

New posts for the Four Quartets website, September 9

Bounding box showing extent of East Coker

Map showing the position of East Coker within the United Kingdom



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Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

From: Charles Williams, *The Greater Trumps*, (1932). *Eliot cites this novel as the source of his imagery of the dance.*

He stood away from her a step or two, and then, looking not at her but at the table, he began again to speak. "Imagine, then, if you can," he said, imagine that everything which exists takes part in the movement of a great dance – everything, the electrons, all growing and decaying things, men and beasts, trees and stones, everything that changes, and there is nothing anywhere that does not change. That change - that's what we know of the immortal dance; the law in the nature of things – that's the measure of the dance, why one thing changes swiftly and another slowly, why there is seeming accident and incalculable alteration, why men hate and love and grow hungry, and cities that have stood for centuries fall in a week, why the smallest wheel and the mightiest world revolve, why blood flows and the heart beats and the brain moves, why your body is poised on your ankles and the Himalaya are rooted in the earth – quick or slow, measurable or immeasurable, there is nothing at all anywhere but the dance. Imagine it – imagine it, see it all at once and in one!"



From *The Boke named the Governour*, (1531) by Sir Thomas Elyot (c. 1496- 1546). Elyot (in a sketch above by Holbein the Younger) was, a distant ancestor of T.S., a

friend of Thomas More and a high official in Thomas Cromwell's administration of Henry VIII's realm. He was a humanist and an early advocate of the use of the English language in the writing of works of literature.

It is diligently to be noted that the associatinge of man and woman in daunsing, they both obseruing one nombre and tyme in their meuyings [movings], was nat begonne without a special consideration, as well for the necessarye coniunction of these two persones, as for the intimation of sundry virtues, whiche be by them represented. And for as moche as by the association of a man and a woman in daunsinge may be signified matrimonie, I coulde in declarynge the dignitie and commoditie of that sacrament make intiere volumes, if it were not so communely knowen to all men, that almost euery frere lymytour carieth it written in his bosom.... In euery daunse, of a moste auncient custome, there daunseth to gether a man and a women, holding eche other by the hande or the arme, which betokeneth concorde.

For Eliot's imagery of the dawn wind wrinkling and sliding, I always see in my mind's eye the opening of the early 1950's NBC series *Victory at Sea*. You can see that opening here, on YouTube: https://youtu.be/fSCWi0ivx9w?si=ixDsb_sWatFrX2z_.

From *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* by Saint John of the Cross (1542-1591), Carmelite priest and advisor, and confidant of St. Teresa of Avila. He was spiritual director to Teresa's nuns and the author of several classics of Western Christian spirituality. Eliot paraphrases his work in several places in the Quartets, as the text below in East Coker.

To reach satisfaction in all
Desire satisfaction in nothing.
To come to possess all
Desire the possession of nothing.
To arrive at being all
Desire to be nothing.
To come to the knowledge of all
Desire the knowledge of nothing.

To come to enjoy what you have not
You must go by a way in which you enjoy not.
To come to the knowledge you have not
You must go by a way in which you know not.

To come to the possession you have not
You must go by a way in which you possess not.
To come to be what you are not
You must go by a way in which you are not.

When you delay in something
You cease to rush toward the all.
For to go from the all to the all
You must deny yourself of all in all.
And when you come to the possession of the all
You must possess it without wanting anything.
Because if you desire to have something in all
Your treasure in God is not purely your all.

In this nakedness the spirit finds its quietude and rest. For in coveting nothing, nothing tires it by pulling it up and nothing oppresses it by pushing it down, because it is in the center of its humility. When it covets something, by this very fact it tires itself.

(*The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book 1, Chapter 13, sections 11-13)

Robert Frost, *Fire and Ice*.

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

The opening verses of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. (Public domain, translator not identified)

Midway upon the journey of our life
I found myself within a forest dark,
For the straightforward pathway had been lost.

Ah me! how hard a thing it is to say
What was this forest savage, rough, and stern,
Which in the very thought renews the fear.
