



# The 'unknown, remembered gate': *Four Quartets* as spiritual biography

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DESPITE a seemingly exhaustive array of responses from 1942 to the present, there has been no accord in critical interpretations of the metaphysics of *Four Quartets*. Why does Eliot remain such a problematic religious figure despite the broad cultural penetration of his later poetry? While the problem is rooted in Eliot's self-confessed idiosyncrasy, his deeper elusiveness stems from his complex spirituality and mythic sensibility. Contrary to the widely-held view of Eliot as a narrowly doctrinal Christian, he traversed a broad and changing metaphysical terrain in pursuit of an instinctive language of the soul. His debt to the mystical self-abnegatory tradition exemplified by St John of the Cross, in tension with his sensory imagination, is generally recognised. Yet, as the *Quartets* contemplate the Incarnation as a perpetual ingress of Godhead into the world of the senses, the poem's key images reverberate in several metaphysical landscapes, conscious and unconscious. The condition of complete simplicity realised poetically in 'Little Gidding' is not produced by resolution of doctrinal conflict or spiritual and sensory self-mastery as ordinarily understood, but is a complex fusion of immanence and transcendence, latent gnosticism and mantic fascination with the mythic underworld.

## I

In the Summer of 1910, Eliot experienced an instant of visionary revelation that crystallised his search for the 'timeless moment' so evident in his later work and life. That moment produced a short poem, 'Silence', in which Eliot's voice is charged with metaphysical portent:

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Along the city streets  
It is still high tide,  
Yet the garrulous waves of life  
Shrink and divide  
With a thousand incidents  
Vexed and debated:—  
This is the hour for which we waited —  
This is the ultimate hour  
When life is justified.  
The seas of experience  
That were so broad and deep,  
So immediate and steep,  
Are suddenly still.  
You may say what you will,  
At such peace I am terrified.  
There is nothing else beside.<sup>1</sup>

Early and comparatively simple as it may be, this is instantly recognisable as the idiom in which Eliot articulates the paradoxical fulfilment and emptiness of his spiritual life in *Four Quartets*. The moment is unpredictable, yet awaited; absolute, yet dialectical; revelatory yet vacuous. Its progression is also characteristic: from the distanced and superior description of the 'garrulous waves of life' to the declaratory 'This is the hour for which we waited', to the proclamatory 'The ultimate hour when life is justified' to the resumed dialogue which gives the journey momentum: 'Say what you will, at such peace I am terrified'.

It does not really matter whether, as some commentators have suggested, silence was the catalyst for Eliot's spiritual journey or a point in a journey already commenced. The important thing is that, spiritually and psychologically, it foreshadows 'the still point of the turning world', yet in terms which, emotionally and poetically, could hardly be more different. In her biography, *Eliot's Early Years* (1977), Lyndall Gordon misread (and thereby enhanced) the poem as referring to the 'city streets' themselves shrinking and dividing.<sup>2</sup> Yet, more conventional though it is, the shrinking and dividing of the 'garrulous waves of life' shows Eliot's instinctive recourse to mythic imagery – in this case, the moment when





the waters of the Red Sea part for the Israelites and the awesome and threatening 'otherness' of the spiritual realm is miraculously manifest – with vision and extinction perilously close.

In fact, what reverberates from the poem is the 'nothing else besides' of the final line – which marries apotheosis with devastation. It is the desert in the depth of the waves which 'terrifies' by its miracle and its cost of life. This is the voice of a visionary echoing from the other side of an abyss. To a contemplative young man whose mother wrote impassioned religious poetry, Eliot's 'city streets' are the agnostic reality from which gnostic experience leaps. His doctoral thesis, on the philosophy of F. H. Bradley, depicts the sustained spiritual tension between the demands of verifiable experience and the 'undiscovered country' to which he had fleeting access, both directly and through answering concepts and images, from Eastern and Western philosophy.

Many scholarly hours have been spent attempting to discover a consistent system of philosophy within the body of Eliot's works. Yet the key to Eliot's poetic genius, and perhaps his greatest legacy to those that come after, is in fact his radical inconsistency both as a man and a poet. Eliot was a deeply divided man – awkward, stiff, pretentious – a contrived character who wished to lose the 'nigger drawl'<sup>3</sup> of his Missouri childhood to become a consummate Englishman. He was an eminent man of letters who placed whoopee cushions on the seats of his dinner-guests and offered them exploding cigars. An outsider in the Mid-West, in New England, in Paris, and in London, Eliot was also doctrinally divided, describing himself as combining 'a Catholic cast of mind, a Calvinistic heritage, and a Puritanical temperament'.<sup>4</sup> In 1953 Randall Jarrell summed up the difficulties of writing about Eliot and his poetry, asking:

*Won't the future say to us in helpless astonishment: 'But did you actually believe that all those things about objective correlations, Classicism, the tradition, applied to his poetry? Surely you must have seen that he was one of the most subjective and daemonic poets who ever lived, the victim and helpless beneficiary of his own inexorable compulsions, obsessions? From a psychoanalytical point of view he was by far and away the most interesting poet of your century'.<sup>5</sup>*

It is this daemonic element which I wish to explore by reference to





'Little Gidding' and to connect with Eliot's affinities to both Christian and pre-Christian mysticism.

As Gordon argues, Eliot 'dreamed of the saint's ambitious task, of living by his own vision beyond the imaginative frontiers of his civilisation'.<sup>6</sup> The poet himself believed that truth may be a compound hidden from philosophy but revealed in poetry: 'Different philosophies, or opposed philosophical opinions which cannot in the philosophical area of discourse be maintained at once, may... be united and poetically reconciled'.<sup>7</sup> So 'Midwinter spring is its own season': it does not conform to the rigid binaries of solstice (Summer/Winter) and equinox (Spring/Autumn) but exists as a transitory moment eternally enshrined in poetry. Eliot was driven to reconcile 'knowledge' with 'experience'; his instinctive 'taste for mysticism' with his intellectual need for pragmatism; his Bradleian sense of rapture with the Jamesian doubt engendered by his fear of becoming uncritical and lost in a miasma of emotionalism; and his striving toward spiritual purity with a self-loathing and masochistic sensuality. Donald Childs describes the moment in the rose garden in 'Burnt Norton' when the lotus rises, and the moment in 'Little Gidding' of 'Midwinter Spring' when 'The soul's sap quivers' as 'Eliot's location of the point of contact between the human and the Divine, between samsara and nirvana, between Bradley's appearance and reality, or between Bergson's clock time and *durée*'.<sup>8</sup> But beyond all these dichotomies, 'Little Gidding' is the felt reality of an Orphic poet who has crossed the most perilous thresholds of the human spirit; and a reverie on the gifts reserved for those who 'shall not cease from exploration'.

## II

I do not wish to suggest for a moment that Eliot was a syncretist. He disavowed the view 'that the ultimate and esoteric truth is one, that all religions show some traces of it, and that it is a matter of indifference to which one of the great religions we adhere'.<sup>9</sup> The 'dark dove' which grants redeeming love through fire at once purgatorial and pentecostal is undeniably the Holy Spirit of the Christian Trinity. However, Eliot's sympathy with gnosticism's ultimate goal of achieving unity between



the human soul and God is undeniable. The final, radiant phase of 'Little Gidding' when 'the tongues of flame are in-folded / Into the crowned knot of fire / And the fire and the rose are one' portrays this consummation by echoing the anonymous fourteenth-century mystical tract, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, in which detachment from selfish desire 'will at the last help thee to knit a ghostly knot of burning love betwixt thee and thy God in ghostly onehead and accordance of will'.<sup>10</sup>

Eliot was constrained from engaging fully with Eastern religion in the way of his contemporaries Pound and Babbitt (who both converted to Confucianism) by a sense of the value of his own Eurocentric cultural presuppositions. To him, the 'only hope of penetrating to the heart... [of the mystery of Indian metaphysics lay] in forgetting how to think and feel as an American or a European'<sup>11</sup>, a step Eliot was unwilling to take. Nevertheless, proceeding from an ambivalent position of spiritual onlooker, he embraced an open-minded sense of the wisdom to be gained from differing cultures. The poet's sense that 'contemplatives of religions and civilisations remote from each other are saying the same thing'<sup>12</sup> stems from his conception of wisdom as divinely bestowed. It is through the grace of Godhead that the individual comes to the Whole: 'Wisdom is a native gift of intuition, ripened and given application by experience.... In some men it may appear fitfully and occasionally, or once in a lifetime, in the rapture of a single experience beatific or awful'.<sup>13</sup> 'Little Gidding' is thus the story of these flashes of rapture that descend 'in the dark time of the year' and make 'the soul's sap' quiver. But it is also the culmination of Eliot's quest to discover a path to gnosis through (in the faintly echoed words of the Fisher King) the gathering of fragments to shore against ruin.

Whilst the seeker's precise predicament is veiled in the earlier poems by 'hints and guesses', in the third part of 'Little Gidding', the poet sets out a startlingly simple schema of his spiritual quandary:

*There are three conditions which often look alike  
Yet differ completely, flourish in the same hedgerow:  
Attachment to self and to things and to persons, detachment  
From self and from things and from persons; and, growing between them,  
indifference  
Which resembles the others as death resembles life,*



*Being between two lives – unflowering, between  
The live and the dead nettle.*

One of the most striking things about these lines is the image of the three conditions flourishing in the same hedgerow: the place where wild things take root and struggle for ascendancy. This is the hedgerow that was 'blanched for an hour with transitory blossom of snow' in the revelatory opening of this final Quartet. But its inhabitants are 'the live and the dead nettle' and something in-between that is 'unflowering'. Eliot suffered from a horror of 'the void that I find in the middle of all human happiness and all human relations, and which there is only one thing to fill' and confessed to a friend that 'I am one whom the sense of void tends to drive towards asceticism or sensuality, and only Christianity helps to reconcile me to life which is otherwise disgusting'.<sup>14</sup> So it is that sensuality and asceticism form the fundamental binary opposition at the poem's (and the poet's) heart, but the third state – the one that 'resembles the others as death resembles life' – is the true 'heart of darkness' which the poet must escape and confront.

Eliot's pathological repugnance from physical sensuality, and his resultant attraction to self-mortification have been well-documented by his biographers.<sup>15</sup> The 'country mirth' of the marriage bonfire in 'East Coker' is imaged as a pagan ritual culminating in 'dung and death'. Evocative as it is, and glimpsed only 'if you do not come too close', its life rhythm is quickly repulsed, the bonfire extinguished like the lives it illuminated. Eliot's zone of comfort is the watchful darkness – the realm of the ascetic who must wait, blind and quiet, for the gift of spiritual illumination. This is the Eliot who, Murray argues, 'is determined to walk "by a way wherein there is no ecstasy"'.<sup>16</sup> Yet, like the female medieval mystics glimpsed through his poetry – Hildegard von Bingen, Dame Julian of Norwich, and Margery Kempe – Eliot does not so much 'shut fast the door of the senses' as propel the reader 'through the unknown, remembered gate', finding a new 'earth' to 'discover' beyond the realm of the sensual. All the imaginative power of the poet is directed to evoking moments of embodied spirituality – from the moment in the lilac garden to the moment in the rose garden and the hedgerow irradiated with 'transitory blossom of snow'.





In an early *Ariel* poem, 'Marina', the placing of spiritual struggle into the world literally dissolves sins, which

*Are become unsubstantial, reduced by a wind,*

*A breath of pine, and the woodsong fog*

*By this grace dissolved in place.*

The *Ariel* poems do not merely describe landscapes, they form the very contours of the mind's eye. 'Marina' begins by echoing the bewildered Hercules' horror, asking 'Quis hic locus, quae regio, quae mundi plaga?'<sup>17</sup> But the horror is subsumed by a gentle wonder that asks:

*What seas what shores what grey rocks and what islands*

*What water lapping the bow*

*And scent of pine and the woodthrush singing through the  
fog....*

These are not solid landscapes, but the liminal places of the questing mind. Each image is created to rest in consciousness just long enough to form a stepping block, then dissolve in upon the next. The waft of pine and the hazy voice of the hidden bird dissolve into fog, leaving only 'Whispers and small laughter between leaves and hurrying feet / Under sleep, where all the waters meet'. This incantatory 'other world', where the sounds, scents and images of the material world 'return' in unearthly yet intensified form, is constituted from the vapours of the divine breath acting upon the stores of sensuous memory.

Evelyn Underhill, whose class Eliot had enthusiastically attended whilst at Harvard, wrote that 'the Incarnation... is, for mystics of a certain type... also a perpetual Cosmic and personal process. It is an everlasting bringing forth, in the universe and also in the individual ascending soul, of the divine and perfect life'.<sup>18</sup> Although Eliot denounced the modern world's 'chatter about mysticism' as 'some splattering indulgence of emotion', arguing instead for 'the most terrible concentration and *askesis*', the spiritual journey enacted in his finest poem is (to adapt Louis Martz's words) 'an intuitive groping back into regions of the soul that lie beyond sensory memories',<sup>19</sup> but to which sensory memories are the portal. It is simultaneously a 'Cosmic and a personal process': a journey which finds self-discovery through self-subordination, delivers knowledge





through intuition, and universalises the personal through re-enactment of mythic precedent. In this regard, it has much in common with a shamanistic journey. Indeed, while Eliot preferred the term 'poet sage', Grover Smith has described him as 'the first of my shamans'.<sup>20</sup> His quest to 'renew our association with traditional wisdom: to re-establish a vital connection between the individual and the race'<sup>21</sup> made him what Smith (discussing *The Cocktail Party*) describes as 'a convergence of three streams of shamanistic tradition', namely the Greek mythic tradition of Euripides; the occult tradition through his ritual magician friend Charles Williams; and the scientific tradition through his acquaintance with anthropologist / psychologist John Layard.<sup>22</sup>

### III

Incongruous as such a characterisation may seem with the image of the dour and earnest Christian, Eliot was willing to place himself within explicitly occultist social contexts. As Grover Smith argues, Eliot 'had much potential for occultism himself... he needed only to encounter it in a context of Christian mysticism, to shed his fear of it'.<sup>23</sup> In March, 1917 Eliot attended a meeting of the Omega Club. He wrote to a friend that he 'was sitting on a mat (as is the custom in such circles) discussing psychical research with William Butler Yeats (the only thing he ever talks about except for Dublin gossip)'.<sup>24</sup> Three years later, in the Autumn of 1920 Eliot was an occasional presence at *séances* co-hosted by Lady Rothermere and James Young and presided over by the occultist P. D. Ouspensky, whose philosophy was cabalistic, numerological, and gymnosophistical (nudist).<sup>25</sup> Even the Christian mystic Evelyn Underhill was a member of a Hermetic Order, successor to the Golden Dawn.<sup>26</sup> While Eliot in 'The Dry Salvages' is openly scornful of esoteric scholars who 'riddle the inevitable with playing cards' and 'fiddle with pentagrams', the visionary quality of 'Little Gidding' is partially foreshadowed in W. B. Yeats's *A Vision*, where the Irish poet 'thought I had discovered this antithesis of the seasons, when some countryman told me that he heard the lambs of Faery bleating in November, and read in some heroic tale of supernatural flowers in midwinter'.<sup>27</sup> Eliot was also attracted to Blake's 'remarkable







and original sense of language and the music of language' and his 'gift of hallucinated vision'.<sup>28</sup> There is also some evidence that Eliot himself experienced hallucinations and a sense of being haunted by spirits or spiritual presences.<sup>29</sup>

Eliot believed Charles Williams (a *Magister Templi* in the Rosicrucian branch of the Golden Dawn) to have an almost unrivalled understanding of mystical experience<sup>30</sup> and told Helen Gardner that 'the image of the dance around the "still point" [in 'Burnt Norton'] was suggested by Williams' novel *The Greater Trumps*, where in a magical model of the universe the figures of the Tarot pack dance around the Fool at the still centre'.<sup>31</sup> In the novel, only the wise woman (her name, tellingly, is 'Sybil') understands that the Fool is moving – his own dance completes the movements of the outer dancers. The only soul wise enough to imperil itself for the Truth, the Fool, is hanging, 'neither flesh nor fleshless', pensile 'at the still point, there the dance is'.

It is no accident that the prologue to *Four Quartets* features two fragments from Heraclitus of Ephesus, the adopted mystical guide to the early twentieth-century occultists. Heraclitus conceived the fluid principle of *panta rhei* ('everything flows') as a cosmic fire 'kindling in measures and going out in measures'<sup>32</sup> and the world as needing to 'move in measure, like a dancer'. In 'Little Gidding', the fire poem of the *Quartets*, the presence of Heraclitean cosmic fire is pervasive. The 'dumb spirit' is stirred by contact with the world-soul, the divine fire that burns 'more intense than blaze of branch or brazier'. If this is a mere 'brief flame', says the astonished soul, then 'Where is the summer, the unimaginable / Zero summer?' The Fool's dance around and through cosmic fire is recalled in the 'refining fire where you must move in measure, like a dancer'. In this passage, the Fool dances around the Sun, the celestial Centre.

The mythic journey of the soul is alluded to through the symbolism of the Wise Fool's journey, the image of the Shaman revived in the motifs of forest, mountain, fire and sea woven through *Four Quartets*. The word 'shaman' possibly derives from the Pali language, the language spoken in India at the time of the Buddha. In Pali, a 'samana' is a term describing the Asian forest mystics. Eliot professed a preference for the 'Forest





Philosophers of India<sup>33</sup> and made a direct reference to these mystics in an excised passage of 'East Coker'. The lines describe a shamanistic journeying to the deep places of the soul: 'The mind must venture / Where it has not been, be separated / For a further union, a deeper communion, / Aranyaka, the forest or the sea'.<sup>34</sup> 'Aranyakas' are figures from Indian mysticism, 'those who belong to the forest', whose wisdom appears in the Upanishads.<sup>35</sup> 'The Dry Salvage's again charts this primitive myth-world, juxtaposing forest and the sea: 'The sea has many voices, / Many gods and many voices. / The salt is on the briar rose, / The fog is in the fir trees'.<sup>36</sup> This time, the phrase also has Homeric allusions. Homer described the world using the imagery of forest and mist: 'the fir-tree reached through the aer to the aither'.<sup>37</sup> That is, the fir-tree strove through the fog or mist to the ether, the air wrought of celestial fire.

In 'Marina', the traps of death are dispelled by 'a breath of pine and the woodsong fog'. The full fusion of these world-elements occurs in 'Little Gidding'. As Heraclitus saw earth, water, and fire as bound on a wheel, so the *Rig Veda*, the first of the Indian mystical texts, envisions 'Primal Man' as composing these elements: 'From your mind the moon is born, your eyes will become the sun, from your mouth will flow Indra and the fire, and your breath will be the wind. In your turn you will go to the sky and the earth and the waters. Your limbs will become the roots of plants'.<sup>38</sup> In the very first notes for 'Little Gidding' were the following words: 'Winter scene. May. / Lyric. air earth water end / daemonic fire'.<sup>39</sup>

Eliot's plant and tree symbolism in 'Little Gidding' is also quite deliberate. During the drafting of 'the live and the dead nettle' section of Part III, the poet wrote to John Hayward. He was concerned to retain the phrase 'dead nettle' as 'the dead nettle is the family of flowering plants of which the White Archangel is one'. If instead 'the live nettle and the dead' were used, 'it would tend to suggest a dead stinging nettle instead of a quite different plant'.<sup>40</sup> The hawthorn which is 'not in the scheme of generation' often stands in sacred places (the poem's 'other places') over holy wells and on hills. In the Classical world, the hawthorn was believed to have sprung from lightning. In Heraclitean philosophy, ethereal fire, 'the purest and brightest sort, that is, as of the aitherial and divine thunderbolt



–has a directive capacity'.<sup>41</sup> Like the famous 'Glastonbury Thorn', said to have sprouted from Joseph of Arimathea's staff, the hawthorn is the stave of travellers between the outer and inner worlds. However, as the catalytic beginning of the Fool's journey, the May conceals dangers. A mistrusted tree, the hawthorn was also sacred to faeries and witches.

A similar ambiguity governs the graveyard yew, whose image in Part V counterbalances the unbudding blossom of hawthorn. As the quintessential churchyard hedge, the yew immediately signifies mortality and sorrow. But the yew is also the tree of resurrection, reincarnation and faith, for both Christianity and Celtic Druidism. In Irish mythology, the yew is a sacred tree brought from the Otherworld, offspring of the tree of Paradise. The Scottish Isle of Iona, sacred to St. Columba, derives its name from the Gaelic word for 'yew-tree', Ioho or Ioha. 'The island was once a powerful Druid centre, planted with sacred groves of yew, and the traditions of Iona traditionally involve rebirth and reincarnation'.<sup>42</sup> The yew thus encodes both the pagan past and the establishment of Christianity in Britain. Reaching ages upwards of 2,000 years, it symbolises eternal life in an environment of mortality. The poem speaks of 'the moment of the yew-tree' and the equal 'moment of the rose'. The rose is the instantaneous and transient realisation of knowledge that is the shaman's goal. The yew-tree is the world-axle upon which the shaman pivots as he reaches for the flower.

These images should not be thought of as mere borrowings from a pagan context for the benefit of a Christian one. Rather, their compound resonances are the essence of Eliot's complex spirituality. For it is, in fact, the 'measure' (that is, the process of encounter), and the re-experiencing of its mythic and historical dimensions, that defines and refines the spirit. The blinding flash of realisation at the beginning of the poem could well have been the ending. But instead of representing the fulfilment of the poet-fool's quest, 'Midwinter Spring' is the first step in the journey. The seeker must pass through the decay of time, the 'dust in the air suspended'. It is no accident that this passage in Part II is the most detailed, portraying the minutiae of hostile mortality, the 'flood and drouth' that overwhelm the dead eyes and invade the mouth. The 'dead sand' and 'parched eviscerate



soil' are the deserts of Sisyphus, laughing 'without mirth', like a death's head, at 'the vanity of toil' from which only the living can suffer. The abstract wasteland becomes tangible as the lone figure wanders through an 'interminable night'. In the darkest moments of the poem, at 'the uncertain hour before dawn', we glimpse the horrors ahead, the dread breath of the 'dark dove with the flickering tongue'. The passage rings with hoarseness, but the 'metal leaves' that rattle on 'like tin' are the coughs of long-silent wisdom clearing its throat. The ghost encountered in the underworld is, like Tiresias, a sage in his own way.

#### IV

In this way, Eliot became a poetic shaman, entering the underworld of the collective unconscious through the suspended animation of 'Midwinter Spring' to retrieve 'the communication / Of the dead', 'tongued with fire beyond the language of the living'. Recognising that 'what the dead had no speech for, when living, / They can tell you, being dead', his spiritual quest is also an Orphic journey which 'can only be hinted at in myths and images. To speak about it we talk of darkness, labyrinths, Minotaur terrors'.<sup>43</sup> Hence the intensity of Eliot's prayer, in *The Cocktail Party*, for those who go upon (psychic) journeys: 'Watch over her in the desert. Watch over her in the mountain. Watch over her in the labyrinth. Watch over her by the quicksand'.<sup>44</sup> Mary Trevelyan, Eliot's long-time friend and correspondent, records in her unpublished memoir the wistful prayer she said for him every night:

*Protector of travellers  
Bless the road  
Watch over him in the desert.  
Watch over him in the mountain.  
Watch over him in the labyrinth.  
Watch over him by the quicksand.  
Protect him from the Voices  
Protect him from the Visions  
Protect him from the tumult  
Protect him in the silence.*<sup>45</sup>

These are strange incantations from, and applied to, a devoutly



Christian poet. Yet they do not feel misplaced. For while Christianity was the only thing that could fill the Void – and *did* fill it, like the empty pool filled with water out of sunlight – the poem's mythic underpinnings defy the metaphor of arrival. To know the place for the first time implies that it is not the last.

## Notes

- 1 T.S. Eliot, 'Silence', in *Inventions of the March Hare: Poems 1909 -1917*, ed. Christopher Ricks (Faber and Faber, London, 1996), p.18.
- 2 See Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977), p.15. This mistake was rectified in *T.S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life* (1998), which featured the correct, although less poetically potent, formulation. See Lyndall Gordon, *T.S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life* (W.W. Norton, London, 1999).
- 3 Carole Seymour-Jones, *Painted Shadow: A Life of Vivienne Eliot* (Constable, London, 2001), p.37.
- 4 T.S. Eliot, 'Goethe as the Sage', *On Poetry and Poets* (Faber and Faber, London, 1955, published 1957), p.209.
- 5 Randall Jarrell, in *Fifty Years of American Poetry*, quoted in Seymour-Jones, *op cit.*, p.xvi.
- 6 Gordon, *Imperfect Life*, p.3.
- 7 T.S. Eliot, 'Scylla and Charybdis', *Agenda* xxiii.1-2 (1985). 17.
- 8 Donald J. Childs, 'Risking Enchantment: The Middle Way between Mysticism and Pragmatism in *Four Quartets*', in Edward Lobb, ed. *Words in Time: New Essays on Eliot's Four Quartets* (Athlone, London, 1993), p.109.
- 9 T.S. Eliot, 'Preface', in Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1952), p.ix.
- 10 Anonymous, *A Book of Contemplation the Which Is Called The Cloud of Unknowing* (ed. Evelyn Underhill, London, 1912), p.112.
- 11 T. S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (Harcourt, Brace and Co, London, 1934), p.34.
- 12 T.S. Eliot, 'Preface', in *Thoughts for Meditation: A Way to Recovery from Within*, ed. Narendralal Gangulee (Greensleeves Books, London, 1951), p.13. By way of illustrating the eclecticism of Eliot's spiritual interests, this anthology contains writings by authors as diverse as Vivekananda, William Blake, Chuang Tzu Kabir, Mira Bai, Augustine and others and selected from works such as the Surangama Sutra, the Koran, and the Gita.
- 13 T.S. Eliot, 'Goethe as the Sage', *op cit.*, p.221.
- 14 T.S. Eliot, in a letter to Paul Elmer More. Quoted in Paul Murray, *T.S. Eliot and Mysticism: The Secret History of Four Quartets* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1991), pp.99, 118.
- 15 See Seymour-Jones, *op cit.*, pp.40, 56-58.
- 16 Murray, *op. cit.*, p.81.
- 17 'What place is this, what region, what quarter of the world?' in Seneca's *Hercules Furens*. Hercules asks this after waking to find that he has killed his wife and children in a blind rage. He goes on: 'Ubi sum? Sub ortu solis, an sub cardine Glacialis Ursae?' (Where am I? Under the rising sun, or beneath the wheeling course of the Frozen Bear?)
- 18 *The Cloud of Unknowing*, *op. cit.*, p.118.
- 19 Louis L. Martz, 'Henry Vaughan: The Man Within', *PMLA*. 78:1 (1963), 47.
- 20 Grover Smith, *T.S. Eliot and the Use of Memory* (Bucknell University Press, Lewisburg 1996), p.122.

- 21 T.S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy*, *op. cit.*, p.48.
- 22 See Smith, *op. cit.*, p.123.
- 23 Smith, *op. cit.*, p.104.
- 24 T.S. Eliot to Eleanor Hinckley, 23 March 1917, in *The Letters of T.S. Eliot Vol. 1: 1898-1922*, ed. Valerie Eliot (Faber and Faber, London, 1988), p.169.
- 25 See John Carswell, *Lives and Letters 1906-1957* (Faber and Faber, London, 1978), pp.171-2
- 26 Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999), p.256.
- 27 W. B. Yeats. *A Vision* (2nd edn., Macmillan, London, 1937) p.210.
- 28 T.S. Eliot, 'Blake', *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (Methuen, London, 1920), p.157, quoted in Murray, *op. cit.*, p.61.
- 29 See Seymour-Jones, *op. cit.*, p.110.
- 30 See T.S. Eliot, 'Mr Charles Williams', (an obituary notice) *Times*, 17 May, 1945, 7.
- 31 Helen Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets* (Faber and Faber, London, 1978), p.85.
- 32 Heraclitus, Fragment 217 'On Nature' in *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*, eds G. S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, & M. Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.198.
- 33 T.S. Eliot, 'Introduction'. in *The Wheel of Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. G. Wilson Knight (1930) (Methuen & Co, London, 1972), p.xvi.
- 34 Gardner, *op. cit.*, p.112.
- 35 For a more detailed discussion of these references in East Coker see Murray, *op. cit.*, pp.132-3.
- 36 This imagery also echoes symbolist visions of the prophet Isaiah: 55:13 'Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off'.
- 37 Homer, *Iliad*, xiv, 288, quoted in G. S. Kirk, et al., *op. cit.*, p.9.
- 38 'Purusa', in *The Rig Veda Book 10*, Hymn 90.
- 39 Gardner, *op. cit.*, p.157.
- 40 Gardner, *op. cit.*, p.200.
- 41 On 'Fragment 220', in G. S. Kirk, et al., *op. cit.*, p.198.
- 42 See Mara Freeman, 'Yew: Patriarch of Long-Lasting Woods', *Touchstone* at <http://druidry.org/obod/theorder/archive/mara-yew.html> (1996).
- 43 T.S. Eliot, 'The Cocktail Party', in *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot* (Faber and Faber, London, 1969), p.438.
- 44 T.S. Eliot, 'The Cocktail Party' *op. cit.*, p.422.
- 45 Mary Trevelyan, *Eliot: The Pope of Russell Square 1938-1958* (unpublished). Quoted in Seymour-Jones, *op. cit.*, p.651.