"At the still point": T. S. Eliot, Dance, and Modernism

Susan Jones

Introduction

T.S. Eliot's "Burnt Norton" initially appeared in 1936, but eventually this poem became the first of the *Four Quartets* (1943), a cycle expressing the poet's most mature meditations on time and the timeless. The *Quartets* confirmed Eliot's already well-established position as a modernist poet, but they also suggested a new sense of spiritual resolution, in part reflecting his journey from religious doubt to newfound faith through his conversion to Anglicanism in 1927.[1] Throughout his work Eliot had described moments of sublime spirituality, but these do not usually endure within the framework of the early poetry.[2] In "Burnt Norton," however, he embarked on a sustained exploration of time and transcendence. In a striking invocation of this theme, the speaker alludes to dance as representative of the human experience of timelessness:

> At the still point of the turning world. 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. Except for the point, the still point,
> There would be no dance, and there is only 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. (Eliot 1952, 119)

Eliot's definition of dance seems paradoxical, claiming that it is neither still nor in motion, yet both. Its spatial and temporal locations are indefinable and unfixed; the place to which Eliot refers cannot be named—the still point is simply *there*—but the speaker cannot say where. It is both of the body and bodiless, and as such seems not to exist in language nor

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within the limits of human teleology. It is only to be experienced during an atemporal moment of refined physical and mental activity. The speaker of the poem and his companion ("we") have experienced such a moment fleetingly, but in his struggle to articulate it he can only define it negatively by telling us what it is not. Its very constitution resists definition—the action associated with dance suggests a moment of existence outside time.[3]

Eliot here distinguishes his use of dance from those of his immediate literary predecessors and contemporaries who tended to fall back on dance as a means of metaphorizing poetry, as in Mallarmé's claim for dance as "poésie par excellence" (2003, 207)[4] or Yeats's explorations of the creative act ("How can we know the dancer from the dance?" [1982, 245][5]). Instead, Eliot takes into consideration the very material of dance itself, saying something about its constitution as corporeal form and its internal properties. Yet he goes further than this. He equates the activity of dance with a finely poised equilibrium of physiological and intellectual states that most closely resembles the modernist sublime he gestured toward throughout his poetry. Using this passage as a focus for discussion, I shall explore Eliot's use of dance to illustrate a modernist perspective on the sublime, examining the ways in which he transformed his firsthand spectatorship of performance dance into literary material and into an expression of transcendence in this poem. I not only show the importance to Eliot of the work of the Russian dancer and choreographer Léonide Massine but also suggest the ways in which the processes of composition of Eliot's late work may have been inspired in part by the work of the British choreographer Antony Tudor, whose innovations in dramatic ballet were performed in London in the 1930s. Turning finally to the transatlantic nature of Eliot's work, and with reference to Martha Graham, I suggest a reciprocal relationship, showing some of the surprising ways in which Eliot's advocacy of a "still point" contributed to choreographic innovations in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century.

I

Eliot's knowledge of dance has been extensively outlined by critics such as Nancy Hargrove (1997), Terri Mester (1997), and Amy Koritz (1995), who have recorded his spectatorship of dance and enumerated the ways in which dance emerged as a significant emblem in Eliot's poetry and early criticism. These critics have shown biographical evidence that Eliot's inspiration and knowledge of dance included his attendance at performances of Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, which opened in Paris in 1909 and performed in Paris and London during numerous seasons until Diaghilev's death in 1929.[6] However, while specific ballets and even individual dancers may have inspired Eliot, the issue of how the poet transformed his experiences into poetic or dramatic form remains more difficult to explain, and in Eliot's case there is a danger of forcing the "resemblance" between two fundamentally distinctive generic registers. For example, Eliot probably saw *Petrouchka* danced by the Ballets Russes, either in 1911 during his first year in Paris (1910–11) or in subsequent years when he was living in London and the company performed this ballet there before and after the First World War.[7] As Hargrove and Mester have commented, he may have drawn on, among many other sources, the presentation of the central puppet figure of this ballet in thinking

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about his poem "The Hollow Men" (1925). However, it would be unwise to draw too close an analogy between any Diaghilev production, with its habitually colorful abundance of design, costume, and lighting (however modernist in conception) with the relatively spare aesthetic of an Eliot poem. Early poems like "The Burnt Dancer" (1914) illustrate the *fin de siècle* tone of Eliot's French Symbolist influences, which had also penetrated Diaghilev ballets like the 1911 *Narcisse* (Bernstein 1976, 76, 98; Bernstein 1981, 236n, 239, 259; Hargrove 1997, 69) and *Le Spectre de la Rose* (1911; Hargrove 1997, 72). In "Little Gidding," the fourth of the *Quartets,* Eliot's reference to the "spectre of the Rose" (Eliot 1952, 143) deliberately conjures a vision of the romantic essence of Fokine's ballet of a previous generation, and Nijinsky's gravity-defying leap in *Spectre* may have been one of the allusions in Eliot's 1939 play *The Family Reunion:* "When the loop in time comes—and it does not come for everybody— / The hidden is revealed, and the spectres show themselves" (1952, 229). Yet the aesthetic register of Eliot's late poetics suggests an economy of form much closer to one associated with the sparer (often nonmimetic) exploration of the body's movement in time and space in twentieth-century nonballetic dance forms.

Eliot may have drawn inspiration from his view of the Ballets Russes, but we need a further explanation of the way in which he transformed his spectatorship into the austere poetic formalism of *Four Quartets.* In this context, André Lepecki provides an important reading of Eliot and dance, exploring "the still point of the turning world" in relation to the physiological phenomenon of "stillness" in dance. He offers a view of Eliot's image that helps us to grasp what was "modern" in dance at this time and that caused the poet to encourage his reader to imagine an almost unimaginable physiological state (Lepecki 2000, 334–42). Lepecki refers to this state as one that can only be understood as introspective proprioception. Examining the meaning of the still point in terms of the physiology and phenomenology of the body, he gives us a striking account of what Eliot might be implying in actual physical terms from the point of view of the dancer. Lepecki observes the dancer's experience of this state of being, as she/he turns an inward gaze of self-awareness toward her/his perception of the minute but active vibrations of musculature engaged in being "still" in a dance (336). Lepecki develops his argument with reference to recent neuroscientific research about what is actually happening to the dancer physiologically and perceptually and likewise explores the experience of the viewer of a "still" body. Showing how dance has often been defined exclusively in terms of movement rather than stillness, Lepecki rightly identifies the radicalism of Eliot's evocation of active stillness as constituting the very material of dance itself ("Except for the point . . . there would be no dance").

In order to place Eliot's description of dance in the context of choreographic innovations in the period, however, Lepecki too easily historicizes the argument in terms of a polarized distinction between ballet and modern dance. Lepecki situates Eliot's reference to dance in this poem as a moment of recognition of the break of modernity occurring in dance itself. By claiming that ballet (both romantic and classical styles) privileges movement over stasis, while modernism in dance signals the recognition of stillness as its constituent material, he argues that Eliot's definition of the still point fundamentally reflects the poet's understanding of this radical break in the art of dance, a break occurring in the new dance forms developing at the end of the nineteenth century and the

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beginning of the twentieth. Using Nijinsky's choreography for the Ballets Russes's first performance of *The Rite of Spring* in Paris in 1913 as an example of this aesthetic rupture in dance, Lepecki argues that Eliot's representation of the still point in the poem recognizes Nijinsky's break with the past. Lepecki suggests that Eliot's reference signals a body inscribed by and embraced by the break of modernity, which, he claims, privileges (for the first time) stillness as part of dance itself.

Yet the relationship between Eliot and dance is less straightforward than this perspective on modernist rupture allows. Lepecki's historical perspective (the trajectory of which leads him eventually to explore later twentieth-century innovations such as Judson Church experiments and Jerôme Bel) is somewhat misleading in relation to Eliot. Eliot wrote of *Rite* after seeing a performance by the Diaghilev Ballet at the Princes' Theatre in London in 1921: "To me the music seemed very remarkable—but at all events struck me as possessing a quality of modernity which I missed from the ballet which accompanied it" (1921a, 452–53). Eliot was more impressed by the score than by the choreography. We must remember that Nijinsky was no longer with the company at this time, and no one could remember the choreography for the first production. Eliot is writing here of a revival of *Rite* with the original music by Igor Stravinsky and the original sets by Nicholas Roerich but with new choreography by Massine (MacDonald 1975, 258, 264–66).[8] It seems unlikely that Eliot actually saw Nijinsky's original choreography for *Rite* (performed in 1913), and the tone of the review suggests that this was the first time he had encountered the piece. As we shall see, Eliot was otherwise drawn to the performing and choreographic skills of Massine, but on this occasion Eliot was unimpressed. (It is possible that Massine's sense of following in Nijinsky's footsteps meant that he did not quite "own" this piece at this time.)

Furthermore, Eliot's negative definitions of the "there" of the still point—"not towards, not back, neither flesh nor not flesh"—which arose in part from his reading of St. John of the Cross and medieval ideas about the *via negativa*, is not, in essence, a "modernist" way of thinking about the body. In fact, Eliot's modernism is very different from Lepecki's account of aesthetic rupture and to some extent militates *against* the idea of a modernist "break." Just as Eliot incorporates much older philosophical traditions into a modernist critique of language in his poetry, he uses a similar pattern of thinking about tradition in his analysis of dance, privileging an idea of modern dance that assimilates, rather than breaks away from, the traditions of nineteenth-century ballet. If we put Eliot's passage back into the context of his larger literary preoccupations, and in addition turn to his significant remarks about his own spectatorship of dance performance, it may be necessary to shift our sense of Eliot's use of dance in his poem away from an idea of modernist rupture and instead toward a broader consideration of his self-consciously modernist "revision" of the past.

Eliot's exploration of a transcendent moment reaches far back in his career, and in addition to his reading of the work of the medieval mystics and Dante, his position encompassed the contemporary philosophical influences of Henri Bergson, F. H. Bradley, T. E. Hulme, and Bertrand Russell. Eliot struggled with an ongoing conflict in which the search for truth through private, subjective states of feeling operated in tension with what he saw as the failure of philosophy to objectify such truth. Increasingly Eliot envisioned

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a sublime moment that in part utilized, and in part rejected, his early influences. While denying aspects of all their theories, he absorbed something of Bradley's objectivity and Russell's analytical style; he retained something of Bergson when he emphasized the primacy of subjective experience—"All significant truths are private truths" (Eliot 1964, 165)[9]—yet did not capitulate to Bergson's exclusively individualistic perception of a continuous, interior temporality. At the same time he believed that the only reality we can know is an experienced reality, where "any object which is wholly real is independent of time" (1964, 110). This reality increasingly translates into an expression of spiritual faith where "immediate experience is a timeless unity" (1964, 164). Thus, "the still point" offers an "objective correlative" (a term Eliot had outlined in "Hamlet and His Problems" [1919; Adams 1971, 788–90]), a poetic equivalent of the human experience of timelessness, a moment of spiritual fulfilment that *can* be experienced physically, an activity for which he found expression as physiological balance in the dancer's state of poise and equilibrium—a timeless, yet temporal, phenomenon.

However perceptive Eliot's literary evocation of the activity of dance might have been, his late poetics have often been evaluated in terms of an increasingly conservative position (particularly in relation to religion and politics), so that his incorporation of dance as an expression of transcendence, of ritual, and of the sacred has been subsumed into the dominant view of his traditionalism. Nevertheless, Eliot's expression of the physiological experience of dance suggests a modernist sublime close to Joyce's epiphanies or Woolf's radical aesthetics. In *To the Lighthouse* (1927), for example, Woolf describes a "moment of being" in kinetic terms as "the still space that lies about the heart of things, where one could move or rest" (1981, 105). Moreover, the received view of Eliot's conservatism also forecloses the possibility that he (somewhat ironically, as this discussion will show in the case of Martha Graham) provided early twentieth-century choreographers with inspiration for some of dance's most striking breaks with tradition during this period.

Lepecki cuts through this perspective on Eliot's late poetics by elegantly describing the physiological phenomenon suggested by the "still point" as modernist, yet his picture depends on a trajectory privileging the notion of a modernist rupture in dance practices in the twentieth century that elides any sense of continuity or revisionist practice. Lepecki argues that "Granted, the fixity of the pose was part of the vocabulary of the choreography [of ballet], but such stillness operated semiotically and physiologically as 'pauses,' thus clearly falling outside of the motions and gestures considered as dance proper" (2000, 340). This does not seem to me to be the case. To begin with, the still point, as Eliot uses it, hits on one of the essential phenomena of certain moments in dance—a place that occurs in *all* systems of dance, whether ritual form, ballet, contemporary, or social dance—in which the body is apparently at rest; all visible movement is stripped away, leaving only the centered stillness of the figure, as in the fifth position of ballet or, perhaps more pertinently, as the dancer strikes a balance. In her discussion of the ballet tradition as a form of "inscriptive practice," Sally Ann Ness has written of how it "develops in its regimes of training a theory of a performative equivalent of the English-language term *balance,*" a term "linked ... to the maintenance of motionlessness, and to the apparent prolonging of stillness" (2008, 16). But in ballet this does not refer to a passive or static pose. The musculature remains alert, in

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readiness to move; energy spirals through the body even as it alights on the perfect stillness of a moment. This moment is full of potential, where the possibility of movement fills the stillness, the mind reaching within, toward, and beyond an apparently temporal confinement of the body. One could argue that nineteenth-century ballet illustrates the kind of active stillness Lepecki focuses on and that he argues occurs only in modernism, whereas it is very much *constitutive* of at least the technique, if not always the practice, of ballet of both the romantic and late nineteenth-century periods. For example, Marius Petipa, the great nineteenth-century choreographer of the Maryinsky Ballet, in St. Petersburg, incorporates the "still points" of the Rose Adagio in Act 1 of *Sleeping Beauty* (1890); he does this not just by choreographing a series of attitude balances, where the ballerina is aided by the support of four consorts, but by inserting such moments into Princess Aurora's first entrance, where her fleeting movement along a diagonal from upstage left to downstage right is punctuated by a *delevopé devant en relevé,* arrested at the moment of its greatest height and registering stillness at the moment of an intake of the breath. These moments, if performed with integrity by the ballerina, are not simply "pauses" emphasizing the "fixity of the pose" but are both *of* the dance itself and *are* the dance, in the way that Lepecki describes the introspective proprioception phenomenon of modernist dance. The whole adagio requires the ballerina's sense of interiority and muscular awareness, her perception of the subject who self-consciously feels the "there"—the place that constitutes the distinction between "the subject experienced as a core and the mask of . . . body-image" to which Lepecki refers (2000, 336). Lepecki provides an accurate description of the physiological effects of stillness in dance, but I would question his reading of Eliot insofar as the poet's evocation of "the still point" was drawn from a rather different context than the one suggested by a break or rupture of modernity.

II

In fact, Eliot's remarks on dance reflect many of his ideas about tradition in literature. In a famous essay of 1919, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," he discussed the authority of the contemporary poet and his relationship to literary history: "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists" (Adams 1971, 784). One of the major influences on Eliot's view of dance came from contemporary anthropology (James Frazer, Jessie Weston, F. M. Cornford, Gilbert Murray), which he may not have wholeheartedly appropriated but whose object of study he nevertheless found compelling (many critics have noted the influence of Frazer's *The Golden Bough* on *The Waste Land*). Eliot's view of the atavistic in dance is curious. He rejected the choreography of the primitive in *The Rite of Spring* but, as we shall see, was nevertheless drawn to the essential rhythm associated with ritual and liturgical dance forms. In his turn to verse drama he drew on the idea of liturgical as well as "primitive" ritual, emphasizing, in writing the *Sweeney Agonistes* fragments, for example, the desire to write a drama of modern life "perhaps with certain things in it accentuated by drumbeats." In fact, Eliot had initially intended to present a ballet between the two sections of *Sweeney,* to be performed to unaccompanied drumbeats (Everett 1984, 248). In

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"The Beating of a Drum" (1923) he stressed the importance of the body's physical generation of rhythm when discussing the origins of classical drama, quoting as his source S. H. Butcher: "The essentials of drama were, as we might expect, given by Aristotle: poetry, music, and dancing constitute in Aristotle a group by themselves, their common element being imitation by means of rhythm—rhythm which admits of being applied to words, sounds, and the movements of the body" (1923a, 12). Eliot goes on to say that this is why Massine and Chaplin are the great actors of the time. And in a preface to an edition of Dryden's *Of Dramatic Poesie* (1928), Eliot's lengthy "Dialogue on Poetic Drama" again makes the point that "the human soul, in intense emotion, strives to express itself in verse" where "feeling and rhythm are related."[10] What is more, one of the characters of this "Dialogue" expresses a liking for the Russian Ballet: "Here seemed to be everything that we wanted in drama, except the poetry." It seemed that ballet "has, unconsciously, concerned itself with a permanent form," its importance lying in "a tradition, an askesis." The crucial utterance is this character's declaration that "any efficient dancer has undergone a training which is like a moral training. Has any actor of our generation undergone anything similar?" (Eliot 1928, xv). Presumably the traditions of ballet appealed to Eliot because its training required the subjection of the body to a rigorous physical discipline of the sort he equated with the spiritual discipline of religious acceptance. Eliot saw in dance not simply an art form that draws attention to rhythmic and lyrical movement in time and space but one that also offered, in its religious origins, a liturgical component that he associated with the adoption of a "moral" position, a giving up of the entire body to the practice of the form (the "Dialogue" also refers to the "drama of the Mass"): "the ballet is a liturgy of very wide adaptability," says another character (1928, xvi).[11]

This deeper influence on Eliot's poetics may well have been stimulated by his knowledge of Massine's performance and choreographic styles. Massine (1895–1979) was born in Russia and trained at the Moscow Imperial Theatre School from 1904 to 1912. He joined Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in 1914, where he established himself as a charismatic performer, especially in *demi-caractère* roles. His talents blossomed between 1914 and 1920, when Diaghilev invited him to succeed Nijinsky as principal choreographer, and during this period he created eleven new ballets for the company. Although he lost favor with Diaghilev when he married and spent a period away from the company in 1924, he maintained a prolific creative output. Following Diaghilev's death he continued to create new ballets for many post-Diaghilev offshoots of this company, as well as for Ballet Theater in the United States and for companies in South America and Europe.[12]

Massine was a great favorite with the London literati, and Eliot's comments on him came from the period of the choreographer's postwar output of new ballets for Diaghilev. On May 30, 1919, James Strachey wrote that Massine went further than Nijinsky by "extending the classical style" rather than abandoning it (406). Eliot's perspective on Massine stemmed from a similar admiration for the dancer's ability to innovate while retaining the traditions of ballet. But Eliot was also impressed by his performance technique, which suggested to him the potential to symbolize emotion through abstract gesture, reminding us of Eliot's emphasis on physical and emotional detachment in poetry. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent" Eliot's complex expression of "the impersonality of the poet"

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anticipates his observations on Massine's style (Adams 1971). Writing in the *Criterion* in 1923 that as an actor Massine was "the most completely unhuman, impersonal, abstract," and as such "belongs to the future stage," Eliot draws on his poetics in describing the dancer's rare quality: "The difference between the conventional gesture of the ordinary stage, which is supposed to *express* emotion, and the abstract gesture of Massine, which *symbolises* emotion, is enormous" (1923b, 305–6). Eliot's application of the word "abstract" to describe Massine's gestures is significant here. He intimated that the dancer's (offstage) personality is subsumed, that the dancer is the medium of choreographic invention in the same way that Eliot regarded the poet as medium—that is, a conduit of verbal expression distinct from his subjective personality and feeling.

Massine's performance and choreographic styles also influenced Eliot's thinking about reinvigorating dramaturgical forms in the verse plays of his later career. Eliot's contributions to the *Dial*, a contemporary American literary journal, show that the Ballets Russes's postwar London seasons, which included many works by Massine, provided him with specific inspiration for his ideas for an innovative drama. In 1920, in an essay entitled "The Possibility of a Poetic Drama," he extended his thinking about the "objective correlative" (in "Hamlet and His Problems," published the same year [Adams, 1971, 788–90]) as the key to an enduring literary tradition: "Permanent literature is always a presentation of thought, or a presentation of feeling by a statement of events in human action or objects in the external world" (444). Already the ballet had provided him with the idea of this potentially innovative dramaturgy: "A mute theatre is a possibility . . . the ballet is an actuality (though under-nourished) . . . The essential is to get upon the stage this precise statement of life which is at the same time a point of view, a world; a world which the author's mind has subjected to a process of sophistication" (446).

By August 1921 Eliot was clear about the importance to him of the postwar Diaghilev ballet in solidifying his thoughts on an innovative form of drama. Referring to three new Massine ballets in the *Dial*, he observed, "We greeted the Good-humoured Ladies, and the Boutique Fantasque, and the Three-Cornered Hat, as the dawn of an art of the theatre. And although there has been nothing since that could be called a further development, the ballet will probably be one of the influences forming a new drama, if a new drama ever comes" (1921b, 214). Eliot marks out for comment the "later ballet" of the postwar years, which he claimed "is more sophisticated, but also more simplified, and simplifies more; and what is needed of art is a simplification of current life into something rich and strange" (1921b, 214). He had initiated these ideas in a review of the Phoenix Society's production of *The Duchess of Malfi* on November 24, 1919, complaining that the actors did not fulfill his hoped-for revitalization of poetic drama, failing to "obtain, with verse, an effect as immediate and direct as that of the best ballet" (1919–20, 38–39). (Again, he is presumably referring to the Massine repertoire in 1919.)

Eliot's remarks on Massine suggest that he had a good sense of the phenomenological experience of dance practice, and in Massine's self-contained style he observed what is essential to all great dancers—the ability to apprehend and control the "center," an internal point of origin that forms the focal point and stimulus of all movement and line. A dancer's "good line" not only refers to her/his ability to create pleasing shapes

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and extensions of the limbs; its execution derives from a sense of "placing," where the limbs extend outward from a torso and trunk that, when at rest, is squarely centered with shoulders over the hips. The body's movement originates in a strongly felt inner point that may be located in ballet at a level midpoint in the trunk and in contemporary dance forms lower in the abdomen. Eliot is alert to the material from which dance is itself produced, its outward physical expression of inner states of being and emotional activity, its physiological expression of inner rhythms (which Virginia Woolf connected to the beating of the heart), its musical constitution, the effort and motivations of mind and body that frequently gather when the dancer is apparently at rest, and the control of the center, at the "still point of the turning world."

III

Rather than identifying a modern dance practice that was emerging in opposition to ballet, Eliot's remarks on tradition and on Massine suggest an association between the still point and a predominantly classical training. What has largely gone unnoticed, however, is the possibility that Eliot drew inspiration from contemporary experimentation in ballet besides Massine and the Ballets Russes, and that he may have continued to be inspired by innovations in ballet in England beyond Diaghilev's death in 1929. As Eliot worked on his material for the *Four Quartets,* the British choreographer Antony Tudor was developing a similar concern for the representation of temporal experience in the "modern" ballet aesthetics of the 1930s in England. Tudor began his career with Ballet Rambert, a company directed by Marie Rambert and based at premises that Rambert shared with her husband, Ashley Dukes, and his experimental drama group at the Mercury Theatre, London. Here Tudor created some of his greatest works, including *Jardin aux lilas* (1936) and *Dark Elegies* (1937), while he was with Ballet Rambert, although he left London in 1940 to take part in Ballet Theater's first season in New York and remained in the United States thereafter. Tudor's literariness is well documented. Nora Kaye tells of his instruction to her to read the seven volumes of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* before coming to rehearsal for *Pillar of Fire* (1942; Perlmutter 1995, 134),[13] and Tudor's choreography reveals the importance to him of communicating in dance form the intense experience of memory and interiority, right up to *The Leaves Are Fading* (1975) and beyond.

Tudor experimented with the physical representation of internal states of mind in his choreography for *Jardin aux lilas* at the same time that Eliot was in the last stages of his work on "Burnt Norton." Thus, it is intriguing that both Eliot and Tudor were simultaneously involved with the Mercury Theatre (Eliot with Dukes; Tudor with Rambert), and that they may well have met or seen each other's work. As Helen Gardner observed, "Burnt Norton" is intimately bound up with Eliot's burgeoning career in verse drama. Eliot wrote "Burnt Norton" quickly in "the latter part of 1935 in an interval between the completion of *Murder in the Cathedral* and Eliot's beginning work on his new play *The Family Reunion*" (Gardner 1978, 16). Gardner also shows how "Burnt Norton" grew out of material that Eliot cut from *Murder in the Cathedral,* which he was drafting and discussing in 1934 with Martin Browne (who produced the first performance of the play at

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Canterbury in June 1935). However, in 1934 Eliot was also discussing the play with Ashley Dukes and Rupert Doone, who "were anxious to have it for their new venture of poetic plays at the Mercury Theatre" (Gardner 1978, 15). Subsequently, *Murder in the Cathedral* was presented at the Mercury in January 1936, the same season in which Tudor produced his first performances of *Jardin aux lilas.*[14] Tudor's ballet was given, not quite on "alternate nights" (Chazin-Bennahum 1994, 248), but at least twice a week during each week of the season in which Eliot's play was performed.

Elizabeth Sawyer, who became Tudor's rehearsal pianist in the United States, suggests a link between "Burnt Norton" and *Jardin,* claiming that the poem may have inspired certain ideas for the ballet (Sawyer 2003). While I agree that there is a convergence in theme between the ballet and the poem, I do not believe that it could have been an initial inspiration for *Jardin* because, at the time of Tudor's creation of this ballet, "Burnt Norton" had not yet been published. Tudor could only later have identified a similarity between his ballet and Eliot's poem, and, indeed, as Sawyer (2003, 66–67) observes, it was during his rehearsals for revivals of *Jardin* in the United States that Tudor frequently quoted the following passage from the first section of "Burnt Norton":

> 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. (Eliot 1952, 117)

In "Burnt Norton" Eliot associates the place of temporal atemporality—the "still point," as he puts it a little later in the poem—with this passage's discussion of the function of memory and the memory of what might have been. While Ellman has observed how the passage reflects Augustine's representation of time in Book XI:18 of the *Confessions* (Ellman 1987, 123, 131n15), it also links Eliot's proposition of a timeless moment with Augustine's suggestion that time can only be experienced in "the threefold present" (which he explains in Book XI:28 as an active distension of the mind moving forwards and back). This passage in Eliot's poem was originally included in *Murder in the Cathedral* (and can be seen in manuscript in the "Bellegarde fragment" at the Houghton Library at Harvard University), but it had been cut before the first Canterbury performance.

Unless Tudor had been present at some conversation between Eliot, Dukes, and Doone about the play at the Mercury, or unless the choreographer had seen an early draft of the play that included this passage (highly unlikely) he could not have used this poem directly as a source for the composition of *Jardin* because it was not initially published until April 1936. While Eliot may have subsequently inspired Tudor, it seems more likely that the influence first occurred the other way round. Eliot most likely attended performances of his own play at the Mercury and had either seen rehearsals or performances of *Jardin* in the same season (Leo Kersley, a former dancer with Ballet Rambert and colleague of Tudor, claimed in an interview in 2002 that Eliot attended ballets as well as plays at the Mercury at that time).[15] Eliot may well have been struck by Tudor's poetic evocation and restrained economy of choreographic form for his expression of relationships that "might

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have been." As Eliot contemplated his expansion of the poem in 1940 (Gardner 1978, 16), he could, in addition to the many other sources of inspiration suggested by Gardner and others, have remembered the quartet structure of *Jardin aux lilas* (and the fact that the music, Chausson's *Poème*, like all the *Quartets*, was divided into five sections). The ballet's enclosed spatial setting of a garden in which unfulfilled moments of the past simultaneously unify space and time with an anguished present and projected future would have appealed to Eliot, who may have recognized in the ballet a physical equivalent to the presentation of time in his poem, where the mind engages in moments of active distension, experiencing the "threefold present" as an intense moment of suspended temporality.

Tudor's physical representation of memory in the ballet occurs through the chance encounters of two couples who wrestle with their past relationships and consider "what might have been." If Eliot saw this ballet, he would have noticed the similarities of subject matter in a poem of his own that was about to be published, with its echoes of his own relationship with Emily Hale; Eliot's friendship with Hale was never fulfilled in marriage, but he did visit the actual rose garden of Burnt Norton in England in 1934 with Hale (Gordon 1988, 95). He may have been inspired by *Jardin aux lilas* to develop further the ideas initiated in "Burnt Norton." The ballet's restrained evocation of a moment inside and outside human temporal experience reaches its climax in a "frozen" pose, where the dancers form a tableau—the central character, Caroline, falling into a backbend into the arms of her partner (see Figure 1). While the whole cast remains still, Caroline slowly unfolds out of the backbend and moves, as if in a trance, weaving between the still figures before they come back to life. As an embodiment of the interior experience of a moment of intense memory, this movement phrase, dovetailing in the still point of the dance, creates a visual representation of Eliot's philosophical ideas about time and transcendence. In short, Tudor suggests a modernist sublime close to Eliot's presentation of memory and its transcendence in "Burnt Norton"—an expression of an internalized moment of supreme intensity that re-emerges in Eliot's drama and finds a specific echo in his 1939 play *The Family Reunion:* "I only looked through the little door / When the sun was shining on the rose garden" (1952, 276).

IV

So far I have explored dance's impact on Eliot, but what of Eliot's impact on choreography of the twentieth century? Sawyer (2003) has provided evidence that Tudor quoted Eliot in rehearsal in the United States. But I now want to turn to a larger context for these issues of cross-disciplinary exchange by focusing on Eliot's transatlantic influence on American modernism in dance. Looking back to Tudor, we must remember that in spite of its French score and its mixed literary sources, *Jardin* remains essentially an Edwardian piece, whereas the register of *Four Quartets* is not entirely English.[16] In fact, the American resonances of these poems may help to explain the aesthetic empathy that Eliot inspired in early twentieth-century American choreographers. From one perspective the *Quartets* cycle offers a panegyric to "little England," with its idealizing spiritual reverence for English locations and references to the poet's English ancestral past, but

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Figure 1. Hugh Laing and Maude Lloyd performing in Jardin aux lilas *(no date, but probably 1936). Photographer uncredited. By permission of Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundation.*

this view does not entirely account for the poems' transatlantic material. In later years Eliot remarked of his poetry that "in its sources, in its emotional springs, it comes from America" (Gordon 1977, 2), and Eliot's American identity informs the text of the *Four Quartets* (not least in "The Dry Salvages," with its allusions to the New England coastline and its fishermen, whose Emersonian self-reliance seems to have endured in Eliot's mind as a model of moral rectitude). It could be argued that Eliot's representation of transcendence in "Burnt Norton" owes something to the American as well as European traditions, and Lyndall Gordon has shown that as far back as Eliot's participation in his Harvard classes (1913–16) he explored the idea of the visionary in a way that conjures the gothic resonances of Edgar Allen Poe (Gordon 1977, 53). At that time, Eliot deemed the subjective mental experiences of "hallucination," "illusion," and "superstition" more worthy of "serious philosophical attention than social or material objects" (Gordon 1977, 52). His emphasis on a visionary power to see "into the flux between different viewpoints," to envision a "half-object," and by making an active, "intuitive 'leap'" discover the "power to see 'the real future of an imaginary present'" echoes something of Henry James's claim for the power of the artist "to guess the seen from the unseen" (James 1948, 11). Moreover, Gordon shows that, even at this early point in his career, Eliot's exploration of a visionary "reality" insists on its timeless quality, observing that "It is curious to see, here, the development of an idea that came to fruition several decades later in FQ." (Gordon

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1977, 53n). Elsewhere Gordon reiterates this theme, adding that when at the end of his life Eliot admitted the profound influence of Bradley on his work, it was in part because Bradley's view that "what we really observe are fragments of a greater Reality . . . corresponds to the Transcendentalism of Emerson" (Gordon 1999, 488). The reverberation of this transcendental theme throughout "Burnt Norton" can be heard in Eliot's evocation of a perpetual movement in the stillness of a "Chinese jar," which might owe as much to Wallace Stevens' "Jar in Tennessee" (1919) as to Keats's Grecian urn or to European locations of timelessness (such as Dante's *Paradiso*). The specters of *The Family Reunion,* a play whose creation was closely associated with the work for "Burnt Norton," equally take us back to the ghostly voices of Charles Brockden Brown in *Carwin the Biloquist* (first serialised 1803–1805) or to the work of Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Perhaps the New England overtones of this American transcendental register drew Eliot to Martha Graham's attention (Graham was of course an avid reader of Hawthorne and Emily Dickinson). In fact, another way of resituating the transatlantic character of Eliot's late poetics into a more complex argument about his modernism is to show the impact of *Four Quartets* on developments in choreography in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. In this final section I shall argue that Martha Graham utilized her reading of Eliot's poetry during the long gestation of several dance pieces in ways that are reminiscent of Eliot's creative use of dance spectatorship. In addition, by tracing this process in Graham's work, we find that her reading of Eliot's late work leads her to invoke "the still point" in ways that Lepecki signaled as dance's fundamental turn toward modernity.

Eliot's spectatorship of ballet contributed to his literary ideas about transcendence in poetry and to the rhythms and ritual forms of verse drama. However, Mark Franko's reading of Martha Graham's early work illustrates how she too demonstrated a "consciousness of materials" deriving from "the primitive" and from "ritual." Franko shows how Graham's "absorption" of such materials into an aesthetic of modernism increased the design element of the dance, and, contrary to assumptions about Graham's emotionalism, "It is as though she wished to convey emotion only after reducing it to formal design" (Franko 1995, 46–47). Recalling Graham's "tableau vivant" style in her early group work, such as *Primitive Mysteries* (1931), Franko observes "how expressive moments were consistently displaced by a formalist choreographic practice" (47). In some ways this emphasis on a "non-narrative time" in moments of stillness seems to confirm Lepecki's notion of modernist rupture, but, as Franko implies, Graham's notion of impersonality, of presentation of ritual "design," reflects her assimilation of traditional materials—"the artist breaking through the ritual," as Louis Horst proposed (Franko 1995, 47). This choreographic *modus vivendi* is not so very far from Eliot's remarks about impersonality, nor from his observations about Stravinsky's music for *Rite,* whose spirit he claimed was "modern" (unlike the choreography), transforming "the spirit of the steppes . . . into the barbaric cries of modern life," rather than simply reconstructing an "anthropological" approximation of "primitive ceremony" (Eliot 1921a, 452–53). Turning now to Graham's transformation of literary materials, I explore other surprising affinities with Eliot's aesthetics, especially in her reach for memory and its transcendence. Her choreographic style, however, constitutes a break with balletic tradition in ways that suggest not just the spare formalism of Eliot but the attention to active stillness outlined by Lepecki.

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One of the most intriguing choreographic responses to Eliot's *Four Quartets* in the United States appears in Martha Graham's *Notebooks* (1973). The wide range of literary quotation in the *Notebooks* indicates that Graham was not only an avid reader throughout her career but that she was open to literary inspiration in the fundamental stages of developing her choreography, using her reading of literature (both primary and secondary sources) in the written sketches for her ballets. At times, the *Notebooks* could be mistaken for an experimental form of poetic art, a patchwork of literary quotation juxtaposed with written sketches for themes and descriptions of movement that in themselves reveal an acute literary sensibility, as well as a rare ability to transform and embody the literary. In the case of Eliot, Graham seems to mediate her choreography, as embodied form, through an intermediate stage of written sketches based on her initial reading and understanding of the poetry. The *Notebooks* provide one of the century's most striking examples of a choreographer's engagement with literary texts during the choreographic process, illustrating a discrete relationship between poetic and choreographic arts.

As we might expect from such intimate material, the notebook entries are frequently disjointed, inexplicable, and often indicate false starts and unfulfilled ideas as well as offering insight into completed works. Yet Graham stored everything for future use, and her citation of Eliot provided a striking catalyst as she developed pieces of work apparently unconnected to the initial context of quotation. Graham's references are wide-ranging, including citations from Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dante, St. John Perse, Hawthorne, Dickinson, Joyce, and Joseph Campbell. In the context of this essay, however, her citation of Eliot (not only from the poetry itself but also from secondary reading about his work) offers a notable example of the way in which Graham utilized and transformed textual inspiration into the finished work of choreography.

The earliest reference to Eliot in Nancy Ross Wilson's transcription of the *Notebooks* appears in notes for *The Eye of Anguish,* Graham's ballet about *King Lear* that was eventually performed in 1950 (unfortunately, the notes are all undated so we must rely on external evidence from Graham's performance history for establishing a time frame). Eliot's poetry appears neither as direct reference nor image in the final ballet, nor is his work read aloud on stage. But in the notes Graham initially quotes "Burnt Norton": "voices in the Tree / Life in the Tree / The bedded axle-tree"; "circular desert"; "quick now, here, now, always" (Graham 1973, 41). The *Quartets* continued to resonate with Graham. In notes for *Dark Meadow* (first performed in 1946), she cites critical readings of Eliot's poem by Wallace Fowlie as well as some of Eliot's anthropological inspiration for *The Waste Land,* including Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* and F. M. Cornford's *From Religion to Philosophy.*[17] In a *Notebook* study for a piece never choreographed ("Folly"), Graham refers back to *The Waste Land* ("Game of Chess") and forward to the opening of *Little Gidding* ("Midwinter spring"), reading the poetry in part through F. O. Matthiesson's critical work *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot,* from which she copied out several passages. Significantly, she cites in this section a now familiar reference for the first time: "at the still point of the turning world" (Graham 1973, 285).

But what is most intriguing here is Graham's re-using of material gathered for earlier pieces, or pieces never realized on stage, in their initial notebook form. Thus in 1959, as she

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worked on a piece about Mary Queen of Scots (*Episodes I*) she revisited her earlier reading of Eliot for *Dark Meadow* and the unchoreographed "Folly." Graham had been invited by George Balanchine to "collaborate" in the opening of New York City Ballet's 1959 season. The first half of the evening was to be choreographed by Graham, the second by Balanchine. In fact *Episodes I & II* had nothing in common except the composer, Anton Webern. Although Graham's work was not a narrative piece, she grounded it in a specific historical context, choosing as a theme the execution of the Scottish Queen in 1587, while Balanchine's piece (with a solo for Paul Taylor) was purely abstract. Graham herself created the part of Mary, with Sallie Wilson in her first major role as Elizabeth I, the English Queen who signed Mary's death warrant. A poor quality videotape of a 1985 reconstruction of the piece gives us some idea of its dramatic power, but according to Sallie Wilson, in an interview with Agnes de Mille that year, this version bore little resemblance to the original; Wilson claimed that the 1959 version was far more stylized, the figures of the two Queens far more remote from one another, and the action, which had become too literal, was more ritualized in the original.[18] Wilson's description suggests that the 1959 ballet might have been closer in dramatic style, even bearing some resemblance in theme to Graham's earlier invocations of stillness and tableaux and to the female dialogue and investigations of the mirror of her 1944 *Herodiade,* with its Mallarméan/Yeatsian flavor.

But, as the *Notebooks* show, Graham continued to use Eliot as inspirational material for this work. There are two sets of notes for *Episodes I,* and Graham transfers from the first to the second set her identification of the relationship between "Burnt Norton" and Eliot's play *The Family Reunion.* She had first made this connection not in the notes for *Episodes* but earlier, in those for *Dark Meadow,* where she drew on Fowlie's reading of *Four Quartets,* adding a reminder to herself for the second section of *Dark Meadow* that reads "2. Nostalgic/Pamela figure/Family Reunion" (Graham 1973, 187). Then, on the first page of her preliminary ideas for the Mary Queen of Scots piece, constituting the first set of notes for *Episodes I,* her first poetic quotation is "'At the still point' / moment of decision—?" followed by "'an unexpected presence in the garden, and a miraculous messenger' (Quartets—re—14)" (1973, 311). The following transcription of the initial notes for *Episodes I* shows how Graham's reading of Eliot, and the connections she made instinctively, could only have arisen from a sensitive and wide-ranging study of his work. Graham accurately linked Eliot's idea of an "evanescent moment" in three works: *The Waste Land,* "Burnt Norton," and *The Family Reunion.* She showed how, in each work, timelessness is represented by a glimpse through a door or into a garden:

> "Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden . . ."
>   Waste land—
> "Heart of light"
>   Dante—(13)
> "The rose-garden is the Garden 'where all loves end' (Ash Wednesday)"
>   Family Reunion—(12)
> "*I only looked thru* the little door" (12)
>   Reunion—(12) (Graham 1973, 311)

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We can only speculate on what Graham initially intended for her ballet at this point, but her juxtaposition of these moments in Eliot's poetry suggests a strong interest, much as Tudor had shown with *Jardin aux lilas,* in the choreographic representation of timelessness, of moments where memory works in conjunction with the present and future, suggesting paths that might have been taken, other choices that might have been made. *Four Quartets* plays an important part in all the subsequent notes for *Episodes I,* providing further insight into her creative thinking.

The first group of notes for *Episodes I* also suggests an opening scene that already looks forward to Mary's execution and begins with a reference to the opening lines of the first two stanzas of "East Coker," the second of the *Quartets:* "In my beginning is my end" (Eliot 1952, 123) (a reversal of the line—"In my end is my beginning"—the words that Mary had embroidered into her cloth of estate while in prison).[19] Then Graham imagines a scene for the ballet that suggests either an opening or a closing, either prefiguring the final scene or constituting it:

> Drum roll as of execution—
> Light finds figure of woman
> extreme stage left—
> She speaks—
> "What might have been & what has been
> Point to one end, which is always present.
> Footfalls echo in the memory
> Down the passage which we did not take
> Towards the door we never opened
> Into the rose-garden. . ." (Graham 1973, 312)

Later in the same page Graham indicates that the dance piece represents "an exercise in redemption thru the use of memory" (312). On the next page Graham has another shot at imagining the opening scene, repeating the quotation from "Burnt Norton," only this time with a preliminary instruction: "curtain opens as she walks / 'What might have been & what has been / Point to one end which is present. / Footfalls echo'" (313). As Marnie Thomas and Linda Hodes pointed out to me in conversation, this description also suggests the protagonist's walk forward at the beginning of *Clytemnestra* (1958), and Thomas, who was watching *Episodes* in 1959, remembers this same move occurring at some point during the Mary Queen of Scots piece (see Figure 2).[20]

The second set of notes for *Episodes I* shows a considerable rethinking of the scenario, which is now more definitively sketched out with references to the Webern score and with no mention of a speaker of Eliot's words. Yet the echo of Eliot's famous meditations on time reverberates in Graham's later notes, now headed "'In my end is my beginning' / a passacaglia on a theme of Mary, Queen of Scots" (431), and where the first scene is described in detail, with Mary's initial entrance imaginatively linked to the philosophical implications of Eliot's "rose garden." The set (as confirmed by the 1985 film) consisted of a large platform constructed across the back of the stage, with steps leading up to it on either side.

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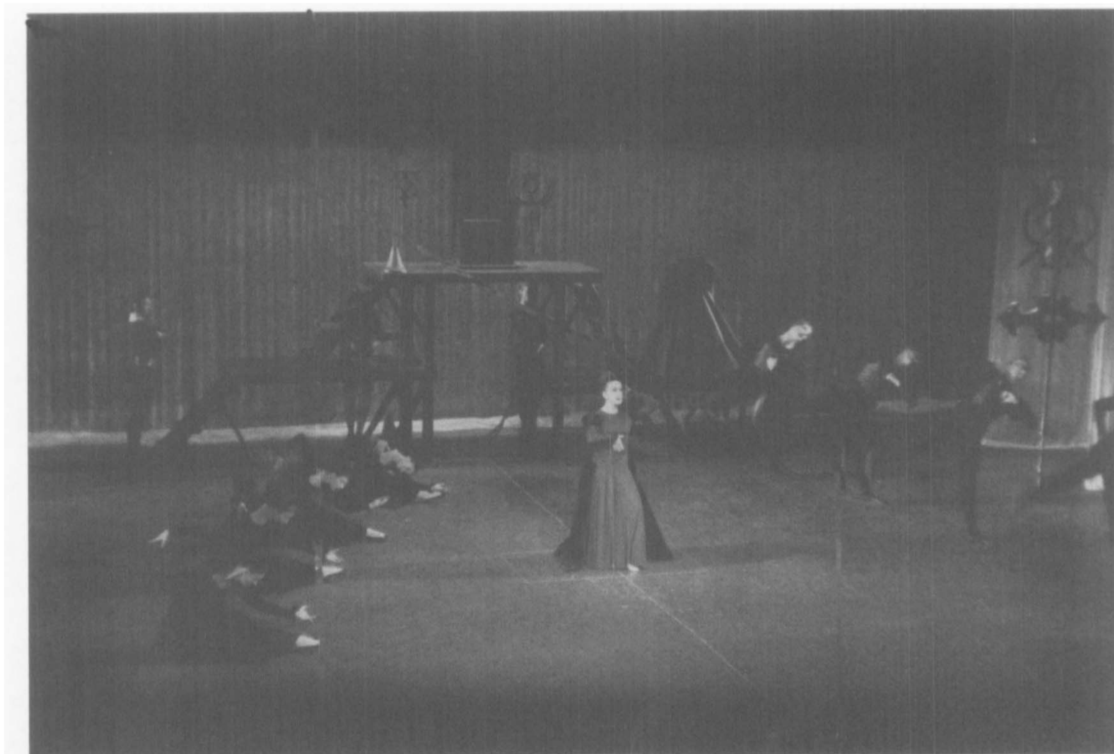

Figure 2. The Martha Graham Dance Company in Martha Graham's Episodes I. *Photo by Martha Swope, courtesy of the Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance.*

Elizabeth's throne, in the center of the platform, would be turned around during the action to reveal the executioner's block. This is how Graham describes the scenario:

> Scene—
> Scaffolding indicative of a throne
>
> Perhaps it could be on top of an arched door way—a grille—thru
> which the Queen [Mary] makes her initial entrance directly to the audience—
> alone—then turns to ascend her final throne—someone at side
> could bear her train & see that it curves the stage & finally forms
> a path descending the steps along which she steps when she enters her
> "rose-garden" with her "footfalls of memory" (Graham 1973, 431)

The ballet does not follow a linear narrative trajectory but, as in *Clytemnestra,* whose eponymous protagonist repeatedly engages, from different perspectives, with events in her past, *Episodes I* reflects a series of moments in Mary's memory, where the spatial disposition of Elizabeth I of England and Mary on stage re-enact the political hierarchies, conflicts, and moments that "might have been" as part of the historicizing and mythologizing of the Mary Stuart story. Elizabeth, seated on the raised throne, is cast initially, as Graham puts it in her later notes, "as spectator / (chorus in classic sense)" (431), but

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the spatial elevation of the platform illustrates the political hierarchy obviously enough. When Elizabeth moves down to the floor area she dances with Mary and even plays a game of "real tennis"—an aristocratic sport and antecedent of today's game. The two principals share the stage space but never touch and rarely make eye contact—an effective choreographic metaphor for the historical fact that the cousins never met.[21]

Moreover, the drama suggests a unified focus on Mary's calm resolution to embrace death with dignity. The ballet represents a metaphorical embodiment of Mary's memories, illustrated by a series of almost unconnected episodes that add up to the idea of a life where choices taken, decisions made, might have been made differently. Without the *Notebooks* it would not be clear that Eliot contributed to Graham's thinking about this ballet, and her notes illustrate many other sources. But after reading the notes it is hard to ignore the importance to Graham of Eliot's theme of "footfalls" echoing in the memory, of his representation of a "threefold" present and of a "sublime" moment of awareness outside time. Graham assimilates such poetic moments to advance her exploration of female psychology, represented here in Mary's final submission to the executioner. This is not a conventional image of defeat but one of active integrity as the curtain falls on the Mary figure, who is not kneeling at the block but turning to lie across it on her back, face upwards, her body elongated in a high release, encountering the axe, unshielded, and in plain sight. The tableau registers the timelessness of Mary's tale—"in my end is my beginning"—encapsulating her final movement as she turns on the block "at the still point."

Eliot's engagement with dance had provided him with important, if neglected, inspiration for his poetry and for his later thinking about verse drama. In return, his poetry suggested provocative representations of philosophical problems to an American choreographer who was exploring space and time through innovative dance encounters in the first half of the twentieth century. Graham was not the only choreographer of her period to turn to Eliot. Her colleague and contemporary May O'Donnell seemed also to have been inspired by the cool abstraction of late Eliot in *Suspension* (1943), with music by Ray Green. Dick Moore, O'Donnell's friend and himself a poet, "upon seeing the work in a studio performance, borrowing from T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets,* wrote: 'at the still point of the turning world, there the dance is'" (Horosko 2005, 47).[22] As a visual embodiment of Eliot's themes, *Suspension* explores the possibility of representing multiple time frames, even as the human body operates within a single teleology. The struggle to find equilibrium, to center consciousness in a place beyond human temporality, appears in O'Donnell's piece when the dancers fleetingly capture those moments of suspension, of perfect balance, of active silence to which Eliot had turned again and again until his words alighted on a Dantean expression of resolution in "Little Gidding's "the fire and the rose are one."[23] Other choreographers who, like O'Donnell, emerged from the Graham stable, such as Erick Hawkins, Merce Cunningham, and Paul Taylor, and who frequently resisted many aspects of Graham's aesthetics, nevertheless interrogated the body's movement in space and time in ways that are reminiscent of Eliot's representation of movement and stillness in relation to a modernist sublime.[24] However, this analysis of Graham's work in the context of Eliot's literary aesthetics, which paradoxically draws on the poet's understanding of ballet's still point, illustrates Eliot's somewhat surprising

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return to the United States in forms he may never have envisioned. This material helps to identify patterns of continuity and exchange that revise our understanding of modernism exclusively as an aesthetic rupture in both literature and dance. It also suggests unacknowledged transatlantic transactions occurring across the arts during this period.

Notes

I am grateful to Mark Franko for many helpful suggestions and to George Dorris for reading an earlier draft of this essay.

1. For a full account of Eliot's life and work see Gordon (1977, 1988, 1999).

2. The *Quartets* retain the fragmentary quality and intertextual resonances associated with Eliot's earlier modernist style in "The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1917) or *The Waste Land* (1922), but their pensive, philosophical register has shifted from the overt skepticism and unresolved conflicts of the earlier work to accommodate a stronger sense of the culmination of a spiritual quest. Such a goal had been hinted at in earlier poems, but had never reached fruition, as in the speaker's momentary vision into "the heart of light" while looking at a young girl in the "Hyacinth garden" in *The Waste Land* (Eliot 1952, 38).

3. Eliot borrowed the image of "the still point" from his *Coriolan I. Triumphal March,* published in 1931, but, according to Helen Gardner, he originally derived this image from Charles Williams's novel *The Greater Trumps,* where "in a magical model of the universe the figures of the Tarot pack dance around the Fool at the still centre. Only Sybil, the wise woman of the novel, sees the Fool as moving and completing all the movements of the dancers" (Gardner 1978, 85).

4. For a discussion of Mallarmé and dance, see Shaw (1992, 51–69).

5. In "Among Schoolchildren," from *The Tower* (1928).

6. Hargrove (1997, 62–65) shows that Eliot may also have seen Isadora Duncan.

7. For an extensive discussion of the London literary audience's response to the Ballets Russes, see Garafola (1989, 300–329).

8. Massine's version of *Rite* had premiered in Paris in 1920.

9. Eliot wrote his (undefended) Harvard thesis on Bradley between 1913 and 1916 and later published it in 1964 (Gordon 1977, 51).

10. I am grateful to Kate Longworth for bringing this work to my attention.

11. See also Eliot's review of Cecil J. Sharpe's *The Dance: An Historical Survey of Dancing in Europe* and Tyra de Kleen's *Mudra: The Ritual Hand Poses of the Buddha Priests and Shiva Priests.* Eliot claimed that Sharpe lacked "a first-hand knowledge of the technique of the ballet" and should have "studied the evolution of Christian and other liturgy. (For is not the High Mass . . . one of the highest developments of dancing?)" (Eliot 1925, 441–42).

12. For a full biographical account of Massine's life and career, see García-Márquez (1995).

13. Although Tudor himself denied the extravagance of Kaye's claim (on the Dick Cavett show in 1979), it indicates Kaye's perception of what was important to Tudor.

14. In a letter to the author (December 11, 2008), Jane Pritchard explained that *Jardin* and *Murder* were playing concurrently at the Mercury Theatre in 1936. *Murder in the Cathedral* opened on Friday, November 1, 1935, and was performed on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays through to May 16, 1936 (over the Christmas period there were two performances a day). It was then revived on September 15, 1936, before transferring to the Duchess Theatre in November. Its history is interlinked with Marie Rambert's Ballet Club/Ballet Rambert, which performed on Thursdays and Sundays during this period. *Jardin aux lilas* opened on January 26, 1936, and then appears to be in every performance (Thursday and Sunday) up to March 1, 1936.

15. Telephone interview with Leo Kersley, July 2002.

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16. See Chazin-Bennahum (1994, 61) for an account of Tudor's potential literary sources for *Jardin,* including Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude;* a short story by the Finnish author Aino Kallas; a variety of French allusions to Guy de Maupassant, Marcel Proust, and J. K. Huysmans; and a short story by Georges Ohnet on a similar theme to that of Kallas.

17. *Dark Meadow* also drew on Roman, Greek, and American Indian myths and Jungian theories of the collective unconscious.

18. The videotape of *Episodes I* and the Sallie Wilson interview with De Mille are in the Jerome Robbins Dance Collection, New York Public Library of the Performing Arts.

19. The "cloth of estate" was a piece of material bearing the insignia of Mary's royal status, and it was used as a canopy or carpet.

20. The 1985 video certainly shows Queen Mary's dramatic walk forward just before the final scene. She has just stepped out of her stiff, formal dress, which remains standing in the upstage left-hand corner—the paraphernalia of the Queen, signifying her regal status, has thus become an empty shell—while she dons the final red robe of her execution.

21. One exception was a movement phrase described by Marnie Thomas as demonstrating the two Queens' antagonism. Facing one another *en diagonale,* both performed a *grand battement en l'air* directed to one another and moving toward each other across the stage. Elizabeth's *battement* is sustained, controlled, balletic, while Mary performs a "strike"—a shift of weight and kick with the leg like a knife slicing through liquid. The distinctive movement qualities of the two signify their individual approaches to the conflict between them.

22. In speaking of the creation of this wartime piece, O'Donnell had herself expressed a perspective that was uncannily close to Eliot's when creating the *Quartets:* "The world, in the midst of World War II, was crazy, with no reason for man's inhumanity . . . We have to trust, I thought, in a bigger law of nature that seems to hold the universe together in a kind of balance. Things move in their own orbit and yet hold their own kind of energy and design" (Horosko 2005, 46).

23. O'Donnell extended the analogy with Eliot in her 1957 work to Bartok, which she entitled *Footfalls Echo in Memory* after the quotation from Eliot's poem, and in her 1978 piece, *Vibrations,* she again explored the theme of figures orbiting around a central, imperceptibly moving point.

24. O'Donnell and Cunningham appeared together in concert performances in the 1950s. The title of Todd Bolender's *The Still Point* (1955) shows the continued resonance of Eliot's poem in a modern balletic context. Ernestine Stodelle (formerly a dancer with Doris Humphrey) recited the poem while Jim May performed the choreography (without music) for her duet, *At the Still Point* (1998). And while Taylor's *Beloved Renegade* (2008) was inspired by Walt Whitman, the end of the piece, with its single female figure continuously pivoting on the flat foot with one leg raised in *attitude derrière* as the curtain falls, evokes "the still point" of a turning world.

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