowa, U.S.A.

Abstract

The Four Quartets has been called the greatest philosophical poem of this century. Eliot's earlier epic, The Wasteland, has maintained a more lasting influence, but the latter poem is a fuller, more mature treatment of Eliot's spiritual vision. The Four Quartets considers the relationship between life in time, a life of bondage and suffering, and life in eternity, freedom, and happiness. Prior to the composition of the Four Quartets, Eliot had converted to Anglicanism, but the basis of the poem remains Eastern with the Bhagavad-Gita as its primary source of inspiration. Because Maharishi Vedic Science is the most comprehensive discussion on the relationship between life in time and life in eternity, between ignorance and enlightenment, and because its practical methodologies—the Transcendental Meditation technique and the Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi program—provide the means for living life in eternity, it exists as the most appropriate body of knowledge for elucidating the full scope of Eliot's masterpiece.

Contents

Introduction	52
<i>Four Quartets</i> : The Epigraph	54
<i>Burnt Norton</i>	57
<i>East Coker</i>	66
<i>The Dry Salvages</i>	72
<i>Little Gidding</i>	79
Appendix	86

A Postmodern Assessment of Eliot86
 Space-Time88
 Quantum Mechanical Time90
 Reversing Time92

Introduction

Thomas Stearns Eliot was a mass of contradictions. An American from St. Louis, he moved to England and took British citizenship. A man who had always wanted to be a poet, he studied philosophy at Harvard. A writer who filled his poetry with Eastern philosophy, he converted to Anglicanism. One of the world’s great intellectuals, Eliot read detective fiction and wrote limericks about cats in his spare time. The most revolutionary poet of his age (who literally changed the direction of poetry), he is now seen by post-structuralists as a crypto-fascist. Such opposing characteristics also exist everywhere in Eliot’s poetry and nowhere more than in his masterpiece *Four Quartets*. Often called a “negative poet” for his unrelenting attack on modern life in his earlier works, in the *Four Quartets* Eliot sees things differently. The life of time and change that he had previously depicted as the “wasteland” is in the *Four Quartets* found to be supported by an underlying, spiritual absolute, a level of life where the two extremes of time and timeless are indistinguishable. Moreover, Eliot espouses the experience of this transcendental field as the spiritually transforming value of all life both for the individual and the world. Therefore, in Eliot’s last and greatest poetic effort we find not a negative or dualistic view of life after all, but rather the vision of a man who passionately believed in a spiritual unity.

What is particularly satisfying about the *Four Quartets* is that they complete Eliot’s broad landscape begun with “Prufrock,” “Gerontion,” and *The Wasteland*, poems that address spiritual failure in a bankrupt universe. But with the Vedic words “*Datta . . . Dayadhvam . . . Damyata*”¹ spoken by the thunder at *The Wasteland*’s conclusion, Eliot anticipates a spiritually revitalized world fully conceptualized in the *Four Quartets*. In this later poem, Eliot once again considers the life of desire, fear, and death that haunted *The Wasteland* and other earlier efforts; but in the *Quartets* the importance of this darker world has been diminished, relegated to the sphere of time to form a backdrop to Eliot’s expanded vision of life as unblemished eternity.

Tradition has it that Eliot had long wanted to write a poem imitating music, an intention confirmed in his essay “The Music of Poetry.” The structure of his *Quartets*, with the introduction of an initial theme and an elaboration and variation on that theme, and a series of movements repeated in each quartet, suggests that he was not only indebted thematically and structurally to music, he was specifically indebted to the famous quartets of Mozart and Beethoven (Matthiessen, 1959, p. 182) for the poem’s name. Eliot’s primary theme—time and the timeless—consistent with the temporal qualities of music, is presented in the *Four Quartets*’ opening lines:

Time present and time past
 Are both perhaps present in time future,

TIME AND ETERNITY IN ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

And time future contained in time past . . .
all time is eternally present.

Time more than anything defines the contrasting dimensions of relative existence: an apparent snare with no escape, a continuum of change ever wearing away the fabric of existence, a flow and beauty in constant renewal, a series of exquisite moments that bind life together. Time defines the human condition—the constant reminder that our days are numbered, that our “too, too solid flesh” will too soon melt. This fatal image of time symbolizes the Modern Age—the grave digger delivering the newborn child, the conflation of womb and tomb. Over the span of English literature, poets as diverse as Spenser, Shakespeare, Shelley, Keats, Yeats, and Dylan Thomas (“Time held me green and dying”) have vilified time as an assassin without conscience. The Yoga Vasishta defines time in a complementary way:

All the hopes of man in this world are consistently destroyed by Time. Time alone, O sage, wears everything out in this world; there is nothing in creation which is beyond its reach. Time alone creates innumerable universes, and in a very short time Time destroys everything. (Venkatesananda, 1984, p. 16)

When we make “time run,” says Andrew Marvell, when we allow our lives to be dictated by deadlines, when we compress too much activity into too few hours, time catapults us towards our end. But if we could reverse Marvell’s dictum, slow time down, make time stop, transcend time, peacefully settle into the silence of eternity, we would have “world enough, and time” for everything. In such a state, we would exchange roles with time and *we* would become *its* gentle annihilator. Hence, timelessness or eternity is the second element in Eliot’s equation for the *Four Quartets*:

Time + eternity = entirety (totality, wholeness)

The *Four Quartets*’ opening four lines demonstrate Eliot’s grasp of time, its spiritual significance, and its philosophically exasperating nature which the poet contemplates in the line: “time is eternally present,” an assertion that lends to time both relative and absolute properties while conflating its various, fluctuating forms—the *past* forever disappearing, the *future* forever being born, and the *present* forever being renewed into a single moment. Pointedly juxtaposing time and eternity, Eliot calls attention to the close relationship between them. By merging past, present, and future he creates the eternal present, absolute and relative, never changing and always fleeting, captured in time like the lovers on Keats’ urn for future unborn generations.

Because time and eternity are fundamental to the *Four Quartets*, this subject has been mined again and again by Eliot critics. Nevertheless, it is a topic that needs to be sifted once more. Previous excavations have yet to examine time and eternity in a fully systematic way. Both proponents of Eastern and Western thought have made invaluable commentaries on the significance of time in the *Quartets*, but they miss the poem’s most vital element, Eliot’s sincere conviction that eternity can and must be incorporated into the life of time as the sole means to revitalize the spiritual wasteland of modern life. Read with greatest profundity, the *Four Quartets* present the triumph of life over time. With the Bhagavad-Gita as his primary inspiration, Eliot moves forward in a continuous ebb and flow of time and eternity until he reaches the end of the poem, which is

its true beginning, life lived forever in the timeless, no longer touched by the binding influence of time. Similarly, Maharishi Vedic ScienceSM describes a state of consciousness called *Brahmi Chetna*, Unity Consciousness: individual life raised to the level of the universal, the temporal raised to the level of the eternal. Simply stated, the *Four Quartets* presents a progression, a nonlinear evolution of human consciousness, away from the wasteland suffering of time-locked existence and towards the full beatitude of spiritual life in the eternal freedom lived beyond time.

Maharishi Vedic Science, which includes Maharishi's extensive commentaries on Vedic Literature, an impressive videotape collection on the relationship between relativity and the varieties of timeless existence, a weighty library of texts on the Transcendental Meditation[®] technique and its application to every conceivable field, and a collection of scientific papers on over 25 years of research,² exists as an enormous intellectual resource on the nature of life lived in and out of time. Because of Eliot's background in such Vedic Literature as the Bhagavad-Gita and the Upanishads, texts that when restored to their fullest value form along with Maharishi's commentaries on the nature of consciousness the basis of Maharishi Vedic Science, make Maharishi Vedic Science not only an appropriate critical light by which to view Eliot's poetry, it illuminates it to a degree not previously attained in other critical commentaries, including such studies as P. S. Shri's *T.S. Eliot: Vedanta and Buddhism* and A.N. Dwivedi's *T.S. Eliot's Major Poems: An Indian Interpretation*, which indiscriminately rather than systematically draw from the huge body of Vedic Literature. Maharishi Vedic Science treats time and its opposite counterpart, transcendent eternity, as complementary components in an ongoing cycle of evolution. More importantly, it provides the means of accelerating this process of evolution through its applied element—the Transcendental Meditation technique and the Transcendental Meditation-SidhiSM program—for experiencing the field of eternity, pure consciousness, which has enormous benefits for every individual, society, and all of life.

The *Four Quartets* also considers the possibility of immortality—the logical fusing of time and eternity, more or less ignored by previous Eliot criticism. Immortality, to the Western scholar, lies either in the field beyond this life or in the metaphorical realm of poetry, inspiring but impractical. But as we shall see, immortality had greater substance for Eliot than simply as a poetic concept, and for Maharishi Vedic Science it is both the starting point and the natural conclusion of Maharishi's programs mentioned above. Therefore, in this paper I will employ Maharishi Vedic Science, especially as it relates to time, eternity, and immortality, as a means to unveil the deepest values of Eliot's masterpiece.

The *Four Quartets*

The Epigraph

The *Four Quartets* like *The Wasteland* begins with an epigraph. In the *Quartets* it serves as the initial commentary on time and launches the poem's tone and its basic themes. The epigraph originally pertained only to *Burnt Norton* conceived autonomously, but because of their common theme it equally applies to each of the *Quartets*. Two

quotations in Greek from Heraclitus comprise the epigraph. The following is a fair translation of the first:

Although logos (universal consciousness) is common to all,
 most live as though they had an individual wisdom (individual consciousness)
 of their own.

The proper sense of this epigraph is important because it introduces the primary concern of the *Four Quartets*, the connection between individual and universal, temporal and eternal. Interpretations of the epigraph are typical of interpretations of the poem as a whole. A few examples will prove instructive. Derek Traversi misreads the line as “a reasonable truth is . . . the common possession of men, whose lives in fact can only be lived significantly *in common*, in recognition of their essentially social nature” (91). Some interpretations are better than others, but Heraclitus’ epigraph undoubtedly asserts more than Traversi’s social implications.

For Julia Reibetanz, “[t]he problem that the first fragment broaches is . . . the opposition of individual wisdoms to that of higher Wisdom available to all men” (1983, p. 20). Reibetanz’s reading is more helpful, but she unfortunately rends a dichotomy between the higher and lower wisdoms, and in doing so divides the epigraph’s sense of unity implicit in the word “common.” Because logos is *common* to all, a universality always exists, and, therefore, there can be no real opposition. Others reading the line from a conventionally religious position, take the word “logos” metaphorically rather than literally to mean the focal point around which all human action revolves (Gish, 1981, p. 97). To read the epigraph as a metaphor, unfortunately, is to miss Heraclitus’ profound commentary on the literal relationship between the individual and the divine.

Grover Smith’s more liberal translation of the Heraclitian fragment—“Although there is but one Center, most men live in centers of their own” (1950, p. 251) is among the better interpretations. Heraclitus says there is only one logos or center of intelligence—analogue to the foundational field of existence Maharishi calls pure consciousness or pure intelligence which underlies all the individual intelligences that make up the phenomenal world. Reading the line in this broader sense, that there is a primal state common to everyone, suggests that the relationship between logos and individual wisdom is not adversarial, as Reibetanz has suggested; it is simply that the interconnectedness of such a relationship has been lost. An example from modern physics will help clarify what Heraclitus means by a “logos common to all.”

A commonplace exists that Einstein’s greatest disappointment was his failure to prove his unified field theory. In 1967 Professors Weinberg and Salam began to make inroads to redress that disappointment. It was in that year they introduced a theory unifying the weak and electromagnetic forces, two of the four fundamental forces governing physical nature. Seven years later, in 1974, “supersymmetry” was born,

a profound mathematical symmetry principle capable of unifying particles of different “spin,” i.e., force fields and matter fields—providing the mathematical basis for completely unified field theories. During the past several years, the application of this principle has led to the development of completely unified theories of all the fundamental forces and particles of nature based on the heterotic string. (Hagelin, 1993, p. 75)

What a unified field theory establishes is a fundamental, nonchanging, eternal, source for all phenomena, or in Heraclitus' terms a "common logos." It verifies what Maharishi Vedic Science avows, the existence of a unified field of pure consciousness as the basis of all life, a field from which all temporal phenomena emerge. The existence of this field has been further corroborated over the past 30 years by millions of people who experience that common, eternal field of pure consciousness during the practice of the Maharishi Transcendental MeditationSM technique. The discovery of the unified field in physics, the descriptions from Vedic Literature, and the experiences during the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique demonstrate a profound interconnectedness between time and eternity and a universal or *common* source for all existence.

Maharishi explains that because there is a common source, pure consciousness, that lies at the basis of all the Laws of Nature—those laws involved in the organization of every aspect of creation—direct experience of this source has tremendous value to everyone. Repeated experience of this source of life, Maharishi predicts, will put an end to the violation of Natural Law, all problems, and human suffering that Eliot depicts as the wasteland. When the full potential of Natural Law is enlivened in Cosmic Consciousness—the first of the "enlightened" states that Maharishi systematically defines as the seven states of consciousness³—complete harmony with the environment and full support of Natural Law ensues. This is life completely free of mistakes in which eternity is breathed into every moment of ever-changing time.

Hence, it is essential to comprehend the intimate relationship between Heraclitus' "logos," what Eliot will simply call eternity, and "individual wisdom," or Eliot's time-bound existence. In affirming that there exists a "logos . . . common to all," meaning a logos located everywhere and available to everyone at all times, Heraclitus is neither being superficially philosophical nor casually mystical; he is in his aphoristic style simply describing the true reality of existence. Analogous to Heraclitus' logos, Vedic ScienceSM calls the source of life pure consciousness, the eternal fountainhead from which everything springs, always exists, and is no further away than one's own Self—eternity that has been lost in the maze of time. The logos of the epigraph, then, holds the same philosophical value for Heraclitus as does Eliot's own "still point" elaborated later in the section on *Burnt Norton*.

The second Heraclitus' quote in the epigraph is complementary to the first:

The way up and the way down are one and the same,

a paradoxical statement that at first seems the coinage of an absurdist, which neither Heraclitus nor Eliot were. They both, however, loved paradoxes that accentuated for them life's incongruities, paradoxes resolved in Vedic Literature and quantum physics, disciplines that supply more holistic views of life. From the perspective of the unified field, *the way up and the way down are* [indeed] *one and the same* because everything in creation at the vacuum state is an equal distance from everything else. I might have said an equal distance in time and space, but on this most fundamental level, time and space exist only *in potentia*. This equal distancing can even apply to manifest, solid objects if the measurement (if infinity could be measured) is taken at an object's deepest

TIME AND ETERNITY IN ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

level, at its unified field. The cactus in Arizona, the olive tree in Greece, and the mango tree in India, all separated on the physical level, are homogeneous at their common source, with no lapse in space or time.

Practitioners of the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique also prove daily that distance in either time or space is only a concept. Mentally starting from the field of greatest activity, entrenched in time, they experience ever deeper, less active states of consciousness until they transcend the least excited state of activity and reach the unbounded, eternal field of pure consciousness—a self-referral state of pure potential—from which all other levels of existence find their origin (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1966, pp. 44–53):

The process of bringing the attention to the level of transcendental Being [pure consciousness] is known as the system of Transcendental Meditation.

In the practice of Transcendental Meditation, a proper thought is selected and the technique of experiencing that thought in its infant states of development enables the conscious mind to arrive systematically at the source of thought, the field of Being.

Thus, the way to experience transcendental Being lies in selecting a proper thought and experiencing its subtle states until its subtlest state is experienced and transcended. (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1963, pp. 46–47)

The change in experience from the ever-changing, waking consciousness to the never-changing Transcendental Consciousness, from an isolated point in time to an unbounded, timeless eternity, is enormous, but the journey is accomplished without physical movement and at the very least expense of energy. All that changes is a shift in awareness. Seen in this light, the axiom, “the way up and the way down are one in the same,” is absolutely valid in both theory and experience.

Ostensibly the two Heraclitian aphorisms, one about intelligence and the other about direction, differ from Eliot's concern in the *Four Quartets* with time and eternity, but all three ideas converge, as at a Roman crossroads, at the point of interconnectedness where concrete individuality and abstract universality meet, where all roads begin and all roads end, where time and eternity cannot be distinguished, a point Eliot will make again and again in each of the following Quartets.

Burnt Norton

Eliot selected the title of his first quartet—*Burnt Norton*—from a manor house he once visited in Gloucestershire, England, because its grounds inspired the poem's central image—the ethereal rose garden. For each of the quartets, Eliot chose a place name and together they function as “objective correlatives,” concrete foundations to which Eliot tethers his highly abstract, philosophical ideas. Each quartet takes its name from a specific locale that represents for Eliot an emotional or spiritual state. *Burnt Norton* and its airy rose garden symbolize vision; East Coker Eliot's ancestral home in Somerset (Eliot's birth site) represents physicality and tradition; The Dry Salvages a group of rocks on the Massachusetts shore line (where Eliot played as a child) stand for life's ebb and flow; and Little Gidding a seventeenth-century religious community signifies the

apex of spirituality (Bergonzi, 1972, pp. 166–167), a theme introduced in *Burnt Norton* completed in the final lines of *Little Gidding*.

The four locales also stand for the four elements cryptically alluded to in the epigraph. *East Coker* is earth, *The Dry Salvages* water, *Little Gidding* fire, and *Burnt Norton* air, the world of thoughts, words, philosophy, and poetry (Thompson, 1963, p. 84). The owners of the manor house that inspired Eliot gave it the name Burnt Norton because the present edifice was built on the same spot where its predecessor had burned down. Burnt Norton’s suggestion of rebirth—the phoenix rising from its ashes, the Christian soul ascending to heaven out of the dross of a discarded body must have held for Eliot extraordinary charm. Like his contemporary James Joyce, Eliot gravitated towards circular structures, ideas that start in one place and return in the end to the exact point of departure; thus in the title of his first quartet he prefigured his whole poem. Beginning with *Burnt Norton*’s central image, the rose of perfection, and ending with *Little Gidding*’s fire of purification, the rose and fire are compressed into a single symbol of spiritual unity.

However, before the sublime unity of *Little Gidding* can be realized, the first word of *Burnt Norton*, the first word of the *Four Quartets*—profane Time—must be accounted for. The *Quartets* taken together, then, embody a journey from the ignorance of time to an awakening in eternity. *Burnt Norton*’s opening lines, in seed form, function as a kind of road atlas for that journey:

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.

This passage demonstrates how well Eliot understands time. Sandwiching past, present, and future together, he creates the eternal moment, the natural condition of time according to physics. With a touch of glib humor, Eliot states that the past contains the future, a truism if time is conceived as sequential flow, that is, the future flowing into the present and the present flowing into the past, but an absurdity from the perspective of pure philosophy which holds that the future is always in a state of becoming and the past is always already gone. Eliot next suggests that the present and past will “perhaps” be found in time future. Once again he has his tongue firmly in his cheek. True, what will become the present and the past must first be found in the future, but because what is already the past and what is currently the present precede the future, is Eliot’s assertion logical? Moreover, Eliot adds the qualification *perhaps* they will be found because the future, unlike the past and present, is yet to be formed and remains forever uncertain.

In the first of the *Four Quartets*’ many paradoxes, Eliot states that “all time is eternally present.” This line is central to appreciating Eliot’s philosophical position in the poem. Time he says is not always present; it is *eternally* present. For time to be eternally present, it can have no temporal boundaries. But by its very nature, time creates boundaries. We define relativity by the dimensions of time and space. Again Eliot has made a paradoxical, Heraclitian-like statement that at first seems impossible, a forging

TIME AND ETERNITY IN ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

together of the opposites time and eternity. His statement proves to be true, however, because time and eternity are from one perspective not antithetical but rather the very same thing. Just as an image in a mirror is both the same and completely different from the thing it reflects, so a moment of time is simply the reflection of eternity. Maharishi explains that if we could take a moment in time to its deepest physical level, even beyond the level of elementary particles, we would transcend all boundaries and locate eternity, the origin of time, the place where time does not exist and yet the place that gives existence to time. This is a fairly accurate description of what takes place during the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique.

Before beginning to meditate, a person's mind will be found hovering on a thought, a set point in time, and then following the simple but specific criteria of the Transcendental Meditation technique, the mind begins to experience deeper, or less temporally defined states of a thought until that thought is transcended and only pure awareness without an object of awareness remains (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1963, pp. 50–57). What is most significant about this experience of transcendence, Maharishi explains, is not the experience itself, but rather its cumulative effects. Transcending, the mind becomes reacquainted with its own Self and immediately enjoys increased happiness and freedom and begins to develop such salutary qualities as creativity, adaptability, flexibility, growth, harmony, health, etc., inherent within this deepest level of life.

“What might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present,” Eliot says in the next group of lines. “Always present,” eternal. If eternity is omnipresent, then past, present, and future are only an illusion; this means the destructive characteristics of time that wither away all life must also be an illusion. If time cannot destroy, then it cannot give birth. It is oblivious to change. In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, one of the primary inspirations for the *Four Quartets*, Lord Krishna, speaking of the eternal condition of the life of man, says as much to Arjuna on the battlefield:

He [man] is never born, nor does he ever die;
nor once having been, does he cease to
be. Unborn, eternal, everlasting, ancient,
he is not slain when the body is slain.

Life understood in its most developed state lies beyond the reach of time, never takes birth, and never dies. Without this fundamental knowledge that life is eternal, the temporal world of physical existence must be lived in trepidation and despair—or as Eliot would have it, “fear in a handful of dust” (“I. The Burial of the Dead,” *The Wasteland*).

Eliot states that “time is unredeemable,” a statement with two important implications for this poem. Time is unredeemable first of all because life is eternal, and because eternity is perfection it does not need redeeming. Secondly, being destructive, time cannot redeem; it can only cause change. To live in the temporal world means to remain unredeemed, unliberated, in bondage to the ravages of time, caught in the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth in the field of suffering. Joseph Campbell, inspired by both Vedic Literature and the *Four Quartets*, takes a higher position than Eliot but not necessarily a contradictory one. He contends that time does not need redeeming because it has never fallen:

The eternal cannot change. It's not touched by time. As soon as you have a historical act, a movement, you're in time. The world of time is a reflex of the energy of what is eternal. But the eternal is not touched by what is here. So the whole doctrine of sin is a false doctrine. It has to do with time. Your eternal character is not touched. You are redeemed. (1990, p. 227)

Krishna, in what Maharishi refers to as the seminal teaching of the Bhagavad-Gita, implores Arjuna to be free from time, to "Be without the three gunas . . . freed from duality" (1967, p. 126), the field of time. Freedom from duality is redemption in the highest sense of the word because it is one's own true Self that is being redeemed. The three gunas to which Krishna alludes are "the finest aspect of creation" (1967, p. 222) and form the building blocks of temporal existence, the creative (*Sattva*), maintaining (*Rajas*), and destructive (*Tamas*) tendencies whose various transformations and mutations produce time, change, and the opposing forces of duality, such as good and bad, forward and backward, up and down, etc. These opposing forces trap those unawake to the field of pure consciousness in a lifetime of feckless actions that must remain unsatisfied as long as a person operates within the dimensions of time, because action within the field and influence of time cannot produce absolute effects; it can only cause the need for further action, *ad infinitum*. This system of action and its continuously deferred fulfillment resembles one of Maharishi's favorite analogies, the activity of a person groping for the source of darkness in the midst of darkness. Only by transcending the field of change, the field of darkness, can the light of absolute fulfillment be found, as Maharishi explains in his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita:

'Be without the three gunas'; be without activity, be your Self [your own eternal, imperishable reality]. This is resolute consciousness, the state of absolute Being, which is the ultimate cause of all causes. This state of consciousness brings harmony to the whole field of cause and effect and glorifies all life. (1967, p. 127)

The poem's most famous image immediately follows the opening, abstract contemplation of time, *Burnt Norton's* exquisite, evanescent rose garden. With its layered sensuality, the garden strikes a welcome relief to the imageless, philosophical passage that precedes it. Unlike common gardens, Eliot fashioned his from the realm of the imagination, and, being non-physical, it need not obey the same laws as those engulfed in time:

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

With his conspiratorial *we*, Eliot invites the reader to enter with him into the garden. Like the thrush, the garden which appears real but is not takes us in. The garden is not real, first of all, because it is fashioned from Eliot's mind; secondly, the poem's grammatical past suggests that if it ever existed it no longer does. The inhabitants of the garden are no doubt an allusion to Dante's inhabitants of the underworld. These mysterious, invisible "they" associated with the dead leaves also seem dead. They are the ghosts of the past whose presence the artist always feels, according to Eliot in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," spirits of those dying generations.

TIME AND ETERNITY IN ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

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.

The imagined bird responds to the imagined music, “unheard music” like the eyebeams that have never been seen, like the imaginary flowers that only have “the look of flowers that are looked at.” The poet like the Creator creates a world that appears real but is always qualified. Only the bird can hear the unheard music because it exists in the same unreal world.

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

With the spirits of the past, “our guests,” we move “in a formal pattern,” formal because it is the pattern of Eliot’s poetry. We look at what for Eliot was no doubt a real pool, a memory from Burnt Norton manor, but for us an imaginary pool filled with imaginary water, twice removed being constructed out of sunlight. Like Shelley before him, Eliot makes his imagery here more and more ephemeral to demonstrate how insubstantial is physical existence but also to create a sense of transcendence by reducing the concreteness of physical objects.

And the lotus 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.

Out of the illusory water which can even reflect the spirits of the past grows a lotus rose, a symbol in Vedic Literature of vision and perfection, then a cloud passes signifying the vision’s end.

Eliot ingeniously invests this passage with the various qualities of time and eternity that he examines and reexamines in the *Four Quartets* from multiple vantage points. First there is the thrush, as imaginary as the garden itself, but an intruder into the garden. Not possessing the garden’s timeless perfection, it is not free like the garden from the strictures of time. The garden, on the other hand, with its perfect beauty, illusive-ness, and transcendence, is the embodiment of timeless characteristics. However, the rose garden is also susceptible to time because it is an ideal rather than a literal garden. In a hierarchical eternity, it will outlast a common garden, but like all linguistic constructions born of time, it will wither with changes in taste and perception, even against such poetic claims as Shakespeare’s, who boasted he would keep his love alive in verse forever “Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity . . . / Even in the eyes of all posterity / That wear this world out to the ending doom” (1942, p. 1380.)

Although timeless perfection, the garden in another respect symbolizes the very character of phenomenal existence. Like the flatness of the earth it appears real but is not; it is a form of ignorance, a kind of magician’s trick:

This expresses a great metaphysical truth: ignorance has no material substance. It is just an illusion which should be easy to shake off. (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1967, p. 81)

Just as ignorance appears to have substance but does not, so the reality of the rose garden is a trick of the poet, a mirage like the water in the pool made from sunlight, a mirage that Vedic Science would explain in terms of states of consciousness. Reality depends upon a person's awareness, or as Maharishi puts it, "knowledge is different in different states of consciousness." Like the imaginary thrush who believes in the imaginary garden, people living waking state of consciousness believe the material world to be the true nature of life. Only in higher states of consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness, God consciousness, or Unity Consciousness, Maharishi explains, when the mind has fully realized that it is unbounded and eternal can material existence be said to be a mirage. Moreover, this reality dawns only through the two aspects of knowledge: understanding and direct experience, and this knowledge only becomes dependable when the experience becomes stabilized.

Another reason not to dismiss the rose garden as simply a mirage is that it achieves what poets have always struggled to achieve—*poetic immortality*. The phrase "unheard music," a reference to "Ode on a Grecian Urn," the touchstone of all immortality poems, attests that poetic immortality is undeniably one of Eliot's aims in the *Four Quartets*. In Keats' poem, the magnificent urn, its human figures frozen in time, and the poem celebrating the urn, each itself an image of eternity, taken together multiply the poem's immortal effect. W. B. Yeats' immortal bird hammered out of gold, a closer influence on Eliot, is fashioned out of "the artifice of eternity" in "Sailing to Byzantium" "to sing . . . Of what is past, or passing, or to come." But all such images of immortality in art, as we know, are simply a convention, indestructible only insofar as art, like everything else, is a permutation of the absolute reality. Hence, in spite of poetic protests to the contrary, no work of art, no poem, not Keats', nor Yeats', nor Eliot's is really indestructible. Keats' urn, Yeats' golden bird, and Eliot's rose garden may each disdain the mutable complexities of life, but each is itself no more immutable than Shelley's haughty Ozymandias, whose plaque arrogantly boasts of his longevity while his stone image turns to dust.

This eternal process of creation and destruction, Maharishi explains, is the natural growth and evolution of life. No creative act can exist without a former state being destroyed.

When life evolves from one state to another, the first state is dissolved and the second brought into existence. In other words, the process of evolution is carried out under the influence of two opposing forces—one to destroy the first state and the other to give rise to a second state. The creative and destructive forces working in harmony with one another maintain life and spin the wheel of evolution. (1967, p. 27)

Although immortality can be located in time, "What might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present," it cannot however be sustained by time; immortality can only be sustained by its own field of immortality. Maharishi explains that this is why there is always a need for spiritual renewal. An enlightened master, established in that field of immortality, speaks to those established in time, and something of his immortal words becomes lost, no matter how attentive the disciples

(1967, p. 11). For physics this is an example of the second law of thermodynamics: entropy increases over time.

The mortality of poetry, the lasting effect of words, is a chief concern of Eliot in the *Four Quartets*. As the acknowledged spokesman of the Modern period, the great poet of his age, Eliot wondered how long his thoughts and those of other poets would remain viable. The language of lesser writers he quickly dismisses: "Words," he says, when not put to their best use, "strain, / Crack and sometimes break, under the burden, . . . / Decay with imprecision." The last word in the line is telling. Through deeper introspection, Eliot's persona comes to the conclusion that words, though not immortal themselves, used to their best advantage can lead to the field of immortality: "Only by the form, the pattern, / Can words or music reach the stillness." This ability to contain eternal silence through poetic patterning is for Eliot the greatest virtue of poetry.

It is in the stillness where perfect order can be located, where poets discover the perfection of order through form. The most patterned and most perfect poetry notes Maharishi is found in the hymns of Ṛk Veda, "in their more expressed form, laid out in the whole creation, diversity of creation contained in those expressions of Ṛk Veda" (Maharishi, 1971). First cognized by enlightened sages and then later written down in Sanskrit—the language Maharishi holds to be closest to the language of cognition—Ṛk Veda expresses eternity through its eternal form and patterning. It is a similar eternal patterning to which Eliot espouses. It is the poetic patterning of the Veda, much more than its meaning, that contains the fullest knowledge of life. For that reason, Vedic pandits who recite the Vedas are taught its rhythm and meter before learning to fully assimilate the meaning of the words. So perfect is the patterning of the Veda that it is possible to speak volumes about the relationship between sentences, words, letters, and even the silences in between. Maharishi has commented at length on अ (A) the first letter of Ṛk Veda, which "stands to represent the whole field of knowledge" (1994, pp. 123–24), demonstrating that the entire Veda can be conceived as a commentary on this one letter, the first letter of the first word, Agni, but also that the Veda is a highly condensed form containing the structure and relationship of all existence, absolute and relative. Hence, it is in the poetic patterning of the Veda that the very source of life is found.

In one of the most deservedly quoted passages in English literature, Eliot locates this source of life in the ever-changing universe:

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.

Eliot discovers the timeless, unmoved mover, within the limits of time, at a specific point, at the hub of the universe around which all creation turns, what Joseph Campbell calls the "world navel" (1949, pp. 40–46). This hub or point, however, is not a fixed point; 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. In the following, Maharishi alternately uses the terms Self, Being, Brahman, and Absolute to convey the different characteristics of this state:

The hymns of the Vedas and the Bhagavad-Gita sing of the glory of the imperishable Self, Being, ultimate Reality, the Brahman which is the supreme, ultimate Absolute. They say: Water cannot wet It nor can fire burn It. Wind cannot dry It and weapons cannot slay It. It is in front, It is behind, It is above and below. It is to the right and the left. It is all-pervading, the omnipresent, divine Being. (1966, p. 35)

Maharishi's method for locating and describing Being is in one respect the exact opposite of the manner in which Eliot identifies the still point, and yet both descriptions come to the same conclusion. For Maharishi, because Being is all inclusive it can be located everywhere; it is behind, in front, above, and below, and because it is immortal it cannot be harmed; it cannot be burned, dried, or slain. Eliot, contrastingly, takes the opposite tack. Instead of saying what the still point is, he says what it is not. Seeing the still point as lying outside of the field of time, Eliot says that it cannot be identified by the characteristics of time; it is "Neither flesh nor fleshless; / Neither from nor towards . . . Neither ascent nor decline."

So what then is the still point, and where exactly is it to be found? It is what the phenomenal world is not, and it is found where the world does not exist. Hence, *it is neither this nor that, nor here nor there*. However, immediately following this sequence of negations, Eliot seems to contradict himself by locating the still point in a specific space-time reference, where the *dance* is. But the dance, a noun which might be taken either as an act or an event, is surprisingly a description, a metaphor to suggest the still point's paradoxical dynamism that contradicts the quiescence of its name—a dynamism without which the highly-charged universe could not exist.

The dance, then, like the still point that it is meant to clarify through analogy, needs clarification itself. The complexity of the dance, simultaneously robust and tranquil, is further complicated by context, where Eliot alters its meaning to suit the ever-fluctuating varieties of existence, making it at one moment absolute, the next relative, and at another simultaneously both. Such contextual variance is one element that makes Eliot so difficult, but in this case he is being neither obscure nor careless, he is actually being faithful to the complexity inherent both in relative existence and its relationship to the absolute. Typical of such complexity is the way the meaning of the word *dance* shifts radically from line to line. When Eliot says, "Except for the point, the still point, / There would be no dance," dance here can refer to either the act of creation or creation itself. Earlier, however, Eliot says, "at the still point, there the dance is," equating the dance with the still point, the absolute, timeless, source of creation. Finally he says, "Except for the point, the still point, / There would be no dance, and there is only the dance." The first dance in this sentence refers to creation and the second to the origin from which the creation emerges. Dance as Eliot keenly understands is an appropriate word for all three of his uses—the source, the act, and the object of creation—because although they are distinct in the field of time, from the perspective of the source they are one and the same.

Many critics believe Eliot's use of dance refers specifically to *the Dance of Shiva*, the spinning out and maintenance of all creation from the silent, eternal, pure consciousness that changes without changing, creates without creating, manifests without

TIME AND ETERNITY IN ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

manifesting through the power of *Lila* or divine play. However, it is also a reply to the question: "How can we know the dancer from the dance"? from the last line of Yeats' poem "Among School Children" (1983, p. 217). The answer is we cannot. The dancer and the dance, the wave and the ocean, the creator and the creation, are ultimately one and the same, but only when the dancer *knows* that the two are one. By *knows*, Yeats seems to be indicating that knowledge is more than simply intellectual understanding. Maharishi explains that complete knowledge includes both understanding and direct experience. To either know the dancer *from* the dance or to know the dancer *is* the dance is the difference between states of consciousness.

Knowledge of non-difference between dancer and dance can be compared to Maharishi's explanation of knowledge in the different states of consciousness (see end-note 1). Knowledge in one state of consciousness has nothing to do with knowledge in any of the other six states. In the fifth state, for instance, the knowledge that one is enlightened is true but incomplete: true in the experience of inner awareness, but untrue in the perceptual experience of outer phenomenon. Only in the seventh state, Unity Consciousness, in which refinement on all levels of human experience has been completed can it be said that there is a state of non-difference between inner consciousness and outer phenomenon. Eliot seems to be making a similar point in the statement "there is only the dance," which conflates dancer and dance into one making them indistinguishable, unifying them into a beatific wholeness. In *Burnt Norton's* next stanza Eliot poetically describes this state:

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.

Eliot's reference to desire in this image of enlightenment interestingly is accurate but misleading. Maharishi comments that, "Desire in the state of ignorance overshadows the pure nature of the self, which is absolute bliss-consciousness, and keeps life in bondage and suffering" (1967, p. 237). Therefore, when the mind is permanently established in bliss, "freedom from the practical desire," as Eliot says, takes place even though desires continue. Many commentators on the Bhagavad-Gita have made desire the enemy as Eliot does in the *Four Quartets*. However, Maharishi makes it clear that without desire there would be no action, no motivation to progress, or for that matter, even to exist. What is lost in enlightenment, then, is not the inclination to desire, but rather the *attachment* to desire (1967, p. 239), an issue that Eliot takes up in *Little Gidding* at the end of the *Four Quartets*. In enlightenment a person's relationship to desire changes; it "ceases to be 'the enemy on earth'" as Lord Krishna calls it. Because enlightenment brings complete fulfillment, one is no longer driven by desire for personal gain, but even then desire does not end. An enlightened person acts for the good of all mankind (1967, p. 162), and as each person newly steps on to enlightenment, as the bliss and harmony of society increase, the joy of the enlightened person's fulfillment deepens.

The opposite of fulfillment is the life lived in ignorance of the still point, in the "turning shadow" and the "transient beauty / With slow rotation." This is the world of

impermanence that, like a spinning top losing its momentum, wobbly gyrates around the silent hub. In a mock imitation of Dante, Eliot recreates a descent into the underworld, this time a descent into the subway of the “unreal city.” Unlike the frightening horrors of the *Inferno*, Eliot’s abyss is a “twittering world,” a typically modern and insipid image made to compare unfavorably to the vitality of a former age. Lost city dwellers, whose faces are “time ridden,” ignorant of eternity, who only know “Time before and time after,” strain to see in the “dim light” and inhale the “faded air” through “unwholesome lungs.” Such people seem caught in what Maharishi calls “the binding influence of action, the bondage of karma,” “the cycle of impression, action, and desire that sustains the cycle of birth and death” (Maharishi, 1967, p. 142). They are Eliot says “[d]istracted from distraction by distraction.” Not anchored to eternity, such “men and bits of paper, [are] whirled by the cold wind.” “[E]mpty of meaning,” where people are “Filled with fancies . . . / Tumid apathy [and] with no concentration” or purpose, this world is horrifying in its vacuity.

Just as Keats found truth and beauty to be primary—those qualities which most reflect transcendence in the world—Eliot, in the final section of *Burnt Norton*, settles on “Love” as opposed to physical desire, “Not in itself desirable,” as the supreme expression of consciousness, as his antidote to “the twittering world.” Love, more than the ambivalent feelings of human beings, is for Eliot the embodiment of the divine. Christ endures crucifixion out of love and compassion for humanity; Krishna out of love, “Caught in the form of limitation,” takes birth “To protect the righteous and destroy the wicked, to establish dharma⁴ firmly . . . age after age” (Maharishi, 1967, p. 263). Love, untainted by time is the highest expression of the eternal, an act of creation. It is, Maharishi explains, the reason the unmoved moves, the unmanifest manifests. Out of love, the one becomes the many to multiply its bliss, its divine nature. “Love is the sweet expression of life, it is the supreme content of life. Love is the force of life, powerful and sublime” (Maharishi, 1973, p. 13). Love, truth, beauty and all desirable qualities find their full value at the origin of life, for Eliot at the still point, in the gap between “un-being and being.”

East Coker

Burnt Norton examines life “in and out of time” inclusively; *East Coker*, associated with Eliot’s ancestral home, looks at time more personally. Indicated by the possessive pronoun in the *Quartet*’s opening statement, “In the beginning is *my* end” refers to Eliot specifically but also to Everyman. The line also echoes the first words of Genesis: “In the beginning God created heaven and earth”—according to Judeo-Christianity, everyone’s beginning. After *Burnt Norton*’s unrelenting emphasis on eternity, *East Coker*’s beginning with “beginning” is slightly startling, but less so when we find how closely Eliot connects it to an *end*-ing, creating an Eliotonian, virtual circle.

As a modernist, the phrase “In the beginning is my end” would have had a nihilistic as well as a spiritual meaning for Eliot. The *beginning* which anticipates an ending, if fact all temporal endings, is a prefiguration of death and destruction:

Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place

TIME AND ETERNITY IN ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,
Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth.

In this passage we see the eternal cycle of creation and destruction, life under the dominion of time, underscored by the Biblical reference *ashes to ashes, dust to dust*. However, given Eliot's proclivity for paradox, eternity is implicit even in this bleakest image of time. As each house falls along with its tenants, only to give rise to new houses and new tenants which will subsequently fall, an endless superstructure pervades the cumulative individual moments of creation and destruction. Time is synonymous with change, but in the midst of change eternity is found forever lurking. Maharishi states, "[d]espite the continual change of bodies in the past, present, and future, it [the non-changing, imperishable Self] ever remains the same" (1967, p. 92).

In the next stanza, non-change is more easily discovered. With a few brief strokes, Eliot fashions a contemporary scene: "a van passes" in front of a field, almost floating in the heat of the afternoon, "in the empty silence" where "dahlias sleep." From this modern locale objectively rendered, we are drawn back through the colloquial language of Eliot's ancestor Thomas Eliot (from *The Boke Named The Governour*) into an intimate sixteenth-century ritual (Traversi, 1976, p. 130):

The association of man and woman
In *daunsinge* [sic], signifying *matrimonie*—
A dignified and commodious 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.
[italics mine]

This stanza celebrates the time-honored event of marriage accompanied by the joyous activity of dancing, a rite played out by countless newlyweds of every generation. The scene depicts physical desire in the act of "leaping through the flames," as well as tradition, that flow of repeated social-patterning which defies time and connects past, present, and future. Woven into the scene's homespun fabric are three favorite Eliot images: dancing, fire, and circles, scattered everywhere throughout the *Four Quartets*.

Used to depict the eternal life in *Burnt Norton*—the play of the phenomenal world whirled into existence from the depths of the unmoved silence—dancing emerges in this quartet a smaller and lighter activity, the joyful gyrations of a few at an event only meaningful to the few. But, like the poetic patterning of *Burnt Norton*, the dance of *East Coker* contains joyous freedom and unbridled movement, the same qualities in microcosm of the eternal dance. Typical of his multi-layered vision, Eliot uses dancing in this scene not only as an expression of personal liberty but also for death, again indicated by the leaping through the fire.

Elsewhere in the *Quartets* dancing conveys the sordid, meaningless movements of the spiritually lost, the dance of the living dead, and fire and circles are employed with similar ambiguity. Sometimes fire destroys, at others it purifies, just as circles vacillate between symbols of eternity and confinement. The ambiguity of these reoccurring elements typify for Eliot the life of opposing values. This is the lesson of the Bhagavad-

Gita. Arjuna sees those on the battlefield before him simultaneously the evil ones it his duty to destroy and his kinsmen whom he loves.

Arjuna's main problem was to reconcile love of kinsman with the necessity to root out evil. He was desperately seeking a formula of compromise between righteousness and evil. But on any plane of life these are irreconcilable. That is why, having explored all the avenues of his heart and mind, Arjuna could not find any practical solution, could not decide on any line of action. Lord Krishna, however, shows him the field where righteousness and love merge in eternal harmony, the eternal life of absolute Being. (Maharishi, 1967, p. 127)

In Section II Eliot introduces the primary concerns of *East Coker*: the role of the poet caught in that sensuous music of time, and poetry as a means to escape the snare of time. The first stanza written in a consciously poetic style is filled with echoes from Yeats ("triumphal cars"), Frost (the "destructive fire / Which burns before the ice-cap reigns") and Whitmanesque poets whom Eliot believes have imprecisely represented the turbulent world, "That was a way of putting it—not very satisfactory: / A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion." Instead, Eliot hopes to find an honest means of communication, but disillusioned in his search he comes to mistrust "words and meanings [and the] poetry does not matter." Patterns, so comforting in *Burnt Norton*, falsify in *East Coker* because their instability makes them "new in every moment." Wisdom, solace to the romantic Wordsworth when the spiritual visions of childhood had faded, cannot comfort the modernist Eliot. Old age having known only a lifetime of ignorance acquires not wisdom but folly. In this pessimistic mood, the only knowledge the poet finds is humility.

Such an unfruitful vision of the poet foundering against the waves of time can only lead Eliot's persona to temporarily view existence as a funeral of darkness, a catalogue of humanity marching into the silence of death. But with his customary fondness for reversals, Eliot turns this doomed quality of darkness into godliness, because for him the quietness of darkness can also represent silence, not the silence of doom, but the transcendent silence of the still point:

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 light, and the stillness the dancing.

The deep silence of this stanza emerges through a careful series of negations—waiting without hope, without love, without faith, and finally without thought—a series of discriminations that eventually lead to the dancing stillness. A parallel sequence of discriminations experienced during the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique leads to an analogous state of silence. As the mind—free of expectation—settles down it is fully conscious, but at every point it is increasingly less conscious of external phenomenon. Although this movement from grosser to ever-refined states of awareness takes place effortlessly, spontaneously without any action on the part of the practitioner; it is as though the intellect is choosing to reject what is less refined in favor of what is

more refined at any given moment. When the mind transcends the finest level of phenomena it leaves off being conscious of anything until it experiences only pure consciousness, a phrase that rings strikingly similar to Eliot's "conscious but conscious of nothing."

Eliot instructs us to wait for this moment of spiritual silence "without hope" and "without love" because such external abstractions belong only to the phenomenal world. To wait without love or hope recalls Eliot's analysis of the "still point" in *Burnt Norton* where he says, "*there* we have been: but I cannot say where. / And I cannot say how long, for that is to place it in time." One must wait without love and without hope, for to do otherwise is to place one's self in time. Paradoxically, once the still point has been permanently attained, when consciousness has been fully expanded, hope is realized and love is unrestricted.

Eliot next advises to "wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought." Waiting without thought means transcending thought, an experience of that lively state of pure potentiality before a thought has formed. Outside of death or the inertia of deep sleep, transcending is the only way the mind can experience *thought-less-ness*. To become "ready for thought," the mind must intimately know the source of thought. Until then thinking, Maharishi explains, caught in the web of time, will remain superficial and egocentric, but once the source of thought is established on the level of one's individual consciousness, thinking becomes powerful, evolutionary, and fulfilling. Having gained the source of thought, one becomes "ready" for it, ready to think and then act with profundity supported by the Laws of Nature (Maharishi, 1963, pp. 144–145).

The section ends in vision: the darkness of death and the flickering light—earmarks of the sensory world—are transformed into the light of life, and the stillness of death and the stillness of waiting are transformed into the dancing stillness. No longer a participant in the life of time, one becomes the silent witness to "the agony / Of death and birth." Life is lived as the "Whisper of running streams, and winter lightening, / The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry, / [and] The laughter in the garden."

Section III's final stanza seems at first nothing more than a clever set piece, a procession of Zen-like conundrums, but with more consideration it reveals itself to be among the poem's most profound passages:

You say I am repeating
Something I have said before. I shall say it again.
Shall I say it again?

Eliot enjoys being clever, but here what he is running to earth is nothing other than complete truth, "not less than everything." In pursuit of such elusive game, he defies the awkwardness of being repetitive, because what he seeks to understand and convey cannot be repeated too many times; therefore, he brazenly revisits the path to the transcendent still-point, closely scrutinized only a few lines previously. He introduces this passage with an inquiry:

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 the first of this passage's riddles, Eliot gives us the nondescript place nouns, *there*, *here*, and *not here*, which appear to be different but are metaphysically identical. To "arrive there," is "to arrive where you [already] are," Eliot informs us. What kind of a nonsensical journey is this? It is a journey of understanding. Like quantum physics' mysterious sub-atomic particles which behave simultaneously as particles and waves until a limiting choice is made, so *here* and *there* also function without distinction until a decision is made. As the bumper sticker says, "wherever you go *there* you are," but of course having arrived you will always be *here*. When you leave a place *there* will be *here* and *here* will be *there*. Here is to space as now is to time. It is always now and it is always here.

Secondly, the journey from *there* to "where you are" is a journey of perspective, a change of experience. *There* for Eliot is the same as it was for the 19th-century Transcendentalists: transcendent Nature or the deepest level of one's own existence, the goal of all conscious and unconscious desires, a return to the primordial, unfractured state from which the journey of personal evolution began. However, because one is and always has been the transcendental Self, the journey can only be made in the form of remembering or reawakening to one's status that has been forgotten; and because one has been asleep to one's greater status, Eliot can say, reawakening you "arrive where you are not."

In one sense, this journey of arriving where you both are and are not is accomplished in a momentary transcendence, a going beyond all sensual experience, beyond the boundaries of the non-self and arriving at the unboundedness of the true Self. Such a journey is very fast but ephemeral, like a momentary epiphany. From a broader perspective, reawakening to your own Self is a state of unbroken enlightenment, accomplished at that moment when you fully realize that you have always been your Self, have always been unbounded and eternal, and will never again lose your eternal status. Maharishi describes in a similar way the state of Cosmic Consciousness achieved through regular and repeated experiences of the Transcendental Meditation program, emphasizing the pronoun *that* rather than Eliot's adverb *there*:

Life finds its goal in the state of the eternal freedom of the Transcendent, spoken of here as 'That'; Knowledge Itself. The use of the word 'That' makes it clear that the goal of life does not lie in the sphere of phenomenal existence [here]; it lies beyond it. The real life is not this which is commonly referred to as life; beyond this is That Reality of life. This is a teaching of life from the standpoint of renunciation.

The Upanishads declare: 'Tat tvam asi—That thou art', implying that this obvious phase of phenomenal existence, which you take as your self, is not your real nature—you, in fact, are That transcendent Reality. (1967, pp. 357–58)

In this state *there* and *here* are experienced as non-different, but until you reawaken to that state, the equivalency of *there* and *here* continues to exist "where you are not":

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

TIME AND ETERNITY IN ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

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.

To arrive at knowledge, we “must go by a way which is the way of ignorance” because ignorance, relative, unreliable knowledge, is all that we can know until all ignorance has been burned away in the purifying fire of absolute, unchanging knowledge. To gain what we want, “not less than everything,” we must dispossess ourselves of what we only think we own. We must renounce that which is “unreal” for that which is real. This series of steps parallels the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique when the mind settles down to the field of unbounded consciousness, giving up activity (1967, p. 198) for silence, time for eternity, the reflection for the mirror. To “arrive at what you are not,” you must “go through the way in which you are not,” but when arriving, that is transcending, you will find not the thing you are not but rather the thing that you are, your deepest reality, and you will realize that you always have been what you are and never have been what you are not (1967, pp. 357–358).

In Section V, *East Coker* returns to its principal theme, a poet's “raid on the inarticulate.” As the putative poet of his age, Eliot feels the last two decades have been a waste; words fail him; his poetic powers are deteriorating; imprecision distorts what he wishes to say; and what he wants to discover has already been “found and lost again and again.” Maharishi similarly demonstrates in the following paragraph life's eternal pattern of loss and gain:

The truth of Vedic wisdom is by its very nature independent of time and can therefore never be lost. When, however, man's vision becomes one-sided and he is caught by the binding influence of the phenomenal world to the exclusion of the absolute phase of Reality, when he is thus confined within the ever-changing phases of existence, his life loses stability and he begins to suffer. When suffering grows, the invincible force of nature moves to set man's vision right and establish a way of life which will again fulfill the high purpose of his existence. The long history of the world records many such periods in which the ideal pattern of life is first forgotten and then restored to man. (1967, p. 9)

Despite this endless cycle in which wisdom is lost and gained, Eliot believes “[t]here is only the fight to recover what has been lost. . . . For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.”

The final stanza of *East Coker* brings the poem full circle. “Home is where we start from,” and home is where we want to return. But conventional old age, near the end of personal time, is lived in pitiful isolation “with no before and after, / But a lifetime burning in every moment.” Like Prufrock who “forked no lightning,”⁵ who measured out his “life with coffee spoons,” Eliot's septuagenarians in this poem spend “The evening with the photograph album.” It should not be that way;

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

“We must be still and still moving,” that is, we must be full of that inner, non-active, silence. Maharishi says that even as we perform action; we must be anchored in Transcendental Consciousness and ultimately Cosmic Consciousness (1966, pp. 61–62) Eliot states we must move “into another intensity / For a further union.” Maharishi holds that the ultimate union is the union of the non-self and the Self in Unity Consciousness in which all existence is seen as the same undifferentiated *Ātmā*.

East Coker ends with an inversion of its first line, “In my end is my beginning,” often interpreted to mean the *beginning* of eternal life at death with an ascendance into heaven (Mathiessen, 1959, p. 185). This line may suggest salvation, but it equally conveys the conditions of Vedic liberation. The fusion of *beginning* and *end* is “the moment in and out of time.” Beginning at any time and any place in the grip of time, one proceeds to that eternal end beyond time and space towards a new *beginning* and a rediscovery of the original *beginning*. This is the *end* of the journey of personal evolution that in one sense never takes place, since the relative action of the journey itself loses its validity in the infinite realization. The end of the journey achieved through the Transcendental Meditation program Maharishi gives the name Unity Consciousness, when the

experiencer and the object of experience have both been brought to the same level of infinite value and this encompasses the entire phenomenon of perception and action as well. [When t]he gulf between the knower and the object of his knowing has been bridged. (R. Orme-Johnson, 1987, p. 339)

When what one sees and what one is can no longer be distinguished, time and space lose their relative meanings, and only in such infinite/eternal existence can the beginning and ending be the same. For Eliot this coming together of beginning and end takes place when “the past and future / Are conquered and reconciled.” In this state all life is experienced as eternity without change; therefore, having once arrived at this final state of evolution, even the path of evolution—a series of changes—is seen as an illusion. Such is the paradoxical relationship between the relative and the absolute.

The end is not only the finality for those who discover it, it is, Maharishi says, by its very nature “the source, course and goal” of all existence, the be all and end all of everything. For the spiritual pilgrim it is the journey’s end where ignorance is vanquished and knowledge is fully restored, where all opposites, such as individual and universal, finite and infinite, and time and eternity are resolved. About this state, this nondifferentiated beginning and ending, the Upanishads declare, “I am That, thou art That, all this is nothing other than That.” I am the totality; “I am Brahman.”

The Dry Salvages

The Dry Salvages, as the poem’s headnote explains, is a ledge of rocks off the coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts, where on vacation Eliot played as a boy and a favorite haunt returned to while at Harvard. Although Eliot did not personally coin the name *The Dry Salvages*, he nevertheless chose it for its evocative qualities as he had earlier chosen *Burnt Norton*. *Dry*, Eliot’s metaphor for spiritual depletion, recalls the imagery of modern life in *The Wasteland*, and *salvage*, pertaining to human wreckage, suggests the

need of being salvaged. Taken together the words convey the typically ambiguous Eliot symbol, spiritual barrenness (dry) and, because of The Dry Salvages' proximity to the sea, spiritual fullness.

Earlier I stated that Eliot associated each Quartet with one of the four elements—air, earth, water, and fire, but even if he had not, it seems a given that one of the *Quartets* would have been devoted to water, an image as fundamental to his poetry as stairways (“Prufrock,” *The Wasteland*, “Ash Wednesday”). In his earlier opus *The Wasteland*, water, of course, represents life and spirituality, but also “death by water” and, when polluted, the spiritual corruption of modern existence.

Apparently from his earliest days, water had left a strong impression on Eliot. Not only did he play as a child among the Dry Salvages on the Atlantic sea coast, he also romped on the beaches of the Mississippi which rushed along the west bank of St. Louis where he was raised, and it is these two great natural forces from childhood, the river and the sea, that buoy up the imagery that washes throughout the poem. The poem's first lines undoubtedly refer to the Mississippi, “Useful, untrustworthy, . . . a conveyor of commerce,” but they also suggest the two other great rivers in Eliot's life, London's befouled Thames of *The Wasteland* and, in the phrase “strong brown god,” India's holy Ganges of the Bhagavad-Gita.

Such critics as Nancy Gish read Eliot's river as a destructive force only (1981, p. 108), a view inconsistent with Eliot's typical symbolic patterning. As we have continuously seen, Eliot's chief symbols, the rose, the circle, dancing, fire, all possess dual characteristics—time and the timeless, permanent and impermanent, sublime and profane, creative and destructive. However, words such as “implacable,” “destroyer,” “unhonored, [and] unpropitiated / By worshippers of the machine” seem initially to confirm Gish's pessimistic view. But the river is not simply destructive; untamed and elemental, it is also the antithesis of “the dwellers in the city” who have forgotten the primal font from which all life springs.

The river, over the eons, has been crystallized by philosophers and poets into a metaphor for time, as the sequential flow of past, present, future, and unfathomable eternity, and Heraclitus' stream that cannot be stepped into twice, that encompasses all the changes of sequential time, including Eliot's progression of “the nursery bedroom,” “the April dooryard,” “the autumn table,” and “the winter gaslight.” “The river is within us, the sea is all about us,” Eliot informs: individuality and eternity, the one an expression of the other, the individual river a tributary of the vast encompassing sea. The river and the sea, the drop and the ocean, are simultaneously different and the same.

In *Huckleberry Finn*, for which Eliot once wrote an introduction, Twain makes the Mississippi River the source of eternity and natural goodness in opposition to its shores which are the sources of temporal activity and human corruption. For Eliot, all oppositions are found in the image of water itself. Containing all temporal states within it, the eternal sea is a primeval intelligence which litters the beach with “hints of earlier and other creation: / The starfish, the hermit crab, the whale's backbone.” It also tosses up the wreckage of humanity's disparate and desperate endeavors, containing within its “many voices” the woeful sounds of time:

MODERN SCIENCE AND VEDIC SCIENCE

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.

The bells of sea vessels toll out the moments of human life on the timeless sea, and the faithful Penelopes weave together the deceptive pasts and the futureless futures waiting for their absent Odysseuses. The time of the sea predates time (“chronometers”), and the weaving of grieving wives for absent husbands is an endless cycle that envelops both the time that does not exist (“stops”) and the time that never ends, which are the two extremes of the same thing—eternity.

Stanza II elaborates this theme of never-ending that depicts both the eternal sea of spirituality and the endless, “soundless wailing” of life in time. When will this multitude of suffering and destruction end? the poet ponders, and his initial conclusion is that “There is no end, but addition.” The aged of *East Coker* who spend their evenings with “the photograph album” are in *The Dry Salvages* full of “resentment at [their] failing powers,” and feel cast “[i]n a drifting boat with a slow leakage.” The fate of these fishermen—that is all humanity—is to sail into the futureless-future in a fog-bound ocean “littered with wastage.”

Moments of time, moments of human suffering, strung together become an endless sea of time, a sea defiled by corrupt desires and feckless action. From the vantage point of the eternal present, the sailors who sail this sea of time are “forever bailing”; their past is unreliable, “a partial fallacy,” which they misuse by accepting “superficial notions of evolution,” forgetting the value of history, “The moments of happiness . . . Fruition, fulfillment, security or affection.” The real benefit of the past, the poet says, is found in tradition, in the experiences “of many generations—not forgetting / Something that is probably quite ineffable.”

At the end of this stanza, the poem’s persona fully appreciates the dual meaning of time never-ending, realizing that “Time the destroyer is time the preserver,” that a rock in the ocean can be either a perilous hazard or a navigational marker, that time can be an endless string of miseries or a vision of eternity within time; it is a two-headed coin with the ever-changing on one side and the never-changing on the other. This is what Hugh Kenner and others have failed to properly comprehend. Kenner seems to think that in *The Dry Salvages* Eliot is simply an advocate for the capturing of brief time, an attainment that would have little if any practical value:

The Dry Salvages . . . is what our capacity for orderly generalization from experience can give us, not the continual apprehension of the still point but an account of how our experience would be related to such an apprehension if we could have it. (1959, p. 316)

What Kenner is missing is that Eliot is after more than just a “glimpse” into timelessness. The eternal moment for Eliot is precious not simply as a visionary experience, but because he realizes that eternity exists everywhere, everywhere that time exists, because the still point is both the center and the source of time. Therefore, it is unnecessary to go anywhere to escape time and the suffering associated with it. Eternity is time's deepest value just as infinity is space's deepest value. And to know eternity is to know the deepest value of one's own life, unbounded and eternal, and to know this level is to be able to transcend the whips and scorns of time.

Kenner's complaints, however, are not without merit. Implied rather than stated, he criticizes Eliot for offering eternity as the solution to life lived in time but without stating how this eternity is to be annexed.⁶ This is certainly a glaring deficiency, but we must forgive Eliot for his lack of practical solutions, for he is after all a poet and not a sage. But, unlike the Audens of the world who believe poetry has no practical effect on life (Auden, 1971), Eliot's spiritual/poetic solutions are offered with the same kind of sincerity as Emerson's and Matthew Arnold's. Intellectually he understands that to avoid the destructive nature of time one should simply step out of it, and he offers history, philosophy, and religion to support his position. What he could not offer was a practical method that would actually allow his audience to experience the transcendence he espoused, a role that the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique has proven to fulfill for millions around the world.

In Section III the poet surmises, “I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant—,” a query that directly alludes to Eliot's chief philosophical source, the Bhagavad-Gita. This apparently random thought, however, will remain unanswered until Eliot once more examines the emptiness of past and future and the fallacy of sequential time, which he compresses into such oxymoronic images as “the future is a faded song,” and flowers “pressed between yellow leaves of a book that has never been opened.” In the world of change, time cannot be arrested; it keeps slipping into something else—the future into the present, the present into the past, the past into the remote past, and the remote past into forgetfulness. In this transitory world, the demise of an event exists before it has occurred, has “faded” before it was conceived, turned into a remembrance before it has happened.

The strangeness of time is most peculiar when experienced not between a person and an object but between living beings. Because life is always in flux, precise continuity in human interaction may seem to but does not actually exist. The reason is that everyone is changing in every moment. The friends we talked to yesterday are not the same as those before us now, nor are we the same to them; and because we are different, so too are our relationships, things we have said, actions we have performed, attitudes we have held. Because time is continuous in our own lives we don't notice the changes in ourselves, nor those in friends we see frequently, but nevertheless time inexorably produces its effects.

These changes are not only psychologically and sociologically true, they are also physiologically true. In a one-year period more than 90% of the body's cells are replaced, and within seven years the transformation is complete. Therefore, when Eliot says, “time is no healer: the patient is no longer here,” he is being both metaphorically

can only exist in the temporal field through the individual consciousness of one who comes to know eternity. As the number of individuals experiencing the field of eternity increases, the greater the impact the Maharishi Effect has on the world.

The moment between action and non-action is for Eliot the “real destination” of all journeys, of life itself. To reach this destination he invokes Krishna’s warning “do not think of the fruit of action.” For Eliot and many commentators on the Gita, this statement is a warning against desire, a warning not to look for success in the field of action but rather only in the field of transcendence.

In his commentary on Chapters 1–6 of the Bhagavad-Gita, the source of Eliot’s allusion, Maharishi corrects all interpreters who have misunderstood Krishna’s injunction to “Live not for the fruits of action, nor attach yourself to inaction” (1967, p. 133). Maharishi explains that it is the mind’s nature to desire. Desires rise spontaneously whenever there is a lack, thus making desires the precursors to action, and hence an essential part of evolution (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1967, p. 51). The necessity and inescapability of desires can be seen in the desire to be free from desires.

Maharishi notes that it would be absurd to infer “that a man has no right to the fruits of action.” It is not the fruits themselves that are undesirable, it is *attachment* to the fruits which binds a person to the field of time, and it is attachment that limits the kinds of actions and fruits that can be produced or even appreciated. Attachment is bondage born of discontent. Desire, on the other hand, is the catalyst that moves one in search of contentment, but when the fruits of a particular action fall short of desire, new desires emerge and the cycle is renewed. Only when the mind is fulfilled in the bliss of Unity Consciousness is attachment dissolved. However, even in this state when one is free from their binding influence, desires remain, but instead of personal desires they have become desires to act for the universal good (1967, p. 134).

The final section of *The Dry Salvages* opens with a series of esoteric but inadequate ways of dealing with time: seances, astrology, handwriting analysis, palmistry, the reading of tea leaves, tarot cards, and modern psychology, each an occult or pseudo-science that attempts to arrest the past or divine the future. These superficial means of fathoming time, “curiosities” Eliot calls them, contrast with true spiritual vision:

But to apprehend
The point of intersection of the timeless
With Time, is an occupation for the saint—

Eliot acknowledges historically accepted saints as Krishna, Buddha, Christ, and Thomas Beckett of his *Murder in the Cathedral*, but also ordinary human beings who possess spiritual conviction and perseverance, qualities that distinguish them from the common lot. It is these qualities that separate Celia, the heroine of Eliot’s *The Cocktail Party*—a work that shares a spiritual vision with the *Four Quartets*—from Edward, Lavinia, and Peter. Celia, whose everyday world “seems all a delusion,” embraces the world of the ascetic offered her by the enigmatic Reilly:

Reilly: The destination cannot be described;
You will know very little until you get there;
You will journey blind. But the way leads towards possession
Of what you have sought for in the wrong place.

Celia: That sounds like what I want.

.....

I don't in the least know what I am doing

Or why I am doing it. There is nothing else to do:

That is the only reason.

Reilly: It is the best reason. (Eliot, 1962, pp. 364–366)

Celia deliberately relinquishes her accustomed life, possessions, and ordinary relationships in order to pursue the strenuous activities of a would-be saint. Eliot presumably believed that only a reclusive existence fraught with hardships and even the specter of danger would result in deep spirituality. This is a vision of spirituality in a society out of balance, where suffering and a withdrawal from life are perceived as virtues.

Maharishi gives an explanation of how one such society—India—lost the greatness of its culture through a similar misinterpretation:

It was the perfection of his presentation that caused Shankara's teaching to be accepted as the core of Vedic wisdom and placed it at the centre of Indian culture. It became so inseparable from the Indian way of life that when, in course of time, this teaching lost its universal character and came to be interpreted as for the recluse order alone, the whole basis of Indian culture also began to be considered in terms of the recluse way of life, founded on renunciation and detachment.

When this detached view of life became accepted as the basis of Vedic wisdom, the wholeness of life and fulfillment was lost. This error of understanding has dominated Indian culture for centuries and has turned the principle of life upside down. Life on the basis of detachment! This is a complete distortion of Indian philosophy. (1967, p. 15)

When a teaching loses its universal truth and general application, it can only be sustained by the most rigorous devotees of the knowledge. Such saintly figures deserve our admiration for keeping the teaching alive, but without universal appeal its effect on the world is minimal. Maharishi's comments above explain the degeneration of the teaching of Shankara, but they could describe the disintegration of any body of spiritual knowledge. For a teaching to remain vital it must be holistic; it must bring fulfillment to everyone, not simply those few with the will and inclination to reject ordinary life.

Eliot concludes *The Dry Salvages* again through a set of oxymoronic images of heightened vision: "The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning / Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply / That it is not heard at all." These moments for Eliot are the deserved wealth of the saints, won through

right action [which] is freedom

From past and future also.

For most of us, this the aim

Never here to be realized.

"For most of us . . . Never here to be realized," Eliot says. He sees here the spiritual expectations of human beings as distressingly low, but as we have seen, this need not be the case. Maharishi realizes that to spiritually revitalize the world, spiritual fulfillment must be found not simply among monks, it must be extended to that vast majority living a worldly existence, "the householders," and he understands that their vigorous lifestyle can actually be an asset for spiritual growth. Evolution, he explains, depends upon a

balance of deep rest and dynamic activity; hence, the vitality of the householder, the non-recluse, alternated with the Transcendental Meditation technique forms an ideal combination for spiritually rejuvenating life in our time (1967, pp. 10–16).

Maharishi's teaching also corrects another misunderstanding of spiritual growth commonly accepted and asserted here by Eliot—Buddha's message of right action—which has actually over time become completely inverted. It is not right action that leads to spiritual freedom; it is the other way around. In Maharishi's words, "The teaching of right action without due emphasis on the primary necessity of realization of Being [pure consciousness] is like building a wall without a foundation" (1967, p. 11). Achievement in life is dependent upon right action, right action upon clear thinking, and clear thinking upon the deepest level of silence which Maharishi refers to as the foundation of action. Permanently gaining this state of deep silence, pure consciousness, which is the source of all life and all activity, a person spontaneously performs right action in accord with the all the Laws of Nature. Thus, it is not right action that leads to enlightenment; it is enlightenment that produces right action.

After this vital discussion of action, *The Dry Salvages* ends equivocally. In lieu of a confident, beatific vision, Eliot leaves us with only the faint hope that all will be nourished not at but rather "Not too far from the [Buddha's] yew-tree." Eternity, he has established exists everywhere that time exists; however, until one actually experiences it, one can only live *near* not *in* eternity that the yew-tree symbolizes. The reason for this tepid ending is clear enough, for unlike the self-contained *Burnt Norton*, *The Dry Salvages* functions like *East Coker* in the overall structure of the *Four Quartets*. It is an intermediary state, a stage on the path rather than the journey's final destination; thus, Eliot's most expanded spiritual vision is left for the Quartet that is to complete his holy and holistic circle: *Little Gidding*.

Little Gidding

Little Gidding ranks with *Burnt Norton* as the best of the *Four Quartets*. It has a wider philosophical scope than *East Coker* and *The Dry Salvages*, and is more personal and concrete than *Burnt Norton*. Written primarily in the first half of 1941, the poem was both aided and hindered by the German air raids on London. The ubiquitous sight of fire and ash, the nightly terror of sirens and explosions, the constant presence of death and demolition, creates a visceral immediacy in *Little Gidding* missing in the other *Quartets* even though such horrors are presented indirectly and symbolically. The air raids, on the other hand, were less beneficial for Eliot's work habits, causing him to write the poem's first draft quickly and superficially. Writing about the timeless, he constantly felt the pressure of time, the futureless future: "Like everyone else in this period, his life became one of monotony and anxiety, caught in a middle period when pre-war life seemed unreal and post-war life unimaginable" (Ackroyd, 1984, p. 264).

In spite of his personal anguish, or any doubt he originally had about the quality of *Little Gidding*, the poem begins with amazing surety and affirmation. *Burnt Norton* had posed the problem of time; *East Coker* and *The Dry Salvages* elaborated on time's character; but *Little Gidding* redeems it and in so doing presents Eliot's most definitive spir-

itual vision. The poem's first two words, "Midwinter spring," metaphorically suggest its vitality and direction. The phrase is not only the kind of mind-challenging paradox that Eliot relished; but in context it envisions an end to the air raids, a peace in the heart of war, heaven amidst the inferno, an interruption to what had become life's status quo—suffering as usual. This unlooked-for spring "is its own season / Sempiternal . . . Suspended in time." Not a common annual season, it is a new eternal season of its own making, existing in a time that never existed, reconciling and unifying sets of opposites, "pole and tropic . . . When the short day is brightest."

The opposing forces "frost and fire" literally represent the seasons winter and summer and characterize the harsh weather that defines them. Metaphorically they are the polarized means by which the eternal spring comes into being. The fire of war is calmed by the frost of winter, and the holy fire "that is the heart's heat," in contrast to the fire of desire (symbolized by leaping through the flames in *East Coker*), melts the congealed emotions and awakens the dormant inner life. The sun shining on the pond on the shortest day of the year generates a blinding light that "Stirs the dumb spirit." The "[s]oul's sap" that had long been frozen "quivers" and begins to flow. This is a celestial spring "not in time's covenant," devoid of the taint of earthly existence.

The opening stanza concludes with the question answered in the rest of the poem: "Where is the summer, the unimaginable / Zero summer?" Summer is fullness, more than spring, and the zero summer is brought about by a fusion of winter and summer—the hedgerow blooming more suddenly from a temporary snowfall—a summer that is "neither budding nor fading." It is an "unimaginable" summer because suffering and the horrors of war have made it so, but also a zero summer because it transcends human imagination. It is the full ripeness of spiritual awakening that the poet longs for, a summer that exceeds the still point and the midwinter spring, embracing all life and all things in the warmth of eternity.

The zero summer is for Eliot analogous to the ancient concept of paradise on earth, a period of peace and abundance, a period that has long been chronicled in the history of literature as Plato's *Republic*, More's *Utopia*, Shakespeare's Arden Forest, the many versions of Camelot, and Morris's *The Earthly Paradise* to name a few. But with the cynicism and doubt of the twentieth century, the dystopia replaced the utopia in such cautionary tales as Huxley's *Brave New World*, Orwell's *1984*, Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, and in such plays as Brecht's *Baal*, Beckett's *Endgame*, and Sartre's *No Exit*. However, as science comes close to proving Einstein's unified field, and its discovery of the Maharishi Effect (See endnote 7)—that only .1% of a population practicing the Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi program is needed to reduce the negative effects of a society such as hunger, disease, crime, and pollution—this worldwide myth of earthly perfection and harmony no longer need be a fantasy. Hence, in 1989 Maharishi was able to predict based upon the increased order in the world the coming of a literal Heaven on Earth.

With individuals who could fully develop their consciousness through the Transcendental Meditation technique and the Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi program functioning as the units of society, permanently established in and operating from the source of Natural Law, a society made up of such individuals must know immense growth and creativity. A society based upon the enlivenment of Natural Law through

the growth of consciousness of its individuals would be a balanced society in which the highest values of every area of life would blossom, because every area in life is founded in pure consciousness—the source of Natural Law. In such a Heaven on Earth, such a zero summer, Nature and humanity will harmoniously interact in a perfect symbiotic relationship. Maharishi Vedic Science describes the means of achieving Heaven on Earth for each major area of life as well as a vision of what we might expect for each area. Here Maharishi comments on the future transition of two essential areas of society, crime and agriculture:

Heaven on Earth will be characterized by the absence of the need to rehabilitate, because everyone set on the path of evolution will not create problems either for himself or for his surroundings. Everyone will enjoy perfect freedom in a crime-free society. (1991, p. 92)

The creativity of man, of the soil, of the clouds, of the sun, of the sea—the creativity of everything is involved in agriculture. When all of these natural processes are evolutionary, life-supporting, the farmer's task is easy and nobody has to suffer from lack of food. Unfolding the full creative potential of the individual is vital for the success of agriculture. (1991, p. 86)

Little Gidding describes the path to the zero summer in language reminiscent of *East Coker* (“To arrive where you are, to get where you are not, / You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy”):

If you came this way
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
At any time or at any season,
It would always be the same.

A spiritual pilgrim traveling this route to the midwinter spring would find the “voluptuary sweetness” of May, “the same at the end of the journey,” and a meaning that fulfills and exceeds the original purpose. The journey begins at any time and from any place that is the “world's end,” for Eliot “Now and England.” It is the end of the world because the war has made it so, but every place is the end just as every place is the beginning. That is what distinguishes the still point from the point in time. To get there one must “leave the rough road,” and “put off / Sense and notion.” The coarseness of ordinary desires must be abandoned, and the route taken cannot be one of ideas or even rational thinking. Eliot says the route to the zero summer is through prayer, but for him “prayer is more / Than an order of words,” more than the act or sound of praying; it is a means of transcendence to “the intersection of the timeless moment [that] / Is England and nowhere. Never and always.”

Eliot, the converted Anglican, no doubt sincerely believes in the efficacy of prayer, but on this issue he is also the Harvard graduate in Eastern philosophy. To get to the “timeless moment,” he knows one must transcend all thought. Prayer, a form of contemplation, depends on thought and exists in time; thus prayer as it is normally apprehended is an activity whose *ideals* may transcend the field of time, but whose method does not. Eliot realizes as much when he adds to the word prayer such qualifications as “more / Than an order of words, the conscious occupation / Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.” He also makes it clear that the prayer he advocates is not an intellectual process, which prayer is generally taken to be: “You are not here to veri-

fy, / Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity / Or carry report.” If what Eliot calls prayer is not an exercise of the intellect nor what usually passes for prayer, what then is it? It is a non-intellectual practice uninvolved in activity, sound, or thought that settles the mind and brings brings it to “the still point.” Unfortunately, Eliot doesn’t explain how his concept of prayer is to accomplish this movement, and history has not proven prayer of any sort to be a reliable method for transcending.

Little Gidding’s second section opens with a long contemplation of death, which from one perspective is the cessation of life, but the subject of death like the subject of time is a Hydra with many heads. To the nihilist, death is annihilation; to the reprobate, Eliot’s citizen of the wasteland, life is a living death; to the Christian, death is a prelude to heaven; to the seeker of enlightenment, death is the death of change; and to the Veda, death is an illusion because life is finally immortal. In the *Four Quartets*, Eliot plays with all of these forms of death, and nowhere more than in *Little Gidding*.

The section opens with three short lyrics organized around the deaths of air, earth, water, and fire. The first, which visualizes the choked air of London’s fire bombings, is the most impressive. In this lyric, the “death of air” is the suffocating ash and dust that had formerly been the walls of homes, the structures of former lives. Through a single minimalist image, which conveys the remnants of what had been life, Eliot quietly captures elderly despair in the “Ash on an old man’s sleeve.” Ash is also what “the burnt roses leave,” the roses of *Burnt Norton’s* eternal garden. In the one word *ash*, then, Eliot manages to conflate the entire range of human existence. Ash is the sobering destiny of all life lived in time; it is also all that remains of the yogi’s spiritual fire which burns away the dross of non-existence.⁸ These two images—the rose and the fire—come together again in an ecstatic, visionary union at the end of *Little Gidding*, marking the end and the beginning of the *Four Quartet’s* spiritual journey.

Caused in this poem by the unimaginable destruction of war, “the death of earth” is Eliot’s human wasteland that “Gapes at the vanity of toil, / Laughs without mirth,” like the pitiless sphinx in Yeats’ “The Second Coming.” Deaths by water and fire, like those of air and earth, are the means of change, the end of time. They “succeed / The town, the pasture and the weed . . . deride / The sacrifice that we denied . . . rot / The marred foundations we forgot.”

Eliot’s choice of the preposition *of* (as in “the death *of* fire”) in associating death with each of the four elements instead of *by* (as in death *by* water) is significant because *of* makes the primal elements, air, earth, water, and fire, both the destroyers and the destroyed. Humanity, for Eliot as for Gerard Manley Hopkins, fouls the air and water and reduces life to ash and dust through wars and other thoughtless acts, and the elements, in turn, the subalterns of change, wear away all that exists including the “monuments of time,” human structures created out of naivete and arrogance.

In *Burnt Norton* Eliot had fashioned a mock *Inferno* from a descent into the London subway; in *Little Gidding* he outdoes his earlier effort by calling upon his experiences as a Kensington fire-spotter (Smith, 1950, p. 287). Walking his “dead patrol” through the eerie ruins and rubble that had become London, Eliot’s persona encounters the ghost of a former poetic master. Whom this master might have been has inspired many speculative candidates: Yeats (Kenner, 1959, p. 320), Swift (Gish), Shakespeare, Mallarmé (Traversi, 1976, p. 190), and Shelley (Smith, 1950, p. 285) among them, and yet from

TIME AND ETERNITY IN ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

the final phrase in the passage, "I caught the sudden look of some dead master / Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled / *Both one and many*;" [my italics] we may easily deduce that the ghost is a composite rather than a single individual. This notwithstanding, Eliot is undoubtedly paying special homage to Dante, the poet whom he admired most, by closely modeling his own Hades after a passage from the *Inferno's* Canto XV:

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?"

Little Gidding: 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?"

Eliot's night journey takes place in that familiar hour when the fiendish activity of night fall is almost over, "After the dark dove with the flickering tongue" has dropped its fire bombs, just prior to the rebirth of day, "Near the ending of interminable night / At the recurrent end of the unending," at the crack-in-the-world between what isn't and what is, when time seems nonexistent. In a renewal of conversation that has the ring of an endless debate, the old master asserts a strong desire to avoid old poetic theories. Reibetanz takes this statement to mean a refusal to discuss poetry at all (1983, p. 155), but this is not the case. The passage is in fact Eliot's consummate statement on the best use of poetry, a central issue considered in each of the *Four Quartets*. The dead master is the voice of poetic heritage, the link to the past that in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" Eliot states cannot be avoided. Eliot represents poetry's present and also its connection to the future; together the two poets form an eternal continuum of poetry.

The dead master cautions that "last year's words belong to last year's language / And next year's words await another voice." Although the poet of his age, Eliot understands, and stated as much in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," that each age speaks in its own language and its own forms. Maharishi has said that the world's greatest sages, such as Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Moses, and Mohammed have extolled the virtues of eternity in languages indigenous to their own times and places. As ages pass, the universal in their statements becomes lost with the changes in language and custom, and it can only be revived by intellects like their own that rise above the constraints of time.

In this vein, as Brunetto had warned Dante, the dead master warns Eliot of the fate of his poetry:

and pray they [your words] be forgiven
 By others, as I pray you to forgive
 Both Bad and good. Last season's fruit is eaten
 And the fulfilled beast shall kick the empty pail.

And in a pointed reference to Pound's "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," the dead master states that both he and his listener had tried to improve the language of their respective ages, had been "impelled . . . to purify the dialect of the tribe."⁹ But in spite of their good intentions, such "shadow fruit" will come to folly, mistake followed by mistake, unless the younger poet becomes "restored by that refining fire." This is *Little Gidding's* primary theme. In opposition to the destructive fire of the "dark dove," the fire of knowledge—the holy fire of the still point—purifies poetry and all existence.

Life can either be purified by the transcendent "Pentecostal fire" or be consumed by the coarse fires of ignorance and desire. Cleansed by the spiritual flame, the poet's consciousness and subsequent poetry will "move in measure, like a dancer," in the cosmic dance of perfection. The master, having given this sage advice, departs like Hamlet's ghostly father at the cock's crow, or like the German bomber before the sounding of the all clear, bringing another day of hope and peace to war-torn Londoners. Later in Section IV, Eliot will reprise the opposing meanings of fire and fire:

The only hope, or else despair
 Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre—
 To be redeemed from fire by fire.

The dead master teaches Eliot about his life's poetic work, detachment, which is the primary lesson of Section III. Attachment, detachment, and indifference, Eliot says, all "flourish in the same hedgerow," that is they spring from the same source. Indifference resembles the "others as death resembles life"; it comes between attachment and detachment, each of which has the capacity for love, but detachment is superior because it fosters "love beyond desire." Detachment, according to Eliot, is created out of a sense of the past; "This is the use of memory: / For liberation."

He says that detachment replaces attachment over time: "love of a country / Begins as attachment to our own field of action / And comes to find that action of little importance." This loss of importance, he states, is not indifference, because memories still evoke meaning for us even though they no longer have the power over our actions:

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.

Eliot's explanation of detachment and its place in the development of liberation is admirable, but like his earlier discussion of desires it is misleading. Maharishi explains that detachment evolves not as a change in attitude, as Eliot would have it, but rather as a matter of fulfillment. The mind remains attached to the objects of the senses as long as it remains unfulfilled, but as soon as it becomes contented, attachments to lesser experiences lose their charm and the mind becomes detached from them. A person becomes detached from a hut, for example, when moving into a mansion. Maharishi actually

prefers to speak of this movement on to fulfillment as gaining equanimity rather than detachment which possesses the negative connotation of aloofness (1967, pp. 155–158). Eliot's detachment is based on remoteness that occurs over time, and in spite of his disclaimers, it is difficult not to see this experience as indifference. Eliot is correct, however, in pointing out the vital role of memory in the growth of detachment, but according to Maharishi Vedic Science, not in the way he understands it.

The value of memory (*Smṛiti*) is to remember one's original, unbounded status, one's deepest elemental Self that is transcendental pure consciousness, forgotten in the fragmentation of temporal life. Having gained this state of full liberation, detachment from the fruits of action is the result. New desires arise, but because fulfillment—the *raison d'être* of all desires—has already been obtained, they are no longer binding. Detachment from the things of this world, however, as Eliot's rendering of detachment suggests, does not translate into aloofness; one still cares deeply about things. Firmly established in the state of fulfillment, life is lived in the stability and security of bliss consciousness as the things of the temporal world continuously change. Maharishi describes life in this state of consciousness:

Such a carefree state of life in freedom is only possible when a man is contented. And contentment is possible only when the mind is established in bliss-consciousness, the state of the transcendental Absolute, because in the relative field there is no happiness so intense that it could finally satisfy the thirst of the mind for joy. . . . This is the state of perfect detachment. (1967, pp. 333–334)

Section V, the final rumination of time, ties together the *Four Quartets*' various strands. It is the end of the poem, the final blossoming of Eliot's themes and symbolic patterns, his philosophy, and his metaphysics; "And to make an end is to make a beginning. / The end is where we start from." Everything in the last two stanzas are by now familiar, but their familiarity is intentional, for it is through the "remembered gate" that freedom is to be found.

The movement in this final section is a gathering of diversity into unity. Once more Eliot calls for modesty, precision, and flexibility to produce in poetry a "complete consort," just as fire and water will produce from death an eternal rebirth, and out of the incidents of history comes "a pattern of timeless moments." To achieve this unity, this image of the great and final reality, everything, even war, death, and the dark "descending dove," time as well as the timeless, must be included. This Eliot brings about with immense grace and affirmation in the final quatrain, once more through the images of fire and rose and their vacillating qualities relative and absolute, destructive and purifying, mutable and perfect, that merge together at the eternal still point, at the beginning and the end, when all existence,

All manner of things 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.

The expansiveness of Eliot's vision lies in that one phrase, "the fire and the rose are one," the fire of destruction and the rose of perfection. Maharishi calls such opposites that define duality—life in time—opposing forces on the battlefield of life. Under what

conditions could these antithetical poles be understood to be one? Only in Unity Consciousness, the beginning and ending of the long journey, that, for the fully enlightened who perceive all change as an illusion, never takes place. Only in Unity Consciousness are opposites entirely reconciled. In Unity Consciousness eternity is lived and time is redeemed. It is the greatness of Eliot's vision and poetic powers that he could imagine such a state. It is the immensely greater vision of Maharishi to make the possibility of living such a state universally available.

Appendix

The relationship between time and eternity that Eliot finds so essential to both an understanding of life and a means for coping with it has perhaps always been at the forefront of philosophical and scientific investigation, but perhaps at no time more so than the twentieth century. The great inroads that science made into the understanding of time, first with Einsteinian and later with quantum physics, fueled the imaginations of scientists and artists alike. From the field of literary criticism, Postmodernists, finding the timeless excursions of Moderns like Eliot idealistic and impractical, have temporally repositioned themselves, have discounted the knowability of eternity and thus left themselves only within the unreliable and destructive hands of time. Maharishi Vedic Science, however, coming to redress the limited vision of the Modernists and the cynical expectations of the Postmoderns offers a vision of time that supports the ideals of Eliot and the Moderns as well as the desire for practical solutions of the Postmoderns. The result is a concrete strategy for arresting the negative effects of time through an empirical methodology for reversing aging, a new standard for conceiving time as we approach and crossover into that temporal benchmark: the second millennium.

A Postmodern Assessment of Eliot

For many Eliot's final rhetorical and spiritual unity in *Little Gidding*, its note of optimistic humanism, its vision of perfection amidst chaos, rings out not only hope for an otherwise futureless future, it also rings true. But amidst the present critical establishment such sentiments are outdated, un-critical, and presumably invalid. The attempt by Eliot and his peers to locate transcendental "presence," the so-called totalizing strategies of Modernism, have been scathingly criticized as "profoundly ahistorical" by contemporary theorists. By this they mean that the search for transcendence has alienated Modernist writers from the process of history and the relevance of their time. Although an established Postmodern way of reading modernism for going on three decades, modernist ahistoricism is only true if we accept post-structuralist agendas, that is, if we read literature diachronically and relativistically. On the other hand, if we read Eliot and the other Moderns synchronically, accusations made against them are more easily defended.

Postmodernists freely admit that formally Modernists were not only not ahistorical, they in fact began one of the most radical formal revolutions in the history of Western literature. Among the most severe experiments engendered among the Moderns was the elliptical method of poetry adopted and perfected by Eliot and Ezra Pound for *The*

TIME AND ETERNITY IN ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

Wasteland, a poetic technique so *defamiliarizing* that the poem's first readers were lost without notes. *The Wasteland* came to be and still is the most influential poem of the twentieth century and can be said, at least in the field of literature, to have actually changed the direction of time. Joyce, Woolf, Proust, Faulkner, and others had a similar impact on the novel. Therefore, formally, rather than ahistorical, the Moderns were both in and ahead of their time.

The argument postmodern theorists have picked with the Moderns, however, is not with form but with the moderns' treatment of subject. The Postmoderns believe their predecessors possessed an overriding penchant for presence (transcendence) in such works as Eliot's *Four Quartets*, and in so doing disassociated themselves with time and subsequent relevance. Finding the comforting order of one system—Judeo-Christianity—no longer intellectually viable, the Moderns, say their critics, simply switched from an Occidental to an Oriental order lying outside the realm of ordinary phenomena. Given the horrors of this century, it is an order the Postmoderns cannot accept. Such attempts to find transcendence they contend are not only irrelevant, they are elitist. According to Postmodernists, few can comprehend transcendence and even fewer can say they have experienced it, if it exists at all.¹⁰ Because language, they argue, is the source of consciousness, and because language is simply a system of *différance*, no absolute relationship within the schizophrenic word, between signifier (symbol) and signified (meaning), can exist. Thus, transcendence in the eyes of Postmodernism is an impossibility.¹¹

Interestingly enough, even on the level of subject, where Eliot above all poets is supposedly vulnerable to the claim of ahistoricism, he can be defended. The simplest argument in his favor is that the Modernist search for transcendence, in opposition to middle-class realism, was representative of the Modern period just as *différance* in the second half of this century is representative of Postmodernism. In both cases, writers and critics are writing in response to the time in which they live. Secondly, Eliot does not, as he is often presently imputed, ignore the issues of his own era to exclusively stalk the ineffable. In truth, Eliot was one of the severest critics of his age, and one way of reading his literary oeuvre is as an unflinching attack on the bourgeois quest for materialism and sensual gratification in lieu of moral and spiritual values.

Thirdly, and this is the point most pertinent to this paper, Eliot did not simply, as he has been accused, withdraw into a search for the timeless (presence) at the expense of time (history). On this point he is in surprising agreement with Derrida and other contemporary theorists who state that nothing can be located beyond the realm of time, in this case even transcendence, the eternal, which has nothing to do with time. This is the paradox of time and eternity that Eliot grapples with throughout the *Four Quartets*. Time Eliot understands not only can be located within the field of time, it ultimately cannot be distinguished from it. And this is where he and the Postmodernists part company. Time is the expression of the timeless in the phenomenal world, and the resolution of this paradox takes place in individual consciousness. If the consciousness of an individual remains time-bound, the fragmented world of the Postmoderns is the reality; for the individual who knows Transcendental Consciousness, eternity pervades every changing element of temporal existence.

Space-Time

Eliot's interest in the great scientific discoveries of his time demonstrates just how responsive he was to his age. The scientific conceptions of time that swept in with the new century held enormous importance for artists, Eliot among them; it was the passion of the modern world. We have only to think of Salvadore Dali's melting clocks or the syncopated rhythms of American jazz to conceptualize time's influence on aesthetics, but among artistic disciplines literature assuredly was the most bewitched by it. Such movements as impressionism, expressionism, stream-of-consciousness, elliptical poetry, and surrealism consciously distorted time in order to separate literature from the ordinary and conventional world depicted in literary realism. Writers who were seduced by the varieties of time are a Modernist Who's Who: besides Eliot and Pound, such poets as Yeats, Lawrence, Crane, Stevens, and Moore embraced it, along with such novelists as Woolf, Joyce, Proust, Faulkner, and Thomas Wolfe. Time monopolized the intellectual circles in the first decades of the century, but one scientific discovery in particular captured the imagination of both scientists and artists as nothing had since Copernicus, altering the temporal awareness of mankind forever.

Time changed in the year 1905. Or, at least, the way science thought about time changed. Until that decisive year, classical Newtonian physics operated as if time were absolute, although it had for centuries resigned itself that space was not (Hawking, 1988, p. 20). Long before Einstein's theory of relativity, space was acknowledged to be relative. If you took two different observers looking at the same object, the object would look different from or relative to each observer. Time, however, before 1905 was accepted as a constant, as an absolute. But Einstein ended that comforting but erroneous notion, realizing that temporal considerations are also relative to the observer.

He postulated that observers moving at different speeds would affect the temporal ordering of events. If the speeds were not great, the differences would be difficult to notice, but at high speeds the changes would be significant. Two observers moving at different speeds, say one on earth and another in a spacecraft, would each in his/her own sphere experience time as "normal" relative to the speed of light, and their wrist watches would indicate as much. But relative to each other, time would be quite different. To the earthbound, time in the rocket ship would appear to be moving very slowly. What Einstein had realized was that time is different in different situations. One significance of this discovery was that it was no longer possible to talk about an event as though it were a single phenomenon. The same event could exist in the past, present, or future for different observers (Capra, 1975, pp. 165–166). As a result, science could no longer locate an event in relative space and absolute time. Space and time had become almost indistinguishable; therefore, four-dimensional space-time came into being as the new term for establishing the position of an event.

One of time's most noteworthy features, observed by Eliot in the *Four Quartets*, has to do with its relationship to light. An event's light, beginning at a specific point in space and time, spreads out three dimensionally into what science calls a light cone. When the first rays of that light reach a specific destination, that light begins a future light cone. The place which cannot be affected by the event is called elsewhere. What

TIME AND ETERNITY IN ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

the light cone effectively demonstrates is that the past and future exist simultaneously, can actually be the same event depending upon the variable of the observer. An explosion on some star deep in the cosmos, for example, is the beginning of a light cone for that star. Thousands of years later when the light from that explosion can finally be seen on earth, only then does the event exist for us. Stephen Hawking explains:

the light that we see from distant galaxies left them millions of years ago, and in the case of the most distant object that we have seen, the light left some eight thousand million years ago. Thus, when we look at the universe, we are seeing it as it was in the past. (1988, p. 28)

What Hawking's example demonstrates is that time exists only in relationship to consciousness. Time cannot be said to exist until someone witnesses it or feels its effects. To the observer on earth, however, the event seems to be happening as it is being seen. In *The Dry Salvages* Eliot considers this illusion of time as "mere sequence":

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."

For those on board Eliot's liner, time is the present and the shore is the past; but for those at the place of departure the shore is the present and it is the liner that is receding into the past; for those at the liner's destination its arrival is the future, and yet, the liner on the ocean is a single event. It produces different experiences of time solely due to the various placements of its observers. Because past, present, and future have been scientifically proven to be what Maharishi calls a concept (1967, p. 253), time and its co-conspirator change are only an illusion of reality. The fact that life exists in spite of this cosmic conjuring trick demonstrates that what is constant in the absence of time and change is the timeless and non-change, or the field of pure, eternal intelligence that orchestrates this grand illusion. With the field of change at best completely undependable, at worst a total mirage, Eliot's advice to place one's life in the field of eternity is a thoroughly practical suggestion, and as has been demonstrated, most effectively accomplished through the effortless practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique.

Einstein's famous equation $E = mc^2$ predicted the effect of gravity on time and provided an image of immortality. It demonstrates that light has energy and therefore mass. If light has mass then it must be affected by gravity. With this in mind, Einstein predicted that clocks running close to a body with a large mass like earth would run slower than clocks at high altitudes with less gravity. Although Einstein made this prediction in the century's first decade, it was not until 1975 that lingering doubts about the prediction were dispelled. In that salient year the U.S. Navy flew over Chesapeake Bay for more than fifteen hours at an altitude of 30,000 feet. The clocks on board the airplane gained about three billionths of a second every hour compared to identical clocks on the ground (Calder, 1979, pp. 72-73).

The most remarkable effect of gravity on time takes place in the infamous black holes. When a star burns up all of its energy, it begins to collapse in upon itself forming a region in space with such a huge gravitational force that it pulls in any body in the vicinity. At the edge of a black hole's circumference exists what is called the *event horizon*, and anything that enters it, including light, is its prey. Like an insect that falls into a doodle bug pit, nothing that trespasses returns, and because light or anything else cannot return, time stops, collapses inside the black hole. Ironically, in this image of time stopping, of total annihilation, exists an argument for immortality. Moreover, in consideration of black holes, Eliot's statement "All time is unredeemable" makes literal sense.

Although by 1958 Bertrand Russell could still claim that Einstein's theory of relativity had few philosophical implications (1958, p. 138), the growing importance of the observer in both science and philosophy is one indication that he was not correct. If time, space, or anything else can be affected by subjectivity, that is, the placement or perception of the observer, we are moving ever closer to a definition of not a single universe but of multiple universes structured in individual consciousness.

The effect of Einstein's discovery on Eliot cannot be overestimated as both confirmation and stimulation of his poetry. The earlier Eliot was fascinated by time, but of a completely different order than that found in his most mature poetry such as *The Wasteland* and *Four Quartets*. In the poems that make up *Prufrock and Other Observations*, Eliot had adopted the theories of Bergsonian time, *durée* or duration, which presents the world as one of "constant flux, constant becoming without permanence or transcendence" (Gish, 1981, p. 3), qualitative time that is purely subjective in opposition to and with no connection to chronological or scientific time. In the *Four Quartets*, thanks in part to Einstein, Eliot's conception of time becomes greatly expanded, taking in the full range of human existence, subject and object, from point to eternity.

Quantum Mechanical Time

No doubt influenced by the theory of relativity, Eliot derived one of his central philosophical positions in the *Four Quartets*, namely that time is not absolute and therefore must be inconstant and unreliable. From quantum mechanics, a system of physical inquiry that blurs the boundaries of objective science and subjective consciousness at the deepest levels of human existence, at a point where ordinary concepts of time are inappropriate, Eliot's assertion that time and eternity are inseparable is validated.

This metaphysical side of the new physics can be seen in questions such as, when is a particle not a particle or a wave not a wave?—questions nonsensical in classical physics but commonplace in quantum mechanics. In the macroscopic world of pure Newtonian physics, the universe is made up of heavenly bodies and empty space, and the two shall not overlap. Einstein's general theory of relativity changed that. It demonstrated that the gravitational pull of massive bodies produces a curvature of space. In quantum field theory this means we can no longer simply think of bodies of mass floating in empty space. We must now account for the *interaction* between physical objects and space, because a body's gravitational mass curves space, and this curved space is the body's field: "In Einstein's theory, then, matter cannot be separated from its field of

gravity, and the field of gravity cannot be separated from the curved space. Matter and space are thus seen to be inseparable and interdependent parts of a single whole" (Capra, 1975, p. 208).

The same kind of scientific logic applies to time. It can no longer be said that a person operates in a universal time anymore than it can be said that a planet operates in a universal space. Just as a planet creates its own field of space, people create their own fields of time.

In quantum mechanics, the antiquated idea of an objective observer witnessing a separate universe, "out there," has been replaced by a new view of the universe in which participants interact with the environments that they have created (Zukav, 1979, pp. 53–54). Such surprising statements from the field of physics have stopped being surprising from the perspective of quantum mechanics. We are entering a new phase where the clear distinctions between the complete objectivity of science and the total subjectivity of metaphysics is disappearing.

In the famous summit of 1927, called the Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics, the new physicists came to the conclusion that "what we perceive to be physical reality is actually our cognitive construction of it." Henry Pierce Stapp firmly states that there is no longer a "substantive physical world, in the usual sense of this term" (cited in Zukav, 1979, pp. 105); as an accepted unified field theory of physics becomes imminent, John Hagelin asks the question, "Is Consciousness the Unified Field?" (1993, p. 29–87) and his own answer comes close to confirming that it is; and John Wheeler and others have gone so far as to suggest that we not only create our own individual universes from consciousness, but because of the existence of multiple possibilities, we may even create multiple universes (Zukav, 1979, pp. 106–108). In his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita, Maharishi states that it is essential to recognize that the "opposing forces [duality] on the battlefield of life are one's own creation" (1967, p. 22). In other words, out of one's own consciousness the entire universe is created, first perceptively, from how the universe is individually comprehended—from one's state of consciousness—but also from one's deepest Self, which is the universal source from which all creation springs.

Eliot's layered rose garden in *Burnt Norton* is a supreme example of a multiple universe created out of consciousness. He begins the passage with the line, "My words echo / Thus in your mind," indicating his awareness that what he is creating is not his alone, but rather a conspiracy between his thoughts at a specific point in his life and the thoughts of any reader who reads them at any time. The rose garden is a dynamic idea that belongs to Eliot, to any reader, the thrush who observes it, the mysterious "they" who make up the party, to the past, present, and future who own it. The rose garden, like a quantum mechanical wave, is pure potential. It does not become my or your idea of Eliot's rose garden until one of us reads the passage and decides it means one thing or another. The swimming pool full of water made from light is also analogous to the potential quantum particle simultaneously illusion and reality, like all of the *Burnt Norton* garden, and by extension all of life.

How is it that physics has entered into this transcendent world of poetry and consciousness? The answer lies in quantum field theory where elementary particles some-

times behave as particles and sometimes as waves. When do they behave as which? Apparently, they behave as one or the other when we, the interactors, perceive them as one or the other. Otherwise, they exist in a state of pure potential to be either. When we decide to examine the activity of a particular subatomic particle, our decision limits what its wave capability can become. It causes it to collapse to a specific point in time and space. Previously the particle maintained a free flowing existence of timeless potential. These kinds of choices are not limited to the laboratory either; they are the common modes of functioning of all beings in what we call life. Hence, it is the choices made in consciousness that create time, activity, and matter as we normally understand them.

As we progress to subtler levels of existence, from matter to cells, from cells to molecules, from molecules to atoms, and from atoms to subatomic particles, our paradigm of reality must at each stage undergo a radical shift. At the quantum level our old beliefs in the tangible stuff of the world must be discarded: “[a]t the subatomic level there is no longer a clear distinction between what is and what happens . . . the world is fundamentally dancing energy” (Zukav, 1979, p. 212). At the quantum level, things, including time, do not behave the way they do on the perceptual level of the senses. Stephen Hawking says the potential exists for us to remember the future the way we remember the past, or even more radical to experience events backward, although on the sensual level of existence this will never happen because time moves in one direction, in the so-called “arrow of time” (1988, pp. 143–144), obeying the second law of thermodynamics which states that entropy increases over time, and because disorder increases time cannot be reversed. According to this law, destruction, aging, and death, the negative effects of time, make a kind of morbid sense. This is the world of time as perceived by the unreliable senses, and given its limitations and its distortions of reality, living solely on this sensory level of life will undoubtedly prove Eliot correct that the only way to escape time is to enter into eternity, to transcend it.

From quantum mechanics, which is more and more being associated with the field of consciousness, particles move freely backwards and forwards in time as freely as physical bodies move backwards and forwards in space. If human beings could somehow operate from this deeper, more powerful, quantum level, or better yet from its source—what Maharishi terms the unified field of pure consciousness—we would know the temporal freedom the *Rishis* in ancient times describe as a common experience. We could avoid *The Wasteland’s* destructive effects of time, and live life in the direction of immortality that Eliot envisioned in the *Four Quartets*.

Reversing Time

Eternity translates into immortality when it is lived. Life lived in immortality has long been held in the East to be the supreme goal of human existence. In the West, however, it has generally been scrutinized with suspicion. Christian theology, Greek myth, and Western poetry are filled with cautionary tales of tragic mortals who try to steal immortality from the covetous gods and fail. Tennyson describes the agony of Tithonus, one such victim, to whom Zeus granted immortal life but not eternal youth, dooming him to endless aging without the release of death:

TIME AND ETERNITY IN ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.
Me only cruel immortality
Consumes; I wither slowly in thine arms. (71)

The rare Western work that treats human immortality benignly, such as Emerson's "Brahma,"

If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again,¹²

or Eliot's *Four Quartets*, more often than not borrow their concept of immortality from the East.

However, whether Eastern or Western, human beings have always seen immortality as an intriguing possibility; without it individual life on earth faces annihilation. Vedic Literature not only proclaims immortality to be a possibility, it provides examples of those who have attained it. The doubting West, moreover, is not without its own precedents of longevity, which at least suggest the potential for immortality. Eliot without many practical examples of its existence to draw upon, renders immortality only in the abstract:

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.

But from science and the environment we can locate more specific examples, such as the one-celled amoeba which avoids extinction by dividing itself into two; certain fish and crocodiles with unlimited cell reproduction, who only succumb to death by becoming the prey of other species; the giant sequoias that live to five thousand years, and, most notably, genes which may alter over time, but are not destroyed.

Among human beings, societies exist in which people regularly live in excess of 130 years, hardly immortality, but a far cry from the life span of 70 something among affluent countries and as low as 45 in the third world. To a great degree life span can be attributed to behavioral and environmental factors, but many authorities believe it is also structured in individual DNA. If both conditioning and genes could be enhanced to increase life expectancy in a completely natural way, the world would possess an ideal technique for reversing the negative effects of time on the physiology. This is exactly what the Transcendental Meditation technique and its advanced Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi program do by allowing stress to be released through deep rest, and by transforming the human nervous system, not through abnormal manipulation, but by refamiliarizing it with its deeper Self thereby allowing it to return to its most perfect state of functioning.

By taking the awareness to the source of the DNA, pure consciousness, which we have seen is that field fundamental to all existence, the DNA begins to rediscover its ground state of perfect orderliness, a condition which it in turn passes on to the physiol-

ogy. Longevity studies on practitioners of the Transcendental Meditation technique and the Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi program, led by Keith Wallace at Maharishi University of Management, found that the physiological age for Transcendental Meditation practitioners was, for those recently beginning the technique, five years less than their chronological age, and for longer Transcendental Meditation and Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi practitioners, twelve years less, compared to a decrease of 2.2 years from the norm for the control group (1986, p. 205).

Another interesting study showed that people practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique, in contrast to their control-group counterparts, produce significantly higher levels of the biochemical Serum dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEAS), an important inhibitor of aging. Hundreds of other studies on the effects of the Transcendental Meditation technique have demonstrated that Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi® program practitioners maintain an overall lower metabolic functioning than non-practitioners, and for more than a hundred years now, lower metabolism has been associated with longer lifespans (Wallace, 1986, pp. 205–211). For the *Four Quartets*, such studies, along with the discoveries by Einstein and quantum mechanics, validate Eliot's theories of time and immortality.

An ancient science that deals directly with immortality, *Ayur-Veda*, has recently been revitalized by Maharishi. Ayur-Veda is that area of knowledge concerned with perfect health which is essential for sustaining the highest state of consciousness, that state that upholds the immortal field of pure awareness on the level of consciousness and on the level of perception. In that state of consciousness a person is said to be truly invincible. However, prior to Maharishi's revival of this science, Ayur-Veda had degenerated primarily into a system of herbal folk-medicine. But Maharishi has explained that its real purpose has always been to bring a person to enlightenment, to immortality, and for it to be effective, Ayur-Veda, like all branches of the Veda, must first be connected to the field of pure consciousness, the field of eternity, for only from that field will the discipline possess wholeness. In fact, the first healing component of the Maharishi Vedic Approach to HealthSM is the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique which restores the connection between the human physiology and its eternal source. Therefore, physicians who adhere to the Maharishi Vedic Approach to Health (*Vaidyas*) and who diagnose and prescribe Ayur-Vedic remedies, in order to be most effective, must themselves be functioning from the deepest level of perfect health, and for best results so should the patient.

The value of such considerations as the philosophical history of immortality, environmental and genetic studies, and the ancient healing practice of Maharishi Ayur-VedaSM to Eliot's *Four Quartets* is that they establish a framework for living eternity—immortality—that defies the idea of immortality as a fanciful illusion. When Eliot states that man should transcend time and live eternity, he is suggesting the most practical solution to the problems that plague mankind. This practical solution is what has been missing in past studies of Eliot which often see him as a dreamy intellectual whose idealism alienated him from ordinary human beings. Eliot was, in fact, a visionary in the best sense of the word. Seeing that the world was trapped in time and its cohorts change and entropy, Eliot understood and advocated non-change as the solution to cure human

TIME AND ETERNITY IN ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

misery. However, only when Maharishi brought out the Transcendental Meditation technique, a universal technique through which all mankind might regularly experience this field of non-change, could Eliot's vision reach fruition.

Maharishi describes this field of non-change that Eliot alludes to as the immortal field of pure consciousness, indestructible pure knowledge from which all manifest expressions of existence gain their intelligence and direction. This eternal field of perfection possesses limitless energy and intelligence, and is a field of all possibilities. From it the first sprouting of life into the field of time is free of problems because it maintains a direct connection to the field of pure intelligence. Problems, or fluctuations of disorder, then, are a secondary rather than a primary phenomenon. Maharishi says that problems creep in "illegally," meaning that they are produced by violations of Natural Law. Problems which cause aging should not be part of human life but are.

Evolution is certainly a process of change, but change does not have to impede life, because change is structured in non-change. It is the non-change that appears as change, and non-change is just immortal. . . . Therefore the son of immortality does not have to be mortal. The cause of the immortal becoming mortal is simply loss of memory—Smriti. It is simply loss of awareness, which is not natural. It is an abnormality which is restored by the strokes of pure knowledge. (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1980, p. 18)

Problems, change, aging, and time are all dysfunctions of memory—that is, forgetting, producing a state of delusion in which one associates one's self with unstable change rather than stable change. Hence, "'delusion' obscures the track of memory, and thereby one feels as if disconnected from the harmonious rhythm of life" (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1967, p. 164). Fortunately, regularly transcendence of the field of change to the field of non-change, the eternal field of pure knowledge, reawakens memory and enables one to remember one's own invincible, eternal nature.

Eliot says, "this [is] the use of memory: for liberation." Being permanently established in this field of perfect order disallows such disorders as time and change to arise. Eliot says, "Time past and time future / Allow but a little consciousness. / [And] To be conscious is not to be in time." To be conscious, to be fully awake in that unbounded state of eternity is the human birthright, life lived in immortality, and at its most eloquent this is the vision of Eliot's *Four Quartets*.

Notes

¹Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 5.1. Eliot uses Deussen's *Sechzig Upanishads des Veda* p. 489 which translates these words as "Give, sympathize, control."

²See Wallace, Orme-Johnson, Dillbeck, et al. for the collected papers containing extensive scientific research on the practice and benefits of the practical technologies of Maharishi Vedic Science, the Transcendental Meditation technique and the Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi program.

³Time is different in different *states of consciousness* (Maharishi 1972, Maharishi 1991, pp. 30–31, R. Orme-Johnson, 1987, pp. 331–341, Alexander, 1987, pp. 78–80). Maharishi explains that the field of psychology recognizes three major states of consciousness: sleep, dreaming, and the waking state. In deep sleep, time does not exist,

nor does anything else. During dreaming, time is unpredictable, with its own individual time-logic. In the waking state of consciousness, time changes with the quality of perception: time is different when we are sad or happy, alert or drowsy, etc. These are the ordinary states of consciousness, but Maharishi has identified four more states of consciousness that are developed by means of the Transcendental Meditation technique and the Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi program.

When someone practices the Transcendental Meditation technique, Maharishi explains, that person experiences finer levels of awareness until the finest individual awareness is transcended and only pure awareness remains, or to put it in the theme of this paper, finer fields of time are experienced until only the field of eternity remains. What the mind experiences in this field of eternity, or pure awareness, is a state of consciousness completely different from the three ordinary states mentioned above. This state of consciousness should not be confused with an altered state of consciousness because its characteristics are unique. For example, the rest experienced during this state is measurably deeper than that found at any moment of deep sleep and, yet, electroencephalograph studies have demonstrated that the mind is even more alert than at any time during ordinary waking state of consciousness. What is experienced is a major fourth state of consciousness called *Turiya Chetna* in Vedic Literature or what Maharishi terms Transcendental Consciousness, the foundation for developments of all higher states of consciousness (1966, pp. 50–57).

The following are Maharishi's distinctions between the four higher states of consciousness beyond waking, sleeping, and dreaming and their connections to time and the timeless. The first experiences of eternity in this fourth state of consciousness are distinct but fleeting. However, "[a]fter some time of alternating that fourth state with the other three, the nervous system becomes habituated to maintaining that state of awareness" (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1972, pp. 23–5). Over time the sense of the timeless becomes increasingly familiar, not only during the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique, but in the waking state of consciousness as well. This is growth towards the fifth state of consciousness—Cosmic Consciousness.

During the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique, Maharishi states, the mind goes in and out of the fourth state of consciousness, Transcendental Consciousness, each time gaining greater familiarity with this deeper level of the Self. In Cosmic Consciousness the mind becomes permanently established in that transcendental field of pure consciousness. Thereafter, during both the inner experience of the Transcendental Meditation technique and the outer experience of dynamic activity, pure consciousness is not lost. In this state, the ego or small self comes to realize that it is the cosmic, infinite/eternal Self. "The characteristic of the fifth state is the co-existence of awareness of the unbounded along with awareness of boundaries" (Maharishi, 1972, pp. 23–5). Because the cosmic Self is immortal and unchanging, the permanent realization of this state proves that time is an illusion and that one is and always has been eternal. This is a new reality of time understood fully on the level of experience, and not available to the ordinary waking state of consciousness.

The original loss of this eternal status, Maharishi notes, had come about as a matter of forgetting, the way an amnesia victim might forget that she is an heiress to a fortune.

TIME AND ETERNITY IN ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

The knowledge that life is eternal, lived in the state of Cosmic Consciousness, however, has taken place only on the level of inner awareness, not on the level of outer perception. Hence, in this fifth state of consciousness two distinct experiences of time exist. On the one hand, one has realized one's own undivided, eternal nature; on the other, through the senses one continues to perceive a world of changes that define life in time. This is a new experience of duality in which both time and the timeless are lived simultaneously.

The sixth state of consciousness—God Consciousness—results from a refinement of the mechanism of perception as the emotions begin to flow in waves of bliss:

Our perception becomes more refined. We could naturally imagine a state in which the finest perception would be possible, so that the finest relative value of the object of experience would become apparent to our perception. (Maharishi, 1972, pp. 23-6)

In this state, life becomes more fascinating, more beautiful. Happiness develops exponentially, and time is naturally affected by this growing fulfillment. Life is lived less and less in the grip of time, and the ever increasing experience of bliss makes time less significant. Time passes with increasingly little notice in such a state of exalted joy.

The seventh state of consciousness—Unity Consciousness—the goal of all life and evolution, is a natural progression of the sixth state. When the organs of perception have been refined to their highest value, nothing remains for them but to realize their own unbounded, eternal condition. In Unity Consciousness, the means of perception have been raised to the same status as one's mind in Cosmic Consciousness. "In this situation, the finest relative perception rises to the level of the infinite value of perception" (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1972, pp. 23-9). In this Unity Consciousness, now not only am I eternal, but everything I see is also eternal. Change and time continue to be perceived on a superficial level of life, but now their deeper nature, non-change and eternity, is simultaneously perceived. In Unity Consciousness, all opposites such as relative and absolute, change and non-change, time and eternity are unified in the knowledge—intellectual and experiential—that only one reality exists; all life is the same transcendental, immortal, pure consciousness. The experience of duality that characterizes Cosmic Consciousness—time in the form of waking state of consciousness coexisting with the timeless in the form of Transcendental Consciousness—is replaced by the two timelessnesses, subjective and objective, in Unity Consciousness. In this state everything is experienced on the level of eternity. For a more detailed explanation of higher states of consciousness according to Maharishi Vedic Science, see Orme-Johnson 1987 and Alexander et al, 1987.

⁴Dharma, Maharishi explains, "is that which promotes worldly prosperity and spiritual freedom" (1967, p. 26).

⁵Dylan Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night," (1971, p. 208). Thomas also felt the aged should not be pathetically cowed by time and existence:

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

⁶Unless we consider such Zen-like, seemingly impractical instructions as to “go by the way in which you are not” from *East Coker* as useful guides.

⁷*The Maharishi Effect* works on the level of *collective consciousness*, a term that means the atmosphere or influence created by any collection of individuals in any society. For example, if the singers in a choir all sing together, then harmony is their collective effect; if they sing off key and out of time then randomness is their collective effect. Taking this example to the level of social interaction, if the individuals in a particular society are orderly they will create an orderly society. Contrastingly, if the individuals are dominantly incoherent, they will produce an incoherent collective consciousness that exhibits itself in various ways antithetical to quality of life. Maharishi explains,

All occurrences of violence, negativity, conflicts, crises or problems in any society are just the expression of growth of stress in the collective consciousness. When the level of stress becomes sufficiently great, it bursts out into external violence and war, or internal crime, accidents and disorder. (cited in Oates, 1990, p. 47)

The heartening element in this grim portrait of social entropy is the implication that there is one solution to all social problems, namely reducing stress.

The Transcendental Meditation technique which has proven itself for years to be effective in reducing individual stress was put to the test in the early 1970s to see if it were equally effective in reducing societal stress. Realizing that orderly individuals, acting more in harmony with the deepest Laws of Nature, were more influential than disorderly individuals, Maharishi predicted that a few people practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique, as few as 1% of a given populace, could have a great harmonizing effect on society. This prediction was proven correct in 1974 in a study by Landrith and Borland which showed that crime significantly decreased in cities that had at least 1% of the population practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique (Landrith).

Since that early study the Maharishi Effect has been replicated many times, even demonstrated to reduce violence during wars such as those in Zambia and Nicaragua (Oates, 1990, pp. 41–43). The Maharishi Effect has, moreover, become significantly more effective with the addition of the advanced Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi program. To produce significant social improvements, this technique reduced the requirements from 1% of the population practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique to the square root of 1% of people practicing the TM-Sidhi program. Practiced together in groups, a much more manageable harmonizing force came into play (called Super Radiance) that greatly enhanced the prospects for solving mankind’s ancient problems.

⁸“by means of gaining the state of enlightenment, ‘the activities of the senses and of the life-breath’ are offered ‘in the fire of yoga’” (1967, p. 296).

⁹Consider “Maunderley’s” opening stanza:

For three years, out of key with his time,
He strove to resuscitate the dead art
Of poetry; to maintain “the sublime”
In the old sense. Wrong from the start—

TIME AND ETERNITY IN ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

¹⁰This position of course has been statistically contradicted by the millions who practice the Transcendental Meditation technique and experience Transcendental Consciousness on a daily basis.

¹¹Rhoda Orme-Johnson (1987) debates this issue in a section entitled "Levels of the Mind and the Nature of Language" in "A Unified Field Theory of Literature," *Modern Science and Vedic Science* 1,3 pp. 341–348.

¹²Emerson's lines echo 2.19 of the Bhagavad-Gita:

He who understands him to be the slayer,
and he who takes him to be the slain,
both fail to perceive the truth. He
neither slays nor is slain.

References

- Ackroyd, P. (1984). *T.S. Eliot: A life*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Alexander, C.N., Boyer, R.W. and Alexander, V.K. (1987) Higher states of consciousness in the Vedic psychology of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi: A theoretical introduction and research review. *Modern Science and Vedic Science* 1, 88–126.
- Auden, W.H. (1971). *New York Times*, 7 August.
- Augustine, Saint. (1960). *The confessions of St. Augustine*. (J.K. Ryan, Trans.) Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Bergonzi, B. (1972). *T.S. Eliot*. New York: Collier Books.
- Borges, J.L. (1993). *Labyrinths: selected stories & other writings*. New York: A New Direction Book.
- Calder, N. (1979). *Einstein's universe*. London: Penguin.
- Campbell, J. (1949). *A hero with a thousand faces*. Princeton, NJ: Bollingen Series.
- Campbell, J. (1990). *The hero's journey: The world of Joseph Campbell*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Capra, F. (1975). *The Tao of physics*. Berkeley: Shambhala.
- Dante, A. (1954). *The inferno*. (J. Ciardi, Trans.). New York: Mentor.
- Eliot, T. S. (1962). *T.S. Eliot: The complete poems and plays, 1909–1950*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Gale, R. (1967). Introduction. In *The philosophy of time: a collection of essays*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- Gish, N. K. (1981). *Time in the poetry of T.S. Eliot*. Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble.
- Haney, W. (1993). *Literary theory and sanskrit poetics*. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Hawking, S. K. (1988). *A brief history of time*. New York: Bantam.
- Hagelin, J. S. and Herriott, S. R. (1993). Unified field based economics. *Modern Science and Vedic Science* 4, 72–87.

- Kenner, H. (1959). *The invisible poet: T. S. Eliot*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Landrith, G. and Borland, C. (1978). Improved quality of city life through the Transcendental Meditation program. In *Scientific Research on the Transcendental Meditation program: Collected Papers Vol. 1.*, 2nd ed. Bad Bellingen, Germany: Maharishi European Research University Press, 1977.
- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. (1963). *The science of Being and art of living*. Stuttgart: International SRM Publications.
- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. (1967). *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita: A new translation and commentary, chapters 1–6*. London: Penguin.
- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. (1971). *Poetry and the Vedas*. [Videotaped lecture, 26 July 1971, Amherst, Massachusetts].
- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. (1973). *Love and God*. Fairfield, IA: Maharishi International University Press.
- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. (1972). *The Science of Creative Intelligence: Knowledge and experience (Lesson 23)* [Syllabus of videotaped course]. Los Angeles: Maharishi International University Press.
- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. (1978). *Enlightenment and invincibility*. West Germany: Maharishi European Research University Press.
- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. (1980). *Science, consciousness, and ageing: Proceedings of the international conference*. Rheinweiler, Germany: Maharishi European Research University Press.
- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. (1980). *Perfect health and immortality: Reversing the aging process through the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program*. Fairfield, IA: Age of Enlightenment Press.
- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. (1986). *Life supported by natural law*. Fairfield, IA: Maharishi International University Press.
- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. (1988). *Time, perception, and the spell of mortality*. [Lecture, Maharishi Nagar, India].
- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. (1991). *Maharishi's master plan to create heaven on earth*. Holland: Maharishi Vedic University Press.
- Matthews, T.S. (1974). *Great Tom: Notes towards the definition of T.S. Eliot*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Matthiessen, F.O. (1959). *The achievement of T.S. Eliot: An essay on the nature of poetry*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Oates, R. (1990). *Creating heaven on earth: The mechanics of the impossible*. Fairfield, IA: Heaven on Earth Publications.
- Orme-Johnson, R. (1987). A unified field theory of literature. *Modern Science and Vedic Science 1*, 323–373.
- Reibetanz, J.M. (1983). *A reading of Eliot's Four Quartets*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Research Press.
- Riegel, K.F. (1977). Towards a dialectical interpretation of time and change, The personal experience of time. (B.S. Gorman and A.E. Wessman, Eds.) New York: Plenum Press.
- Russell, B. (1958). *The ABC of relativity*. New York: Mentor.
- Seddon, K. (1987). *Time: A philosophical treatment*. London: Croom Helm.
- Shakespeare, W. (1942). Sonnet 55. In *The complete plays and poems of William Shakespeare*. (W.A Neilson & C.J. Hill, Eds.) Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Shastri, H.P. (1937). *World within the mind*. London: Shanti Sadan.
- Smith, G, Jr. (1950). *T.S. Eliot's poetry and plays*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Thomas, D. (1971). *The poems of Dylan Thomas*. New York: New Directions books.

TIME AND ETERNITY IN ELIOT'S *FOUR QUARTETS*

- Thompson, E. (1963). *T.S. Eliot: the man and his work*. Carbondale, IL: Southern University Press.
- Traversi, D. (1976). *T.S. Eliot: the longer poems*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Venkatesananda, Swami. (1984). *The concise yoga Vasistha*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Wallace, R.K. (1986). *The Maharishi technology of the unified field: The neurophysiology of enlightenment*. Fairfield, IA: Maharishi International University Press.
- Wallace, R.K., Orme-Johnson, D. and Dillbeck, M., (Eds.). (1976). *Scientific research on Maharishi Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program, Collected papers, volumes 1-5*. Fairfield, IA: Maharishi International University Press.
- Wessman, A.E. and Gorman, B.S., (Eds.) (1977). The emergence of human awareness and concepts of time. In *The personal experience of time*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Williamson, G. (1955). *A reader's guide to T.S. Eliot*. New York: The Noonday Press.
- Yeats, W.B. (1983). *The poems of W.B. Yeats*. New York: Macmillan.
- Zukav, G. (1979). *The dancing Wu Li masters: An overview of the new physics*. New York: William Morrow.