

"Now and in England"

Four Quartets, Place, and Martin Heidegger's Concept of Dwelling

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Introduction¹

I had my existence. I was there.

Me in place and the place in me.

“A Herbal” – Seamus Heaney (43)²

T.S. Eliot's poem, *Four Quartets*, is foremost a meditation on place, a psychological narration of its significance. Each quartet is named for a place which, because of either historical or personal memory, holds importance for Eliot. “Burnt Norton” was published in April 1936, “East Coker” in March 1940, “The Dry Salvages” in February 1941, and “Little Gidding” in October 1942. The quartets appeared in a collected volume in May 1943, forming a single poem. Eliot's engagement with place in *Four Quartets* is unusual, for though the quartets are named after places, three of which are in England and one in the United States, for the most part the content of the quartets do not offer a poetic description of the places. Rather, Eliot evokes “place” as an ontological topology by describing it in psychological and existential terms of belonging and home. This sense of belonging is established and maintained through the complex poetic narrative which the poem weaves. This paper argues that the work of the philosopher Martin Heidegger, particularly his notion of dwelling, helps us explore how Eliot, in his last and greatest work, comes to understand the role the four places celebrated in *Four Quartets* have in shaping and confirming his identity. Interpreted through Heidegger's later philosophy,

Eliot's poem offers us a sense of what it truly means to *dwell*, to be “at home” in the world. *Four Quartets* does this by illuminating the profound ontological relationship we can have with place. As the paper will show, the evocation of the four landscapes that make up the *Quartets* confirms that “poetically man / Dwells on this earth” (PLT 214),³ in the words of Friederich Hölderlin (1770-1843), a German Romantic poet much loved by Heidegger.

This paper draws on Heidegger's later work, particularly the concept of dwelling, as a philosophical bridge to support the claims of Eliot's poem. I begin by considering the meaning of dwelling itself and its relation to what Heidegger calls “enframing,” then discuss the relationship of place with narrative, and finally briefly demonstrate how these ideas can be brought into dialogue with *Four Quartets*.

Dwelling, Modern Technology and Poetry

Dwelling, Martin Heidegger writes, is the proper relationship of humankind to Being (LH 227-228).⁴ Being is the central concept in Heidegger's philosophy. The term points to the very fabric of existence itself, the mysterious fact that there *is* something rather than nothing and that we are able to behold it and are, in our very existence, ineluctably open to the possibilities it offers. Thus we have the potential to have a “proper” relationship to Being, a relationship characterized fundamentally as

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“freedom,” meaning that our essential nature, as the “site of openness” or “clearing of Being” (LH 229) is one of *freeing* potential. A simple example of this potential is a carpenter, who through various materials and techniques, responds to both his craftsmanship and the raw materials the earth provides, and creates something new, something which did not previously materially exist – say, a table. In Heidegger’s terms, this table is literally “unconcealed,” through the freeing process he calls *poiesis*, or “bringing-forth” (QCT 317).⁵ However, the revealing of the table, *as table* conceals other things that could have been revealed in the wood; thus revealing and concealing occur simultaneously, enabled by human beings who are the site of openness in which Being can freely be brought to presence. A similar example, more fitting for our purposes, is a poet and the blank page. The act of writing and creating a poem distils a particular experience of reality, while at the same time covering over other possibilities which are not expressed.

These two examples illustrate the general and genuine way of conceiving of human existence, characterized as “openness” to the world, essentially free. Our “openness” is inherently temporal; we are “ecstatic,” meaning that our essence is to “stand out” of the past and project ourselves towards the future from the present (BT 377).⁶ Ideally freedom should be unhindered, while at the same time responsible; in

the language of Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, freedom can be characterized as *care*. We create ourselves as individuals and communities, while also “sparing and preserving” the nature of both “earth” and “world” (PLT 147). “Earth” for Heidegger points to the natural physical realm which sustains human life. “World” is then the complex of meaning structures, practices and values which humankind brings into being by the act of living together on the earth. Earth never disappears wholly into world; the mysteries of natality and death, the untameable forces of nature, bear witness to its primordial essence, even within our most sophisticated worlds. So, though humankind has the potential to create many possible worlds, only a world that is responsible, that takes cognisance of the role of earth, can truly be a “free sphere” which sets things at peace and, “safe-guards each thing in its nature” (PLT 147-148). In order for this “safe guarding” to occur dwelling must be established through “measure,” which Heidegger defines as the granted, recognised space between man and the gods (PLT 218). This mythic understanding of ourselves as existing in a realm before and surrounded by gods is largely gone in the Occident. Yet the world understood as a sacred place has been a human reality for much of its existence. “Man,” Heidegger reminds us, “has always measured himself with and against something heavenly” (PLT 218). To lose sight of the

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space separating us from the gods is, essentially, to lose sight of the holy. The holy is a vital dimension of our humanity, and acknowledging it secures our relationship to the gods and affirms our sense of dwelling as mortals upon the earth. Only in taking this genuine measure can man live “commensurately” with his nature and dwell fully within the free sphere that surrounds him (PLT 219). This is the “proper relationship” which defines dwelling, which enables us to transform our environment from earth into world, while keeping both in balance. Human freedom, expressed to its fullest potential, is what enables dwelling.

Because dwelling takes place on the earth, it must involve a physical location. Heidegger explores how dwelling transforms this location from mere space into home or dwelling place. This transformation is the creation of an ontological topology, a way of experiencing existence as inextricably connected with place, such that an individual’s understanding of him- or herself is only fully grasped within the context of the place which shapes his or her identity. This shaping, which is manifest in the meaningful structures and relationships that surround us, affirms that to be human means to be part of, and in, a world with others, grounded in place. This world is formed by the historical narrative which extends before, during and after an individual’s life. Each of

us is singled out of the broader narrative of human existence by the unique events of our own natality and death. Dwelling accounts for how the “space” that surrounds us is transformed into significant “place.” It explains how the earth which man dwells *upon* is transformed into a world which man dwells *in*. As mentioned above, this transformation does not obliterate the role of earth or assert the domination of world within the two-fold relationship; rather their mutual tension supports and fully enables the role of man as dweller (OWA 168).⁷

To dwell then, simply put, is to be *at home* somewhere (LH 260). It means to be in a world of familiarity and peace. Truly dwelling in one place rather than another requires the cultivation and sedimentation of an emotional and psychological attachment towards that place. The truism “home is where the heart is” succinctly expresses the meaning of this bond because the heart is, metaphorically, the emotional centre of our being. What this means in more realistic terms is that to dwell somewhere, to consider a place as *home*, requires *thinking* of oneself as belonging there. For Heidegger this thinking is a kind of ontological “building” which both prompts and serves as the basis for physical building. Building and thinking are both “inescapable for dwelling” (PLT 158).

The activities of thinking and building must

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ideally, as already noted, be practiced in accordance with both the nature of the earth and our essence as humankind manifest in the world. Because humankind is responsible for creating place, in both the ontological and physical sense, we have the ability to create a *home* in one instance, or make ourselves *homeless* in another. It is significant that all of Heidegger's writing on dwelling occurs after the Second World War, when physical homelessness was a reality for millions of people. (This was also the period in which T.S. Eliot wrote much of *Four Quartets*, a poem celebrating the importance of place in the face of witnessing so much destruction of it.) For Heidegger the context of the war prompts an attempt to uncover a meaning of dwelling which goes beyond "merely the occupying of a lodging" (PLT 213). He wants to uncover a deeper, more profound meaning of dwelling in order to establish the genuine meaning of home. The event of the Second World War was itself the consequence of a deeper existential homelessness, rooted in the world's "disenchantment" (Taylor 25-26). Heidegger particularly singles out two currents in this disenchanting, which he calls "technological enframing" and the "loss of the gods."⁸ In his diagnosis, the overwhelming certainties of mathematical calculability and technological efficiency leave no place for humankind to acknowledge and ponder the mystery of Being itself, to see the world in terms of

"divine radiance" (PLT 89), and to experience the openness which they themselves are as a result of this mystery. Our "proper" relationship with Being is endangered, and the world is bereft of dwelling, so much so that even the possibility of dwelling is closed off to us. The consequence is that a world in which we can no longer dwell is a world in which we are essentially no longer free.

Dwelling thus stands in direct contrast to "enframing" [*Gestell*], which is the term Heidegger uses to define the essence of modern technology (QCT 325). The problem with this technology is the nature of its revealing; essentially, instead of a "bringing-forth," modern technology is a violent "challenging-forth" (QCT 319-320). Both bringing- and challenging-forth are ways of revealing the hidden potential of Being, but the difference between them is the attitude and method which underpin this revealing. Ancient technology, technology which works in harmony with the natural forces and processes of nature, as a "bringing-forth," is a process which *fre*es something into its essence (Young, Later Heidegger 37). The wood the carpenter uses is transformed into a table, but the essential nature of the wood is unchanged. In fact, the very properties wood is celebrated for, its durability, strength and beauty, are all preserved in its transformation into an enduring use object.⁹ In contrast, modern technology is a "setting-upon, in the

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sense of a challenging-forth" (QCT 321). This single, overwhelming way of revealing effectively conceals the nature of the tree as a potential object of beauty, as part of a forest, as part of an ecological system, or as the acorn your grandfather planted. None of these potential disclosures matter, and are swept away leaving only the tree understood as a storehouse of material to be used – what Heidegger calls "standing reserve" [*Bestand*] (QCT 322). Effectively enframing eliminates the earth as *earth*, transforming everything into *world*, conceived purely as "standing reserve," as resource. Evidently, dwelling is associated with ancient technology, but fundamentally inimical to the aggressive, overwhelming nature of modern technology and its primary motive of enframing.

Enframing threatens our essential human freedom because it determines our choices, so much so that it conceals our ability to recognise our existence as free and open to a myriad of possibilities (QCT 331). Rather the principle of enframing dominates these choices resulting in the "supreme danger," namely the loss of our free human essence (QCT 331). Enframing drives technological advancement forward while at the same time concealing the possibility of dwelling. It is this principle of modern technology which, if left unchecked, poses a fundamental danger to the very nature of human existence.

Heidegger contends that the decisive confrontation

with modern technology must occur within a realm that is also a revealing of Being, yet fundamentally different from technology. Such a realm he identifies tentatively as art (QCT 340). Art offers up a way of revealing Being without "challenging it forth" in the way of enframing. It offers a way of disclosing a world by narrating and expressing individual and communal human experience. Art is an exemplary form of revealing, an expression of revealing purely for its own sake, and so it is an expression of the ideal of human freedom. It accomplishes revealing, in all its myriad forms, without the engulfing coercive violence of enframing. This is the context of what Heidegger means when he says poetry, conceived in its broadest sense as all artistic creation, "is what really lets us dwell Poetic creation, which lets us dwell, is a kind of building" (PLT 213).

From a Heideggerian position, *Four Quartets* deals with dwelling on two levels, firstly in that home and identity on the earth form its subject, and secondly because it is poetry, and as poetry it is also that way in which the possibility of dwelling can be most effectively thought. What this means is that Eliot, as poet, is enabling a "building" in the sense that he is building through writing poetry about the nature of dwelling. The fact that he is doing this in a time when dwelling itself has become a question confirms that, for Heidegger, he is truly fulfilling the

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role of poet, for he is a poet writing “in a destitute time” (PLT 139) when the need for poetry is great. These poets “who are of the more venturesome kind are under way on the track of the holy because they experience the unholy as such” (PLT 138). Eliot, whose poem is a spiritual meditation about place and dwelling, is just this “venturesome kind” of poet, particularly because his earlier poetry, such as *The Waste Land* and *Hollow Men*, is a testament to the “unholy,” and *Four Quartets* itself was composed during our most “unholy” time. Eliot has experienced both those dimensions of reality and so his poetry is able to express both. He understands that only once the proper relationship with the gods, with Being, has been restored, can humankind really dwell, be existentially “at home” and experience the world again as a “holy” place.

Four Quartets: Home and Narrative Identity

In *Four Quartets* Eliot re-creates and re-infuses this sense of home, i.e. the world understood as a “holy place” through narrative. Narrative is the fundamental way thinking that promotes building, in Heidegger’s sense, can transform the earth into dwelling place. This is principally because language is how we embed ourselves in a world, and how we respond to the context of that world. Narrative, the story we tell about ourselves, allows this embedding to occur and allows our sense of place to be developed and

understood, both collectively and individually, with and through human interaction.

This narrating activity occurs in what is initially an “objective, physical environment” (Malpas 184). The process of coming to *belong* to this physical environment happens through the narrating of oneself into a new context (Malpas 184). To return to terms discussed earlier, this narrating is a *thinking* which is also a *building*, and it is this building which leads to dwelling. Space is transformed into dwelling place through the gradual blurring of the initial, distinct subject/object differentiation between the individual and his or her environment. Over time the subject or community becomes situated, no longer thinking of itself as separate or indifferent to the environment it inhabits. This “humanized”, “personalised” character of place can be viewed as indicating both the

character of places as unitary structures possessed of a certain identity and particularity of their own (something expressed in the giving of a name), and the obtaining of a certain interdependence, rather than simply a one-way dependence, between place and person.

(Malpas 184-185)

Creating this interdependence between place and person is at the centre of Eliot’s poem. To understand the four landscapes as dwelling places Eliot interweaves a complex pattern of symbol, history,

memory and event. He does this through a juxtaposed, psychological and spiritual narrative of experience, both individual and communal, both historically real and poetically imaged. All of these aspects have, as their centre point, the poet and man whose identity and close personal association with these four places makes their existence interdependent on his.

There is a debate in Heidegger scholarship on whether our ontological relationship to place relates primarily to our temporal or topological existence.¹⁰ If what binds us to place, in terms of this “interdependence,” is our sense of narrative identity, then both are necessary – and this is something Eliot’s poem helps reveal. Narrating is an act of human speaking or writing which requires both a temporal and topological grounding. This act, which occurs on the level of praxis, also requires a detached memorization from lived experience (Kristeva 16). One narrates the past as it is remembered from the present and imagines how the future might unfold. Thus narration is always temporalized in the form of an event, it has a temporal framework, but the event gives it topological sustenance. Narration forms part of the “ecstatic” essence of human beings, in the sense that it takes account of our temporal modes, allowing us to interpret the past, understand the present and reflect on the future. This “ecstatic” essence though is only possible because it is always

already occurring in “place.” Narrative thus distils our temporal being while affirming its topological nature. If we consider the opening of the first quartet, “Burnt Norton,” named after the Manor where the events it narrates occurred we see how Eliot demonstrates the mutual enfolding of time and place through the poetic narrative. This famous passage, which reflects on how “[t]ime present and time past” may both be “present in time future, / And time future ... in time past,” concerns a walk that Eliot took in the rose-garden of Burnt Norton Manor with Emily Hale, a long-time friend and, at the time, potential spouse:

Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden.

(CPP 172)

The first section of the opening passage (ll.1-17) ponders the results of the decisions they made on their walk: “[w]hat might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present.” The second part (ll.17b-39) evokes for the reader scattered memories of the walk itself. Eliot begins by meditating on human temporality, seeking a way to redeem our linear, mortal existence, which appears “unredeemable,” for all our decisions point to a present which seemingly cannot be undone. Yet the opening movement of “Burnt Norton” suggests that

it may be possible to redeem our temporal existence through brief bewildering moments of, in Heidegger's language, "transport" and "enchantment."¹¹ In the context of "Burnt Norton" the encounter with the "heart of light" is such a moment. This moment allows Eliot to give a detached narration of a remembered past, while at the same time allows him to imagine the different trajectories the moment in the rose-garden may have taken, but did not.

Though the reader is given no details of the event itself, of what Eliot and Hale actually talked about in the rose-garden or experienced, Eliot's poem conveys a strong sense of its importance for him. The experience described is epiphanic, what Julia Kristeva calls an "exemplary moment": the art of narration she writes resides "in the ability to condense the action into an exemplary moment, to extract it from the continuous flow of time, and reveal a *who*" (8). The point is that the opening of "Burnt Norton" is not merely prose narration; rather it poetically lays bare the ontological functioning of such exemplary, epiphanic moments. Eliot's memory of the rose-garden at Burnt Norton Manor may consist of the scattered sensory perceptions and emotions he experienced at the time, described in the second part of the quotation above, but actually, fundamentally, the event in the rose-garden was what happened to him ontologically; the person the poet is now (the

person writing "Burton Norton" in the autumn of 1935 in the presbytery at 9 Grenville Place), the *who*, in his very being, only exists because of his past experience in the garden (both real and imagined).

Eliot's poetic technique brings out both the nature of his individual exemplary moment, and the functioning of all such moments. He brings to his readers' attention how such moments, imbedded in their physical setting, come to symbolise in memory those life-changing choices, non-retractable flashes of insight, moods of elation or sorrow, that make us what we are – even if the importance of these events was not noticed at the time. This is how narrative reveals "a *who*", confirming identity, narrated through event. Eliot "extracts," in Kristeva's terms, a moment from time and condenses it. However, the moment and Eliot's identity are profoundly shaped by place itself, the quartet title signalling the mutual interdependence of place and person, not only for this quartet, but for all four. While Kristeva is attentive to the temporal aspect of the event, without acknowledging its topological features narrative identity cannot be fully accounted for.

In *Four Quartets* this complex of place and person is evoked for the reader by what Marshall McLuhan calls Eliot's landscape motif, by which McLuhan means the juxtaposing of widely diverse and discontinuous objects in a particular quartet,

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within Eliot's interweaving of re-occurring themes and symbols throughout all the *Quartets*. Together this "becomes a precise musical means of orchestrating that which could never be rendered by systematic discourse. Landscape is the means of presenting . . . experiences which are united in existence but not in conceptual thought" (239). These emotional perceptual "landscapes," like the rose-garden from "Burnt Norton," are powerful poetic tools because they mimic human memory; in this respect poetry is the narrative form which is most authentic to memory, because memory is not chronological in its remembering but patterned by a myriad of sensory, emotional and psychological features. Human remembering is not governed by strict "clock" temporality and because of this poetry is the truest form of narrative because it expresses life in life's imprecisions – as a meaningful jumble of memories, emotions, places and events. The rose-garden in *Four Quartets* functions as the motif which unites the diverse emotional and psychological experiences that Eliot re-visits in his poetic narration of that moment. It draws the past and the future into an order which is not causal linear temporality, but a more genuine expression of what human temporality is.

Eliot carries this technique on through the other three *Quartets*, the title of each signalling the importance that place has for the poet. However, as

the reader knows, the content of each quartet draws on a variety of personal, religious, philosophical, historical and psychological experiences and knowledge, all of which contributes to evoking the powerful ontological attachment Eliot has to each place. Throughout *Four Quartets* Eliot traces his personal coming-to-terms with his historically situated finitude, by acknowledging these places as "dwelling places," as homes, which through ancestral and personal association form a significant part of his own identity. This is the interdependence of thinking and dwelling that Heidegger describes.¹² A clear example of this is a passage from the first movement of "East Coker" (ll.23b-46), particularly these lines:

The association of man and woman
In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie –
A dignified and commodious sacrament.
Two and two, necessarye coniunction,
Holding eche other by the hand or the arm
Whiche betokeneth concorde.

(CPP 178)

Here we encounter phrases of sixteenth-century English with their archaic spellings. With this language Eliot acknowledges the presence of his ancestors and their beginnings in the village of East Coker. In the writing of "East Coker" Eliot makes a symbolic return to his place of origin. East Coker village is the ancestral home of Eliot's family, in the

countryside of Somerset, west of London, though his ancestors left for the New World in search of religious freedom around 1669 (Kramer 66). Eliot visited St Michael's Church in East Coker – where his ashes are interred today – in 1937, two years before he wrote the quartet itself (1939-1940). The Elyots, as the family name was once spelt, had lived in East Coker for several generations and church records testify to their presence in the village from as early as 1560 (Kramer 67). Thus Eliot, in this quartet, signifies his identity as inextricably linked with the village of East Coker and his ancestors who once dwelt there. Furthermore, the fact that the first quartet "Burnt Norton" is followed by "East Coker," both places of symbolic and historic value to Eliot's own identity, begins to create the broader narrative structure which enables the poet to relate to these places (and the places of the other two quartets) as dwelling places. Even though he was not born in East Coker village, he can nevertheless claim an ontological belonging there because of the historical, genealogical trace of his family. This over-arching narrative structure of place, signalled in the title of each quartet, is linked to Eliot's own existence, which promotes the thinking of these places as dwelling places.

Eliot also uses an image similar to Heidegger's "building," in a passage from "East Coker" (ll.1-13) that plays on the word "house" as meaning a physical

building and also, metonymically, the generations of a family line:

In my beginning is my end. In succession
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
...
Houses live and die

(CPP: 177)

These opening lines of "East Coker" present us with the interspersion of two temporal cycles. One is the linear cycle of a single life which is finite and marked by its natality and death. This cycle falls within the broader temporal cycle of human dwelling itself, situated upon the earth. The relationship between dwelling and place asserts itself as a continual process of "building." Building means a beginning, but contains also its ending. Both form part of becoming and thus in "my beginning is my end." In the meeting of earth and world, of "old stone" and "new building," this constant state of becoming unfolds as decay and rebirth.

Houses, like humans, also "live and die." Our understanding of place, as home, is not distinct from the understanding of ourselves. The image of a transforming landscape in the passage, the earth itself, expresses human dwelling and confirms our ontological relation to place. Supporting this Kristeva writes that the very possibility of representing birth and death, "to conceive of them in time and to explain

them to others – that is *the possibility of narrating* – grounds human life in what is specific to it, in what is non-animal about it, non-physiological” (8). Eliot illustrates this grounding in an exemplary manner in the above passage, for he poetically narrates what grounds human life, natality and death within the broader pattern of human dwelling upon the earth. He narrates the continual interrelation of the building and passing away of place, in the context of an experience which is uniquely human. In this way he affirms the important necessary tension between world and earth, each dependent on the other for its genuine sustenance.

From the individual sense of identity expressed in “Burnt Norton,” to the communal, genealogical sense developed in “East Coker,” the poem moves towards articulating an important dimension of the “holy” in the opening movement of “The Dry Savages.” Although the river may be “a strong brown god – sullen, untamed and intractable,” at some point it must become “only a problem confronting the builder of bridges.”

The problem once solved, the brown god is
almost forgotten

By the dwellers in cities – ever, however,
implacable,

Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer,
reminder

Of what men chose to forget.

(CPP: 184)

In these lines Eliot captures that tense, important rift Heidegger describes between “earth” and “world” and the importance of “measure” in maintaining this tension. As mentioned in the previous section “safe guarding” the earth is established through “measure” – the recognised space between man and the gods (PLT 218). In the above passage Eliot unites the relationship of the earth and gods by giving the river the status of a “strong brown god” with a will of its own. He captures the portentous, sacral aspect of the earth and the gods that Heidegger also alludes to, in the image of the river. It is seen as both useful and an obstacle, forming part of the daily life of the country dweller but forgotten and overlooked once it is integrated into the cityscape. Yet, the river remains implacable; it floods and dries up and occasionally asserts itself through natural disaster. Though human beings, superficially, forget the river and worship the technology of the machine, the river does not forget us. It is an aspect of the earth deeply embedded in our world. Its rhythm is part of our heartbeat so to speak, for we too are literally from the earth, and form part of the cycles of the river, though we may forget that. In confirmation of this the opening line of the next passage from “The Dry Savages” begins “The river is within us, the sea is all about us” (CPP

184). Eliot asserts the primordial connection between humankind and the earth here. Genuine dwelling is the recognition of the mutual relationship between the world of humankind and the sustaining role of the earth. It is a measured existence, unlike technological enframing which attempts to obliterate the role of the earth and thus close off the possibility of dwelling. Dwelling is thus not only *the* alternative to enframing, but the mode itself in which other possibilities of existence are disclosed.

The culmination of Eliot's story of building and moving, in search of identity and peaceful dwelling, comes in the last movement of *Four Quartets*, "Little Gidding," which was Eliot's last published poem. The quartet is named for the small shrine established at Little Gidding in the county of Huntingdonshire. In many ways Eliot regarded it as his spiritual home. At the very least, he affirms his own ontological relationship to place, to Little Gidding specifically. For though there are "other places / Which also are the world's end ... this is the nearest." In terms of human finitude and our historical situatedness, this place is, for Eliot's present, "the nearest":

... England and nowhere. Never and always.

(CPP: 192)

It is his spiritual dwelling place, his home. However, he acknowledges that the present is always narrated and understood through its past, through "the

communication / Of the dead" who speak through the living. Thus what "is England" is the language of its dead kept alive in the memory of its living. History itself is a pattern of events and exemplary "moments" which shape the present. Yet it is through our sense of belonging to place, and its changing and transformation, that these moments are patterned and narrated. So, then, "History is now and England" (CPP: 197), because it is the poet's very being in a secluded chapel on a winter's afternoon in 1936 that confirms who and what he is in terms of a broader pattern that extends beyond the boundaries of his own life. Thus history is *now*, this moment in time and place, is literally a paradox, but an ontological truth. This poetry confirms that, following Paul Ricoeur, we are "entangled in narratives, feeding on them and being influenced by them" (75).¹³ Eliot shows this amply by giving us four quartets, four places and within them many different narratives from different traditions, all of which show how complex our sense of self is. The poem shows us how the meaning of this selfhood is never ontologically separable from place. The repetition of "England" acts to confirm Eliot's identity, as an American born into a Unitarian household who finds himself an Englishman professing the Anglican faith. This scene at Little Gidding is meant in many ways as the culmination of his life story as well as of *Four Quartets*.

Conclusion

Though *Four Quartets* is an intensely personal narrative, focusing on four obscure places that have meaning only to Eliot, it serves as his poetic testament to the possibility of dwelling. Eliot, in terms of Heidegger's definition, is truly an exemplary poet. His poem demonstrates some of the prerequisites of true dwelling: an acknowledgement of our ecstatic temporality, a cognisance of the claims of the earth and its rhythms, an openness to the strangeness of the divine. By narrating the steps by which he comes to feel at home "now and in England," he embodies in his poem the processes by which identity, the sense of "who" a person is, comes to existence, is confirmed, challenged, shaped and reshaped through being in *place*. And because he is portraying dwelling in *poetry*, he can articulate a sense of our nearness to place with a power that no philosophy can muster.

Notes

1. I am greatly indebted to Maria Prozesky and Prof. Julian Young for their careful and considered critique of previous versions of this essay.
2. S. Heaney, *Human Chain*. London: Faber and Faber, 2010.
3. I abbreviate Martin Heidegger's collection of essays, *Poetry, Language, Thought* as PLT.
4. I abbreviate Martin Heidegger's essay "Letter on Humanism" in his *Basic Writings* as LH.
5. I abbreviate Martin Heidegger's essay "The Question Concerning Technology" in his *Basic Writings* as QCT.
6. I abbreviate Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* as BT.
7. I abbreviate Martin Heidegger's essay "The Origin of the Work of Art" in his *Basic Writings* as OWA.

8. For a more detailed exposition of these ideas see J. Young's, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy*, esp. 35-36 & 45-53.

9. See H. Arendt, *The Human Condition* 136 onwards for a further development of Heidegger's understanding of our relationship to things in our world.

10. To get a sense of this debate see T. Sheehan, "A Paradigm Shift in Heidegger Research." *Continental Philosophy Review* 34 (2001): 183-202 for an atotopological approach to Heidegger which focusses on our being open, ecstatic temporal beings. For the topological perspective see J. Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* as well as J. Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being*.

11. Quoted from Heidegger in J. Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* 106-107. Young points out that this choice of words, "*Entrückung und Berückung*," "transport and enchantment," appears in Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy* 48, as well as his essay on Hölderlin's poem, "As when on a Holiday..." in *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* 76.

12. When initially Eliot conceived of writing the first two quartets into a larger unity he thought of calling them the "South Kensington Quartets" because that was the area of London he was living in. Smith, *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays* 255.

13. P. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative: Volume 1*. See also P. Vandevelde, "The Challenge of the "Such as It Was": Ricoeur's Theory of Narratives", in *Reading Ricoeur* 149.

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