

CHAPTER THREE – *THE MIXING OF MEMORY WITH DESIRE:* THE CONCEPTUAL DRIVER.

3.1 – Towards a Conceptual Framework

Figure 3.1.1 schematizes the conceptual frame underpinning *The Mixing of Memory with Desire*. Each of the constituent boxes will be discussed separately, albeit with differing levels of detail as appropriate.

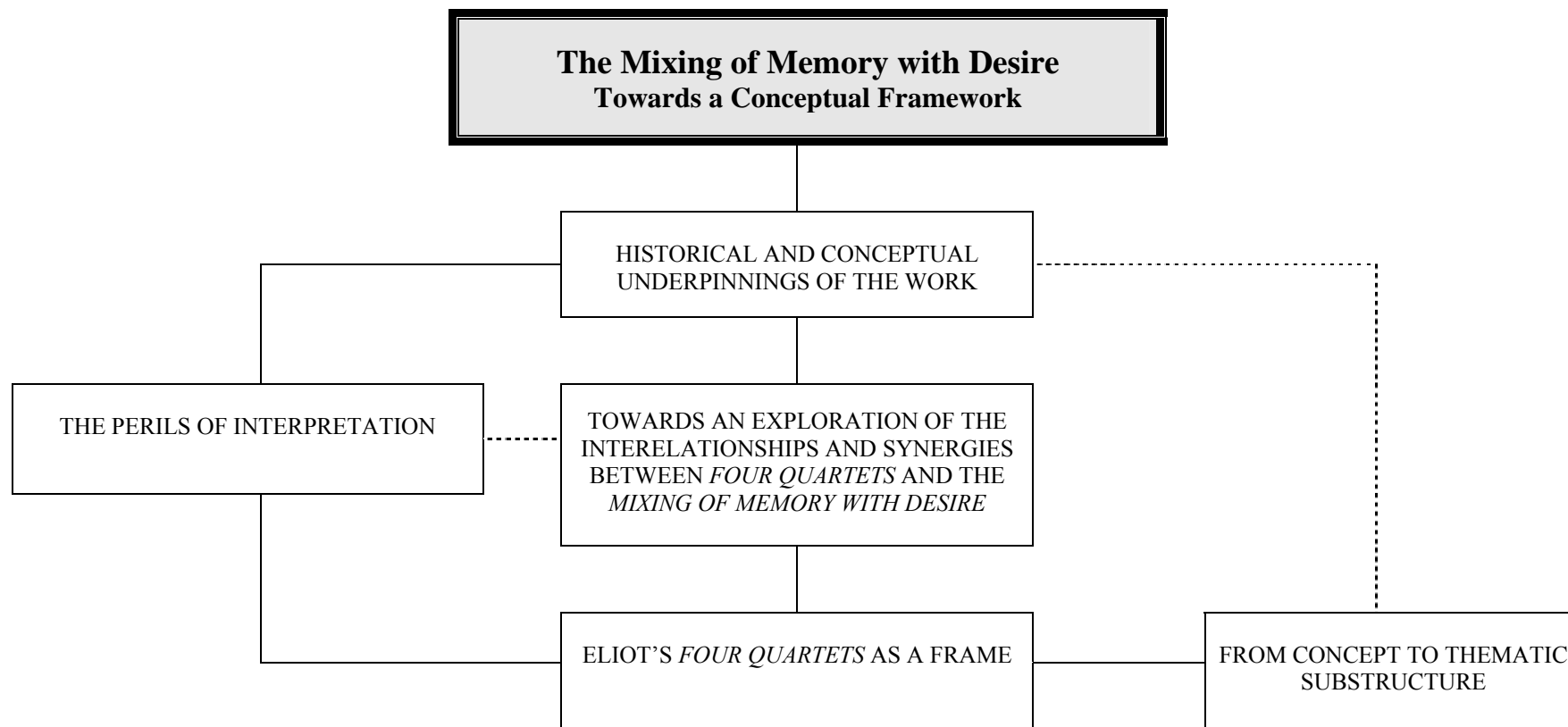


Figure 3.1.1

Schematic map of the conceptual framework underpinning *The Mixing of Memory with Desire*

3.2 – Historical and Conceptual Underpinnings of the Work

This section addresses those matters pertaining to the key historical and conceptual influences and indicators underpinning the work. In the interests of clarity they have been presented in a schematized form in Figure 3.2.1, which has been divided into quadrants, each encompassing a different cluster of influences and/or indicators. The four clusters have been designated **Art Historical** and **Literary** on the left hand side of the figure and **Conceptual** and **Experiential** on the right. The quadrant containing Conceptual influences and indicators largely precedes the initial experiences of encountering works of art together with those of poetry and literature, and has been positioned thus but with no order of importance intended. In the case of the **Art Historical** influences these are represented chronologically.

The juxtaposition of **Art Historical** and **Literary** influences are somewhat complementary as both are associated, at least to some degree, with temporal inventories of selected points of aesthetic reference (paintings, artifacts or literary works) which are to be found in the Tables (e.g., Table 1.7.1 - *Dominant Early Intermediate Artistic Influences*; Table 1.7.2 - *Dominant Early Influences from other Disciplines: Literary influences, and so forth*).

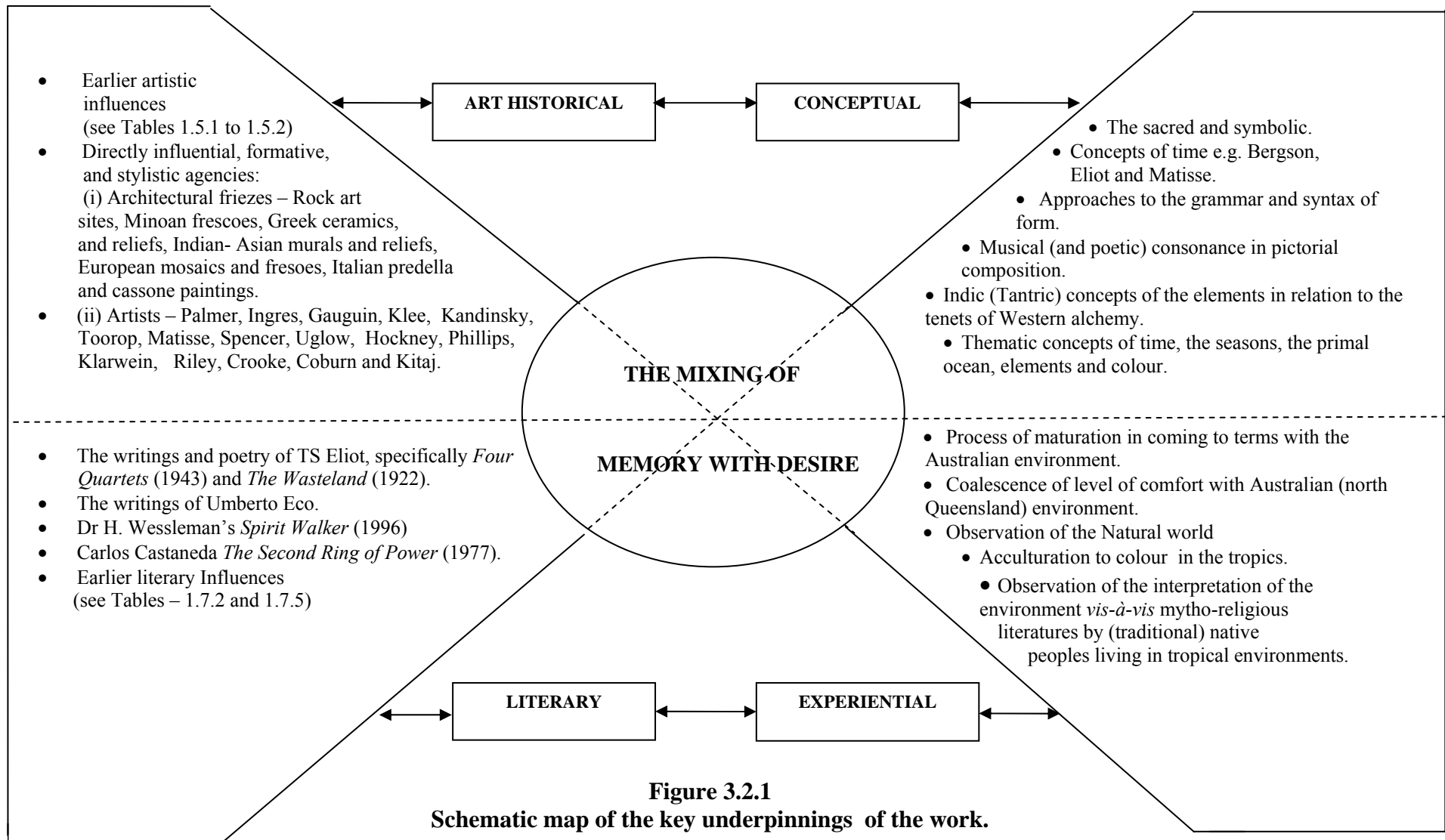
The quadrants encompassing **Conceptual** and **Experiential** influences and indicators have been similarly juxtaposed and, where relevant, concise information has also been provided in the Tables (see those cited above) as well as the main body of the text, both in the preceding chapters and those, which follow. All the quadrants come together in the central disc representing a confluence of all the various factors

underlying *The Mixing of Memory with Desire*. Indeed Figure 3.2.1 is presented as a *mind* map which illustrates in schematic form those specific issues referred to in previous chapters and presaged in this chapter. This required in the first instance an explanation in the form of a short discussion of the issues associated with interpretation in section 3.3.

3.3 – The Perils of Interpretation

Before venturing further it is perhaps appropriate to draw attention to the matter of interpretation, a subject about which T.S Eliot (1888-1965) was much concerned. His ideas regarding interpretation can be discerned at several levels on a sliding scale; the most elevated involving that of the broad philosophical debate concerning the interpretation of *self* and the *Absolute*, the other being the interpretation of a work of art in its widest sense. In discussing this matter, Eliot himself remarks that “... our impulse to interpret a work of art... is exactly as imperative and fundamental as our impulse to interpret the universe by metaphysics.” (Eliot 1930:102). Nevertheless what follows pertains to the matter of interpretation of works of art and, more particularly, to visual art more than it does to interpretations of self and the universe.

It is generally understood that an artist’s concern in discussing practice should not extend beyond the issues of explanation and description and, with this in view, every effort has been made to guard against attempting interpretation. The confusion between issues of interpretation and those of explanation are matters, which have beset artists from almost everywhere during every period of history, whatever their



creative proclivities. Among the many reasons given, probably one of the most significant is that, in the case of the visual artist (as with writers, poets and composers), once the work has left the studio and entered the public domain the artist is no longer able to intercede physically on its behalf. Indeed from that point on, the work begins to accumulate a history and life of its own, with interpretations being conferred upon it, some of which, in all probability, will be quite at odds with those that the author of the work may originally have intended.

In his discussion of the role of the author, the celebrated contemporary Italian philosopher, historian, novelist and literary critic Umberto Eco (b.1932-) in *Reflections on name of the Rose* (Eco, 1985), an exposition of the writing of his own novel, *The Name of the Rose* (1980), expresses the opinion that “A narrator should not supply interpretations of his work; otherwise he would not have written a novel, which is a machine for generating interpretations ...” (Eco, 1985:1-2). In the same text he further remarks that “The author must not interpret. But he may tell why and how he wrote his book ...” (Eco, 1985:10). Indeed it is his repeated emphasis and cautionary tone that have, in the present context, prompted the artist to focus particular attention on this matter.

In both instances Eco’s (1985) position is quite unequivocal and (as previously noted) applies equally to both artists and writers generally i.e., that it is not the place of artists to interpret their own work, but they may quite properly explain their intentions and describe the context in which, and methods whereby it was created. The artist’s own understanding of Eco’s (1985) deliberations is that it is appropriate to relate only those things that have a bearing on the work from the points of view of

its conceptual motivation, relationship to other works of art, its purpose or application, the circumstances of its creation, its theme, content, compositional organisation and the methods associated with its fabrication. In some instances it may also be apposite to describe the roles these factors might play in investing the work with conscious symbolic meaning. Indeed it includes those things, as Eco (1985) explains, which assist in “constructing the reader ...” (Eco, 1985:48) or, in the case of the visual arts which he also discusses, the viewer.

The dynamics of the relationship of the writer or artist to the work *vis à vis* its fabrication, its nexus to other works, and to the dialogue between the author of the work and the reader or viewer is also reflected upon by Eco (1985) in his discussion of constructing the reader:

Rhythm, pace, penitence ... For whom? For me? No certainly not. For the reader. While you write, you are thinking of a reader, as a painter while he paints, is thinking of the viewer who will look at the picture. After making a brush stroke, he takes two or three steps back and studies the effect: he looks at the picture, that is, the way the viewer will admire it, in proper lighting, when it is hanging on a wall. When a work is finished a dialogue is established between the text and its readers (the author is excluded). While a work is in progress, the dialogue is double: there is the dialogue between that text and all other previously written texts (books are made ... from other books and around other books), and there is the dialogue between the author and his model reader.

(Eco, 1985:47)

Although it is not possible to embrace Eco's description of the painter's thoughts entirely, a number of questions arise, at least from the *view point* of reading the image. It might well be asked, to what extent does it hold up as a matter for serious consideration? Is it important for the viewer to be able to share in the artist's visual experience? Indeed, is it even a consideration? While in some cases it may be that it is not, it is the artist's opinion that it should be, at least to some degree. If it is not, the work will have failed to communicate which would, in terms of its effectiveness (as a visual image) *vis à vis* the percipient, tend to make it somewhat redundant. An alternative view might be that the principal concern of the artist is to attempt to convey a particular emotive or intuitive experience (either interior or exterior) with a visual equivalent (see 2.4).

Whatever the artist's intention may be, the business of interpretation cannot be circumvented. Moreover, the fact that many contemporary and near contemporary artists of all persuasions may at one time or another, and for a variety of reasons, have strayed into the forbidden territory of interpretation can also not be overlooked - even though they may have been attempting to explain those things which they believed would assist in providing a clearer understanding of their work. Indeed, a case in point are the notes which Eliot himself provided to assist the reader in more fully comprehending the somewhat esoteric under layers which inform his poem *The Waste Land* (1922). The notes themselves have, in fact, invoked a variety of responses and been described by some as not only "...superfluous [but] even misleading" (Kaplan, 1985:82). However they are so much an integral part of the work that it is difficult to ignore them and they do at least provide some indication of

what Eliot himself was thinking about at the time, though his later observations may have been quite different.

It should perhaps be mentioned that, although Eliot and Eco's ideas regarding the issues of interpretation are not entirely congruent, the artist did find it of considerable interest that both writers do, in fact, share some identifiable common ground. Indeed, in her discussion of this matter, Kearns (1987) explains that "... there are some interesting points of contact between Eliot's theory of interpretation and that of Umberto Eco." (Kearns, 1987:103). She also provides a significant example of such a mutual *point of contact*, about which she remarks that

Eliot, too, would have seen the "open" text (of which *The Waste Land* is a striking example) as a 'pragmatic device whose foreseen interpretation is part of its generative process'

(Kearns, 1987:130).

A further *point of contact* is broached by Eco (1985) himself in the contemplation of the role of emotion in his own fictional writing, in which he makes the statement that, for him, "Art is an escape from personal emotion, as both Joyce and Eliot had taught me." (Eco, 1985:34). The section which follows explores the connections between Eliot's *Four Quartets* and the selection of the title for the artist's work *The Mixing of Memory with Desire*.

3.4 - Towards an Exploration of Interrelationships and Synergies between T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* and *The Mixing of Memory with Desire*

That certain aspects of T. S. Eliot's poetic works, including *Four Quartets* (1943), have had a significant influence on the compositional organisation, formal arrangement and, to a much lesser extent, the content of the suite of four paintings constituting *The Mixing of Memory with Desire*, should be acknowledged from the outset. What follows represents an attempt by the artist to highlight the most significant of those influences and to provide an account of their interrelationships. In addition, it poses and attempts to answer a number of questions regarding those issues treating the contextual, thematic and formal relationships between Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1943) and the suite of four paintings; in short it focuses on what drives the work and how.

In terms of the relationships between *Four Quartets* (1943) and the suite of four paintings, two questions arise which demand immediate explanation: the first being – why Eliot?; the second – why the choice of title, given that *The Mixing of Memory with Desire* was derived not from *Four Quartets* (1943), but the first verse of 'Burial of the Dead' from *The Waste Land* (1922). The answers to both questions are closely interconnected and can only be reasonably explained by the artist within an autobiographical context. In the description, which follows, the symbiotic relationship between Eliot, the season of spring, and memory and desire are all caught up within the net of a single experience. It will become clear that the subject of Eliot himself, spring and desire inhabit the site of the same event, the recollection

of the experience later surfacing as a triggered evocation, external but anchored to it via the temporal thread of *episodic memory*. What follows is an attempt to recount briefly those experiences which may assist in elucidating that which, in the first instance, may appear to be over freely associated and, in the second, an event that would not, in spite of its nature, necessarily inspire a body of paintings.

The artist's first experience regarding the poetry of T. S. Eliot was as a child attending the local primary school close to his home in South East London. In fact a particular moment in time is so strongly attached to it that the event can still be recalled with some clarity. The poem was *Growltiger's Last Stand* (1939) from, as the artist discovered some time later, T. S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939). It was a typical dull grey overcast London morning in early spring, with rain falling steadily in a thin blue-grey veil. The details of the housetops, usually quite visible over the playground wall, were on this occasion completely obscured, reduced to a single unified dark brown-grey mass, silhouetted against the paler blue-grey of the sky. A hazy island of yellow green marked the position of a large pear tree recently covered in a mantle of new growth and whose nether branches overhung the wall. An intermittent pathway of green reflections extended directly from the tree to the condensation-covered window through which he was gazing, every puddle in its path reflected the intense green of new foliage.

At that moment the artist remembers feeling a great urge to leap out of the window, run through the rain along the green pathway of reflections, spring on the top of the wall then climb up into the very topmost branches of the tree in imitation of the effortless agility and freedom of a cat. This memory among others frequently

surfaces in the presence of similar scenes and is one of a number that is associated in some way with a literary source.

The second encounter with Eliot's work came four decades later in quite another form (the only common thread being that of pedagogy). It occurred as the result of the artist joining a graduate program in the arts, the principal line of inquiry being founded upon a very specific approach to inter-disciplinary research.¹ The program comprised a series of lectures and workshops whose *raison d'être* was to explore the interactions with and interrelationships between music, poetry, literature (both fictional and dramatic), the visual arts and performance. Included in the series were several lectures expressly concerned with the work of T. S. Eliot. Our attention was directed first to *The Waste Land* (1922), followed by *The Lovesong of Alfred J. Prufrock* (1917), continuing with *Preludes* (1917), *Ash Wednesday* (1930) and, finally (in much greater detail), *Four Quartets* (1943).

The primary focus of the course of study was directed toward an analysis of his poetic works from a number of viewpoints, which were designed to reveal an alliance between "... those *elements of forming...*" (Cowie, 1993) which are apparently common to all the arts. A significant proportion of its agenda was to demonstrate that the grammars of form and syntax may be utilized across art forms in order to revivify and enrich the formative process of another: such revivification and enrichment applying equally to the thematic content, the meaning and organisational structure. *Four Quartets* (1943) represents a classic example in which musical form and structure have been appropriated and redeployed, though loosely,

¹ A program of lectures offered between 4th July 1991 – 31st December 1994 to students undertaking Research Higher Degrees in Creative Arts, by The Australian Arts Fusion Centre, whose director was, for the span of its life, the contemporary composer Professor Edward Cowie.

in the creation of a poetic work. The language of music may be identified as not only having been appropriated for the title (among other things), but also engaged in the syntactical arrangement and thematic development of its overall structure. In his discussion of syntax in the poetry of Eliot and music, Swarbrick (1988) maintains that

... music may suggest all sorts of things simultaneously ... [and] is based on continuity, on sounds which progress from one another successively ... we might say of music that the experience of continuity is all that it can truly present to us, the notes making constructions which are modified, departed from, returned to restated and brought to rest In the syntactical arrangement of words, Eliot sometimes aims for effects of continuity or suspension which are akin to music.

(Swarbrick, 1988:73).

Indeed the title of a number of Eliot's poetic works and the structure of others can be seen to allude directly to music e.g., *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (1917), *Preludes* (1917), *Rhapsody on a Windy Night* (1917), *Five-Finger Exercises* (1930), and *Four Quartets* (1943), and (structurally) *The Waste Land* (1922). In the field of poetry Eliot was something of a pioneer not only in his use of musical form and structure, but also of appropriation, and the re-introduction of allusion and parody as strategies which relied upon integrating both implied and direct quotations into his work. In terms of allusion Eliot may be seen to be "... incorporating his work into a particular tradition." (Swarbrick, 1988: 76) whilst at the same time, as Kaplan (1991) points out, conjuring up

... images which are expected to evoke in his readers echoes of other works and other ideas, and these echoes are supported to enrich the context of both Eliot's poem and the original.

(Kaplan, 1991: 24).

His use of these strategies (e.g., that of appropriation) in fact, attracted much criticism from other poet-critics, particularly when he first gained public acclaim, one of the most influential of whom was W. B. Yeats. (1865-1939). In this regard it is perhaps worthy of note that, although Eliot occupies a pre-eminent position in the vanguard of twentieth century Anglo-American *modernist* poetic writing and criticism, his use of appropriation, parody, allusion and the employment of "... past forms." (Jencks, 1989: 16) also represent significant elements in the underpinning of postmodernist theory and practice. This has been central to its discourse within all the arts (particularly architecture) from its nascent beginnings in the 1960s to its *maturity* in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Indeed, in the field of visual arts, Eliot's work became the particular subject and motivation for a remarkable postmodern work *If Not, Not* (1975-76) (see Plate 3.4.1) created by the Anglo-American painter R. B. Kitaj (b.1932-). In his description of the work, Jencks (1989) observes that

... Kitaj, who is the artist most concerned with literary and cultural subject matter, combines Modernist techniques of [simulated] collage and a flat, graphic composition with Renaissance traditions. His enigmatic allegory *If Not, Not* is a visual counterpart of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* on which it was partly based.

(Jencks, 1989: 24).

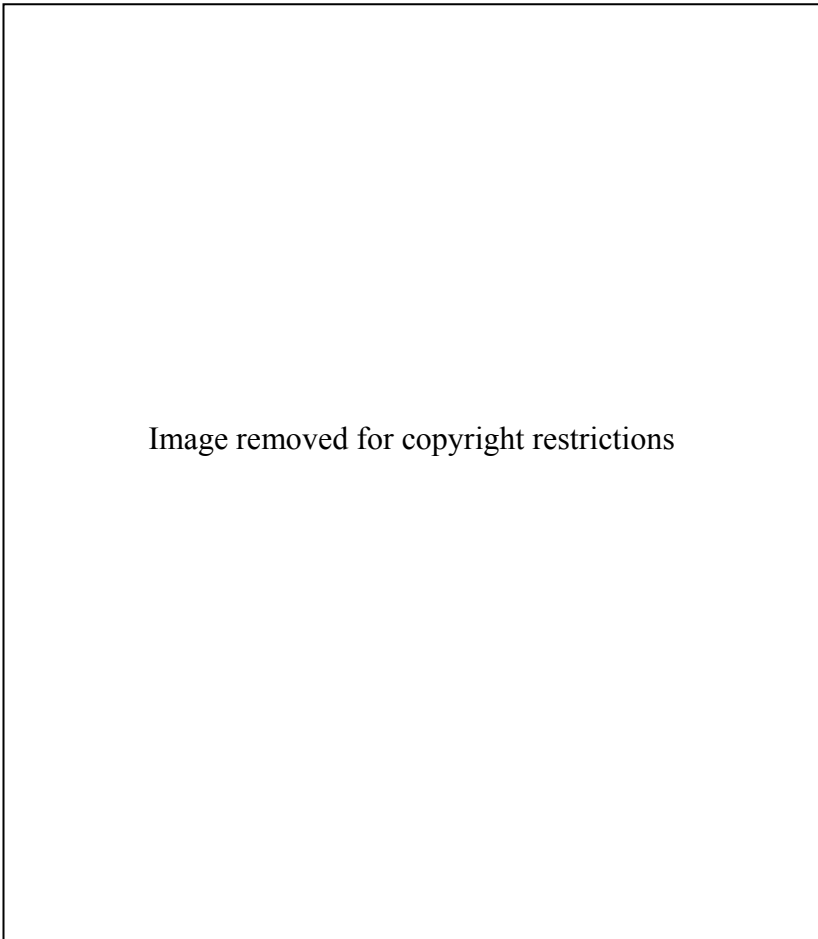


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Plate 3.4.1 R. B. Kitaj, *If Not, Not* (1975-76), oil on canvas, 150 x 150 cm.

Although quite different in style and concept, the artist found Kitaj's work (even though the subject was partially founded on *The Waste Land* (1922)), to be both significant and helpful - significant inasmuch as the picture had been created at all, and helpful in terms of the artist's own attempt at organizing pictorial compositions based on Eliot's poetry. Indeed Kitaj's work not only established a point of reference in terms of subject and approach but also indicated points of departure with regard to style and fabrication. The artist also felt some empathy with Eliot and Kitaj, both of whom shared the common experience of having left their native land in order to take up residence in another country, the resulting dislocation being somewhat reflected, in both their lives and work. Given this context, although the modernist/postmodernist debate extends well beyond the scope of the present discussion, it is nevertheless worth recalling Eco's (1985) remarks concerning time and past traditions, about which he observes that

The postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognizing that the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently ...

(Eco, 1985: 67).

Eco's (1985) observation not only provides a positive point of view *vis à vis* the use of the past in the present, but also goes some way to the legitimating of its use in a relatively contemporary context. It also provides a nexus in the discussion of Eliot's poetry and his utilization of the past and tradition. Moreover it may be discerned that

through his employment of allegory, appropriation and allusion, his inclusion of snatches of colloquial speech and remembered contemporary experience, it was his intention to address both the notion of tradition and to bring “.... ‘time past’ into ‘time present’ ...” (Kaplan, 1993:5), or to measure the present against the past. The relationship of the past to the present is further - and compellingly - clarified by Kaplan (1991) when he remarks that

Eliot appears to make the past be the present. The past can be the present because the memory of it presently exists. At the same time Eliot wants to use the past to explain the contemporaneousness of the present.

(Kaplan, 1991: 55).

Even though Kaplan (1991) does not mention either irony or innocence *per se* in his interpretations of Eliot’s matrix of poetic intentions, they do nevertheless resonate strongly (at least in this regard) with the ideas articulated by Eco (1985) and Jencks (1989). The expression of these ideas, it should be noted, assisted in engendering a greater sense of confidence in the artist’s own creative endeavours e.g., through invoking the presence of the past (both ancient and more recent) by means of allusion through “... invent[ed] mythology ...” and the deliberate fabrication of “... an eclectic [hybrid] approach...” (Searle, 1991: 58) to style.

Although *Four Quartets* (1944) marked the principal inspiration for the suite of four paintings constituting *The Mixing of Memory with Desire*, it was, in fact, reading *The Wasteland* (1922) for the first time that renewed the artist’s acquaintance with Eliot’s poetry. In particular the first four lines of *Burial of the Dead* (1922) (from which the

title was culled) prompted a childhood experience which not only evoked the felicitous memory of Eliot's poetry, Springtime (from the Sanskrit *sprhayati* – he desires), and a conscious desire for felinity, but also conspired to propel the memory of an experience from the artist's own past into the present. The words culled from the beginning of *The Wasteland*, 'The Burial of the Dead' (1922) (as previously mentioned) and constituting the title employed for the artist's suite of paintings have been underlined and are shown below in the context of the poem.

April is the cruelest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.

(Eliot, 1974:63).

In discussing the origin of the title given to the suite of paintings, it is felt that in the interests of clarity, an explanation should be provided for the exchange of the word *and* (in line three of the original poem) for the word *with* in the artist's revised appellation. The reason for making this exchange is that the word *and* gives the impression of temporal succession, of separation and of one thing being added to another, whereas the word *with* invokes a greater sense of the simultaneous blending of two entities, which are temporally interrelated. The “... mixing of Memory ... [with] desire ...” (Eliot, 1974: 63) may be understood (at least in terms of temporality) as a need to propagate things or situations in the future (*desire*) which

are prefigured by dreams, aspirations or demands located in the past (*memory*). The equation of *memory* and *desire* would appear to have no ultimate resolution but simply constitute an unfolding continuum of successive interactions (the *mixing* process) taking place in the present.

Although the subject of *Desire* forms an essential part of the work and thought of the French psychoanalyst and theorist Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), among others (e.g., Gilles Deleuze (1925-95) and Felix Guattari (1930-92) who proposed the concept of *délire*) and important though his work has been e.g., his "... concepts of need, demand and desire ..." (Sarup, 1988: 20), the artist's initial interest in this fragment of Eliot's poetry extended little beyond the idea of conditional states *vis-à-vis* temporal interaction. Indeed it is more closely associated with the ideas of Bergson (1910) which played "... an important part in Eliot's early conception of time; Bergson recognizing that scientific time does not endure ... but attempts to limit duration." (Kaplan, 1993: 50). The notion of time and duration or *durée*, it may be recalled, was central to Bergson's thought and has already been discussed in relation to the work of Henri Matisse (see 2.4). However, with regard to Eliot's attitude to time, Kaplan (1993) explains that

For Eliot the notion of mathematical time ... [was] an abstraction. Eliot ... [was] concerned with human time in which past and present coexist in a continuum of now.

(Kaplan, 1993: 50).

Nevertheless Northrup Frye (1963), a recognized authority on Eliot's work, has proposed a temporal model which identifies the manner in which Eliot treated different aspects of time, not only in words, but also in the overarching structural conception. However the significance of Frye's (1963) model and its perceived relationship to Indic notions of time will be treated in 3.5.

During the artist's introduction to Eliot's work (through the Cowie lectures 1993-1994), attention was drawn not only to his biographical profile but also to his profound knowledge and understanding of literature and poetry. It was established that, in addition to his being widely read in the literatures of the Classics, of English and the European languages (particularly French and Italian), his scholarship (as noted earlier), also extended to a study of the great Sanskrit and Pali classics of India. Indeed another aspect of his work, which the artist found compelling, was his breadth of knowledge and understanding of Indian poetic, literary and artistic traditions. To this list may be added his great interest and erudition in a number of other disciplines, which will be examined subsequently.

Figures 3.4.1 and 3.4.2, which follow, represent an ordering of the potentially confusing network of associations and interrelationships connecting a considerable amount of disparate material. The fundamental intention has been, particularly in Figure 3.4.2, to provide a blueprint, which will serve as a basis for enumerating and discussing the topics, which fuel the concept underpinning *The Mixing of Memory with Desire*. Figure 3.4.1 explores the interrelationship of form and structure in

Music and literature focusing on T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1943). As can be seen from Figure 3.4.1 the fundamental structure of *Four Quartets*, both in musical and literary form, is used as a basis for developing an initial structure for the visual form.

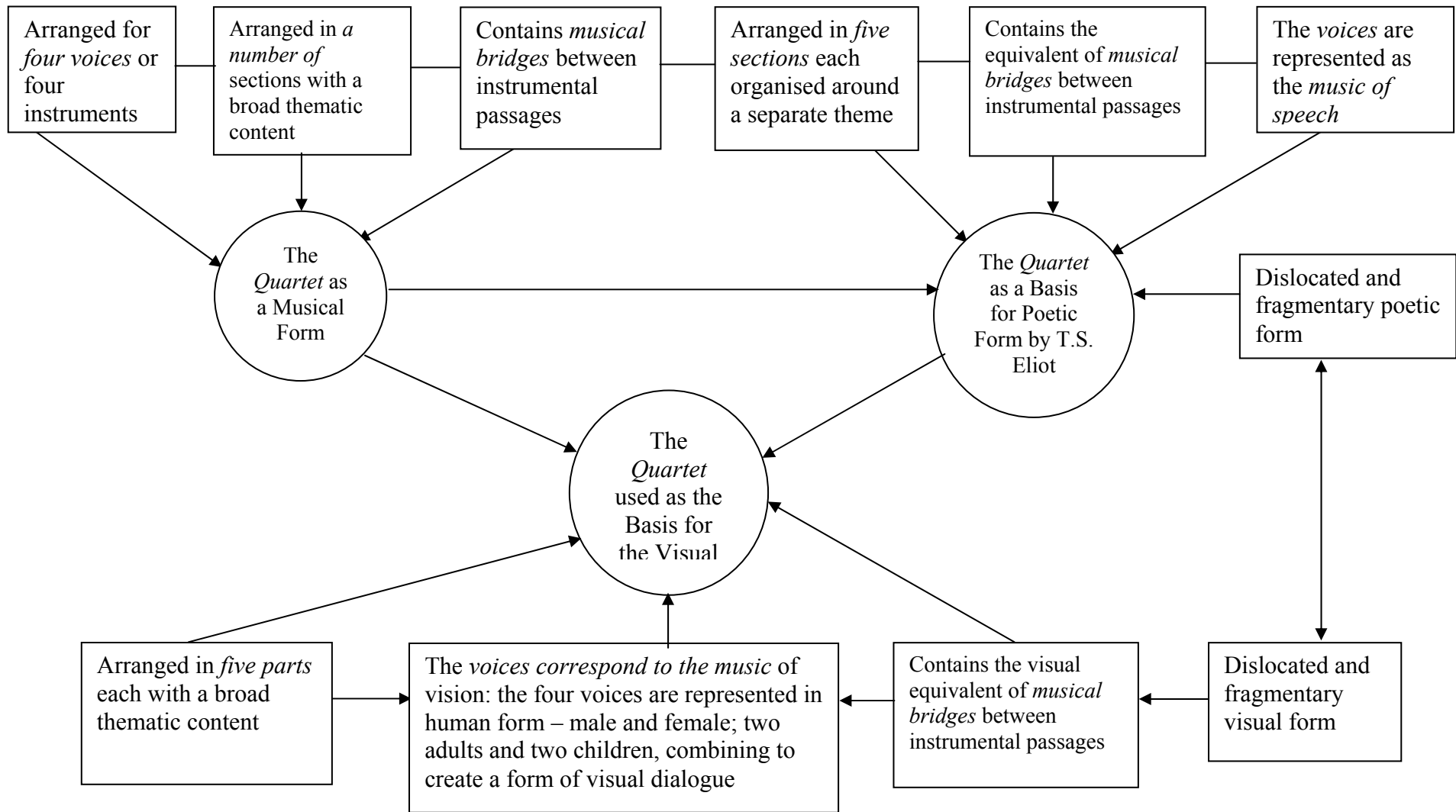


Figure 3.4.1
The Quartet as a Motif for the Study

Figure 3.4.2 however extends the process of formal development much further by counterpoising the tentacular roots of Eliot's poems and the planned suite of paintings – *The Mixing of Memory with Desire*. It is useful to demonstrate the flow from related sub-disciplines (mysticism being only one aspect of these). Relevant sub-disciplines fueling the crucible of ideas are discussed in terms of their impact on the work.

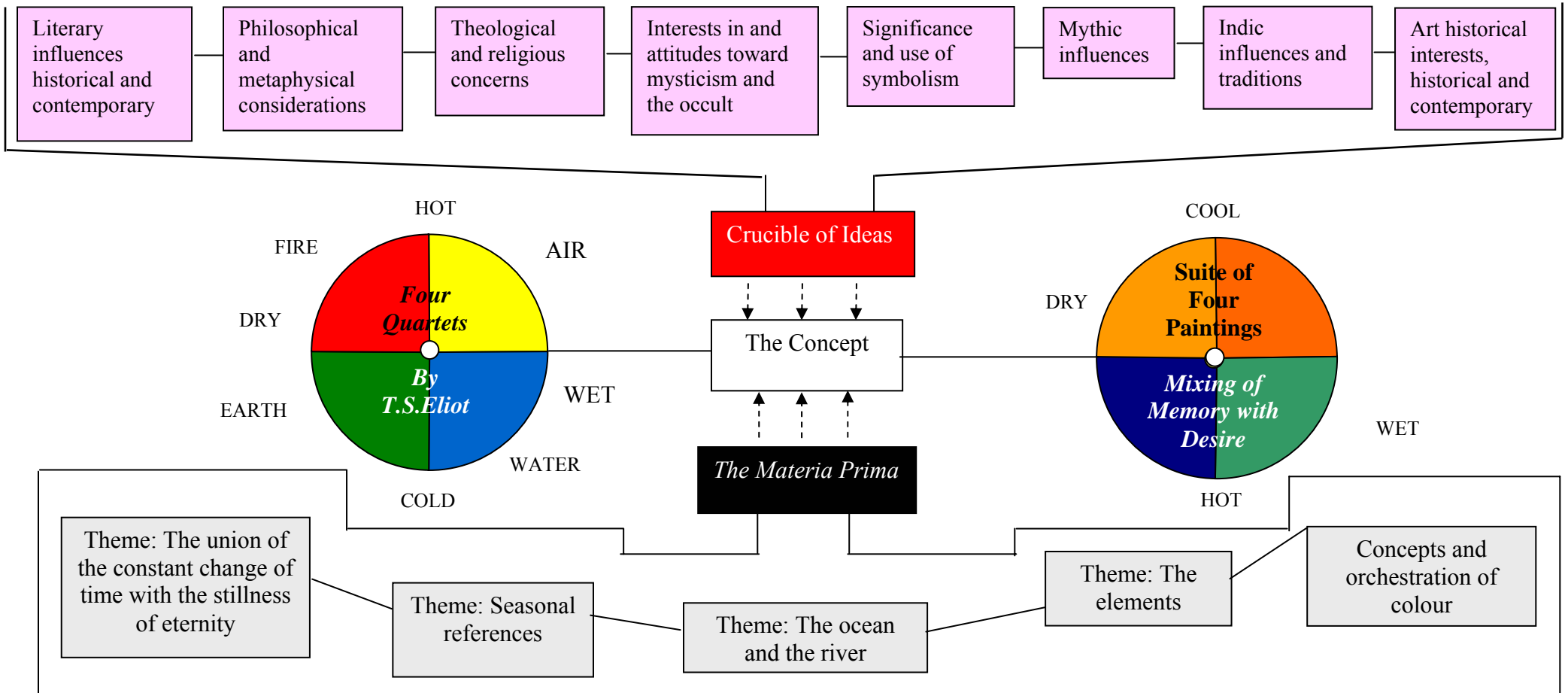


Figure 3.4.2
Conceptual antecedents of the study

Figure 3.4.2 contains three centrally placed boxes which are flanked by two discs, each of which have been ascribed a particular colour either singly or in combination. The colour designations for the three central boxes are based on a paradigm derived from the pseudo-science of alchemy. The principal reason for this is that, central to the practice of alchemy (as with the artist's practice) are the processes of the combination, synthesis and transmutation of disparate material substances 'First Matter' (*Materia Prima*) into an *alchahest*, or other variously distilled or fused forms. The second is due to the transformations which take place in the substances themselves during the alchemical process (or work), about which Ball (2001) remarks that, since

... these changes were often accompanied by an alteration in colour, it can come as no surprise that practical alchemy became the means by which artificial colours were provided to artists... it is no coincidence that artists and alchemists were using the same materials.

(Ball 2001 : 83).

In his exposition of alchemy, the Austrian author and ethnographer Hans Biedermann (1970) explains that the "... the stages of the...[alchemical] work are black, red and white." (Biedermann, 1970:56). The names by which this trinity of states is known are "...negredo...rubedo...[and] albedo..." (Biedermann, 1977:2178). To resume the description of the boxes in Figure 3.4.2, the uppermost of the rectangular boxes (in the centre) containing the *crucible of ideas* has been ascribed the colour red (*rubedo*) and represents the amalgam of disparate influences (contained in the uppermost horizontal line of boxes shaded

in pink) which inform *Four Quartets* (1943) and which are contained in the line of boxes immediately above it. Furthermore, red (*rubedo*) in the literature of alchemy represents the human spirit (*Spiritus*) and the material mercury (*Mercurius*) or quicksilver (*Argentum Vivum*).

The box at the lowest level, that of 'First Matter' (*Materia Prima*) (the primal ooze from which all nature (*Natura*) is formed, ingests, as it were, the panoply of themes derived from nature (*Natura*). Indeed they constitute the most significant themes (contained in the bottom line of horizontal boxes shaded in grey) underpinning both the *Four Quartets* (1943) and the artist's work. This rectangle has been coloured black (*negredo*) which represents the composition of the human body (*Corpus*) and the "... substance salt (*Sal*)" (Biedermann, 1977:1808). The contents of both the *crucible of ideas* and the *Materia Prima* descend and ascend providing, as it were, nutrients for the *concept*. The box labeled *concept* has been designated the colour white (*albedo*) which represents the soul (*Anima*) and the substance sulphur (*Sulfu*). The combination of these three substances, salt (*Sal*), mercury (*Mercurius*) or quicksilver (*Argentum Vivum*) and sulphur (*Sulfu*) were coalesced in the alchemical process through the operations of purgation, sublimation, calcination, exuberation, fixation, solution, putrefaction, separation and conjunction (Douglas, 1997), in an attempt to create alchemical gold (*Aurum*), (*Lapis Philosophorum*) "...the stone of the wise." (De Rola 1973 : 120) and the the Elixir of Life (*Elixir Vitae*).

Given the present context, it should perhaps be noted that alchemy in the Western world has its origins in far more ancient traditions inherited from the East; notably "... Egypt in the last centuries before Christ". (Biedermann, 1970: 55).

Indeed the word itself has one of its early etymological origins in the “... Arabic *al-kīmiyā*.” (*Collins English Dictionary*, 1984: 33). Of particular interest is the relationship of Egyptian alchemy to traditions from further to the East in India and China. The independent researcher and author Stanislas De Rola (1973) submits that, “ ... in spite of all the evidence, there are still those who deny that connections exist between alchemy and esoteric Eastern doctrines”. (De Rola, 1973: 19). Nevertheless, in India it is well established that “ ... alchemy (*Rasayana*) ... [though shrouded in secrecy] does exist ...” (De Rola, 1973: 19) and that it “ ... reached its zenith in the tantric renaissance period (AD 700-1300).” (Mookerjee and Khanna, 1989: 108).

In this regard and in terms of the central boxes in Figure 3.4.2, a remarkable parallel may be seen to exist between the *three principles* of Western alchemy and the “ ... three qualities (*gunas*) of material Nature....” (Khanna, 1979:65) from the Hindu (Tantric) tradition. Although there is, to the artist’s knowledge, little if any direct evidence documenting a direct connection between them, many authorities believe that “... the link between Western alchemy and Tantra is apparent.” (Douglas, 1997: 158). However, before proceeding further, it should be explained that the three *gunas* (*rajas*, *sattva* and *tamas*) also have the colour ascriptions of red, white and black (or dark grey-blue) respectively which, in turn, correspond to the *three principles* associated with Western alchemy. Furthermore the *gunas* are understood to denote the qualities of “ ... creation, preservation and dissolution.” (Khanna, 1979: 133). With regard to the relationship of Eastern (Tantric) traditions to those of the West, De Rola (1973) remarks that

There have ... been misuses of the word ‘Tantra’ in this connection; and it would be misleading to speak of alchemy simply as (Western Tantrism) ... [nevertheless] the open-minded will find profit in the study of the analogies between alchemy and the Tantras (both Hindu and Buddhist).

(De Rola, 1973: 19).

Returning to the Figure 3.4.2 itself, the quadripartite division of the two discs flanking the central boxes have been coloured in a manner which not only reflects Eliot’s *Four Quartets* (1943) and, following from it, the artist’s work *The Mixing of Memory with Desire*, but also the overall conceptual organization of Figure 3.4.2 based on the chromatic symbolism associated with alchemy.

The four-part structure carries through in a variety of ways, though primarily it represents the four poems constituting *Four Quartets* (1943), which are located in the left-hand disc and the suite of four paintings, *The Mixing of Memory with Desire*, in the right hand disc. The quadrants within the disc encompassing the *Four Quartets* (1943) also represent “... each of the sections ... [in the poem which] corresponded to a season of the year and to one of the ‘basic elements’, earth, water, air and fire.” (Kaplan, 1993: 59). The principal “... theme of the *Four Quartets* (1943) is time.” (Swarbrick, 1988: 61), or more precisely “... the timeless moment ...” (Gish, 1981: 96) and, as such, the seasons and the elements “... maintain the cycle of change in time against which Eliot places the idea of a stable, still eternity.” (Kaplan, 1993: 59).

This cyclical movement is represented by the circular frames (discs) at the centre of which a dot has been placed “... (*bindu*) point-limit ...” (Moorerjee, 1971: 16)

representing quintessence. *Bindu* also represents not only the notion of the potential of four to become five (see Plate 4.3.1) but the conditions of stability, stillness and eternity “... the still point of the turning world.” (Eliot: 1989: 17). The colours contained in the quadrants of the disc enclosing *Four Quartets* (1943) have been ascribed the colours of the four *basic elements*, (the fifth, quintessential element ether or space being represented as a central dot) according to the tenets of alchemy, i.e., yellow for air, blue for water, green for earth, red for fire and white for ether or space (Biedermann, 1970); though these designations are not necessarily universally accepted. These colour ascriptions are also at variance with the correspondences traditionally assigned to the four *material* or *great elements* (*Mahābhūtas*) of Indic tradition and the *basic elements* of the West, which are yellow representing earth, blue for air, red for fire and silver (or smoky-grey) for water; “...indigo being the colour of the quintessential element of ether or space.” (Crowley, 1984: 397).

Nevertheless, a parallel set of colours to those of alchemy may be found in the correspondences associated with the *Pañcatattwas*, “... the primary subtle elements used in Tantric rites.” (Van Lysebeth, 1995: 367) by some *Kula* (Tantric) cults of Indic origin. The author and scholar of Tantric traditions Nik Douglas (1997) in fact identifies five subtle “... elements which are connected to both forms and colours: the square, the crescent, the triangle, hexagon and the circle, to yellow, green, red, blue and white ...” (Douglas: 1997: 84). Indeed the Belgian authority on the theory and practice of Yoga and a Western Tantric adept André Van Lysebeth (1995) submits that “... An interesting fact ... [is that] the five Tantric and alchemist elements, i.e., Earth, Water, Air, Fire and Ether are identical and their aims are the same.” (Van Lysebeth, 1995: 288).

Colour references to the *basic elements* within the disc enclosing *The Mixing of Memory with Desire* have not been illustrated *per se* as, in the artist's work, it was anticipated that they would be designed as five independent *companion pieces* to accompany the main works. (see Figure 4.4.1) However the four quadrants of the disc do represent the background or *field* colours of the four (*principal*) painted works i.e., two with fields of blue and, above them, two with fields of brown. The colour bias of the blues and browns is intended to reflect the elemental arrangement in the disc containing the *Four Quartets* (1943).

A further aspect, which is common to both discs whilst at the same time differentiating one from the other, is the notion of seasonal differences. In *Four Quartets* (1943) they are reflected in the four variously coloured quadrants indicative of the four temperate northern hemisphere seasons which have been designated wet, dry, hot and cold in keeping with the original alchemical model (Biedermann, 1970). The same ascriptions have been applied to the disc enclosing *The Mixing of Memory with Desire*, but rather than four, it reflects only two major seasonal differences which are those of the tropics in the southern hemisphere, a subject which will be discussed further on.

However the quadrants in this disc indicate the bi-qualitative aspects of the wet season (the pre-wet and the wet) which is hot (and humid) and those of the dry season which is cool and dry. In his exposition of alchemical operations, De Rola (1973) submits that there "... are two major paths ... the first is the ... [moist] Humid way ... [the other] the Dry way ..." (De Rola, 1973: 123). These two climatic temperaments may be perceived to exist (by association) in both the

discs encompassing the *Four Quartets* (1943) and that containing *The Mixing of Memory with Desire*. Although not in accord in every respect, this synergy nevertheless facilitated the conceptual process in as much as it not only revealed a community of common interests (between Eliot's poetry and the artist's paintings), but also provided an enabling device by means of which the artist could devise an overarching plan for creating the work.

The artist's purpose in making these connections has not only been to establish an analogous association between the conceptual organization of Figure 3.4.2 and that of Western alchemy (as a model for the process of synthesis and transmutation), but also to generate a particular resonance through the identification of parallels in the traditions of both East (Indian Tantra) and West. Indeed the intention is to attempt to reflect in some way the integration of Eastern and Western traditions with which Eliot informed his poetry and which engaged the artist's interest to the extent that it served as a source for his own pictorial work.

3.5 - Eliot's *Four Quartets* as the Frame

In exploring areas which supply the Crucible of Ideas, Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1943) is of central significance. Yet, in the act of clarifying something by means of identifying its sources, there lies hidden the distinct possibility that *the process of identification* may in itself, pose severe limitations which, in the end, could prove to be subversive. Thus the intention here is to explore only the more overt

interrelationships and synergies between Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1943) as they influenced the suite of four paintings entitled *The Mixing of Memory with Desire*.

In order to imbue his work with greater spiritual meaning, Eliot did not confine his sources to the exposition of mystical and visionary experience. It becomes evident, even from a cursory reading of *Four Quartets* (1943) that he was drawing upon related patterns of thought and experience derived from an extensive knowledge of the fields of anthropology, mystical philosophy, theology, occult literature, poetry, literature, myth, art and music. Indeed in terms of the breadth of Eliot's intellectual and spiritual preoccupations "...a full history of [his] interests has still to be written" (Murray, 1991:2) although many of the principal influences, including his own fluctuating attitudes to mysticism, have been well documented. In defining terms, however, and in the interests of clarity, a mystic may be understood (in a religious sense at least) as

...one who seeks direct communication with the divine, whether by self-surrender or by means of contemplation. A person who achieves mystical experience or an apprehension of divine mysteries.

(*Collins English Dictionary*, 1983:974).

By his own admission Eliot did not, apparently, consider himself to be a mystic, though he did sustain a long and abiding interest not only in the *mystical impulse* but also in the literature of the mystical tradition and its interpretation. This interest included the compositions of mystical poets, about whose work he had a profound knowledge and from whom he quoted, in particular Dante Alighieri

(1265-1321) and William Shakespeare (1564-1616); the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century, e.g., John Donne (1573-1631), Henry Vaughan (1622-95), Andrew Marvell (1621-78), John Milton (1608-74), and George Chapman (1559-1634); in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-92), in the visionary writings and original linguistic style of the artist-poet William Blake (1752-1827) and Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) . Eliot himself however, voiced the opinion that a mystical experience does not necessarily make a mystic.

Nevertheless what cannot be denied is Eliot's standing as a contemplative (both as poet and man) which, among other things, is evidenced by his life-long study and practice of meditational techniques. Not only were these wide-ranging but they embraced both Eastern and Western traditions, from the Indic *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali (circa 150 CE), (which he preferred) to "... those of the Ignatian school... and John of the Cross." (Kearns 1987:59). Indeed, in her study of the influences of Indic philosophy on Eliot's poetic work, the distinguished author and academic C. M. Kearns (1987) confirms this perception when she states that

No human activity was as intimately linked to the writing of poetry for Eliot as was meditation, and none provided as great a fund of analogies and intersections with contemplation and creation.

(Kearns, 1987:59).

Further aspects of the title, which resonated with the artist's, own preoccupations are also noted by Kearns (1987) who, in her discussion of the subject of *Memory*

and *Desire* in both *The Waste Land* (1922) and *Four Quartets* (1943), submits that

The Indic dimension of *The Waste Land* is present not only via Jessie Weston, but in a number of allusions ... not all of which have clear points of reference. The opening lines with their famous evocation of April as “the cruellest month” because of its “mixing of memory and desire” are deeply informed not only by a long tradition of English poetry ... but by the conscious motivation in the *Yoga-sutras* and in many of the texts of the Pali canon.

(Kearns, 1987: 201).

Although the *Yoga-sutras* (aphorisms or threads) of Patanjali (c. 150 CE) are not the only source drawn on by Eliot, Kearns (1987) also demonstrates the significance of the relationship he constructs between the process of meditation or *concentration*. With regard to the influence of Patanjali on Eliot’s work, she explains that

... it is especially evident in his frequent treatment of the links between memory and desire ... Memory and desire are linked by Patanjali in his analysis of *samskaras*, those ‘subliminal impressions’ ... that act as scars left on the unconscious by strongly cathected past experiences. Memory in this instance, Patanjali argued can operate as a hindrance to ‘concentration’ or meditation because it can stir up those ‘subliminal impressions’ infected by desire and activate them into mind waves.

(Kearns, 1987: 63).

The influences of Indic in addition to Western philosophical and literary traditions may also be seen to apply throughout the four poems constituting *Four Quartets* (1943). Indeed, Kearns (1987) confirms again that

The conjunction of Indic influence and Western literary and philosophical tradition begins in “Burnt Norton” (1935) with the convergence of memory and desire onto the present.

(Kearns, 1978: 232).

The fact that meditation played a central role in the production of Eliot’s poetic work has also been commented upon by the author and scholar Alvarez (1958) who, in an analysis of Eliot’s *method*, maintained that he was “... a supreme interpreter of the meditated experience.” (Alvarez, 1958:10).

Murray (1991) has pointed out in his study, *T. S. Eliot and Mysticism* (1991) (one of the two authoritative studies² exclusively focusing on an examination of this particular aspect of his work), that Eliot was faced with a two pronged dilemma “...whether to write a poetry which is illuminating and informative but heavily weighed down by theology” (Murray, 1991:261) or to construct

... a poetry whose meaning is so private it is almost esoteric, but whose music holds us all the same because it sounds (like statements made in our dreams) - a poetry of pure sound and incantation.

(Murray, 1991:261).

² The other is F. M. Ishak’s (1973) text *The Mystical Philosophy of T. S. Eliot*.

Murray (1991) proposes that the inner life of *Four Quartets* (1943) is underpinned by "...the struggle between these two alternatives ...” (Murray, 1991:261) but that, in the end, neither extreme cancels out the other. Murray (1991) also implies that, in addition to these polarities, it would be a mistake to overlook Eliot’s use of what he himself called "...*The mythical method*..."³ (Murray, 1991:201) as, for example, his references in *The Waste Land* (1922) to Sir James Frazer’s, *Golden Bough* (1890) and Jessie Weston’s work *From Ritual to Romance* (1920) (which explored the Grail legend), both authors treating the study of myth as a subject worthy of serious consideration (Kaplan, 1993:25). Indeed Eliot himself commenting on *The Golden Bough* (1890) remarked that "... [it] can be read in two different ways: as a collection of entertaining myths, or as a revelation of vanished mind of which our mind is a continuation.” (Eliot, 1921: 202).

It has been further proposed that, in composing *Four Quartets* (1943), both the plan and some of the incidental symbolism was suggested as much by secular and pagan mythology as they were nourished by Christian dogma, albeit deeply embedded in the text. It is the artist’s belief that these two opposing tendencies in Eliot’s work (tendencies with which he is able to empathize) highlight the very different seed-beds of his interest - that is, of mysticism on the one hand and theological issues on the other, of the intuitive and visionary experience as opposed to its complementary - that of abstract theoretical interests and scholarly debate. An analogy which immediately suggests itself is that of music played

³ Eliot held the view that, poetic practice prior to and overlapping his own was dominated by what he called the "narrative method".

through two speakers, the voice of visionary experience being represented by the treble frequency and that of Christian dogma and theological debate by that of the bass. When played in unison, the two independent frequencies not only conjoin to create an apparently unified voice, (though their sources remain separated), but one which is both profoundly richer and more complex than either single frequency alone and is full of oscillating tensions. Moreover and largely due to the melding of these two disparately located frequencies

...a tension is created in Eliot's work particularly in *Four Quartets* which, although at times apparently uneasy, is kept for the most part, in remarkable and masterly balance.

(Cowie, 1993: unpublished lecture).

3.6 – From Concept to Thematic Sub Structure

The nexus between *The Waste Land* (1922), *Four Quartets* (1943) and *The Mixing of Memory with Desire* (see Figure 3.4.2) reflects the artist's attraction to the way in which the poems flicker with meaning and also a certain cerebral connectedness, rather than any direct textual parallels. What was of unequivocal importance however, was the underlying structure – four poems, each with its five sections, each section embodying its own theme. The most significant of these themes are treated below beginning with that which is contained in the grey shaded box at the bottom left of Figure 3.4.2 and progressing to the last box at the bottom right.

The first theme common to each poem constituting *Four Quartets* (1943) can be described as a union of the constant change of time with that of the stillness of eternity. It is generally acknowledged that the enigma of time, as previously mentioned (see 3.4 and 2.4), is a fundamental theme underpinning the entire *Four Quartets* (1943). Indeed this theme inheres in almost all his work from the earliest years as, for example, in *A Lyric* of 1905 which begins “If Time and Space, as Sages say ...” (Eliot, 1967: 17). Bergson’s (1910) philosophy, central to Eliot’s early work, has its starting point in time (see 2.4 and 3.4) and “... the idea that reality is ... [a process of] becoming...” (Gish, 1981: 121). It has already been noted (in 2.4 and 3.4) that, for Bergson (1910) “Reality ... is duration and the duration we know most fully is inner, the process of changing and developing psychic states.” (Gish, 1981: 121). As Bergson’s (1910) thought held a prominent position in Eliot’s work (despite his eventual distancing from it), it is of some relevance to discuss the notion of duration a little further.

Bergson’s (1910) definition of duration, (*durée*) as Gish (1981) informs us, is based upon his elucidation of the character of *psychic states*. She observes that, though they are often thought of as quantitative, they are in fact qualitative; further she explains that

Although we generally speak as if they ... [psychic states] were quantitative, as, for example, an increase from a feeble desire to a deep passion, this is a misconception. In fact what happens is that the initially isolated feeling gradually permeates more and more psychic elements; our desire, for example, comes to affect more and more of our perceptions and memories.

(Gish, 1981: 121).

On the other hand there are "... some sensations, in addition [which] undergo qualitative changes as from a feeling of weight to one of fatigue ..." (Gish, 1981: 122). In terms of external sensation and qualitative change, Gish (1981) further identifies "... representative states (sensations caused from without like colour, sound, etc.)..." (Gish, 1981: 122) and further submits that

What we interpret as increase or decrease in them is in fact an estimate of the magnitude of their cause, for external causes are subject to quantitative change. This description of psychic states is directly related to the nature of time.

(Gish, 1981: 122).

Bergson (1910), in fact, identifies two temporal states - the outer and inner - which he observes to display the impress of extreme difference e.g., the quantitative, *mutual externality* of objects in (external) space and the qualitative aspect of *conscious states* emanating from interior space. In terms of the qualitative nature of inherent conscious states, Bergson (1910) proposes that

... pure duration might well be nothing but a succession of changes, which melt into and permeate one another, without precise outlines, ... without any tendency to externalize themselves, in relation to one another, without any affiliation with number.

(Gish, 1981: 123).

This is of particular significance in relation to the perception of measurable time which, in spite of its apparent homogeneity,

... is only 'counting simultaneities' If for example we count the strokes of a clock, the sound seems to endure, but in fact only one stroke ever exists. It is the ego which does endure, that binds the strokes into a whole There cannot be succession except for a memory and sets of a series of events or their symbols side by side in an auxiliary space.

(Gish, 1981: 123).

The two most significant aspects of Bergson's thought which prevail in Eliot's poetry are, in the first instance, that of memory which binds the past to the present providing an elucidation of disparate experiences and, in the second, the notion of two selves (interior and exterior) presenting the prospect of inner duration complemented by "... discrete external moments." (Gish, 1981: 125).

In relation to the conceptual underpinnings of many of Eliot's poetic works and the artist's own interests, it is not without significance that the issues associated with aspects of time and the notion of *two selves* (the exterior self which perceives objects and events in external space and the interior self, occupying inner space) are also central to Indic spiritual thought. This is nowhere more evident than in the various branches of the pan-Indian tradition of Tantric teachings, which straddle both Hinduism and Buddhism, though there are many significant differences between them "... at the practical as well as the theoretical level." (Rawson, 1978: 25).

Both forms of Tantra, in theory and practice, are predicated upon the principles of polarity and the union of opposites. The objective of Tantra, as Omar Garrison (1964) explains, is "... the union of two polar streams of life force – a reintegration that produces spiritual illumination." (Garrison, 1964: 40). It is understood that a successful reintegration of the polar opposites through meditative and or other ritual practices and disciplines results in the realization of the nature of the *two selves*. Furthermore the Tāntrika (whose Tantric designation is *Sādhakā*, (masc.), or *Sādhikā* (fem.) – accomplisher), gains a profound awareness of the relationship between and the quantitative and qualitative nature of his or her exterior and interior space. The quest for this completeness through the reconciliation of opposites has, as its objective, self-knowledge and is founded "... in the idea of *Śakti* the feminine principle of cosmic existence." (Feuerstein, 1997: 304); a concept which will be discussed further on.

In spite of Eliot's use of Hindu and Buddhist sources and the translation of their "... [philosophies] and experience into his own original Christian vision." (Murray, 1991: 152), no suggestion is being made here that he ever espoused the doctrines of Tantra, even though they are cited by Patanjali in his *Yoga-Sutras* (circa, 150 CE) and parallel interests can readily be discerned. Indeed Eliot's own approach to the path of *self-transformation* could, in many ways, be perceived as profoundly complementary. Be that as it may, at this point attention needs to be drawn to the fact that this artist's work has, to some extent, been infused with ideas and artistic forms derived from Tantric praxis. This being the case, it would not seem overly digressive to provide a brief explanation of what Tantra is understood to be. Certainly it has been, and still is, widely

misunderstood in the West, where its practices have often been confused with eroticism and licentious morality. (Feuerstein, 1998).

Over time Tantric teachings and practices have infiltrated and subsequently profoundly influenced non-Tantric traditions as, for example, with *Vedānta* (the dominant philosophy of Hinduism). However the more extreme aspects of Tantric tradition, as the Indologist and historian of religion Georg Feuerstein (1998) points out with regard to Hinduism, brought it "... into disrepute because of the antinomian practices of some of its adherents." (Feuerstein, 1998: x). The distinguished scholar and authority of *Vedic* science David Frawley (1996) moreover, remarks that

While some Tantric teachings mention such practices they are not necessarily the main focus of Tantric Yoga which focuses on mantra and meditation. Many Tantric texts contain no references to sexual practices Though Tantra does contain sexual Yogas, it is wrong to think that ...[it] is characterized by them.... Tantra is not characterized by sexuality or its negation ...

(Frawley, 1996: 23-4).

Nevertheless it is understood in Indic spiritual traditions that sexual *dinergy* is "... the core energy of our existence." (Frawley, 1996: 24). The transmutation of this energy by the aspirant for utilization at other levels may be gained either through celibacy as a *renuciate* or fulfilled through the *householder* tradition in which ritual (as well as procreative) sexuality is practiced.

It is generally acknowledged that Tantra, though it is both complex and diverse, is nevertheless neither a philosophy nor a religion *per se*. If so, what then is it? Feuerstein (1998) explains in his acclaimed introductory study that

Historically, Tantra denotes a particular style or genre of spiritual teachings beginning to achieve prominence in India about fifteen hundred years ago – teachings that affirm the continuity between Spirit and matter. The word also signifies a scripture (*shāstra*) in which such teachings are revealed.

(Feuerstein, 1998: 2).

In passing it is perhaps worth reflecting upon the fact that the influence of Tantra, as Mookerjee and Khanna (1989) submit,

... is not limited to India alone, and there is evidence that the precepts of Tantrism travelled to various parts of the world, especially Nepal, Tibet, China, Japan and parts of South-East Asia; its influence has also been evident in Mediterranean cultures such as those of Egypt and Crete.

(Mookerjee and Khanna, 1989: 12).

The fact that Indic influence was so widespread is strongly supported by a number of other Indic scholars as, for example, Feuerstein, Kak and Frawley (1995). Indeed, in their pioneering work *In Search of the Cradle of Civilization: New Light on Ancient India* (1995), they maintain that

There was a colony of Indic people in Memphis as long ago as 500 BCE. But Egypt's connection with India may go back much further in time learned men and ascetics are known to have visited Greece, and some of the great Greek thinkers are said to have travelled in India. The impact of Indic traditions on the ... religions of Orphism and Manichaenism and also ... Neoplatonism has been acknowledged by many experts. Also, the Essenes of Palestine and the Therapeutae of Alexandria appear to have incorporated philosophical (Buddhist) and other elements from India's rich philosophical heritage.

(Freustein, Kak and Frawley, 1995: 23).

Further discussion regarding the Therapeutae and Essene connections and their origins will occur later (see 5.2.1).

It is acknowledged by Sanskrit scholars that the word Tantra is "... derived from the root *tan-*, to expand." (Mookerjee and Khanna, 1998: 9) or stretch, it may also be interpreted as a *loom* or at its most prosaic level "... denotes 'web' or 'woof' [and] also yields the word *tantu* (thread or cord)." (Feuerstein, 1998: 1). According to Feuerstein, Tantra "... is generally interpreted as 'that which extends understanding'..." (Feuerstein, 1989: 251). It is also agreed that, due to the fact that Tantra also refers to a text-book and may be employed as a suffix in the title of a work on any subject, the interchangeability of meanings has led over time to much confusion and "... a great deal of misinterpretation." (Mookerjee and Khanna, 1989: 9).

Tantra is founded upon the belief that "... the forces governing the cosmos at a macro-level also govern the individual at a micro-level." (Mookerjee and Khanna, 1989: 2). It may best be described perhaps as an empirical-experiential method or system of *yogic* discipline founded upon the belief that the universe is a creation of the spiritual and physical union of the male and female principles (Van Lysebeth, 1995). Regarding the aims of Tantric practice, Mookerjee and Khanna (1989) explain that it is intended to "... heal the dichotomy that exists between the physical world and inner reality ..." (Mookerjee and Khanna, 1989: 9). Tantrism, though at times apparently contradictory, represents an extraordinary synthesis of theory and practice, a system evolved to integrate "... bodily existence with the Spiritual Reality." (Feuerstein, 1989: 252).

The female (dynamic) principle in Tantric teachings is understood to be a symbolic expression of the great Creatrix (*Śakti*) by whose act of continuous creation (with her male partner *Śiva*), and wisdom "... all things in the Universe are manifested in time." (Rawson, 1973: 139). Within the present context it should be mentioned that the idea of this primal (creative) pair in a variety of physical guises, both active and passive, underlies the representations of male and female figures in all the artists's work. With regard to the concept of creation, Tantric tradition subscribes to the belief that prior to

...creation there was unity. Creation disrupted unity and gave rise to multiplicity. Only through a return to primal unity can one know the freedom of the Absolute.

(Mookerjee, 1971: 16).

In his discussion of the temporal aspects of creation and genesis Schwaller de Lubicz (1978) submits furthermore that “All creation is constant in the eternal Present.” (Schwaller de Lubicz, 1978: 75) and, although the process of creation (a continuum of cause and effect) is represented by a “... chain of activities which seem to be located in Time and Space, ...[nevertheless] *it is a gestation which is Time.*” (Schwaller de Lubicz, 1978: 76-7).

Tantra as a part of and in keeping with the traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism and to a lesser extent Jainism, also perceives the vast spectrum of natural phenomena (both visible and invisible) as being encapsulated and personified in the form of *divine figures*. As the Sanskrit word for Time – *Kāla*, not only constitutes part of the title of this thesis but also embodies the concepts of change (implying movement and duration) personified by a *divinity*, it might well be asked what that connection might be. Although the concept of polarity and its relationship to the physical exterior world and that of inner reality have been cited earlier in this section, there still remains the question of the nature of their interconnectedness and how they are related to time. In his exposition of the Tantric view of cosmogenesis and time, Rawson (1973) explains this interconnection in the following manner:

Tantra holds that our impression that things exist outside ourselves is really the result of an encounter between fields of energy. A rainbow only appears when sunrays, atmospheric processes and the optical activity of an observer come together in a certain relationship in space and time. In Tantra’s understanding all other objects no matter how dense they may seem, like rocks, planets ...[human beings], are so interwoven with our ideas of them as to be inseparable. They result in the same way from the

collision and collusion of forces [which] can only be defined in terms of time; they are sub-functions of time. Tantra ... calls its principal divine figures *Māhakāla*, the male Great Time, and *Kālī* the female personification of Time. These two together are the creative functions of the unimaginable ... *Parasamvit* the Supreme Truth, which encloses and projects all that can possibly exist throughout universes and star-systems ‘numberless as the sand grains of the Ganges.’

(Rawson, 1973: 15).

The divine figure of *Mahākāla* (an aspect of *Śiva*) personifies the *devouring power of time* and the great cosmic cycle or wheel of time (*Kāla-śakra*) wherein the *yugas* slowly revolve; in contradistinction *Kālī* (an aspect of *Śiva*'s partner, *Śakti*) represents the personification of the dynamic aspect of time in both its destructive and creative forms. Indeed Eliot makes a direct reference to this idea in *The Dry Salvages* (1941) (line 115) where he writes “Time the destroyer is time the preserver, like the river with its cargo... (Eliot, 1989: 34). In fact the Tantric view is that time itself may be perceived as bi-polar, both male and female, static and dynamic. In his description of *Kālī* (the feminine of *Kāla*) as the centre (*Adya-Śakti*) of the creative process and dynamic aspect of time, in the course of which all change takes place Mookerjee (1971) explains that

She is the Mother of Time for in Time (*Kāla*) everything exists, is sustained and dissolves. Hence time to Tāntrikas is not continuous, but is repeatedly coming to an end to begin its cycle once again. *Kālī* is dense darkness ... a background against which phenomenal light-forms become

visible. She is the ... principle, which governs the unfolding of the life process.

(Mookerjee, 1971: 17).

With regard to the subject of the *Four Quartets* (1943), it is noteworthy that they are also generally considered to be cyclical in nature and make direct reference to the yearly round (see 3.4), an impression maintained by many ancient and traditional peoples across the world concerning the passage and calculation of time. Indeed, in this regard and given Eliot's Indic influences, it is of related significance, as the author and metaphysician Murray Hope (1991) explains,

One of the main teachings of Vedism is that the course of the universe through time is cyclical. Every event has occurred before and will occur again. This theory not only applies to the life of the individual in the course of his or her rebirths but also to the history of society, the lives of the gods, and the evolution of the entire cosmos.

(Hope, 1991: 90).

It is well known that, according to Hindu mytho-chronology, the great cosmic cycle is divided into a sequence of aeonic periods (*Mahāyugas*), each of which is further divided into a series of world ages (*yugas*) of which there are four, each one shorter and more degraded and containing within it greater suffering than its predecessor. In the doctrine of *yugas* these ages (named after the type of throws made with a dice) are known as *Kritā* or *Satyā-yuga* the first or golden age, *Tretā-yuga* the second age, *Dvāpara-yuga* the third age and *Kali-yuga* the fourth or *dark age* and the age in which we are now thought to be living. Indeed it is

generally acknowledged that Tantra is a "... teaching tailored for the needs of *Kali-yuga*, the era of spiritual decline that is still in progress today." (Feuerstein, 1998: x). In his discussion of the *yugas* Feuerstein (1997) submits that

Present humanity is thought to live at the beginning of *Kali-yuga*, which is an age of darkness. With the collapse of the industrial myth of progress in the face of the far-flung ecological crisis precipitated by technology and consumerism, this traditional interpretation of contemporary history is believable enough.

(Feuerstein, 1997: 339).

The *yugas* correspond, except by name, to the four great ages designated in Western antiquity by the Latin poet Ovid (43 BCE – ?17CE) as the "... Golden, Silver, Bronze and Iron... [ages]". (Hall, 1984: 9) – the Iron Age being an age of darkness similar to that of *Kālī-yuga*. Indeed a corresponding sense of disaffection with the present as a dark age of chaos and of "... suffering at the hands of time." (Swarbrick, 1988: 37) may be discerned as a profound undercurrent in Eliot's poetry. However, in her exposition of the *yugas*, Khanna (1979) proposes that

Time flows through the ages like an endless river, never exhausting itself. Each age has its period of zenith and decline. The four ages are succeeded by a state of universal cataclysm ... then the universe will evolve again *ad infinitum*.

(Khanna, 1979: 65).

A cyclical view of the movement of time, referred to by the theological historian Brandon (1965) as “... the sorrowful weary wheel of time...” (Brandon, 1965: 65) and which, as West (1970) observes, appears to endlessly replicate “... the same pattern of events ... [as] an obvious deduction to make from observing natural phenomena.” (West, 1970: 2848). Indeed it is this cyclical movement which predicates the next theme which is that of seasonal references.

Within the immense cycles of time (*mahāyugas*) Tantric tradition also recognizes the phenomenal world of *samsāra* “... as opposed to the transcendental or noumenal ...” (Feuerstein, 1997: 257). *Samsāra* (to flow) communicates the state of continual flux and the impermanent nature of finite existence (Feuerstein, 1997) and may be used in compound forms as for example in “...*samsāra-śākhā* (wheel of cyclic existence), *samsāra-sāgara* (ocean of cyclic existence), or *samsāra-vriksha* (tree of cyclic existence)” (Feuerstein, 1998: 21). Nevertheless the author and lecturer in metaphysics Anodea Judith (1998) explains that “ ... the world of *samsāra* or birth and death ... is [also] ...the world that plunges us into the linear, unidirectional sense of time.” (Judith, 1998: 346).

Although the Indic belief in the repetition of an individual’s life through a continuum of successive incarnations is also seen as a cyclical sequence of events, the passage of unidirectional, linear time (derived from the experiences of *samsāra*) may be perceived as a horizontal line cutting across the vast background of cyclical time. In this regard it is worth recalling Frye’s (1963) model (mentioned in 3.4) in which he identifies this horizontal line as representing mundane, clock time, the *arrow of time* (or so called objective time). Frye (1963) also explains that the horizontal line of clock time is bisected by a

vertical line representing sacred time (or subjective time), both of which are enclosed within the immense revolving frame of the great wheel of cyclical time (*Kāla-ċakra*). Indeed one of the most compelling aspects of Tantric thought is that sacred time (not necessarily synonymous with religious temporality), as Van Lysebeth (1995) asserts,

... is alone 'real' and ... paradoxical though it may seem – it abolishes all other forms of time! The past precisely because it has passed no longer exists. The future, because it is still to *come*, does not yet exist! And is the present a year, a day, a second ...? Impossible to define in terms of ... [either] linear ... or cyclical time.

(Van Lyzebeth, 1995: 30).

Furthermore the point at which horizontal linear, time and vertical sacred time intersect also defines the timeless place at the "... centre of the wheel of time, where all rotations become stillness." (Judith, 1998: 346). Eliot himself writes again, in lines 200-203 of *The Dry Salvages* (1941), "But to apprehend the point of intersection of the timeless with time, is an occupation for the saint..." (Eliot, 1989: 37).

As stated in 3.5, in addition to his Indic (literary) interests, meditation in both theory and practice occupied a central position in the development of Eliot's poetic work. Although Eliot's preoccupations included both Eastern (Hindu and Buddhist) and Western (Christian) forms of meditation, it perhaps should be mentioned at this point that the artist's own *mantric* form of (*mantra* = a numinous syllabic sound empowered by a teacher) meditational practices have

been strictly Indic in origin. Moreover, it would certainly be true to say that they have, without doubt, made a significant impress on both the artist's thought and visual practice. It should also be reinforced that the principal aim of meditation is to attempt to transcend the experience of time, both mundane linear and cyclical. Indeed, in her discussion of the subject in relation to Indic *yoga* practice, Von Franz (1978) observes that

The greatest efforts to transcend time have been made by Eastern sages, for instance in the practice of Indian yoga When a yogi [or yogini] seeks to transcend time he [or she] does not do so with a jump. Through ... breathing exercises ... [they try] initially ... to overcome ordinary time and 'burn up' all... [their] personal karmic inheritances. Then ... [they] begin to breathe according to the rhythm of the great cosmic time. [Their] ... inspiration corresponds to the course of the sun ... [and] expiration to the course of the moon: 'The yogi [or yogini] lives a cosmic Time, ... but nevertheless continues to live in ordinary time. [They] ... attempt to unify even those two rhythms and thus abolish the cosmos and unite all opposites. [They]... break the shell of the microcosm and transcend the contingent world which exists in time. The ultimate foundation of reality, into which ... [they] break through, is both time and eternity; what we have to overcome is ... our wrong assumption that there is nothing outside ordinary time.

(Von Franz, 1978: 30).

As previously indicated, the movements of the heavens in terms of time can be understood as cyclical markings which, Judith (1998) maintains in relation to seasonal movements, represent

... the concurrence of events: it is summer when the Earth is in a particular relationship to the sun, night time when our physical presence is separated from the sun. It is not time measured but ...[an] *event connection*. When summertime is past, will it not occur again when the Earth and sun repeat that same relationship?

(Judith, 1998: 347).

The relationship of the wheel of the year may be perceived in fact as a rhythmic continuum of small cycles encompassed by the greater cycle of the wheel of time. The cycle of the year, as it is experienced in the temperate climes of the northern hemisphere, with its rhythmic pattern of quaternary divisions manifested by distinctive seasons *is*, of course, the year to which Eliot refers in *Four Quartets* (1943). However, the eminent scholar of comparative religion Eric Sharpe (1970) reminds us, in his discussion of seasonal rhythms, that

In ... [other] parts of the world where the seasons ...[are] less well defined, other patterns took their place – patterns dominated by the alternation of wet and dry periods.

(Sharpe, 1970: 937).

The identification of the wet and dry seasons in relation to the artist's work and Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1943) has been indicated in Figure 3.4.2. Furthermore the impression of movement through the notion of temporal change and a comparison highlighting the different characteristics of climatic temperament e.g., between the artist's geographical setting for *The Mixing of Memory with*

Desire and Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1943), has already been argued (see 3.4). The subject of the seasons will be discussed in greater depth in 4.3.1.1.

Also connected with the concepts and passage of time is the ocean and the river, both of which are referred to specifically in *Four Quartets* (1943). Indeed a marine theme is the subject of *The Dry Salvages* (1941), the third quartet in the sequence. Furthermore both the sea and river are mentioned together within one line (the beginning of the second verse in Part 1) i.e., "The river is within us, the sea is all about us;" (Eliot, 1989: 31). Eliot's experience of living close to a large river and spending much time by the sea at Cape Ann also resonated with the artist's own domestic location, albeit a dissimilar river and different ocean at another time. Nevertheless Eliot's poetic description of the sea in *The Dry Salvages* (1941) recalls both the immensity of evolutionary time and the fact that it was from the primordial ocean that all life originated:

... the beaches where it tosses Its hints of earlier and other creation: The starfish, the horseshoe crab, the whale's backbone; The pools where it offers to our curiosity The more delicate algae and the sea anemone.

(Eliot, 1989: 31).

We are also reminded of the sea's rhythmic swell, of its continual motion and relationship to time through its tides e.g., the *clanging* of a bell attached to a beacon buoy. Eliot (1941) also writes that "The sea has ... many gods and many voices." (Eliot, 1989: 31).

With regard to the theme of the river and time, Van Lysebeth (1995), in his interpretation of Tantric teachings, proposes that

Each person is a river, from conception to death and yet, we are just a ... drop, a fleeting instant in the immense human river of today, yesterday and tomorrow.

(Van Lysebeth, 1995: 66).

It may also be recalled that, in her discussion of the *yugas*, Khanna (1979) observed that “Time flows through the ages like an endless river, never exhausting itself.” (Khanna, 1979: 95). It is in this sense and the fact that rivers represent the arteries from which much of the earth derives its life and which, apart from a few exceptions e.g., the Ganges, Jumna (*Yumana*) and a few others, now go “Unhonoured,...[and] unpropitiated ...” (Eliot, 1989: 31). The physical life of a river is not only understood to be a great cyclical process in Indic tradition but also, as the author and lecturer on philosophy and comparative religion J.C.Cooper (1982) explains, it represents the

... flux of the world in manifestation; the passage of life. The River of Life is the realm of divinity, the macrocosm; the River of Death is manifest existence; the world of change, the microcosm.

(Cooper, 1982: 139).

Hindu tradition tells of four rivers which flow, from the Tree of Life (the world axis). These are the four rivers of Paradise which flow towards the four points of the compass and through their intersection, form “... the horizontal cross of the terrestrial world... [which is] related to the quaternary elements, the four phases of cyclic development... [and] the four *yugas* ...” (Cooper, 1982: 140). As the ocean and river represented elements of common experience, and were strongly

associated with the *Four Quartets* (1943), Indic notions of the passage of time and the process of creation, it was proposed therefore that they should form a basis for the pictorial underpinning of the artist's work. The subject of quaternary or four *basic elements*, their relationship to Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1943) and the artist's work were discussed in 3.4. In addition a schematization (see Figure 3.4.2) was also provided indicating how a fifth element could be generated at the point of intersection between the vertical and horizontal divisions demarcating the other four (see 3.4). Their relationship and application to the artist's work will be discussed further in 4.3.1.1.

The final theme cited in Figure 3.4.2 is concerned with the concepts and orchestration of colour. The utilization of fields of colour as seasonal indicators e.g., the wet and dry seasons, have been discussed in 3.4 and are schematized within the disc titled *The Mixing of Memory with Desire* (Figure 3.4.2). They will also be treated in relation to their application to the artist's work in 4.3.1.1. Also worthy of note is the fact that, in *The Dry Salvages* (1941), Eliot himself describes the colour of the river as "... a strong brown god ..." (Eliot, 1984: 31) which provided a direct point of chromatic reference. Furthermore in Tantric tradition the Sanskrit word for time, *Kāla* is also synonymous with the dark-blue colouring employed for images of *Mahākāla*, Great Time, a colour "... like that of storm clouds (*jīmūta*).” (Chakravarti, 1978: 105). This is the same colour that, in Tantric art, is utilized for the primordial or "... cosmic waters...[cosmic ocean] from which the universe emerged.” (Mookerjee, 1989: 58).

The divine being of *Krishna* whose name is invoked several times by Eliot in *The Dry Salvages* (1941) is also the name designated for a particular colour.

Although *Krishna* is generally translated to mean a dark colour or black (though other words with less precise meanings are also used e.g., *syāma* and *masīvarna*) it is also used for a dark blue hue which, indeed, is the colour in which he is most often portrayed; a combination of both blue (*nīla*) and black (*nīlāñjana*) and “...the bluish black appearance of the water of the deep seas... *Nīla-sindhujala*.” (Chakravarti, (1978: 438).

The essential universal qualities characterised by the three *gunas* cited in 3.5 are also applied to the qualities associated with colour generally. It may be recalled that they were also possessed of their own specific hues e.g., *Rajas*, which is a reddish hue, *Sattva* which is white or bright yellow and *Tamas* which has a dark hue inclined towards dark blue or black (Chakravarti, 1978). It was suggested earlier (see 3.4) that the background colours (or the chromatic fields) which the artist proposed to use for the paintings constituting *The Mixing of Memory with Desire* would, among other things, reflect the two extremes of the *gunas*, *rajoguna* which is dark red (and also associated with a variety of shades of red-brown) representing dryness and heat and *tamoguna* which is dark blue representing wetness, dampness, and humidity or coolness. In his disquisition of ancient Hindu perspectives and applications of colour, Chakravarti (1978) explains that

Mahākāla has Kālī or the ... blue-black destructive female energy as his consort. The goddess Kālī... [also] combines in Her person however the white and red colours... *sattvaguna* and *rajoguna* along with Her outwardly prominent *tamoguna* or blue-black appearance.

(Chakravarti, 1978: 121).

However aspects of *Mahākālī* in other of her *Śakti* - transformations may also be perceived as *tawny* or red-brown as in depictions of her “... resembling the *Chandika-śaktī*, ...[or] *Chamunda*...” (Mookerjee, 1971: 127).

Apart from those indications provided by Eliot himself (1943) in his poetry, the underlying concepts of colour associated with...

- the three *gunas* or qualitative states;
- the great cycles of time as they are perceived (in Tantric tradition) in relation to the phenomena of creation, preservation and dissolution and personified by *Mahākāla* and *Mahākālī*;
- the hues associated with the great cosmic ocean and the river of time (and life);
- the qualities associated with the smaller yearly cycles of the wet and dry seasons and their relationship to humidity and desiccation, heat and cold;
- the complexion of the artist’s own local environment i.e., the landscape, river and the sea, in and by which the artist lives, all contributed significantly to the formulation of ideas concerning the relationship between colour and time and their application to the work constituting *The Mixing of Memory with Desire*.

The chapter which follows charts the course of the production of the artist’s work and related supplementary pieces (constituting *The Mixing of Memory with Desire*), together with the evolution of Public Works, which developed from them.