THE CENTRALITY OF PARADOX:  
THE INFLUENCE OF HERACLITUS ON ELIOT’S FOUR QUARTETS

A Thesis

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by  
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To the Memory of Vivienne Koch
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INTRODUCTION

T. S. Eliot used two of the sayings of the Pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, as epigraphs to "Burnt Norton," the first poem of Four Quartets. 1 The epigraph, as a means of suggestion and allusion, has always been one of Eliot's methods to enrich his own poetry. According to Raymond Preston, Eliot has said that he was attracted to the fragments of Heraclitus because of their poetic suggestiveness (viii). Although there are no epigraphs to the three other poems that make up the Four Quartets, all the poems, nevertheless, display a marked assimilation of and adherence to the essential philosophy of Heraclitus which insists upon the necessity for man to seek a source of higher (divine) wisdom, to understand the essential and continual transformation of the four elements--air, earth, water, and fire--and to recognize the underlying and unchanging unity that exists in this flux of the elements. Poems like Four Quartets are seldom subject to explication by means of a single point of view; therefore, examination of the degree of
influence of Heraclitus upon Eliot has been too little considered. Most critical analyses of *Four Quartets* mention the Heraclitean epigraphs in passing with, perhaps, a few pages devoted to the more obvious and overt allusions made by Eliot. The full range of poetic suggestiveness that these Heraclitean sayings allow the poet and the remarkable similarity of philosophical and religious ideas shared by the philosopher and the philosopher-poet are described in this study.

Heraclitus' task, as he saw it, was to try to communicate his philosophical concepts about the nature of the universe and man's place in it; the ideas were, however, often beyond his ability to express in simple terms. Thus, for the philosopher to attempt to understand the physical and the moral world of man, it was necessary for him to indulge in figures of speech: imagery, metaphor, simile, repetition, and even puns (which are particularly difficult to translate by modern translators) with which he could state his belief in the essential unity of the universe. In particular, his use of paradox allowed him to make generalizations about things which were seemingly unrelated. Paradox so employed appeals to the imagination as well as to reason; it offers a certain amount of shock to the reader but, at the same time, it
suggests a possible other solution for the connection between isolated particulars. Heraclitus’ language was like that used by the Delphic oracle about which he said, “The lord whose oracle is at Delphi neither speaks nor conceals but gives signs” (Wheelwright, Fragment 18, p. 20). In his own time, Heraclitus’ difficult language, no less than his difficult concepts, earned him the epithet, the obscure one.

Heraclitus believed that all matter consisted of the four elements and that they are always in a state of flux, continually changing from one to another. “Fire lives in the death of earth, air in the death of fire, water in the death of air, and earth in the death of water” (Fr. 34, p. 37). In general, Heraclitus refers most often to three elements rather than four, omitting air. Wheelwright suggests that for Heraclitus “the sun is moulded each morning out of the waters surrounding the earth and becomes one with the waters again when it drops back into them again in the evening” (48). Thus, the exchange from fire to water and water to fire takes place without the intermedation of air. However, air was, of course, recognized by Heraclitus as one of the essential four elements; air was often conceived by the ancient Greeks to be closely associated with the soul (48).
Fire is the basic element for Heraclitus: "There is an exchange of all things for fire and of fire for all things, as there is of wares for gold and gold for wares" (Fr. 28, p. 37). In addition, he says that the universe "...has been, is, and will be--an ever-living fire, kindling itself by regular measures and going out by regular measures" (Fr. 29, p. 37). There are motions implicit in these regular measures as well: some of the transformations occur downward from the heavens, seat of the fiery light of the sun, to the water below, which, when hardened, becomes earth. Conversely, once the transformation has permuted into earth, it can then once again begin to strive upwards toward the heavens; earth, when moistened, once again becomes liquified and is, thus, susceptible to being lifted through the power of air. This concept allowed Heraclitus to say that "The way up and the way down are one and the same" (Fr. 108, p. 90). In order for Heraclitus to understand the forces of nature as he construed them, he postulated the idea that "human nature has no real understanding, only the divine nature has it" (Fr. 61, p. 68). This divine nature he described as the Logos, a source of control by which all things come to pass. The Logos is not a god but "...Truth in its objective and trans-human form" (23).
The two quotations that Eliot used as epigraphs to "Burnt Norton" are:

Although the Logos is common to all, most men live as if each of them had a private intelligence of his own (Fr. 2, p. 19).

The way up and the way down are one and the same (Fr. 108, p. 90).

Eliot left the quotations in the original Greek because he felt that no translator, today, could be considered capable of suggesting "...anything more than a limited interpretation since the meanings of key words in Greek philosophy can never be completely rendered in a modern language" (Stephenson, 80). He did, however, gloss the word Logos as "the rational understanding of the nature of things [that] is common or available to all men" (80). In addition, Eliot has also written that he felt that "to the Greek there was something inexplicable about Logos so that it was a participation of man with the divine" (SE, 433, n.1). This statement, contained in his essay "Second Thoughts about Humanism" written in 1928, predates the writing of "Burnt Norton," but demonstrates a long-standing interest in and study of Greek philosophical ideas. Ackroyd reports in his biography of Eliot that, as early as 1914, he was
sufficiently interested in Heraclitus to offer, during a seminar on symbolic logic, a comparison between the Greek philosopher and the French medieval poet, François Villon (60).

If the Logos of Heraclitus is compared with the Logos of St. John's gospel which opens with the words: "In the beginning was the Word (Logos), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," then it is evident that both men understand Logos as a divine principle, the source of order and control over the universe. *Four Quartets* is, in fact, Eliot's Christian iteration of Heraclitus' admonition that man should realize his inability to understand the nature of the world in which he lives and acknowledge the wisdom and understanding that is available to a higher (divine) wisdom. As Eliot progresses through the poems of *Four Quartets*, he becomes increasingly more explicit about his own faith in Christianity and by implication, at least, urges his readers to a similar acceptance of Christ. The urging becomes most overt in "Little Gidding," written during the dark days of World War II. Although Eliot had always been disenchanted with the modern world, he began to consider that war was a punishment from God, and one which man could escape by right thoughts and right action.
The second fragment is "The way up and the way down are one and the same." The way up is for Heraclitus the direction of the transmutation of earth to water to fire; the downward way being the reverse path: from fire to water to earth. However, this paradox is, at once, as obscure as it is obvious. At first glance, the saying sounds ridiculous: it must be false, absolute nonsense. Yet, a little reflection suggests, for example, the image of a ladder by means of which one may indeed go up or go down. Heraclitus has, moreover, compounded the meaning by saying further that the way up and the way down are one and the same (my italics). This additional emphasis, though equally paradoxical, suggests that both processes are always present at the same moment in time and are present all the time. The paradox offers a set of two conditions that are in apparent opposition to each other and discloses the state of tension that must, therefore, necessarily exist between the two.

Eliot does not comment upon his use of the epigraphs; they appear at the head of "Burnt Norton" erudite and cryptic in the Greek language. Readers are familiar with this poet's penchant for the epigraph: the Latin quotation that heads The Waste Land, for example, or, the collage of six different quotations that appear in the poem "Burbank with a Baedeker:"
Bleistein with a Cigar." Sometimes, these help the reader; more often, they do not. In the *Four Quartets*, however, the use of these two sayings of Heraclitus does more, much more, than suggest a possible reading; the epigraphs are, per se, an adumbration of all the Heraclitean sayings. Eliot's selection of these particular fragments demonstrates that the two men thought alike about the same concepts and the same themes: time, mortality, mutability, and the place of man in the scheme of a higher order.
Burnt Norton

"Burnt Norton" opens with an abstract musing on the nature of time

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 (CP&P 117).

A paradoxical statement, a deliberate equivocation, a play on words. Time is for all of us now, the present. We remember the past; we look forward to the future; but time is always present whenever we try to grasp the concept of time. It is, as Eliot says, eternally present. Note that the poet has added—without punctuation to set it off and thus make it too apparent, too emphatic—the word "perhaps." The tensions that are subtly raised by "perhaps" suggest the questions in his mind: can man recapture the past or having passed does time roll on endlessly without meaning?

Heraclitus said it this way, "You cannot step twice into the same river, for other waters are flowing
on" (Fr. 21, p. 29). Time like a river "flows and nothing abides" (Fr. 20, p. 29). At any moment of time, there exists always that which had just gone before, what is now, and what is to come. In addition, Heraclitus added a further consideration: "Time is a child moving counters in a game, the royal power is a child's" (Fr. 24, p. 29). The thrust of this paradox allows Heraclitus to suggest that things happen either because of accident or by destiny—either the child is idly moving counters or the child is doing so in fulfillment of the will of some power over natural order. Typically, the Heraclitean paradox implies both meanings: the game, however idly played, is yet played in accordance with rules. Chance or destiny, these are different ways of looking at the same thing, neither of which is a satisfactory explanation of the events of the universe and neither of which is totally comprehensible by man.

Elliot adds an element to this same speculative musing about the nature of time—"is "all time unredeemable"? Obviously, this is a Christian concept taken from the words of St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians (5:16, 17) advising that they be wise: "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." By redeeming, Paul, on the one
hand, means his readers must make the most of time while on earth in preparation for eternal life with Christ after death. On the other hand, Paul is also suggesting that "good" acts, wise acts, performed now in the immediate present can act so as to ransom or atone for the past. The past cannot be relived; it cannot be altered. Eliot, throughout *Four Quartets*, expatiates upon the idea offered by Paul: if all time is unredeemable, is it possible to modify the significance of past behavior (sin), to absolve oneself of the guilt of that sin? Does this act of redemption alter the course of history, one's personal history or the history of the world or of humankind? Here, in the first poem, "Burnt Norton," the speaker does not believe that it can or that it does:

All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end which is always present

(CP&P, 117).

The poet seems to have accepted a notion of time simply as a deterministic phenomenon, one which simply goes on and on endlessly like Heraclitus' river continually
flowing. "Everything flows and nothing abides; everything gives way and nothing stays fixed."
Heraclitus further says (Fr. 20, p. 29). Eliot ends his abstract thoughts about time by repeating his opening remark—that all time is ever-present—and introduces yet another aspect of the nature of time, that of human memory.

The poet thinks of what he has been and what he might have been:

Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo
Thus, in your mind.

But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves
I do not know (CP&P 117).

These lines are a continuation of the speculation on time. A fleeting memory has jogged his mind into consideration of "what might have been." For all of us, there are passages we did not take, doors we never opened. Does it mean that, although the waters of the river of time have long since gone by, we can yet hold them, keep them in a kind of ever-lasting state of suspension?
Suddenly, however, like a torrent, that moment of memory rushes the poet and us into the world of the present again, into the actual scene at the very moment when Eliot stood in the garden at Burnt Norton. We are whirled there with the following words:

Other echoes

Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?
Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,
Round the corner. Through the first gate,
Into our first world, shall we follow
The deception of the thrush? (CP&P 118).

The moment of the past is, thus, superimposed upon the present moment. We, as readers, are swept along with the poet; the "perpetual possibility" is shared with us. These lines prepare us for another consideration: that of the phenomenon in which occur moments that appear to be beyond time. Things appear to stand still, to endure for eternities when they have, in fact, taken place in a split-second. Our senses deceive us. Heraclitus also was aware of this. He said that "Most people do not take heed of the things they encounter, nor do they grasp them even when they have learned about them, although they suppose they do" (Fr. 57, p. 58).
Elliot's moment in which time stood still was foreshadowed by the lines about the memory of events which never actually took place. At this point of the poem, we have now left off abstract thinking and have entered what seems to be a real, palpable world. Elliot did visit the rose-garden at Burnt Norton where he did experience such a moment (Ackroyd, 229). He describes the event in this way:

So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,
Along the empty alley, into the box circle,
To look down into the drained pool.
Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
And the lotus rose quietly, quietly,
The surface glittered out of the heart of light,
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.

Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty (CP&P 118).

These lines contain and reflect a perfect description of the Heraclitean transmutation of the elements. The earth of the dry pool is seen to be water because of the effect of the downward shaft of sunlight;
instantly, however, the scene returns to normal with the passage of a cloud. All this could be explained in purely rational terms. The sight of water surrounded by palm trees is a common mirage caused by the effects of heat and light in desert areas. Eliot's visit was made in the summer of 1934 making it possible that the combined effects of heat and glaring light can similarly account his vision of the sudden appearance of water in a dry pool.

But Lyndall Gordon reports that, in his youth, Eliot had had a similar "out-of-time" experience in which the streets of Boston shrank and divided. This inexplicable vision was accompanied by a feeling that he was "enfolded in a great silence" (15). The effect upon Eliot, at that time, was to cause him to read extensively in the works of religious mystical literature where he (apparently) hoped to discern the meaning of this experience. When, nearly twenty years later, he again experienced (and we must accept his word that the incident in the rose-garden at Burnt Norton did actually appear to him) another such event, he regarded it as a mystical experience, devoid of any rational explanation.

As mentioned above, Heraclitus had remarked upon man's inability to sort out the various things that occur in life, saying "Most people do not take heed of
the things they encounter, nor do they grasp them even when they have learned about them, although they suppose they do" (Fr. 57, p. 58). By thinking about and creating poetry out of the experience, Eliot has tried to do more than "suppose" that he comprehends the meaning of the vision in the rose-garden. What the reader witnesses, in reading the lines that precede and those that include the moment of vision, is a strange, split-second flash of a dual state of consciousness in which the tangible reality of the pool at Burnt Norton is merged with imagined or remembered people and creatures of the poet's past. For example, as Mark Reinsberg has pointed out, the water thrush, native to the Missouri area of Eliot's childhood, is a bird which uses deceptive tactics to hide its nest. Eliot admitted his deliberate selection of this bird to Reinsberg (342).

We know less, however, about what Eliot says when he writes of the "first world," (his childhood perhaps?), and of the doors that were never opened. In this moment between past and future, the past is curiously coexistent with the present: both what has happened and even what has not happened are experienced at the same instant during which the speaker is looking at the dry pool. We, as readers, are not told who the "they" are that he envisions—only that their "unseen
eyebeams" cross—nor are we aware of who the children are who laugh among the leaves. We read, with a quite involuntary suspension of disbelief, of the strange phenomenon which makes a dry pool fill with water and burgeon with flowers. When the moment has passed, we feel, however, as the poet does, a moment of sadness as the bird says, "Go, go, go,...human kind cannot bear much reality (CP&P 118). Is the reality that which he has seen of the past? or is it the glimpse he has just experienced where past and present both seem to be simultaneously coexistent? or is it the return to the solid, everyday world around him?

The rest of "Burnt Norton" explores the meaning of the vision and attempts a resolution of the nature of the reality that was granted to him. This poem, originally written as a single piece, became a point of departure for Eliot. According to John Hayward, the Four Quartets began to take form in Eliot's mind as a series of poems which was to be directly related to the four seasons and to the four elements, with each poem to be directly dependent upon the idea of a poetry of place (qtd. in Reibetanz, 204, n. 10). "Burnt Norton" is a poem about place and about a season (summer); however, it is not related to air to any great degree—direct analogies, other than the influence of the cloud to end the moment of vision and to end the
day, are not as overt as those in the other poems which are quite explicit: earth in "East Coker," water in "The Dry Salvages," and fire in "Little Gidding." The influence of Heraclitus is obvious in these poems.

There are, however, a number of indirect and subtle Heraclitean influences in "Burnt Norton." If fire is the principal element, then water must be considered as its antithesis; the life-force of fire is quenched by water. Heraclitus said that, "It is death to souls to become water, and it is death to water to become earth. Conversely, water comes into existence out of earth, and souls out of water" (Fr. 49, p. 58). Furthermore, the transmutation of elements occurs because "Cool things become warm, the warm grows cool; the moist dries, the parched becomes moist" (Fr. 22, p. 29). If we recall that souls were considered by the Greeks to be related to air, there is no conflict with what Heraclitus has said in fragment 44, "Souls are vaporized from what is moist" (p. 58). Obviously, Heraclitus intended to suggest that the soul exists somewhere between water and fire; however, as usual, he neglects to state the influence and the intermediating function of air.

References to Heraclitean concepts in the second section of "Burnt Norton" are included in the following lines:
Garlic and sapphires in the mud
Clot the bedded axle-tree.
The trilling wire in the blood
Sings below inveterate scars
And reconciles forgotten wars.
The dance along the artery
The circulation of the lymph
Are figured in the drift of stars
Ascend to summer in the tree
We move above the moving tree
In light upon the figured leaf
And hear upon the sodden floor
Below, the boarhound and the boar
Pursue their pattern as before
But reconciled among the stars.

(CP&P 118)

This is a lyric of movement and transmutation; the downward and the upward ways are both depicted by the images of mud, blood and lymph, and the ascent to the heavens where, from the aspect of eternity, the pattern of continual change is manifest above the "moving tree" and on "the sodden floor." "Sodden" means to become overly moist and, therefore, represents death—"it is death for soules to become water...." From the viewpoint of eternity, the process of change, the
pattern of the pursued and the pursuer, the pattern of war and peace is but a single event occurring and reoccurring in a perpetual rhythmic cycle. The cosmic overtones of the Heraclitean philosophy are reiterated by Eliot in this section but they are also expanded to include the poet's Christian concepts of reconciliation about which he equivocates. The "trilling wire in the blood ... reconciles forgotten wars" means that, because life goes on generation after generation by virtue of the life-blood in all things, past events are appeased; they are simply parts of the never-ending cycle of life. "The boarhound and the boar... reconciled among the stars" is another way of saying that they are merely fulfilling the pattern of destiny that was ordained for them.

Seen from the vantage point of eternity, these changes and patterns take place almost without movement. It is at this point that Eliot introduces his concept of the "still point" where there is "neither arrest nor movement." This is the place at which the forces of opposition between the way up and the way down or arrest and movement are neutralized. It is like "a mathematical point [which] is merely a sign for something, say in a continuum. It has no dimensions whatever; it cannot be described specifically in any way, yet it is because of the point
that there is a continuum" (Clubb, 26). Although the still point does not itself move, it, nevertheless, implies the possibility of movement. Heraclitus thought in similar terms, for although he does not ascribe any notion of movement to the Logos, he does imply it when he says that "Opposition brings concord. Out of concord comes the fairest harmony" (Fr. 98, p. 90). For Heraclitus, it was important that "People understand how that which is at variance with itself agrees with itself. There is a harmony in the bending back, as in the case of the bow and the lyre" (Fr. 117, p. 102). These statements imply a point of centrality at which the tension between opposites is balanced but yet with the potential of movement toward one or the other pole of contrariety.

In Heraclitus' philosophy the point of balance is the Logos—not the fire by which all things are subsumed and transformed, not the fire as a material thing but rather the Logos operating in the nature of fire, its shape and "substance continually changing but appearing constant" (Clubb, 21). Heraclitus does not specifically identify the Logos as a god. In fact, he goes so far as to say paradoxically that "...it is unwilling and yet willing to be called by the name of Zeus" (Fr. 119, p. 102). However, it must be stated that Heraclitus' concept of the Logos is essentially
divine. His Logos is beyond man's conception of the
divine as an anthropomorphic being who is an arbitrary
creator. "God," he said, "is day and night, winter and
summer, war and peace, satiety and want. But he
undergoes transformations...." (Fr. 121, p. 102). "The
sun will not overstep its measures..." and "all things
will come in their due seasons" because the Logos is
the wisdom "by which all things are steered through all
things" (Frs. 120, 122, 123 resp., p. 102).

As a Christian, Eliot also perceives the source of
order in the universe as divine, though "Burnt Norton"
does not yield such an interpretation at the point in
the poem under discussion. Eliot's use of the "still
point" appears in section "I" of "Coriolan," an earlier
poem published in 1931 (Gardner, 83). Eliot admitted
to Gardner that this concept had been suggested to him
by a reading of The Greater Trumps by Charles Williams.
This novel describes a "magical model of the universe"
in which "the figures of the Tarot pack dance around
the Fool at the still centre" and only "the Sibyl ... 
sees the Fool as moving and completing all the
movements of the dancers" (Gardner, 83). The Sibyl and
the Tarot cards are familiar elements of the Eliot
canon: the epigraph to The Waste Land is specifically
concerned with the Sibyl, and Eliot's particular use of
the Tarot pack in that poem is explained in the notes
he attached to The Waste Land. There is, notwithstanding, a sense of elevation over and above these secular and occult trappings.

The poet describes the still point in paradoxical terms similar to those Heraclitus used when he depicted the Logos as "unwilling and willing to be called by the name of Zeus." The still point is a place, Eliot says, that cannot be described: "...there we have been: but I cannot say where. / And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time" (CP&P, 119). But it is a place where there is:

...release from action and suffering, release from the inner
And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded
By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving,
Erhebung without motion, concentration
Without elimination, both a new world
And the old made explicit, understood
In the completion of its partial ecstasy,
The resolution of its partial horror...

(CP&P, 119)

A reader cannot help inferring the essentially Christian tenor of these lines: release from suffering, grace of sense (sense of grace?), Erhebung (exaltation
/ elevation), the old and the new (the old and the new man of St. Paul?). All these suggest a Christian heaven. Yet, because this place is also one which offers only "the completion of its partial ecstasy and the resolution of its partial horror," it is not totally perfect, it is not a paradise. The "new world and the old" are, for Eliot, the vision he has witnessed which offers the sense of timelessness and ecstasy and the modern world of human time and imperfection respectively. Eliot’s poetry in the *Four Quartets* consistently portrays the tension, "...the war between "immanence and transcendence" (Libby, 21). The inference that it is Christ who is the prime mover is paramount.

"To be conscious is not to be in time," Eliot writes in the close of Section II of "Burnt Norton": "Only through time is time conquered" (CP&P 120). The moment of vision can be recalled "in time" and be merged with the present and the future. The poet presents the reader with more paradox, more equivocation. He does not simply suggest that everything that happens to us and everything we remember must of necessity take place in the continuum of time. Eliot rather believes that, at man’s most conscious awareness, he paradoxically becomes "out of time." "To be conscious is not to be in time" is his
way of stating this belief; all of us believe
instinctively that such a statement is false: we are
here; we exist in time. But because time is
continually moving from past to present to future, we
are, when consciously thinking about time, aware only
of the present moment and therefore not of the vast
continuum—a concept too enormous for us to comprehend.
However, memory of the experience of the moment
"out-of-time" does furnish Eliot with a tantalizing
glimpse of the method to conquer time.

Eliot here echoes Heraclitus who insisted upon the
necessity for man to be aware of and to use all his
faculties in the search for wisdom and knowledge of the
Logos. "The things of which there can be sight,
hearing, and learning—these are what I especially
prize" (Fr. 11, p. 19). The search for wisdom should
be made, however, in active participation of all that
is going on around man: "Whatever we see when awake is
death; when asleep dreams" (Fr. 16, p. 20). By death,
Heraclitus means that constant movement of change and
flux in nature: things are dying while others are being
born. In dreams, things remain static offering the
self-delusion of permanence. Time, therefore, may be
understood only by active awareness and comprehension
of the nature of things. This includes time: past,
present, and future. The seeker of wisdom (Logos) must
"acquaint himself with many particulars" (Fr. 3, p. 19). Eliot similarly implies that merely to be conscious without actively seeking is to be unable to comprehend the greater mystery.

The section of "Burnt Norton" that follows is a further exploration of what he and Heraclitus have both said about the search for wisdom. Heraclitus said that, if eyes and ears and learning are the things he prizes for apprehending the Logos, "Eyes and ears are bad witnesses to men having barbarian souls" (Fr. 13, p. 20). "One should not act or speak as though he were asleep" (Fr. 14, p. 20). Similarly, Eliot opens the third section of "Burnt Norton" with a contrast between the "there" of the still point and the "here" of modern society. In a brilliant section describing the London Underground and concomitant images of traveling, Eliot pictures with savage emphasis those who he feels are "asleep" in the Heraclitean sense. Heraclitus despised the masses, the demos, 5 asking, "What mental grasp, what sense have they? They believe the tales of poets and follow the crowd as their teachers, ignoring the adage that the many are bad, the good are few" (Fr. 91, p. 83). Similarly, Eliot depicts modern man as traveling purposelessly through time in a state of unawareness where there is "neither daylight...nor darkness, neither plenitude nor vacancy" (CP&P 120).
Such people are, like Heraclitus' barbarians, "distracted from distraction by distraction"; they are unaware of the true nature of life (CP&P 120). The images offered by the poet's words are Heraclitean in that they portray opposite poles of the same thing: daylight is the opposite of darkness, plenitude is the opposite of vacancy.

Heraclitus put it this way, "If there were no sun, the other stars would not suffice to prevent its being night" (Fr. 38, p. 37). If plenitude and vacancy are opposite poles of the same condition, then, these things are essentially the same thing; the words merely describe different aspects of them--"From out of all the many particulars comes oneness, and out of oneness come all the many particulars" (Fr. 112, p. 90).

"Burnt Norton" continues with yet another Heraclitean image wherein "the black cloud carries the sun away" (CP&P, 121). The cloud, moisture borne aloft in air, quenches the fire of the sun; for Heraclitus, this is the downward path, death. Eliot has returned to the reality of the garden at Burnt Norton and presents the reader with images of death:

...will the clematis
Stray down, bend to us; tendril and spray
Clutch and cling?
Chill

Fingers of yew be curled down on us?

(CP&P, 121).

The images are intensely suggestive of the dark and cold of death. Yew, for example, is a traditional symbol of death, but, at the same time, paradoxically, it is also one of eternal life because it remains evergreen throughout the year. The moisture of the cloud has effectively ended the cycle; the downward path has been completed.

"Burnt Norton" does not, however, end here; the poet again takes up the meditation on time that began the poem, but instead of the abstruse and formal language in the earlier passage, he now offers metaphoric images:

Words move, music moves
Only in time; but that which is only living
Can only die. Words, after speech, reach
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,

Can words or music reach
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
Moves perpetually in its stillness.
Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts.
Not that only, but the co-existence,
Or say that the end precedes the beginning,
And the end and the beginning were always there
Before the beginning and after the end.
And all is always now (CP&P 121).

"The co-existence" of the "all [that] is always now" is the equivalent of Heraclitus' balance of tensions and his recognition that "all things are one." The paradox of words, poetry, moving in time and yet achieving a stillness by virtue of their form is compared to the paradox of the decoration on a Chinese jar set down in stillness moving perpetually within its stillness (Reibetanz, 46). Paradox continues to be the medium of expression. Eliot attempts to express the sense of the timelesslessness and stillness the vision has aroused. Although he declares that the form of poetry is capable of achieving "the stillness," the actual words used are themselves constantly changing, transforming, and, as a result, are rendered incapable of conveying the precise thoughts the poet wishes to express. He is fully aware of the impossibility of achieving the state where "the ultimate order of form" coexists with the words he uses (Reibetanz, 50).

Eliot likens the failure of words to remain constant, undying in precision, to the travail of "The
Word in the desert / ...most attacked by voices of temptation...." (CP&P 122). Here, for the first time, he makes an overt reference to Christ. "The Word" reminds the reader of the Gospel of St. John and, at the same time, of the Logos of Heraclitus. Christians believe that the "Word was God" who, at the Incarnation, became "flesh and dwelt amongst us" (John 1: 14). John further says that "He was in the world, ... and the world knew him not" (John 1: 10). Eliot states in the final lines of "Burnt Norton" that "love is itself unmoving," in a life where "the detail of the pattern is movement" (CP&P 122). Because the poet has referred to Christ (however indirectly), the inference that what he means by "love," the love his creator holds for him "caught in the form of limitation / Between un-being and being," is unmistakable (CP&P, 122).

Heraclitus said in fragment 1 that:

Although the Logos is eternally valid, yet men are unable to understand it--not only before hearing it, but even after they have heard it for the first time. That is to say, although all things come to pass in accordance with this Logos, men seem to be quite without any experience of it--at least
if they are judged in the light of such words and deed as I am setting forth. My own method is to distinguish each thing according to its nature, and to specify how it behaves; other men, on the contrary, are as forgetful and heedless in their waking moments of what is going on around and within them as they are during sleep (Wheelwright, 19).

This fragment precedes the section of fragment 2 that Eliot used as an epigraph which says that "Although the Logos is common to all, most men live as if each had a private wisdom of his own" (Wheelwright, 19). Eliot, however, did not quote fragment 2 in its entirety. Fragment 2 begins, "We should let ourselves be guided by what is common to all" (Wheelwright, 19). Both fragments 1 and 2 acquire much greater significance for Heraclitean thought when read in their entire context and, when so read, they contribute much more to the understanding of Eliot's use of them both as epigraphic allusion and as a base of philosophical thought upon which he overlaid his Christian beliefs.
EAST COKER

Elliot continues the *Four Quartets* with "East Coker," a poem which emphasizes the Heraclitean theory of the elements considerably more than "Burnt Norton" did and which establishes a more Christian context for the interpretation of spiritual experience. As Brown remarks in *Transfiguration: Poetic Metaphor and the Language of Religious Belief*, "...Christian belief is more 'presumed' than 'explained' by the Quartets" (p. 120). Elliot's allusions to Christian belief concerning the Annunciation, the Incarnation, and the Atonement, for example, are not intended to instruct but to suggest, through the use of these beliefs as metaphoric allusions, that his own "leap of faith" is comprehensible. He continues to employ the theory of the flux of elements and the notion that "Opposition brings concord. Out of discord comes fairest harmony" as stated by Heraclitus (Fr. 98, p. 90). Beginning with "East Coker" and continuing with the remaining poems of *Four Quartets*, the poet displays more openly his dependence on the poetic suggestiveness of the concept of flux and transformation of the elements.
As he had in "Burnt Norton," Eliot continues to deal with a single element at a particular place during a specific season of the year in the last three poems: "East Coker," "The Dry Salvages," and "Little Gidding." In these poems the Heraclitean concepts form a base upon which Eliot overlays metaphors of and allusions to Christian belief by which he aspires to convey the meaning of the moment in the rose garden described in "Burnt Norton."

"East Coker" opens with a reversal of Mary Queen of Scots' words before her execution: "En ma fin est mon commencement," or "In my end is my beginning" (Gardner, 42). That motif of cyclic beginnings and endings also has its source in Heraclitus who said, "In the circle the beginning and the end are common" (Fr. 109, p. 90). Eliot writes, rather, "In my beginning is my end" (CP&P 123). He does this because he is visiting the place which was the home of an ancestor; thus, it is truly a place of his beginning and a place which has meaning to him; it is the source of inspiration. Once again, the Heraclitean concept of the tension of opposites and their underlying unity, their oneness is stressed. This is followed by a succession of images of rise and fall and of the death and rebirth of all things:
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,
Old fires to new ashes, and ashes to the earth
Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,
Bones of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf.
Houses live and die: there is a time for building
And a time for living and for generation...
(CP&P 123).

The element used as the main theme is earth; and earth, as dust, dirt, mud, leaf mold, etc. is stressed in this poem. This is in sharp contrast to the element air which was only rather vaguely implied as operative in "Burnt Norton." The theory of transmutation is immediately apparent. Earth for Heraclitus is the death of water. The poet similarly deals with death. Although "Burnt Norton" ends with thoughts of death, these thoughts come rather late in the poem; they do not operate over the entire work as they do in "East Coker."

The opening lines of "East Coker" have already indicated to the reader what the poet feels about the pattern of growth and decay, of life and death. The narrator is very aware of his own mortality and he is fascinated and repelled by its images of decay: "flesh,
fur and faeces, / bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf" (CP&P 123). As he gazes upon the scene of his ancestral home, the bright light of a summer day darkens into twilight (the light of the sun, the source of fire is descending) and he imagines a scene of people, long since dead, dancing in a field,

Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes.  
Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth

Mirth of those long since under earth
Nourishing the corn. Keeping time,
Keeping the rhythm in their dancing
As in their living in the living seasons
The time of the seasons and the constellations
The time of milking and the time of harvest
The time of the coupling of man and woman
And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.
Eating and drinking. Dung and death.

(CP&P 124).

The echo of Ecclesiastes here is akin to the echo of Heraclitus--"All things come in their due seasons" (Fr. 123, p. 102). The rhythm of life and death, the opposite poles of being, goes on eternally.
The narrator then says "Dawn points. ...Out at sea
the dawn wind / Wrinkles and slides. I am here or
there, or elsewhere. / In my beginning" (CP&P 124).
Eliot is specific in his directions: he points--dawn
cannot be said to point--to the next state of the
transformation of the elements, water in the form of
the sea. He is no longer "there" at the still point;
he is no longer "here" at East Coker viewing the
ancient stones; he is or may not be elsewhere, he says.
This remark is a curiously off-hand one with which he
surely intends to prepare the reader for yet another
level of discourse and a return to the moment in the
rose garden at Burnt Norton. Opposition returns,
bringing discord and confusion: instead of the
particular season (summer) he remarks "What is the late
November doing / With the disturbance of spring...";
instead of a specific locale, we are returned to cosmic
considerations where:

Comets weep and Leonids fly
Hunt the heavens and the plains
Whirled in a vortex that shall bring
The world to that destructive fire
Which burns before the ice-cap reigns.

(CP&P 125)
The point about which a vortex whirls is the still point; it does not itself move, yet everything around it does. The Heraclitean fire which subsumes all things is also present. However, Heraclitus did not believe in world-cycles that would end with the world being destroyed by conflagration (Wheelwright, 50). He insisted upon the balance of tensions between opposites and upon the principles of measures and exchange. (Eliot's world-destruction by fire, terminated with a subsequent ice-cap, derives from other sources. But Eliot with this notion creates a balance of opposites, even in a vision of destruction.)

Eliot returns to his attempt to discern the meaning of his vision at Burnt Norton. He is dissatisfied with his previous explanation as well as with the one he is presenting here in "East Coker." He seeks understanding and, like Heraclitus, comes to the conclusion that "human nature has no real understanding; only the divine nature has it" (Fr. 61, p. 68). As a Christian, Eliot chooses to submit to the will of God, to humble himself: "the only wisdom we can hope to acquire / Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless" (CP&P 126). Humility is not the wisdom Heraclitus sought. Although he knew that "...wisdom stands apart from all else" (Fr. 7, p. 19), his Logos did not require a characteristic like humility because
he did not personify it; Eliot's *Logos*, however, centered upon Christ, God made Man, can.

His humility, however, yet allows him to offer a depiction, similar to that made in "Burnt Norton," of the masses as purposeless, unsentient beings--"the vacant [go] into the vacant" (CP&P 126). Travel motifs are once again used to symbolize the empty journey through time and space of people on whose faces the "mental emptiness" deepens. He seeks solace, hope, and inspiration in Christian mysticism inspired in part by Neo-Platonic philosophy and St. John of the Cross: "I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you / Which shall be the darkness of God" (CP&P, 126). "So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing" (CP&P 127). The notion that light is the shadow of God, derives from the Hermetic philosophers' *Lux est umbra Dei*; the stillness is the dancing from "Burnt Norton." St. John of the Cross, whose mystic writings describe, in terms of paradox, a method for achieving the state of emptiness of soul and spirit by which one may make "the psychic leap from nothing to everything," is quoted, (albeit it in a rather free paraphrase), directly by Eliot (Libby, 24).

These thoughts continue with a brief section in which the world is likened to a hospital and Christ is seen as "the wounded surgeon" who "plies the steel" and
offers the "compassion of the healer's art" (CP&P 127). Among the allusions embedded in this section, one iterates the Hermetic philosophy from which Sir Thomas Browne in the seventeenth century drew his remark that "For the world, I count it not an Inn, but an Hospital, and a place, not to live, but to die in" (Browne, 83). Christian tradition, moreover, has always used Christ the Good Physician as a standard metaphor.

Heraclitus had similarly used images of sickness and death with which to emphasize his paradoxical view of the union of opposites, "It is by disease that health is pleasant; by evil that good is pleasant; by hunger, satiety; by weariness, rest" (Fr. 99, 90). The following fragment, 107, continues with the startling paradox that "Doctors cut, burn, and torture the sick, and then demand of them an undeserved fee for such services" (Wheelwright, 90). These statements are different aspects of his basic belief that "all things are one"; to Heraclitus, man can only know health because of disease, its opposite, thus, the physician does not deserve his fee. Wheelwright comments upon these particular fragments saying that Heraclitus "employs figures of speech ... as a means of exploring and adumbrating some of the more hidden aspects of reality..." (94). "If the metaphors and the paradox
are to serve a metaphysical purpose, each must to some degree involve the other" (Wheelwright, 95).

As sickness is to health, so good is to evil. For Heraclitus, something can be good only so far as it is evil; the two are merely two polar aspects of that thing. In fragment 106, Heraclitus also remarks that "To God all things are beautiful, good, and right; men, on the other hand, deem some things right and others wrong" (Wheelwright, 90). Eliot, on the other hand, views God as only "good"; therefore, he believes that his God is incapable of viewing evil as good and he recognizes that Christ the surgeon "plies the steel" solely to eradicate evil from mankind.

Thus, Eliot's metaphysical image of Christ as "the wounded surgeon" and of the events of [Good] Friday as "good" are not new concepts; they offer modern readers ideas that are paradoxical but which, however, exemplify--quite in the Christian tradition--a different and enlarged view of the realities of human life. If, as Eliot says, we listen to the "the dying nurse" (the Church) and abandon our sick bodies and souls to the surgeon (Christ), we can through suffering and death achieve the ultimate state of goodness, transcendence into a life of the spirit. Unlike Heraclitus, Eliot does not state that good and evil are one; that they seem to be opposites, he agrees.
However, as a Christian to whom good and evil can only be antithetical, he believes that good must be achieved through atonement and purgation of evil—"our sickness must grow worse," he writes, in order for us "to be restored" (CP&P, 127).

This section also recapitulates the themes of "Burnt Norton": the meaning of the vision in the garden, the problem of verbalizing that meaning, and the nature of time. The lines stress a new emphasis on the need for belief in Christianity. Eliot is still concerned with the suffering of human life. He mentions that he "must freeze / And quake in frigid purgatorial fires" before he "is to be warmed (CP&P 128); the paradoxes of opposition continue and are now couched in traditional Christian terms of purgatorial fires. The poet seeks transcendence: "We must be still and still moving / Into another intensity / For a further union, a deeper communion" (CP&P, 129). But he has not achieved union at East Coker; the poem is concerned with death and decay, with mutability and mortality—the earth of Heraclitus' transformations.

After the transformation downward of fire through air to water to earth, there is, as Heraclitus says in fragment 33, a further and inevitable movement—upwards this time: "When earth has melted into sea, the resultant amount is the same as there had been before
the sea had hardened into earth" (Wheelwright, p. 37). When earth has melted into sea, Heraclitus then declares that "water comes into existence out of earth..." and in the same fragment, he also declares that, "... souls [come] out of water," and "It is death for souls to become water..." (Fr. 49, p. 58). These statements hinge upon the point at which the transformation is taking place. For example, if the soul has been "vaporized of what is moist" and is proceeding along the way up towards fire, source of the Logos, but falls prey to "impulsive desire...at the cost of soul," it will die (Fr. 51, p. 58). Fragments 46 and 47 state "A dry soul is wisest and best" and "Souls take pleasure in becoming moist" (58). These statements (surely a pre-Christian recognition of the concept of free will and man's pre-disposition to sin) would seem to be a cryptic admonition to seek only the wisdom and goodness offered by the divine, are emphasized by Heraclitus' addition that "A drunken man [does not know] whither he is going, for his soul is moist" (Fr. 48, p. 58). Heraclitus chooses the figure of a drunken man as representative of one who is not temperate and is, therefore, unaware of "the nature of things"--"to be temperate is the greatest virtue" (Fr. 10, p. 19). Once the soul has been liberated, the soul must not return to its watery origin.
Eliot ends "East Coker" with water imagery. He, also, will be found to stress a similar view of the nature of the soul's quest and the necessity to follow the Logos, the source of the divine. The poet suggests his intentions via the following passage: "Through the dark cold and the empty desolation / The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters / Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning" (CP&P 129). The images of water and of sea creatures point toward the next poem of the Quartets and, more importantly, towards the strengthening of the Christian burden Eliot superimposes on the Heraclitean theory of flux and transformation. Though he continues to employ this poetic device, at the same time, he will be seen to depart from the basic concepts. Eliot's use of paradox and cryptic allusion becomes less; his iteration of Christian metaphor, on the other hand, becomes more explicit and urgent. The soul which will be shown to have grown out of water in Eliot's case is his own.
THE DRY SALVAGES

The third poem of *Four Quartets* is "The Dry Salvages" which is, as the poet tells his readers in a note to the title, a small group of rocks located in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Massachusetts. Thus, the particularity of place is established and the meaning of the place derives for the poet from childhood memories of summers spent near this location. The Mississippi River, also a childhood memory, is also used. Water, then, as the principal element is unmistakably the predominant image as Eliot continues his use of the Heraclitean transmutation of the elements. The season of the year is not directly stated but implied by the following lines:

His rhythm was present in the nursery bedroom,
In the rank allanthus of the April dooryard.
In the smell of grapes on the autumn table,
And the evening circle in the winter gaslight

(*CP&P, 130*).
The "he" referred to in "His rhythm" is "the strong, brown god of the river" whom Eliot believes to be "almost forgotten." "He" endures, however, "keeping his seasons and rages." This Whitmanesque passage describes the passage of the seasons from spring through summer and autumn into winter, the season for the most violent and destructive forces of water. The images of fog and storm and of ocean travel and shipwreck confirm the selection of winter as the specific season.

Eliot, initially, concerns himself with water in the form of the Mississippi River, "a strong brown god--sullen, untamed, intractable..." and in the form of the sea, which has "many gods and many voices" (CP&P, 130, 131). While "the river is within us, the sea is all about us," he writes. Both the river and the sea are strong, violent, and destructive--images of death and shattered lives abound in these lines. As Heraclitus indicates in Fragment 32, "The transformations of fire are: first, sea; and of sea, half becomes earth, and half, the lightning-flash" (Wheelwright, 37). If the result of the downward path is earth and sea, then what has become earth represents death and what has become sea is capable of rebirth because Heraclitus further says that "souls are vaporized from what is moist," and "souls [come out of]
water" (Frs. 44 & 49, p. 58). There is, then, for
Eliot, a more optimistic, a less death-oriented,
outlook in this poem.

After the opening passage, Eliot suggests that
change of outlook as he describes a sense of the time,
"rung by the unhurried / Ground swell," "older than
chronometers" and of the time "that is and was from the
beginning" and which "Clangs / The bell" (CP&P 131).
The bell's message is, at once, both a warning and a
sign of salvation: literally, it is the beacon at the
Dry Salvages; figuratively, it is the bell that
suggests, at least to Christian readers, the Angelus
bell which commemorates the Annunciation. That this is
what the poet wants readers to apprehend is clearly
stated in the last section of "The Dry Salvages" when
the word "Incarnation" is given as the solution of the
meaning of the "intersection of the timeless with time"
(CP&P, 136). Man should "follow the Logos," Eliot is
saying here.

The conscious man, the one who is aware, should
recognize the meaning of what he perceives. Eliot and
Heraclitus agree upon the importance of active and
intelligent perceptions that man must make of the
moving world around him. Each of us moves within the
moving world, "for the moving world can only be known
by what is in motion" (Frs. 43, p. 58). This affects
human personality; as Eliot says, "You are not the same people who left that station / Or who will arrive at any terminus..." (CP&P, 134). This concept is also central to Heraclitus who says, "It is one and the same thing to be living or dead, awake or asleep, young or old. The former aspect in each case becomes the latter, and the latter again the former, by sudden unexpected reversal" (Fr. 113, p. 90-91). If personality can be equated with consciousness, personality can exist only now, in the immediate present, and only as part of a stream of states of consciousness--"into the same rivers we step and do not step" (Fr. 110, p. 90). "You shall not think 'the past is finished' / or 'the future is before us'" (CP&P, 134).

By using the images of travel by rail and sea as he had done in the two previous poems of Four Quartets, Eliot continues his castigation of the mass of people whom he sees as traveling endlessly and purposelessly through life. In addition, he now satirizes the popular beliefs of these people who seek wisdom from seances, cards, fortune tellers, astrologers, psychologists, and tea leaves. These are the "usual pastimes and drugs, and features of the press" (CP&P, 136). Instead of these vulgar and useless things with which man--ancient and modern--seeks to understand the
past, to cope with the present, and to foresee the future, Eliot says it is necessary to "apprehend / The point of intersection of the timeless / With time..." (CP&P, 135). Such activity is, however, "an occupation for the saint--..." (CP&P, 136). The poet recognizes that all men are not saints and that it is "not really an occupation"; but it is, he says, a "lifetime's death in love" (CP&P, 136). One must rely upon the "gift" which is only "half-understood, the Incarnation" (CP&P, 136).

Heraclitus also mocked his fellow man, saying that "They pray to images, much as if they should talk to houses; for they do not know the nature of gods and heroes" (Fr. 75, 68). In addition, he adds,

"Night-walkers, magicians, bacchantes, revellers, and participants in the mysteries! What are regarded as mysteries among men are unholy rituals. Their processions and their phallic hymns would be disgraceful exhibitions, were they not done in honor of Dionysius. But Dionysius, in whose honor they rave and hold big feasts, is the same as Hades" (Fr. 76, 77, pps. 68, 69).

Both Heraclitus and Eliot express a disdain of their society in similar terms; their motives for doing
so are also the same. For Heraclitus, his contempt derides the common ritualistic practices of his contemporaries who are not aware of the difference between holy and unholy things: "When defiled, they purify themselves with blood--as though one who had stepped into filth should wash himself with filth" (Fr. 77, p. 69). "The Sybil with raving words," he adds, "reaches out because of the god in her" (Fr. 79, p. 69). For Heraclitus, god in the form of the fire of the Logos is everywhere and ever-present (when visitors unexpectedly found Heraclitus warming himself by the cooking fire, he said "Here, too, are gods" [Wheelwright, 68.]) He says that Dionysius is--or should be--at the opposite pole from Hades, but is, in reality, the same as Hades, because of the unholy rituals given in his honor. Man should, he implies, follow only the Logos; "fire in its advance will judge and overtake all things" (Fr. 72, p. 68).

Eliot's disdain for the men of his world who are unaware of God leads him to similar contempt for them and their attempts "to unweave, unwind, unravel / And piece together the past and the future" (CP&P, 131). He mocks their mindless pastimes and does so to admonish that there is only one thing which should concern man--to follow the Logos which in this case, is to love Christ. In the Incarnation of Christ, he says,
the "impossible union of spheres of existence is actual, / Here the past and the future / Are conquered, and reconciled" (CP&P, 136).

Eliot goes on to say

"I wonder if that is what Krishna meant--
Among other things--or one way of putting the same thing:
That the future is a faded song, a Royal Rose or a lavender spray
Of vistful regret for those who are not here yet to regret.
Pressed between the yellow leaves of a book that has never been opened.
And the way up is the way down, the way forward is the way back (CP&P, 134).

Why Krishna after Heraclitus and Christ? The reference is to the Bhagavad Gita which says that, at the moment of death, a man who has concentrated his spirit upon the godhead will achieve union with that godhead (Reibetanz, 123). Whereas the Hindu religion sees this as a step in the process of reincarnation, Eliot turns this notion into one of balance and equanimity towards death and time and emphasizes "the one action / (And the time of death is every moment) / Which shall fructify in the lives of others: / And do
not think of the fruit of action. / Fare forward (CP&P, 134). "Fare forward" are the words spoken by Krishna to Arjuna on the field of battle (CP&P, 135). The speaker of "The Dry Salvages" has accepted the thought of death spoken in the previous poem and has adopted a more positive attitude; he will fare forward.

In section IV of the poem, Eliot returns to Christianity with a prayer to the "Lady, whose shrine stands upon the promontory" (CP&P, 135). The lines that follow are simple, almost bathetic, consisting of five line stanzas which urge the Lady to pray for those "in ships" and for those "women who have seen their sons or husbands / Setting forth and not returning" (CP&P, 135). Eliot echoes Dante (Paradiso, Canto 33) by calling the Lady Figlia del tuo figlio (a quite paradoxical view of Mary as the daughter of her own son) as well as "The Queen of Heaven" (CP&P, 135). The Christian nature of the Four Quartets is now quite obvious.

Eliot ends the poem with a recall of the moment in the garden at Burnt Norton; there is, he says, "the unattended moment, the moment in and out of time, / The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight..." which is only "half guessed, half understood" (CP&P, 134). The effect of the unattended moment which filled the poet with a great silence and a glimpse of the
ineffable is a small death. As the words by Krishna imply, man should be prepared for death; thus, the speaker urgently speaks with a directive toward "right action"—the same right action he quoted as Krishna's words: to be intent at the time of death; right action will bring freedom. Although for "most of us, he says, "this is the aim / Never to be realized," we, who have tried, though undefeated because we have gone on trying, will be content to nourish the life of the significant soil, not too far from the yew-tree (CP&P, 137). The echoes of the words and themes used in "Burnt Norton" and "East Coker" serve to unify the various concepts and allusions and to point towards the affirmation of faith to come in the last poem of the Quartets, "Little Gidding."
"Little Gidding," the final poem of *Four Quartets*, celebrates the element of fire, the ultimate transcendent stage of the Heraclitean flux. Thus, this poem represents Eliot's specific and conscious assimilation of Heraclitean thoughts and concepts and demonstrates his alteration of those ideas in Christian terms. Gardner quotes the preliminary notes that Eliot made before starting "Little Gidding"; this sketch indicates the poet's realization that the seasons and the four elements were organizable and capable of unifying the four poems:

Winter scene. May.
Lyric, air earth water & & [sic] daemonic fire. The Inferno.
They vanish, the individuals, and our feeling for them sinks into the flame which refines. They emerge in another pattern & recreated and reconciled redeemed, having their meaning to-gether not apart, in a union
which is of beams from the central fire. And the others with them contemporaneous.

Invocation to the Holy Spirit

(Gardner, 157).

The images used in "Little Gidding" involve the element of fire, the season of spring, and a place, Little Gidding. The fire the poet writes about equates not only with the fire of Heraclitean Logos but also with the fires of Purgatory and Hell. The reference to Pentecost is present in the words "beams from a central fire" which describe those which descended upon the heads of the Apostles at Pentecost (Gardner, 157). Eliot emphasizes this allusion in his notes when he suggests that individuals are changed (just as the Apostles were changed) and emerge in another pattern after a union of beams from a central fire. The season is clearly stated here to be spring.

Whereas the three earlier poems dealt with a personal history and with his meditations on time and "what might have been and what has been," this final poem about this particular place enables him to merge his personal history into that of his adopted country as well as that of its church. However, as the jottings for the preliminary scheme of the poem
demonstrate, the poet initially had in mind an amalgamation of the Heraclitean flux and the Heraclitean fire with Christian beliefs of: the Inferno, notions about reconciliation, redemption, and the union of recreated individuals with the beams of a central fire.

"Little Gidding" opens with a "moment in and out of time," another experience like that of the moment in the rose-garden at Burnt Norton (CP&P, 136). This vision is described without any antecedent; it is only after the reader reads the second stanza that he learns that this illuminative moment takes place on the route to Little Gidding after one leaves "the rough road" to "turn behind the pig-sty" past the hedges. The images presented are opposites, contrarieties: fire and ice, cold and heat, melting and freezing, darkness and light; even the seasons oppose each other. The image of fire, source of the divine, "flames the ice," produces a "glare that is blindness," and "a glow more intense than blaze of branch" (CP&P, 138). The source is, the poet declares, "the Pentecostal fire," bringing life to all things, yet the occasion is perceived by the poet as a moment of stasis, a moment out of time, in which "there is neither budding nor fading, not in the time of generation." By this he means that this glimpse of the balance of opposites and of the
reconciliation between immanence and transcendence is momentary and itself transcendent—a glimpse only. The earlier moment in the rose-garden at Burnt Norton is recalled here, but, although the narrator of "Burnt Norton" spoke only of seeing a shaft of sunlight, the speaker in "Little Gidding" is surrounded by fiery images: flames, glare, glow, blaze; the fire is everywhere, transforming everything. This moment, in contrast to that in the rose-garden, will be developed and made more explicitly Christian but, at the same time, less personal. There are no personal pronouns in this opening passage from "Little Gidding." The "we," the "they" of "Burnt Norton"; the "I" and "me" of "East Coker" and "The Dry Salvages" have given way to an impersonal—-but still specific—language: "the dumb spirit" and "the soul's sap." The reader recognizes that the poet is still speaking of himself but is also aware of the shift towards a more universal, a more generalized plane encompassing all humankind.

This passage is, perhaps, the most Heraclitean in the whole of the *Four Quartets*; all the particulars of Heraclitus' concepts are restated here by Eliot. According to Heraclitus, those things that contain fire are alive and share in the divinity of the fire of the Logos. On the other hand, because water quenches fire,
water is death. For Heraclitus, the sun contains the highest concentration of fire, but at sundown, when it sinks into the sea, it is dimmed because of the moisture: "The transformations of fire are: first, sea; and of sea, half becomes earth...." (Fr. 32, 37). This is, of course, not a final transformation; "The sun is new each day," Heraclitus adds (Fr. 36, 37) and "...cannot overstep his measures..." (Fr. 122, 102).

When Eliot describes a clash between the seasons, he probably alludes to what he perceives to be the apparent chaos of the physical world immersed in global war. In "East Coker," the poet had similarly asked, "What is the late November doing / With the disturbance of spring...." (CP&P, 124). Here, in the passage from "Little Gidding," he reiterates the same concern about the "midwinter spring." It is, he says, in "its own season / sempiternal though sodden towards sundown...." (CP&P, 138). Sempiternal is eternal; eternal is divine. This season is "suspended in time" but "not in time's covenant," he says, suggesting once more reference to the still point, "moving and unmoving," "where the beginning and the end are always there." As the Heraclitean fire is quenched by water, Eliot's midwinter spring is "sodden towards sundown." Yet, as we have seen, water is regarded by both Heraclitus and Eliot as a source of death and a source of rebirth; and
both men regard it as something beyond time, beyond comprehension, beyond the natural order of things.

With his meditation on place at Little Gidding, Eliot immerses himself in English history, alluding to what he perceives to be the historicity of the site. He is also concerned about the sanctity of the place as a religious commune. "There are other places / which also are at the world's end," he says, "But this is the nearest, in place and time, / Now and in England" (CP&P, 139). As the spring is sodden, it brings thoughts of death; "places at the world's end" foresees destruction in a world at war. His thoughts on the sense of grace offered by the place lead him to consider prayer,

And prayer is more
Than an order of words, the conscious occupation
Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.
And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
They can tell you, being dead: the communication
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.
Here, the intersection of the timeless moment
Is England and nowhere. Never and always
(CP&P, 139).

When Eliot says that "the dead are tongued with fire," he is granting them a sense of divinity. Just as Heraclitus had considered fire to be divine, Eliot's "central fire" also represents the godhead. Heraclitus also believed that "There await men after death such things as they neither expect nor have any conception of" and "They arise into wakefulness and become guardians of the living and the dead" (Fr. 67, 68, p. 68). Moreover, he stated a belief that "Immortals become mortals, mortals become immortals, they live in each other's death and die in each other's life" (Fr. 66, p. 68). That those who have gone on before us yet speak to us is a concept shared by the philosopher and the poet.

In section II of "Little Gidding," Eliot uses verbatim quotations from Heraclitus to end three stanzas of verse, each of which echoes the three previous poems:

Ash on an old man's sleeve
Is all the ash the burnt roses leave.
Dust in the air suspended
Marks the place where a story ended.
Dust inbreathed was a house—
The wall, the wainscot and the mouse.
The death of hope and despair,
This is the death of air.

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

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

This is the death of water and fire.

(CP&P, 139, 140)

These lines echo those of the earlier poems: the final lines of "Burnt Norton" contain a reference to dust on a bowl of rose-leaves, "Sudden in a shaft of sunlight /
Even while the dust moves...." (CP&P, 122). The lines from "East Coker," "...to shake the wainscot where the field-mouse trots....," are echoed as well as the images of decay and destruction with the passage of time (CP&P, 123). Finally, whereas "The Dry Salvages" speaks of "...the life of significant soil (CP&P, 137); the earth here, "parched and eviscerate" is no longer so.

Elliot's tone abruptly changes; it is as if the narrator has become soul, disembodied, by virtue of the Heraclitean transformations of air, earth, water, and fire: "[Soul] is the vaporization out of which everything else is derived" (Fr. 43, p. 58). He describes a meeting with a "familiar compound ghost" (CP&P, 140). 11 In the meeting, Elliot "assumes a double part": one being himself, the other being one (or more) of the poetic masters who have gone before--the dead "tongued with fire." The other self speaks in Dante's voice (Elliot attempts to imitate Dante's poetic form of terza rima) and says, "I am not eager to rehearse / My thought and theory which you have forgotten. / These things have served their purpose: Let them be" (CP&P, 141). The ghost urges that the poet's consciousness and full awareness be turned towards two things accompanying "the gifts reserved for age":

First, the cold friction of expiring sense
Without enchantment, offering no promise
But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit
As body and soul begin to fall asunder.
Second, the conscious impotence of rage
At human folly, and the laceration
Of laughter at what ceases to amuse.
And last, the rending pain of re-enactment
Of all that you have done, and been; the
shame
Of motives late revealed, and the awareness
Of things ill done and done to others' harm
Which you once undertook for exercise of
virtue (CP&P, 142).

"The exasperated spirit" must proceed "from wrong to
wrong," "unless restored by that refining fire / Where
you must move in measure, like a dancer" (CP&P, 142).12
Achievement of transcendence, union with the divine,
must go through the way up through fire. Oxymoronic
paradox emphasizes the nature of the contrarieties:
cold friction, bitter tastelessness, and "expiring
gence" implies "the dying breath" (Reibetanz, 157).
For Eliot, here at Little Gidding, the Heraclitean fire
has been completely subsumed by a Christian fire by an
interweaving of "the refiner's fire" of Malachi 3: 2;
Heraclitean fire has been completely subsumed by a Christian fire by an interweaving of "the refiner's fire" of Malachi 3: 2; of Dante's Purgatorio, Canto XXVI; 13 of the tongues of fire that accompanied the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2: 3); and the white rose of Dante's Paradiso, Cantos XXX-XXXIII.

Section III of "Little Gidding" continues to meditate upon the from the futility of one's preoccupation with the past; the poet asks,

Why should we celebrate
Those dead men more than the dying?
It is not to ring the bell backward
Nor is it an incantation
To summon the spectre of a Rose.
We cannot revive old factions
We cannot restore old policies
Or follow an antique drum.
Those men, and those who opposed them
And those whom they opposed
Accept the constitution of silence
And are folded in a single party.

(CP&P, 143).

"Folded into a single party" echoes Heraclitus' saying "all things are one." They, those who have gone
before, are us but they are "perfected in death," they are one with the divine.

The downward path of the Heraclitean flux from fire to earth is depicted in Section IV with a compound image of the dove of the Paraclete descending with tongues of fire and of a warplane spitting "flames of incandescent terror" (CP&P 143). One of these offers discharge from sin and error; the other, death. We, the living, "can only live, only suspire / Consumed by either fire or fire" (CP&P, 144).

Finally, the poem ends with a summation of all the themes of the Four Quartets: "the end is where you start from," the poet says. He recalls the major themes: time, the moment of vision, the struggle with words with which to express that vision, and the partial understanding and gradual acceptance of the necessity to follow the Logos. Not Heraclitus' Logos but John's Logos—which was with God and which was God—though each man clearly saw the source of order in his own concept of the Logos. The elements are recalled: air, earth, water, and fire, and the nature of time, unconquerable by mankind, is seen to be as one.

The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew tree
Are of equal duration. A people without history
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern
Of timeless moments. So, while the light fails
On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel
History is now and England.
With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this calling. (CP&P, 145)

"We die with the dying," he says, "See, they depart, and we go with them. / We are born with the dead: / See, they return, and bring us with them" (CP&P, 144). This is a clear iteration of Heraclitus' saying that immortals become mortals and mortals, immortals.

The final stanza of "Little Gidding" sums up all that had preceded the poem, going back, in fact, to the "Landscape" poems that were written earlier and which adumbrate the themes of Four Quartets. Echoes resound of motifs from the first three parts of the Quartets: the hidden children in the trees from "Burnt Norton," the earth of "East Coker," and the river and the sea from "The Dry Salvages." "All shall be well," Eliot says quoting the words of Julian of Norwich and by which he announces his affirmation of faith: "All
shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be well" (CP&P, 145). It shall be so when "the tongues of flame are in-folded / Into the crowned knot of fire / And the fire and the rose are one" (CP&P, 145). That the fire of Heraclitus' Logos and the rose of Dante's Christian Paradiso have become one is a fitting conclusion.
CONCLUSION

When "Burnt Norton" was published, the epigraphs to this poem consisted of two of the sayings of the Greek Pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus and the relevance of the epigraphic material to the poem was not apprehendable because of the relative unfamiliarity of the source and the paradoxical language used by Heraclitus. Before the other three poems of *Four Quartets* were written, a diligent reader might have translated the original Greek of the epigraphs quoted and discerned an echo of one of them ("The way up and the way down are the same") in the lines in Section III of "Burnt Norton" which read, "This is the one way, and the other / Is the same... (CP&P, 121). However, the relevance of the other Heraclitean saying, "Although the *Logos* is common to all men, each acts as though he has a private wisdom," is not evident in "Burnt Norton." For this reason, the full significance of Eliot’s use of these sayings was not considered by readers when "Burnt Norton" was issued as a single unit. There was no consideration—even by the poet at that time—that additional poems based on the themes of "Burnt Norton" would be forthcoming. Thus, until the
three associated poems comprising the *Four Quartets*
were written and read in conjunction with an
understanding and an appreciation of the basic tenets
of Heraclitus' philosophical theories, the full range
of Eliot's dependence upon and modification of them was
largely unappreciated.

Of the two sayings of Heraclitus that Eliot
attached to "Burnt Norton," the most important is the
one which admonishes man to follow the *Logos* and not to
rely upon his own wisdom. It is this directive that
ultimately shapes the whole of the *Four Quartets*.
However, as the poems progress from their starting
point, the description of the spiritual experience at
"Burnt Norton," and expand upon the meaning of that
moment, that admonition by Heraclitus is rendered
increasingly Christian and ultimately equated with the
need for modern man to love Christ, as God made Man.
Significantly, that particular Heraclitean directive to
follow the *Logos* is never directly quoted or referred
to in any of the four poems, yet it serves as the
central theme against which Eliot counterpoised a great
many of other concepts of Heraclitus as variations.

For example, Heraclitus' central notion was that
the natural elements—earth, water, and fire (though
air, to be sure, was recognized as an element, it acted
only as a intermediating factor in Heraclitus' order of
things)--were the basis of all things with each of the elements in a state of perpetual flux toward either the upward or the downward way. Fire was the primal substance and the Logos, or the source of order over creation; water, on the other hand, because it quenches fire was a state of no order, or death. The tension created by the opposition between "the way up and the way down" is balanced by a state of equilibrium, a "hidden harmony" that makes all things one. In such a cosmic view, Heraclitus saw that apparent opposites: war and peace, life and death, hot and cold, light and dark, and so on, are really merely different aspects of the same thing. Moreover, if these things are so considered, then both the apparent differences and the essential unity which is inherent in them are equally valid. Time, for Heraclitus, is an ever-flowing river into which one cannot step twice because the waters are continually flowing on; what has (or has not) happened in the past has flowed by and what will happen in the future is always about to take place. Such notions are per se paradoxical and Heraclitus could not avoid speaking about them except in paradoxes.

Eliot's attempt to describe what he considers a "timeless moment" of ineffable spiritual experience, thus, is also paradoxical. If it is indescribable, if it is a moment out of time, how can it be described?
Such moments are often the source and inspiration for mystical writing, particularly among Christian mystics. Yet, Eliot's knowledge of and appreciation for the writings of Heraclitus enables him to use these as a base upon which he constructs his own search for and adoption of a spiritual discipline which will enable him to suggest some comprehension of it to others. Heraclitus' sayings underlie everything in the Four Quartets: the pagan philosopher's cosmic outlook, his understanding of the essential unity that exists in the universe, his paradoxical dialectic, his firm belief in a sense of order in the universe, and, even, his misanthropy and scorn of his fellow men who see but do not comprehend; all these elements of Heraclitus' thought appealed to the modern poet.

That Eliot used a great many more of the Heraclitean fragments than the two appended to "Burnt Norton" has been made clear. The kinship between these two men, one pagan, one Christian, separated by 2000 years of human history, has been demonstrated. Such a demonstration does not suffice to indicate the breadth and depth of the poetic concepts contained in a long, major poetic work like Four Quartets. However, knowledge of Eliot's use and adaption of the Heraclitean themes and paradoxical language does enrich the reader and make more understandable those themes...
derived from other sources which may be only peripherally—and, often cryptically—alluded to. For example, the brief mention of "the figure of the ten stairs" in section V of "Burnt Norton" refers to the writings of St. John of the Cross but, more importantly, it reinforces and reemphasizes the Heraclitean concept offered in the epigraph that "the way up and the way down are the same." For Eliot, *Four Quartets* employs the Heraclitean concepts as a means toward defining and conveying his own resolution of the nature of man's life on earth, the nature of time, and the acceptance of the Christian religion as the source of wisdom and order in the world.
NOTES

1 These sayings are called fragments by the translators and compilers of Heraclitus because his words have come down to the present only in the form of quotations in the works of other early writers; subsequent references to such fragments will be given simply as Fr. followed by its number and with page number for the translation made by Wheelwright given as p. --.


6 Cf. Dante Alighieri, "Inferno," of *La Commedia*, Canto XXXIV, which depicts Satan frozen in ice at the lowest reaches of a fiery hell.

7 Although Wheelwright does not include a specific fragment dealing with the notion that man is continually changing, Freeman (q. v.) discusses remarks by one Epicharmus, mocking Heraclitus for such a statement, saying that if a man borrowed money from another, he need not repay the loan because he was not the same man who borrowed it.

8 The quotation from Gardner is given as shown in that work. Because it attempts to duplicate jottings from a "scribbling pad, the typography is non-standard. I have similarly duplicated Gardner.

9 Gardner remarks (p. 108) that Eliot had unconsciously echoed Sir Thomas Browne here as well as elsewhere in "Little Gidding." Gardner quotes John Hayward’s *Quatre Quatours* in which Eliot said: "Damn Sir T. Browne, a writer I never got much kick from: I suppose it is a reminiscence...."

10 Reibetanz’ work, *A Reading of Eliot’s Four Quartets*, provides an analysis of this section of "Little Gidding" and offers a more complete understanding of the shift from the use of personal pronouns. I have adapted part of this analysis.

11 Eliot alludes to Canto XV of Dante’s *Inferno* in which Dante meets his master Brunetto Latini in hell and who speaks to Dante much as Eliot’s ghost speaks to him. Moreover, a ghost also appears as one Stetson in Section I of *The Waste Land*.

12 The echoes here are Yeatsian rather than Dantesque although Gardner quotes Eliot as saying that "...the visionary figure has now become somewhat more definite and will no doubt be identified by some readers with Yeats though I do not mean anything so precise as that" (p. 176).
Canto XXVI of Dante's *Purgatorio* similarly refers to the need to go through the refiner's fire. This passage depicts Arnaut Daniel, a Provençal poet, who speaks to Dante in Provençal and "then hid himself in the fire that refines....". In addition, Eliot quoted this line in Italian at the close of *The Waste Land*. 
Works Cited


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