

CHARD WHITLOW (*The Fifth Quartet?*)

A parody by Henry Reed, written during the Blitz in May 1941

(*Mr. Eliot's Sunday Evening Postscript*)

As we get older we do not get any younger.
Seasons return, and today I am fifty-five,
And this time last year I was fifty-four,
And this time next year I shall be sixty-two.
And I cannot say I should like (to speak for myself)
To see my time over again— if you can call it time:
Fidgeting uneasily under a draughty stair,
Or counting sleepless nights in the crowded Tube.

There are certain precautions— though none of them very reliable—
Against the blast from bombs and the flying splinter,
But not against the blast from heaven, *vento dei venti*,
The wind within a wind unable to speak for wind;
And the frigid burnings of purgatory will not be touched
By any emollient.

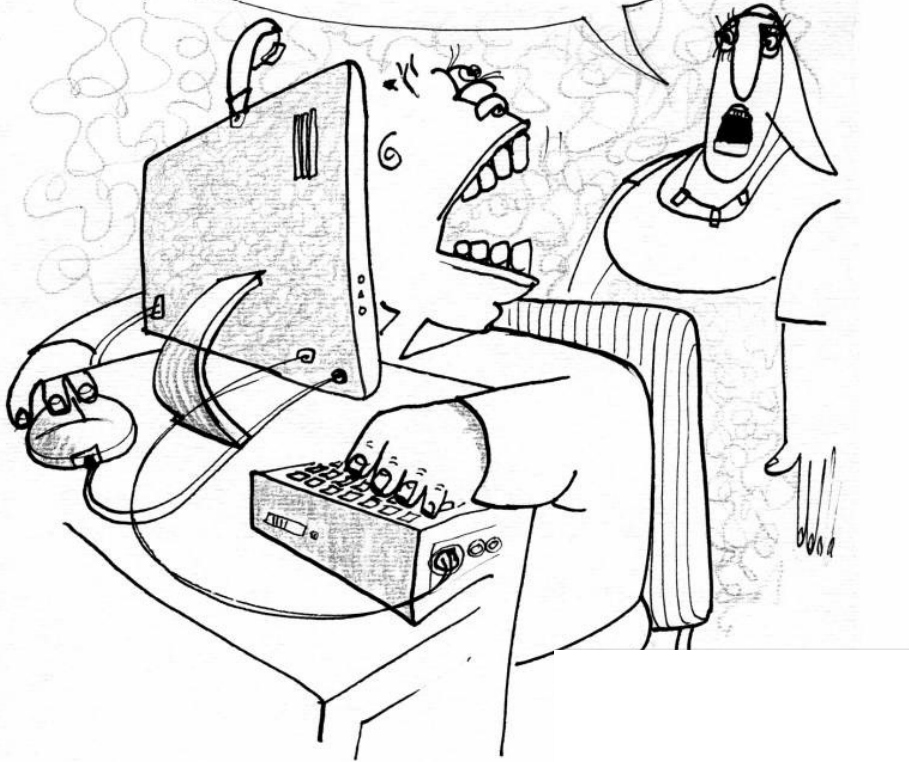
I think you will find this put,
Better than I could ever hope to express it,
In the words of Kharma: "It is, we believe,
Idle to hope that the simple stirrup-pump
Will extinguish hell."

Oh, listeners,
And you especially who have turned off the wireless,
And sit in Stoke or Basingstoke listening appreciatively to the silence,
(Which is also the silence of hell) pray not for your selves but your souls.
And pray for me also under the draughty stair.
As we get older we do not get any younger.

And pray for Kharma under the holy mountain.

Henry Reed. "Chard Whitlow (Mr. Eliot's Sunday Evening Postscript)." *New Statesman and Nation* 21, no. 533 (10 May 1941)

**WHY ARE YOU ALWAYS
ON THAT COMPUTER?**



“Mum! – T.S.Eliot –
‘Humankind cannot bear very much reality’.”