T. S. ELIOT'S FOUR QUARTETS:  
THEIR PATTERN AND MEANING

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to describe T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets as a work that is highly dependent upon pattern. This is in keeping with the views of those critics (e.g. Helen Gardner, Harry Blamires, Elizabeth Drew) who feel that the Quartets, throughout all four books, are the drawing out of a continuous thread of meaning. The underpinnings of the poem are religious and sacramental and its purpose is to bring a sense of the eternal to the temporal world. Throughout, one is guided by the notion that Eliot is describing the way to religious vision.

Chapter one, therefore, is a discussion of Eliot's attempts to establish a fundamental point of view, the point at which vision begins. One is required to seek the meaning of individual words and the pattern of key images which lead to what Eliot calls "a condition of complete simplicity." The conclusion of the chapter suggests that vision begins where it ends, that Eliot's goal is the extinction of the bodily eye and the kindling of the light of inner vision.

Chapter two proceeds to discuss the circular pattern of the Quartets, the constantly reiterated theme that in order to make a beginning one must make an end, or "the end is where we start from." It is argued
that the thing that prevents one's making an end is one's fear of change. Thus it is the fear of change that clouds the way to mystic vision.

Following is a chapter on the mandala and how it relates to the general pattern of poetic imagery. It is viewed as a synthesis of many meanings, most particularly what mystics call the "downward way to wisdom." The mandala, that is, is a symbolic way of stating the paradox that vision occurs through darkness. And as the mandala resolves this one paradox so it resolves many others. The intensely complex association of ideas that the mandala represents is interpreted to be an image of "enlightened consciousness."

Chapter four develops this same theme, only going into more detail as concerns the finer points of the pattern. Here is discussed the descent into darkness and what this signifies in the general pattern of mystic thought. Also discussed is the relationship of images of darkness and light and how this leads to a sense of a pattern of growth. Symbolic of this latter pattern are images of the tree and its leaves to which chapter six then gives expression.

A brief summary looks at the pattern of development in Eliot's prose, poetry and drama and draws the conclusion that Four Quartets is the work of the mature artist, sure of his talents and able to speak in the affirmative voice that had eluded him in much of his earlier work. In all, Four Quartets represents the coherent ordering not only of the pattern of one man's life but of the life of a people as he observes it to be.
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INTRODUCTION

Many critics feel that *Four Quartets* is a work that is based on pattern. Just casually glancing at the range of Eliot criticism one finds such comments as the following:

The influence of *Ulysses* can be detected throughout *Four Quartets*. Its patterning is systematic and complex in the Joycean way, its use of words Joycean to a degree which critics . . . have scarcely begun to sense.¹

Harry Blamires attributes to Eliot's work a high degree of verbal pattern. As he points out, words are "cross referenced" and their meaning in one context enriched by their meaning in another. Much the same argument is advanced by R. P. Blackmur who believes that the images of *Four Quartets* are "agents of composition":

That is to say they are seen as themselves analogies which by enlightening each other are themselves enlightened . . . . The analogies are always pretty much undeclared, they do not say what they are about. They are ungoverned; they do not come directly under the head or power of anything, but only by their association. They are incomplete: they always require their parallels, and they always represent more than they state.²

Helen Gardner is no less aware of the pattern, in one form or another, of Eliot's work:

The more familiar we become with *Four Quartets* . . . the more we realize that the analogy with music goes much
deeper than a comparison of the sections with the movements of a quartet.3

The pattern of the Quartets, Gardner argues, is one in which we are:

constantly reminded of music by the treatment of images, which recur with constant modifications, from their context, or from their combination with other recurring images, as a phrase recurs with modifications in music.4

Whether one is speaking of words or images there is a systematic counterpointing of both. The phrase recurs, as in music, and therefore is constantly modified and given new shades of meaning. Gardner is influenced by Eliot's own essay, The Music of Poetry, which she cites:

I think that a poet may gain much from the study of music: how much technical knowledge of musical form is desirable I do not know, for I have not that technical knowledge myself. But I believe that the properties in which music concerns the poet most nearly, are the sense of rhythm and the sense of structure. I think that it might be possible for a poet to work too closely to musical analogies: the result might be an effect of artificiality; but I know that a poem, or a passage of a poem, may tend to realize itself first as a particular rhythm before it reaches expression in words, and that this rhythm may bring to birth the idea and the image; and I do not believe that this is an experience peculiar to myself. There are possibilities for verse which bear some analogy to the development of a theme by different groups of instruments; there are possibilities of transitions in a poem comparable to the different movements of a symphony or a quartet; there are possibilities of contrapuntal arrangement of subject-matter. It is in the concert room, rather than in the opera house, that the germ of a poem may be quickened.5

In effect Eliot lends support to the commentators who see in the Quartets a contrapuntal arrangement of words and images. There is little doubt that the musical analogy applies to the Quartets, and that Eliot intended it to apply. On this subject Miss Gardner's work is learned and convincing. The work of Blamires is simply more exhaustive.
and treats of every possible interplay of word and image. They, together
with Blackmur and others, attest to Eliot's pursuit of musical form.

The shortcoming of this approach is that it tends to ignore
the specific meaning of individual words, phrases and images. In
the concert hall, for example, one does not listen to the single
instrument, and the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. This,
indeed, is what Blamires believes Joyce to have been saying of the
life of Leopold Bloom: from the context of one's total being and
from a phantasia of experience life is realized. So Gardner argues
of the *Quartets*:

... to read *Four Quartets* one must have some sense of
the whole before one attempts to make very much of the
parts.6

Further:

It is better in reading poetry of this kind to trouble
too little about 'meaning' than to trouble too much.

Her placing of meaning in inverted commas states a key critical
premise: one is wrong too fully to pursue the 'meaning' of any image
or idea apart from the total context within which it occurs. For:

... the music and the meaning arise at 'a point of intersection',
in the changes and movement of the whole.7

I can only say that my own understanding of the meaning of pattern
in *Four Quartets* is quite different from this. I would say, for
example, that one must trouble a great deal about individual images,
whether these are considered in isolation or in unison. To treat
meaning as something that mysteriously rises from a "point of intersection"
can create more problems than it solves. It leads Gardner to say:

*Four Quartets* is unique and essentially inimitable. In
it the form is the perfect expression of the subject; so
much so that one can hardly in the end distinguish subject from form. The whole poem in its unity declares more eloquently than any single line or passage that truth is not the final answer to a calculation, nor the last stage of an argument, nor something told us once and for all, which we spend the rest of our life proving by examples. The subject of Four Quartets is the truth which is indistinguishable from the way and the life in which we find it.8

One wonders on encountering Gardner's use of the word "unique" whether she has forgotten Eliot's own argument concerning the uniqueness or the novelty of a work of art. He of course says, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," that no artist or work of art is unique. Each, rather, exists within a tradition which can only be modified and added to as one adds to any gradually evolving art or medium of expression. Eliot staunchly avows, therefore, that the poet exists within a public domain and that his work is indeed "imitable", though the works of Ford may suffer in comparison to Shakespeare.

As more directly concerns the view that I am trying to establish, I doubt the efficacy of pure form as a conveyor of meaning. Though Eliot says

Only by the form, the pattern,  
Can words or music reach  
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still  
Moves perpetually in its stillness. (BN V)

he is not to be taken entirely at his word, for the pattern is merely the imitation of an experience, and it is this one dominant experience that one wishes to know. The form, in other words, contains the meaning, and that meaning may be arrived at by a consideration of form but not by form alone. The form and the pattern are simply a way of arranging a particular landscape so as to give it unity and perspective as, say, the painter does in painting.
In short, I do not see the value of a critical view which states that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, especially when one speaks of Eliot. Were he writing a symphonic score it would be quite another matter; but he is not, he is writing of the reality of religious experience and of the doctrine of Incarnation -- these are specific, substantial matters and are not something which, like music, may disappear in a vapor. One begins and ends in the full knowledge that:

What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present. (BN I)

If one is considering pattern it especially points to "one end" which is always present, and the nearest thing to that end is the individual word, phrase and image. One cannot imagine, for instance, how form can manifest the Christian meaning of the word Love, or "prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action." (DS V) These words and ideas cannot be illuminated except by troubling a very great deal about individual meanings.9

Indeed as one progresses through the Quartets it becomes quite remarkable that such a depth of meaning is packed into individual words. Images such as the rose garden and the rose are equally complex, and they yield their fullest meaning not by a consideration of form but by a delicate probing of their own inner depths. To be sure the rose garden of "Burnt Norton" is arranged in a pattern but the pattern is not realized at some remote "point of intersection." Rather, the pattern to which Eliot alludes is one which requires a studied attention to detail and the clearest sense of the meaning of words.
In yet a further area there is evidence of a very consistent and concrete pattern, a pattern which, I feel, can be logically explored from beginning to end. This is in the realm of historical consciousness, for the pattern of the Quartets, in large part, is an 'external' pattern laid down by men who lived, thought and suffered long before Eliot began to write. So great is his sense of history that he constantly reminds us of a process which he knows to have preceded him and which will also survive after him. An allusion to St. John of the Cross, therefore, is more the mark of Eliot's humility than an immodest show of learning. I believe him to be admitting a profound debt to the past and indeed emphasizing the eloquence and the authority of people from other times and other places. Especially in the case of Dante, Eliot admits him to be the unrivalled master of religious verse, and if we are to understand the one we must see him as writing under the dominion of the other.

In effect, then, I believe Eliot has tried to create a work which will both reflect and conform to the pattern of poetical, historical and religious thought as he knew it to his day. One must take very seriously such assertions as the following:

Readers of my Waste Land will perhaps remember that the vision of my city clerks trooping over London Bridge from the railway station to their offices evoked the reflection 'I had not thought death had undone so many'; and that in another place I deliberately modified a line of Dante by altering it -- 'sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled.' And I gave the references in my notes, in order to make the reader who recognized the allusion, know that I meant him to recognize it, and know that he would have missed the point if he did not recognize it. 10

Eliot's allusions to Dante, as to others, are intended to have the reader see that work as a whole, as for instance one would see
the entire meaning, scope and pattern of the Paradiso through the lines, "Figlia del tuo figlio, / Queen of Heaven." (DS IV) And not only is one to see that particular work as a whole, but as a part of a pattern of works that have one thing in common: the attempt to set the world in some kind of spiritual order. In brief, there is but one "pattern" and that pattern is universal. This is the lesson that we learn from reading Dante and the Bible and the Bhagavad Gita. Such works represent, as I believe Eliot would have us see, a type of efflorescence of the human mind; as the religious impulse in general begins to work itself up to consciousness it takes shape around particular images, patterns and doctrines. So if one wanted to know the Quartets, he could do no better than to embark on a detailed investigation of Eliot's sources; to know that the allusions to Krishna, Dame Julian of Norwich and St. John of the Cross are not incidental, nor are they there for the sake of the fact that these are what we call "religious" people. Rather, they are given a place in the pattern because they are the pattern, and any thought of the Quartets without these people would make the meaning of that work entirely different.

One of Eliot's most significant undertakings is, perhaps, the attempt to unite these people, their beliefs and their attitudes, in a single pattern -- "the complete consort dancing together." (LG V)

Krishna says:

I am the soul, prince victorious, which dwells in the heart of all things. I am the beginning the middle, and the end of all that lives. (Bhagavad Gita)

The words of Christ are:

I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.
And while the cornerstone of Christianity is the doctrine of love leading to eternal life, the Bhagavad Gita says:

But beyond this, visible and invisible, there is An Invisible, higher, Eternal; and when all things pass away this remains for ever and ever.

This Invisible is called the Everlasting and is the highest End supreme. Those who reach him never return. This is my supreme abode.

This Spirit Supreme, Arjuna, is attained by an everliving love. In him all things have their life, and from him all things have come. (Bhagavad Gita 8)

As in Eliot's references in the Waste Land, I believe that one is meant to see the pervading purpose of a specific allusion, and to dig below the surface and come up with the parallel pattern of seemingly different religious faiths. It is not that any one religion can be mistaken for another, but rather that there is a striving in many religions, for reasons hardly to be understood, toward the same summit of thought.

While my reading of the people to whom Eliot alludes has been superficial, it has been just deep enough, possibly, to give the freshness of insight that comes with first acquaintance. Reading Dante and the Bhagavad Gita, for instance, I was immediately struck by the fact that any single image in Eliot could be expanded until it became one with images from these two sources. Gradually this led to a belief that there is both an internal and an external order of words and images in Four Quartets; there is indeed an independent order of meaning within the work but there is also a sense in which Eliot cannot be understood without reference to a great number of outside sources. This is by way of saying that there is nothing quasi-mystical about the way in which Eliot creates meaning. Though he may have had mystical experiences he is sensible enough not
to talk about them. He tells us, rather, that the way to the experience -- the experience of what the Quartets are about -- is through a consideration of history and authority. The individual experience does not matter, and even the Quartets do not matter except as they are an attempt to echo the pattern that has already been discovered:

And what there is to conquer
By strength and submission, has already been discovered
Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope
To emulate -- but there is no competition --
There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
And found and lost again and again: and now under conditions
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.
For us there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.

EC V

Eliot makes no special claims to authority, and what he is involved in, strictly speaking, is a process of discovery. The pattern which is purely his own, the pattern which we more immediately perceive, is simply that which points to the broader historical pattern and the nature of religious experience more clearly revealed.

One is led to conclude that the Quartets are imbued by such a strong historical sense that the only way to approach them is through the pattern of time and history; history, that is, will shed light on Four Quartets rather than they on history. Eliot is not simply Eliot, but the Elyot, his ancestor, of Sixteenth Century England. He is Dante down to the present day, and Dame Julian merely seen through contemporary eyes, a figure from the past absorbed into the modern consciousness. Each suffers a sea change as each is filtered through the present moment, but perhaps, as Eliot says, this "neither gain nor loss." For what is complete -- vision in its highest form -- cannot be added to, and what is incomplete is merely that vision in its various stages of ebb and
flow throughout the pattern of time and history. One's moment in time may not be the most propitious moment, but "for us there is only the trying."

It may appear from my introduction that I have paid a great deal of attention to the people to whom Eliot alludes but this is not altogether the case. Having discovered the source of an allusion and that Eliot was thinking of this person or that work there is not much else that can be said unless we consider the work and the person as part of a general pattern. The real importance of Dante for instance is not that he is author of the line "figlia del tuo figlio" but rather that he is creator of the image of the Celestial Rose and that the image and the highly complex pattern of thought for which it stands has special importance for Eliot. In similar manner the "figure of the ten stairs" is not in itself as interesting as the fact that through the allusion Eliot opens up the entire subject of the mystic journey, a journey that occurs in definite stages and requires many levels of "discipline, thought and action." One learns that knowledge is gained through a ritual exercise and that this exercise has been mapped out as one maps the features of an entire continent -- in order to travel from east to west and north to south, discovering every dark nook of human experience, one must know the prerequisite steps. There are pits and shoals that Dame Julian of Norwich, St. John of the Cross and a host of mystics pinpoint as one would locate boundaries and place-names on a map.

Thus the Four Quartets span the four quarters of the known world and descend into a world that is darker and more awesome. Their pattern is one that begins, as Dante does, in the commonplace realms of material
experience but leads step by step to the almost chartless realms of
inner being. Here the importance of the "map", or the mandala is
vividly seen.

What I have tried to do, by dealing with the pattern of the *Quartets*,
is show its broad contours and to isolate, where possible, specific
images such as the mandala, the rose, the tree and its leaves. Thus
I have hoped to show the way of approach to the "still point" to which
Eliot so constantly alludes. My chapters are divided according to the
view that one's first task is to establish a "point of view"; that
view being established one is then able to pay far greater attention
to the "detail of the pattern" and to separate the detail from the
constant flux of the material world. As the journey proceeds one gradually
learns that the "world" is destroyed in order to be created again along
specific lines of spiritual awareness. The mandala, for example, contains
the world in miniature -- everything is reduced to symbolic proportions
and new meanings are attached to old words, values and beliefs. Eventually
achieved is a reversal of the world as it is commonly known. The darkness
becomes the light and the stillness the dancing. Nothing really is new
but is simply seen from a different perspective or from a standpoint of
spiritual rather than material laws. But again one is not in the world
but out of it; one has become a creator of worlds -- the creator of the
kingdom of spiritual consciousness. One looks back at the world and
everything in it as the same and yet different just as a mirror reflects
the same and yet different images of reality. And so the pool-begotten
vision with which the *Quartets* open becomes something more than an echo
or a Platonic world of second-hand reality. Instead one looks, as Dante
looks at the end of the "Paradiso", into the very heart of light, the heart of the pattern, the point of union of man and God, stillness and motion, joy and suffering and all the dualities of which the world is made:

And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one. (LG V)
CHAPTER I

In *Four Quartets* one of Eliot's primary aims is to establish a point of view. His wish is to give focus not only to his poetry but to the world in general. This is a daring undertaking but one which is the essence of the *Quartets* and its kindred religious poetry. One thinks, for example, of Dante's *Divine Comedy* which is one of the most outstanding attempts in poetry to reduce the world to a single principle or moment of vision. As in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, God is light, and once this is understood the world assumes a new simplicity -- Eliot's "condition of complete simplicity." (LG V) The simplicity of light is the fountainhead of all worldly being. Henry Vaughn says:

I saw eternity the other night
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
   All calm as it was bright;
And round beneath it, time, in hours, days, years,
   Driven by the spheres,
Like a vast shadow moved, in which the world
   And all her train were hurled.

In one way or another, Dante, Milton and Vaughn all arrive at the oneness and unity of light. In attempting to establish a similar view, William Blake speaks of seeing "the world in a grain of sand", and "eternity in an hour."

This sought-after illumination -- the seeing of the world in a grain of sand -- is more or less what Eliot attempts to achieve in
his own terms. This is why I have begun by discussing point of view, or what may be termed the 'focus' of *Four Quartets*. For Eliot's method, really, is one of ever greater attention to detail, forcing one to look at the world as one would at a finely balanced mechanism and to discover its governing principle. His purpose is to find the key that unlocks the mystery of the whole. Which is to say, one seeks the detail of the pattern before the pattern itself.

In general, Eliot attempts to establish the drift of his poetry, the tack that it must take in order to arrive at a sense of what the world is about. On one level his concern must obviously be, as he is a poet, for speech, the purifying of the "dialect of the tribe." (LG II) As with the world, of which speech is a part, he must try to find key words, key utterances, which tell what the language is about. Yet the poet's task is a difficult one, for standing between the word and its meaning, ironically, is the barrier of 'poetry':

Thunder rolled by rolling stars
Simulates triumphal cars
Deployed in constallated wars
Scorpion fights against the Sun
Until the Sun and Moon go down
Comets weep and Leonids fly
Hunt the heavens and the plains
Whirled in a vortex that shall bring
The world to that destructive fire
That burns before the ice-cap reigns. (EC II)

I have always looked upon this as one of the 'finer' pieces of writing in Eliot, something so deliberately rhetorical that it stands in bold relief to the words that immediately follow:

That was a way of putting it -- not very satisfactory:
A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion,
Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle
With words and meanings.
By his own protestation the previous lines were "not very satisfactory", for they were too much an attempt at style rather than meaning. One must still "wrestle" with words and rescue them from the bed of poetry within which they lie.

The poetry, says Eliot, "does not matter", and yet it does matter and what he really means is that the poetry apart from the meaning does not matter. The conversational tone that he assumes -- "that was a way of putting it" -- is meant to draw one's attention to the word, and not only to the word but to its sometimes almost inexpressible meaning. If one considers Eliot's essay For Lancelot Andrewes, his own purposes as a poet, especially in Four Quartets, become clearer:

Andrewes takes the word and derives the world from it; squeezing and squeezing the word until it yields a juice of meaning which we should never have supposed any word to possess.

Andrewes was one who "wrestled" with words and sought to establish their richest and deepest meaning. As an example, his seventeen Sermons of the Nativity consistently strove to come to grips with the meaning of the word "Incarnation." Because of his great success, Andrewes won Eliot's admiration. From the entire body of Christian belief he took a single word and set it like a jewel among rough stones.

Eliot's purposes are much like Andrewes', for in order to arrive at world-unity he must arrive at the unity of language. Language, that is, is too often a trap -- words change, they mean different things to different people, and they cannot bear the "burden":

Words strain
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
Will not stay still. Shrieking voices
Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering,
Always assail them. (BN V)

Yet at the very moment that Eliot proclaims the uncertainty and
instability of language he shifts ground, and with no moment of pause
says:

The Word in the desert
Is most attacked by the voices of temptation,
The crying shadow in the funeral dance,
The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera. (BN V)

The "Word" is Andrewes' "word within a word, unable to speak a
word." The Word, or the Incarnate Christ, is locked within a word
and a language that can both be a trap. Even to utter the word seems
an impossibility and one must come at from oblique angles. Though
Eliot is not shy to introduce the idea of Incarnation -- as he has
just done -- he does make us see the extreme importance of sifting
language, of stripping it of accident and imperfection and trying, even
for a moment, to make it "stay still." We, then, like the poet, must
engage in the purifying of the dialect of the tribe and must try to
find the crucial point at which the word and its meaning intersect;
where the two are joined, is where temporary stillness of vision occurs.
In no other way but that one arrive at the essence of language can such
a goal be attained.

Thus, the passage "Thunder rolled by rolling stars" is deliberately
contrasted to "That was a way of putting it -- not very satisfactory:
A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion." Eliot is simply
trying to establish the fact that there must be a harmony of words and
meaning, that the poetry must act not just in its own service but in
the service of language. One is always concerned with the harmony, the sudden union of 'poetry' and meaning or sound and sense.

With similar thoughts of union in mind, Eliot says:

But to apprehend
The point of intersection of the timeless
With time, is an occupation for the saint --
No occupation either, but something given
And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,
Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender,
For most of us, there is only the unattended
Moment, the moment in and out of time,
The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,
The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning
Or the waterfall, or the music heard so deeply
That it is not heard at all . . . . (DS V)

Eliot is proclaiming the need to know the "point of intersection of the timeless / With time" just as one seeks to know the intersection of the word and its meaning. For it is in moments of "timelessness", when one is free of the temporal, that the meaning of the world is most clearly seen. Yet too often one is "lost in a shaft of sunlight." Those subtle images which should strike the sense with deepest meaning are lost in the commonplace light of day. One such image is the "wild thyme" which, though it is the 'essence' of thyme -- the play on words being apparent -- goes unnoticed. Far sooner one sees the domestic counterpart of the image, the thyme that is not wild but which is soiled by common use and common sight. Thus, still lost in a shaft of sunlight, one does not hear the 'waterfall' or see the sudden flash of 'winter lightning.' In Eliot's words, one suffers a "distraction fit", or is so deeply seized by the commonplace that all else is unheeded.

Allusion to rare and sudden manifestations of meaning are elsewhere repeated:
Whisper of running streams, and winter lightning,
The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry . . . . (EC III)

Eliot is attempting to draw one's attention away from the blurring panorama of rushing rivers, light that falls in great "shafts", and the cloying fruit of everyday experience. As I have tried to suggest, he is concerned to arrive at essences, whether it is in the realm of language or of images. One must have a point of view, a fundamental focus, in order to know where to begin, where, indeed, to end.

An outstanding example of the attempt to steady one's gaze and to give it a point of orientation occurs in "The Dry Salvages", where Eliot says:

The sea has many voices
Many gods and many voices . . . .
   The sea howl
And the sea yelp, are different voices
Often together heard: the whine in the rigging,
The menace and caress of wave that breaks on water,
The distant rote in the granite teeth,
And the wailing warning from the approaching headland
Are all sea voices . . . . (DS I)

The sea is an aimless presence which speaks no clear message -- in the wave there is both a "menace" and a "caress." Yet it is toward a single unit of articulate speech that Eliot moves and thus, just brief lines later, says:

Between midnight and dawn, when the past is all deception,
The future futureless, before the morning watch
When time stops and time is never ending;
And the ground swell, that is and was from the beginning,
Clangs
The bell.

Though it is a very gradual process, "The Dry Salvages" is an attempt to reduce the many voices of the sea, the "howl" and the "yelp", to the simplicity and the unity of the "bell." This is not just any bell
as we later discover:

Also pray for those who were in ships, and
 Ended their voyage on the sand, in the sea's lips
 Or wherever cannot reach them the sound of the sea bell's
 Perpetual angelus. (DS IV)

Wave after wave may break upon the shore but there remains, as earlier witnessed, the "ground swell, that is and was from the beginning." That swell carries through the poem and raises to sight the praying "Lady, whose shrine stands on the promontory." (DS IV) Altogether there is a pattern that reduces the ringing of the sea to the sea bell's "perpetual angelus." One has arrived at the sea that calls to service, the thrice rung daily bell of the Incarnation. Everything intersects within a network of meaning that includes the Virgin, the Son, and the idea of salvation. But really this is where one began: The Dry Salvages -- or "les trois sauvages" -- are the group of rocks off the N. E. coast of Cape Ann which rises above the eddying mass of the sea. They are a single point of stability just as the angelus is a single point of meaning.

Implicit in this is the fact that Eliot is trying to create a fundamental point of view. Through certain images (the wild thyme and the winter lightning), through a pattern of the fewest possible words, and the gathering together of all the sea's voices, he is attempting to have his reader see where the pattern begins. It is like searching for the tag-end of a ball of string, just the right piece that will allow the pattern slowly to unfold. What is looked for, thus, is the point of convergence -- the gathering together of all light within a single flash, all words within a Word, the sea's many voices within a bell.
This, I believe, is Eliot's primary aim. But in arriving at what he calls a "condition of complete simplicity" one is sure to encounter the problem of change. The sea, for example, is a vast pattern of change, and Burnt Norton, East Coker and Little Gidding all testify to this same force. The alien power in the world, therefore, the power that sometimes clouds man's vision, is the power of destruction. "East Coker" presents the simple message:

Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass. (EC I)

It is the same in "The Dry Salvages" where the sea has a double edge and the keener side seems to be the pattern of destruction rather than salvation:

There is no end of it, the voiceless wailing,
No end to the withering of withered flowers,
To the movement of pain that is painless and motionless,
To the drift of the sea and the drifting wreckage . . . . (DS II)

Eliot of course ends by saying that there is "Only the hardly, barely prayable / Prayer of the one Annunciation." (DS II) But unless one perceives that the timeless is interwoven with time just as permanence is with change there can be, really, no prayer. And to perceive such a subtly complex pattern one must accept all signs and symbols of change. From this basic problem there can be no backward journeying, only a plunge into the future, a casting of oneself onto the treadmill of time. Just so, says Eliot, "Krishna admonished Arjuna / On the field of battle":

Not fare well,
But fare forward, voyagers. (DS IV)

The fundamental importance of pattern, thus, is that it provides the key to vision, and vision is what Four Quartets are about. In
this regard, however, one cannot over-emphasize the fact that, for
Eliot, if vision is to occur it must occur in stages. Even the Saint and
the mystic, in the testimony they have given us, speak of a well defined
journey. So, Eliot seems to say, if we are to participate in anything
near mystic vision, we must do as the Saint and realize that:

... any action
Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat
Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start.
We die with the dying:
See, they depart, and we go with them.
We are born with the dead:
See, they return, and bring us with them.
The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree
Are of equal duration. (LG V)

In order to achieve the permanent, one must accept the impermanent,
in order to live one must "die." More paradoxical than anything, where
we end is where we begin, and this is precisely what I have tried to
say of the pattern of Four Quartets in general: they pose the necessity
of vision beginning where it ends. Where, that is, the bodily eye
suffers itself to be consumed in darkness is where the light of inner
vision is found.
CHAPTER II.

"It is in changing that things find repose."

-- Heraclitus

When the world is viewed in its utmost state of simplicity it seems, merely, that universal flux is eternal and man is temporal. The Quartets remind us of this again and again. The manor house at Burnt Norton was once destroyed by fire and rose again on the same foundations. East Coker is the former site of Eliot's ancestral home and Little Gidding the location of the religious community established by Nicholas Ferrar. Thus each title betokens change and this leads Eliot, in "The Dry Salvages", to say:

There is no end, but addition: the trailing Consequence of further days and hours, While emotion takes to itself the emotionless Years of living among the breakage Of what was believed in as the most reliable-- And therefore the fittest for renunciation. (DS II)

Days are heaped upon days in the endless "addition" of temporal existence. Following lines say:

Where is the end of them, the fishermen sailing Into the wind's tail, where the fog cowers? We cannot think of a time that is oceanless Or of an ocean not littered with wastage Or a future that is not liable Like the past, to have no destination. (DS II)
The problem, as it has always been, is pointing a goal. One is unable to find, either in a word, an image or a phrase, a sense of the timeless within time:

We have to think of them as forever bailing,
Setting and hauling, while the North East lowers
Over shallow banks unchanging and erosionless
Or drawing their money, drying sails at dockage;
For a haul that will not bear examination.

Being so thoroughly imbued with a sense of linear time we cannot think of the fishermen -- as a type of humanity -- coming to rest. Rather we see them as "forever bailing, / Setting and hauling." With their nets sunk so deep and no deeper the fishermen find that there is no haul that will "bear examination" and therefore no end to their voyage. The problem which Eliot here partially defines is that man constantly charts a course between time past and time future. In doing this he creates the impression that there is "no end, but addition: the trailing / Consequence of further days and hours." Life, history, human endeavour are simply a continuum which pushes forever into the future. But underlying this is a teleological foundation -- an assumption really -- which man himself has created. Out of his fear of change he thinks of his life as a voyage without end, a series of bright new harbours forever appearing on the horizon. This, as Eliot would have it, is man's way of disowning the past, of never facing squarely the fact that when all is considered all is change. So the endless voyage, the fear of coming to rest, is the result of the way man thinks and the way he suffers. He cannot bear the thought of there being a stop to time and a forced 'addition' of the meaning and value of his life. One is better to sail above the ocean, avoiding its troubled depths and the problem of time and change.
But Eliot does not accept, in anything near its common understanding, the doctrine of change. Nor does he accept what he implicitly terms "superficial notions of evolution" -- the notion that the future develops out of the past and that man's history is the working out of an always new pattern of existence. With extreme consciousness of purpose Eliot sets himself in opposition to such theories and would have us gain a new sense of time:

I have said before
That the past experience revived in the meaning
Is not the experience of one life only
But of many generations -- not forgetting
Something that is quite ineffable:
The backward look behind the assurance
Of recorded history, the backward half-look
Over the shoulder, towards the primitive terror. (DS II)

The primitive terror in the Christian sense is that the entire race owes a profound debt to the past and that the debt is never fully paid, the sin of man's transgression against God never entirely expiated, except by personal sacrifice. Thus past, present and future are inextricably bound together and yet man behaves as though they were not.

This, then, is the problem seen in a somewhat different light, for man fears not only change but the terrible burden of the past, and of the "experience" revived in its full weight of meaning. Therefore the way of escaping the past -- the way too of escaping change -- is never to think beyond the limits of linear time. This, I believe, makes sense of Eliot saying:

Men's curiosity searches past and future
And clings to that dimension. (DS V)

If man projects himself on a linear scale of time, if his "curiosity" searches just that far, he indeed becomes the fisherman to whose voyage
"there is no end, but addition." The journey simply goes on interminably, and the only "end", the one final consummation, is realized "In a drifting boat with a slow leakage." Eliot's portrait, once it is reduced to its essentials, is of a humankind that sails in a slowly rotting vessel, who would avoid the ravages of time or "the trial and judgement of the sea", but who must suffer it anyway. Thus, the straight-arrow concept of time, while it seems a comfort, is its own undoing. For Eliot translates the voyage into moral terms and suggests that there can be no true escape from the past. Eventually one must turn homeward, steering not into the future but into the eternal now, the moral dilemma that has never been reconciled.

The only way of arresting the voyage, as I see it, is to conquer the problem of time and change; but so long as man imagines himself on a ship's course into the future, running from a past that cannot be escaped, there can be no end, no final contest that ends in victory. As I have argued, one must develop that type of vision which can countenance time and change and can therefore allow one to make an abrupt stop within the aspect of time. The goal is not to be drawn forever forward by the wind, but to be drawn downward by a relaxation of tension to the very ground of one's being. Vision begins where it ends, at the absolute.

But to portray an end Eliot must point the way backward in time and force the human ship to turn sail. His task is more than formidable and yet he says:

There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
And found and lost again and again .... (EC V)

What has been lost are the clear categories of human existence -- defined in a Christian way -- which have nothing to do with time. Yet
the Christian meaning of life, the "experience" which we have forgotten, lies in the "past" which we have denied. Therefore to get beyond our locked-in moment of time we must think of the circular pattern of life, of the ship that is "rounded homeward," and the return to the point in human history where time first began. Metaphors throughout the Quartets are dedicated to the single purpose of having the human "machine" recognize the deep-felt rhythms of the universe. In one way or another one must return to the past, uncover the pattern, dance one's way to salvation through destruction. But the rhythm and the movement are always inward and downward as in the dance of "East Coker":

In that open field
If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close,
On a summer midnight, you can hear the music
Of the weak pipe and the little drum
And see them dancing around the bonfire
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. Round and round the fire
Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,
Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter
Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,
Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth
Mirth of those long since under earth
Nourishing the corn. Keeping time,
Keeping the rhythm in their dancing
As in their living in the living seasons
The time of the seasons and the constellations
The time of milking and the time of harvest
The time of the coupling of man and woman
And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling,
Eating and drinking. Dung and death (EC I)

The passage focuses on the entire spectrum of time, from that of "man and beasts" to that of "the seasons and the constellations." Eliot is striving here as elsewhere to create unity of vision, the wedding
of all creation in a single pattern of existence. Yet to achieve this end he must evoke the idea of the circular pattern of life which leads downward through various stages of change and ends in ultimate death.

Man and woman are seen, for instance, moving

Round and round the fire
Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles . . . .

Altogether ignored is the former pattern of the train which moved so desirously on its "metalled ways" of time past and time future. Having abandoned the purely linear and mechanical function of life, man and woman are now "joined in circles, rustically solemn or in rustic laughter." Each step of the dance is a ritual movement and is timed to the flow of the entire universe. But this "time" completely inverts or reverses the idea of sequence and progression. The pattern of life is now gathered within the compass of the circle but that circle never turns its face from the fire at its centre, the dominant symbol of change that is always present. Thus the only movement is the movement toward the absolute, or as Eliot later says:

And any action
Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat
Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start. (LG V)

In these latter words is revealed much of Eliot's meaning: life begins where it ends and, if we relate the pieces of the pattern, the circle is the dominant mode of human existence. In other words, "any action" is equivalent to the dance and this dance is like a magnetic field of force that aligns everything in one cyclic pattern of creation and destruction. The block, the fire and the sea are emblems of one world process -- the process of change -- yet such change, it must be
understood, is self-sought change, that mystic descent into the pure essence of being that annuls and makes meaningless all categories of temporal existence.

Further hint of circular pattern is found in the use of archaic spelling, as in "daunsinge" and "matrimonie." Called to mind is the cyclic pattern of the generations, each one set to the "neccesarye" task of fulfilling its appointed round. Such are the dance and the marriage: not recent innovations but age-long rituals. The pattern of the dead is the pattern of the living; old blood moves through new veins. This pattern is so thoroughly preordained and so dedicated to its own ends that man can never hedge or equivocate in the face of something he calls "time." Given to "a condition of complete simplicity" the dancers have absolutely no knowledge of life measured in minutes and hours. The measure now is the measure of the dance, the metre and rhythm of its movement. And the final measure of all is one of quality, not of duration. Did the dancers dance well? Was the circle rich and meaningful and did it, most of all, reach a worthy end?

Within the scope of the dance, then, is found the meaning of time as circular pattern and as an "end" which is simultaneously a "beginning." The point at which end and beginning perfectly coincide is the fire: within the flames -- the flames of mystic self-extinction -- one dies but is born again. But to reach the fire, to reach the end and therefore the beginning, one must accept change. This again recalls the Heraclitean doctrine -- one which is always implicit in the Quartets -- "It is in changing that things find repose." Rest comes at that point at which one achieves union with the source and power of stillness that exists "at the still point of the turning world." (BN IV)
At times the pattern of circularity is far more explicitly evident than in the lines I have just discussed. An outstanding example is again found in "East Coker" which opens:

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

and closes:

   In my end is my beginning.

The simple fact that these key phrases occur at the beginning and end of "East Coker" indicates that some form of circular pattern is in force. Not only that, but enclosed within this pattern are the words:

   Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
   The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated
   Of dead and living. (EC V)

The word "home", in even its simplest value, denotes a point of both departure and return: each journeying forth is a journeying back, for "home", otherwise, would not be home. And, too, home is a beginning and an end. Therefore Eliot is again evoking the idea of circular pattern. His purpose, as I have tried to argue, is to offset the terribly pervasive force of linear time, a force that is symbolized by trains and ships and vans and the mechanistic view of life that attend them.

In these varying ways a pattern of circularity -- what at one point is called "the recurrent end of the unending" -- is set forth. Life is not an endless and perfectly linear pattern of new ends, but a cyclic and repeated occurrence of the old -- what has been "lost /
And found and lost again and again." Eliot is working toward a conception of life which consists in a pattern of eternal return. The world as
a moral entity is destined to end where it began. One cannot dissociate the past from the present or from the future either. But Eliot would primarily have us look upon the entire universe as a kind of plastic power which shapes it thus; rather than teaching a morality he is teaching a pattern and the latter gives rise to the former. Chief among his purposes is to have us see how the world constantly renews and repeats itself. What has been of old, as Ecclesiastes says, will be again -- there is nothing new under the sun.14 The pattern, the basic mode of human existence, is unchanging in time. All that time can do is cloud man's purposes and, by concealing his end, conceal also his beginning.

Thus, as I have spoken often of the end that is a beginning, I should like to suggest that both the end and beginning of Four Quartets are represented by the garden at "Burnt Norton." Though we read to the last line of "Little Gidding" we increasingly realize that where we end is where we begin, or to repeat Eliot's own words:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time. (LG V)
CHAPTER III

There are, I believe, two general ways in which the world may be known: in the simplest possible terms, the one is to proceed from the particular to the general and the other from the general to the particular. In all that I have said so far I have tried to indicate that Eliot chooses the latter method. Such pregnant phrases as "the still point of the turning world" offer more than a hint of the pattern I am trying to describe. What it amounts to, really, is a tracing of all worldly phenomena to their point of origin. This is especially seen in the closing lines of "Little Gidding":

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, remembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river . . . . (LG V)

Each image suggests the arrival at the point of departure, so that one is going "full circle." This once more points the fact that Eliot is attempting to reverse the world's generally linear pattern, but also it reveals that he is using the opposite of an ampliative approach. When he speaks of the wild thyme, the wild strawberry and the winter
lightning it is in the voice of one who is trying to make us acutely aware of essences or of beginnings. Without the awareness that life has a beginning, a point of origin as in the image of the river which we trace to its source, there can be no "end." Even the image of the rose reveals this fundamental pattern of beginning at the beginning or of reducing all things to one dominant word, image or idea. It is a type, really, of "infolded" pattern. That is, there is a single conceptual notion which holds all the petals of the rose in stable synthesis. But it is of absolutely no avail to try to know the rose -- as I have said of the world -- in any objective fashion. It is the "idea" at the centre that gives the rose meaning, as in Dante's Celestial Rose. In other words, one seeks to penetrate to the absolute centre of the rose as one does the still point of the turning world. There one finds the key to the door that gives egress to the world at large. Thus, the whole point of the human journey is to seek the "centre" or the world's absolute point of orientation. Having arrived at this conceptual centre one becomes united with the world -- and this is absolutely vital -- as a single coherent entity.

Yet in my second chapter I have tried to point the extraordinary difficulty that is placed in one's way, and this is nothing other than the law of change, that law which has again and again been taken as the fundamental principle of all human existence -- nothing in the world exists but it is subject to this all pervading law -- this is the beginning and it is also the end. What I have here tried to suggest, however, is that Eliot finds an escape, paradoxical though it is, in
the Heraclitean doctrine, "It is in changing that things find repose." In light of this "The Dry Salvages" -- as just one example -- is a testimony to change, but that which destroys, when we have achieved full enlightenment, also creates. For example:

And the ragged rock in the restless waters,
Waves wash over it, fogs conceal it;
On a halycon 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. (DS II)

The rock represents, of course, the church and in many ways "The Dry Salvages" speaks the saving power of divine grace, the wisdom and enlightenment that lie beyond the level of any sea change.

To further recapitulate the argument of my second chapter, the way of achieving the "stillness" -- which is the very opposite of change -- is willingly to submit to change. But change must be seen as occurring within circular pattern; the dancers of "East Coker" do not represent a simple dying within linear time but a return to origins, a descent away from the time-bound self and a movement toward the self that pre-existed time and material existence in general. The circle that one pursues, in effect, is the circular "return" to everything that is implied in biblical notions of the garden. There was a time of no-time, and of a self that was freed from the exigencies of bodily self. Everything was "centered" and created in such a way as never to disturb the balance, never to allow one to lose sight of the whole which flows as a river from one pure source.

In many ways the garden of "Burnt Norton" represents the conceptual centre of the four books of the Quartets, for as one reaches the end of
"Little Gidding" all indications are that the "end" represents the "beginning", or that the "end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started", in the garden. But I wish presently to explore the separate images of the garden passage and to demonstrate how the garden, in a further extension of paradox, is not fully the end I have argued it to be but a new beginning. To again quote Eliot:

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from. (LG V)

I think this may be interpreted in the sense that the beginning is an end but that this end is once more a new beginning in a constant reassertion of circular pattern. The point Eliot would make, I believe, is that each completion of the circle reveals to us some further depth of meaning. Thus the garden is indeed an end but it is also an entirely new beginning in which we may read the finer detail of the pattern. For instance, the Quartets as a whole are a circle, the garden is a smaller circle, and the rose a part of a smaller circle yet. Our purpose must be to see how the pattern that is established closes down to a smaller and smaller point until all that is left, in a very strict sense, is the moment of illumination. It might legitimately be argued, thus, that the way of the Quartets -- in all directions -- leads to the garden, the garden to the rose, and the rose to the "still point" of the turning world -- or as otherwise described, the pure essence of enlightenment.

That the garden is laid directly in our path is made clear by the lines:

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

Though someone else has taken the passage and opened the door into the rose garden we have not. By memory alone do we recall the journey that once took place. Eliot presses on, however, the hint of roses and the rose garden not long out of sight. In words of near admonitory tone we read:

My words echo
Thus, in your mind.
But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves
I do not know.20

The garden, or rather the pre-existence of the garden, echoes down the corridors of time, and it is this distance in time that Eliot seeks to emphasize. What we are left with is token reminders of what once was -- the "rose leaves", the time-worn, dust-laden symbol of former fullness and life. But each step takes us nearer the inner reaches of the garden, hesitate though we will at its verge:

Other echoes
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?
Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,
Round the corner. Through the first gate,
Into our first world, shall we follow
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world. (BN I)

The difficulty that we encounter is that Eliot terms this "our first world" though we have never entered it. And the bird is deceiving in the sense that it leads us into a world that is part real, part illusion. An echo, that is, is a reverberation with no substance. It comes to us "Round the corner" and in such obscure fashion that we are prevented direct vision. But the bird flies above the garden
and its tortured ways and sees the pattern as a whole -- it urges us to "find them, find them" as though we were seeking some foreign being whose presence is felt but hardly seen. Once more the emphasis is on lack of vision:

There they were, dignified, invisible,
Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,21
In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air,
And the bird called, in response to
The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,
And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.

Again Eliot does not allow the possibility of direct vision and therefore the beings in the garden are both "dignified" and "invisible." One's sense of their presence is largely a result of the bird which serves as a guide -- one whose purpose is like that of Beatrice in The Divine Comedy. The garden and the rose are one's central mission but as in the Comedy vision must come slowly. Beatrice knows that a too sudden view of the light would be blindness. And as the music "hidden in the shrubbery" represents unity and harmony -- the very essence of vision -- man once more finds that the bird must act as his intermediary -- "And the bird called in response to / The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery."

The garden, in one sense, is a thicket, especially if one considers its untended state at Burnt Norton. The shrubbery is in all likelihood tangled, the roses grown wild, and yet:

... the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.

With the emphasis still upon seeing, Eliot says that, "the roses / Had the look of flowers that are looked at." One sees but does not
see; the "unseen eyebeam" is said to have "crossed", as though there were a gulf of vision separating man and the rose. And yet there is a vital meaning in the word "crossed", for it denotes, on one level, a point of intersection: that point at which the seeing and the blind do at last meet. This view hinges upon one's sense of the Christian meaning of the cross and how it symbolizes the death of one who existed both in and out of time, one whose presence now is further symbolized by the rose. If the rose is the centre of the garden it is also the centre of Christian belief. The point of intersection occurs when man perceives the meaning of the cross and takes that leap of faith which carries him out of the realm of time and makes him one with the rose, one with this dominant symbol of Christian love.

Yet as man still exists in time vision is not fully his. This is not to say that the pattern may not be completed:

So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,
Along the empty alley, into the box circle,
To look down into the drained pool,
Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight . . . .

The importance of the "formal pattern" cannot be over-emphasized, but for the moment one notices how vision is still denied. The pool is filled with illusory "water out of sunlight." It is as though nothing in the garden is yet real, least of all the water which is more mirage than reality. When vision does occur it is fleeting and passes, as indeed the mirage does, with the mere passing of a cloud:

And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
The surface glittered out of heart of light,
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.
The extraordinarily striking feature of this passage is the one line: "And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly." When considered in conjunction with other words and images this presents a pattern that is as complex as anything one will find in Eliot. As a beginning, one might notice that the "lotos" is said to have risen, yet in the past tense of the verb rise is the noun "rose", a word which in every way is central to the Quartets, central to the garden and to the entire pattern which one perceives. As I have tried to suggest, the rose is the concomitant of vision. It is so important an image that when the mere word "rose" occurs, in whatever context, one must be ready to explore its every possible meaning.

For example, an actual lotus rose is one of many varieties of the lotus. In Eastern art and religion the lotus -- which may be assumed to represent the lotus rose -- has a specifically religious meaning. Consider:

Primarily, the lotus-flower appears to have symbolized for the Aryans from very remote times the idea of superhuman or divine birth; and, secondarily, the creative force and immortality. The traditional Indian and Buddhist explanation of it is that the glorious lotus-flower appears to spring not from the sordid earth but from the surface of the water, and is always pure and unsullied, no matter how impure may be the water of the lake.

I would force no comparison but note simply that Eliot says:

And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
And the surface glittered out of heart of light . . . .

In another valuable source the writer speaks of the Buddhist mantra, "The Jewel in the Lotus":

Om mani padme hum (or Om). Mani is the Radiant Jewel; padmi the lotus which, rooted in the mud, grows upwards
through the water and opens its petals in the light of the sun. The lotus is the symbol of enlightened consciousness.25

In Eliot the lotos appears simply to rise out of illusory water and the surface to glitter momentarily in the "light" of the sun. Once more there is no true "enlightenment" but certainly, if one accepts Eliot's knowledge of Eastern religion, there is a slowly emerging pattern. Burnt Norton contains a garden, the garden a pool -- one which is enclosed in a "box circle" -- and the pool a lotos. Again, the movement toward a still point is of utmost importance. The idea of this pattern might be considered in light of the following:

Now what is here in the city of Brahma, is an abode, a small lotus-flower. Within that is a small space. What is within that, should be searched out; that assuredly, is what one should desire to understand.26

One might notice that the journey here is from the city to the flower, and from the flower to a "small space." In Eliot, as I have attempted to describe, the journey is somewhat the same: from house to garden, garden to pool, and pool to lotos. Thus, having recognized the mystic strain in Eliot, one may begin the search for that "small space" which is the heart of the lotos and which, in symbolic terms, is the "heart of enlightenment." To penetrate to the core of the lotos -- as we now understand it -- is to penetrate to the core of life itself. Rightly understood, therefore, the lotos is the still point for which one has been searching. No longer does one contemplate the world at large but, rather, a small sign or token of reality which is an entire "city" unto itself. The whole notion becomes the more striking when one realizes that the very cornerstone of Eastern meditative practice, to which Eliot so frequently alludes, contains the notion of a "small point" --
a point which, like the heart of the lotos, is thought to be the all-in-all. This the Indians call sartori, a sudden visionary insight into the universe as a whole. Basic to the belief is the idea that the lotos represents a point of convergence: here the paths of man and Buddha -- symbol of highest wisdom -- cross. That is, Buddha is the flower, the indwelling heart of wisdom, and having understood or conceived of the essence of his being one sees in a mirror image of light the meaning of all existence. On this score, however, much remains to be said.

What I wish now to consider is the lotos in relation to Eliot's extremely pregnant phrase, "box circle", which occurs at the end of the lines:

So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,
Along the empty alley, into the box circle . . . .

As some commentators have felt, the box circle may be simply a box wood hedge in the form of a circle, and such indeed is the case in many "formal" gardens. But in Eastern religion and art there is nothing more "formal" than the depiction of the Mandala, this pattern incorporating in a very special way not only the lotos -- as shall later be seen -- but the idea of a "box circle":

In Sanskrit Mandala literally means circle and center. Its traditional design often utilizes the circle-symbol of the universe in its entirety -- and the square-symbol of the earth or man-made world . . . . In Tibet the Mandala has achieved its fullest and most complex development -- both as an artistic form and as a meditative ritual emphasizing cosmic integration. The center, the abode of the deity, is contained within the square -- the palace of inner being -- surrounded by a circle or a series of circles, each symbolizing a particular phase or level of consciousness.

In light of this description, Eliot's use of the words "box circle" becomes deeply suggestive. As above, the two most dominant features of
the mandala are the circle and the square. The theory of the mandala is that it implies a meditative ritual leading to enlightenment. Such enlightenment is achieved through the gradual penetration of the square -- "symbol of the man-made world" -- and the inner series of concentric circles -- "symbol of the universe in its entirety." But beyond the realm of the smallest circle is something of far greater importance and this is the lotos:

... the classical Tibetan Mandala ... is often conceived of as a palace or fortress ... Not only is the Mandala literally a cosmic plan, but also a celestial palace. Such Mandalas are the "homes" of the Deity ... the basic features of the Mandala are: a protective circle comprised of a fire ... and a lotus band; the four portals or gates of the palace; and the inner lotus which is ... the seat of the Deity. On the lotus petals and placed around the inner square are other features embodying aspects of Illuminating wisdom.30

Not only does the center of the pattern contain an "inner lotus" -- as in the center of Eliot's garden -- but this lotus is thought to be the "seat of the Deity." Hence, the formal pattern of square (box), circle, lotos equals mandala, and the lotos in itself equals Deity. Moreover, there is the fact that a four-sided figure, often with "four portals", enters into almost all representations of the mandala. The relation of this to the title Four Quartets is, of course, clear. Through the four portals of the mandala one enters into the palace of wisdom -- otherwise known as "the heart of enlightenment" (c.f. "and the surface glittered out of heart of light"). Interpreted in this way, each Quartet is a "portal" which opens on Eliot's own world of Illuminating wisdom. To the idea of fourness this simply adds a further dimension.

Especially interesting is a work entitled The Secret of the Golden Flower.31 I am in no way suggesting that Eliot was acquainted with this
specific work but I am indeed convinced that he read widely in Eastern
religion and was inescapably aware of the meaning of the mandala.
Witness Carl C. Jung's commentary on the text of The Golden Flower:

Mandala means a circle, more especially a magic circle, and this form of symbol is not only to be found all through the East, but among us . . . . The specifically Christian ones come from the earlier Middle Ages. Most of them show Christ in the centre, with four evangelists, or their symbols, at the cardinal points. Later there is to be found a clear and very interesting mandala in Jacob Boehme's book on the soul. The latter mandala, it is easy to see, deals with a psycho-cosmic system having a strong Christian colour. Boehme calls it the "philosophical eye", or the "mirror of wisdom", which obviously means a body of secret knowledge. For the most part, the mandala form is that of a flower, cross, or wheel, with a distinct tendency toward four as the basis of the structure.32

Whether in the East or the West the mandala, as above, is a means of establishing a central point within, say, a circle. One example would be Christ situated within a pattern of the four evangelists. What such a mandala implies is that one reaches the center -- Christ -- by the four portals of wisdom which are represented by the evangelists, or the preachers of the four gospels. But as Jung also points out, and this is more in keeping with the Eastern tradition, the center may be expressed by means of a flower (e.g. Eliot's lotos rose), a wheel, or a cross.

Now in Eliot, in the passage under consideration, there occurs the line, "and the unseen eyebeam crossed." This can mean either that an eyebeam crosses a certain space or that an actual "cross" is inscribed within a circle or space, as within the "box circle" of the garden. If this indeed is the case, then the seminal pattern of a mandala exists. Yet there is further evidence to support this theory and it consists
in the fact that "eyebeam" is a compound word that may be broken down into its component parts. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives one possible meaning of eye as, "the center", or the "greatest point of light."

This reminds one that the lotos is also thought to contain an "eye" which is its greatest point of light. Thus, in Eliot's own terminology, there may be thought to be an answering of "light to light." The unseen eyebeam, in other words, crosses from the outer to the inner circle of the garden and is met by the beam of light from the lotos. That Eliot intends a meaning of this sort is borne out by the fact that the "beam" of eyebeam can be interpreted as, "a line stretching directly from the circle to the center." It seems an almost extraordinary use of language -- a consciousness of purpose to the utmost degree -- when one considers, too, that "beam" may be interpreted as, "The axel-tree, or middle beam of the eye." Turning to the word "axel-tree", one finds that it yields, "the central line; the axis of vision." All told, Eliot has developed a Donne-like image -- something even more complex than in Donne -- in which there is an intertwining of eyebeams. The lotos, in effect, is the "heart of light" ("and the surface glittered out of heart of light"), and one must train the eye in that direction in order to achieve the light and the heart of the pattern of the mandala. The problem that Eliot faces, of course, is that he is dealing in a highly complex pattern of images and that he cannot elucidate each of them for us. But even a sense of the meaning of "eyebeam", "formal pattern", "box circle", and "lotos rose" ultimately yields the pattern of the mandala and its even further chain of associations. For instance, the
mandala does not mark the end of a journey but the beginning, just as the garden of "Burnt Norton", too, is not an end but a beginning. Here one arrives, within the box circle, intent upon making the descent that "Burnt Norton" later spells out:

Descend lower, descend only
Into the world of perpetual solitude,
World not world, but that which is not world,
Internal darkness, deprivation
And destitution of all property,
Desiccation of the world of sense,
Evacuation of the world of fancy,
Inoperancy of the world of spirit . . . (BN III)

The box circle, indeed the mandala as a whole, is just one way of pointing the manner of one's arrival at a condition between two worlds -- a "World not world, but that which is not world." This is the so-called mystic "middle way", a way of gradual self-extinction. The importance of the mandala is that it holds in suspension all the ideas inherent in mystic thought; each component in its pattern symbolizes various stages on the road to enlightenment. Thus, as one enters the box circle one indeed enters a "World not world, but that which is not world."

In other words, the journey toward the center of the garden, the contemplation of the pool and the quietly rising "lotos rose" is the precise equivalent of mystic descent into darkness. This darkness is a world entirely unto itself.

The box circle, it may be further added, serves the prime function of the resolution of paradox. Its basic design speaks this purpose, for how can that which is square be made round? The entire notion has to do with the "coincidence of opposites" and their resolution in the one being of God or Buddha. One might recall Eliot's epigraph
to the *Quartets*: "The way up and the way down are one and the same."

Eliot, I believe, intends that we should see the basically paradoxical
nature of the universe; a paradox which Heraclitus solved through the
postulation of fire as his "One principle." All seeming differences,
according to this early dictum, become one as they are absorbed within
an ever-living, all-consuming fire. Eliot, of course, states the solution
differently. That is, whatever opposites there are in the world, they
ultimately coincide in the one being of God. Eliot is squarely in the
tradition of Nicholas of Cusa who, in one work, says:

Thou, Lord, dost stand and move at the same time, at
the same time Thou dost proceed and rest.

Cusa speaks of God as being "girt round with the coincidence of
contradictories", and I wish simply to suggest that Eliot departs little
from this doctrine, as indeed is little done in even the Eastern tradition.
Cusa is not unique, he is simply one among many who postulate the
notion that all oppositions and antagonisms can be absorbed within
the one being of God, Buddha, or Deity in general.

To return to the notion of the mandala, as one crosses the border
between the world of paradox and the world of the "lotos rose", one
emerges upon a plane of *supernatural* experience. The mandala is possessed
of the absolute power of a symbol -- it is not logical, nor is it linguistic,
for its express purpose is to transcend both of these categories. Thus,
upon the level of the supernatural, there is a "coincidence" of time
and eternity, motion and rest, light and dark, man and god -- and indeed,
the square and the circle.\(^3\) Eliot, of course, is faced with the problems
of paradox inherent in the Christian religion, especially those involved
in the doctrine of Incarnation:

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. (BN II)

And later:

Figlia del tuo figlio,
Queen of Heaven. (DS IV)

Significantly, Eliot echoes the first line of the last canto of the Paradiso: "O Virgin Mother, Daughter of thy Son." What this has to do with the mandala, or any such similar belief, is that Dante, too, was dependent upon the power of an image or a symbol to demonstrate the supra-rational power of his belief, this image being the Celestial Rose. Dante finds that he cannot logically explain the essence of his vision at the end of the Paradiso:

How weak are words, and how unfit to frame
My concept — which lags far after what was shown
So far, 'twould flatter it to call it lame! 39

One learns only by reading the Paradiso that the "frame" within which Dante's concept did appear was the image of the Celestial Rose, but even that image was hardly adequate to express what he perceived:

As the geometer his mind applies
To square the circle, nor for all his wit
Finds the right formula, howe'er he tries,

So strove I with that wonder -- how to fit
The image to the sphere; so sought to see
How it maintained the point of rest in it.

Thither my own wings could not carry me,
But that a flash my understanding clove,
Whence its desire came to it suddenly. 40

Though Dante's wings will indeed carry him no further, there is but one way that he has reached even this point of understanding and that
is by virtue of the "image" which he mentions. What has occurred is that the rose, transliterated to a vast degree, has become a symbol embodying all aspects of divine wisdom; thus the pattern that begins in the garden -- even in Dante -- leads onward to the rose and from the rose to the "still point" that exists at its innermost core. The parallels between Eliot and Dante are too numerous to mention, but the one common feature of utmost importance is the image of the rose. In both poets this image is the key to vision: it is the means by which they point a pattern that is "infolded", like the rose, petal by petal.

With these thoughts in mind one can return to the garden of Burnt Norton and the unreconciled problem of vision:

And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
The surface glittered out of heart of light,
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.

There is an extremely important passage in Dante, in which he too sees a "mirrored" reality:

... I raised my head upright;

But what I saw so carried me away
To gaze on it, that ere I could confess,
I had forgotten what I meant to say.

Like as from a polished and transparent glass,
Or as from water clear and luminous,
Whose shallows leave the bottom shadowless,

The image of a face comes back to us
So faint, a pearl on a white forehead stirs
The seeing sense no slowlier than this does,

So I saw faces, many and diverse,
Eager to speak; and straight fell in a snare --
The pool-anamoured swain's, but in reverse,
For I, the moment I beheld them there,
Taking them for reflections, turned my head
Hastily round, to find out whose they were.

But I saw nothing . . . . *(Paradiso, Canto III)*

Like Narcissus, Dante was enamoured of the reflection in a pool. While this reflection was not his own but someone else's, the real importance of the passage rests in the fact that the reflection is that of souls who were inconstant to their vows in this life -- those who occupy the lowest order in the hierarchy of bliss. And yet Dante cannot perceive them directly as his eye has not been trained to look thereto. The light of vision, even on this primary level, is so bright as to be blinding: he must be led gradually to look at the light by Beatrice, the mediatrix of vision. She protects, as the cloud protects in Eliot, from a blinding flash of light:

> Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.
> Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,
> Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.
> Go, go, said the bird: human kind
> Cannot bear very much reality. *(BN I)*

The "reality" is unmediated vision, the final mystic sense of God's existence that begins and ends in the garden and to which the rose bears steadfast witness. As has been argued, the end is the beginning and the beginning the end, here within the garden. But this paradox takes on a deepening meaning for it is not just in terms of pattern and architectural form that the garden represents a beginning and an end: now, the meaning that we must see is that the rose and the mandala -- as a synthesis of pattern -- mark another end-beginning which is the mystic "dying unto self." As the approach to the mandala's "palace of wisdom" is begun,
one finds that the journey begins in a world of utter darkness -- but there also is one's end:

    Descend lower, descend only
    Into the world of perpetual solitude,
    World not world, but that which is not world,
    Internal darkness, deprivation
    And destitution of all property,
    Desiccation of the world of sense,
    Evacuation of the world of fancy,
    Inoperancy of the world of spirit;
    This is the one way, and the other
    Is the same, not in movement
    But abstention from movement; while the world moves
    In appetency, on its metalled ways
    Of time past and time future.

To further deal with the way of mystic enlightenment, which Eliot here alludes to, is the subject of my next chapter.
CHAPTER IV

As I have argued, it is very much within the realm of Eliot's purpose to focus one's attention on the garden, that garden being both a beginning and an end. Once within the garden the scope of one's vision is fixed on smaller and smaller points until all that is left is the pool, the quietly rising lotos rose, and the "water out of sunlight." This I have deemed the pattern of *Four Quartets* to this point. One may read to the last line of "Little Gidding", but in order to get the distilled sense of what the *Quartets* are about it is necessary to return to the garden of "Burnt Norton" and the mystery of the box circle. There, within the compass of the garden, is the absolute essence of vision. It is as though one must reach an end in order to know the meaning of a beginning. And further, it now appears that:

... the end precedes the beginning,
And the end and the beginning were always there
Before the beginning and after the end.
And all is always now. (BN V)

When the final moment of vision has occurred it is an eternal moment and has no beginning and no end. Such an insight, however, is not the product of every man's experience, for as Eliot says: "We had the experience but missed the meaning" (DS II).
It is all but impossible to interpret the "experience" -- those sudden moments of vision -- and to know that "all is always now."

Chiefly the difficulty is due to the fact that:

... to apprehend
The Point of intersection of the timeless
With time, is an occupation for the saint --
No occupation either, but something given
And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,
Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender. (DS V)

Men are not saints and even saints must undergo what Eliot calls "a lifetime's death in love." But having experienced through Christian love the meaning of death-in-life the saint has struggled to bring us closer to the meaning of his experience. Though Eliot never says it, it is likely that he experienced a moment of vision in the garden of Burnt Norton, and so he struggles to do as others have done -- not to give us the experience but a sense of the experience, the pattern within which it is bound. Thus the garden contains certain signs and images that point the way of the experience: this is the "beginning" -- the point at which we first recognize the potential meaning of the word "vision" -- and yet it is the beginning of the end. This is no play on words but the actual logical consequence of making one's way through the garden and standing at the edge of the pool as one stands at the edge of a great precipice; for mystics have long envisioned a descent into darkness which is analogous to a descent into the symbolic depths of the pool. Thus the choice is one of either darkness or light, and the lotos is a clue to this meaning for it represents the rising toward the light of a flower that grows in the dark. Enlightened consciousness must be the same -- it must be drawn upward by inner
impulse and outer force, both the darkness and the light seeking to become one.

It is this seeking of essential unity through a descent into darkness which shall be the subject of this chapter. My purpose is to show how the pattern of the garden leads to that end which, as I have noted, mystics refer to as a "dying unto self." Also, it is referred to as a "dying unto God", and therefore if God is light it is God who redeems man from the dark. This he does through the Christian miracle of Incarnation, the sending of his only begotten Son into the world of time. If we read the Quartets correctly we more and more realize that they are about the miracle of Incarnation and that their every thought and action is intended to point in this direction. In other words, Christ is the stillness that exists at the "still point of the turning world." But also he is symbolically represented by the absolute essence of light which exists at the heart of the lotos, the heart of the mandala as a whole. Thus one's purpose, as before, is to engage in the meditative ritual -- or an attempted understanding thereof -- that the mandala implies: the gradual extinction of self in pure darkness as one journeys toward the light. How all this is achieved in the Quartets is through an interplay of images of darkness and light and it is these which I now wish to discuss.

For instance, there is the passage which begins:

Here is a place of disaffection
Time before and time after
In a dim light: neither daylight
Investing form with lucid stillness
Turning shadow into transient beauty
With slow rotation suggesting permanence
Nor darkness to purify the soul  
Emptying the sensual with deprivation  
Cleansing affection from the temporal. (BN III)

The world of time is viewed as a trap, the absolute limits of which are past and future or, "Time before and time after." The problem that exists is that time spreads human life over a span of years just as the city dissolves and diffuses darkness and light over too broad a landscape. Of London and the surrounding areas Eliot can only speak as he speaks in The Waste Land:

Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind  
That blows before and after time,  
Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs  
Time before and time after.  
Eruption of unhealthy souls  
Into the faded air, the torpid  
Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of London.  
Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney,  
Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate. Not here  
Not here the darkness, in this twittering world. (BN III)

The wind is aimless and blows in any direction, the air "faded." Again there is no intensity, either of existence and experience or darkness and light. What are tossed up, as on the sea of "The Dry Salvages", are the waste elements of a society: "Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind / That blows before and after time." It is a kind of frenzy dance in which man is a participant and is a far cry from the order and precision of the dance of "East Coker." Now there is no center, no purposeful movement. How interesting that Eliot offers in his catalogue of place-names both "Highgate" and "Ludgate." Both indeed are "gates", but they are gates to the city of London, to confusion and disarray. In no way are these equivalent to "the first gate" that enters "into our first world" at the beginning of "Burnt Norton." Now man is in the
second world of the city rather than the first world of the garden. Gone is the intensity, the immediacy of primal experience:

Not here
Not here the darkness, in this twittering world.

Judging from the word "twittering" it appears that even the bird, whose value was so positive in the beginning, and whose presence now is only implied, issues a most small and tremulous cry. So Eliot must say:

Descend lower, descend only
Into the world of perpetual solitude,
World not world, but that which is not world,
Internal darkness, deprivation
And destitution of all property,
Desiccation of the world of sense,
Evacuation of the world of fancy,
Inoperancy of the world of spirit;
This is the one way, and the other
Is the same, not in movement
But abstention from movement; while the world moves
In appetency, on its metalled ways
Of time past and time future. (BN III)

Where there is no darkness, Eliot is driven to say, one must create an "Internal darkness." Where there is an overabundance of the material, one must seek to create a sense of the immaterial. What is lost, thus, is the world of time and motion and materiality; what is gained, it may simply be, is the darkness of inner being but:

So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing. (EC III)

To the mystic there is nothing foreign about the paradox of the darkness being the light. Nicholas of Cusa has said, in anticipation of union with God:

Hence I observed how needful it is for me to enter into the darkness, and to admit the coincidence of opposites, beyond all the grasp of reason, and there to seek the truth where impossibility meeteth me . . . . And the more that dark
impossibility is recognized as dark and impossible, the more doth His Neccesity shine forth, and is more unveiledly present, and draweth nigh. 43

Of this same descent into self, John Ruysbroeck has said:

And there is death and fruition and a melting and dying into the Essential Nudity, where all the Divine names, and all the living images which are reflected in the mirror of Divine Truth lapse in the Onefold and ineffable in waylessness and without reason. For in this unfathomable abyss of the Simplicity all things are wrapped in frutitive bliss; and the abyss itself may not be comprehended unless by the Essential Unity. To this the Persons [the trinity] and all that lives in God, must give place; for here there is nought but an eternal rest in the frutitive embrace of an outpouring Love. And this is that wayless being which all interior spirits have chosen above all other things. This is the dark silence in which all lovers lose themselves. 44

That Ruysbroeck chooses the word "lovers" is significant inasmuch as the final union of man and God is looked upon, in mystic literature, as a Spiritual Marriage. In relation to Eliot, all the elements of the descent into self and "internal darkness" are present in the above passage. Ruysbroeck speaks of the "wayless being which all interior spirits have chosen." The "interior spirit" is he who, having gazed in the "mirror of Divine Truth", attempts to make the mirror image conform to the deep reality that lies within the "unfathomable abyss of the Simplicity." To the mystic the "Simplicity" is the sense of wholeness and unity that comes of having made Eliot's descent into darkness. Once within the Simplicity "there is nought but an eternal rest", as in Eliot there is "stillness" at the "still point of the turning world." One might notice, too, how in Eliot, Dante and Ruysbroeck, there is a common attempt to escape the mirror-begotten image and to perceive directly the reality.
So intent is Eliot upon pointing the necessity of mystic descent into self that he returns to the theme in "East Coker", restating it in blunt and straightforward language:

You say I am repeating
Something I have said before. I shall say it again.
Shall I say it again? In order to arrive there,
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy,
In order to arrive at what you do not know
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.
In order to possess what you do not possess
You must go by the way of dispossession.
In order to arrive at what you are not
You must go through the way in which you are not.
And what you do not know is the only thing you know
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not. (EC III)

Now there is no mention of darkness and light, or of descent either, but the language which Eliot uses clearly ties the passage to a well-defined pattern of mystic thought. "Ecstasy", for example, is an extremely carefully used word and has no place in the highest sort of mystical experiences. Later lines show how thoroughly misplaced the word would be in the context of Eliot's meaning:

The chill ascends from feet to knees,
The fever sings in mental wires.
If to be warmed, then I must freeze
And quake in frigid purgatorial fires
Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars. (EC IV)

It is not ecstasy but suffering and atonement that the mystic experience is about. Thus if one traced the development of the pattern of descent from "Burnt Norton" through "East Coker" there would be seen the cold, logical development of an idea: the initiate to the mystical experience is a passive sufferer who, having dispossessed himself of an entire world, having abandoned all thought and reason, exists in a death-like
state of inner darkness. As Eliot approaches nearer the heart of his meaning he grows more explicit in terms of Christian dogma: the pattern of descent, the pattern of suffering, are in imitation of the death of Christ. One notices, in this regard, how clearly Eliot focuses on a particular day in the Christian calendar and how this day crowns those lines which view man as dying "of the absolute paternal care", dying because he must do so in order to live:

    The dripping blood our only drink
    The bloody flesh our only food:
    In spite of which we like to think
    That we are sound, substantial flesh and blood --
    Again, in spite of that, we call this Friday good. (EC IV)

In terms of Christian belief Good Friday is one of the darkest days of the year, a day on which the Catholic clergy appear in black robes, the altar is stripped bare, and the candles are unlit. Thinking of this, one realizes with what care Eliot has developed the theme of darkness and how, too, the "cross" is made central to the Quartets both in terms of dogma and pattern. Here, if one will, is the "point of intersection", the meeting of two patterns of darkness and suffering. Yet, in terms of the poetry the journey through the dark night of the soul is not yet done, for Good Friday is the day of death and not of resurrection, and much remains to be said.45

We look, therefore, to the pattern of poetic dispensation rather than to articles of dogmatic faith. The pattern of the experience, as before, is what one is seeking; the point of intersection is still to be found in terms of images of darkness and light. One extremely significant passage in this regard is the one which introduces the
dance of "East Coker":

In my beginning is my end. Now the light falls
Across the open field, leaving the deep lane
Shuttered with branches, dark in the afternoon,
Where you lean against a bank while a van passes,
And the deep lane insists on the direction
Into the village, in the electric heat
Hypnotized. In a warm haze the sultry light
Is absorbed, not refracted, by grey stone.
The dahlias sleep in the empty silence.
Wait for the early owl. (EC I)

A dominant image is "the deep lane / Shuttered with branches, dark in the afternoon." Previously there had been an "empty alley" that led into the box circle, but now the twice repeated "deep lane" "insists" on the direction into the village. It is as though one were back at "Highgate" and "Ludgate", the gates to London but not to the garden, nor to the box circle. The image of the deep lane is tied to the idea of the mechanized way of modern, urban life, for as the "van" passes, toting its freight of material goods, it too suggests a deeply linear pattern. Not equipped to leave the road nor to seek its own direction, the van is like the world that "moves / In appetency, on its metalled ways / Of time past and time future." It simply suggests, again, the idea of the enchainment of past and future, the linear pattern of time.

As regards the idea of darkness, the passage is further suggestive, for the lane is "shuttered" with branches as though there were a deliberate attempt to exclude the light of illumination. This is one kind of darkness but it is not that which Eliot seeks. Rather than a condition of darkness leading to the light it is a state of somnolence leading to hypnosis:

And the deep lane insists on the direction
Into the village, in the electric heat
Hypnotized.
And then:

In a warm haze the sultry light
Is absorbed, not refracted, by grey stone.
The dahlias sleep in the empty silence.
Wait for the early owl.

In a "warm haze" that shrouds the entire scene there is a mere "sultry light" and nothing to startle the eye nor to awaken the drowsing spirit. The idea of a lack of vision is emphasized by the fact that the dahlias "sleep" in the "empty silence." Moreover they do not await the sun but "the early owl", a bird whose vision is any but the keenest.

Yet Eliot intersperses in such scenes a hint of his meaning in terms of pattern. In speaking of the sultry light being "absorbed" not "refracted" by the grey stone he is marking the difference between animate and inanimate matter. The stone, being but a spiritless object cannot, as in an earlier passage, reflect the light back to its source:

After the kingfisher's wing
Has answered light to light, and is silent, the light is still
At the still point of the turning world. (BN IV)

It is not that the "kingfisher" has the consciousness or purpose of man set on a particular goal, but in the scheme of things -- maybe just in the pattern of the poetry -- it serves a decided function. It is a "fisher" of "kings" in an image that must be thought deliberate. In the darkness and seclusion which is thought to be its habitation it seeks and "answers" "light to light." Eliot, of course, is fond of the image that suggests a pattern of light being returned to its source, but underlying the image is the notion that God knows Himself in reflected glory only. And only thus does man discover Him, for unless he becomes one with the light there can be no light. This is a belief upon which
the whole of Dante's "Paradiso" and his Celestial Rose is founded. Eliot
relies on the same pattern of imagery; like Dante he is setting man on
a downward course toward a kind of winter of the human spirit, and then
asking the question: "Where is the summer, the unimaginable / Zero
summer?" The answer, again, lies within the sense of pattern that has
been created: man leaves the dark lane, enters the true darkness of
the soul, and there turns his face toward the light as do the saints
arranged in the hierarchy of the Celestial Rose. This is the "springtime"
(c.f. L.G. I) but, as Eliot says, "not in time's covenant" (L.G. I).
Here the spirit blooms eternally in the "covenant" of love between man
and God. 46

As I earlier suggested, the entire passage dealing with the "deep
lane" and its sense of blindness is in contrast to the scene that follows:

In that open field
If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close,
On a summer midnight, you can hear the music
Of the weak pipe and the little drum
And see them dancing around the bonfire
The association of man and woman
In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie
A dignified and commodiois sacrament.

That the dance is a "commodiois" sacrament, I believe, suggests
that it can accommodate the generality of men. It bears witness to the
fact that one may leave the shuttered lane, enter the field and follow
the "light." Having done so, one is allowed participation in the dance,
one which is attuned to the rhythms of the universe rather than to any
mere temporal and secular pattern of existence. Heeding this rhythm,
one is brought nearer and nearer the point of extinction, but that,
after all, is what the mystic experience is about. One "dies" into the
fullest possible pattern of life and thereby becomes one with the saint
whose purpose is to realize the sum of life through a similar death.
Thus the dance is translated into a symbolic gesture, a final, decisive
step toward annihilation. "Little Gidding" puts it:

And any action
Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat
Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start. (LG V)

By now the logic of the Quartets has become clear and simple: we
"begin" where we "end", but the end must be framed within a purposeful
"action." Such an action could be defined as one's willingness to leave
the course of secular time, the course of the ship the van and the
train, and to seek the circular pattern of the dance and a life that leads
to the darkness that "shall be the light."

All of course depends on one's "descent" into the essential pattern
of life, a pattern which may be defined as the dance but may be defined
as follows:

Old men ought to be explorers
Here and there does not matter
We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion
Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,
The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters
Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning. (EC V)

Without having literally to say it -- as in the conscious use of
the word descent -- Eliot here implies the same thing: the "deeper
communion" of man and Christ is achieved through a descent into the
purgative depths of the ocean or, as the image suggests, "the vast waters /
Of the petrel and the porpoise." Yet counterpoised to this, as a means
of presenting a composite picture of the way of both ascent and descent,
is such an image as occurs in the following:

What is the late November doing
With the disturbance of the spring
And creatures of the summer heat,
And snowdrops writhing under feet
And hollyhocks that aim too high
Red into grey and tumble down
Late roses filled with early snow? (EC II)

Primarily suggested is that everything in nature "tumbles" once more into the scheme of generation and decay. Snowdrops "writhe" -- in seeming physical agony -- "under feet" which crush them to the earth that they struggle vainly to escape. And the hollyhocks, as though conscious of a similar struggle, "aim too high" and "tumble down." Implied is the futility of the struggle toward the light within the scheme of generation. Man, were he to remain simply on the level of the earthly and the temporal, would be similarly fated. What Eliot is doing, in an adroit juxtaposition of patterns of imagery, is contrasting two ways of reaching toward the light. In "late November" -- the dark time of the year -- creatures of the summer heat seek light and warmth -- an escape, really, from their very creatureliness. But the physical-temporal bond is inescapable and thus everything that aims too high is destined to tumble down. Again and again the cycle is repeated, unless one seeks another kind of winter, another darkness. There must be something in the nature of what Eliot spells out in "Little Gidding":

Midwinter spring is its own season
Sempiternal though sodden towards sundown,
Suspended in time, between pole and tropic. (LG I)

The spring which occurs in midwinter is its own season, a season, as we ultimately learn, of the human spirit. Putting off nature altogether -- the all-too-human condition of Eliot's "creatures of the summer heat" --
one establishes oneself in the everlasting or "sempiternal" calm of inner being. In a magnificently condensed pattern of imagery Eliot is suggesting that it is the "sundown" of the day, but that it is the sundown, too, of the temporal world. Thus the day of generation and decay is ending and a new day dawning. This is a movement toward the "still point of the turning world" as one becomes "suspended in time", suspended between frost and fire, pole and tropic, darkness and light. Eliot clings to the image of a dying year:

When the short day is brightest, with frost and fire,
The brief sun flames the ice, on pond and ditches,
In a windless cold that is the heart's heat,
Reflecting in a watery mirror
A glare that is blindness in the early afternoon. (LG I)

Yet, when the "short day" is brightest, the sun is most intense: "The brief sun flames the ice, on pond and ditches." At this point one can only marvel at the precision of Eliot's poetry and his dedication to a single meaning and unity of purpose. The descending sun -- marking the end of the physical-temporal world -- is in fact the Son who descends in a rush of light to "flame" and to kindle to an intense fire of passion the frozen human spirit:

And glow more intense than blaze of branch, or brazier,
Stirs the dumb spirit: no wind, but pentecostal fire
In the dark time of the year.

In the "dark time of the year" it is no sun but the Son of "pente-
costal fire" who "stirs the dumb spirit." Here is the crossroads of meaning to which Eliot has been attempting to point since the beginning: there is no darkness of any consequence but it leads to this sort of light. Man has fallen into the world of time and the only way that he can escape that world is by a further fall into a world of utter darkness.
This is the "middle way" where:

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Between melting and freezing
The soul's sap quivers. There is no earth smell
Or smell of living thing. This is the spring time
But not in time's covenant. (LG I)
```

Thinking of bishop Lancelot Andrewes, whose works Eliot knew so well, it is Christ who "springs", like a tiger, in the new year. His coming, however, whether on the day of pentecost or any other day, is not to the world of time: "This is the spring time / But not in time's covenant." And so, too, in a metaphor that is alive with meaning, "the soul's sap quivers" and rises as it would within the tree that has suddenly become regenerate -- in the spring time. But the tree is more than any normal tree, it is the "axle tree", the hub of the world, the point at which stillness and motion, darkness and light, man and Christ, finally meet. This is the point of intersection:

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The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is
Incarnation.
Here the impossible union
Of spheres of existence is actual,
Here the past and future
Are conquered and reconciled,
Where action were otherwise movement
Of that which is only moved
And has in it no source of movement --
Driven by daemonic, chthonic
Powers. (DS V)
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Having gone underground, as it were, man is subject to "daemonic, chthonic / Powers." These powers might be termed the powers of darkness, but Eliot does not concede this shade of meaning, for "chthonic", as well as being "daemonic" is beneficent:

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Hermes stood in the cycle of the Chthonian
gods, the powers that send up fruits and bounteous
blessings from below. (Oxford English Dictionary)
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One must realize, I believe, that the world of Classical mythology -- the Chthonian gods and all such agents -- are meant merely to express the bounteousness of darkness. One fears the darkness, but both Christian mysticism and Classical lore impart to it a special meaning -- even those powers that reside beneath the earth "drive" man toward some ultimate good. Too, the Classical allusion is but another way of hinting an all-pervasive pattern, that rising of the human spirit from out the dark of night and its movement toward a point of fruition.

It is this idea of the bounteousness of darkness that is important in terms of the development of a single pattern of imagery. For instance, "East Coker" has one type of voyager savouring the "fruit" of action and of the temporal world:

You cannot face it steadily, but this thing is sure,
That time is no healer: the patient is no longer here.
When the train starts, and the passengers are settled
To fruit, periodicals and business letters
(And those who saw them off have left the platform)
Their faces relax from grief into relief,
To the sleepy rhythm of a hundred hours. (EC III)

Eliot's "passengers" are never far-removed from some image of the imprisonment of linear time, which in this case is the train. Now, however, is added the further dimension of their settling to "fruit", periodicals and business letters. It is this mood of quiescence, the slow savouring of the fruit of this life that sets the tone of the entire passage. But there is the terribly bitter irony that it was the taste of fruit that first cast man into the world of time. Thus, while meditating the process of time, Eliot is led to a sense of how time began:
Time the destroyer is time the preserver,
Like the river with its cargo of dead negroes, cows and chicken coops,
The bitter apple and the bite in the apple. (DS II)

The "bitter apple", indeed, is the after-taste of the first apple eaten from a particular tree. Yet man continues to reside by the onflowing river of time -- witnessing its very destructiveness -- and seldom thinks to seek the fruit of what Eliot would term a meaningful action:

Last season's fruit is eaten
And the fullfed beast shall kick the empty pail. (LG II)

And later the dead master speaks again the rewards of time, the fruit of this life:

Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age
To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort.
First, the cold friction of expiring sense
Without enchantment, offering no promise
But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit
As body and soul begin to fall asunder. (LG III)

The fruit which man may once have savoured is now reduced, as time has its way, to the "bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit." In terms of Eliot's pattern of meaning, the choice remains ever the same: to look for the fruit of action in this life or in another. Translated into the images and meaning that are consistently present, this becomes a choice of darkness and light or of temporal life and spiritual death. Evidence of how man should decide the matter is offered in a passage from "The Dry Salvages":

'Fare forward, you who think that you are voyaging;
You are not those who saw the harbour
Receding, or those who will disembark.
Here between the hither and the farther shore
While time is withdrawn, consider the future
And the past with an equal mind.
At the moment which is not of action or inaction
You can receive this: "on whatever sphere of being
The mind of man may be intent
At the time of death" -- this is the one action
(And the time of death is every moment)
Which shall fructify in the life of others:
And do not think of the fruit of action.
Fare forward. (DS III)

What I am intent upon revealing is that Eliot tries so desperately hard to reduce all "action" in the Quartets to that one "moment which is not of action or inaction" -- it is a moment of willing surrender to blindness, darkness and death. Thus does life "fructify" and bear the ever-ripening, never to be decayed, "fruit" of spiritual vision.

One is finally driven to realize the extraordinary consistency of Eliot's imagery and how, most of all, it tends toward the idea of life as a single organic unity -- an embryonic growth which sets its seed in darkness and flowers in the sun. For example, the "soul's sap" is said to quiver like the sap of a tree which, though dormant, is not dead. Thus is the spiritual body "resurrected", given new life. So, too, the "daemonic, chthonic / Powers" are those who "send up fruit and bounteous blessings from below." It is they who set the soul on a further path of fruitful existence. And, indeed, all the references to temporal "fruit" suggest that real fructification shall occur only

If our temporal reversion nourish
(Not too far from the yew-tree)
The life of significant soil.

Eliot's meaning is like a slowly unwinding parchment scroll -- everything is contained within that scroll, but it cannot be seen at a glance. We may not see, for instance, the idea of life as a living
tree, a tree quite opposite to the "yew-tree", but the image is there, and it grows to reality only when we realize the meaning of "the life of significant soil." That soil is one within which, as I have tried to suggest, the seed of life is planted, the seed of man which descends into darkness and returns again to the light.
CHAPTER V

In my preceding chapters I have tried to trace the development of pattern. One of the greatest difficulties in doing so is that the pattern, though it follows a logical order, is abstract in the extreme. This is why, I believe, Eliot hints the presence of the mandala early in the Quartets, for it gives solid form to an otherwise bodiless idea. The mystic journey becomes something that is spelled out in terms of a "formal pattern", one which draws together and holds in stable synthesis a great number of complex ideas. This is the chief value of a symbol of this sort. It is a means, as one man has put it, "to express simultaneously several meanings the unity between which is not evident on the plane of immediate experience." 47

The mandala is seen as a way of hinting a pattern of order within the Quartets. Indeed, one of the most important features of the mandala, as many commentators agree, is its structuring of space. North, East, South and West are given a common direction -- the four quarters of the earth find one center. The idea of centrality, however, can be variously figured, as in the image of the tree. Where the image of the tree begins to usurp the power of the mandala, I believe, is in its clearer suggestion of this centrality -- rather than pure "vision" -- and, also, in its clearer pattern of ascent. Mystics feel, for example,
that the lotos holds the key to vision, but that the tree, branching
in all directions, marks the way of ascent from the moment of vision
to the life of pure unity.

To make this notion somewhat clearer, one might think of the
geography of Eliot's garden in which there is both a lotos and a tree --
the latter, of course, being far more implicit, but it is the same
tree as occurs at the end of "Little Gidding":

And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea. (LG V)

These children in the apple-tree are the same children that were
"hidden" in the leaves in "Burnt Norton":

Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.

Eliot is intent on drawing our attention to the tree, just as to
the lotos. One notices, however, that in the order of the poetry
the lotos comes first. In a most studied manner Eliot points the
way to the pool, and only later, much later, does he hint the existence
of an actual tree. The reason for this is that the one is a point
of departure, the other a point of arrival. That is, the lotos points
the way of "descent" into the dark and the tree the way of "ascent"
into the light. Both ways are necessary, but the latter is the absolute
end which Four Quartets seek. This I hope to prove in my present chapter,
and to demonstrate the idea of absolute unity that comes of our under-
standing of the pattern that leads to the tree.

The pattern is one that begins in the city -- the very antithesis
of the garden in which the tree is located. Here there is no clear
center and, certainly, no unity:

Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind
That blows before and after time,
Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs
Time before and time after,
Eructation of unhealthy souls
Into the faded air, the torpid
Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of London,
Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney,
Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate. Not here
Not here the darkness, in this twittering world. (BN III)

In the first few lines of the quotation it is as though the corporeal
body, through the very fact of breathing -- "wind in and out of unwholesome
lungs" -- gives "breath" to the wind, indeed aids it in creating the
aimlessness of urban life. With the word "eructation" it further seems
that man is casting his breath -- indeed his very life -- upon the
wind. The notion of breathing denotes the perpetuation of life, but a
life that is without purpose or gravity. One is caught on a wind
that sweeps throughout the suburbs of London:

Eructation of unhealthy souls
Into the faded air, the torpid
Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of London,
Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney,
Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate.

Rather than the notion of centrality, the lines suggest the
dispersion of wind breath, and being over an ever vaster landscape.
As the wind "sweeps the gloomy hills of London" there is a growing
loss of intensity, order, and unity -- everything that the garden,
the lotos, and the tree represent.

By contrast, one notices that the crucial opening lines of "Little
Gidding" specifically declare a windless condition:

When the short day is brightest, with frost and fire,
The brief sun flames the ice, on pond and ditches,
In a windless cold that is the heart's heat . . . .
In order to approach the "heart" of the poetry -- as in the "heart's heat" -- there must be no wind. The very notion of the heart's heat implies a type of cauldron, a point at which the heart, now at the "heart" of the pattern, melts into pure unity. The wind cannot now disperse the soul's passionate intensity -- an intensity that exists outside of time, outside of the world of "London / Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney." As Eliot concludes:

And glow more intense than blaze of branch, or brazier,
Stirs the dumb spirit: no wind, but pentecostal fire
In the dark time of the year.

In effect, there is no wind to disturb the calm of inner being, nor any wind that can add to the intensity of "pentecostal fire." This fire is one that burns within the realm of its own being and has nothing to do with the vague wanderings of the wind and fire of the temporal world.

In other passages, Eliot is concerned to show the opposite of a perfectly windless and intense state of being. The dead master passage of "Little Gidding" is a perfect example:

In the uncertain hour before the morning
 Near the ending of interminable night
 At the recurrent end of the unending
 After the dark dove with the flickering tongue
 Had passed below the horizon of his homing
 While the dead leaves still rattled on like tin
 Over the asphalt where no other sound was
 Between three districts whence the smoke arose
 I met one walking, loitering and hurried
 As if blown towards me like the metal leaves
 Before the urban dawn wind unresisting. (LG II)

An extremely arresting phrase is, "As if blown towards me like the metal leaves." Leaves which are "metal" are something hard and
intractable and suggest their being forged in the "asphalt" streets of London. The interesting feature of the image is the way in which it relates to the dead master, for both man and the leaf have been sucked dry of their life. Yet with both something remains to speak the original form — a ghost from the past, a breath of former being.

Still the dead master cannot escape his dry and lifeless condition. A voice and no more, he is blown aimlessly through the streets of London. Like Eliot he is unable to set down roots, to find "The life of significant soil." (DS V) The entire passage evokes the idea of aimlessness in which the wind plays a large part:

And so, compliant to the common wind,
Too strange to each other for misunderstanding,
In concord at this intersection time
Of meeting nowhere, no before and after,
We trod the pavement in a dead patrol.

Where previously the dead master had been blown "before the urban dawn wind unresisting", both he and Eliot, again like leaves, are now "compliant to the common wind." The further sense that the passage conveys is that the two men are in a kind of purgatory, but one in which, as yet, they are incapable of purgation. The cleansing ritual of the descent into darkness is here, in war-torn London, hardly possible. The problem is simple: the purgatory that the two men occupy is the purgatory of the temporal world. To escape they must first establish a sense of purpose and then begin their descent into another kind of darkness.

Thus, knowing full well that his spirit is "unappeased and peregrine" — unfulfilled in the deepest sense — the dead master speaks his final words:
From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit
Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire
Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.
The day was breaking. In the disfigured street
He left me, with a kind of valediction,
And faded on the blowing of the horn.

The wrong that man commits is that he never finds his "measure."
Yet it is by "measure", the correct apportioning of the resources of
the human spirit, that man finds salvation within the fire. It is as
though one has to find the "figure", or the pattern -- as do the dancers
in "East Coker" -- in order to avoid the "disfigured" streets of war-
torn London -- streets laid out like a grid which endlessly "cross"
and re-cross but never reveal a true point of "intersection." The
dancer, however, learns the measure, the rhythmmed pattern of movement
that allows him to discover the point at which two paths cross. His
steps take him nearer and nearer the center of the pattern -- the meeting
point of stillness and motion, darkness and light, time and eternity.
Never would one find, in the windy world of temporal time, such a point
of intersection.

In contrast to this, the general pattern of the dead master passage
reveals an aimless and "disfigured" world. When the day "breaks" --
in a perfect echo of "disfigured" -- there is no real dawn, no new birth
of light and vision. Man sees as darkly as ever and not the least
message is written on the "urban dawn wind", a wind that rattles like
a deathknell the dead leaves upon the pavement.

The intricacies of the dead master passage, of course, reveal
more than this. But on one significant level the passage speaks of
the rootlessness of both temporal and urban existence. One notices
that the dead master is described as being "a familiar compound ghost."
He is evocative of the world's many literary ghosts that wander the
world looking for a resting place. In his own words the dead master
finds that:

... the passage presents no hindrance
To the spirit unappeased and peregrine
Between two worlds become much like each other . . . .

There is no essential difference between the world of London
and the implied purgatory from which the ghost appears -- "the passage
presents no hindrance" and he is free to wander as he will. For Eliot
this is a damning criticism of a society. Moreover, it suggests that
the only real purgatory, and the only condition that leads to the
Beatific Vision, is the purgatory of self. Otherwise there is no
real darkness, and therefore no real light. As earlier was said, "Not
here / Not here the darkness, in this twittering world." It is as
though one must throw down roots, roots which sink to the very soil,
in order to stay the progress of time, the rush of the wind, and the
"unappeased" wanderings of the human spirit. But this seeking of the
life of significant soil, the descent into darkness known to mystics
as a state of "Fruitive Bliss",48 implies the "agony / Of death and
birth." (EC III)

Of major present concern is the association of ideas inherent in
the wind and the leaves and human wanderings. In sum they lead to a
sense of aimlessness. The world of London lacks a center, just as the
human soul lacks a point of absolute fixity. What Eliot does in the
face of this immense difficulty is overlay the pattern of one world
on that of another. London is London the mechanical, the desert of urban
society. It is a barren world which is incapable of growth or renewal, a place where "the dead leaves still rattled on like tin." Nowhere, amid the "asphalt" streets, can the seed of the human spirit plant itself. This is the wasteland where "there is no water but only rock."

In order to discover the opposite pattern one need simply turn to "Little Gidding":

Midwinter spring is its own season
Sempternal though sodden towards sundown,
Suspended in time, between pole and tropic . . .
And glow more intense than blaze of branch, or brazier
Stirs the dumb spirit: no wind, but pentecostal fire
In the dark time of the year. Between melting and freezing
The soul's sap quivers. There is no earth smell
Or smell of living thing. This is the spring time
But not in time's covenant. (LG I)

The pattern of the temporal world, running aimlessly through the arid streets of "London, / Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney" ends here. The long sought point of fixity and the soil of spiritual generation are found in a moment of vision "suspended in time, between pole and tropic." "Spring" is a process of the human heart, swelling toward the mystic's moment of "Fruitive Bliss." But, in an absolutely key image, it is through the ineffable power of "pentecostal fire" that the soul's sap "quivers" at its moment of birth. No power in man, neither that of reason, will, or desire can move the human spirit, a spirit which is now "Driven by daemonic, chthonic / Powers."

And the power that "drives" man drives him as though from the seed through the root, and from the root through the living tree of life and upward to the outermost branch:

Ascend to summer in the tree
We move above the moving tree
In light upon the figured leaf
And hear upon the sodden floor
Below, the boarhound and the boar
Pursue their pattern as before
But reconciled among the stars. (BN II)

Having asked, "Where is the summer, the unimaginable / Zero summer?", Eliot finds at least a partial answer -- an answer given a semblance of tangible form -- in the image of the tree that is lifted out of the order of temporal time. Once having descended to the dark "winter" of the human spirit, one is able to become united with the mystic pattern of Fruitive Bliss and thereby "Ascend to summer in the tree." All the world's windblown leaves are gathered in this single image, and man is part of that image, part of the living tree. The quivering soul has at last risen to that point at which it:

... moves above the moving tree
in light upon the figured leaf ...

The light now, however, is that of "enlightenment", the power by which man reads the message inscribed on "the figured leaf." One can hardly escape recalling the "disfigured" street of the dead master passage, a pattern of meaning that had been tortured out of existence by the shattering experience of war. There the tree had not grown, and such leaves as existed bore no message but, rather, "rattled" like death.

Eliot's image of the tree, thus, is one way of speaking the regeneration of life, for as the tree lives so man lives. Indeed, the tree is a means of "ascent" from death to life, from darkness to light. The very apogee of man's life is reached when, as the poetry says, he "moves above the moving tree", for to this point motion -- the flow of time -- has been confusion but now it is enlightenment -- "We move
above the moving tree / In light upon the figured leaf." In other words, one is detached from the secular pattern and, through the bounty of the tree and all that it stands for, is able to see the pattern at a glance. But the pattern is not, as one may think, contained in one's seeing but, rather, in one's hearing:

We move in light upon the figured leaf
And hear upon the sodden floor
Below, the boarhound and the boar
Below, pursue their pattern as before
But reconciled among the stars.

The logic of the Quartets, so simple and yet so complex, derives from the body of mystic belief which dictates that vision is blindness. One thinks again of the meaning inherent in the lines of "Little Gidding":

When the short day is brightest, with frost and fire,
The brief sun flames the ice, on pond and ditches,
Reflecting in a watery mirror
A glare that is blindness in the early afternoon.

The paradoxical sun/Son extinguishes the bodily eye -- at the moment when vision occurs -- and one no longer sees in the sense of the temporal world. Everything now, as one of the chief tenets of Christian mysticism declares, exists in the light of Love. The figured leaf bears just one word, a word which Dante was leading to throughout the entire length of The Divine Comedy:

O grace abounding, whereby I presumed
So deep the eternal light to search and sound
That my whole vision was therein consumed!

In that abyss I saw how love held bound
Into one volume all the leaves whose flight
Is scattered through the universe around. (Canto XXXIII)

One notices that the dead master passage had spoken of "the dark dove with the flickering tongue", a bold image suggesting the corruption
of love -- a dove-aircraft with a flickering tongue of flame. Such "love" holds nothing bound, least of all the "leaves", as in Dante:

In that abyss I saw how love held bound
Into one volume all the leaves whose flight
Is scattered through the universe around.

In the "abyss" into which Eliot peers there is only a "dark" dove whose reign causes the leaves to be loosed and to rattle with dry metallic sound over the asphalt. Dante, of course, has emerged from the world of temporal time which Eliot has not yet done. Yet when Eliot does approach the timeless moment, and when one realizes that the "figured" leaf bears the word love, and it is this that holds all the leaves bound in one volume, he declares the existence of another dove:

The dove descending breaks the air
With flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.
The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre--
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

Who then devised the torment? Love.
Love is the unfamiliar Name
Behind the hands that wove
The intolerable shirt of flame
Which human power cannot remove.
We only live, only suspire
Consumed by either fire or fire. (LG IV)

If the "dark dove" had spoken one message this dove speaks another: the difference is the difference between the monstrous dove of destruction and that of salvation. One notices, too, how deliberately Eliot relates the dark dove and the image of "dead leaves":

After the dark dove with the flickering tongue
Had passed below the horizon of his homing
While the dead leaves still rattled on like tin ....
The enemy aircraft, passing "below the horizon of his homing" had brought a breath of flame that blew the leaves to destruction, rattling them upon the asphalt like the rattle of falling bombs. One might even see in the dark dove the image of the serpent who, with its flickering tongue, steals into the darkness from whence it comes.

It is a bold transition from this dove to the dove that:

... breaks the air
With flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.

The Redeemer comes and speaks, as he spoke to the apostles, in tongues of fire:

And when the days of Pentecost were drawing to a close, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a violent wind blowing, and it filled the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues as of fire, which settled upon each of them. (Apostles 2:3)

This sheds further light on Eliot's lines:

And glow more intense than blaze of branch, or brazier,
Stirs the dumb spirit: no wind, but pentecostal fire
In the dark time of the year. (LG I)

The blow that is more intense than blaze of branch, or brazier, is that of "pentecostal fire", or of the descending dove that speaks in "tongues" of fire. In other words, the risen Christ descends and speaks to fallen man:

The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre--
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

The message is simple: one can "burn" either with or without purpose -- the choice is that of pyre or pyre -- either London in the flames of temporal destruction or the self in the flames of salvation.
It is remarkable the extent to which the first dove scene is the perfect reversal of the second. In the implied burning streets of London, for example, the flames are those that are lit by the diabolical enemy aircraft -- the "dove" that passes "below the horizon of his homing." There the message contained in the "flickering tongue" was one of disunity and strife. The difference, again, is the difference between the flickering tongue of destruction and that of salvation.

The effect of the reversal is strikingly seen in the lines which I have previously cited:

The dove descending breaks the air
With flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.
The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre--
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

This dove, while no less terrifying than the first, terrifies to some positive end. In its tongue of flame it speaks the necessity of being "redeemed from fire by fire", of choosing the flames of unity over those of disunity. This, again, is the message of the dead master:

From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit
Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire
Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.'

The moving in measure, "like a dancer", brings one to the point of recognition of meaning in fire. The "torment" is no longer the aimless torment of the temporal world:

Who then devised the torment? Love
Love is the unfamiliar Name
Behind the hands that wove
The intolerable shirt of flame
Which human power cannot remove.

Everything, from the beginning to the end, from the dead master passage to here, is "devised" to point in the direction of ideas relating
to Christian Love. This is the force which, through death, brings life; it is the power of light which ends the dark. Most of all, Love is the power of unity which gathers all the "leaves" in a single volume.

The Quartets speak, really, one long act of attempted synthesis: the tree and its fallen leaves are united; the book of life is once more pieced together; man is one with the universe, one with God. The pattern of the tree figures in it all, for the tree is the means of enlightenment. It bears upon its "figured leaf", the one word, "Love."

One turns again, then, to an absolutely key passage in which the tree is a vital image:

Garlic and saphires in the mud
Clot the bedded axle-tree.
The trilling wire in the blood
Sings below inveterate scars
Appeasing long forgotten wars.
The dance along the artery
The circulation of the lymph
Are figured in the drift of stars
Ascend to summer in the tree
We move above the moving tree
In light upon the figured leaf
And hear upon the sodden floor
Below, the boarhound and the boar
Pursue their pattern as before
But reconciled among the stars. (BN II)

The importance of the tree as the unifying force of the entire passage cannot be overestimated. There is first the "axle-tree" which in ancient usage denoted the "axis" of the world, the stillness amid motion. The image derives from the axle and the wheel, for while the one turned the other was still. More than this, however, the axle-tree represented the point of communication between heaven and earth. Having been thought that the axle-tree was a "still point", it was similarly thought that by entering the stillness one could pass from one plane of existence to another. The passing from one level to
another was accomplished by the fact that the tree altered space-time relations just as, in a sense, the axle turns stillness into motion.

As just one example of this idea, Buddha is said to have seated himself, after the long days of his struggle toward enlightenment, under the Bo-tree. When suddenly he left behind his earthly body and the enchainment of temporal time the tree was given as the effective cause. Other people have attributed the same sacred qualities to a particular tree. Usually the tree is found at the center of a village just as the axle is the center of the wheel. By performing certain rites at the base of the tree one entered not only sacred time but sacred space. The realm of the tree was an area in which one could become as a child again. In effect, time was reversed and there was a "return to origins." But in being reborn the process was thought to be more spiritual than physical, more a matter of enlightenment than anything else. Thus, to be Buddha-born was to be born into the realm of light, to have had one's physical-temporal being utterly transformed by the sacred power of the tree.

One thinks immediately of Eliot's

... children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea. (LG V)

The "two waves" are the waves that wash upon the shore of temporal being, but between the waves, as between past and future, is the "stillness" of vision to which the children have attained. In the passage under consideration, however, the efficacy of the tree is in question:

Garlic and saphires in the mud
Clot the bedded axle-tree.
The difference between the clotting "mud" and the light of vision is self evident. Where man allows the impulse to vision to fail he rises no higher than the level of the reeking plant, is aware of no greater radiance than the false glow of saphires. Indeed, garlic may be thought to represent a type of superstitious belief that leads to ever greater depths of darkness rather than light. It is symptomatic of fear just as the saphire is symptomatic of pseudo-grandiosity.

Having hinted the idea of the world either turning or not turning on its axle-tree, Eliot speaks of another type of rotation or circulation:

    The trilling wire in the blood
    Sings below inveterate scars
    Appeasing long forgotten wars.

The axle-tree denotes rotation, and human blood, in its own way, rotates within a fixed sphere. As bad the blood should cease to move as the axle-tree to turn. But the blood does turn, even below the level of "inveterate scars," and there is a singing that will not allow the wars to be forgotten. Thus, if the axle-tree in its turning provides the music of the spheres, the blood provides an answering music within its sphere. Eliot's linking of the two is quite brilliant, and the oneness of two types of circulation, of two "spheres of existence" (DS V), is immediately stressed:

    The dance along the artery
    The circulation of the lymph
    Are figured in the drift of stars . . . .

The idea of the music of the spheres, the "dance" of all existence in one universal harmony, is perfectly repeated in "the dance along the artery." Thus does one attain the cosmic view, for within the "circulation of the lymph" is "figured" the "drift of stars." One
knows the universe because both man and the universe are governed by the same laws and one knows the dance because one is the dance: "you are the music / While the music lasts." (DS V) The axle-tree that penetrates the earth at its center, and which reaches to the level of the stars, is figured in the "heart" of human life. The heart of man, the heart of the tree, and the heart of the entire universe beat in one rhythm.

Thus, with the tree so much the center of the pattern, it is easy to see why Eliot later speaks of the "soul's sap" (DG I), for the tree is the means by which one of the highest acts of synthesis occurs -- the bonding together of man and the universe at a crucial point of "intersection." Further, to think of the axle-tree is not only to think of the bond between man and the universe but between man and Christ. This is realized by Eliot's constant hinting of the pattern of the cross, whether through "eyebeam", as one has earlier witnessed, or through the very word "crossed" which occurs in conjunction with it. And, as one presently sees, the transition from axle-tree to tree is made easy by the gradual development of pattern:

    Ascend to summer in the tree
    We move above the moving tree
    In light upon the figured leaf
    And hear upon the sodden floor
    Below, the boarhound and the boar
    Pursue their pattern as before
    But reconciled among the stars.

The ascent of the tree is the point at which Christ departed the world and so it is with he who imitates that pattern. This I have tried to point out through the meaning of the word Love, which is the Christian explanation of Christ's death on the cross. If the "figured
leaf" bears that message then it is by the leaf that man is "enlightened."
Thus we get:

We move above the moving tree
In light upon the figured leaf . . . .

Because the tree, strictly speaking, exists in time it is "moving", but man has conquered time and therefore moves "above the moving tree."
The soul, being reduced to a quintessential sap, is now further reduced to air and light. One is free of the world through the liberating power of Love. So great is this power, once it is realized, that it lifts man from the "sodden floor / Below"and, having stripped him of his creatureliness, allows him to see all other creatures at a glance, all in a single "pattern", all "reconciled among the stars."

Thus, from the level of a timeless star -- as in the star that heralded the beginning of the Christian era -- one looks back in enlightenment at the whole of time and the changing world. The at last understood pattern of man and the pattern of Christ are made one. It is not just through the tree, although the tree is all important, that this occurs. Rather, an extremely complex association of images -- complex yet simple -- lift toward the "crowned knot of fire" of which Eliot speaks at the end of the Quartets:

Quick now, here, now, always --
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.

In these last lines is the ultimate proclamation of unity and simplicity. The cost of such simplicity is "not less than everything",
for "any action / Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's
throat . . . ." The sacrifice of self leaves one with nothing, and
yet, in a paradox that persists to the end, of nothing comes everything.
The kingdom of heaven is achieved through a death-in-life and a life-
in-death. The crown that is thus worn is the "crowned knot of fire",
the in-folding through love of the fire and the rose, the earthly and
the ethereal, the symbol and the reality. For, inasmuch as man is
entering the pattern of the rose -- the lotos rose of "Burnt Norton"
-- he is committing himself to a death by fire at the heart of the pattern
and there he quakes

... in frigid purgatorial fires
Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars. (EC IV)

But there, in such paradoxical heat of passion, another rose
is born, the rose of enlightened consciousness. Thus does the "symbol",
the rose that is bedded in the garden and which gradually becomes one
with the pattern of the mandala, become translated into something
wholly different -- an idea, a thought, an image of eternity. But
as man himself aspires to eternity he aspires along the path of the rose.
It is a downward way to darkness and yet it leads to the light, to the
crown which one finally wears. So the rose ends in ashes, but man
begins in flame and the circle is once more complete.
CONCLUSION

One of the fascinating features of the Quartets is that they have been written about in such detail but that the detail can always be fitted to a more coherent pattern. Reading the best criticisms, one would be hard pressed to discover a sense of unbroken unity, and critics have overcome this by speaking of Eliot's "allusiveness." My own point of view is that Eliot is indeed allusive but that there is no single image or idea that is out of place. Which is to say, Eliot has never been more aware of his purposes or more in control of his style. This is the work of the mature poet who knew exactly what he wanted to say. Further, there is absolutely nothing new in the Quartets, but simply a fresh way of ordering the facts. The entire work is in the nature of an historical document which speaks to us of the past as seen from the present; its one most dominant voice is composed of the blended voices of all those people whom Eliot has read, studied, absorbed. Such a judgement is made in full recognition of the artist's simultaneous originality and extreme indebtedness to the past.

The historical consciousness with which the Quartets are imbued is, of course, at once evident. But how the poet's mind sets that consciousness down on paper is another matter. Eliot comes at his task
with a peculiar sense of dedication; he begins by citing Heraclitus and thereby establishes the historical mood. He next introduces his theme which is a meditation upon time. Each of the four books that follows is a further exploration of this theme and each is an attempt to broaden it and to look at it from a new perspective -- there is hardly a thing in "Little Gidding" that is not to be found in "Burnt Norton." This much has been recognized and the relationship of the Quartets to Eliot's key essay The Music of Poetry has also been noted. Thus the Quartets by general agreement are highly orchestrated.

Yet no one to my knowledge has mentioned the way in which section one of "Little Gidding" is the near perfect echo of section two of "Burnt Norton." I speak in regard to the fact that the tree is the dominant image of both passages and that each contains the notion of growth from darkness to light, from the level of flesh to that of spirit, and from the seed that is in the heart to the flower of Christian love. Nor has anyone fully explored the constantly reiterated images of darkness and light and how they form a single harmony. The reflective pool of "Burnt Norton", for instance, is enriched in meaning and scope by the "watery mirror" of "Little Gidding." And each of these in turn is related to the "kingfisher's wing" that answers "light to light." (BN IV) I have tried to indicate, too, the difference between light that is "absorbed" and light that is "refracted", as in section one of "East Coker." In general, I have tried to show that no single light image is as meaningful in isolation as it is in "harmony."

Ultimately one discovers that the "music" of Eliot's poetry consists of an extremely well worked out pattern. Where "East Coker" says
If to be warmed, then I must freeze
And quake in frigid purgatorial fires
Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars. (EC IV)

"Little Gidding" replies:

Ash on an old man's sleeve
Is all the ash the burnt Roses leave. (LG II)

Though Eliot may be "alluding" to a number of ideas there are
specific tangible facts which help unite the above images in a single
pattern. Certain Buddhists, for instance, believe in a ritual "burning
of the roses" by which they think to be achieving pure spirit. Similarly,
if one follows up the implications of the mandala, certain of them
are found to contain an inner "lotus band", a flaming ring of rose-like
flowers by which means one is thought to be purified on the way to
enlightenment. By a number of related images Eliot is hinting the idea
of purification by fire, a flaming rose that consumes itself as it consumes
man but thereby yields the higher essence of both.

Another area in which pattern has been almost completely ignored is
in Eliot's glancing references to Dante's Celestial Rose. No one
pursues the fact that "Figlia del tuo figlio" (DS IV) is the beginning
of the great choral ode that ends The Divine Comedy. Nor is it mentioned
that the greatest paradox that both Dante and Eliot face -- O Virgin
Mother, Daughter of Thy Son -- is in a sense "consumed" within the image
of the Celestial Rose. There, by means of the vision for which the
Celestial Rose stands, all paradox melts into one supreme image of
love and unity. Not only is the Virgin Mother Daughter of Her Son but
the three persons of the Trinity are single yet separate beings. As
well, the Celestial Rose represents the sense of vision which Dante
had earlier seen "mirrored" in the moon, just as Eliot has seen his vision mirrored in the surface of the pool. These things I have tried to indicate, and to show not only that Eliot is indebted to Dante but that he consciously echoes the pattern of vision of The Divine Comedy.

The most significant conclusion that I have come to, as concerns pattern, is that each image is developmental. The rose garden leads to the rose and this same rose, if I am correct, to a cross-cultural rose -- the lotos rose which appears at the center of the "box circle" or the mandala. Through this Eliot is searching for a means of conveying not only the idea of vision, but of death-that-is-life and "darkness" that is the "light." Coupled with this is the desire to show that the heart of the rose is the heart of man and that the two coincide at the "heart" of the pattern. The chain of associations, however, seems almost endless, for the absolute center of the pattern is meant to imply the point of intersection whereat Christ enters the world of time. Thus the rose, partially as a symbol of Christian love, represents the ultimate idea of Incarnation.

One very important feature of the rose, as a symbol, is that it drives one into the darkness of the absolute and of pure self. Having been consumed by love, by the right choice of either "pyre or pyre", one is no more than a "seed." With this in mind I have attempted to argue, as all mystics argue, in one way or another, that from the seed is the tree sprung. This relates to Eliot's consistent pattern of leaf imagery and to his extremely pregnant notion of the "soul's sap" -- words within which I hear, at the very least, the voice of Jacob Boehme and his idea of the "astringent" soul which draws the
"sap" from the blood (Aurora) and blossoms forth in the light of love. Thus the tree, as in my final chapter, is the tree of life reincarnate. The children who are in the tree are one with the pattern: they represent those who have gone from death to life along the course of vision that Eliot lays down. The closing image of the tongues of flame being "infolded" is simply another logical consequence of the development of pattern -- it is an overtly sexual image in which man comes to Christ and to the church in a tongue of flame just as the bridegroom comes to the bride.\(^{53}\) The entire pattern is one of darkness and light, death and life, descent and ascent, separation and union.

The music of the *Quartets* is the dancing in harmony of all these images and ideas. The sphere within which the harmony occurs is the completed circle of meaning, the pattern that breaks the wall between death and life, the timeless and the temporal, the circling blood and the drifting stars:

The dance along the artery  
The circulation of the lymph  
Are figured in the drift of stars. (BN II)

This is by way of saying that there is no point outside the self for which one need be searching, for in Eliot's own words: "you are the music / While the music lasts." (DS V) The temple, the shrine, the point of intersection -- everything that is contained in the world without -- is contained in the world within.

In point of view of Eliot's earlier work -- and in light of his prose criticism -- *Four Quartets* come nearer the type of perfection he sought than anything he has written. Here his voice is far more nearly that of the man who creates than the mind that suffers. "Prufrock" and
"Portrait of a Lady" had been the work of the excruciatingly self-aware young poet. "The Waste Land", in whatever way it is viewed, was a period of aridity -- a poem that founded its greatness, no matter how much Eliot argued to the contrary, on a sense of disillusion and despair. The important fact is not what the poet intended but the effect that the poem creates. I venture that few people would argue that The Waste Land is a poem of light and hope. The dominant impression is of the ruin of a society rather than the building of a poetic or religious faith. In "The Hollow Men" Eliot reaches the height of negation:

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.

It can be argued that the poet was describing an extra-personal condition, the state-of-the-world as it were, but it is still the poet's world, a mid-twenties period of gloom that had settled upon some few people. From "Prufrock" through "The Hollow Men" there is an evident search for some absolute value upon which to pin not only a poetic creed but a personal faith.

"Journey of the Magi" can be viewed as a middle poem; there is both hope and despair though neither is absolute. The despair consists in Eliot having reached the point at which he is perfectly explicit about the death-in-life that is the modern world. At the end of the journey there is no vision, no redemption, no sense of the dawn of a new era:

I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
The Magi are simply not equivalent to the situation, not having brought anything to it and having been starved of the sense of vision which formerly attended the Birth. Therefore they are simple ironic reversals of the original Magi who had journeyed with such purpose and dedication. Eliot can only bitterly conclude, "I should be glad of another death." But in such bitterness is the hope that *Ash Wednesday* makes more clear, for there the poet abandons the mask of despair and welcomes the scattering of his bones as the one possible means to life:

And I who am here dissembled
Proffer my deeds to oblivion, and my love
To the posterity of the desert and the fruit of the gourd.

The gourd is of course hollow -- like the earlier "hollow round of my skull" -- and the desert is as barren as the inner regions of self, but this is Eliot's point:

It is this which recovers
My guts the strings of my eyes and the indigestible portions
Which the leopards reject.

It is concluded that only through a total surrender to "death" can there be life, as in the sense of death implied in "Journey of the Magi." It is marginal hope but it is hope nonetheless. The dissembled body may be pieced together, a new person made out of the ruin of the old.

Even in his choice of title, *Ash Wednesday*, Eliot reveals his newly found course. It is a path that leads, as in *Four Quartets*, to a far more affirmative voice and a surety of belief that was hitherto unseen. There is a stark realization of the importance of particular images:
The single Rose  
Is now the Garden  
Where all loves end  
Terminate torment ....

And there is a clearer statement of categories of Christian belief:

Grace to the Mother  
For the Garden  
Where all love ends.

The single Rose is the Garden and a lasting symbol of love, a symbol that is eminently rediscovered in Four Quartets. But even the plays, as in The Family Reunion, echo a gradually developing pattern of belief which expresses itself in key images:

Agatha. I only looked through the little door  
When the sun was shining on the rose-garden:  
And heard in the distance tiny voices  
And then a black raven flew over.

In this early play Agatha anticipates key categories of Four Quartets: the open door; the sun overhead; the rose-garden; the voices of children; and a passing bird. This may be small sign of spiritual growth but it is indication of Eliot creating a consistent pattern of belief. It is recognized, as in the Quartets, that life must run a course from beginning to end:

Agatha. This is the way of pilgrimage  
Of expiation  
Round and round the circle  
Completing the charm  
So the knot may be unknotted  
The cross be uncrossed  
And the crooked made straight  
And the curse be ended  
By intercession  
By pilgrimage  
By those who depart  
In several directions  
For their own redemption  
And that of the departed --  
May they rest in peace. (Part II, Scene III)
In the garden Agatha has had fleeting glimpses of reality and knows to some extent that the "curse" that must be undone is the curse of time. She is faintly aware, too, that the pattern of her life is tied up with the "cross" which must be "uncrossed" in order for her to be redeemed from the curse, from the bondage of time. And, further, if the curse may be undone by "intercession", the intercessor is the "Lady" of Four Quartets, she "whose shrine stands on the promontory." (DS IV)

Thus, the center of the circle in both Ash Wednesday and the Quartets is the cross, the point of intersection which marks the meaning of Incarnation.

Eliot never abandons his newly found faith, and in as late a play as The Elder Statesman proclaims it anew:

Lord Claverton. And Michael --
I love him, even for rejecting me,
For the me he rejected, I reject also.
I've been freed from the self that pretends to be someone;
And in becoming no one, I begin to live.
It is worth dying, to find out what life is. (Act III)

The symbolic death of self is now a consistent theme, a theme which reaches full maturity in Four Quartets. In the present play Eliot is simply rehearsing this theme and struggling gradually to escape Prufrock's agonies of living in the material world. Though one could at greater length describe the pattern of development in the poems, plays and criticism it is sufficient to say that Four Quartets are the apt summary of everything Eliot has previously written.

Yet I must offer the caution that the Quartets are not the drawing to a calm close of a long poetic career. Far from seeking escape into mystic serenity -- the last retreat of the aging man -- Eliot is proclaiming his faith as an endless and sometimes profound struggle toward vision.
Moreover, one cannot escape the notion of one's "fear of fear and frenzy", a fear that arises from the pattern of life being, at every moment, "a new and shocking / Valuation of all that we have been." (EC II) Eliot insists that we look directly at the peril which attends our surrender to the world, to the extra-personal pattern that daily surrounds us. As early as The Waste Land there were hints of this meaning:

Datta: what have we given?
My friend, blood shaking my heart
The awful daring of a moment's surrender
Which an age of prudence can never retract . . . . (The Waste Land V)

In Eliot's attitude toward the idea of "surrender" I see much of the later Yeats, in particular that especially fine poem, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul":

I am content to live it all again
And yet again, if it be life to pitch
Into the frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch,
A blind man battering blind men . . . .

Yeats' "frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch" is simply that point at which one surrenders, as Eliot seeks surrender, to a world of forces which govern man as they will. But most of all, for both poets in their respective ways, the headlong plunge into the tumult of life represents the ever attempted re-creation of self in the dark smithy of one's own soul. It matters little that Yeats speaks of the frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch and Eliot of the "dark . . . which shall be the darkness of God", for the nature of the experience which the two men seek is entirely undifferentiated. What most matters is that both the secular and the religious poet hold fast to the idea of man being able to complete the circle of life many times over. In either case there is the "awful daring of a moment's surrender", the act of
introspection to the point of annihilation of which, perhaps, few men are capable.

To think that Eliot in his waning years sought the sheltering wing of Anglo-Catholicism is more than a slight misunderstanding of the man. Indeed, he held fast to the tenets of his religion, but at the same time he was deeply involved in its mystical side. He probed and questioned and consistently sought the meaning of the religious experience in its deepest sense. These are not the marks of a complacent man or a conservative poet. Rather they are indications of the man who tried again and again to achieve a more naked vision.
FOOTNOTES


4 Gardner, p. 48.

5 Gardner, p. 36.

6 Gardner, p. 54.

7 Gardner, p. 54.

8 Gardner, pp. 55-56.

9 When Eliot mentions (EC III) the words 'faith', 'hope', and 'love' he is doubtless aware that they are the three theological values of St. Paul and therefore seems very conscious of his use of individual words.


11 Sir Thomas Elyot, a distant relative of Eliot's whose home was East Coker.

12 Cf. "The heaving groaner / Rounder homeward." (DS I) The image suggests the pain of the journey through time, the sometimes vital necessity of putting in to safe harbour through this "end" is only temporary as the human ship awaits further travel through time.

13 Union implies the Christian union of man and God.
14 Eliot consciously paraphrases Ecclesiastes and attempts to have us see, perhaps, that in spite of the individual human life being mutable the generational pattern is eternal.

15 That is, an end to time, an end to linear pattern, an end to action and suffering.

16 By general implication the rose is an infolded pattern.

17 In the Christian sense this is the power of love.

18 Best explained by the notion, "you are the music / While the music lasts." (DS V) As in Yeats where the dancer is the dance here there can be no separation of the knower from the known.

19 Though the only direct reference to Heraclitus occurs in Eliot's epigraph it is likely that he intended us to feel the implied presence of the Heraclitean doctrine of change throughout the Quartets.

20 Later lines read, "Ash on an old man's sleeve / Is all the ash the burnt roses leave." (LG II) In one way or another it is hinted that the rose has fallen into decay.

21 In "dead leaves" there is an echo of the former "rose leaves," but it is perhaps more significant that the entire "autumn" passage with its word "crossed" is a hint of the Christian "Fall."

22 The rose is a traditional symbol of Christian Love.

23 The more common spelling appears to be "lotus."


27 "And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses / Had the look of flowers that are looked at.” In both Christian and Eastern religious belief the cross -- note "crossed" -- is of prime importance.


29 Italics mine. Cf. "empty alley" (BN I).

30 Arguelles, p. 91.
A work wherein the translator argues the indebtedness of Western to Eastern thought and points out that the Golden flower (i.e. lotus) is the key to the unconscious and to archetypal patterns in general; with the train of thought here espoused Eliot must have been familiar.


Cf. "After the kingfisher's wing / Has answered light to light, and is silent, the light is still / At the still point of the turning world." (BN III)


That the "unseen eyebeam" is connected with the lotus rose depends on one's reading of the word "crossed" as an implied point of intersection, i.e. the unseen eyebeam "crosses" from the circle to the center, from the garden to the center of the pool, the heart of the pattern.

Some form of the "middle way" is referred to by most mystics.


O quanto e corto il dire, e come fioco al mio concetto! e questo, a quel ch'io vidid, e tanto, che non basta a dicer poco. (Paradiso 33, 11. 121-23)

Qual e il geometre che tutto s'affige per misurar lo cerchio, e non ritrova, pensando, quel principio ond'egli indige; tale era io a quella vista nuova: veder voleva, come si convenne l'amago al cerchio e comevi s'indova; ma non eran da cio le properie penne, se non che la mia mente fu percossa da und fulgore, in che suavoglia venne. (Paradiso 33, 11. 133-41)

Preparing him for the moment of final vision, St. Bernard says to Dante: "Over this garden with thy vision fly, / For looking on it will prepare thy gaze / To rise towards God's luminence on high." (Paradiso 31, 11. 97-99)
levai lo cappo a proferer piu erto.
Ma visione apparve, che ritenne
a se me tanto stretto, per vedersi,
che di mia confession non mi sovvenne.
Quali per vetri transparenti e tersi,
o ver per acque nitide e tranquille,
non si profonde che i fondi sien persi,
toran dei nostri visi le postille
debili si, che perla in biance fonte
non vien men tosto alle nostre puppille;
tali vid'io piu facce a parlar pronte,
perch'io dentro all'error contrario corsi
a quel ch'accese amor tra l'uomo e il fonte,
Subito, si com'io di lor m'accorsi,
quelle stimando specchiati, sembianti,
per ch'io dentro all'error contrario corsi
e nulla vidi .... (Paradiso 3, 11. 7-22)

42


44 Happold, Prayer and Meditation, pp. 124-25.

45 Easter, the day of resurrection, is one of the brightest days in the Christian calendar. The lighting of churches on the eve of Easter Day, sometimes the lighting of whole cities, was once a traditional practice.

46 Cf. "a lifetime's death in love." (DS V) In the mystic experience the end-product of light -- or "enlightened consciousness" -- is an understanding of the meaning of Christian love or Agape.


48 See once more F. C. Happold's quotation of John Ruysbroesck, p. 55 above.

49 o abbondante grazia, ond'io presuni
ficcar lo viso per la luce eterna
tanto, che la venduta vi consunsii!

Nelsuo profondo vidi che s'interna,
legato con amore in un volume,
cio per l'universo si squanderna .... (Paradiso 33, 11. 82-87)

50 A belief in a return to origins is the subject of Mircea Eliade's illuminative work, The Myth of Eternal Return.
Jacob Boehme says: "now behold! When the seed is generated it standeth in the centre of the heart, for there the mother catcheth the Ternary or Trinity." In his Aurora Boehme ascribes to the heart the ability to reduce the blood to "sap" and thereby to lay down the "root" of the Trinity.

Cf. chapter 3 and my description of the mandala.

The image of the bridegroom and the bride occurs frequently in mystic literature.

In abandoning the dramatic monologue Eliot is foregoing the mask technique and while growing paradoxically more "personal" is achieving a higher kind of impersonal art.
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