

Candidate 2

Title of Dissertation	Word count (Max 3000)
/// Eliot and Existentialism: The use of setting in the search for meaning within 'The Four Quartets'	3,281



Advanced Higher English Dissertation

**Eliot and Existentialism: The use of setting in the search for meaning
within *'The Four Quartets'*.**

Word Count: 3,281

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Eliot and Existentialism:***The Use of Setting in the Search for Meaning within 'The Four Quartets'***

The chaotic uncertainty of the 1920s and 1930s coupled with the devastation of the Second World War significantly affected the attitudes of Western society towards the nature of humanity's existence. This period polarised opinion, giving rise to secularism and agnosticism whilst contrarily heightening the intensity of religious devotion. The extent of this former pessimism is apparent in the mainstream belief, reflected in Bertrand Russell's description of humanity as: "*but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms*"¹. Although arguably realistic, TS Eliot rebelled from this cynicism to find solace in Anglicanism, to which he had converted in 1927². In this year the poet also adopted British citizenship³, aligning with his heritage. Such grounding in traditionalism, awakened by the tumultuous inter- and intra-war atmosphere, initiated Eliot's journey into existentialism; an exploration documented in *The Four Quartets*⁴.

Published individually between 1938 and 1942, setting within these poems allow Eliot to contemplate spiritual fulfilment. The *Quartets*⁵ initially consider the negligence of nature in an increasingly materialistic world, and the potential for meaning achievable through the reversal of such disharmony; with discord portrayed through contradictory setting. Throughout, the poems reflect Eliot's gradual realisation that although nature is superior to man, God

¹ Russell, Bertrand "*A Free Man's Worship*", (1903) Available – <http://www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/courses/264/fmw.htm>

² Nobel Prize, *T.S. Eliot – Biographical* (2016) Available - http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1948/eliot-bio.html

³ Ibid.

⁴ Eliot, Thomas Stearns "*Collected Poems 1909-1962*" (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 175-209

⁵ Ibid.

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is superior to nature; conclusively emphasising the importance for humanity to base our existence within religion. This revelation is supported in the use of settings both personal to Eliot and relevant to his journey.

The first of the poems, *Burnt Norton*⁶, is set initially in the gardens of Norton Manor, in Gloucester⁷. The garden itself symbolises a contorted appreciation of nature on the behalf of man, achieved through nature's conformation to a particular aesthetic:

*"Garlic and Sapphires in the mud
Clot the bedded axle-tree"*⁸.

Humanity's disillusionment from nature is reflected in the portrayal of mud, something unattractive, masking wealth; both in the obscure form of garlic, used as a currency in Ancient Egypt⁹, and the recognizable form of sapphires. Eliot thus portrays humanity's failure to appreciate the depth of nature's untouched beauty, in both its obvious and discrete forms. In the second of these lines, Eliot illustrates that this lack of comprehension leads to man contorting the natural world into something that we can appreciate; linking to the idea of a garden being a place of false coexistence between the two worlds. The metaphor of an "axle-tree"¹⁰ suggests this endeavour to

⁶ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 177-183

⁷ *"Let us go then, to Burnt Norton"* (2013), Available -

<http://www.literature.hss.ed.ac.uk/2013/08/let-us-go-then-to-burnt-norton/>

⁸ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, page 178

⁹ Clickner, Trina *"A Miscellany of Garlic"* (2011) Adams Media Corporation, page 21

¹⁰ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, page 178

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apperceive nature, with "bedded"¹¹ indicating the magnitude to which humanity forces our invasion and "clot"¹² reiterating the resultant rift between the manmade and natural worlds. Lamenting this disharmony, *Burnt Norton*¹³ questions whether humanity is truly superior, or if arrogance drives this belief. For example, the use of personification in the image "fingers of yew be curled / down on us"¹⁴ grants the natural world a sense of strength, suggesting that, contrary to popular belief, nature has the upper hand over man.

Eliot proceeds to consider the impact of this contorted social attitude within his own life, discussing his psychological misalignment with nature:

"Shall we follow

The deception of the thrush?"¹⁵

These lines highlight a disassociation with the natural world, arising from submersion in modern society. The use of "deception"¹⁶ juxtaposed to the image of the thrush - a symbol of intellect and beauty - projects a tone of sadness, implying that societal beliefs have led us to mistrust the natural world. Moreover, the role of the thrush as a songbird suggests that it bears a message to lead us from the wrongs of modernism and recognise our place within nature. This furthers the irony surrounding the use of "deception"¹⁷, as it is the man-made world, not nature, which is deceitful. Finally, employing

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, page 178

¹³ Ibid, pages 177-183

¹⁴ Ibid, page 181

¹⁵ Ibid, page 177

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

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"we"¹⁸ in these lines indicates that such antipathy is universal, and consequently the journey on which Eliot is embarking holds significance for us all.

In its third section, the poem shifts from the "vibrant air"¹⁹ of the manor gardens to the "faded air"²⁰ of the London Underground²¹, a symbol of the man-made world. Immediately this contrast adds weight to Eliot's previous implications regarding the spiritually deprived nature of modern life:

"Neither plenitude nor vacancy. Only a flicker

*Over the strained time-ridden faces"*²²

These two lines confirm the lack of satisfaction to be gained from modernism, implying that a life without nature can only be incomplete. However, the concept of "neither plenitude nor vacancy"²³ suggests that such an existence is not devoid of occupation, rather that such occupation is not spiritually fulfilling. Eliot continues:

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Eliot, Thomas Stearns "Collected Poems 1909-1962" (1974), Faber & Faber, page 177

²⁰ Ibid. page 180.

²¹ Ibid, page 180. Also Welsh, David "Underground Writing" (2010) Liverpool University Press, page 194.

²² Eliot, Thomas Stearns "Collected Poems 1909-1962" (1974), Faber & Faber, page 180

²³ Ibid.

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*"Distracted from distraction by distraction
Filled with fancies and empty of meaning".²⁴*

This furthers the above concept of a man-made existence lacking fulfilment, suggesting that social standards dictate a disassociation with the natural world and our true purpose. The second line specifies the reason we feel a lack of fulfilment, highlighting material "*fancies*"²⁵ as the object of our distraction from what is truly important. This detrimental impact of a society separate from the natural world is reinforced in the description: "*unhealthy souls*"²⁶; confirming our lack of spiritual prosperity associated with a failure to appreciate nature.

Eliot concludes the poem by returning to the original setting, however this time reflecting on the history of Norton Manor itself to emphasise the consequences of an overly materialistic lifestyle. The ultimate owner of the manor, Sir William Keyt, was a man obsessed with such success, purchasing it as a show of grandeur and building expansions to accommodate the desires of his mistresses²⁷. This led him into debt, and subsequently, the clutches of alcoholism²⁸. Keyt set fire to the house, hence the nickname 'Burnt' Norton, and himself perished within the flames²⁹. In the final section of the poem, Eliot refers to this:

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, page 180

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *"Let us go then, to Burnt Norton"* (2013), Available – <http://www.literature.hss.ed.ac.uk/2013/08/let-us-go-then-to-burnt-norton/>

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Burke, John *"A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Extinct and Dormant Baronetcies of England"* (2015), Scholar's Choice, page 289

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*"Attacked by voices of temptation,
The crying shadow in the funeral dance
The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera"³⁰*

This emphasises the idea that man's obsession with fickle, materialistic happiness will be his downfall; echoing Dante in *Inferno Canto 1*: "[a successful man] will not feed himself on land or wealth, but on wisdom, love and virtue"³¹. Keyt represents the failings of modern man, with his focus on material wealth resulting in his alienation from the natural world in which he truly belonged, and this ultimately caused his drunken suicide. Furthermore, the reference to the "chimera"³², a hybrid figure in Greek mythology³³, illustrates that this existence is not only fatal, but unnatural and distorted.

The second of the *Quartets*³⁴, *East Coker*³⁵, similarly uses setting to further the discussion of man and nature. Referencing the village where Eliot's ancestors resided until 1670³⁶ emphasises the significance of a connection to our origins. This concept develops through Eliot's consideration of the cycle of life, which corresponds to his family's departure for America, and his return centuries on:

³⁰ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, page 182

³¹ Dante, *"Inferno Canto I:100-111, The Salvation of Italy"*. Available – <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Italian/DantInfl1to7.htm>

³² Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, page 182

³³ Oxford English Dictionary, "Chimera" Available – <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/chimera>

³⁴ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 175-209

³⁵ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 184-191

³⁶ Poet's Graves, Available – <http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/eliot.htm>

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*"Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,
Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth"³⁷.*

This cyclical imagery implies that in order to advance, we must look back to our history. Moreover, the idea that the earth is the ultimate destination of all things, including those that are man-made, illustrates our unavoidable belonging to nature in death.

Personally for Eliot, this setting symbolises the potential harmony between the synthetic and natural worlds:

*"Into the village, in the electric heat
Hypnotised. In a warm haze the sultry light
Is absorbed, not refracted, by grey stone".³⁸*

These lines entwine the two worlds, with *"electric heat"*³⁹ illustrating a new sense of vibrancy and excitement in man-made life as a result of this natural coexistence. *"Hypnotised"*⁴⁰ furthers this, suggesting that Eliot is experiencing the epitome of both spiritual and materialistic satisfaction; thus this setting represents the ideal of modern day life. Finally, the image of the village absorbing light shows that as the two worlds are at peace, Eliot feels he has reached the destination of his existential journey. However, the

³⁷ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 184

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 184

⁴⁰ Ibid.

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emphasis placed on *"not refracted"*⁴¹ connotes that such harmony, for the most part, is absent; leading Eliot to highlight the major flaw of modern man – our failure to recognise that satisfaction is embedded in harmony with nature. Instead, our attempt to exert authority, as first suggested in the gardens of *Burnt Norton*⁴², heightens conflict:

"Thunder rolled by the rolling cars

Deployed in constellated wars

Scorpion fights against the Sun".⁴³

Here the idea of *"Scorpion fights"*⁴⁴ portrays the image of poison and betrayal; implying that the failure of the modern world to live naturally is treason against our origins. Moreover, the use of *"constellated"*⁴⁵ evokes the sense that this treason is premeditated, linking to our presumptuous view of human superiority. However, Eliot himself is not trapped in this superficial arrogance:

"Whirled in a vortex that shall bring

The world to that destructive fire".⁴⁶

The above image of *"fire"*⁴⁷, in the context of Eliot's Anglicanism, links to Hell and damnation. Coupled with the idea of turmoil, as portrayed by

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 177-183

⁴³ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 186

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 186

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“whirled”⁴⁸, Eliot concludes his condemnation of the man-made world with the idea that our discord with nature rebels against the desires of God and thus can only result in our destruction.

Eliot's journey continues into *The Dry Salvages*⁴⁹, to which setting is again of pivotal importance to the exploration of existentialism. Named for *Les Trois Sauvages*⁵⁰, a rock formation to the North East of Cape Ann regularly visited by Eliot during his childhood⁵¹, and the use of this as the immediate setting for the poem illustrates the significance of origins to Eliot, and the centrality of nature within these roots. Furthermore, the direct correlation to his childhood draws parallel to the image used in *Burnt Norton*⁵², “*Children in the foliage*”⁵³, in the suggestion that humanity's harmony with nature is at its height in childhood, and that exposure to the man made world compromises such unity.

Additionally, the oceanic nature of the setting allows for the use of connected imagery, which Eliot harnesses to highlight the disharmony between man and nature in the modern world:

“The river...

Is a strong brown god – sullen, untamed and intractable,

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Eliot, Thomas Stearns “*Collected Poems 1909-1962*” (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 192-200

⁵⁰ Eliot, Thomas Stearns “*Collected Poems 1909-1962*” (1974), Faber & Faber, page 192

⁵¹ Parker, James “*A Pilgrimage to T.S Eliot's Dry Salvages*” (2012) The Boston Globe. Available – <https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2012/10/13/pilgrimage-eliot-dry-salvages/DvyPv2qhFIK7dWOSGvAuHO/story.html>

⁵² Eliot, Thomas Stearns “*Collected Poems 1909-1962*” (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 177-183

⁵³ Eliot, Thomas Stearns “*Collected Poems 1909-1962*” (1974), Faber & Faber, page 182



*Patient to some degree, at first recognised as a frontier;
... Then only a problem confronting the builder of bridges*⁵⁴.

Coming at the very start of the poem, this adds power to Eliot's message; the use of 'untamed' illustrates that man does not have power over nature, and never will; whilst the use of 'god'⁵⁵ without capitalisation purposefully suggests that the reign of nature is commonly ignored and disrespected. Moreover, the portrayal of water as sinister and dangerous draws a contrast to the previous two poems which depicted nature more kindly. This progression in the presentation of the natural world emphasises humanity's arrogance; with the metaphor of the river as "waiting"⁵⁶ suggesting that nature is at the liberty to bide its time before retaliating to the destruction of man. Additionally, the discussion of nature as initially a "frontier"⁵⁷, then "a problem confronting the builder of bridges"⁵⁸ reinforces that humanity's original respect for nature gave way to a selfish desire for industrial expansion and personal gain. Eliot suggests that in our attempt to preside over nature, our instinctual relationship with the natural world recedes to the background of our conscience; yet is not entirely forgotten. This maintenance of this connection correlates to the gardens of *Burnt Norton*⁵⁹, as our appreciation is manipulative and materialistic.

⁵⁴ Eliot, Thomas Stearns "Collected Poems 1909-1962" (1974), Faber & Faber, page 192

⁵⁵ Eliot, Thomas Stearns "Collected Poems 1909-1962" (1974), Faber & Faber, page 192

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Eliot, Thomas Stearns "Collected Poems 1909-1962" (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 177-183

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With the backdrop of the sea, and a place central within his own roots, Eliot deepens the exploration of our deteriorating relationship with the natural world through the suggestion that modern disillusionment is unnatural and fatal; linking to the portrayal of war in *East Coker*⁶⁰:

*"The river is within us, the sea is all about us;
...the beaches where it tosses
Its hints of earlier and other creation".⁶¹*

These lines illustrate that we are endemic to nature; and the extent to which it surrounds us emphasises that this is inescapable. In line with this, we are far inferior to the natural world, which has the power to destroy us with ease; as reiterated in the use of "tosses"⁶², advancing the idea that the war we have initiated is unwinnable.

Furthermore, Eliot uses the sea to metaphorically illustrate the necessity for a rediscovery of our relationship with nature, parallel to his own ascetic journey into existentialism:

*"O voyagers. O seamen,
You who come to port, and whose bodies
Will suffer the trial and judgement of the sea,
... this is your real destination"⁶³*

⁶⁰ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 184-191

⁶¹ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, page 192

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid, page 197.

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The image of our bodies undergoing torment at the hands of nature reinforces Eliot's condemnation of our reliance on materialism; it is our souls, rather than our physical incarnations, that are of greatest importance. Moreover, the aim of our journey being away from materialistic and towards spiritual satisfaction is emphasised in the reference to our "*real destination*"⁶⁴. Coupled with the description of "*voyagers*"⁶⁵ and "*seamen*"⁶⁶, both of which connote an existence more removed from the man made world, Eliot exemplifies his disdain for the mediocrity of modern life.

Eliot closes the third of his *Quartets*⁶⁷ with a conclusive analysis of the meaning behind his spiritual journey:

*"We, content at the last
If our temporal reversion nourish
(Not too far from the yew tree)
The life of significant soil"*⁶⁸

These lines enforce that happiness will be found in our connection to the natural world; as this will bring peace and stability between us, portrayed his reflection acting to "*nourish the life of significant soil*"⁶⁹. Clear, comparative

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Eliot, Thomas Stearns "*Collected Poems 1909-1962*" (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 175-209

⁶⁸ Ibid, page 200

⁶⁹ Ibid.

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links to the beginning of *Burnt Norton*⁷⁰ in the use of "significant"⁷¹ suggest his new-found ability to appreciate the less aesthetically beautiful elements of nature - the "garlic and sapphires in the mud"⁷² that were once so nonchalantly overlooked. Similarly, the tying of "yew tree"⁷³ to "axle-tree"⁷⁴ reiterates this progression in Eliot's view of the world and the harmony that has resulted.

The fourth *Quartet, Little Gidding*⁷⁵, was written and published during a time where Eliot was most directly affected by the turmoil of the Second World War; and this affects the discussion of nature and existentialism, with emphasis placed on the importance of faith. Setting advances this, as 'Little Gidding' itself is a 17th-century Anglican monastery, famed for the extent of its devotion⁷⁶. Coupled with the exploration of a natural deity in *The Dry Salvages*⁷⁷, this illustrates the overlap between faith and the natural world, with both pivotal to our spiritual fulfilment. Furthermore, in 1645 Little Gidding was visited by a fleeing King Charles I shortly before his defeat in the English Civil War⁷⁸:

*"If you came this way in may time, you would find the hedges
White again, in May, with voluptuary sweetness,*

⁷⁰ Ibid, pages 177-183

⁷¹ Ibid, page 200.

⁷² Ibid, page 178.

⁷³ Ibid, page 200.

⁷⁴ Ibid, page 178.

⁷⁵ Eliot, Thomas Stearns "Collected Poems 1909-1962" (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 201-209

⁷⁶ Little Gidding Church, Available –

<http://www.littlegiddingchurch.org.uk/index.html>

⁷⁷ Eliot, Thomas Stearns "Collected Poems 1909-1962" (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 192-200

⁷⁸ Little Gidding Church, Available –

<http://www.littlegiddingchurch.org.uk/index.html>

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*It would be the same at the end of the journey,
If you came by night like a broken king".⁷⁹*

The use of "*voluptuary*"⁸⁰ here enhances the suggestion that, no matter how beautiful nature appears or how sensually pleasing it seems, the spirituality of Little Gidding is so complex it is impossible to grasp on first arrival; highlighting the lack of human comprehension when it comes to anything beyond material satisfaction. Furthermore, the potential for religion to grant us deeper understanding is implied by Eliot's discussion that the monastery is the closest you can get to spiritual fulfilment: "*But this is the nearest, in place and time*"⁸¹. Moreover, the reference to time in this line indicates that religion is eternally present; however, unlike nature, faith connects us directly to a higher meaning, hence is superior in the search for enlightenment.

The importance of religion over nature is supported in the exploration of war, and the destruction of the natural world. The second section of *Little Gidding*⁸² is set in the aftermath of a bombing raid:

*"Ash on an old man's sleeve
Is all the ash the burnt roses leave. Dust in the air suspended
Marks the place where a story ended"*⁸³

⁷⁹ Eliot, Thomas Stearns "*Collected Poems 1909-1962*" (1974), Faber & Faber, page 201

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Eliot, Thomas Stearns "*Collected Poems 1909-1962*" (1974), Faber & Faber, page 202

⁸² Eliot, Thomas Stearns "*Collected Poems 1909-1962*" (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 201-209

⁸³ Eliot, Thomas Stearns "*Collected Poems 1909-1962*" (1974), Faber & Faber, page 203

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The metaphor of burnt roses suggests that nature is unable to provide spiritual fulfilment if it is overshadowed by war; showing Eliot's realisation that religion and faith offers a more substantial answer to existentialism than a mere connection to the natural world. Aligning with the Anglican teachings of nature as part of creation, Eliot realises that we cannot achieve spiritual enlightenment purely through a connection to wider creation; rather we must exist harmoniously with the creator.

In exploring this further Eliot vocalises the failure of nature to provide adequate fulfilment:

*"First, the cold friction of expiring sense
Without enchantment, offering no promise
But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit."⁸⁴*

The idea of sense "*expiring*"⁸⁵ indicates that Eliot believed he had reached the end of his journey, but that war forced him to prolong his search by highlighting that the solace found in nature is vulnerable.

The consequent importance of faith ties to Eliot's further exploration of religion and salvation. Firstly, "*the dove descending breaks the air*"⁸⁶ shows that the Holy Spirit, of which the dove is symbolic⁸⁷, will lead past the obstacles to fulfilment. Furthermore, the line: "*to be redeemed from fire by*

⁸⁴ Eliot, Thomas Stearns "*Collected Poems 1909-1962*" (1974), Faber & Faber, page 205

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid, page 207

⁸⁷ Luke 3:22, The Bible. Available – <http://biblehub.com/luke/3-22.htm>

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*fire*⁸⁸ indicates that in a world where hellish fire reigns free, as it does in this time of war, faith will liberate us through the fires of the Pentecost⁸⁹. This reinforces that in the failure of natural enlightenment, a connection to religion is paramount.

Finally, *Little Gidding*⁹⁰ is concluded with the repeat use of symbols present in the previous *Quartets*⁹¹ to reiterate the cyclical development of Eliot's journey into existentialism; such as the yew-tree from *Burnt Norton*⁹², earth from *East Coker*⁹³ and the river from *The Dry Salvages*⁹⁴. Alongside this, the conclusive lines of the poem return to the idea that despite the confusion of the war, harmony is found in simplicity:

*"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".*⁹⁵

Here, faith itself is symbolised in Eliot's hope, that even in times of such pain and suffering "*all manner of thing shall be well*"⁹⁶; if only we are able to remove ourselves from the turmoil to connect to ourselves and religion. The penultimate line illustrates the spiritual elevation achieved through such

⁸⁸ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, page 207

⁸⁹ Ibid, page 201 and BBC *"Pentecost"*, Available –

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/holydays/pentecost.shtml>

⁹⁰ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, page 201-209

⁹¹ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 175-209

⁹² Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 177-183

⁹³ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, page 184-191

⁹⁴ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, page 192-200

⁹⁵ Eliot, Thomas Stearns *"Collected Poems 1909-1962"* (1974), Faber & Faber, page 209

⁹⁶ Ibid.

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reversion by harnessing the image of a coronation. Conclusively, the harmony of the last line reinforces that all will synthesise and conclude meaningfully, and it is merely circumstance that dictates the balance of "fire"⁹⁷, whether war or the need for religion, with "the rose"⁹⁸, the simpler and less sinister connection to the natural world. This harmonious conclusion is the destination of his journey, and that of all life.

Overall, *The Four Quartets*⁹⁹ provided for TS Eliot an outlet for his exploration of existentialism. The first three, *Burnt Norton*¹⁰⁰, *East Coker*¹⁰¹ and *The Dry Salvages*¹⁰² focus purely on humanity's connection to the natural world in the search for spiritual fulfilment; using contradictory settings to highlight the foolish, destructive tendencies of the modern world that compromise an otherwise peaceful harmony with nature. Eliot chooses settings embedded within his own history to emphasise the place of nature within our roots, exemplifying the necessity for a connection with the past. The final poem, *Little Gidding*¹⁰³, was more closely influenced by the destruction of the Second World War, emphasising to Eliot the importance of a harmony with religion in achieving spiritual salvation. Setting is also pivotal to this, acting to reinforce the potential of faith in enlightenment.

As such, the developing exploration of existentialism, embedded first in nature and laterally in religion, is vitally supported by setting throughout *The*

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Eliot, Thomas Stearns "*Collected Poems 1909-1962*" (1974), Faber & Faber, pages 175-209

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, pages 177-183

¹⁰¹ Ibid, pages 184-191

¹⁰² Ibid, pages 192-200

¹⁰³ Ibid, pages 201-209

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*Four Quartets*¹⁰⁴; enhancing the message of TS Eliot that spiritual fulfilment is found in simplicity, through a connection to both creation, symbolised in nature, and the creator, symbolised in faith.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, pages 175-209

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