

## December Day at Little Gidding

An old man with a wheelbarrow  
refusing to offer up directions without full theatre;  
before he mentions a left hand turn by the hedge,  
he's twelve and on his first  
horse on a green pasture  
with his mother fearing for his safety and him  
hanging on for dear life.

As if to illustrate some consummate point,  
he picks up his hoe  
and holds it up with two strong brown hands.  
"It was down that way, at least it was when I was a boy."  
Like a literate fool, I ask if that's the place,  
the small retreat, the chapel, the poem from Four Quartets by Eliot.  
"Don't know no Eliot. Perhaps there was once.  
And a chapel, yes.  
Strong religion in that place.  
I never believed in God till one Sunday  
in there with the light through the stained glass  
shining down on the ankle of a girl  
along the pew.  
Heaven took me then  
and never gave me back."