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**A Reformation of New Criticism:
"Burnt Norton" Revisited**

by

Paul D. Hahn

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Chapter I

Theory: A Systematic Method of Explication

by

Paul D. Hahn *

When I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot were laying the foundations of the "new criticism"¹ after the turn of the century, two other types of criticism were already strongly entrenched. On the one hand, the impressionists, followers of such late Victorian critics as Walter Pater and Matthew Arnold, believed that criticism is the expression of the critic's personal and subjective response to a work of literature. On the other hand, the historians, followers of such French critics as Hippolyte Taine and St. Beuve, believed that criticism is the determination of the extent to which various historical circumstances, such as the author's biography, social milieu, and literary tradition, have influenced a work.² Without denying the possible usefulness of either the impressionists' or the historians' methods, Richards and Eliot strove in their early critical writings to discover a new and more reliable method of criticism. Though they differed in some respects — Eliot attempting to free the work from its author through an "impersonal" theory and Richards attempting to free the poem from the reader's emotional reaction — nonetheless, the two critics shared a basic critical tenet: the work itself is the proper object of study for literary criticism. In the conclusion of his early essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot emphasized this assumption: "To divert interest from the poet to the poetry is a laudable aim: for it would conduce to a juster estimation of actual poetry, good and bad."³

The emphasis of Richards and Eliot upon the work itself during the teens and early twenties may be considered the first stage of new criticism. In 1938, Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren published *Understanding Poetry*, and another stage of new criticism was begun.

* Paul D. Hahn is an instructor in English at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois.

¹ The term, "new criticism," has presumably come into vogue as a result of the title to one of John Browe Ransom's books, *The New Criticism* (1941). See Sylvan Barnet, Morton Berman, and William Burto, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, p. 27.

² See Lionel Trilling, ed., *Literary Criticism*, pp. 211, 231-232, 252-253.

³ T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, p. 59.

Understanding Poetry was soon regarded as the new critics' guidebook. For the first time, many of the new critical ideas were assimilated and organized in one volume; what is more, the volume was aimed at American colleges and universities, for it was a textbook. During the forties and fifties, new criticism gained ground in many schools throughout the country. Two important and influential essays during these decades were Mark Shorer's "Technique as Discovery" (1948) and Brooks's "The Formalist Critic" (1951).¹ Shorer's statement that "the difference between content, or experience, and *achieved* content, or art, is technique" placed even greater emphasis than previous criticism on the importance of form. Shorer's article is historically important, also, in that it established the value of new critical principles for the study of fiction. Brooks's article begins with his famous "decatalogue," the ten "articles of faith that [Brooks] could subscribe to."

However, with the reformulation of new critical principles and the criticism's resultant popularity came various misunderstandings of the approach. The impressionists and historians were naturally wary of new criticism, and soon converts to the new critical camp were themselves denying the value of other critical approaches to literature or intent upon hardening the approach into a mechanism. The former misunderstanding of the converts was quickly apparent in Wright Thomas's and Stuart Brown's *Reading Poems* (1941), a volume so determined to avoid historical interpretation that its poets' names and dates were printed only at the back of the book. The latter misunderstanding is well exemplified by much that is printed in *The Explicator*, a magazine presumably devoted to the new critical method. Many of the articles published in *The Explicator* consider a work of literature not as a whole, but as a collection of parts; again, many are mere exercises in symbol-hunting. Both of these difficulties are discussed by Brooks and Warren, yet both persist.

The situation has improved little in the last ten years. The restless social conditions of the sixties caused a new and pervasive anti-intellectualism to surface in academic circles, and impressionism has again become a widely-used method in the teaching of literature; the titles of such anthologies as *Naked Poetry* and *The Now Voices* reflect not only the new impressionism, but also the demand that literature concern itself with present-day social and political problems.

Most serious recent critics have reflected these popular trends, though in a calmer manner. One exception is Northrop Frye, who accepts the premises of new criticism, such as the emphasis upon the work as criticism's proper object of study, the inseparability of form and content, and the necessity of studying literature inductively. The systems expounded in *Anatomy of Criticism*, however, have yet to establish a pedagogical usefulness. Another prominent critic of re-

¹ Both these articles are reprinted in *The Modern Critical Spectrum*, pp. 1-6, 70-83.

cent years has shown a greater predilection for the popular trends. In the preface to *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Wayne C. Booth has written, "My subject is the technique of non-didactic fiction, viewed as the art of communicating with readers — the rhetorical resources available to the writer of epic, novel, or short story" Yet Booth's otherwise brilliant and detailed study ends with a plea to the reader's innate moral sense.

The tendencies to attack, misunderstand, or ignore new criticism have, then, largely conditioned the state of criticism at the present time. These tendencies, however, leave the serious student and critic of literature with a basic and unanswered question: "How is a work of literature to be understood?" The essential problem for student and critic alike remains the problem of understanding. If the work is not understood, no impressionistic reaction is possible; if the work is not understood, historical research is of little value; if the work is not understood, its applicability to current problems cannot be assessed. The understanding of a work of literature, then, remains the unavoidable and preliminary act of criticism.

To arrive at a workable method for accomplishing this *a priori* act of understanding has presumably been the *raison d'être* of new criticism. For this reason, the new critical writings which help answer the basic question, "How is a work of literature to be understood?" should be reevaluated. What is presently needed is perhaps another stage in the evolution of new criticism: it might be formulated anew.

There are two reasons why the original formulation of new criticism in *Understanding Poetry* may no longer be as useful as it has been in the past. First, the tendencies of criticism since 1938 have largely obscured the efforts of Brooks and Warren: there have simply been too many misunderstandings. Second, *Understanding Poetry* is perhaps not as systematic an exposition of new criticism as it might be. The separate considerations of poetry, fiction, and drama in *Understanding Poetry*, *Understanding Fiction*, and *Understanding Drama* are somewhat misleading; if new criticism is to be a basic method for understanding a work of literature, it should presumably be applicable to any work, regardless of the work's genre. The distinction between "Narrative Poems" and "Descriptive Poems," the first two chapters of *Understanding Poetry*, is also rather misleading, for works that are only narrative or only descriptive are usually not very good works. Finally, several concepts presented in the book seem a little vague: "tone" and "theme" are examples. Such concepts might be clearer if presented as technical aspects of the work: tone may be understood as the work's style, and theme may be understood as the work's plot and world.

If new criticism in the past has been primarily an attempt to establish principles by which a work of literature may be understood, then

² Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, p. 1.

any reformulation of new criticism must continue to emphasize the importance of explication. Indeed, organizing the new criticism that has preceded it, the reformulation will primarily be an attempt to discover and systematize both the underlying assumptions of explication and the basic linguistic concepts which will make explication as complete and simple a method as it can be. For a reformulation of new critical concepts to be useful in understanding a work, the system should be relatively complete; otherwise the system will result in misunderstanding. For the reformulation to be useful in the classroom, where the preliminary act of understanding is encountered daily, the system ought to be relatively simple; otherwise, many students will not be able to apply it easily. The following, then, is an attempt to make explication, not a mechanism, but a method. It cannot claim to be either as complete or as simple as explication should perhaps be; nonetheless, it may be of some value as a tentative exposition of the reformulation of new criticism.

For the study of literature to be possible, one needs to accept the basic assumption that words have well-established meanings. This assumption may seem obvious to one who has studied literature and language for several years, but a surprising number of students entering the study of literature at the college level believe that a work of literature may mean whatever they wish. This is an especially formidable argument against the study of literature, public or private, and it needs to be overcome at the outset of such study.

The theory of relative meaning may in practice prove disastrous, as the following conversation illustrates:

CONTRA: The rule of consistency [the belief that meanings are not relative, but well-established] is bunk.

PRO: Do you mean that we are free to violate it at will?

CONTRA: That is exactly what I mean.

PRO: Then I may understand you as saying that the rule of consistency is eternal and inviolable?

CONTRA: No! Of course not. I was specifically insisting on the opposite

PRO: Exactly! Even to deny the rule, you have to depend on it to preserve the meaning of your denial. In order to call it 'bunk,' and *mean* anything, you have to presuppose it.⁶

Verbal communication of any kind would be impossible if words did not have well-established meanings.

This is not, however, to argue that words have rigidly established meanings. Words do alter their meanings in different contexts: "How are you?" may be asked at a party and in a hospital room with different

⁶ Frederick Ferre, *Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion*, p. 16.

meanings. Words also differ in their connotations: the sentences, "William is deceased" and "William is dead," do not have exactly the same meaning. Both of these matters will be discussed more fully later, but both illustrate that, though the meanings of words are for the most part well-established, they do retain a certain fluidity.

If words have well-established meanings, then so does a work of literature, for a work of literature is composed of words. Only by this assumption is the study of literature possible. If the student allows a work to mean whatever he wishes, then he will not be studying literature: he will be studying himself. Such a situation would allow few new experiences and little learning to take place. Only by the assumption that words have established meanings, then by the study of the work's words, can the meaning of a work of literature be established.

In studying the words of a work, however, care must be taken to notice the effect of context upon the words' meanings. This effect may be illustrated by the simple sentence, "Jesus wept." The word "Jesus" has, by itself, innumerable associations: one may think of Jesus in the desert, on the Mount, crossing the water, or on the cross; one may also think of pews, the Pope, of Calvin, of baptism. "Wept" also has, by itself, innumerable associations. Yet something unusual happens to the associations of both words when they are combined in a single sentence: "wept" influences the concept of "Jesus," and "Jesus" influences the concept of "wept." One is left with a new meaning, the meaning of "Jesus wept." I. A. Richards has aptly called this process "the inter-animation of words,"⁷ for the ability of words to influence and be influenced by their context makes them seem almost alive.

Though the context of a word in a work of literature is usually larger than a sentence, the process remains the same. For example, in Irwin Shaw's "The Girls in Their Summer Dresses," Michael tells his wife, "I'm a happily married man."⁸ The statement's context, however, shows that Michael is not happily married, and the meaning of Michael's statement becomes ironic.⁹ There is also a sense in which the language to which a word belongs is its context: the meaning of a word is shaped by its past and present usage. Thus, "let" has come to mean "allow" rather than "restrain," its seventeenth-century meaning.

The ideal understanding of a work is reached when one knows both the established meanings of words and their contextual influences

⁷ I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 47.

⁸ Irwin Shaw, "The Girls in Their Summer Dresses," in *Mixed Company*, p. 6.

⁹ Because the processes involved in irony and in other instances of contextual alteration of meaning are the same, irony has been defined as contextual alteration. Thus, Cleanth Brooks, in *The Well Wrought Urn*, has written that "irony is the most general term that we have for the kind of qualification which the various elements in the context receive from their context" (209). However, since I have chosen to use "irony" in its more restricted sense later in the chapter, I have not used it in its general sense here.

upon each other. This total meaning of the work has in recent years been called "form," though form has other meanings for the literary critic. Often "form" is used to indicate the more mechanical devices of structure that a literary work may possess, such as meter and rhyme. This unfortunate use of the word has led many to conceive of the sonnet and other established forms as a sort of vase into which the flowers of content are thrust.¹⁰ "Form" is also used to designate the selection and organization of content; instead of a vase, "form" in this usage may perhaps be thought of as a statue minus the stone. Another analogy for this meaning of "form" has been given by Theodore Roethke: "'Form' is regarded not as a neat mold to be filled, but rather as a sieve to catch certain kinds of material."¹¹ "Form" as it is used hereafter will refer either to the selection and organization of content, or to the total meaning of the work.

Though the total meaning of a work is composed of the established meanings of its words as they are influenced by context, form should not be conceived as a collection of separate meanings, but as a fusion of all the meanings. Just as the separate meanings of "Jesus" and "wept" fuse together to become the new meaning of "Jesus wept," so all of the meanings within a work fuse together to become that work's form. In the Introduction to Valery's *Art of Poetry*, Eliot has written, "Ideally I should like to be able to hold the whole of a great symphony in my mind at once."¹² Analogously, the whole of work of literature should ideally be held in the mind after its last word has been read.

Yet this total comprehension of a work of literature must remain an ideal. Though the reader may largely understand a work by continued study, that he will reach total understanding of the form is doubtful. Nonetheless, one may postulate the existence of total comprehension in the mind of an ideal reader.¹³ The ideal reader both knows and understands the total work; the mortal reader must seek knowledge about the work which will point toward its understanding. His task is to become, as far as he is able, the ideal reader. The student or critic of a work will become its ideal reader only through a close reading of the work; thus, explication needs to be distinguished from interpretation. Explication necessitates a close reading of the work; it is a study of the work's words and a constant amalgamation of their meanings into a larger meaning. Interpretation does not necessitate close reading, but skimming; by adding more or subtracting less meaning than is given in the work, interpretation results in misunderstanding. Though in a sense explication must always be partial, since total understanding of the form will probably never be achieved, nevertheless it is always

¹⁰ The dangers of such an attitude toward literature have been exposed by Brooks and Warren in the introduction to *Understanding Poetry*.

¹¹ Theodore Roethke, *Selected Letters of Theodore Roethke*, p. 106.

¹² Quoted in Kristian Smidt, *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot*, p. 177.

¹³ Brooks, "The Formalist Critic," in *The Modern Critical Spectrum*, p. 3.

a contribution toward the understanding of the form. Interpretation, on the other hand, often falsifies the evidence upon which it is based and may, consequently, lead away from an understanding of the form.

The distinction between explication and interpretation may explain the use of other academic disciplines in criticism. The disciplines of history, psychology, philosophy, and so on may be used by both explication and interpretation in attempting to explain the work's form; yet there remains an important difference of approach. A critic who begins with the work, notes which psychological, theological, or sociological theories are inherent in the work, and then studies the relationships between the theories and the work is an explicator. A critic who begins with a psychological or philosophical theory and then applies the theory to a work which does not call for such treatment is an interpreter. Thus, to apply the medieval theory of the sublunary and supralunary worlds to Donne's "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" is to explicate, for the poem itself indicates through the line, "Dull sublunary lovers love,"¹⁴ that the theory is applicable. But to apply the theory to Hardy's "Wessex Heights" is to interpret, for the poem gives no indication that the theory is related to its meaning.

The explicator needs also to consider the essentially dramatic structure of literature. A work of literature presents an experience; as Brooks and Warren have said, ". . . every poem [every work of literature] can be — and in fact must be — regarded as a little drama."¹⁵ As a presentation of an experience, a work of literature seems to possess four essential elements: plot, point of view, imagery, and style. Each of these elements deserves close, individual consideration.

Tragedy, as Aristotle has pointed out, is "an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action . . ."¹⁶ To understand plot as an element in a work of literature, then, two important matters need first to be considered: an action as it exists in life, and an action as it is imitated in a work of literature.

An action in life is usually a choice between alternatives; for this reason, actions in life usually involves values. A value may be defined

¹⁴ John Donne, *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne*, p. 38.

¹⁵ Brooks and Warren, *Understanding Poetry*, p. 20.

¹⁶ Aristotle, *The Poetics*, in *Literary Criticism: An Introductory Reader*, p. 58. It should be noted at the outset of this discussion that the concept of plot has recently been enhanced by the work of the neo-Aristotelians of the Chicago school. However, Norman Friedman's analyses of plots tend to be episodic outlines of a work, and his emphasis on cause and effect seems to lose sight both of the all-important moment of change and of non-realistic fiction. See, for example, "What Makes a Short Story Short?" in *A College Book of Modern Fiction*, pp. 552-565. Ronald S. Crane would also have plot understood as a structure of scenes and episodes, abstracting plot "from the moral qualities of the characters and the operations of their thoughts." Also, Crane relies upon an updated version of the concept of catharsis when he considers plot "in relation to the general pleasure we take in any fiction when our curiosity about the impending events is aroused, sustained, and then satisfied . . ." See "The Concept of Plot," in *Approaches to the Novel: Materials for a Poetics*, pp. 233-243.

as one of several alternatives that is chosen, consciously or unconsciously, instead of other alternatives; the chosen alternative is considered more valuable than the others. For example, if a man living in a totalitarian state forfeits, at the state's demand and on pain of death, his business, his home, and his limbs, but refuses to forfeit his son, then it may be said of the man that he values his son more than he values his business, home, limbs, or life. It can be argued, of course, that there are certain circumstances in which one has no alternatives. The man who has a terminal illness and only a handful of days in which to live cannot, merely by an act of will, choose to reverse the decay within him. But to say that actions in life involve alternatives is not to argue that men are omnipotent or that positive thinking is efficacious. The man who is dying of a terminal illness probably cannot cure himself by choosing to be well; nevertheless, he may act in a variety of ways in response to his circumstances. He may tour Europe, lie abed, spend time with his children, throw himself off a cliff, pray, run naked through the streets, or continue working. Whatever alternative he chooses will reveal his values. There seem, however, to be a few actions in life that do not involve values. The distinction lies not with the circumstances in which a man acts, but with the man himself. A schizophrenic controlled by his hallucinations, for example, cannot legitimately be said to reveal values by his actions. A newborn infant, who cannot yet make choices of his own, also does not reveal values by his actions. Also, the actions of animals need not always reveal values. The distinction lies in the presence or absence of free will and responsibility. Since free will is present only when one is aware of alternatives, the minds of the insane person, the infant, and the animal, which are not capable of recognizing alternatives, cannot properly be said to possess free will. Since the consequences of one's actions are the result of free will, minds that do not possess free will are also not responsible for their actions. Thus, the insane person, the infant, and the animal should not be held to reveal values by their actions.

The actions of most people, however, reveal values. Indeed, only through an individual's actions may his values be known. What one says is as much a choice among alternatives as what he does and should also be considered an action. Even when one learns about the individual from a third party, only what the individual has said and done, or what the third party himself says and does about the person's actions, can be learned.

Since an action exists in time, and since the values revealed by an action are a choice among alternatives, an action may conveniently be divided into three stages: before the choice, the choice itself, and after the choice. For a choice to be made, a problem must force the selection of one alternative and the rejection of the others; this is the situation before the choice. The choice itself occurs when one alternative is chosen as most valuable. And the situation after the choice will

be characterized by the consequences of the choice. Though other analyses might be made, this three-part division at least emphasizes the importance of choice and values in actions as they exist in life.

An action as it is imitated in a work of literature, which is then called the "plot," retains most of the characteristics of the action in life. Like the action in life, the plot is a choice between alternatives; for this reason, it too reveals the values of its actor, who is called the "central character." Like the person who performs the action in life, the central character usually possesses free will and responsibility. Finally, the plot may also be divided into three stages: before the choice, the choice, and after the choice. These three stages have special terms when they are the divisions of a plot. Since it involves a problem, the situation before the choice is commonly called the "complication." The choice itself, since it is the turning point between the situations of before and after, is usually called the "change." And, since the situation after the choice contains the consequences of the change, it is commonly called the "resolution." Two other terms that are frequently used in discussing a plot should also be mentioned. "Recognition" is the central character's becoming aware of part or all of the action. Since the change, like the choice in life, may be unconscious, the recognition may precede, accompany, or follow the change. "Reversal" is the turning of the central character's condition as a result of the change; thus a prosperous central character may become destitute. Since the change causes the reversal, the reversal must always follow the change. Neither the recognition nor the reversal, however, are essential elements of the plot; therefore, neither will be present in every plot.

Though the action in life and the plot in literature have many similarities, there remains an important difference between them. In life, values are judged to be good or bad depending upon how well they correspond to the way life is. For example, the person who commits adultery may be judged by his peers to have made a poor choice of values. The judgment which determines that this action is bad, however, will not necessarily be shared by everyone. Thus, while the Christian or Jew may judge adultery to be a sin, the Epicurean may rate it highly among his values. Values in life, then, are debatable and depend upon a person's own view of the world in which he lives.

In the work of literature, however, the world in which the central character displays his values has been fixed by selection and organization: unlike life, the work of literature has form. It remains true that the values of the central character may still be judged good or bad, depending upon how well his values correspond to his world; but since his world is fixed, one must judge his values according to that world. Thus, in two novels, the central characters may reveal their values by committing adultery. If the central character of the first novel lives in a Christian world, then one should judge his action to be bad; for his

action does not correspond with the world in which he lives. If the central character of the second novel lives in an Epicurean world, then one should judge his action to be good; for his action does correspond with the world of the work. Of course, the reader need not become a Christian or an Epicurean simply because he has read a work in which a Christian or Epicurean worldview has been maintained; but for the Christian to be able to read the Epicurean novel, and for the Epicurean to be able to read the Christian novel, each must set aside his own worldview and assume the other's world for the duration of the novel.

To apply one worldview to a work which maintains another is similar to applying psychological or sociological theory to a work which displays no affinity for it. In either case, the student or critic may finish by misunderstanding the work. Henry James has stated the matter succinctly: "We must grant the artist . . . his *donnee*: our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it."¹⁷

Though the world of the work may differ from the reader's conception of life and though the values revealed by the central character's actions may seem erroneous to the reader, still the reader should find one aspect of the work that will be of interest to him: the problem which impels the central character toward his change should be a problem which the reader himself faces. Otherwise, the work may have no relation to the reader's life other than to entertain him. If the work is to be meaningful beyond the passing of leisure time, it must deal with a problem of immediate concern to the reader; the problem will, therefore, be a moral one. Thus, in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," the central character's problem may be described as a sense of inadequacy; though the reader may not share the work's essentially pessimistic worldview, and though he may dislike Prufrock's change in relation to the problem, still the work can be meaningful for him, since it deals with a common moral problem. On the other hand, escape literature, which is represented by the "slick genres," deals with the typically male interest in sex and adventure, female interest in sentiment and soap opera, adolescent interest in the romantic, and ubiquitous interests in the gothic and the fantastic. Though it may be of passing interest, escape literature can have no permanent meaning for its readers; the problems that may be found in its complications are not the problems of the moral world, but of the world of wish fulfillment.

The assumption that a work should deal with a moral problem is one means by which literature may be evaluated. Poor plotting is another. There are several ways in which plots may be weak; each of these ways denies the reader a knowledge of the central character's values. First, plots whose central characters lack free will and responsibility are usually unsuccessful. The insane person, the infant, and

¹⁷ Henry James, "The Art of Fiction," in *The Portable Henry James*, pp. 402-403.

the animal have been mentioned earlier; the infallible character — Matt Dillon, for example — may be added to the list. Second, improbability of world or of character may harm the plotting of a work. The world of the work may be improbable in two ways. The world which is established at the beginning of the work may later be altered or denied; a world which is made to correspond with Marxist philosophy may be altered at the end of the work to correspond with the free enterprise philosophy. The central character, who thought he should join the proletariat, now finds he should become a successful businessman; he — and the reader — is rightfully bewildered. The world in the work may also be improbable if accident, rather than the central character's change, resolves the complication. The blackmailer whose car crashes on his way to collect from the central character is denying the reader an opportunity to see how the central character would have handled the problem. *Deus ex machina* is a special instance of accident. The lightning which strikes the wicked witch from her cliff in Walt Disney's version of *Snow White* is an example of *deus ex machina*; God or Nature, not Snow White, resolves the complication. Characters who are improbable may also make a plot poor. The engineer in Thomas Wolfe's "The Far and the Near" is an inconsistent character: had he truly cared for the family he had driven past for years, he would have visited them sooner; had he not truly cared for the family, he would not have responded so emotionally when he did visit them. The third way in which a plot may be poor is by abandoning the complication for a new problem. The series of adventures in a Hardy Boys novel, few of which are resolved, is an example of such "broken-backed" plotting.

The good plot will avoid these pitfalls and will not deny its reader a knowledge of the central character's values. Such a plot will be unified: the complication will be squarely faced by the central character, and his change will lead naturally and probably to the resolution. However, though a unified plot may be, in Aristotle's figure, the soul of a work of literature, it cannot in itself guarantee that a work will be entirely successful. The work's point of view is also an important consideration.

The importance of point of view may be illustrated by what Wayne C. Booth has called "the rhetorical stance."¹⁸ Every act of communication involves three essential elements: someone who speaks, something which is spoken, and someone who listens. In a work of literature, these three elements may be termed the speaker or narrator, the story, and the reader. To fit more accurately the situation of a work of literature, however, the scheme should be somewhat expanded. Since the narrator in a work of literature is not always the work's author, it is safest to

¹⁸ Wayne C. Booth, "The Rhetorical Stance," in *Contexts for Composition*, pp. 194-202.

distinguish between the two. If the narrator is the author, no harm will result from treating the narrator as though he were a person distinct from the author; but if the narrator is not the author, misunderstanding will result when the two are confused. It may also be useful to distinguish between the listener, to whom the narrator is speaking, and the reader; for example, not all readers of Spenser's "Sonnet LXXIX" are vain women, like the listener.

The distinction between author and narrator places the author outside of the work of literature; yet most readers of a work tend to construct an image of its author. Here again, however, care must be taken to distinguish between the image and the man, for the image may differ from the man. The man himself may, for example, be licentious; the image that one constructs of him as one reads his novel, however, may be that of a traditional Christian. Booth has called this image of the author the "implied author."¹⁹ If this distinction is useful for the author, it may be useful, also, for the reader. The actual reader — the man with the book in his hands — may differ from the reader for whom the work seems intended, the implied reader. Thus, the rhetorical stance should be expanded to include seven elements: the actual author, the implied author, the narrator, the story, the listener, the implied reader, and the actual reader. Every work of literature, then, will have its narrator, and it is chiefly with the concept of the narrator that point of view is concerned.

"Point of view" may be defined as the amount of knowledge which a narrator possesses. Since the knowledge a narrator possesses differs widely from one work to the next, a classification of narrators may be useful. Basically, narrators may be divided into first and third persons. First person narrators may be either observers of or participants in the story. The narrator of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is an example of the first person observer, and the narrator of Donne's "The Sunne Rising" is an example of the first person participant. Third person narrators may be omniscient, selective omniscient, or effaced. The omniscient narrator has unlimited knowledge and can relate at will the thoughts of his characters; the narrator of Katherine Anne Porter's "Flowering Judas" is an example. The selective omniscient narrator is more restricted: he does not enter the minds of all his characters, but is confined to the minds of one or a few. A narrator restricted to the mind of one character, as in James's *The Ambassadors*, is called a "central intelligence;"²⁰ a narrator restricted to one, then another of his characters' minds, as in Katherine Mansfield's "The Dill Pickle," is called a "roving" narrator. The effaced narrator, also called an "objective" narrator, can only relate that part of the action that may be

¹⁹ Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, pp. 169-173.

²⁰ For an extensive discussion of the effects of James's point of view in *The Ambassadors*, see Percy Lubbock, "Picture, Drama, and Point of View," in *Approaches to the Novel*, pp. 253-263.

seen and heard; for example, Hemingway's "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" and most drama make use of the effaced narrator.

Though this classification is itself relatively simple, it can become more complex when variations of personality, commentary, and reliability are applied to it. Since all narrators must employ style, all narrators must express a personality to some extent. The extent may vary widely, however, and there is thus a spectrum along which a well-delineated personality is more or less apparent. At one end of the spectrum is the first-person narrator of Donald Barthelme's "Florence Green is 81," whose personality is quite evident by such lines as "The old babe is on a kick tonight . . ." ²¹ At the other end is the effaced narrator of the Biblical story of David and Absalom, whose personality is somewhat obscured by the simplicity of his style: "And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away" (2 Samuel 18:9). Moreover, personalities differ not only in degree, but in kind; the variety of literature's narrator personalities is as great as that of its readers. The urbane, sophisticated fellow who narrates Ovid's "Pyramis and Thisbe" differs greatly from the bitter old woman who narrates Porter's "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall;" the enraptured listener who narrates Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper" differs greatly from the meditative lover of Arnold's "Dover Beach."

Because point of view deals with knowledge, one aspect of a narrator's personality is particularly important: his tendency to comment or not to comment upon the action. Booth has noted three principal uses of commentary. First, the narrator may "tell the reader about facts that [the reader] could not easily learn otherwise;" second, the narrator may control dramatic irony by commenting on his characters' misinterpretations of each other's motives; third, the narrator may control his reader's expectations, "insuring that [the reader] will not travel burdened with the false hopes and fears held by the characters." ²²

Not all commentary is reliable, however; just as persons may be untrustworthy, so narrators may be unreliable. ²³ Generally, an unreliable narrator will give himself away by contradicting himself or by protesting too much. In John Betjeman's "In Westminster Abbey," a lady prays,

Gracious Lord, oh bomb the Germans.
Spare their women for Thy Sake.
And if that is not too easy
We will pardon Thy Mistake.

²¹ Donald Barthelme, *Come Back, Dr. Caligari*, p. 1.

²² Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, pp. 169-173.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-159.

But, gracious Lord, whate'er shall be,
Don't let anyone bomb me.²⁴

Unreliability exists when the values of the narrator differ from those of the implied author; in Betjeman's poem, that reader is made aware of the discrepancy by the narrator's contradiction: she is praying, yet she petitions for the death of her enemies. Eudora Welty's "Why I Live at the P. O."²⁵ is a good example of the narrator who protests too much. The reader learns in the paragraph that the narrator's sister, Stella-Rondo, had separated the narrator and a photographer by telling "a deliberate, calculated falsehood . . ." (525). Soon the reader is told that "the first thing Stella-Rondo did at the table was turn Papa-Daddy against me" (526). The reader is then told that Papa-Daddy "tried to turn Uncle Rondo against me" (528). By this time, the narrator's tendency to justify herself has been thoroughly established.

The narrator can be further complicated by being reliable in some respects and unreliable in others. The narrator of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*,²⁶ for example, gives the reader no indication that his representation of the action is not reliable. However, there are several indications that the narrator's comments are unreliable. Though the narrator often shows his omniscience by telling the private thoughts of his character, he frequently refuses to give the reader such information and relies instead upon the opinions of the townspeople or upon his own opinions and speculations. His contradiction of his own omniscience may be seen in his reliance upon the townspeople's reaction to Dimmesdale's would (242); the statement, "There can be not outrage . . . more flagrant than to forbid the culprit to hide his face for shame" (56); and the philosophic parley in which the narrator considers the possible identity of love and hate (244).

Thus, the narrator of a work may be quite complex, and each complexity will alter the story to be narrated. One may imagine how different the story of *The Scarlet Letter* would be if it were told in the first person by Hester Prynne; if Hester were a sweet blonde; if she commented freely upon Arthur's motives; and if she were completely reliable. That the story would then retain little resemblance to its original illustrates the final inseparability of plot and point of view.

Another element of a work of literature which cannot ultimately be separated from plot or point of view, but which can be distinguished for the sake of analysis, is imagery. An image is a sensory experience to which a word or sequence of words may refer. Most words contain at

²⁴ John Betjeman, "In Westminster Abbey," in *Chief Modern Poets of England and America*, II, 431.

²⁵ Eudora Welty, "Why I Live at the P. O.," in *Short Story Masterpieces*, p. 525. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

²⁶ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p. 242. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

least a minimum of sensory reference: "democracy" is less an image than "granduer," and "grandeur" is less an image than "cigarette." Since imagery often forms a pattern in a work of literature, it is frequently useful to distinguish between images that are connected by denotation and images that are connected by connotation. John Ciardi has noted that the former makes use of a *dominant image*; the latter employs scattered imagery.²⁷ Using Donne's "Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" as an example, Ciardi points out that the first six stanzas are an example of scattered imagery, while the last three stanzas are an example of the dominant image.

Even imagery that is denotatively connected, however, may depend largely upon connotations for its meaning. The connotations of a word may be divided into three types: stylistic, emotional, and distinctive. The stylistic connotation of a word may be formal, informal, or colloquial; the distinction is relative, however, and a word is formal, informal, or colloquial only by contrast with other words of similar meaning. "Therefore" is more formal than "thus," and "thus" is more formal than "so." Emotional connotations may also be divided into three types: favorable, neutral, and unfavorable. Again, the distinction is relative; "flower" is more favorable than "plant," and "plant" is more favorable than "weed." The distinctive connotations of a word are its specific, individual associations and attributes. "Oak" may be associated with Zeus, and one may imagine the shape of its leaf and the texture of its bark. "Boat" or "rock," for example, will have different distinctive connotations than "oak."

The connotations of an image become an especially important consideration when the image is part of a figure of speech. In the opening figure of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" — "the night is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherized upon a table" — meaning arises principally from connotation: darkness, expanse, and perhaps evil (the connotations of "night" and "sky") transfer with sickness, semiconsciousness, and helplessness (the connotations of "etherized patient").

Since most figures of speech involve two parts, figures may be classified according to the relationship between the two parts. The relationship of the two parts is generally that of similarity, identity, or discrepancy. For contrast, however, a relationship which does not result in figures of speech should be mentioned: representation. The two devices which may properly be said to result from the relationship of representation are the sign and the index. A sign is a word, object or gesture that represents a meaning conventionally associated with it; thus the word "cat" represents the furry, four-legged animal, and a red light often signifies the meaning, "stop." An index is similar to a sign; but whereas the sign represents its meaning by conventional association,

²⁷ John Ciardi, *How Does a Poem Mean?*, p. 872.

the index represents its meaning by existing near to that meaning in space or time. A disorganized apartment may thus be an index of a disorganized tenant.²⁸

The sign or index itself is relatively unimportant in the relationship of representation; it stands for or in place of its meaning, but the meaning itself is of the greatest importance. One rarely notices the three-letter word, "cat," as one reads; rather, one imagines the meaning, the furry animal. In the relationship of similarity, however, both parts have importance, and in the relationships of identity and similarity, both parts have equal importance. Since the devices which result from the relationships of similarity and identity are figures of speech, at least one part of which is an image, the two parts may now be called the literal term and the figurative term.²⁹ "Literal term" refers to the object or concept actually being discussed in the work, and "figurative term" is the object to which the literal term is being compared.

Two figures rightfully belong to the relationship of similarity: analogy and allegory. An analogy is a comparison in which two essentially dissimilar things are said to be similar, but not identical. To say, "the heart is a pump" or "sleep is like death" is to create an analogy. An analogy is often decorative: "the path of life" is an analogy that recurs too frequently in the work of poetasters. An analogy may also be illustrative: if one's reader is unfamiliar with the biological concept of cells, one may compare the concept to another with which he is familiar — prison cells, for example. Because analogies are usually either decorative or illustrative, they should be distinguished from the metaphor proper, which shall be discussed in a moment. What is important in a distinction among figures of speech is not their grammatical construction, nor their author's intention, but their function.

An allegory differs from an analogy not in kind, but in degree; an allegory is a system of analogies. Though an allegory is often thought to be a system of signs, the object and the concept in an allegorical relationship are related by similarity, not only by more conventional association. The character of Christian in Bunyan's allegory, *Pilgrim's Progress*, does not merely stand for the concept of the Christian soul; rather, the character of Christian influences the concept and to some degree shapes the meaning of the concept. Analogy is, thus, a midpoint between sign, in which only one of the two parts is of importance, and metaphor, in which both parts are of equal importance.

In metaphor, the relationship of the two parts is that of identity, not similarity. Though the concept of metaphor is still frequently

²⁸ See Robert M. Browne, "The Typology of Literary Signs," *College English*, XXXIII (1971), 6.

²⁹ See Laurence Perrine, "Four Forms of Metaphor," *College English*, XXXIII (1971), 125. Subsequent references to this article are given in parenthesis within the text.

divided into various subtypes — simile, metonymy, synechdoche, transferred epithet, synesthesia, personification — the distinctions involved have no great bearing on the general concept; the more recent practice of classing each of these types under the general heading of “metaphor” will here be followed.

The various structures of metaphor have been analyzed by Laurence Perrine in his article, “Four Forms of Metaphor.” Having defined metaphor as “a comparison between two essentially unlike things” (125), Perrine goes on to note that the two things — the literal and figurative terms — may be linked in four ways to create four forms of metaphor: both the literal and the figurative terms may be stated; the literal term may be stated, the figurative implied; the figurative term may be stated, the literal implied; or both the literal and the figurative terms may be implied. An example of a Form 1 metaphor is “Time’s winged chariot,” from Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress,” in which the literal term is time and the figurative is chariot; of Form 2, “were we not weaned,” from Donne’s “The Good Morrow,” in which the literal term is we and the figurative is young animals; of Form 3, “I will speak daggers to her,” from *Hamlet*, in which the literal term is words and the figurative is daggers. Form 4 metaphors are relatively rare; one example, however, is Yeats’s lines from “To a Friend Whose Work has Come to Nothing”: “Now all the truth is out, / Be secret and take defeat / From any brazen throat.” Perrine, who quotes these lines, has commented on them as follows:

The apparent subject in these lines is ‘throat,’ but ‘throat’ is a synecdoche for a person. The literal meaning, therefore, is a person or any enemy. The figurative term is an object made of brass, probably a bell or a cannon (129)

In addition to this classification, Perrine points out that metaphors may also be extended, complex, or both. One of his examples is the following lines from Browning’s “Meeting at Night”: “. . . the startled little waves that leap / In fiery ringlets from their sleep.” This passage contains an extended metaphor because the figurative term of one of its metaphors (the waves are persons) is indicated three times: “startled,” “leap,” and “sleep.” The waves are also compared to hair (“ringlets”) and flames (“fiery”). Since the three figurative terms of persons, hair, and flames refer to one literal term and form a single image, the passage is also a complex metaphor (131).

In addition to the structural consideration of a metaphor, one needs to consider the metaphor contextually; for it is principally by context that one can determine the function of a metaphor within the form of the work. If a metaphor adds essential meaning to the work and cannot be deleted without crippling the work’s meaning, then it may be called *functional*.³⁰ Eliot’s metaphor at the beginning of “Prufrock,”

mentioned earlier, is functional. If however, the metaphor is merely decorative or illustrative, then it may be called *decorative*. An analogy does not greatly depend upon a connotational transfer between its two terms; in the analogy, "The heart is a pump," denotations, not connotations, carry the weight of the meaning. The decorative metaphor, on the other hand, has as great a connotational transfer between its two terms as the functional metaphor; because the connotational transfer is not particularly apt in the context of the work, however, the metaphor is merely decorative. Given another context, the decorative metaphor may become functional.

Just as the analogy found its structurally larger equivalent in the allegory, so the metaphor finds its structurally larger equivalent in the symbol. A literary symbol is not simply a system of metaphors, however; rather, as Charles Feidelson has defined it, a symbol is "the center of many overlapping circles of metaphorical meaning."³¹

To judge the significance of Feidelson's definition, one should first reconsider the importance of context in a work of literature. Earlier, it was noted how the meanings of "Jesus" and of "wept" may fuse to form the third meaning of "Jesus wept." A similar process is involved in a metaphor, though in a metaphor the meanings of two substantives, rather than a substantive and a verb, are fused. It was also noted earlier that, because words influence each others' meanings, a word will mean what its past and present contexts have used it to mean. If "saucer" were used often enough in the contexts which now contain "cat," then "saucer" would soon refer to the furry animal without anyone thinking twice about it.

The symbol is a special use of this principle of contextual alteration. If an image is placed in a large number of various contexts throughout the course of a work, it will soon accumulate so many diverse meanings that one may have difficulty holding the total meaning in the mind at once. The symbol, however, is not a mere sign that represents or stands for an ever-expanded meaning. Rather, the symbol fuses with the meanings given it through various contexts; because the relationship of identity exists between the two parts, Feidelson can define a symbol as "the center of many overlapping circles of metaphorical meaning."

An example may make the nature of a symbol clearer. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne uses the A in many varied contexts, each of which adds new associations to the symbol's meaning. It is, of course, associated with adultery in the novel's first chapter. We learn later that the children of the village avoid it (78), and that it makes Hester sympathetic to the secret sins of others (83). It is said to shine

³⁰ The adjectives, "functional" and "decorative," are from Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn*, pp. 259-260.

³¹ Charles Feidelson, Jr., *Symbolism and American Literature*, p. 64.

with infernal fire (84), and Hester feels that it burns into her bosom. It is seen in the sky (148); it is associated with both "Angel" and "Able" (154); it is implied to be of itself the cause of pain and tribulation (191); and its form is engraved in Hester's and Dimmesdale's tombstone (247). What is more, the letter is associated with two other dominant symbols: it is associated by color with the red and black roses near the prison door; and it is associated with Pearl (97). These secondary symbols, by association with the scarlet A, lend their meanings to it. Thus when Pearl is associated with devilry (88), with Hester's emotions while pregnant (90), with Chillingworth (92-3), with pestilence ("the scarlet fever, or some such half-fledged angel of judgment": 97), with the red rose (105), a tropical bird (106), cruelty to animals (168), the brook (177), sunlight (196), reflection (196) — then all of Pearl's amalgamated associations so melt themselves into the meaning of the scarlet letter that the letter becomes indefinable.

It is sometimes useful to distinguish between a traditional symbol and a nonce symbol. A traditional symbol is one which has been used in many different works of literature; the rose, for example, has been used symbolically from medieval to modern times. It may be that traditional symbols endure because they naturally suggest symbolic associations. For example, the lily may have come to represent Easter, the spring celebration of resurrection and fertility, because it has an unusually large stamen. Because many traditional symbols seem to grow out of their natural suggestions, their meanings tend to remain fairly stable from one context to another; thus, if an author chooses to expand the meaning of a traditional symbol by placing it in new and various contexts in his work, he will be adding new meanings to an already established symbolic meaning. The nonce symbol, on the other hand, is generally an image which has not been widely used as a symbol in previous literature;³² Hawthorne's scarlet letter is an example. Like the traditional symbol, the nonce symbol may also grow out of the natural suggestions of its image, as the narrator of *The Scarlet Letter* indicates in the "Custom House" introduction.

The traditional and the nonce symbols have other characteristics in common.³³ A symbol is, of course, always an image, since it is the common term of many metaphorical relationships. Also, since its meaning is built up by its placement in several contexts, the symbol will be emphasized by repetition and often by detailed description and placement at the beginning, at the end, or in an isolated position as well. The symbol may also be recognized by being more richly sug-

³² The term, "nonce symbol," has been taken from Stageberg and Anderson, pp. 82-83. However, since Stageberg and Anderson tend to think of symbols as signs, I have altered the meaning of their term to suit the present conception of symbolism.

³³ I am indebted to X. J. Kennedy for the following characteristics. See *An Introduction to Poetry*, pp. 235-236.

gestive than a mere image because of its wealth of metaphorical relationships.

The advantage of the metaphor and the symbol is that such figures may be, as X. J. Kennedy has pointed out, "the only kind of language appropriate to an idea of great subtlety and complexity."³⁴ The same may be said for irony, the type of figure which results from the relationship of discrepancy between the two parts of a figure.

Irony may most simply be defined as a contrast of two meanings. In verbal irony, the two meanings are contained within a single statement. Either the discrepancy exists between the literal meaning of the statement and the statement's meaning as it is altered by context, or the statement is self-contradictory. Verbal irony of the first sort is usually either understatement or overstatement. An example of understatement is Teiresias' pronouncement to Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex*:

To your mind he [with whom the gods are angry] is
foreign-born,
But it will soon be shown that he is a Theban.
A revelation that will fail to please.³⁵

Taken literally, the last line means that the discovery will perhaps be irksome, but not particularly distressing. Shortly before this passage, however, Teiresias has accused Oedipus of being the arouser of the gods' wrath; since Oedipus will be more than displeased with the revelation, Teiresias' line is understatement. An example of overstatement occurs in the opening lines of "The Wanderer":

. . . grief hangs on
His heart and follows the frost-cold foam
He cuts in the sea, sailing endlessly,
Aimlessly, in exile.³⁶

The wanderer is not literally "sailing endlessly," for he shall soon die; the phrase is therefore an overstatement.

When verbal irony takes the form of self-contradiction, paradox is the result. There are three principal types of paradox. The first is a seeming contradiction; often its two terms are two ends of a spectrum, and its resolution lies midway between them. "The dark light of dawn" is resolved in dimness, which lies between "dark" and "light." The second type of paradox is resolved when the two terms are seen to be a pun or a metaphor. "The common is not common" puns on two meanings of the word, "common." The third type of paradox is an

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

³⁵ Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, in *Literary Reflections*, p. 85.

³⁶ Anon., "The Wanderer," in *The Poem*, p. 3.

actual contradiction; its two terms are the affirmation and negation of the same thing. "God is life and not life" is a paradox that cannot be resolved, except perhaps intuitively.

Verbal irony finds its structurally larger equivalent in dramatic irony. Where verbal irony is the contrasted meanings of a statement, dramatic irony is the contrasted meanings of a situation. Generally the contrast in dramatic irony is between a full knowledge of the situation and a character's knowledge of the situation. *Oedipus Rex* employs a great deal of dramatic irony; for example, when Oedipus says, "Whoever killed King Laios might — who knows? — / Decide at any moment to kill me as well,"³⁷ he is speaking without full knowledge of the situation.

Irony seems to be an almost universal characteristic of literature; for this reason, the term has been extended in recent criticism to cover territory that was not before considered part of its province. Brooks's definition of irony, which brings all contextual alteration within the term's meaning, has been cited earlier (page 13); and metaphor itself may be considered an instance of irony, for it involves a contrast of meanings. However, this wider usage of the term may be called "contextual alteration" to distinguish it from the narrower usage of irony as a figure of speech. The following graph may serve as a summary of this discussion of figures of speech. On the left are the types of relationship that may exist between the two parts of a figure; in the center are the more diminutive figures which result from each of the types of relationship; on the right are the structurally larger equivalents of each of these smaller figures. The relationship of representation, though not resulting in figures of speech, has also been included.

representation	sign	index
similarity	analogy	allegory
identity	metaphor	symbol
discrepancy	verbal irony	dramatic irony

Imagery and figures of speech have been discussed at some length because imagery and figurative language seem an integral part of a work of literature. Another integral element is style. Before discussing style, however, it should be noted that style involves so many and such various considerations that it becomes difficult to present them all. One should bear in mind, then, that what follows is only a brief and incomplete survey of a few of style's many aspects.

Style may be considered the result of three factors: diction, syntax, and sound. Diction, or word choice, involves several important distinctions, chief among which is the distinction between a word's

³⁷ Sophocles, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

denotation and connotation. Aside from definition, the denotation of a word chiefly involves two basic considerations: first, is the word general or specific? second, is the word abstract or concrete? A general word refers to a class of items; a specific word refers to an item within a class. The distinction is, of course, relative, and one may construct a series of words and phrases ranging from the general to the specific: "apparel," "attire," "coat," "jacket," "hunting jacket." An abstract word refers to the qualities of an object or action; a concrete word refers to an object or action itself. "Round," "red," "bruised," and "edible" are abstract; the "apple" to which they refer is concrete.

The connotations of a word have been discussed in connection with imagery. Stylistic connotations have been divided into the formal, the informal, and the colloquial; emotional connotations have been divided into favorable, neutral, and unfavorable; and distinctive connotations have been defined as the individual associations and attributes of a word.

To discuss thoroughly the second aspect of style, which is syntax or word order, would require too much space at this time. Also, such a thorough discussion would probably be unnecessary, since most persons acquainted with the language in which a work is written will be familiar with the grammar of that language. Another difficulty argues against such a discussion at this time: English grammar in particular is presently undergoing revision as the new discoveries of linguists are being assimilated into the thought of those who practice the language arts. One hopes that these new discoveries will result in a simpler and more accurate grammar for the language; in the meantime, the syntax of a work of literature may be examined by the traditional grammar or any of the new systems with probably similar results.³⁸

With the consideration of sound, the third aspect of style, the distinction between prose and poetry becomes evident. Though most poetry may exhibit greater compression and a greater use of figures than prose, the chief and most apparent difference between them is their use of sound.

In prose, the most important sound device may be the sentence pattern. Sentence patterns may range from the irregular, unbalanced, and unadorned Senecan sentence to the periodic, balanced, and highly ornamented Ciceronian sentence.³⁹ "Periodic" refers to a sentence in which the meaning is more or less suspended until the end of the sentence is reached; often a series of dependent clauses will finally be followed by the verb. "Balanced" refers to the two devices of anti-

³⁸ For a discussion of the traditional, structural, and transformational-generative grammars, see Frank Palmer, *Grammar*.

³⁹ Other sentence patterns — the Attic, the Isocratic, the euphuistic, and so on — seem too similar to either the Senecan or the Ciceronian sentence to deserve special notice at this time.

thesis and parallelism. In antithesis, similar grammatical constructions phrase two opposing ideas: "My feet are ancient: my head is new" is an antithesis. In parallelism, similar grammatical constructions phrase two similar ideas: "Pay your money and pick your prize" is parallelism. "Ornamented" refers to the extensive use of analogies, decorative metaphors, and sound devices. An example of a Senecan sentence is the following from Lawrence Durrell's *Justine*: "It was restful to hear her talk, for to her illness was simply a profession which she had mastered and her attitude to it was that of a journeyman."⁴⁰ Donne's final sentence in *Sermon LXXVI*, a sentence which, being over five hundred words, is too long to quote in its entirety, is an example of the Ciceronian sentence. Nine dependent clauses, each beginning with the relative pronoun "that," end with the following balanced and ornamented construction:

. . . what Tophet is not paradise, what brimstone is not amber, what gnashing is not a comfort, what gnawing of the worm is not a tickling, what torment is not a marriage-bed to this damnation, to be secluded eternally, eternally, eternally from the sight of God?⁴¹

Sentence patterns are generally less important in poetry than in prose, for poetry tends to use the line as its principal unit of sound. The line is useful as a unit of sound because it usually contains a strong meter. "Meter" is a regularly recurrent pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables or of short and long syllables (the latter is principally the meter of Greek and Latin). "Rhythm," though often a synonym for "meter," is perhaps a more useful term when defined as "the total quality of a line's motion."⁴² Using this definition, the rhythm of a line will include not only stress, but also the subtle influences of the syllables' timbre, length, and pitch. Meters are generally classified by the type of foot (iamb UI, trochee IU, anapest UUI, or dactyl IUU, with the spondee II and pyrrhic UUI as occasional substitutes⁴³) and the number of feet per line (monometer for one foot, tetrameter for four, etc.). Thus, an iambic hexameter line will have the following meter: UI | UI | UI | UI | UI | UI.

The principal value of meter is that it provides a stable pattern against which the rhythm of a line may vary to reinforce the meaning of the words. For example, the following line, whose meter is iambic pentameter, has a rhythm which reinforces the meaning of the words:

⁴⁰ Lawrence Durrell, *Justine*, p. 110.

⁴¹ John Donne, *Sermon LXXVI*, in *English Prose of the XVII Century*, pp. 135-136.

⁴² Shapiro and Beum, *A Prosody Handbook*, p. 60.

⁴³ I have restricted myself to three prosodic symbols: unstressed, u; secondary stress, //; and stressed, /. Many other symbols, each referring to important prosodic considerations that have necessarily been excluded from this discussion, may be found in Shapiro and Beum.

"Batter | my héart, | three pér | son'd God; | for, you" ⁴⁴ The opening trochee and the secondary stresses in the third and fifth feet reinforce the violence of the meaning.

The interaction of meter and rhythm is one of the most important uses of sound in poetry, but other sound devices are important as well. "Rhyme" is a repetition of syllables; it generally occurs at the end of a line, though it may also be initial or internal. The masculine rhyme will end on a stressed syllable, the feminine on an unstressed syllable. Also, rhymes may only approximate each other; they are then called "slant" rhymes. "Alliteration" is a repetition of the initial consonantal sounds of a syllable; "assonance" is a repetition of the vowel of a syllable; and "consonance" is a repetition of the final consonantal sounds of a syllable. The principal value of rhyme, alliteration, assonance, and consonance is the emphasis they place upon the words to which they belong. Though these devices may also occur in prose, their extensive use is generally restricted to highly Ciceronian sentences.

In addition to the prosaic rhythm of the sentence and the poetic rhythm of the line, Frye has noted a third basic rhythm, which he calls "associative" and which is dominated by the short and irregular phrase. ⁴⁵ The associative rhythm in literature is an imitation of the associative rhythm in ordinary thought and conversation. The following passage from Joyce's *Ulysses* is based upon the associative rhythm:

A husky fifenote blew.
Blew. Blue bloom is on the
Gold pinnaced hair.
A jumping rose on satiny breasts of satin, rose
of Castille.
Trilling, trilling; Idolores. ⁴⁶

This brief exposition on style has necessarily been incomplete. As was noted earlier, style is probably the most elusive of the four elements; with so many attributes and qualities, it is perhaps the most difficult of the elements to establish in an organization that is both complete and simple. To a lesser extent, the same must be said of the elements of plot, point of view, and imagery: the reformulation of new critical thought that has here been attempted cannot claim to be complete.

A reformulation however, does seem to be needed; if explication is indeed the means by which the preliminary act of understanding the work is to be achieved, then explication ought to be a coherent and relatively simple method.

⁴⁴ John Donne, *Complete Poetry*, p. 252.

⁴⁵ Northrop Frye, *The Well-Tempered Critic*, p. 55.

⁴⁶ James Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 256.

Explication needs to be a systematic method whose various critical concepts may be applied simultaneously to a work of literature. It is doubtful, however, that any theory of literature will ever be able to thoroughly analyze a work of literature, for the total meaning of a work is a unified experience; and, as Brooks has said, it is an experience "which has to be *experienced*" ⁴⁷ Thus, if the system of critical concepts attempted above has any value as a reformulation of new criticism, then that value will lie in its ability to point toward the experience of the work. For this reason, the following chapter is an attempt to illustrate the above system by applying it to a passage from T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. Though the system, if valid, should be applicable to any work of literature, *Four Quartets* should provide a particularly useful example, since much of its criticism seems to overlook important aspects of the poem. The following explication may provide not only an illustration of the above reformulation as it may be practiced, but also a new and possibly useful reconsideration of the poem itself.

⁴⁷ Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn*, p. 190.

Chapter II

Practice: "Burnt Norton" Revisited

Though many books and articles have been written concerning *Four Quartets*, few have added greatly to an elucidation of the work. One thinks of Helen Gardner's extensive study; though many aspects of the poem's structure are made explicit in her work, plot and point of view go unnoticed.⁴⁸ Kristian Smidt's book-length consideration concentrates on the philosophic backgrounds of the poet;⁴⁹ Genesis Jones tends to examine *Four Quartets* as though it were a philosophic treatise;⁵⁰ and Ethel F. Cornwell, though she notes differences among the quartets, fails to notice any progression within them.⁵¹

Though each of these critics has made important contributions in the criticism of *Four Quartets*, the essential difficulty of each seems to be approaching the poem as though it were an essay, with "Burnt Norton" the thesis and the other three quartets an illustration or discussion of the thesis. If the purpose of an essay, however, is to explain or prove a thesis as clearly or persuasively as possible, then the figures, meters, and rhymes that the poem employs are not the most appropriate means by which that purpose might be accomplished. Rather, the uniquely poetic devices that may be found in *Four Quartets* are far more appropriate to the presentation of an experience than to an essay. It seems more likely, therefore, that *Four Quartets* will exhibit the four elements of an imitated experience — plot, point of view, imagery, and style — than a thesis and its elaboration.

However, because of the complexity of the poem, a relatively complete discussion of these elements in *Four Quartets* would require more time and space than is now available; one might spend years on the poem and still be far from exhausting its richness. Given the present situation, then, it may be best to engage in a close reading of the first two sections of what seems to be the most troublesome of the quartets, "Burnt Norton," and then to briefly attempt a summary of the remainder of the poem.

The first three lines of "Burnt Norton" form the first sentence of the quartet:

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
(11. 1-3)

⁴⁸ Helen Gardner, *The Art of T. S. Eliot*.

⁴⁹ Kristian Smidt, *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot*.

⁵⁰ Genesis Jones, *Approach to the Purpose*.

⁵¹ Ethel F. Cornwell, *The Still Point*, pp. 17-64.

Perhaps the first aspect of these lines to note is the inversions, "Time present," "time past," and "time future"; these inversions emphasize the traditional partitions, not the whole, of time. Second, "perhaps" indicates that the narrator is stating an hypothesis, not a view he necessarily accepts without reservation. Third, "present" in the second line may be a pun: it may mean "present" as in the answer to a roll call — that is, present and past are in the company of the future — or it may mean "the present time." In the context of a consideration of time, then, the two meanings of the pun suggest two possible theories of time. First, past, present, and future exist as separate divisions of time, but each is inextricably interwoven with the others by cause and effect; thus, the past is a part of the present because it has caused the present, the future is inherent in the past, and so forth. "Contained," a Form 2 metaphor in line three, supports this theory. In the second theory of time, only the present moment exists. There are two ways in which this theory may be conceived: time is a succession of present moments (the past was the present moment, the future will be the present moment), or all moments coexist. The last notion has as a corollary the concept of omniscience: only in an omniscient mind can all moments coexist.

In such a state of omniscience, only one moment, fixed forever, would exist, since the omniscient mind's total awareness of all time would not change from moment to moment. This becomes a paradox: a total awareness of all time would be omniscience, an omniscience that is total and complete in a single moment; because such omniscience would not change, it would also be eternal. Thus, the single moment and eternity are of equal duration in omniscience. One may arrive at the paradox in another way, a way which has the advantage of showing that whether the second theory is taken to be a succession of present moments, or whether it is taken to be all moments coexisting in an omniscient mind, the single moment and eternity are one and the same. Richard Schlegel has noted that "change in the natural world is essential for the existence of time";⁵² without change, time would not exist. Now, if a given segment of time — say, a second — were split in half until the ultimate, infinitesimal and indivisible moment were reached, then this infinitesimal moment would no longer have duration. The infinitesimal moment would, in effect, no longer be a part of time, for without duration, nothing would change. The infinitesimal moment would, therefore, be eternal.

One such eternal moment is the present: if one could, metaphorically, cut away all past and all future from the present, then one would soon reach an infinitesimal moment. Thus, the present is eternal.

The next lines of "Burnt Norton" play upon the paradox that has just been discussed:

⁵² Richard Schlegel, *Time and the Physical World*, p. 2.

If all time is eternally present
 All time is unredeemable.
 (11. 4-5)

The first of these lines supports both of the ways in which the second theory of time may be conceived — that all time is a succession of present moments, or that all moments coexist, a possibility only realizable in an omniscient mind. In either view of the second theory, the present moment is eternal, for it is infinitesimal and therefore does not exist in time.

The word, “unredeemable,” is of particular importance in the fifth line, since it seems to indicate the effect of the second theory on the common notion of time. Time is unredeemable if the past and future are mere moments empty of their presentness, like a window out of which a light passes or has yet to enter. Time is also unredeemable if past, present, and future coexist in an omniscient mind, for then the divisions no longer exist and consequently become the illusions of a limited mind.

In these first five lines, however, two contradictions have been stated. It was noted earlier that in the third line — “And time future contained in time past” — “contained” is a metaphor; its literal term is “past,” its figurative term a container. One of the distinctive connotation of the figurative term is “spatial”: a container has dimensions and exists in space. This distinctive connotation is reinforced by “unredeemable”; like “contained,” “unredeemable” is a Form 2 metaphor whose figurative term is an object existing in space. Furthermore, if only the present moment exists, which is the second theory of time supported by line four, then the narrator should not say “all time,” for this is to continue thinking of time as an aggregate of past, present, and future moments. “All time” should, to accord with the second theory of time, be “one time.” “Contained,” “unredeemable,” and “all time,” then, show that the narrator is, perhaps subconsciously, continuing to think of time in the traditional divisions of past, present, and future. However, one meaning of “present” in the second line and the paradox — “eternally present” — in the fourth line indicate that the narrator is also trying to conceive of time as the indivisible eternity of the present moment. The two theories being used simultaneously are the first of the narrator’s contradictions.

The second contradiction that may be found in these lines involves the corollary of the second theory: omniscience. The narrator is admittedly a mortal mind; if he were omniscient, then he would not have used the hypothetical “perhaps” in line two, and he would also not have committed the above contradiction. Yet only an omniscient mind is capable of knowing all time in a single, unchanging present. To such an omniscient mind, all time is redeemable. The narrator has con-

tradicted the second theory of time, stated in line four, by ignoring in line five the necessary corollary of that theory.

Two contradictions in five lines may be more than coincidence. It was noted in the discussion of point of view that a narrator who contradicts himself or who protests too much may be unreliable; if the narrator of "Burnt Norton" has contradicted himself twice in five lines, he may be unreliable. More evidence of his unreliability should therefore be forthcoming.

Lines six through eight add a fourth and hitherto unconsidered division of time to the narrator's conjectures:

What might have been is an abstraction
 Remaining a perpetual possibility
 Only in a world of speculation.
 (II. 6-8)

"Abstraction" means "not real, sensory, or concrete"; in the context of a consideration of time, it may mean "not embodied in time." "Remaining" supports this meaning, for to remain is to exist outside the changing processes of time. "Perpetual" is a curious adjective in this line; one need only consider that the narrator might have substituted "eternal" for "perpetual" to note that the latter word indicates repetition or recurrence, an aspect of time, not of timelessness. "World of speculation" implies that there are worlds not of speculation. Since "perpetual" and "world of speculation" are evidently aspects of the first theory of time, and since "abstraction" and "remaining" seem to indicate the second theory of time, one may assume that the narrator is continuing to mix the two theories.

Not only does time seem unredeemable when one speculates on the second theory, but also what might have been becomes a mere abstraction. In an omniscient mind, however, what might have been would not be a merely speculated abstraction; rather, it would be as real as what has been. The narrator, therefore, is considering the effects of "eternally present" time on his own limited understanding, which is the second contradiction above.

The next two lines may be understood by the first or the second theory:

What might have been and what has been
 Point to one end, which is always present.
 (II. 9-10)

Since what might have been never became embodied in time, it has, in its way, caused the present as much as the past has caused the present; this may be the meaning of the lines if the first theory is held. On the other hand, what might have been and what has been may

point the narrator's thoughts back toward the present conceived as an infinitesimal point; this may be the meaning of the lines if the second theory is held. It is worth noting, however, that the narrator again uses spatial metaphors — "point" and "end" — in his consideration of time.

Since the next lines begin to reveal these matters in a more imagistic style, this juncture in the poem may be an appropriate point at which to consider the narrator's complication. The narrator probably cannot be held to be at fault merely because he uses spatial metaphors; spatial metaphors seem necessary if one is to discuss time at all. Nor does it seem that the narrator is incorrect in continuing to conceive of time, according to the first theory, in the traditional divisions of past, present, and future. Where the error may lie is in his mixing of the two theories; however, this mixing is an error only if the narrator fails to notice that his possible understanding of the second theory is limited by his acceptance of the first theory. To attempt to understand the second theory with anything less than an omniscient mind is, by the very nature of the second theory, impossible. It may be, then, that the very contradictions which make the narrator unreliable are the narrator's complication as well. The narrator's problem might then be called intellectual pride; certainly the Christian elements which are soon to appear in the poem make "intellectual pride" seem an appropriate appellation.

With line eleven, the style of the poem shifts somewhat from the abstract and impersonal to the concrete and personal.

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.

(11. 11-15)

"Footfalls" and "echo" are both aural manifestations of something not visually described; since they "echo in the memory," the footfalls may be indexes of something past and only remembered. Yet the passage in the memory down which the footfalls echo is a passage "we did not take"; therefore, the narrator's subject is "what might have been." The parallel constructions of lines twelve and thirteen emphasize that each line is a restatement of the other, so the door not opened also indicates what might have been. "Into the rose-garden" stops the motion of the parallel construction and indicates that what might have been is a rose-garden. The emotional connotations of "rose" and "garden" are highly favorable; what is more, each is a traditional symbol. J. E. Cirlot has noted of the flower in general that "by its very nature it is symbolic of transitoriness, of Spring and of beauty"; he adds that

"red flowers emphasize the relationship with animal life, blood and passion."⁵³ Auden has also discussed the "rose garden":

It is like the city in that it is an enclosed place of safety and like the . . . desert in that it is a solitary or private place from which the general public are excluded The primary idea with which the garden . . . image is associated is, therefore . . . innocence."⁵⁴

The rose has been associated with heaven in Dante's *Paradiso* and also with love in such works as Burn's "A Red, Red Rose" and Blake's "The Sick Rose." The garden has been associated with the paradise from which man was expelled in *Genesis*, and some critics, such as Raymond Preston⁵⁵ and Staffan Bergsten,⁵⁶ associate the rose-garden with the actual garden at the manor-house of Burnt Norton. This latter association, however, is somewhat dubious; the rose-garden lies behind a door and down a passage "in the memory," not in the present physical surroundings, and the garden experience has been associated in the poem with what might have been, not with what is.⁵⁷

Thompson has identified the second person reference in "My words echo / Thus, in your mind" as a woman.⁵⁸ One may assume that the referent of "your" is a person, yet there is no evidence with which to contend that the person is a woman. Nor does the poem provide evidence that the person is the reader.⁵⁹ Possibly the narrator may be observing his own mind and may be engaged in self-dialogue. Apparently the implied author does not feel it necessary to specify his reference further, and to demand that he do so is similar to demanding that he mention Theodore Roosevelt or Charlemagne. It should be noted also that the word, "Thus," indicates an analogy, a figure particularly appropriate to logical or expository thought. Though the narrator's meaning has begun to be carried by imagery, he is still in the philosophical frame of mind.

⁵³ J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, pp. 104-105.

⁵⁴ Auden, *The Enchafed Flood*, p. 20.

⁵⁵ Raymond Preston, "Four Quartets" *Rehearsed*, p. 9.

⁵⁶ Staffan Bergsten, *Time and Eternity*, p. 41.

⁵⁷ Much difficulty in reading *Four Quartets* seems to stem from a desire to treat the poem's four subtitles as literal settings. Might they not be allusions? As such, they might function in the poem in the same way that the allusions to Aeschylus' *Oresteia* function in "Sweeney Among the Nightingales," providing a frame of associations rather than a setting. It may also be that each successive title becomes more clearly a setting: there is very little evidence that "Burnt Norton" is the setting of the first quartet; there is slight evidence that "East Coker" is a setting; there is some evidence that "The Dry Salvages" is a setting; and there is strong evidence that "Little Gidding" is the setting of the final quartet. The dramatic structure of the poem should support this possibility.

⁵⁹ George Williamson, *A Reader's Guide to T. S. Eliot*, p. 211.

⁵⁸ Eric Thompson, *The Metaphysical Perspective*, p. 85.

With the break in the fifteenth line comes the narrator's first reference to himself:

But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose leaves
I do not know.

(11. 16-18)

"Dust" is an index for "long untroubled" or "long settled." "Bowl" has the distinctive connotation of spherical containment; it also connotes the aesthetic when associated with flowers. "Rose-leaves" is a particularly curious choice in line seventeen. Though "rose-leaves" bears a natural relationship with the "rose-garden," the rose-garden itself is no longer emphasized, and the leaves presented without mentioning stem or flower suggest that they are detached from the stem and flower. This implies decay, causing one connotation of "dust" to reverberate. At any rate, the favorable emotional connotation of the imagery has been weakened; and the lines, because they follow the preceding discussion of what might have been, seem to indicate a mental shrug at the prospect of reviving a memory from a "world of speculation." Because the bowl image apparently refers to the experience of the rose-garden, it has a metaphorical relationship with the garden and is almost a synecdoche.

"Other echoes / Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?" (11. 19-20). "Inhabit" indicates the figurative term — persons, or at least animate beings — of a Form 2 metaphor whose literal term is "echoes"; similar metaphors will be encountered in a moment. When repeated three lines later, the question, "Shall we follow?" shows a hesitancy on the narrator's part; this is reinforced by the narrator's questioning of purpose in the preceding lines.

Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,
Round the corner. Through the first gate,
Into our first world, shall we follow
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world.

(11. 21-24)

A thrush urges the narrator to find "them," whose antecedent is apparently the persons to whom "other echoes" refers; for this reason, the thrush seems to be at the threshold of the vision world, serving to direct the narrator into the vision. "Corner" and "gate," like "passage" and "door" above, designate a place that is presently hidden from view. Because "our" remains an uncertain reference, "our first world" is also uncertain; this uncertainty serves to heighten the sense of mystery found in "corner" and "gate." The repetition of the question, "Shall we follow?" shows the narrator's hesitancy, as does "the deception of the

thrush," a condescension similar to "a world of speculation." The repetition of "Into our first world" indicates that the narrator, though hesitant, is being allured into the vision.

"They," in the next line, like "your" in line fifteen, must, for lack of evidence, also remain unspecified:

There they were, dignified, invisible,
 Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,
 In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air
(11. 25-27)

They are persons; they seem to be in control and to fit naturally into the visionary landscape ("dignified"); they are bodiless, supernatural beings ("invisible"); but their identity remains a mystery. The reader's attention is directed to their feet ("moving without pressure"). This is curious: there seems to be a connection between the "footfalls" of line eleven, the "other echoes" of line nineteen, and "they"; yet they now move without pressure. This paradoxical situation is, like the bird who speaks, a miracle of the vision world. The three prepositional phrases in lines twenty-six and twenty-seven develop the setting through which they walk: "autumn heat" seems paradoxical because heat is generally associated with summer, and "vibrant air" adds tension to the setting.

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.
(11. 28-31)

That the bird now calls instead of speaks, as he did seven lines earlier, emphasizes the connection between the bird and the rose-garden. The supernatural details noted above – the echoes which inhabit, "they" who are invisible, and so forth – are now resounded in the bird who communicates with unheard music and the roses that seem conscious of being looked at. That the narrator is aware of the music and the eyebeam without hearing or seeing them may suggest that he is in part but not fully attuned to the vision world.

Northrop Frye has pointed out that "the limit of the imagination is a totally human world. Here we recapture, in full consciousness, that original lost sense of identity with our surroundings" Frye adds that the "totally human world" often takes "the form of the cities and gardens of human civilization" ⁶⁰ Such a humanized world seems to be implied by the inhabitants of the garden: the bird speaks

⁶⁰ Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination*, p. 29.

to the narrator, and the roses repond to the onlooker's gaze. Even the unheard sounds from the shrubbery are "music," a human creation, and "shrubbery" itself is indicative of a formal garden, one adapted to human preferences. One would hesitate to call the garden a vision of paradise, however, for the "unheard music," the "unseen eyebeam," and later, the laughing, hidden children show that the narrator, unlike the pre-lapsarian Adam, is not entirely in control of his world.

The run-on sentence structure of lines twenty-five through thirty-one emphasize the narrator's wonder: his quick and total shifts of attention in these lines make him seem almost in a daze. Nevertheless, the narrator seems to react quite naturally in the garden:

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.

(II. 32-35)

Though "they" are more a part of the garden world than "we," they seem to be the guests, not the hosts; immediately the relationship between "they" and "we" is smooth and natural, though "accepted and accepting" has the distinctive connotation of politeness, of formality without strain. This connotation is reinforced by the "formal pattern" in which the two parties move, as though the proper protocol were inherently assumed upon entering the garden. "So" makes the easy relationship seem a foregone conclusion, and "moved" emphasizes the ease of the relationship: unlike "walked," for example, "moved" has no connotation of jerkiness or effort.

The "empty alley" and the "box circle" again show that nature has been adapted to human wants: there are no weeds in the visionary garden, and the box is in a geometric pattern. "Circle," like the spherical "bowl," is a traditional symbol for "heaven and perfection";⁶¹ if "box" is a pun, meaning both the shrub and the shape of a square, then the effect is a mandala, an image which Carl Jung has called "a symbol of individuation,"⁶² a representation of the depth of the psyche. That the box circle, and, within it, the drained pool may have affinities with the explanation of the mandala in analytical psychology is apparent when one considers that the pool is the place toward which the "passage," "door," "corner," "gate," and "alley" have led; the pool is below ground level, and it is also the scene of the vision's climax, lines thirty-six through forty.

Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,

⁶¹ Cirlot, p. 45.

⁶² Carl Gustav Jung, *The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung*, p. 319.

And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
 The surface glittered out of heart of light,
 And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.
 (II. 36-40)

This passage achieves the sense of the miraculous by maintaining the quick shifts of perception noted earlier; with no more hesitation than a comma, the narrator's awareness shifts from the "dry concrete" to the "water out of sunlight." The difference in rhythm between lines thirty-six and thirty-seven reinforces this sudden shift. "Water out of sunlight" is an important phrase in itself; not only is it a miracle, but it is a miracle resulting from an identification of two of the ancient elements, water and fire. The identification of these two elements seems to generate the lotos.

The lotos is a symbol in Eastern religions for the human mind resting in heavenly perfection; it is also a symbol of fertility in Egyptian iconography⁶³ (this meaning of the symbol is especially important in that it precedes the sudden appearance of the leaves that are full of children). The lotos is here associated with "heart of light" both by religious connotations and by whiteness,⁶⁴ a color which contrasts with the red of the roses and the green of the boxwood. "Heart of light" itself is the Form 1 metaphor of line thirty-seven both extended and made complex. That the lotos rises "quietly, quietly" emphasizes its sexual connotation and its supernatural quality, and that the water in which it rises is "out of sunlight" makes the lotos even more of an ethereal creation. The mysterious "they" become more mysterious when their reflection is made visible in the pool.

Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.
 Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,
 Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.
 Go, go, said the bird: human kind
 Cannot bear very much reality.

(II. 41-45)

After five lines of four beats each, the three beats of "Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty" jolt the reader to a sudden halt, just as the vision of the pool has abruptly ended. "For" is unusual in line forty-two: apparently the bird now urges the narrator to leave the experience of what might have been *because* the leaves are full of children. Why the children should be cause for the narrator's departure may be better understood when the emotional connotation of the image is

⁶³ Cirlot, p. 184.

⁶⁴ Cirlot notes that "in the Middle Ages it [*the lotos*] was equated with the mystic 'Centre' and, consequently, with the heart" (184). Elsewhere Cirlot notes that the whiteness of light is symbolic of "a synthesis of the All" (179).

made explicit. Human trees are a traditional symbol; one thinks of the Apollo and Daphne myth, of the wood of suicides in Dante's *Inferno* (Canto XIII), and of Fradubio and Fraelissa in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (Book I, Canto II). Each of these incidents is tragic. "Hidden excitedly" suggests that the children are playing tricks, and the laughter they are trying to suppress may indicate that they are mocking the narrator. The emotional connotation of the image therefore seems quite unfavorable. One might add that the children, being part of the garden world and thus knowing more about the situation than the narrator, seem demonic also because one of the distinctive connotations of "children" is irresponsibility.

The bird now becomes emphatic in his urgency, and the bird supplies a second reason for the narrator's quick departure. His reason, however, presents a problem. "Reality," in line forty-five, apparently refers to the rose-garden; this is the thrush's term. The narrator, however, both by the image of the dusty bowl of rose-leaves and by the phrase, "the deception of the thrush," has indicated his belief that the vision is something less than "reality." The bowl and the "deception" phrase might, therefore, be taken as further evidence of the narrator's unreliability.

However, the experience of the rose-garden does not seem to have turned out well. First the thrush entices the narrator into the garden, then the thrush urges he leave; if the thrush knew that "mankind / Cannot bear very much reality," why did he invite the narrator into the garden? The children who seem to mock the narrator may do so because he has indeed been deceived.

On the other hand, if the vision of the garden has been a deception, how could the narrator have known this before the vision takes place? A third possibility suggests itself. Could it be that the narrator has already undergone the experience imitated in *Four Quartets* and is now presenting it as though he were going through it for the first time? If the real narrator has been through the experience and has adopted the persona of himself as he existed prior to the experience, then there should be evidence in the poem that the narrator is dual in this manner. The narrator's foreknowledge that the thrush's garden would be a deception may be one instance of such evidence. Other aspects of the poem may also indicate a dual narrator. There is a curious change of tense between lines nineteen and twenty and line twenty-one:

Other echoes
 Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?
 Quick, said the bird
 (11.19-21)

The tense moves from present ("inhabit") to subjunctive ("shall") to past ("said"). The present and the subjunctive may belong to the

narrator's persona, in which the narrator pretends to be undergoing the experience for the first time; the past may belong to the narrator who is post-"Little Gidding." Such a possibility may resolve the paradox of a "memory" of "what might have been."⁶⁵

The consistency of the imagery throughout *Four Quartets* is perhaps further evidence of a dual narrator. It may be that the recurrence of the rose, the yew, the four elements, and so forth, may merely be obsessions in the mind of the narrator; it may be that their frequency may be attributable to the implied author; or it may be that the consistency of these images is evidence that the narrator, having been through the experience represented in *Four Quartets*, has used them as major vehicles of meaning for his representation of the experience while in the guise of himself before he had undergone the experience.

Attention should also be given to the following line from the second section of "Burnt Norton": "The moment in the draughty church at smokefall . . ." (1. 90). This line is associated with the "moment in the rose-garden," mentioned two lines earlier in the section; the line may also refer to the church mentioned in the fifth section of "Little Gidding":

So, while the light fails
On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel
History is now and England.

Either the line from "Burnt Norton" has no connection with the lines from "Little Gidding," or the narrator has already undergone the experience presented in "Little Gidding" before he refers to it in "Burnt Norton."

The determination of the presence of a dual narrator in *Four Quartets* may need to await further readings of the poem; nevertheless, the presence of a dual narrator seems a distinct possibility.

The first section of "Burnt Norton" ends with a presentation of three earlier lines. The first line is an alteration of the first line of the quartet; the second and third are the last lines of the opening philosophic passage:

Time past and time future
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
(11. 46-48)

⁶⁵ It may be, of course, that the narrator has envisioned the rose-garden in the past and that he envisions it again in "Burnt Norton"; the vision may then properly be found in the "memory," and the narrator may properly know beforehand that the thrush's invitation is "deception." This possibility, however, seems less likely than the possibility of a dual narrator.

These lines present, in as mixed a manner as before the garden vision, the theories of time suggested by the first ten lines of the poem. Apparently the narrator's difficulties in considering the nature of time remain unaltered by the experience of the rose-garden. The philosophizing in which the narrator has engaged seems to be of little value when the actual experience of what might have been is encountered, for, in the rose-garden, mysteries that confound his philosophy confront him.

The first section of "Burnt Norton," then, begins with a philosophic passage in abstract diction. In this passage two theories of time seem to be presented: first, past, present, and future, though separate divisions of time, are considered to be inextricably interwoven by cause and effect; second, time is considered as a whole — either as a succession of present moments, or as all moments coexistent in an omniscient mind. The narrator demonstrates his unreliability in this passage by mixing the two theories and by ignoring the necessity of an omniscient mind in the second theory. It may be that the narrator's failure to consider the omniscient mind is his complication; by attempting to understand the second theory without the concept of omniscience, but with his own, limited faculties instead, the narrator may be guilty of intellectual pride. The second passage is an experience of what might have been — a mysterious, supernatural, and humanized rose-garden. The narrator's foreknowledge that the experience would seem, in the light of his philosophizing, a deception may indicate the presence of a dual narrator, one who has been through the experience of *Four Quartets* and who now presents the experience as though he were undergoing it for the first time. The section ends with a reassertion of the philosophy; apparently the narrator intends to continue his efforts to understand time as "eternally present," despite the confounding of his philosophy by the experience of the rose-garden.

The second section of "Burnt Norton" may also be divided into two parts, distinguished by their different styles. The first part contains a great deal of scattered imagery; the second begins with a consideration of a dominant image, and it is more abstract in its diction.

The first part, lines forty-nine through sixty-three, begins with a curious image:

Garlic and sapphires in the mud
Clot the bedded axle-tree.
(*ll.* 49-50)

"Garlic" is an Anglo-Saxon word; an inexpensive and mean seasoning, it connotes the peasantry, the unrefined, the humble. "Sapphires" is a word of Latin derivation; corundum only becomes sapphires when human artifice intervenes, and the word connotes the royalty, the refined, the powerful. Death, a distinctive connotation of "mud," is made an active meaning of the word because sapphires are "in" the mud; human

artifice has returned to the earth. The death connotation of "mud" is also found in "clot," and "clot" indicates the figurative term, blood, of a Form 2 metaphor whose literal term is the image of the first line. The idea of the human alterations of nature returning to the earth is also reinforced by the image of the "bedded axle-tree," part of a vehicle contrived for human transportation. One of the attributes of an "axle-tree," as Smith has noted, is its similarity to the shape of a cross; also, the axle-tree is "the center of the wheel"⁶⁶ and may thus be associated with "the still point" soon to be encountered; being "bedded," however, this "center of the wheel" is no longer moving.

In contrast to the images of death in these two lines, the next three lines develop an image of life and of life opposed to death:

The trilling wire in the blood
Sings below inveterate scars
And reconciles forgotten wars.
(ll. 51-53)

The first of these lines is a complex metaphor. A wire conducts electricity; when associated with blood, the wire may become the force of life pulsing through the circulatory system. "Trilling," however, is a musical term, an "ornament consisting of the rapid alternation of a given tone with its upper neighbor."⁶⁷ Reinforced by "sings" in the next line, "trilling" may indicate an affirmation of life; "dance" three lines later, supports this meaning by referring to a second fine art. Both "trilling" and "sings" add to the complex metaphor of line fifty-one: since they are literally human actions, they personify "wire."

The trilling wire sings "below inveterate scars"; since the wire sings in the blood, the scars indicate the exterior of the body. Scars are an index of violence; they are past wounds that have been healed, though the body does not entirely return to its fresh state prior to the wounding. In the context of these lines, "scars" may result from the force of life mending the effects of turmoil, violence, and pain. "Inveterate" derives from the Latin root, "vetus," meaning "very old"; the turmoil producing the body's wounds are the effects of time. One may also tend to think of "veteran," a word derived from the same root, "vetus," in this connection, especially when the word "war" is encountered in the next line.

"Reconciles" add to the personification noted in "sings." More importantly, "reconciles" indicates that the "trilling wire" does not erase time's effect, but adjusts to it. "Scars" are the result of bodily processes, not of conscious will; thus "forgotten" wars will continue to be reconciled after the conscious mind has moved on to other matters.

⁶⁶ *Loc. cit.*

⁶⁷ Willi Apel and Ralph T. Daniel, *The Harvard Brief Dictionary of Music*, p. 310.

Given the preceding lines, "wars" itself becomes the figurative term of a Form 3 metaphor whose literal term is the opposition of one aspect of life – affirmative, creative action – with another – destructive action, producing pain, wear, and decay and resulting in "scars."

These two opposed aspects of life are made explicit in the next two lines: "The dance along the artery / The circulation of lymph . . . (II. 54-55). These lines, because of their parallel construction, contrast "dance" with "circulation" and "artery" with "lymph." "Dance" is a more conscious, affirmative activity than "circulation"; it is the figurative term of a Form 3 metaphor whose literal term is the movement of the blood. One need only consider that the narrator might have said "vein" instead of "artery" to recognise how an "artery's" attribute of carrying fresh, revitalized blood fits the connotations of "dance." That the narrator opposes "lymph," rather than the more commonly contrasted "vein," to "artery" is also important: lymph carries dead cells and waste, the casualties of the battlefield, off the front lines and contrasts to "artery" a stronger implication of wear and decay than would "vein."

These two lines not only make the contrast of earlier lines explicit, but also begin a new consideration in the narrator's thought.

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
(II. 54-59)

If "figured" is taken to mean "patterned" or "representation," then the narrator may be involved with the concept of the microcosm and macrocosm. The "dance" and "circulation" are an activity within the body of man; "drift of stars" is the macrocosmic correspondent of this activity. If, on the other hand, "figured" is taken to mean "calculated in," then the narrator has approached a kind of pantheistic athanasia. When the body dies, it returns to nature, and each part of the body becomes a part of nature; thus, the circulatory system seems to become tree sap in the next line (it is worth noting, however, that not "artery" and "lymph," but "dance" and "circulation," *i.e.* the movement of life, ascend in the tree). That the dance and circulation ascend during the summer, when the tree grows and the sap rises, may support this notion of pantheistic athanasia. Furthermore, the "tree" itself may be associated, as Thompson has argued,⁶⁸ with the tree of life. "We," who ascend in the tree, may then assume mythic proportions as well and

⁶⁸ Thompson, p. 111.

may refer to the common myth of the dying and reviving god. This myth may also be echoed by an allusion to the myth of Adonis in the reference to "the boarhound and the boar" four lines later.⁶⁹

However, there may be some support in line fifty-seven for the concept of the microcosm and macrocosm as well. The concept of the microcosm and macrocosm was widely held during the medieval and Renaissance periods; it was slowly displaced during the latter age by a more rigorous scientific outlook, based upon a strict application of the principle of cause and effect. For this reason, it is worth noting that the phrase, "Ascend to summer," returns to the pre-scientific outlook of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance by ignoring cause and effect. The modern scientist assumes that sap rises in trees because summer has returned in the cycle of seasons; the poem's phrase, however, ignores this cause-and-effect relationship: instead, the dance and circulation ascend *to* summer.

Both the pantheistic notion and the presence of medieval concepts may be found in the next line. To say that "We move above the moving tree" is apparently to state what was only implicit in the earlier lines: "we" have become the drifting stars. On the other hand, the repetition of the verb, "move," as a participle modifying "tree" gives the image of two movements, one above the other. This image may be associated with the medieval concept of the spheres of influence, commonly divided into the sublunary and supralunary spheres. The "moving tree" is in the sublunary sphere, moving beneath "we," who are "in the drift of stars," the supralunary sphere. The phrase, "drift of stars," itself supports the presence of the concept of spheres of influence in this passage. "Stars" rhymes with "scars" and "wars"; this is an important contrast, for the supralunary sphere of the stars was believed to be the realm of perfect harmony (one may note the contrast to "trilling"), while the sublunary sphere in which man lives was thought to be full of violence, pain, and decay. "Drift" enhances the serenity of the supralunary sphere, and it too contrasts with the frenetic activity of "trilling."

"Figured" is repeated in line fifty-nine — "In light upon the figured leaf" — but it is now an adjective; with light upon the leaf, it probably means "patterned." "We move . . . in light" is a curious image: "we" have already been said to have ascended the tree; now "we move . . . in light upon the figured leaf." Thus, "we" have become both light and leaf. This unusual situation may possibly be explained by referring to the notion of pantheistic athanasia that has been noted in the preceding lines.

⁶⁹ The possible presence of the myth of the dying and reviving god in line fifty-seven may answer C. A. Bodelsen's discounting of the allusion to Adonis; see T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, p. 48, n. 2. For a discussion of Eliot's typical use of myth, see Charles Moorman, *Arthurian Triptych*, pp. 127-148, which discusses Eliot's use of Arthurian myth.

And hear upon the sodden floor
 Below, the boarhound and the boar
 Pursue their pattern as before
 But reconciled among the stars.
 (11. 60-63)

"Sodden" echoes the "mud" of line forty-nine; given the context, the image is that of the ground drenched with blood or mired like a pig slough. "Floor," the figurative term of a Form 3 metaphor whose literal term is the ground beneath the tree, contrast with "sodden" because "floor" has the distinctive connotation of hard smoothness, as though the ground were worn with usage.

The reference to bear hunting in line sixty-one may further support the presence of medieval and early Renaissance concepts in the passage. Boar hunting was popular in medieval and Tudor England, for example; one recalls the boar hunt in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*,⁷⁰ and boars were hunted during Tudor times "in all the great forests of England."⁷¹

Though the boarhound is pursuing the boar, both are pursuing a "pattern." The word, "pattern," may indicate that the boar hunt is a Form 3 synecdoche for all of the turmoil and violence of the sublunary sphere, producing the "wars" which result from the opposition of the creative and destructive aspects of life. "As before" also supports the synecdoche: the opposition seems to move in cycles, an idea reinforced by the mention of the "summer" season in line fifty-seven. That the boarhound and boar, but not the hunter, are mentioned may also be significant; to emphasize the animals is to make the pattern seem more natural and instinctive.

"Reconciled among the stars" probably does not refer to a constellation, as might naturally be inferred. The only constellation having to do with boars is that of the Hyades, which may have been called "boar-throng" by the Anglo-Saxons.⁷² Though Orion, the hunter, chased the Hyades as beautiful maidens later transformed into doves, Robert Graves notes that to the Greeks as well, "the *Hyades* are piglets."⁷³ The constellation of Orion is not chasing the Hyades in the heavens, however, and the boarhound is also missing (Canis major is typically represented as a spaniel; a boarhound is usually a Great Dane). References to the Calidonian boar hunt also seem pointless, though reference to the Adonis myth, as was noted above, may legitimately be supported by the line, "Ascend to summer in the tree."

⁷⁰ *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, pp. 39-45.

⁷¹ Patrick Chalmers, *The History of Hunting*, p. 98.

⁷² Richard Hinckley Allen, *Star-Names and Their Meanings*, p. 389.

⁷³ Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, I, 154.

"Reconciled among the stars" may, on the other hand, continue the concept of the spheres of influence. The violence of life on earth becomes peace ("reconciled") in the supralunary sphere ("the stars"). The stars themselves are, in the medieval and Elizabethan view, only slightly less eternal than the *primum mobile*; they are in themselves changeless, and the spheres of the planets beneath them are the "commuting agents of eternity to mutability . . ." ⁷⁴ The importance of an identification of "stars" with eternity will be mentioned in a moment.

It seems, then, that the principal referent throughout lines forty-nine through sixty-three is the medieval and early Renaissance cosmology. Given the presence of the microcosm and macrocosm, the sublunary and supralunary spheres, the ignoring of cause and effect, and the boar hunt, other aspects of the passage may be seen to add to the medieval and Elizabethan reference underlying the lines. The hitherto unmentioned evidence of the peasant and royal connotations of "garlic" and "sapphires" respectively, the blood and lymph (two of the four humors), ⁷⁵ the close identification with nature ("the Elizabethans naturally felt themselves very close to the rest of nature"), ⁷⁶ the imagery (none of which exceeds the extent of Elizabethan knowledge), and perhaps even the juxtapositions of Latinate to Anglo-Saxon words ⁷⁷ may reinforce the presence of the medieval cosmology.

However, the presence of the medieval cosmology does not seem to become evident in the poem until the middle lines; indications of the cosmology before line fifty-six—"Are figured in the drift of stars"—do not seem to be self-evident references to the medieval worldview until the concepts of microcosm and macrocosm, sublunary and supralunary spheres cause them to reverberate. The narrator's line of thought, therefore, may progress throughout the passage. The passage begins with an image of death, shifts to an image of life, proceeds to an opposition of the creative and destructive aspects of life, and then suggests both cyclical pantheistic athanasia and the medieval cosmology. The two latter concepts share the quality of being attempts to view time comprehensively.

It may be, then, that the narrator is attempting to practice in his own mind the theory of time presented in section one of "Burnt Norton" by using these two concepts to give him a comprehensive view of time. Cyclical pantheistic athanasia is similar to the first conception of the second theory of time, in which time is a succession of present moments: nothing really changes; it merely moves in cycles, without progress.

⁷⁴ E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*, p. 52.

⁷⁵ It should also be noted that blood, more prominent in the passage than lymph, is the humor that derives from air, the element most often associated with "Burnt Norton."

⁷⁶ Tillyard, p. 70.

⁷⁷ Jane Mayall has noted this device as characteristic of Shakespeare. See "Shakespeare and Spenser: A Commentary on Differences," *MLQ*, X (1949), 356-363.

The medieval cosmology is similar to the second conception of the second theory, in which all moments coexist: eternity exists in the supralunary sphere, where the effects of time are "reconciled among the stars."

However, it is worth noting how difficult his effort seems to be. Like the meter at the end of section one, this passage has a tetrameter line; unlike the meter of the first section, this passage is not free in its number of unstressed syllables.⁷⁸ Rather, the pounding pattern of stressed syllables is emphatic from the first two lines, where initial trochaic feet vigorously begin the passage. The accelerating tempo of the lines may in part be attributed to the high incidence of alliteration, assonance, and consonance in the passage, which Audrey Cahill has analyzed.⁷⁹ It may also be attributable to the unusual syntax. The first two sentences are constructed within the language's typical patterns; the third sentence, on the other hand, has two subjects (lines fifty-four and fifty-five) and two predicates (lines fifty-six and fifty-seven), neither pair of which are distinguished by commas or conjunctions. This sentence seems to run directly into the next (lines fifty-eight through sixty-one), whose object is apparently the subject of the following clause (lines sixty-two and sixty-three). Thus, the impelling meter and the run-on syntax combine to give the passage great speed and tension, perhaps indicating that the narrator himself is attempting to achieve in practice an understanding of time he has stated earlier in theory.

The attempt itself may be seen to be a continuation of his complication. It was noted earlier that the narrator, attempting to understand time as "eternally present," has failed to postulate the necessary corollary of that theory, an omniscient mind. The first part of section two, then, illustrates the narrator's effort to achieve in practice what he has stated in theory, with the same error still evident: by continuing to ignore the necessity of an omniscient mind, the narrator is still guilty of intellectual pride.

That the narrator has failed in his effort seems evident, for the first part of section two is immediately followed by another attempt to understand time as "eternally present." In this attempt, the narrator elaborates upon the line of attack he has envisioned through the concept of the supralunary sphere at the end of the first part: the eternal moment is now to be considered out of time, not in time.

In the second part of section two comes a more radical shift in metaphor. The eternal is no longer conceived to be "among the stars," but is rather "at the still point of the turning world." The image is a precise and accurate one: just as the present is an infinitesimal moment,

⁷⁸ Helen Gardner has admirably analyzed the principal meters of *Four Quartets*. See *The Art of T. S. Eliot*, pp. 26-35.

⁷⁹ Audrey F. Cahill, *T. S. Eliot and the Human Predicament*, p. 144.

so the only still point of a turning world is, in short, a mathematical point, and just as an infinitesimal moment does not exist in time, so a mathematical point does not exist in space. The narrator has found the infinitesimal moment's equivalent in space; he has used this spatial equivalent as the figurative term of a Form 3 metaphor whose literal term, the "eternally present" moment, is to be indicated in the next lines by the phrase, "Where past and future are gathered."

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.

(11. 64-68)

The narrator has begun to contemplate the still point. "Neither flesh nor fleshless" is a paradox of the third type mentioned in the discussion of figures of speech; being the affirmation and negation of the same thing, it cannot be resolved by reason or sense, but only, perhaps, by intuition. The other four phrases constructed on the same pattern form a second pure paradox when the point is said not to be fixed.

"Dance" is a significant traditional symbol; it has already been used as a metaphor ("The dance along the artery"), and Tillyard notes its importance in the medieval and Elizabethan cosmology as "the cosmic dance."⁵⁰ Hindu mythology contains the similar dance of Shiva, which spins the illusion (*mava*) of time-space reality, hiding the eternal and infinite Reality (Brahman) from view.⁵¹ That the dance is at the *still* point underscores the paradox of the still point which is not fixed.

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.

(11. 68-71)

Time-space reality is somehow an elaboration of the infinitesimal moment. Somehow timelessness becomes time; this is a third paradox.

⁵⁰ Tillyard, pp. 101-106.

⁵¹ Cirlot, pp. 72-73. See also Franklin Edgerton, *The Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 152-154.

A fourth paradox is also involved in these lines: if "There is only the dance," then the still point is a part of the dance; yet the still point is the necessary cause of the dance. "*There we have been*" emphasizes both that the still point is a spatial, figurative term for the present moment ("there") and that the present moment is elusive: by the time it is reflected upon, the present has become the past ("have been"). "How long" states the same idea in terms of time; since the present, being both infinitesimal and eternal, is not part of time, the narrator cannot say, "how long."

Though the narrator has admitted that he cannot say "where" or "how long," he attempts in the next verse paragraph to describe human life as it might exist if one lived at the still point. This paragraph also seems to have a dominant image: that time-space reality is a prison is conveyed by the words "freedom," "release," and "enchainment."⁸²

The inner freedom from the practical desire,
The release from action and suffering, release from the
inner
And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded
By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving,
Erhebung without motion, concentration
Without elimination

(11. 72-77)

"Action and suffering" has been represented in the first part of section two; since that attempt failed to "release" the narrator, he has concentrated on the still point in the second part of section two. "Inner" and "outer" present a dualism which would be resolved in an omniscient mind; however, since the narrator is describing his conception of the "eternally present" moment rather than experiencing it, he continues to think dualistically. "Compulsion" indicates a three-fold distinction in the narrator's thought. "Compulsion" itself is divided into "inner" (presumably psychosocial needs; "compulsion" is in one sense a Freudian term) and "outer" (presumably social pressures, physical needs, or both). "Release from . . . compulsion" postulates a third aspect of human nature: what would remain after the inner and outer compulsions are erased would be, using the psychological term, the "self."

"Surrounded / By a grace of sense" is a particularly rich phrase. "Surrounded" indicates the figurative term — some form of covering — of a Form 2 metaphor whose literal term is "grace of sense." "Grace of sense" is itself a Form I metaphor, making the image of "surrounded /

⁸² The similarity of this view to that of Zen Buddhism is well known. See D. T. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, p. 44 and 52; also, the archer analogy in Heinrich Dumoulin, *A History of Zen Buddhism*, pp. 130-131.

By a grace of sense" a complex metaphor. "Grace" may have three meanings in this context: first, it may mean beauty or harmony; second, it may be a theological term referring to God's unmerited but freely given favor; third, it may, like "trilling," refer to a musical ornament and connote decoration and delicacy. "Sense," also, may have more than one meaning, referring to the senses and to meaning or intelligibility.

"A white light still and moving" both reinforces these various meanings and adds to the complexity of "surrounded / By a grace of sense." The phrase is reminiscent of the lotos, which was created in water "out of heart of light" and which "rose, quietly." A white light, as was noted earlier, is a traditional symbol of the synthesis of All. "Still and moving" is reminiscent of the paradox several lines earlier — the still point which nevertheless is not fixed.

Erhebung is a German word, referring either to the physical state of "rising" or to the mental state of "exaltation." The narrator may have chosen the German word because its dual meanings are suggested equally; they match the literal and figurative terms of the "still point" metaphor. The physical meaning, "rising," further emphasizes the similarity between the state being described and the lotos. "Without motion" reasserts the paradox of the still but unfixed point.

"Concentration / Without elimination" can refer only to the second view of the second theory of time: if nothing is to be eliminated, omniscience must be postulated.⁸³

. . . both a new world
 And the old made explicit, understood
 In the completion of its partial ecstasy
 The resolution of its partial horror.
 (11. 77-80)

"World" has been used earlier in the passage — "At the still point of the turning world" — where "turning world" seemed to refer to "action and suffering," the world of time-space reality. The "new" and "old" worlds form a dualism similar to the "inner" and "outer" compulsions; though the narrator is describing the experience of the center or still point as he imagines it, he continues to think dualistically.

⁸³ The concept of "concentration / Without elimination" is, of course, quite similar similar to F. H. Bradley's concept of the Absolute. Several critics have made much of the connection between Bradley and Eliot, the latter having written his doctoral dissertation on the former. Kristian Smidt, for example, devotes a section of his seventh chapter to an exposition of Bradley's philosophy, and a discussion of Eliot's dissertation forms the basis of Thompson's work. However, though Bradley's philosophy may be interesting for comparison, it may be dangerous to assume that Bradley's metaphysics underlie *Four Quartets*; the narrator's unreliability has already been noted. For the best explanation of Bradley's philosophy, see Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, VIII, Part I, 214-247.

Again, the concept is close to Zen Buddhism, which claims to revitalize perception without altering its essential nature as it exists prior to revitalization.⁸⁴ The subject of "understood" is apparently "old world," for the partial ecstasy and horror belong to it, as the fulfillment of both belongs to the "new world." It is curious that the narrator has chosen "completion" in reference to the fulfillment of partial ecstasy and "resolution" in reference to the fulfillment of partial horror. The language is somewhat slanted: "completion" suggests an addition to the ecstasy; "resolution" suggests an end to the horror. If the "new world" is "without elimination," however, then one might also say that the partial horror is completed. The narrator is viewing the new world from his own human perspective, not the perspective of omniscience.

The next few lines are quite complex. The narrator seems to admit that he is limited to a human, not an omniscient, view of the new world:

Yet the enchainment of past and future
Woven in the weakness of the changing body,
Protects mankind from heaven and damnation
Which flesh cannot endure.

(11. 81-84)

The first of these lines may have two meanings, both of which function in the context of these lines: past and future enchain mankind, or past and future are enchained — that is, kept separate, the first theory of time — by mankind's physical nature. "Enchainment" indicates the figurative term, chains, of a Form 2 metaphor whose literal term is the limitation of mankind's understanding of reality, an understanding which keeps past and future distinct. "Woven" indicates the figurative term, thread, of a Form 4 metaphor whose literal term is the chains implied by "enchainment." Thus, curiously enough, chains become threads. However, this strange complex metaphor may be functional rather than decorative. "Enchainment" has an unfavorable emotional connotation; though the enchainment protects mankind, the narrator does not seem particularly pleased with the situation. "Woven" has the distinctive connotation of weakness, a connotation which is emphasized by the contrast to chains. These two connotations, the emotional and the distinctive, may combine to indicate that the narrator wishes to break out of the "enchainment of past and future." The two attempts presented in section two of "Burnt Norton" are evidence of the presence of this wish. Yet the narrator himself has noted that the enchainment of past and future protects mankind from heaven (completed ecstasy) and damnation (resolved horror); to desire to break through the enchainment is therefore either masochistic, wishing to

⁸⁴ Suzuki, p. 92; Dumoulin, p. 133.

endure what cannot mortally be endured, or proud, wishing to understand what cannot mortally be understood. When read closely, then, what may appear to be an admission by the narrator of his own limitation becomes one more instance of his intellectual pride.

The next sentence may also be taken to be an admission by the narrator of his limitations:

Time past and time future
Allow but a little consciousness.⁸⁵
(11. 85-86)

The mortal understanding of time (the first theory) is not aware of all moments coexisting in a single, eternal moment (the second theory); in comparison to the second theory, the first produces little awareness of the whole of time. The narrator indicates in the next line that he distinguishes between "little consciousness" and full consciousness.

To be conscious is not to be in time
But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
Be remembered; involved with past and future.
(11. 87-91)

Since "to be conscious is not to be in time," "conscious" must refer to the second theory of time, in which "past and future are gathered" in an omniscient awareness existing out of time. Memory, however, seems to exist only "in time." Of the three moments that are mentioned by the narrator in these lines, the first may refer to "Burnt Norton," section one, and the last to "Little Gidding," section five. Apparently these moments are examples of what are later called "hints and guesses" ("The Dry Salvages," section five); they are moments in time which suggest a reality that is out of time. This meaning is supported by the last line of the section: "Only through time time is conquered" (1. 92). The verb at the end of this line is an excellent summation of the narrator's attitude as it has thus far been illustrated in "Burnt Norton." Time is something to be conquered; the narrator still wishes to break out of "the enchainment of past and future" and therefore still possesses intellectual pride.

Part two of the second section of "Burnt Norton," then, is a further illustration of the narrator's difficulty. He remains an unreliable nar-

⁸⁵ The meaning of these lines seems quite close to Advaita Vedanta, the Hindu philosophical system founded by Shankara. Shankara defines the real as "that which neither changes nor ceases to exist What, then, is the Reality behind all our experiences? There is only one thing that never leaves us — the deep consciousness." See Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, trans., *Shankara's Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*, pp. 13-14.

rator: though he cannot say "where" or "how long," he attempts to describe the experience of existence out of time. Everywhere in this second attempt to understand the "eternally present" moment, he encounters paradoxes: "neither flesh nor fleshless"; the "still point" which is not "fixity"; the "dance" which somehow is set in motion by the "still point"; and the final paradox of attempting to understand the still point while continuing to think dualistically. This dualistic thinking is evident in the distinctions of "the still point" and "the turning world," "the inner and the outer compulsions," the "new world and the old." Even the frequent occurrence of the words ending with the suffix, "-tion," may indicate the narrator's dualistic thinking, for "-tion" makes a verb into a noun, or time into space. The narrator cannot, of course, be censured for thinking dualistically; duality is necessary if thought is to exist at all. Nevertheless, one cannot think dualistically and accurately describe a reality that does not exist in time and space. Like the abstractions and spatial metaphors noted earlier, the narrator's dualistic thought indicates that he remains in time-space reality while attempting to understand a reality in which such distinctions are no longer relevant. Since the source of the narrator's unreliability is also his problem, the paradoxes just noted also illustrate his complication. The narrator remains unreliable, and his complication continues to be intellectual pride.

It is hoped that the foregoing explication of "Burnt Norton," sections one and two, has sufficiently illustrated how a systematic method of explication may be applied to a work of literature. However, it may be useful for the poem's sake to digress for a moment and indicate, very briefly, how the complication of intellectual pride effects the rest of the poem.

The third section of "Burnt Norton" presents "a place of disaffection." Even past and future are "in a dim light" for the "unhealthy souls" who inhabit this description. The narrator scorns those who move on the "metalled ways" of past and future but are not even aware of their enchainment. He postulates two ways of reaching the eternally present moment: daylight and shadow, plentitude and vacancy. By descending "into the world of perpetual solitude," one may follow the way of vacancy.

The fourth section begins with an image associated with death, and the descriptions of the sunflower, clematis, and yew are progressively ominous. Yet this momentary awareness of personal death does not cause the narrator to pause on his own metalled way for long; the still point is reasserted, and the narrator is reassured.

Section five considers the concept that "all is always now" in its relation to art and concludes that "the form, the pattern," is the means by which art achieves the "stillness." The effect of time on language is also considered. Through an allusion to St. John of the Cross, the

narrator notes that "desire itself is movement" and that "love is itself unmoving"; there follows a reminiscence of the rose-garden and of the elusiveness of the "eternally present" movement ("Quick, now, here, now, always"). Yet he concludes the quartet with an implied desert metaphor: "Ridiculous the waste sad time / Stretching before and after." Despite his efforts throughout the quartet, the narrator still views the second theory of time from his own limited awareness; he has not yet admitted that awareness of all moments coexisting is the business of an omniscient, not his own, mind.

The narrator's efforts have made time a desert; the narrator reacts with bitterness in "East Coker." The motto, taken from Mary, Queen of Scots, which opens the first section of "East Coker," indicates that the narrator has returned to the cyclic view of time: "In my beginning is my end." "Action and suffering" are then illustrated by the example of houses, which "rise and fall" in succession. Both the motto and the example show that the narrator's thoughts have left the ethereal realm of philosophy and have begun to consider the actual experience of time in the world; yet time in the world seems to rotate toward death. The narrator describes a vision in an open field on a summer midnight: rustics from the late Middle Ages or early Tudor era are seen dancing (one recalls the "dance" of "Burnt Norton," section two). They are full of life; they become "dung and death."

Section two begins with an image of the autumn's destruction of the spring; the image grows universal and violent, encompassing the destruction of the world. The narrator continues to see time spinning toward death. His thoughts turn to old age: the wisdom of age has a limited value, since the experiences upon which it has been based no longer exist. A description of a perilous bog well illustrates the narrator's growing fear and frustration. Though the narrator says that humility is the only wisdom, he ends the second section of "East Coker" with two images of death: "The houses are all gone under the sea. / The dancers are all gone under the hill."

The third section continues the imagery of death with the words, "O dark dark dark." The narrator follows a catalogue of the dying with the significant lines, "I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you, / Which shall be the darkness of God." The three similes which follow are progressively closer to the absolute negation of existence in death. The "wisdom of humility," however, is growing in the narrator: ". . . the faith and the hope and the love are all in the waiting." Several "hints and guesses" are subsequently recalled, but they are now "requiring, pointing to the agony / Of death and birth." The section ends with a sardonic recounting of the way of darkness; the series of paradoxes point to "the wisdom of humility."

The narrator, however, is still not reconciled to his limitations. Section four presents allegorically the Christian references that have occurred with increasing frequency through the quartet: Christ, the

Church, and God work for man's salvation. The narrator, however, feels that this is a restriction; his statement that the "paternal care . . . prevents us everywhere" and the ironic last line of the section — "Again, in spite of that, we call this Friday good" — demonstrate the narrator's petulance. Nevertheless, the narrator's complication is moving toward its resolution. Section five begins with a consideration of the decay of artistic communication; what has been "discovered" in the past must be rediscovered in the present. The narrator, however, makes a significant statement at the end of the first verse paragraph: "But perhaps neither gain nor loss. / For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business." The narrator shows that he has been altered by his consideration of death in "East Coker" in the next paragraph as well.

Not the intense moment
 Isolated, with no before and after,
 But a lifetime burning in every moment
 And not the lifetime of one man only
 But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.

These lines prefigure the greater resignation that the narrator demonstrates in "The Dry Salvages." The narrator's increased humility is evident in the first line: "I do not know much about gods" The narrator's animistic treatment of the river as a "strong brown god" indicates the matter under consideration in this quartet: having recognized at the end of "East Coker" that the racial life-time, "burning in every moment," is more important than the "intense moment / Isolated," the narrator proceeds to consider time on a grand scale, but from a more human perspective than he attempted in "Burnt Norton." Through the imagery of river and sea — traditional symbols for time and timelessness — the narrator contemplates "a time / Older than the time of chronometers."

The contemplation, however, continues to embitter the narrator and leads him to despair. The sestina which opens the second section of the quartet begins with the question: "Where is there an end to it, the soundless wailing, / The silent withering of autumn flowers" The narrator answers his own question at the end of the sestina: "There is no end of it, the voiceless wailing, / No end to the withering of withered flowers"

The narrator has come to realize that "the agony" cannot be escaped in the "moments of happiness," for

We had the experience but missed the meaning,
 And approach to the meaning restores the experience
 In a different form, beyond any meaning
 We can assign to happiness.

"The agony abides." The ominous image of the "ragged rock," which ends the section, reinforces the narrator's despair, for "in the sombre season / Or the sudden fury," the rock "is what it always was."

The narrator's despair causes him in the third section to envision the future as "a faded song." If time is merely change, always proceeding toward inevitable death, then one must view the future with "wistful regret for those who are not yet here to regret." The narrator's despair has a further consequence, however: if past and future are meaningless — if it is useless to consider the "fruit of action" — then one's only recourse is to "fare forward." The "voice descanting" on the ship at sea admonishes the passengers that their "real destination" is to "fare forward." This is an important alteration in the narrator's thought: he is no longer attempting to understand the second theory of time by a philosophical examination of unresolvable paradoxes; rather, an awareness of the ever-present reality of death has forced him into an awareness of what he believes to be his "real destination." Now the narrator prays. He prays in the fourth section for the persons he might have scorned in the third section of "Burnt Norton."

The fifth section begins with a catalogue of the "pastimes and drugs" by which men search "past and future." The narrator now realizes that an apprehension of "the point of intersection of the timeless / With time" is something "given / And taken," not something wrenched from God by the determined philosophical effort of "Burnt Norton." There still exist, for many, the "hints and guesses" of the rose-garden and similar experiences; yet they remain

Hints followed by guesses; and the rest
Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action
[Most of us] are only undefeated
Because we have gone on trying . . .

Despair, however, is not the final depth to which the narrator descends; in the first section of "Little Gidding," the narrator has gone beyond even despair. Unlike "Burnt Norton's" "only through time time is conquered," or even the tentative opinion which opens "The Dry Salvages" ("I think that the river / Is a strong brown god"), the narrator's description of "mid-winter spring" is beyond any impulsive assertion. "Mid-winter spring" is Christmas, the time of rebirth, when "pentecostal fire" appears "in the dark time of the year." The narrator has finally reached "the world's end," which he says is "Now and in England." The narrator has "put off / Sense and notion."

You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report. You are here to kneel

The narrator no longer attempts to describe the experience of the "still point"; rather, he admits his complete ignorance in the last lines of the section: "Here, the intersection of the timeless moment / Is England and nowhere. Never and always."

The opening three stanzas of the second section describe, through the death of air, earth, water, and fire, the "death of hope and despair." The flat rhythm of the stanzas reinforces the narrator's position beyond hope and despair. There follows a description of the narrator's meeting, in the "waning dusk" of dawn after the city has been bombed, "a familiar compound ghost." The ghost, who had been, like the narrator, a poet, discloses the ironic "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 once you took for exercise of virtue.
Then fools' approval stings, and honour stains.
From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit
Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire
Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.'

The ghost has touched upon the narrator's difficulty and has given him the advice he needs.

The third section is the change in the plot: the narrator accepts the ghost's advice and is "restored by that refining fire." He suddenly recognizes

the use of memory:
For liberation — not less of love but expanding
Of love beyond desire, and so liberation
From the future as well as the past
History may be servitude,
History may be freedom.

History had been servitude to the narrator while he was presumptive, bitter, or despairing in the first three quartets. Now the narrator has expanded love beyond his own "field of action" and has found that field to be "of little importance." Since the narrator's unreliability has stem-

med from his complication, the change in the plot also makes the narrator reliable.

The sonnet in section four asserts the narrator's newfound hope. Having been beyond hope and despair, however, the narrator's new hope is no longer susceptible to despair; rather, the distinction between them is no longer important: "The only hope, or else despair / Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre . . ." Hope and despair no longer matter; what matters is to live. Section five states the idea succinctly: "And any action / Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat / Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start." The narrator still realizes that "history is a pattern / Of timeless moments," but now he also recognises that time is none of his concern. If

Love is the unfamiliar Name
Behind the hands that wove
The intolerable shirt of flame
Which human power cannot remove

then what need has the narrator to attempt to remove the "shirt of flame"? His business is to live in "a condition of complete simplicity," a condition in which pride is replaced by faith. It is, in short, the narrator's acceptance of faith which frees him to love and to hope and which changes his complication of intellectual pride to the resolution of simply living.

The final image of the poem resolves in imagery what the narrator has already resolved in statement:

All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.

The poem ends with an affirmation: timelessness and time are one; therefore, live.

The foregoing summary of the remainder of *Four Quartets*, while not as thorough an explication as the consideration of the first two sections of "Burnt Norton," may illustrate the plot of the poem and the poem's orthodox worldview. The discussion of "Burnt Norton," sections one and two, has hopefully demonstrated the value of explication when it is applied as a system to a work of literature. The unreliability of the narrator, his dual nature, the complication of intellectual pride, the change in the plot, and even the medieval cosmology of the second section of "Burnt Norton" have not, to this author's knowledge, been noted in previous criticism of *Four Quartets*.

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