word of admiration for the anonymous working printers who also produced this edition: in a total of some 1,800 pages there are probably no more than half-a-dozen printing errors: it is on such work also, in various ways, that serious scholarship depends.

The Dry Salvages—Topography as Symbol—II

by John D. Boyd, S.J.

To stop, then, at the mere recital of topography would be like having 'had the experience but missed the meaning'. Yet the meaning of the symbols which rise out of the topography enjoy a peculiar character precisely because, as Miss Gardner has already been quoted as saying: 'The landscape of *The Dry Salvages* is a landscape remembered.' I suggest that this symbolism, especially of the sea and the rocks and of the plight of the fishermen, has a peculiarly realistic quality. I use the word 'realistic' largely in an epistemological context, with, however, psychological and anthropological overtones. This quality refers to structure, theme and tone. Further, transforming and intensifying this realism is a structure best seen as deriving from a Christian imagination—an 'approach to the meaning restores the experience/In a different form'.

It is commonplace to say that Eliot's poetry is deeply indebted to the French *Symboliste* tradition. It is also commonplace to say that this tradition, as its theory and practice developed from Baudelaire through Rimbaud and Valéry, became more and more self-enclosed and private in tone and meaning. The strong idealist tendencies of its epistemology and its premises of the poet's isolation from society are well known.[1]

Whatever Eliot's rather rarefied and complex epistemological interests in his Harvard days, such as we find in his recently published thesis on F. H. Bradley, *Knowledge and Experience*, by the time of the *Quartets* his Christian belief had surely directed his imagination towards a more communal realism. This seems clear enough from the tenor of these poems, and in the preface to *Knowledge and Experience* we note: 'Forty-six years after my academic philosophizing came to an end, I find myself unable to think in the terminology of this essay. Indeed, I do not pretend to understand it.' (*Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley*, New York, 1964, p. 10).

[1]William Wimsatt, Jr., and Cleanth Brooks, *Literary Criticism: A Short History* (New York, 1957), pp. 590 ff.

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The strong realism at the heart of Eliot's theme of Christian redemption of time, which pervades the *Quartets*, involves a permeating sense of a transcendent God as the measure of man's meaning, of an objective eternity making sense of man in time. As the four poems progress, the realism involved in this redemption becomes more and more explicit with something of a cone-like comprehensive intensity, 'at the still point of the turning world'. The imagery of *The Dry Salvages* carries with it a rich empirical memory of the physical realities that constitute its raw material. The immediacy of the rocks and the sea and of the fishermen's lives is intensified in poetic transformation, and presents a greater sense of physical reality than, say, the imagery in *Burnt Norton*. In this respect the tone deriving from much of the symbolism of *Little Gidding* is more spiritual, or to use a poor word, more mystical in its reference, reflecting the realm of Grace and the Resurrection; spiritual, yet in a manner quite different from the speculation of *Burnt Norton*. One thinks of the opening passage of *Little Gidding* that begins: 'Midwinter spring is its own season', and ending: 'Where is the summer, the unimaginable / Zero summer?' At all events, I find a unique sense of the empirical in the dominant imagery of *The Dry Salvages*, and I believe it is due in good part to the impact of the topography just reviewed.

But this realism, Christian as it is, can perhaps, be more sharply understood if read in the context of the traditional Christian notion of Incarnation as the pattern of human redemption. I am suggesting that the pattern of the Incarnation and of its implications for human redemption has an analogue in the very structure of the symbolism of the rocks and the sea, as well as in what is said of the plight of the fishermen.

As an orthodox Christian Eliot believed that Christ, the God-Man, is a Divine Person eternally subsisting in his Divine Nature, but also subsisting in the created human nature he assumed in time. Because of the latter he became capable of human activity and experience. Further, he offered his redemptive sacrifice and rose from the dead in his human nature, although these were actions of a Divine Person. Though this is neither the time nor place for a long discussion of this central mystery of Christianity, it should be noted that the orthodox believer has always jealously guarded the unity of the Divine Person of Christ in both natures, yet the independence or non-confusion of these natures with each other. The Athanasian Creed reflects this faith of the Church against such a doctrine as Monophysitism, held by Apollinarius of Laodocea, which taught that in Christ the Divine Nature absorbed the human nature into itself.[1]

The theological and psychological implications of this seemingly rarefied subject are substantial. If the life of the redeemed is modelled on the pattern of Christ and his redeeming activity, it is important

[1]Louis Bouyer, of the Oratory, *Dictionary of Theology*, transl. Rev. C. U. Quinn (New York, 1965), p. 311. The Athanasian Creed occurs on Sunday at Prime in the *Breviarium Romanum*.

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to note that the human has not been bypassed or absorbed into the divine. For the redeemed the human situation must be embraced entirely as it is; and though it is redeemed, graced, and in a very meaningful way divinized, all its human implications, including the effects of sin, must be faced squarely. Hence all the anti-human or escapist forms of Christianity are not considered orthodox in this context. Christ brought the human and the divine together, in fact united them in his person; but he did not confuse them, nor have either of them cancel the other out. The victory of the divine was not at the expense of the truly human. Human realism, then, is the key to Christian realism; and the Christian imagination, which can reasonably be predicated of Eliot in this poem, will reflect this pattern. In his essay on Christian imagination, *Christ and Apollo: The Dimensions of the Literary Imagination*, Fr William Lynch sums up the theological basis in the Incarnation of this imaginative Christian realism in the following comment:

> The theologians have their own vocabulary, sometimes with divine sanction: St Paul seems to attribute the ascension of Christ into Heaven causally to His descent into the earth, and generally we ourselves will be stressing the great fact of Christology, that Christ moved down into all the realities of man to get to His father. (*New York*, 1963, p. 28).

Further, this incarnational pattern is invariably paradoxical both in the light of the incomprehensible meeting, though without confusion, of the human and divine in us, and in the light of the defects and limitations that characterize our persons and our human situation.

I believe that some such approach as this is needed to describe the peculiar structure of the symbolism of the rocks and the sea in *The Dry Salvages*. The on-going daily life of the fishermen (really of all men) is redeemed from the frustrations of isolated time by a proper union with the still point through the 'hardly, barely prayable / Prayer of the one Annunciation'. Yet, for all that, redemption is not rescue through escape but through immersion in the human in imitation of Christ's archetypal, redeeming act; and the inevitable paradox involved is something of a hither side of the central paradox in Hopkins' *Wreck of the Deutschland*, that of God's mercy in his mastery. The central description of the rocks, the Dry Salvages, shows this most clearly:

> And the ragged rock in the restless waters,
> Waves wash over it, fogs conceal it;
> On a halcyon day it is merely a monument,
> In navigable weather it is always a seamark
> To lay a course by: but in the sombre season
> Or the sudden fury, is what it always was.

When one reads this passage in connexion with the prayer of the Lady on the promontory and the fishermen's (and our) hardly,

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barely prayable share in it, this pattern of Incarnation emerges as quite essential to the poem's theme and its sombre tone. To be sure, the pattern is quite sombre and lacks the fuller implications of Resurrection, which must wait for the last Quartet. 'The tolling bell . . . rung by the unhurried / Ground swell', though now the 'sound of the sea bell's / Perpetual angelus', is still a warning to mariners that the 'ragged rock . . . is what it always was'.

A recent interpretation of this passage seems unaware of this important dimension, rooted as it is in the text and in the topography and theology here outlined. C. A. Bodelsen observes: ' "The ragged rock in the restless waters" is the Faith. "On a halcyon day it is merely a monument" (i.e. regarded as a venerable cultural heritage). "In navigable weather it is always a seamark / To lay a course by" (i.e. in normal times it is a guide for right conduct). But "in the sombre season / Or sudden fury, is what it always was", in times of distress and despair it remains our only refuge.' This interpretation turns Eliot's symbols into allegory, misconstruing both structure and meaning. It leaves the incarnational tension of the timeless and time very slack indeed, and avoids the basic paradox of the rocks and the sea as saviours through danger and destruction. Bodelsen appends a note to this passage about the name of the rocks, implying, I think, the same misunderstanding. 'The very name of the rocks, the Dry Salvages, calls up the ideas of a firm foothold in a troubled sea and of salvation'.[1] But more of this point in a moment.

From a slightly different vantage point Malcolm Ross seems to corroborate my claim that these symbols are incarnational in pattern, (he uses the word *sacramental*) and peculiarly topographical in source:

> The great achievement of Eliot's *Four Quartets* is, of course, in the sacramental re-possession of nature and time, things, and history. In these poems the sacramental act is consummated through, and by means of, contemporary sensibility and contemporary knowledge. . . . In *Dry Salvages* . . . you get a fine illustration of the recovery of authentic Christian symbol. The river and the sea of this poem are actual river and sea. You could get wet in them. They exist in their own unique right. . . . Yet this is not descriptive nature poetry; this is not Masefield. In Eliot the river is a river. But it rises, through psychological and anthropoligical allusion to ethical and spiritual levels of meaning for the life of the person, just as Eliot's sea, actually and sensuously known at one level, is also at another level the symbol of the motion and the intention of history. And beneath its chaotic and complex rhythm beats 'the unhurried ground swell, measuring time that is not our time', and

[1]C. A. Bodelsen, *T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets: A Commentary* (Copenhagen, 1958), p. 91. Another reading which seems to miss this structure of Incarnation and paradox in the symbolism of the rocks, turning the poem to a mystical and pantheistic mood it does not profess, is that of Krishna Sinha, *On the Four Quartets of T. S. Eliot*, (Devon, n.d.), pp. 71-72. 'The rocks have their own symbolism: Christ, moments of agony, the periodicity and permanence of Nature. Nature itself is God.'

> touching both exterior nature and interior man with inscrutable but perpetual benediction.
> I would say that Eliot as a Christian sacramentalist has, in the *Four Quartets*, overcome the fragmentation of contemporary culture by reabsorbing the natural or cosmic myth in the historical symbol. And I would say that he has done so in the terms proper to our moment in time.[1]

There remains one final remark about the name of the rocks, the Dry Salvages, and its import as title of the poem. Though somewhat related to each other, there are two problems here, not one; namely, the historical origin and meaning of the name of the rocks, and the meaning Eliot wishes it to have in the poem. Ultimately, only the latter is a literary problem.

Both these problems involve a set of homonyms. Our English word *salvage, to save*, derives from the Latin *salvare*, meaning the same. Our word *savage, a wild man*, however, derives from the Latin *silva, the woods*, through the adjective *silvaticus* (Late Latin *salvaticus*), describing *wild men* or *savages* who haunt the woods. A perusal of the entry *savage* in the O.E.D. shows a variant of the morpheme *savage*, namely *salvage*, which also has analogues in French, Italian, Portuguese and Roumanian. This variant was in common usage in seventeenth-century English. Hence we get a set of homonyms: *salvage—to save* and *salvage*—the variant of *savage—a wild man.* In 5b of this same entry, *savage*, we read in particular of *the salvage man*—a 'conventional representation of a savage in heraldry and pageants'.

Professor Morison has studied the problem of the regional name thoroughly and convincingly. He first disposes of Eliot's suggestion in the prenote (and with the acquiescence of the poet, as we shall presently see) that the *Dry* derives from the French *trois* (pity it is not a question of German influence!). Morison shows that maps do not begin to use the word *Dry* until 1867, 'when any derivation from *trois* would be farfetched'. Champlain and the French charted the area in the seventeenth century. Rather, the word *Dry* is not in uncommon use along the Atlantic coast for ledges bare at high water, which is the case of the Dry Salvages in contrast with the Little Salvages, which are covered twice daily (p. 236). As for the word *Salvages* in the name, after a detailed study of maritime histories and maps Morison strongly favours calling it a seventeenth-century variant of *Savages*, probably named for Indians in the neighbourhood, with a possible but not too probable influence of the French equivalent *Sauvages* through the work of Champlain (*ibid.*, pp. 236–243).

But more important for our purposes is the second problem, the import Eliot wishes the name to have as title of the poem. His prenote should be taken as part of the poem, a hint at the imaginative inference intended in the title. (We recall here the poetic importance of the other three titles of the *Quartets*.) Whatever Eliot's inaccuracy

[1]Malcolm Ross, 'The Writer as Christian', in *The New Orpheus: Essays Towards a Christian Poetic*, ed. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. (New York, 1964), pp. 91-92.

about the origin of the rocks' name, his imagination was attracted to the explanation he gave. He wrote in 1964 to 'Cousin Sam' Morison:

> I imagine that it was to my brother [Henry Ware, Jr.] that I owe that explanation of the title, and I seem to remember that the rocks were known to the local fishermen as the 'Dry Salvages'. But I myself can give no further explanation and it may be that mine owes more to my own imagination than to any explanation that I heard. (*ibid.*, p. 246).

In the light of the densely paradoxical structure of all the *Quartets* and especially of the argument for the paradoxical Christian realism outlined in this paper, it is not farfetched to think of Eliot as wanting us to keep in mind the paradox deriving from the violent opposition between *salvage* as *savage* and *salvage, to save.* The natural danger of the rocks makes the comparison with wild men realistic enough.

Further, in this connexion it is intriguing to speculate that there may be a hint here not only of the Christian paradox, but also of a transformation into it of the pagan practice of the *apotropaic.* Did Eliot, perhaps, fancy the name of the rocks having its origin in a euphemism, in the practice of warding off evil and avoiding sinister reference by using a kind of favourable name? It is a teasing temptation, at least, to see such a practice as germane to the various forms of fortune-telling and magic, which Eliot rejects in the last section of the poem as false ways of dealing with the redemption of time. Christian realism has always rejected the magical, replacing it with the sacramental, which is something quite different. It would be easy in the context of Christian realism to transform the apotropaic into the genuine paradox of salvation. At all events, this paradox seems implied by the title to reinforce what the poem's theme is surely saying, that men are salvaged through the savagery of the rocks and the sea; find mercy through this mastery.[1]

'Old [and not so old] men ought to be explorers.' In the present case topography has had its reward for at least one explorer, who found the image of journeying, so dominant in the *Quartets*, especially satisfying; and who is pleased to have a refreshed sense of the impact of a region upon a poem and of a poem upon a region, and in a sense to have known them both for the first time.

[1]The paradoxical middle ground of faith sought by Christian realism between gnosticism and the praeternatural, described by Eliot in *East Coker* as 'So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing', has an interesting analogue to this last passage of *The Dry Salvages* in G. K. Chesterton's *The Ballad of the White Horse.* The archetypal symbolism of light and darkness and of the sea finds interesting echoes in Eliot, in the passage beginning: 'The men of the East may spell the stars.' The Blessed Virgin is speaking to Alfred.