T. S. ELIOT'S ROSE SYMBOL: ITS SIGNIFICATIONS IN MYTHOLOGY, FOLK-LORE, HISTORIC INCIDENT, AND RELIGION

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INTRODUCTION

In studying T. S. Eliot's poems and plays, the reader notices the recurrent appearance of certain images. Outstanding among these are flowers, wheels, sea plants and animals, gates and gardens, and deserts. Their frequent appearance suggests that the poet used them as symbols which could convey to the reader, in one or a few words, a story, a history, or a whole body of incidents in which these images have figured in the past. Their frequent use suggests that the poet chose them deliberately for their connotative and evocative power. One of these images is the rose.

It is the purpose of this paper to examine the use and meaning of the rose in mythology, folk-lore, historic incident, and religion, in order to demonstrate that Eliot's use of it, in preference to other symbols, is deliberate and apt.

Although various studies of Eliot's works cite the rose as an important and significant symbol, and offer suggestions as to its textual interpretation, none, to my knowledge, offers a suggestion as to the ultimate "why" of the rose--why it means what it does; why it, in preference to other flowers, should stand in particular passages; or, why Eliot should choose it over possible hundreds of other flowers. For example, F. O. Matthiessen, in The Achievement of T. S. Eliot, suggests that Eliot's flowers follow a certain

definite pattern in their appearance in 'desire' passages.[1] Leonard Unger, in The Man in the Name, asserts that the theme of the 'rose-garden experience' is of 'central significance' in that it forms an 'intricate and intelligible pattern;'[2] but he does not investigate the origins of its significance. Louis L. Martz,[3] C. L. Barber,[4] and Elizabeth Drew[5] suggest an interpretation of 'rose-garden' but do not show "why," other than that Eliot uses it in juxtaposition with other images. Helen Gardner, in The Art of T. S. Eliot, makes frequent reference to mythology in Eliot, but only in a general sense. George Williamson, in A Reader's Guide to T. S. Eliot, A Poem-By-Poem Analysis, analyzes passages containing the rose, but does not investigate its history. In these studies, the rose is recognized as a symbol and is given various interpretations, but the initial investigation as to why the rose is a symbol is missing.

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1 The Achievement of T. S. Eliot, An Essay on the Nature of Poetry, p. 135-136.

2 The Man in the Name, Essays on the Experience of Poetry, p. 189.

3 "The Wheel and the Point: Aspects of Imagery and Theme in Eliot's Later Poetry," from The Sewanee Review, Winter, 1947, in Leonard Unger, T. S. Eliot: A Selected Critique, p. 447-455.

4 "Strange Gods at T. S. Eliot's 'The Family Reunion,'" from The Southern Review, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1940, in Leonard Unger, T. S. Eliot: A Selected Critique, p. 439.

5 T. S. Eliot, The Design of His Poetry, p. 156; 161-162.

This study is an attempt to supply a portion of that missing information.

That there is some foundation for this approach to Eliot's rose symbolism lies in the fact that for a "good deal of the incidental symbolism" of The Waste Land, as well as for the general background, Eliot admittedly[6] went to folk-tradition and mythology by way of Sir James George Frazer's The Golden Bough and Miss Jessie L. Weston's From Ritual to Romance. Since he was indebted to these sources for the material in one of his works, it is logical to assume that he might also have found the basis for his rose image there. Further, in "The Metaphysical Poets," he implies that he expects his reader to bring a great deal of knowledge with him if the latter is to understand the poet. He says, "The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning.[7] In The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, he shows the importance of the past when he says in reference to the 'auditory imagination' that it "is the feeling for syllable and rhythm... sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning

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6 Eliot's "Notes" on The Waste Land.

7 Selected Prose, edited by John Hayward, p. 118-119.

and the end. It works through meanings...and fuses the old and obliterated and the trite, the current, and the new and surprising, the most ancient and the most civilized mentality."[8] If the poet 'sinks to origins,' so must the reader if he is to try to understand the poet.

The 'origins' under consideration comprise the stories, practices, or beliefs found in mythology, folk-lore, historic incidents, and religious traditions common to the Indo-European peoples. The term "mythology" is used in a restricted sense, referring to the traditions or stories, unfounded in fact, which center about deities or demi-gods and which attempt to explain an otherwise unexplainable belief or phenomenon. The term "legend" is used, in distinction to "mythology," to include tales which have some basis in fact or history, however distorted they might be; the term "folk-lore" includes beliefs, superstitions, legends, and customs found among the common people of Europe and India. "Religion" is used in the broad sense to indicate a system of belief which leads man or men to their ideal end. In this sense, it is distinct from mythology, even though some may argue that a myth is the basis for a certain religion. No attempt is made to comment on this or on the value or truth of any of the material presented. The object is to report instances in which the rose has appeared, and

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8 Ibid., p. 94.

then, to demonstrate their possible application to Eliot's passages. Nor is it intended that this be an exhaustive study of all mythologies, folk-lore, history, or religions of the Indo-Europeans. It is intended to present a general view of the past and to cite what are considered to be significant and representative instances in which the rose figures. The application to Eliot's poems and plays is intended as a suggested approach to the understanding and deeper appreciation of his rose-passages, not as the final word on this symbol.

Chapter One will treat mythology; Chapter Two, folk-lore and historic incident; Chapter Three, religion; and Chapter Four will present the application to Eliot's rose-passages of the material studied in the first three chapters.

CHAPTER ONE

MYTHOLOGY

The recurrence of the rose in the mythologies of various peoples is striking. It appears and reappears in the stories of various gods and goddesses, not merely as a decorative property or an arbitrary flower which could be replaced by any other plant, but rather, as a necessary addition to the deity in question. In some myths, the rose is a god transformed; in others, it is a favorite flower of a god, but still a flower; in other myths, it is the commemorative symbol of a specific deity. Were the rose the only flower mentioned in mythology, it might be concluded that no other flowers grew in a particular land or area, and therefore, that the rose alone was available as a symbol. However, this is not true. Various other flowers do occur. They too, as well as the rose, appear as the hallmark of a particular god or as an explanation of the mysteries associated with the life of that god.

It is the general purpose of this chapter to show the significance of the rose in various Indo-European mythologies by indicating its association with various mythological deities. The method of procedure will be to investigate some of the mythological origins of the rose; to note its dedication to and its preference by specific

deities; and to cite several myths which suggest that the rose is a symbol of various traits or qualities.

According to many myths, the origin of the rose is divine, Cupid, Apollo, Bacchus, and Venus sharing honors for its appearance. Cupid, bearing a vase of nectar to the gods on Olympus, fell and spilled the heavenly drink. Wherever it seeped into the earth, roses appeared.[1] At another time, Bacchus ran into a patch of thorns while pursuing nymphs. Disliking the barbs, he converted them to roses, with the help of the blushes of the maidens, only to discover that the delay enabled the nymphs to escape. Displeased, he ordered the thorns to reappear, but since they took their color from the nymphs, only a part of them could be returned to thorns.[2] Both Apollo and Venus play tragic roles. The former, furious because Rhodanthe, Queen of Corinth, usurped the place of his sister Diana in the temple, changed her into a rose tree.[3] Just as Apollo punished a mortal, Zeus punished the sun-god for forgetting his place. According to a Roumanian myth, the rose was originally a young and beautiful princess who, one day while bathing, was looked upon

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1 Charles E. Brown, Flower Lore, Lore and Legends of Garden Flowers, p. 8.

2 Vernon Quinn, Stories and Legends of Garden Flowers, p. 180.

3 William Paul, The Rose Garden, Division 1, p. 12.

and loved by the sun. So enamored was he that for three days he forgot his duty to encircle the heavens, thus impeding the progress of night. Zeus changed the princess into a rose, but could not change her love for the sun--nor her shame for being discovered in her love. That is why she hangs her head and blushes whenever the sun appears.[4] The myth most strongly linked with the forces of nature is that of Venus, who, in running to help her dying lover Adonis, pricked herself on some white roses. Her blood fell on the petals, dyeing them red.[5] According to one tradition, it was not Venus who created the red rose, but rather, Adonis himself who became a rose after being mortally wounded by a boar.[6] According to Eastern mythology, the proud nightingale, rather than the gods, was responsible for the creation of the rose. Although he was beloved by the flowers, he said that only a bloom sharing his own blood could be worthy of his song. He therefore pricked his chest and the blood became a rose bush.[7]

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4 Richard Folkard, Plant Lore, Legends, and Lyrics Embracing the Myths, Traditions, Superstitions, and Folk-Lore of the Plant Kingdom, p. 516.

5 Sir James George Frazer, Adonis Attis Osiris, Studies in the History of Oriental Religion, Vol. 1, Part 4, The Golden Bough, A Study in Magic and Religion, 3rd Ed., p. 226.

6 Charles Joret, La Rose dans l'antiquité et au Moyen Age, Histoire, Légendes et Symbolisme, p. 46.

7 Quinn, op. cit., p. 189.

The rose is alluded to as the favorite of the gods--its perfume was exhaled whenever they smiled or spoke; it sprang up at their every step; it dropped from their hair as they moved. On the feasts of Hera (protectress of marriage), Cybele (fecundity of nature), Ceres (corn crops), and Flora (spring), roses were among the principal floral offerings.[8] The red rose was dedicated to Jupiter (power and love); the damask to Venus (love); and the white to Diana (chastity).[9] This flower was particularly commemorated to Venus who, on the Feast of Vinalia, received the first roses of spring, as well as garlands interlaced with this flower. Hymen (marriage) and Comus (gaiety) wore crowns of roses. The Graces and Muses carried one or several of them or wore them in wreaths.[10]

The foregoing summaries indicate the frequent recurrence of the rose in mythology, as well as its association with the gods of love, fertility, chastity, marriage, and festivity. This association suggests a deeper complicity of this flower in the lives of the gods--in their diversions, their loves, their deaths--so that "rose" becomes a symbol of love, happy or tragic; merry-making and its

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8 Joret, op. cit., p. 73; 93-94.

9 Esther Singleton, The Shakespeare Garden, p. 160.

10 Joret, op. cit., p. 51-54; 64-66; 92.

abuse, debauchery; fertility or sterility; death and resurrection.

Venus, goddess of love, who in Roman mythology bore the name "Aphrodite," chose the rose as her emblem and favorite flower when Paris, Minerva, and Juno admitted that she beautified it as much as it beautified her. The other goddesses had been discontent with Paris' judgment that Aphrodite was the most lovely, and contended that it was her magic cincture which had assured the victory. Aphrodite agreed to relinquish the belt if she would be permitted to find another ornament. While bathing, she was attracted to the perfume of the rose, wove several blossoms into a crown, and returned to Mount Ida, where she was again proclaimed the most lovely goddess.[11] From her garden, Cupid gathered roses whose nectar was used to perfume her gown. To commemorate the wedding of Orpheus and Eurydice she sent doves with garlands of this flower.[12] Since it was Venus' favorite, it blushed for shame if abused by her or, if, on the other hand, it abused her. On one occasion, Venus used it to chastise Cupid who was tormenting a group of maidens with thoughts of their lost loves. Vexed at his irreverence, Venus began beating him with a white rose, which turned dark

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11 Ibid., p. 50-51

12 Ibid., p. 51-52; 64-65.

red with anger.[13] According to another myth, the white rose blushed a permanent red when it wounded Venus who was running to help Adonis.[14] A less direct association between the rose and love--seductive love--appears in the myth of Zeus and Europa. The latter and her noble companions were gathering flowers, of which the loveliest and most preferred was the rose. Zeus, in the form of a handsome and gentle bull, lured Europa onto his back, and carried her off to Crete.[15]

The association of the rose with Bacchus, god of wine, has made of it a symbol of merrymaking, festivity, debauchery and license. The rose became his emblem when, in his role as war-god, he led with reins of roses all the nations he had conquered.[16] But it was first associated with him when he created the rose from a patch of thorns which impeded his pursuit of the nymphs.[17] It is also because of its dedication to Flora, floral goddess of the Romans, that the rose takes on the meaning of license. In remembrance of the wealth, acquired by profligacy, which she was supposed

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13 Ibid., p. 48-49.

14 Frances E. Sabin, Classical Myths that Live Today, p. 187.

15 Edith Hamilton, Mythology, p. 100-105.

16 Joret, op. cit., p. 76.

17 Refer to p. 2 above.

to have bequeathed to Rome, her feast was celebrated by 'gross and unbridled licentiousness.'[18]

The rose's most important and recurrent connection in classical mythology is with death and resurrection, sterility and fertility. The Greeks dedicated this flower to Aurora[19] as well as to Venus and Bacchus; the Romans dedicated it to Flora.[20] Aurora, goddess of dawn and distributor of the dew which encourages flowers to grow, was represented as a garland of roses (the roseate dawn) loved by the sun. In her honor, spring ceremonies were celebrated in Greece in conjunction with solar rituals. In addition, fertility festivals, named after the rose, rusalija, coincided with the aurore and solar myths.[21] Hence, Aurora's relationship to life-rituals is established. Flora, too, goddess of springtime and flowers, was closely linked with fertility rites. It was during the celebration of her feast, which extended from April 28 to May 2, that animals associated with more serious fertility rituals, were pursued.[22]

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18 William S. Walsh, Curiosities of Popular Customs and of Rites, Ceremonies, Observances, and Miscellaneous Antiquities, p. 435.

19 Hilderic Friend, Flowers and Flower Lore, p. 213; and Angelo de Gubernatis, La Mythologie des Plantes ou Les Légendes de Règne Végétal, Vol. 2, p. 322.

20 Joret, op. cit., p. 54-55.

21 Gubernatis, op. cit., p. 320-322.

22 William Sherwood Fox, Greek and Roman, Vol. 1 of Louis Herbert Gray, Ed., The Mythology of All Races, p. 294.

The Roman Rosalia, a flower or 'Flora' festival, was dedicated to the memory of the dead. Flowers were heaped upon tombs, evidently as a promise of everlasting life or of everlasting remembrance.[23] Flora is further associated with life and death rituals by her relationship to the ancient Athenians. Although the latter had no goddess Flora, they had a spring flower festival during which the dead were believed to rise from flowers in bloom at the time.[24] This tradition would seem to be the basis for the Romans' concern for the dead on their feast of the Rosalia, and thus related Flora more closely with spring rites.

The rose does not figure strongly in the major fertility myth, Adonis; but its small role is significant. Whether it was the blood of the god or Adonis himself who was changed into a rose [25] is immaterial. Tradition, crystallized in the Roman poet Bion's "Lament for Adonis," says that his 'tears and blood on the earth turned to flowers. The blood brought forth the rose; the tears, the wind-flower.'[26] The origin is not as important as the association

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23 Joret, op. cit., p. 108-112.

24 Sir James George Frazer, The Golden Bough, A Study in Magic and Religion, Abridged Edition, p. 395-396.

25 Refer to p. 3 above.

26 Translated by Andrew Lang in Charles Mills Gayley, The Classic Myths in English Literature and in Art, p. 126-128.

with the role that this vegetation god played in Greek mythology. Adonis had died, mortally wounded by a boar. Lamented by Venus, he was permitted to return to her for six or nine months of the year; the rest he had to spend in the lower world with Proserpine, the complete cycle representing the fertility of summer and the sterility of winter. The Greeks reenacted this tragedy annually by casting effigies of the god into a river or the sea, mourning his death, and singing for his return. It is significant that before the god 'died,' his effigy and that of Venus were displayed on couches, a symbol of fertility or productivity.[27] Another spring-winter ritual was the growing of Adonis gardens, a rite still carried out by primitives and European peasants at planting time.[28] Vegetables were forced into rapid flower and then cast into water, broken, or otherwise destroyed. Couples then took part in rites and ceremonies intended to produce fertility in crops and man. It was believed that, by this imitative magic, children and crops would be as abundant as the Adonis gardens.

A Roumanian myth which bears a close resemblance to Adonis mythology links the three images associated with the god--youth, the rose, and the nightingale. The loveliness of the rose reaches its culmination when it gives birth to

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27 Frazer, The Golden Bough, Abr. Ed., p. 389-392.

28 Ibid., p. 396-403.

a god-like Prince Trandafir, who takes his place among men. Eventually wearied by wars and strife, he longs to return to the tranquillity of his infancy spent near the rose. Asking trees and plants about the rose bush, he learns it has died. A nightingale appears at that moment and tells the prince that he has come to sing a dirge for the bush. More than that, he offers to sing until the prince's soul is sung back into the rose.[29] The rose and the god are identified; the rose is dead until the god dies and revivifies it; the nightingale, symbol of love, is the instrument which accomplishes the revival.

The rose also figures in the fertility rites of the Phrygian vegetation god Attis. Cybele, the mother of the Phrygian gods, fell in love with the beautiful youth Attis. Jealous because he loved another, Cybele drove him mad so that he mutilated himself; he was changed into the pine tree under which he died. Offerings to the mother goddess returned him to life. The celebration of this spring festival, evident in Rome at the time of the Republic, was observed by swathing a pine tree as a corpse, decking it with flowers and offering blood from self-inflicted wounds in order to effect the resurrection of Attis. Frequently, these rituals reached such a pitch of frenzy that men would

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29 Charles M. Skinner, Myths and Legends of Flowers, Trees, Fruits and Plants, In All Ages and In All Climes, p. 234-235.

castrate themselves as a sacrifice to the god of fertility. As the emasculated Galli priests carried an image of the placated Cybele through the streets, the Romans pelted them with showers of roses and alms.[30]

Although the rose does not have any place in the fertility rites of other ancient civilizations, its association with Adonis and Attis automatically suggests the death and rebirth of Osiris, Tammuz,[31] Persephone,[32] Indra,[33] Frey,[34] and Balder,[35] vegetation gods of Egypt, Chaldea (Babylonia), India, and Scandinavia.

In Hindu mythology, the rose becomes a fertility symbol through its association with Lakshmī, or Lotus, whose first appearance on earth was in the center of a mystical rose.[36] Lakshmī has various titles--world mother, maternal goddess of earthly goods and happiness, procreative energy, "wife-consort and embodied energy of the cosmic sleeper--

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30 Frazer, The Golden Bough, Abr. Ed., p. 403-407.

31 Frazer, Adonis Attis Osiris, Vol. 1, p. 6-12; Vol. 2, p. 1-23.

32 Sir George W. Cox, The Mythology of the Aryan Nations, Revised Edition, p. 513-518.

33 V. Fausboll, Indian Mythology According to the Mahābhārata, in Outline, p. 90-92.

34 [Richard P. Knight], Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology, p. 85.

35 Frazer, The Golden Bough, Abr. Ed., p. 770.

36 Quinn, op. cit., p. 191-192.

Vishnu."[37] These titles are all representative of the goddess in her ancient role as provider of physical goods, but most important, as the creative principle.

> ...the cosmic waters grow a thousand-petaled lotus of pure gold, radiant as the sun. This is the door or gate, the opening or mouth, of the womb of the universe. It is the first product of the creative principle.[38]

As Buddhism developed, Lakshmī rose from the physical to the spiritual plane. From the principle which gave birth to "beings and existences in unending succession," she eventually became the highest feminine personification of Wisdom and virtue in Mahāyāna Buddhism, which is the wisdom of nirvāna.[39]

It is interesting to note here that, in addition to being the symbol of Lakshmī, the lotos is also the flower of the Egyptian sun-god, Osiris.[40] Since the lotos is the Indian rose, associated with fertility, and since Osiris is a vegetation god, the lotos-rose symbol places him one step closer to the rose-rites of the fertility gods, Adonis and Attis.

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37 Heinrich Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, edited by Joseph Campbell, p. 98-99.

38 Ibid., p. 90.

39 Ibid., p. 97-98; 100.

40 Skinner, op. cit., p. 160.

Mythology, in addition to linking the rose with love, merrymaking, and fertility rites, makes of it a symbol of beauty, chastity, pride, secrecy, and prosperity. Rhodanthe, Queen of Corinth, was constantly besieged by suitors. One day, harassed more than usual, she fled to the temple of Diana and begged the protection of the chaste goddess. When the suitors and people of Corinth saw how far superior Rhodanthe was to the cold statue of Diana, they insisted that she replace the latter. Apollo immediately changed her to a rose tree and her subjects to thorns.[41] Another version of this same myth relates that Rhodanthe was punished for her pride rather than her beauty--thus, the rose represents her beauty and the thorns, her pride.[42] A myth which has become a common symbol of secrecy or discretion is that of Cupid bribing Harpocrates (silence) with a rose so that the latter would not reveal Venus' ventures in love.[43] In Hindu mythology, the rose shares the beauty title with the lotus. Because of its direct association with Vishnu's wife, the goddess Lakshmī, it connotes prosperity, fertility, health, fame, and long life.[44] Vishnu, bathing in a lotus pool, saw Brahmā rise from one of the blossoms and heard him praise

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41 Paul, op. cit., p. 12.

42 Skinner, op. cit., p. 245.

43 Buckner Hollingsworth, Flower Chronicles, p. 30.

44 Zimmer, op. cit., p. 91-92.

the flower's superb beauty. Vishnu claimed that the most beautiful flower grew in his paradise. To prove his claim, he took Brahmā to see the rose. As a reward for his loyalty, Lakshmī appeared in its petals and later became Vishnu's wife.[45]

In a Hindustani solar myth of Rose (Gul) and Cypress, the rose signifies infidelity. Each evening, at dusk, Gul leaves her husband to spend the night with Negro friends. In their company she performs nefarious deeds, then returns at dawn just as her husband is rising.[46]

Mythology reveals various interpretations for the rose symbol. By reason of its origin in Cupid's clumsiness, Bacchus' lechery, Apollo's or Zeus' anger, Venus' love, or Adonis' tragic death, it is a symbol of the divine. By reason of its frequent appearance in the stories of the lives of mythological characters, it carries more specific significance. The most recurrent meanings are love, beauty, and perfection through its association with Venus, Rhodanthe, Lakshmī, Hymen, the Graces and Muses, and the nightingale; fertility, because of its appearance in spring death and resurrection rites, and its consequent association with Adonis, Attis, Aurora, Flora, Here, Cybele, and Lakshmī;

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45 Quinn, op. cit., p. 191-192.

46 Gubernatis, op. cit., p. 318-319.

merrymaking, license, and debauchery because of its association with Comus, Bacchus, Zeus, and Hymen; god-head because of its dedication to Jupiter; chastity through Diana; pride through Rhodanthe; secrecy through Harpocrates; infidelity through Gul.

The foregoing chapter demonstrates that the rose is of far greater import than merely an object of beauty in a garden, home, or floral shop. It was intimately associated by myth-makers with the mysteries of life and death, burial and resurrection. Symbolic of the anthropomorphic ideas and emotions ascribed to the gods, it was likewise symbolic of the ideas and emotions basic to man. Some of the deeds which the gods performed were worthy of emulation; others, less honorable, became an excuse for human frailty. At any rate, the rose stood as a symbol for diverse ideas.

If a study of the rose were to stop with mythology, it would produce enough material to add significance to literature, such as T. S. Eliot's, which uses the rose as a major symbol. As a symbol, however, the rose does not begin and end with the gods and goddesses. It continues to hold as prominent a place in the story of man as it held in the story of the gods.

CHAPTER TWO

FOLK-LORE AND HISTORIC INCIDENT

Only one small part of the 'story of man' will be considered in this chapter: that segment which shows the role assigned to the rose among the Indo-European peoples. The greater part of this chapter will be devoted to folk-lore, that is, to the traditional beliefs, legends, customs, and superstitions of the general population. In addition to this, a few outstanding historical incidents, in which the rose has held a significant place, will be related. This chapter is not intended to be an exhaustive study of all folk-lore or all history; it is intended to relate a number of rose incidents in order to point out its significance in the past. These incidents are again organized according to the trait or characteristic exemplified, rather than to point of origin. There are a few incidents related in this chapter which gain in significance because of their relation to mythology or religion. In these instances, digressions will be made to sketch the background so that the later belief or practice may be seen in its proper perspective. For example, to understand the full meaning of the rose in fire ceremonies, an understanding of the wheel in mythology and religion is necessary.

The rose is a popular flower among the Indo-Europeans. It figures in national events, ceremonies, and

celebrations, in public and private festivities, in legends of lovers and heroes, in courtship customs, and in popular superstitions concerning birth, life, and death. It is a symbol of love, luxury, good fortune, death, virtue, or achievement. The Romans regarded it as a sign of triumphant love[1] as well as the emblem of all those devoted to love. On April 23, young girls who were consecrated to Venus appeared in the streets of Rome wearing garlands of roses and myrtle. Their virtue was questionable, as 'consecration' to Venus was sometimes synonymous with profligacy. Gubernatis refers to them as "filles de joie," and links their 'virtue' with a custom of the Middle Ages which forced fallen girls, Jews, and prostitutes to wear a rose as a distinguishing characteristic.[2] "Rose" and "love" are also linked by tales of Cleopatra who is said to have spent an equivalent of two hundred pounds for roses to adorn a room for 'one night's pleasure,'[3] and who met Marc Antony in a hall covered with a carpet of rose petals eighteen inches in depth.[4] An Eastern legend notes that a Mogul princess, Nourmahal, filled an

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1 George Ferguson, Signs and Symbols in Christian Art, p. 47.

2 Angelo de Gubernatis, La Mythologie des Plantes ou Les Légendes du Règne Végétal, Vol. 2, p. 323.

3 Hilderic Friend, Flowers and Flower Lore, p. 90.

4 Elizabeth Todd Nash, One Hundred and One Legends of Flowers, p. 241.

entire canal with rose-water to please the Great Mogul with whom she sailed.[5]

Tristan and Iseult appear in rose-lore as figures of immortal though tragic love. They had drunk of a magic potion which assured the partakers of immortal love. Tristan, wounded in Brittany, sent for Iseult, telling the messenger to hoist a white sail on the ship if he brought her, a black sail if he came without her. Tristan received the wrong signal and died in sorrow. Iseult, finding Tristan dead, lay beside him and died. According to one version of the legend, King Mark placed their tombs on either side of the apse in Tintagel; soon, from Tristan's tomb, a beautiful briar-rose grew, reached across the chapel to Iseult's tomb and took root there. No matter how often men attempted to cut it down, it always grew again.[6] Another version relates that King Mark ordered that a rose tree be planted by Tristan's tomb and a vine by Iseult's. The two grew, reached towards each other, entwined and became inseparable.[7] Similar to this tale of tragic love is a Persian tale of Mem and Zin. Mem fell in love with the sister of his lord, Zein-eddi.

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5 John Ingram, Flora Symbolica or, The Language and Sentiment of Flowers, p. 31-32.

6 Jon Manchip White, cited in G. E. Daniel et al., Myth or Legend?, p. 72.

7 Jessie L. Weston, Tr., Tristan and Iseult, Arthurian Romances Unrepresented in Malory's "Morte d'Arthur," Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 154-155.

Being of obscure birth, he was not permitted to tell his love. Instead, through a treacherous act of a servant, he was thrown in prison. His friend Tajin, a friend of Zeineddi, interceded for Mem and obtained his release from prison. But Mem, seeing Zin after so long, died of joy. Zin, seized with sorrow, died also. Like Tristan and Iseult, they were buried close to each other. Over each of their tombs grew a rose bush, whose branches intertwined as a symbol of their eternal love.[8]

Tainted, cloying, degraded love is the theme of the German Tannhäuser-Venus legend. The degeneration and damnation of the Minnesinger Tannhäuser began when he met Venus one evening in the Hörsel Valley. Surrounded by a soft roseate light, with nymphs scattering rose petals in her path, she appeared irresistible to the singer, who followed her to Venusberg. At the end of seven years of debauched life, a satiated Tannhäuser returned to earth, sought absolution from Pope Urban IV, was refused, and so returned in despair to Venus.[9]

Whether the Italian 'Tournament of Love' was an actuality or merely an art subject is hard to determine because

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8 Charles Joret, La Rose dans l'antiquité et au Moyen Age, Histoire, Légendes et Symbolisme, p. 201-202.

9 S. Baring-Gould, Curious Myths of the Middle Ages, 1884, cited in James R. Foster, Ed., The World's Great Folktales, p. 24-26.

of the paucity of literature describing it. However, a tradition, alive in the thirteenth century, describes a mock battle in which ladies defended a castle against invasion by knights. As the latter scaled the walls, the ladies pelted them with roses. Over the entrance to the castle, Cupid stood with a bow in his hand, ready to aid the knights in their quest for love.[10] A similar love-battle features Dietrich of Bern, the King Arthur of German legend. In Worms, there was a wondrous rose-garden where a beautiful queen and the fairest of ladies walked. Only the Queen could give permission to enter. However, whoever succeeded in forcing entry by overcoming twelve warrior-guards would be rewarded with a crown of roses and a kiss from one of the ladies. Dietrich and his knights overcame the guards and received their reward of love.[11] The banality of the whole siege is emphasized in another version of the same legend which relates that the security of the garden was placed in a single thread of silk which encircled the rose-garden, and twelve warriors at the gate. Whoever broke through either guard received a crown of roses and a kiss from Kriemhild.[12]

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10 Joret, op. cit., p. 403-404.

11 Lewis Spence, Hero Tales and Legends of the Rhine, p. 258-261.

12 Joret, op. cit., p. 290-292.

Custom places the rose foremost as a love charm or as a signal that a youth loves or wants to be loved. In England on Midsummer's Eve, the rose became an instrument of divination when a maid walked backward into a garden, picked a rose, sewed it into a paper bag, and placed this in a drawer where she left it until Christmas. At this time, she wore it, and the man who took it from her, or to whom she gave it, would be her husband.[13] In seventeenth century England, it was the young man, not the girl, who walked backward into a garden at night to pick a rose--a superstitious charm performed to give him success in courtship.[14] An outgrowth of this rose-garden custom is a contemporary form of witchcraft called the "dumb supper." In the evening, a girl prepares dinner in reverse order; what she would ordinarily do first must be done last; what she would ordinarily do last must be done first. She walks backwards and observes absolute silence. At midnight, she is supposed to have a vision of her future husband.[15] In Thuringia, Germany, a maiden with several suitors named a rose leaf for each and threw them

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13 Richard Folkard, Plant Lore, Legends, and Lyrics Embracing the Myths, Traditions, Superstitions, and Folk-Lore of the Plant Kingdom, p. 522.

14 Duncan Emrich, "The Folklore of Love," in Collier's, Vol. 137, No. 4, Feb. 17, 1956, p. 29.

15 Ibid., p. 29.

on the water. The last leaf to sink would be her husband.[16] A more complicated and primitive procedure for divining a future mate was practiced in England in the latter part of June. A young girl secretly picked a rose between three and four o'clock in the morning, held it for about five minutes over the smoke from a chafing dish containing brimstone and charcoal, and then placed it on a paper on which were written her name and that of the boy she loved, plus the date and the name of the morning star. Then she buried the paper under a rose tree until July 6, when she placed it under her pillow. Her dream that night decided her future.[17] In Latvia, also, girls discovered the identity of their mates by entering a rose-garden--the first man who came through the gate would help them decide their future.[18] In Germany and the Netherlands, the expression "gather roses" is synonymous with "make love."[19] Invitations to love are commonly extended by means of a rose. Intensity of love is indicated symbolically by the stage of development in the rose--initial attraction is indicated by the girl's acceptance of a bud; desire to continue the friendship, by a half-blown rose; and

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16 Nash, op. cit., p. 259.

17 Folkard, op. cit., p. 523.

18 Uriah Katzenelenbogen, The Daina, An Anthology of Lithuanian and Latvian Folk-Songs, p. 105-106.

19 Joret, op. cit., p. 313.

engagement, by a full-blown rose.[20] In Mid-France and Germany, on the first of May, boys used to throw roses at the door or in the window of the girl they wished to court. Sometimes to test the love of the suitor, girls would ask for the impossible. According to one tale, a maid requested three roses on one stem, plucked between Ash-Wednesday and Easter. Unable to fulfill the request, the chevalier painted the roses, presented them to the girl, who accepted the gift and the giver.[21]

One of the most popular associations of the rose with love goes back to the many legends concerning this flower and the nightingale. According to legend, the flowers in paradise complained to Allah that the lotus slept all night and, therefore, was unfit to be their queen. Allah gave them a white rose whose beauty ensnared the nightingale. From that time he remained faithful to the rose, addressing his song only to her.[22]

Tradition and legend also mark the rose as a symbol of voluptuousness and gross licentiousness. When Roman society was most decadent, roses were used most abundantly for every ceremony. Rulers and wealthy citizens ate in halls where couches, walls, and floors were garnished with

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20 Friend, op. cit., p. 452.

21 Joret, op. cit., p. 313-316.

22 Ibid., p. 197.

Milanese roses; distributed rose crowns when wine consumption was at its peak; buried banquet tables under their petals;[23] floated petals on the surface of wine or bodies of water; stuffed pillows with them and sometimes slept on veritable beds of roses.[24] Emperor Heliogabalus is credited with arranging such a copious shower of roses to fall on his guests, that some of them suffocated. Nero, too, was lavish in his expenditures on roses--according to Suetonius, he spent four million sesterces (about thirty thousand pounds) for roses to decorate one banquet.[25] At one time in Rome, the rose chaplet was a symbol of honor, merit, and victory. Victorious soldiers were given a crown of roses; great men were honored with showers of roses thrown at their feet or chariot; the prows of returned ships were decorated with roses. Abuses crept in until this mark of honor became a token of degeneracy. Cicero reproached Verres for traveling through Sicily with a crown of roses on his brow, garlands of them around his neck, and a bouquet in his hands from which he inhaled the perfume; and Honorius mocked the wearing of rose crowns as a mark of effeminacy.[26] Societies other than Roman contributed to the connotation of opulence.

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23 Ibid., p. 104-106.

24 Buckner Hollingsworth, Flower Chronicles, p. 30.

25 Folkard, op. cit., p. 517-518.

26 Joret, op. cit., p. 67; 105-107.

Legend says that the Persian rose-gardens yielded enough flowers daily to furnish a fresh bed for the Sultana.[27] The profligacy of Cleopatra has already been mentioned above, as well as that of Princess Nourmahal.

In addition to being a symbol of love and luxury, the rose is recognized as an omen of both good and evil. In Iran the natives welcomed the coming of roses by walking through the streets with baskets of them. Whomever they touched with a thrown rose would enjoy good fortune.[28] On the other hand, to scatter the petals of the red rose on the ground is an evil omen in European superstition.[29] In Armenia, the Festival of Roses, which coincides with Ascension night, brings fortune and deliverance from enemies. It is believed that Mher, a sort of savior, opens the door to his treasures on that night.[30] A folk tale which has overtones of Adonis rites relates the story of a man who had two daughters--one good, one bad. One day, before he set out for a fair, he asked the girls what he could bring them. The bad one requested a silk dress; the good, three roses on one stem. He was able to fill the first request, but he

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27 Ingram, op. cit., p. 31.

28 Joret, op. cit., p. 151.

29 E. and M. A. Radford, Encyclopaedia of Superstitions, p. 204.

30 Mardiros H. Ananikian, Armenian, Vol. 7 of John Arnott MacCulloch, Ed., The Mythology of All Races, p. 370.

could not find the roses. As he neared home, he saw what he wanted in a garden, picked the stem, but was immediately accosted by a monster who demanded the name of the girl for whom the flowers were intended. The father gave the gifts to his children, but told the good daughter that she must go with the monster and become his wife. In spite of his ugliness, she grew to love him. One evening when he did not come home, she searched for him, only to find him dead. By kissing him, she broke a magic spell which had bound him, and saw before her a fine young man.[31] In this case, the rose was the source of good fortune for both the beauty and the beast. The relevancy to the Adonis myth lies in the fact that someone must redeem the young man, in spite of grave obstacles. When the price is paid--in this case, loving a monster--the evil spell is broken and happiness returns.

Roses and fire are a common combination in superstitious rites whose end is good fortune, fertility, and health. In parts of Germany, rose leaves were thrown on fire to ensure good luck.[32] This practice is reminiscent of the vernal and mid-summer fire ceremonies common throughout Europe as late as the nineteenth century. Fire, which

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31 Joret, op. cit., p. 316-317.

32 Folkard, op. cit., p. 523.

represents the sun, was a dragon-killer in ancient mythology.[33] The witch-possessed dragon which was an enemy of the sun brought darkness or disease or sterility.[34] Therefore, to ensure productivity in crops and man, the dragon had to be killed or driven away by fire. For this reason, fires were kindled in annual rites at various times of the year, depending upon the planting or harvesting of crops. In these rites the rose formerly played an important role. For instance, in 1648, Louis XIV, crowned with roses and carrying a bunch of roses, kindled the fire on the Place de Grève, Paris, which annually burned baskets, barrels, or sacks full of cats, the equivalent of witches or evil.[35] No doubt, this practice was a sanitation measure for an overcrowded city; nevertheless, the populace carried home embers and ashes from the 'witch pyres' as an assurance of good luck. Remnants of rose-fire rites are still present in Armenia. On Transfiguration Sunday in June, the people drench themselves with water; the clergy, in procession, throw rose-water on the congregation; churches are decorated with roses. It is true that the use of blessed water and flowers is common in Christian liturgy; however, certain elements

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33 Ananikian, op. cit., p. 45.

34 Walter K. Kelly, Curiosities of Indo-European Tradition and Folk-Lore, p. 22-23.

35 Sir James George Frazer, The Golden Bough, A Study in Magic and Religion, Abridged Edition, p. 760.

in the Armenian festival indicate pre-Christian fertility beliefs. For example, drenching with water was a necessary ritual in ancient fire (female) and water (male) ceremonies whose object was to ensure productivity. Further, although the Church has a Christian name "Transfiguration" for the rites, the popular name is Vartavar which means "burning with roses."[36] Also, bonfires are lighted in preparation for the feast on the eve of Transfiguration. The burning of roses in fire is gone, but the name remains; the water and the fire remain. This suggests that the Armenians, like the French, looked upon the rose in fire as a magic formula for ridding the land of evil spirits, thus ensuring good fortune. The Transylvanians evidently believed the same thing, for, on April 23, St. George's Day, they placed various kinds of roses on smouldering coals, then urged cows to step over these smoking roses and coals in order to deprive witches of the power to interfere with milk production.[37] Germans at one time believed they could prevent death, which they thought resulted from fallen rose petals, by burning them, thus exorcising the devils who caused the desecration

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36 Ananikian, op. cit., p. 59-60.

37 Sir James George Frazer, The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings, Vol. 2, Part 1, The Golden Bough, A Study in Magic and Religion, 3rd Ed., p. 339.

of the rose.[38] Here, again, the combination of rose and fire ensures good fortune.

Why the rose is an integral element in fire rituals might have its answer in wheel-beliefs. These beliefs involve mythology and religion rather than folk-lore, but will be considered here as an explanation of the rose in folk-ceremonies. In Eastern religions, the rose is not a flower at all, but rather, a wheel-cross--a rose-cross.[39] In Eastern civilizations, the wheel was and is the symbol of the power of the sun or the solar system, indicating, among other things, life itself, change of seasons, and fertility.[40] In Celtic belief, the solar deity holds a wheel on his shoulder or beside him on the ground.[41] This wheel symbol, called the Law of the Universe, takes the form of the swastika, the three-legged First-man, the prayer wheel, and the wheel of fortune. The swastika is a universal symbol of good-luck and fertility, frequently appearing as the generative or feminine principle in representations of the nature

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38 Vernon Quinn, Stories and Legends of Garden Flowers, p. 194.

39 John O'Neill, The Night of the Gods, An Inquiry into Cosmic and Cosmogonic Mythology and Symbolism, Vol. 2, p. 583-619.

40 Elisabeth Goldsmith, Ancient Pagan Symbols, p. 92-94.

41 E. Hull, Folklore of British Isles, p. 184-186, cited in Lewis Spence, The History and Origins of Druidism, p. 152-154.

goddesses of various peoples.[42] In Celtic mythology, the wheel takes the form of the three-legged First-man,[43] which is the sun or the descendent of the sun, and thus, a symbol of life, productivity, and fertility. The figure is composed of a rim supported by three spokes which are shaped like legs. The prayer wheels of the Buddhists, imitative of the revolving of the universe or the progress of the sun, have as one of their ends the bringing of good or fortune to a house, city, or territory. Placed near the entrance to a temple, monastery, or dwelling, they are turned by each entrant to assure the favor of the gods. Some Lama monasteries have a system of varying sizes of wheels which are cranked, worked by weights and wound like clocks, or kept in perpetual motion by wind-power or turbine wheels, the object of such an intricate system being the absolute guarantee of good in exchange for the perpetual homage and reverence represented by the care of the wheels.[44] In Goidelic legend, a revolving wheel before a castle door protects against unwanted guests. When it stops, the protection is cancelled.[45] The wheel of fortune is a degenerative form of the

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42 Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 95-96.

43 O'Neill, op. cit., p. 585-594.

44 Ibid., p. 585-590.

45 Robert Graves, The White Goddess, A historical grammar of poetic myth, p. 82.

Universe-wheel. By turning it, the suppliant hoped to hasten or forecast future events.[46] Even though the wheel sometimes brought evil rather than good, it was the latter which was sought. A direct relationship between the rose and the wheel of fortune is seen in the rose-windows of Amiens and Beauvais, whose origin is attributed to the lucky wheel, or wheel of fortune.[47]

If it is accepted that the rose is a wheel and the wheel is a symbol of the solar system, then it is clear why the rose was featured in the European fire festivals, since these rites imitated the power of the sun and had as their object the blessing of life--both animal and vegetative. In spring or mid-summer, bonfires set in churchyard and at home indicated by the direction of the flames and smoke which field would be most productive; torches carried through orchards warded off sickness and witchcraft; burning wheels sent rolling down hills, or flaming discs thrown through the air, kept vermin, hail and storm from the fields. The higher the flame and the more abundant the fire, the greater the crop yield. Young men and women, leaping through flames or red embers, were assured of marriage and fertility.[48]

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46 O'Neill, op. cit., p. 608.

47 Louis Jourdain and Théophile Duval, Bulletin Monumental, Vol. 11, 1845, p. 59-64, cited in O'Neill, op. cit., p. 659.

48 Frazer, The Golden Bough, Abr. Ed., p. 706-732.

Rolling fire-wheels also protected against too much sun--when evil forces captured the sun and brought it too close to the earth, it had to be rolled into the water where it would be extinguished. The new, milder sun would assure the flourishing of crops.[49]

In all of these rites, fire means fertility. In the primitive imagination, fire is a reincarnation of the sun or the power of the sun. When man established the ritual of imitating the motion of the universe by the rotation of wood in wood, and produced fire as a by-product of his worship, it became sacred to him, a sign of acceptance and blessing by the solar deity.[50] Since man could create fire in this way, perhaps he could bring about life which is the product of the sun or fire. The Brahmans of India seem to have retained the original significance of the fire-fertility ritual by the exacting method by which they strike a sacred fire. On the night before the fire is made, the upper part of a fire-drill is placed in charge of the priest, and the lower part is given to his wife. Each of them sleeps with the instrument charged to him; then, on the next day, they kindle the fire. Among primitive peoples, the fire-drill, or the vertical rod, is a symbol of the male principle, while the

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49 Kelly, op. cit., p. 57-62.

50 Lazarus Geiger, cited in O'Neill, op. cit., p. 591.

horizontal piece is a symbol of the female.[51] Whatever the ceremony, fire is symbolic of the sun, and the sun is symbolic of life. Since the solar system is the law of the universe to the primitive mind, and the rose a symbol of this system, then it follows that the rose is ritualistically symbolic of the sun, life, fertility, and good fortune.

Remnants of this good luck symbolism are also present in folk traditions and beliefs exclusive of fire rites. To ensure good milk production, the Saxons of Transylvania spread wild rose bush branches over the gate in order to keep cow-riding witches from the farmyard.[52] In Alsace and Provence, the people honor the Rose of May who symbolically leads them into 'the midst of roses' or good fortune.[53] This seems to be a derivation of more primitive spring rites when the "spirit of vegetation" visited the land under the guise of a girl who represented the May rose.[54] Her begging of money or various other gifts from the townspeople represents fertility prayers. If eggs, vegetables and so forth are refused, then there will be no production or prosperity

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51 W. Crooke, Religion and Folklore of Northern India, Oxford University Press, 1926, p. 336, cited in Frazer, Myths of the Origin of Fire, An Essay, p. 220.

52 Frazer, The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings, Vol. 2, p. 337-338.

53 Joret, op. cit., p. 302-303.

54 Willhelm Mannhardt, cited in Frazer, The Golden Bough, Abr. Ed., p. 147.

for that house during the ensuing year.[55] In Bulgaria, on St. John's Day, nosegays made of white flowers are thrown in a vessel of water under a blooming rose tree where they remain all night. On the following morning, the girls sing and dance around the tree, washing in the water and praying for health.[56] To "live in a rose-garden" or to "live in the midst of roses" means joy, pleasure, content, and happiness.[57]

From good fortune, it is but a small step to healing, another attribute of the rose through the centuries. In itself or as an ingredient in various medicines, it was considered by the Romans as a cure-all for disorders ranging from hydrophobia to headache.[58] Throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance, rose-powder, rose-syrup, rose-water and other concoctions were the "miracle drug" for every sort of ailment. Sometimes it was used purely as a medicine; sometimes, it figured in black magic and incantations. For example, in Westphalia, bleeding was stopped by commanding the blood in the name of the three roses in the garden of God,

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55 Frazer, The Golden Bough, Abr. Ed., p. 139-156.

56 Frazer, Balder the Beautiful, The Fire-Festivals of Europe and the Doctrine of the External Soul, Vol. 2, Part 7, The Golden Bough, A Study in Magic and Religion, 3rd Ed., p. 50.

57 Joret, op. cit., p. 294.

58 Hollingsworth, op. cit., p. 34.

called the "Bounty of God," the "Blood of God," and the "Will of God."[59] Popular legends also recount tales of the rose's healing power. According to one, King Cyrus married the maid Melto whose beauty was threatened by a growth on her chin. Being a faithful follower of Venus, she was visited by the goddess in a dream and told to apply roses from her altar. The growth disappeared.[60] In the Hindu legend of Bakâvalî, a king is afflicted with blindness; he can be healed only if a certain rose from Bakâvalî's garden touches him. His eldest sons search, but are unsuccessful. The youngest, more persevering and courageous, finds the garden and the rose of Bakâvalî, seizes it, takes it to his father, touches his eyes and thus restores his health.[61] Paradoxically, 'rose,' in at least one instance, means disease. It is the popular name for erysipelas, a local inflammatory disease associated with poor socio-economic conditions.[62]

The rose is also symbolic of death. The Roman feast of the Parentalia or Rosalia was a yearly remembrance of the dead. In May or in June, roses were distributed at a banquet, then laid on the tombs of those whom the living had

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59 Joret, op. cit., p. 461-476.

60 Charles E. Brown, Flower Lore, Lore and Legends of Garden Flowers, p. 8.

61 Joret, op. cit., p. 202-203.

62 Thomas Anderson, "Erysipelas," in Chambers's Encyclopoedea, Vol. 5, p. 387-388.

come to venerate. Large sums of money were designated in wills for the annual observance of the rose dinner and tribute.[63] On Christian sarcophagi the sculptured rose was a symbol of the life to come.[64] In folk beliefs and superstitions, rose bushes are for the graves of children, young girls, and youths.[65] Fallen rose leaves or petals mean death or evil; roses thrown into a grave portend bad luck or death. Roses blooming out of season are an omen of plague, pestilence, and death;[66] the sudden blooming of a white rose means death in the nearest house.[67] In a German legend, a white rose of warning appeared on the chair of a monk destined to die the next morning. On one occasion, a young monk who received the warning transferred the rose to an old man's chair. In the morning, both monks were dead and the rose never again appeared as a warning. The remaining brothers died broken-hearted and unwarned; the cloister decayed into ruins.[68] A similar legend tells of the Virgin Mary who appears to sick children: to those who will

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63 Joret, op. cit., p. 108-112.

64 Ibid., p. 420-452.

65 Ingram, op. cit., p. 28; 35.

66 Friend, op. cit., p. 214; 577-578.

67 T. F. Thiselton Dyer, The Folk-Lore of Plants, p. 274.

68 Nash, op. cit., p. 257-258.

recover, she gives strawberries; to those who are to die, a rose.[69] In Ireland, for a sick person to see a rose bush through the window meant death.[70] In German portions of Switzerland, churchyards were called "Rose Gardens."[71]

Love, luxury, luck, fertility, and death are all symbolized by the rose. It is also symbolic of innocence, fidelity, infidelity, secrecy, chivalry, war, and peace.

From earliest times the rose has been an emblem of virtue.[72] On the Fête de la Rosière in France, the young girl with the most unsullied reputation was crowned with white roses and given a sum of money after her candidacy had been announced from the pulpit. Her title was Madame la Rose.[73] Among Latvian peasants, the rose wreath is reserved for young girls of marriageable age who, upon their marriage, pass it on to their youngest sister. To them, the rose means chastity, joy, and youth.[74] Traces of a similar custom are found in Germany where fallen girls at one time were

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69 Joret, op. cit., p. 281.

70 Gubernatis, op. cit., p. 323.

71 Folkard, op. cit., p. 522.

72 William Paul, The Rose Garden, Division 1, p. 11.

73 William S. Walsh, Curiosities of Popular Customs and of Rites, Ceremonies, Observances, and Miscellaneous Antiquities, p. 846-850.

74 Katzenelenbogen, op. cit., p. 105-106.

not permitted to wear a rose crown; instead, they were required to wear one of straw.[75] These two customs are reflected in a Swiss law which prohibited brides from wearing chaplets or garlands in the church, or at the wedding feast, if they had been unchaste.[76] In Hebrew legend, roses miraculously appeared as proof of a young girl's innocence. Zillah, a Jewish maid, was accused by a young man of immoral conduct and was condemned to die at the stake. As she stood on the pyre, waiting to be burned, some of the flames shot out at the young man, killing him, while the rest of the fire changed into red and white roses.[77] In both East and West, roses were placed or sculptured on the tombs of young unmarried girls as a testimonial of their virtue. In England, on the death of a maiden, a wreath of white roses was carried before her body, then hung above her former place in church.[78] The rose is also a purity symbol in a German Grail story. The garden of the Rose Maiden had all varieties of roses save one: a white rose growing on a steep mountainside, accessible only to one of 'pure heart, lofty

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75 Joret, op. cit., p. 407.

76 A. Lambert, "The Ceremonial Use of Flowers," in Nineteenth Century, No. 39, May, 1880, p. 821, cited in Dyer, op. cit., p. 153.

77 Charles M. Skinner, Myths and Legends of Flowers, Trees, Fruits and Plants, In All Ages and In All Climes, p. 258-259.

78 Ingram, op. cit., p. 27; 31.

mind and strong purpose.' Sir Galahad, riding through the region on his quest of the Grail, was told by the Maiden that only he could attain the rose because he had the purest heart. He agreed to find it as it would be a sign that his heart and mind were pure enough to try for the Grail.[79] A Franciscan legend relates how St. Francis, shivering in his cell, was tempted to desire ease and luxury. Immediately, he rolled himself in snow and thorns to chastise himself. Where his blood fell on thorns, roses of Paradise bloomed.[80]

In tales of fidelity the rose takes on a magic quality, having the power to remain fresh as long as love remains unchanged. A French legend tells of Margon who is torn between seeking his fortune at the court of the king and staying home with his young wife Lisane. Urging him to go, Lisane gives him a rose which will become dry if she is unfaithful. Two chevaliers, jealous of Margon's growing popularity with the king, plan to seduce Lisane. She outsmarts them by locking them in a tower. The rose remains fresh; Margon is reunited with Lisane. A Persian legend relates a similar story of a wife who gives her husband a bouquet of magic roses to carry with him. A war lord, discovering why the warrior cherishes the flowers, scoffs at his naïvete and secretly plans to seduce the wife. The

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79 Nash, op. cit., p. 267-268.

80 Folkard, op. cit., p. 519.

latter remains faithful; the roses remain fresh.[81] Religious fidelity, too, is symbolized by the rose. The Mohammedans say that Abraham, condemned to die by fire for not sacrificing to the Chaldean gods, was miraculously preserved by a fountain of water which sprang up from the flames and from which grew roses and other flowers.[82] This is similar to the story, already cited, of the Bethlehem girl who was saved from burning at the stake by the magic appearance of roses. The nightingale, in his love for the rose, is a symbol of fidelity. Once loving the rose, he remains faithful to her all his life, ignoring the attentions of all other lovely blossoms.[83] Paradoxically, the yellow rose, in flower language, indicates infidelity,[84] jealousy, and decreased love.[85] In feudal France, the rose was a token of homage. Records show that one or several roses were given annually to lords as land rental.[86] Until the end of the sixteenth century, the peers of France annually rendered homage to Parliament by presenting each member with a crown of roses

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81 Joret, op. cit., p. 325-327; 199-201.

82 Ibid., p. 198-199.

83 Friend, op. cit., p. 174-175.

84 Ingram, op. cit., p. 24-25.

85 Friend, op. cit., p. 451.

86 Joret, op. cit., p. 413-415.

and by decorating all rooms of the palace with this flower.[87]

One of the most common connotations of the rose is secrecy. One explanation for this association goes back to Roman times when wine flowed freely at rose-laden tables, loosening the tongue for indiscreet remarks. Words spoken under these circumstances were regarded as unsaid. From this grew the custom of wearing chaplets or of hanging garlands of roses over dining-tables. Words spoken were sub rosa.[88] It is claimed that the Jacobites in their rebellion of 1715 and of 1745 adopted the white rose as a badge to symbolize their secret work for the Pretenders.[89]

As a chivalric insignia, the rose meant gentleness plus courage; as an award in a tournament, it signified the beauty of valor[90] as well as victory.[91] In heraldry, it is a symbol both of war and of peace, being associated with the white and red roses of the warring houses of York and Lancaster. These eventually became reconciled with the marriage of Elizabeth of York and Henry Tudor (Lancaster) who

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87 Friend, op. cit., p. 501.

88 Hollingsworth, op. cit., p. 30.

89 Quinn, op. cit., p. 193.

90 Ingram, op. cit., p. 34.

91 Joret, op. cit., p. 412-413.

took as their device the double rose, which became known as the Tudor Rose.[92]

In legend, superstition, and popular tradition, the rose is transferred from the gods to humans; it is no longer a symbol of divinity but rather a symbol of the basic desires and actions of man. As in mythology, it signifies love--innocent and profligate, simple and voluptuous, happy and tragic, courtly and rustic. It is a means of divining the progress and duration of love. The rose is also a symbol of licentiousness, grossness, moral degeneracy, and opulence. In some circumstances, the rose means death; in others, good fortune, fertility or life, and health. Although it connotes evil or wrong in one instance, it means virtue in another--innocence, chastity, fidelity, piety, or courage. It means secrecy and openness, war and peace.

Many of these same themes carry over into religious beliefs and customs, just as they carry over from mythology to folk-lore and history. The incidents and applications vary, but a certain similarity prevails in the significance of the rose.

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92 Hollingsworth, op. cit., p. 53-54.

CHAPTER THREE

RELIGION

Apart from its significant position in mythology, folk-lore, and historic incident, the rose is a prominent symbol in the religious beliefs of East and West. This chapter will attempt to show various meanings ascribed to the rose in religious-lore by relating representative incidents and practices in which the rose figures, or by indicating objects, Person, or persons with which or whom it is associated. Christian rose-lore will be considered first, then that of Eastern religions, with incidents grouped according to characteristics or traits portrayed. Rosicrucianism is treated last since it does not seem to belong wholly to either Christianity or Eastern religions, but seems to draw from both. In some cases a religious practice or belief might seem to overlap mythology. The reason for assigning the incident to religion rather than to mythology is based on the assumption that it involves a way of life more than an explanation of it. In other cases, the incident might seem to fit into "folk-lore" as well as "religious-lore." Because religion is so integral a part of the lives of the people, tales concerning saints and holy men and women could find a place in either body of beliefs. For example, the tales regarding the Blessed Virgin and the sick

children, St. Francis and his temptation to ease, and Abraham at the stake, cited in Chapter Two, are as much a part of religious-lore as they are of folk-lore. They are assigned to one rather than to the other because of the quality they represent, or because of their apparent leaning toward the secular rather than the religious, or toward the religious rather than the secular. Again, this chapter is but an introduction to the incidence of the rose in various religious beliefs, not a comprehensive study of all beliefs, either Eastern or Western.

In Christianity the rose is the symbol of the Blessed Virgin and Christ; of virtue; sanctity and its reward, Paradise; martyrdom; resurrection; and the female principle. Spiritual writers attributed the rose to the Virgin because she was recognized as the 'Rose of Sharon' praised in Solomon's Song of Songs--the supreme type of the human soul affianced to Christ, the Divine Bridegroom. As the Mystical Rose, one of her titles in the "Litany of Loretto," she springs from the root of Jesse and, in turn, produces Christ, the Fruit of the rose.[1] Writers who see Christianity as a development and continuation of pagan rites contend that Mary, taking the place of the Greek and the Roman

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1 Alan W. Watts, Myth and Ritual in Christianity, p. 105; 116, note 1.

Venus[2] or of the German Holda, who was known as "Frau Rose,"[3] also took as her emblem their rose.

Whatever the origin of the name, Medieval Christianity likened Mary to the rose or rose-garden guarded by God Himself, to a 'rose without thorns,'[4] or to the 'rose of the world.'[5] As the rose in the Code of Chivalry meant perfection of performance, the rose in Christianity meant perfection of performance in the spiritual order and thus became the symbol of the Virgin.[6] Medieval and Renaissance artists frequently portrayed the Madonna and Child in the midst of roses since the Church designated them the symbol of divine love.[7] In Christian legend and popular tradition, Mary and the rose are frequently cited. According to a German ballad, she brought three roses to earth, first, when she gave birth to Christ, second, when Christ instituted the Blessed Sacrament, and third, when Christ died to redeem man.[8] It

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2 Angelo de Gubernatis, La Mythologie des Plantes ou Les Légendes du Règne Végétal, Vol. 2, p. 322.

3 Hilderic Friend, Flowers and Flower Lore, p. 99.

4 Charles Joret, La Rose dans l'antiquité et au Moyen Age, Histoire, Légendes et Symbolisme, p. 247-248; 254; 258.

5 Watts, op. cit., p. 101.

6 Joret, op. cit., p. 237-238.

7 Esther Singleton, The Shakespeare Garden, p. 18.

8 Joret, op. cit., p. 255.

was also in Germany that she caused three roses to appear as a sign that she wished a chapel built. Those who saw the miraculous roses discovered an old statue of the Virgin buried under the flowers; this prompted them to build Kirshberg Chapel.[9] A flower called the Christmas Rose is said to have appeared on the road to Egypt wherever Mary's foot touched the earth;[10] on her assumption into Heaven, roses filled her tomb; and in various appearances to man, roses sprang up wherever she walked.[11] In Medieval belief, Mary used the rose as a sign of reward for service to her. In the case of Josbert, a German monk who daily recited five Psalms beginning with the letters of her name, the Virgin rewarded him on his death by placing a rose at his mouth, eyes, and ears.[12] The reward theme recurs in the 'robber and roses' legends of Europe. A young man who had daily offered a wreath of one hundred and fifty roses to Mary, became a monk. No longer having roses to give, he was advised to say one hundred and fifty "Aves" instead. One day on his way through robber-infested woods, he kneels to say his "Aves." The robbers are about to attack when they see a Lady

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9 Ibid., p. 279-280.

10 Elizabeth Todd Nash, One Hundred and One Legends of Flowers, p. 254.

11 Joret, op. cit., p. 245-246.

12 Ibid., p. 266.

drawing, one by one, one hundred and fifty roses from the mouth of the monk. She makes these into a garland which gradually shrinks to the size of a rosary. Converted by this apparition, the robbers become monks.[13] In Marian legend the rose of Jerico, another name for Mary, is a symbol of safe and speedy delivery in childbirth. In Germany, it bears the name 'Maria's Hand' since aid comes swiftly when it is present.[14]

Just as the Medieval mind associated the rose with Mary, so too, it ascribed its perfections to Christ. St. Ambrose declared that the rose is the blood of Christ, while St. Bernard compared Christ and His wounds to roses.[15] The European observance of the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament entailed rose decorations on buildings, rose petals scattered in the streets, and rose wreaths for participants in the procession.[16] Elizabethan England, too, recognized the rose as a symbol for Christ.[17] In legends and popular traditions, the rose either represents Christ or is closely associated with Him. A Christmas legend tells of a shepherdess who,

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13 Vernon Quinn, Stories and Legends of Garden Flowers, p. 181-182.

14 Gubernatis, op. cit., p. 324.

15 Cited in Joret, op. cit., p. 241-243.

16 Joret, op. cit., p. 394-395.

17 Philip Wheelwright, The Burning Fountain, A Study in the Language of Symbolism, p. 340.

having no gift for the Infant, began to cry. Her tears turned into white roses, which became a delicate pink as the Child touched them.[18] In another legend, the Christmas Rose was the only flower which survived a monk's blasphemous doubt: In a magic garden in a Swedish forest, trees, flowers, birds, fruits, and greens returned to life each Christmas Eve. A monk, seeing the miracle, doubted its goodness and attributed the work to the devil. Immediately the paradise disappeared; from that time only the Christmas Rose bloomed each year.[19] The briar-rose had its origin in the passion of Christ; wherever the crown of thorns pierced His head, roses appeared.[20] A German tale represents the rose as a symbol of virginity by linking it with Christ, the Divine Bridegroom. The daughter of the Commander of Grosswardein was disconsolate that she had to marry. Walking in her garden, she saw Christ who slipped a ring on her finger. Overjoyed, she picked a rose and gave it to Him as her answer. Christ took her to Heaven for several years; she returned to earth only to die.[21] A similar tale tells of a Sultan's daughter who was gathering flowers in her father's

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18 "Legends of Flowers for Special Days, A Manual for Schools and Clubs," University of Tennessee News Letter, Vol. 34, No. 3, March, 1955, p. 18.

19 Nash, op. cit., p. 247.

20 Ibid., p. 245.

21 Joret, op. cit., p. 262.

rose-garden. Her admiration of the creature led her to adore the Creator. At that moment Christ appeared and told her of His Father's splendid garden. She expressed a desire to spend all eternity tending this garden. At this, the wounds of Christ opened and roses appeared on His hands. When asked why His hands were covered with roses, Christ replied that they represented His love for her. The girl went with Him to Paradise.[22] The same theme appears in a Rhenish story of a fine maiden who, on her wedding morning, went to gather some flowers from her rose-garden. There she met a stranger who persuaded her to look at his finer varieties. She accepted his invitation, marvelled at the wonders of his garden, and received from him a wondrous rose. Hastening back to her home, she discovered that the village, people, and children had changed; her home was inhabited by strangers. At her request the parish priest consulted his records and found that two hundred years before, a bride had disappeared mysteriously.[23] What she thought was a moment spent with Christ was, in reality, more than a lifetime. The association of the rose with Christ and His wounds is apparent in the legend of Susan. A religious by the name of Anne had a vision of Susan sitting under a marvelous rose

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22 Ibid., p. 244-245.

23 Edwin Sidney Hartland, The Science of Fairy Tales, An Inquiry into Fairy Mythology, p. 185-186.

tree, at the feet of the Infant Christ whose forehead was encircled by red roses. The Child pelted Susan with roses until she was covered. When Anne asked the Child the significance of the flowers, He replied that they indicated the various crosses He sends His servants who bear them with meekness and patience.[24]

In Christian lore, the rose is also a symbol of virtue: charity, innocence, sanctity, perfection, and service to the Church. Many legends tell of the miraculous appearance of roses as a reward for charity, the most outstanding being that of Elizabeth of Hungary. One winter day, as she was carrying food for the poor, her husband Louis asked her to show him what she was hiding. When Elizabeth opened her cloak, a shower of red and white roses fell to the ground. Parallel to this is the story of St. Casilde of Toledo who used to gather fragments from her father's table to give to the Christian slaves. One day her father seized her cloak, threw it open, but found only roses. Rose of Viterbo, Nicholas of Tolentino, Elizabeth of Portugal, Roseline of Villeneuve and Pierre Regalat figure in tales of this sort.[25] A legend which adds innocence to charity concerns pious Ada who, in the absence of her husband, gave up her bed to a leper. Her husband returned unexpectedly, walked

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24 Joret, op. cit., p. 259.

25 Ibid., p. 271-327.

to their room and found a bed of roses.[26] Miracle stories abound in the lives of the saints. Rose of Lima once threw roses towards the heavens in tribute to the 'Supreme Gardener.' In mid-air the flowers took the shape of a cross, a token of God's acceptance.[27] After her death, she was the cause of a shower of roses in the Vatican. Pope Clement X, asked to canonize her, exclaimed, 'Indian and Saint! as likely as it should rain roses!' As the flowers fell, Clement relented.[28] Roses of sanctity were found when the tombs of St. Rosalia of Palermo,[29] St. Julien de Vienne, St. Lucius, Bishop Gandolf of Milan, St. Louis of Toulouse and St. Anthony of Stroncone were opened. Some of these disappeared as soon as they were touched; others gave off fragrance enough to fill a basilica; others were of an unearthly composition.[30] The sanctity of St. Dorothy of Cappadocia was proved by roses. Before her execution, Theophilus told her to bring him some of the fruits from the garden where she would spend eternity. At the moment of her beheading, an angel brought a basket of roses and fruit to Theophilus.

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26 Ibid., p. 269.

27 Ibid., p. 261-262.

28 Clara Erskine Clement, A Handbook of Christian Symbols and Stories of the Saints as Illustrated in Art, p. 272-273.

29 Ibid., p. 273-274.

30 Joret, op. cit., p. 263-264.

He became a Christian.[31] A legend of St. Cecilia tells of an angel who brought crowns of Paradisal roses to her and her husband as a reward for their vow of chastity.[32] Another instance of the rose as a symbol of sanctity and divine approbation is related in the life of Agnes of Monte-Pulciano. Two hermits, attracted by tales of the holiness of Agnes, went to visit her. As they began their dinner, a rose suddenly appeared on the holy woman's plate.[33] Although the rose is generally a symbol of virtue, it can also designate lost virtue. The red rose is reminiscent of Adam and Eve whose sin caused the white rose of innocence to redden with shame.[34] Red roses are said to begin to fade on or around St. Mary Magdalene's Day, a reminder that her tears of shame, falling on the red flowers, changed them to white.[35]

One of the most common roses in Christianity is the Golden Rose, symbol of perfection in time when 'the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard with the kid, and the calf with the young lion' (Isaiah 11, 6). It is the symbol also of love, joy, and satiety, characteristics of Laetare

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31 Clement, op. cit., p. 98.

32 Ibid., p. 77-78.

33 Joret, op. cit., p. 264.

34 Ibid., p. 284.

35 Ibid., p. 284.

Sunday, the mid-Lent festival day on which the rose is conferred.[36] Because it is a reward for service rendered to the faith, it becomes a symbol of the virtues of faith and love. In popular belief, however, the Golden Rose is a symbol of ill-fortune since several of its recipients have been victims of tragic death or misfortune. Joanna of Sicily was dethroned then strangled by her nephew; the Queen of Naples, Isabella of Spain, Isabella of Brazil, and Empress Josephine died shortly after receiving the Rose, or met with ill-fortune.[37]

The rose symbolizes martyrdom and resurrection. According to Christian legends, both the Earthly Paradise and Heaven are the home of the rose--both being the Rose Garden of Our Lady.[38] Martyrs are believed to be reunited in the latter under a rose tree. They wear crowns of red roses as their prize for victory in persecution.[39] Based upon the story of the first martyrdom--that of Abel in the Old Testament--is the Talmudic legend in which Eve is believed to have had a vision of a lamb bleeding on Abel's altar of

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36 P. M. J. Rock, "Golden Rose," in The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 6, p. 629-630.

37 William S. Walsh, Curiosities of Popular Customs and of Rites, Ceremonies, Observances, and Miscellaneous Antiquities, p. 479.

38 Watts, op. cit., p. 226.

39 Joret, op. cit., p. 232-239.

sacrifice, around which were white roses slowly turning red. At first, she heard despairing voices, but these soon changed to strains of beautiful music. The scene shifted to a vast plain where a white-robed shepherd, wearing a wreath of roses, tended his sheep. Bothered by the vision, but not understanding it, Eve pushed it from her mind, only to realize a few hours later that the lamb was her son, Abel; the red roses, his blood; and the despairing voice, that of her son, Cain. In the end, she raised her voice in praise and thanksgiving because the beloved Abel had been received by God. Making a garland of roses for Abel's head, she buried him.[40]

The rose-window, besides being associated with the wheel of fortune, is, according to some mythologists, the female principle in Gothic architecture, which complements the high narrow lancet window, the male principle. The lancet corresponds to spirit, while the rose corresponds to Prima Materia, or the "womb of creation." Since, in Medieval thought, the Blessed Virgin is the Rose, and since she is indispensable in the re-creation of the spiritual order, she is, like the rose-window, "the open cup of the flower, symbol of the receptive, passive, feminine aspect of man's spiritual transformation...."[41]

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40 Charles M. Skinner, Myths and Legends of Flowers, Trees, Fruits and Plants, In All Ages and In All Climes, p. 253-254.

41 Watts, op. cit., p. 107-108; 198-199.

In Eastern religions the rose is a symbol of divinity, purification, and nirvāna; it is a charm against evil, an assurance of fertility, and an ingredient in divination. Turks, Persians, and Arabs, believing that the rose was born from the sweat of Mohomet, are careful lest its petals be desecrated. If any fall to the ground, Mohammedans gather them up reverently, touch them to their lips, and lay them in a sheltered area where they will not be desecrated.[42] The sacred nature of the rose is also attested to in the Mohammedan practice of using rose-water to wash the walls of mosques profaned by Christians. Saladin, reentering Jerusalem in 1128, would not enter the Mosque of the Temple until it had been so cleansed; Mahmoud II, in 1453, cleansed St. Sophia in the same manner.[43] Persians still celebrate the Feast of the Roses throughout the rose season, in memory of Zoroaster whose divinity was proclaimed by a miraculous appearance of this flower. A prediction had been made that a child would soon be born who would dethrone the King of Babylon. In order to prevent the fulfillment of this prophecy, the King decreed that all pregnant women be murdered. One hid herself and gave birth to Zoroaster. When the King tried to slay the child, his hand withered; when he had the

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42 Joret, op. cit., p. 198-199.

43 John Ingram, Flora Symbolica or, The Language and Sentiment of Flowers, p. 33.

child placed on a burning pile, the flames changed into roses.[44] Thus, the affinity between Zoroastrian fire-worship and rose-worship is established. In keeping with this tradition, Persian fire-worshippers relate a legend of their prophet Abraham who, as a child, was thrown into the fire by order of Nimrod. The flames instantly turned into roses.[45]

Although the rose is not as obviously associated with the rosary of the Eastern religions as it is with that of Christianity, it must be mentioned here for its connotative value. Hindus, Buddhists, and Mohammedans use the rosary as a mnemonic device, a charm against evil, an assurance of fertility, and a means of divination.[46] To prevent or cure a disease and to dispel evil spirits, Buddhist monks, following a prescribed formula, recite the rosary near a metal-lined wooden box, containing a special wood which crackles loudly when burned. It is the combination of prescribed physical position, recitation of the rosary, and burning, which drives away evil spirits. After the rosary, the Buddhist prays for nirvāna:

> Oh! the thousand myriad miles of emptiness, the place which is in the midst of hundred

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44 Richard Folkard, Plant Lore, Legends, and Lyrics Embracing the Myths, Traditions, Superstitions, and Folk-Lore of the Plant Kingdom, p. 520-521.

45 Ingram, op. cit., p. 40.

46 Winifred S. Blackman, "Rosaries," in James Hastings, Ed., Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 10, p. 847-856.

> myriad miles of emptiness, the place which is in the midst of the tens of hundred myriads of emptiness, eternal desert where the true Buddha exists. There is eternal existence with Tranquil Peace.[47]

Hindus of the Śākti sect, when praying for a son, use a rosary called the putr jiwa ('which gives life to sons').[48] At a temple of Rama or Siva they repeat a short prayer one hundred twenty thousand times, then make a fire sacrifice. Imitative incantation is obvious in this ceremony, as the beads are of light-colored seeds, oval in shape, abundant in growth. On the other hand, when the worshipper desires not the growth of something but rather the shriveling or disappearance of an object, he uses small black, dry, crinkled seeds for his beads. A temple of Siva is chosen for the recitation of the Hindu rosary because this divinity is the arch-yogī of the gods, the master of the dance of the universe which induces the 'experience of the divine, the realization of one's own secret nature, and the mergence into the divine essence.'[49] In his dance position, Siva is the emblem for the paradox of the motion of time in the stillness of eternity: the motion of the limbs versus the imperturbable calm of face and head: motion in fixity. This is

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47 Ibid., p. 851-852.

48 Ibid., p. 849.

49 Heinrich Zimmer, Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, edited by Joseph Campbell, p. 133; 151; 155.

but another expression of nirvāna and the Law of the Universe symbolized by the wheel or the rose-cross, which in its moving-fixity or fixed mobility creates the still-point of existence. The rosary, then, in addition to its many other associations, evokes the idea of ultimate realization either by way of the cosmic Dance of Siva or by way of the solar wheel. In either case, there is a central pivotal point, a mathematically pure point about which all related parts turn, but which remains immovable in relation to the rest.[50] Outside the center there is no repose because there is still the pull of opposites; but at the center is the 'quietude of love beyond desire,' perfect harmony, serenity, and oneness won through the practice of perfect sympathy with all being.[51] In Christian and Buddhist religions, a wheel-like object called the mandala expresses fulfillment and completion--in the former, the possession of God; in the latter, the attainment of Brahmā, atman, or nirvāna. The mandala figure may be in the shape of a quartered circle, an encircled point, a rose-window, or an eternal rose of souls as in Dante's vision.[52] As a conscious art form, its center bears the figure of Christ or Buddha; its spokes and rim

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50 Wheelwright, op. cit., p. 361-362.

51 Ibid., p. 126-127; 361-362; 364.

52 Watts, op. cit., p. 12; 230.

take on the form of rose or lotus.[53] It is difficult to distinguish a stylized rose from a stylized lotos. Indians, Egyptians, and Japanese call the symbol "lotos;" Persians, Greeks, and Romans call it "rose." Whatever its name, it indicates completeness of being. The wheel, the Siva position, the encircled point, the quartered circle, the rose-window, all are concrete representations of abstract perfection. The swastika, too, mentioned above as a solar symbol, takes on the meaning of nirvāna, inasmuch as it is a symbol which represents the reconciliation of opposites: light and dark, death and life, male and female, good and evil. According to some mythologists, it is but another form of the lotos,[54] which is the Hindu symbol of "Enlightening Wisdom," the wisdom of nirvāna.

> ...our goddess Lotus, the ageless Mother Earth... procreative energy and fortune on the physical plane, now transfigured under the aspect of Prajñā-Pāramitā,[55] has become the queen of the spiritual kingdom attained through enlightenment... representing extinction...of both individualized consciousness and the cosmic manifold of biological, human and godly being.[56]

The process of attaining Brahmā forms a mandala or rose in itself, since

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53 Elizabeth Drew, T. S. Eliot, The Design of His Poetry, p. 142.

54 Skinner, op. cit., p. 160-161.

55 This word means "Enlightening Wisdom now gone to and abiding upon the other shore," Zimmer, op. cit., p. 98.

56 Zimmer, op. cit., p. 98-99.

> all objects that the mind apprehends through the senses are capable of being withdrawn into the mind; the mind can be withdrawn into the understanding; the understanding can be withdrawn into the Soul, and the Soul into the Supreme.[57]

It is interesting to note here that Brahmā 'blazes like a smokeless fire.'[58] Where there is the rose, there is fire. Whether it be in the planting and harvest festivals, in the good luck customs of peasants, marriage divinations, testimonials of innocence and virtue, proclamations of divinity, or prayers for fertility, the rose and fire are inseparable.

Although there is not much material available to the non-member concerning Rosicrucian beliefs, there is enough on the library shelves to show it a religion with the cabalistic rose as its center. The cabalistic rose is a 'rose of light' in the center of which a human figure stands with arms extended in the shape of a cross,[59] similar to, or the same as, the mandala art form. According to Éliphas Lévi, the Rosicrucian rose is a symbol of Renaissance protests against oppression of spirit, celibacy, and sterility of any kind. It is the 'living floral symbol of humanity aspiring towards natural religion, full of reason and love, founded

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57 V. Fausboll, Indian Mythology According to the Mahābhārata, in Outline, p. 66-67.

58 Ibid., p. 67.

59 Éliphas Lévi, The History of Magic, Including a Clear and Precise Exposition of Its Procedure, Its Rites and Its Mysteries, p. 265.

on the revelations of the harmony of being.'[60] There is another reason for the choice of the rose as the partial symbol of this occult religion. According to a secret tradition, Adam's task in the Garden was to grow a paradise of roses from which flowed the four rivers of Eden in the shape of a cross--hence, the 'rosy cross' or 'Rosae Crucis.'[61] The combination of the two symbols represents a nirvāna where the opposites of the universe are perceived as a unity; it represents, on the physical level, the union of the two sexes, as well as the alchemical wedding of sulphur and mercury.[62] In Rosicrucianism, spiritual alchemy, represented by the union of physical opposites, is the means to paradise. Robert Fludd, the first writer of Rosicrucian doctrine, said: "Through alchemy the children of the world will find access to the paradise of bliss, where we obtain the 'red rose' [the blood of Christ]."[63]

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60 Ibid., p. 263.

61 Ibid., p. 107, note 1.

62 John Senior, The Way Down and Out, The Occult in Symbolist Literature, p. 43-44.

63 Quoted in R. Swinburne Clymer, The Book of Rosicruciae, A Condensed History of the Fraternitas Rosae Crucis, or Rosy Cross, the men who made the Order Possible, and those who Maintained the Fraternity Throughout the Centuries, Together with the Fundamental Teachings of these men According to the Actual Records in the Archives of the Fraternity, Vol. 2, p. xix.

As a religious symbol, the rose represents divinity, sanctity, and virtue; it is an image of final attainment or perfection; it is synonymous with miracles and portents; it suggests fecundity in the physical and spiritual orders. In Christianity, it represents Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and various saints; in Eastern religions, it is closely related to the lives of the prophets and demi-gods. Whether regarded as esoteric, cabalistic, or divinely-revealed, the religion in which it appears uses it as a figure or reminder of the ultimate.

CHAPTER FOUR

APPLICATION OF ROSE-LORE TO T. S. ELIOT'S "ROSE" PASSAGES

Among the twenty-nine varieties[1] of flowers or blossoms which T. S. Eliot names in his published poems and plays from 1909 to 1950,[2] the rose is the most predominant. It appears seventeen times in the poems and three times in the plays either as the rose flower, as the symbolic title, "Rose," or as "rose-garden." The application of the material presented in the preceding chapters will be limited to the passages in which the word "rose" specifically appears. Many other passages in Eliot make indirect reference to rose material by using such expressions as the "wheel" or "still-point," "garden," "door" or "gate," and "fire." Appendix 2 lists these appearances for further study; however, they will not be considered in this thesis.

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1 The flowers which Eliot names are: ailanthus, apple-blossom, flowering chestnut, clematis, cowslip, cyclamen, daffodil, dahlia, delphinium, dogwood, geranium, golden-rod, hawthorn, hibiscus, hollyhock, hyacinth, flowering judas, larkspur, lavender, lilac, lobelia, lotos, primrose, rose, snowdrop, sunflower, sweet pea, violet, and wistaria. The flowers next highest to the rose in frequency of appearance are the lilac, which appears five times, and the violet and hyacinth, each of which appears four times.

2 The text used throughout this chapter is T. S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950.

The purpose of this chapter is to show that Eliot's rose-passages acquire more depth and significance through a knowledge of rose-lore. As far as possible, the application of rose-lore will be limited to the immediate passage in which the word "rose" appears. However, in some instances, closely-related material from preceding or succeeding lines will be cited in order to suggest the full significance of the "rose" line. The poems will be considered first, then the plays--all in chronological order. Appendix 1 cites these works and the page on which the rose-passage appears.

"Rhapsody on a Windy Night"

The significance of the rose in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" lies in the fact that it is of paper. The 'speaker' says:

> Her hand twists a paper rose,
> That smells of dust and eau de Cologne,
> She is alone
> With all the old nocturnal smells
> That cross and cross across her brain.

It is not merely lifeless; it is artificial, having a superimposed odor of 'eau de Cologne.' It represents a life which has all the appearances of being lived, but which is, in reality, bereft of light, vitality, productivity, and awareness. This false existence, covered with 'dust,' is a death-in-life. The setting is beyond the stage of decay--it has reached the ultimate of disintegration, dust. The paper rose represents the lure of a false 'beauty,' pock-marked, thought-less, care-less. To the man who met and

left her among 'the old nocturnal smells,' she was momentarily a Venus and Rhodanthe and Cleopatra. But while the loves of the latter were enhanced by hundreds of fresh blooms, her appeal is worth one rose--a paper rose.

As a central symbol in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," the rose evokes strong contrasts in the time and place settings. Here, it is associated with a passive moon and night rather than with creative sun and day. The life-rituals imitative of Aurora, Apollo, and Adonis are here replaced by sterile, debased acts which serve only to extend life-in-death. Whereas the frenzied ceremonies dedicated to the gods of nature had as their end rejuvenation, the action in 'Rhapsody' has its end in itself. There is no rejuvenation in the 'cracked' face; the mind is dull with old thoughts of old objects. In the estimation of the male character, the ritual just performed is an experience in death, unrelated to the 'life' of stereotyped day; at the conclusion of his visit, he says, "Sleep, prepare for life." He recognizes in his clandestine venture not a generating or life-producing sleep, but rather, a little bit of death. It is not the relationship with the woman which spells 'life;' it is tooth-brushes and shined shoes. In the Adonis rites, a period of sterility and emptiness was tolerated only as a means to the resurrection of life. But, in 'Rhapsody,' it is the desired end.

In direct contrast to the voluptuous backgrounds of the classical rose-queens is the dingy sordidness of the ill-ventilated 'rhapsody' house. Here is the Parnassus of the slums, the rose-garden of delight. Its approach is not rose-strewn walks, perfumed canals and antechambers, but rather, twisted paths of memory cluttered with harsh, ugly, sinister objects. The rose-laden tables and deep rose-carpets are replaced by a disturbing setting of stale smells--female and neuter. In rose legend, love-making is generally surrounded by freshness and life; in 'Rhapsody,' flowers are dead, smells are left-overs, and desire is a reflex. In this setting stands the Woman--the Venus, the Lakshmī, Prima Materia. The mythological rose-scented, flawless gown is replaced by a torn and stained dress. The Mother of the Universe 'winks a feeble eye,' and 'smiles foolishly into corners.'

In a sense, nirvāna is achieved in this room. Holding her rose, the woman contemplates the emptiness about and in her, 'the thousand myriad miles of emptiness, the place which is in the midst of hundred myriad miles of emptiness...eternal desert....'[3] She has achieved a sort of tranquillity in her despair. She has emptied her mind of all thought; she has achieved the state of passivity which is the goal of Eastern contemplation. Her mind has become a

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3 Refer to p. 56-57 above.

fit receptacle for the 'wisdom' of her sordid existence: remembered sense impressions.

As a symbol of love, the rose in this passage takes on special significance, again, by way of forcible contrasts. First of all, there is no love here, only animal instinct and habit. The relationship is so devoid of the personal that it 'ne garde aucune rancune,'[4] and takes as its hallmark a worn paper rose. Opposed to this is the love of Tristan and Iseult, or Mem and Zin, which was so intense that it lived even after death in the guise of a living, indestructible rose tree. Inasmuch as the rose is held by a woman of low repute, its presence recalls the German law which compelled fallen women to wear the red rose as a punishment for their immoral conduct.

The Hollow Men

The 'multifoliate rose' of The Hollow Men raises more images from Dante's Divine Comedy than from the material studied in this thesis.

> In this last of meeting places
> We grope together
> And avoid speech
> Gathered on this beach of the tumid river
>
> Sightless, unless
> The eyes reappear
> As the perpetual star

---

4 "holds no grudge."

Multifoliate rose
Of death's twilight kingdom
The hope only
Of empty men.

However, a few rose-lore themes apply. The multifoliate rose, formed by myriads of petals infolded in myriads of petals, is a symbol found in Buddhism, which represents the attainment of Brahmā. It is a form of wheel of life. It is also a symbol of Lotus, or Lakshmī, goddess of procreative energy, who sprang from the center of a rose. Eliot uses the multifoliate rose in a negative sense, as an end which the "empty men" cannot attain. The attainment of Brahmā, though presupposing an emptying of self, does not mean an empty self in the sense of a devitalized being without purpose. Rather, Brahmā requires an intense activity of the soul in a motionless body. Eliot's "hollow men" go through the physical motions of existence, but their souls are dead. They live their lives on the rim of the rose-wheel where they are in constant motion, but where they are farthest removed from the motionless activity of vital existence which is symbolized by the center of the rose-wheel. As a symbol of Lakshmī, who is procreative energy, the rose serves to reiterate the contrast in this passage between degeneration and vitality. The degenerate "hollow men" might still engage in generative acts on the physical plane, but wisdom in their activities is absent. At one time in the history of her development, Lakshmī was simply the world-mother, who

gave birth to an unending succession of beings. As world-mother, she concerned herself only with the physical. From this level, however, she gradually reached the position of the highest feminine principle of Wisdom. The "hollow men" never leave the physical; therefore, it is impossible for them to reach the spiritual.

Ash-Wednesday

The second section of Ash-Wednesday uses several symbols which have a legendary, mythological, or folk-lore significance. Among these are the rose, the still-point, and the rose-garden.

> Lady of silences
> Calm and distressed
> Torn and most whole
> Rose of memory
> Rose of forgetfulness
> Exhausted and life-giving
> Worried reposeful
> The single Rose
> Is now the Garden
> Where all loves end....

The litany-like chant of the short lines, the appellation "Rose of memory" and "Rose of forgetfulness" are close to the "Mystical Rose" title for the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Litany of Loretto. The use of the capitalized "Mother" a few lines later in conjunction with "the Garden/ Where all love ends" is a further indication that the 'Lady of silences' is the Virgin. In Medieval Christianity, both the Earthly Paradise and Heaven were called Mary's rose-gardens.

They were hers to give as a reward to those who had suffered persecution and martyrdom or who had remained faithful to her. In Medieval Christianity, Mary was also known as the rose or rose-garden guarded by God. In Eliot's passage, the "single Rose" is the "Garden;" and in this garden 'torments terminate.' The poet is saying what Medieval tradition taught: Mary is not only the Lady who awards the rose to the Christian; she is also the rose awarded. In other examples of rose-lore, Mary and the rose are associated in childbirth: when she gave birth to Christ, she brought the rose to earth; when her flower, the rose of Jerico or 'Maria's Hand,' is present, delivery is safe and speedy. In Ash-Wednesday, Eliot uses two birth expressions in reference to the Rose Lady: 'torn and most whole;' 'exhausted and life-giving.' The first of these is an oxymoron which summarizes Catholic doctrine concerning Mary's virginity after the conception and birth of Christ. The second describes any woman at childbirth; more than that, however, because it comes directly after the titles "Rose of memory" and "Rose of forgetfulness" and just before 'the Rose which is the Garden,' it would seem again to refer to the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the field of mythology, this passage gives a general picture of the rose-rites in which an individual or a group of selected individuals had to spend themselves in order that the life and welfare of a whole community would be

protected. It suggests the pain suffered by Adonis or Attis in order that vegetation might flourish.

This passage in Ash-Wednesday is one of noticeable opposites--'calm and distressed,' 'torn and whole,' 'memory and forgetfulness,' 'exhausted and life-giving,' 'worried and reposeful,' 'end and endless,' 'journey to no end,' 'conclusion and inconclusible,' 'speech without word,' and 'word of no speech.' This series of opposites begins with silence, with the words, "Lady of silences," and ends in silence in the rose-garden where all opposites are resolved. The nirvāna wheel symbol or rose mandala has a hub of absolute calm around which there is the constant motion of spoke and rim. Each of the spokes has an opposite on the other side of the hub. As long as these opposites remain as opposites, there is restlessness; where they come together at the still-point, there is absolute repose. Where all diverse and conflicting loves end, that is the rose-garden.

Four Quartets

"Burnt Norton"

In "Burnt Norton," Eliot uses the rose symbol four times to express a timeless moment called the still-point. The theme is introduced with mention of a "rose-garden" which had never been enjoyed because its gate was never opened.

> Footfalls echo in the memory
> Down the passage which we did not take

Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo
Thus, in your mind.

Mythology, popular belief, and religion can all contribute to the fuller meaning of this passage, inasmuch as each has several examples of gardens of delight, fulfillment, and ecstasy. Whether it be Venus' garden or Vishnu's, the prognosticative arbors of European peasants or the sensuous pleasure-gardens of the East, the Earthly Paradise or the love-inspired and love-inspiring gardens of Christ, the Father, or the Blessed Virgin Mary, the door 'never opened' onto any of these indicates a blank and arid, lonely and loveless time-corridor, or a life which, as yet, has no purpose. Were the speaker unaware of the unopened door and garden, there would be no pathos. But, because he fills his time-corridor with empty echoes, because he realizes, now, what lies beyond the gate, the rueful regret of a wrong decision--or no decision at all--torments and frustrates him. This realization of an opportunity lost is expressed in the second rose-passage of "Burnt Norton" when the speaker says,

But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves
I do not know.

In the physical order, the door unopened leads to human love, symbolized by Venus and Cupid among their roses. The obstacle between the seeker and Love is an unbarred door, as simple to overcome as Dietrich's thread of silk, if the

seeker is unintimidated; or, as difficult to overcome as the twelve warrior-guards, if the seeker is Prufrock-hearted. Had the speaker had the wisdom to enter the real rose-garden rather than a chimerical one, he would have been rewarded with a volley of delight-full roses, rather than the devastating echoes of unpleasant memories. Had he entered the garden at the proper time, with the right intentions, his fate would have been made as clear to him as to the maidens on Midsummer's Eve. But since he did not try the door to the rose-garden, only 'speculation' remains to him.

> What might have been is an abstraction
> Remaining a perpetual possibility
> Only in a world of speculation.

In Hindu mythology, Lakshmī is the 'door or gate of the womb of the universe.'[5] When this door is opened, life (Wisdom) is produced. When it is left unopened, there is no life.

The 'why' of the unopened door arises here. It would seem that the speaker cannot open it because he is spiritually unfit--either immature or impure. Unlike Galahad, he cannot attain the rose because he has not a 'pure heart, lofty mind or strong purpose.'[6] Or, like Tannhäuser, he approaches the Venus garden with impure intentions and is rewarded with remorse. Since Eliot involves two people in the approach to the garden, and since the footfalls echo not

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5 Refer to p. 12 above.

6 Refer to p. 38-39 above.

merely in one person's memory but in the memories of both, and since the echoes are of a disturbing nature, it is possible that an impure heart, a mean mind, or a weak purpose prevented the attainment of love and delight. The might-have-been is a poignant theme. Nothing is accomplished by 'disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves;' yet, it is this very disturbance or jolting of thought which leads to the contemplation, in Part II of "Burnt Norton," of the ultimate rose-garden: the still-point of existence.

> Time past and time future
> Allow but a little consciousness.
> To be conscious is not to be in time
> But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
> The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
> The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
> Be remembered....

Just as in Eastern religions, the rose form and encircled point of nirvāna are equated, so too, in Eliot, these ancient symbols are united. Further, just as the lotos and the rose are synonymous in some Eastern religions, they are also equated in "Burnt Norton" by Eliot's placing the lotos in the heart of the rose-garden where 'time past and time future' are gathered into the present.

> ...for the roses
> Had the look of flowers that are looked at.
> There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting.
> So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,
> Along the empty alley, into the box circle,
> To look down into the drained pool.
> Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,

> And the pool was filled with water out of
> sunlight,
> And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly....

The fact, too, that the sun creates the mirage lotos, adds another rose form to "Burnt Norton"--the wheel or Law of the Universe which, in mythology, is regarded as the symbol for life.

Rose symbolism becomes a unifying element in what would otherwise seem to be disparate sections of one poem. When its relationship to the lotos and the sun and the still-point of existence is established, then the complexity occasioned by seemingly irrelated parts, is removed.

"East Coker"

As in much of Eliot's poetry, the preoccupation of Part II of "East Coker" is with the foolishness of existence and the terrifying patterns of life. 'Late roses filled with early snow,' that is, roses blooming out of season, are an omen of misfortune in folk-lore. When the order of nature is disturbed, man suffers either its actual punishment or the fear of punishment. In this passage, the presence of unseasonably warm weather in November presages that time when the world will be consumed by fire. But before that universal moment of terror, there will be lived the individual moments of disillusion and despair, and the realization of the uselessness of existence.

What is the late November doing
With the disturbance of the spring
And creatures of the summer heat,
And snowdrops writhing under feet
And hollyhocks that aim too high
Red into grey and tumble down
Late roses filled with early snow?
Thunder rolled by the rolling stars
Simulates triumphal cars
Deployed in constellated wars....

In folk-lore, the misfortune was limited to a single person who saw the unseasonable flower, or to the family in whose yard it bloomed. In "East Coker," the vision of the flower portends universal as well as individual disaster. This passage takes on added significance if considered in direct contrast to the Midsummer's Eve dances and fertility fires referred to in the preceding lines:

Round and round the fire
Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,
Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter
Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,
Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth
Mirth of those long since under earth
Nourishing the corn.

Many of the rose images are here: fire, wheel, death and resurrection rites--all in a setting of joy and revelry because of the promise of fortune. However, in the 'late rose' passage, the tone is ominous, restless, and foreboding. The rose is not in its proper element. Things are out of place; life is not properly ordered, and, therefore, proper ends cannot be achieved.

In a second rose-passage in "East Coker," the rose and fire are used synonymously.

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

They are also used paradoxically. Although natural fire warms, purgatorial fire cools the soul set on fire by earthly desire. If the soul is to attain the warmth of Eternal Love, then it must first be rid of all burning after earthly creatures. To be warm, it must first be deprived of warmth.

The rose in mythology and folk tradition is frequently a symbol of ideal human love, considered either from a purely physical point of view or as a combination of physical and spiritual qualities. In reference to Venus, Cleopatra, Nourmahal, Tristan and Iseult, Mem and Zin, the ladies of Worms, Margon and Lisane, or the nightingale, it symbolizes the apex of love; it represents a good to be attained. On the other hand, the rose is a symbol of licentiousness and sensual gratification, apparent in the tales of Bacchus and Zeus, in the accounts of Roman feasts in honor of Venus and Flora, in the story of the guilty love of Tannhäuser for Venus, and in the custom of pinning roses to the dresses of fallen girls. Flame, too, has a two-fold interpretation: it is an agent for driving away evil and producing good fortune and vitality; or, it is a symbol of destruction and evil. In mythology and folk tradition, the fire drives away witches who cast evil spells on animal and

vegetable; as a sun-symbol, it assures fertility and maximum production of crops. However, when it burns too long or too intensely, this beneficial sun-fire can become an agent of destruction by searing the land. In "East Coker," the flame is both destructive and beneficial, inasmuch as it destroys sensual desire in order that the desire for the spiritual may grow. In this sense, the flame has the attributes of the rose which destroys as well as of the rose which brings good. From a different point of view, the flame destroys the rose of earthly desire in order that the rose of divine love may grow. Just as smoke accompanies fire, so briars accompany the rose. In other words, if there is to be the rose of divine love, there necessarily will be the thorn of suffering before that rose can be enjoyed.

"The Dry Salvages"

"The Dry Salvages" contains two roses, the briar-rose and a Royal Rose. The first is in a passage dealing with 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.

The second, in Part III, is in a passage where time is the predominant preoccupation.

> ...the future is a faded song, a Royal Rose or a lavender spray
> Of wistful regret for those who are not yet here

to regret,
Pressed between yellow leaves of a book that has
never been opened.

The rose-lore presented in the preceding chapters does not mention specifically an instance of 'salt on the briar rose.' However, in the story of Tristan and Iseult, the sea (salt-water) was instrumental in bringing about the tragic end to their love; and the briar-rose sprang from their tombs as a testimonial of their undying love. The stanza in which the allusion appears recounts the tragedy in the lives of those who live by the sea, especially of the "anxious worried women" who 'lie awake' and 'calculate the future futureless.' In the Tristan legend, it was Iseult who could not survive a future without Tristan; in the Eliot passage, it is also the woman who wonders if she can survive the future without her mate. Salt is both a preservative and a destroyer. Since the briar-rose in the Tristan legend stands for love, salt on the rose stands for preserved love. Salt, improperly used, can kill. In the Tristan story, salt, taken as a figure for the circumstances that led to Tristan's death, terminated the love that the two could express for each other. "The salt is on the briar rose" is a thought both tragic and happy--tragic, because it is a death figure, but happy, because it bears the promise of immortality. Part I of "The Dry Salvages" presents a tragic sea-picture; but the last section of the poem ends with the hope for freedom from pain.

The second rose in "The Dry Salvages" is elusive as far as rose-lore is concerned. In this study, there appeared only one 'royal' rose, the Tudor Rose created after the War of the Roses by the joining of the Lancastrian red and the York white. Other than the suggestion that war creates dissension and sorrow, there is little relevancy between the two. As a means of divining the future, Eliot's "Rose" finds predecessors in rose-lore, in the spring and summer mating-rituals. However, Eliot's rose is a thing of the past which brings only regret in the future; the Midsummer's Eve rose was a thing of the present which gave promise of joy for the future. Perhaps the passage says that the future never quite measures up to the anticipations of the present for the future.

"Little Gidding"

"Little Gidding" contains four references to the rose. The first, in Part II, suggests ancient rose-fire ceremonies.

> Ash on an old man's sleeve
> Is all the ash the burnt roses leave.
> Dust in the air suspended
> Marks the place where a story ended.

In the past, roses were burnt as offerings to gods and the elements to insure productivity, health, good fortune and the like. In "Little Gidding," the ashes left by the burnt roses fall on an old man's sleeve; they will be useless

since they fall on sterility; they are the ashes of death; they will bring about no resurrection or beginning; they are harbingers of the end. In the narrow sense, this passage refers to the destruction wrought by war; in the broader sense, it is but another repetition of Eliot's theme of the wasted land--sterile act where there should be fertility; fertile act where there is seeming sterility. In this passage, the offering of the rose for burning is a senseless offering because it is unintended and accidental. The hands which lighted the fire were consecrated to destruction, not to the placation of the gods of life. Something beautiful is destroyed, not to assure the growth of many goods, but to put an end to growth. The sacred rituals of the past are supplanted by meaningless destruction. It is for these reasons that 'all the ash the burnt roses leave is the ash on an old man's sleeve.' At one time, rose-dust kept in the house or sprinkled about was a charm against evil; here, it is an evil, settling in the air with the dusty remains of a house and the life which once dwelt in that house.

Part III of "Little Gidding" refers once to the rose in a passage which speaks of death.

> Why should we celebrate
> These dead men more than the dying?
> It is not to ring the bell backward
> Nor is it an incantation
> To summon the spectre of a Rose.
> We cannot revive old factions
> We cannot restore old policies
> Or follow an antique drum.

This passage recalls three rose incidents--a war, Midsummer's Eve witchcraft, and fertility rites. In the War of the Roses, the House of Lancaster, under the banner of the red rose, and the House of York, under the banner of the white, fought against each other. They were opposing "factions" expressing opposing "policies." It was not until after the death of many soldiers that the two houses became a "single party" united under a single banner, the Tudor Rose. From the victor and from the defeated came the heritage of a single symbol, the rose: "a symbol perfected in death."

Death is the prevailing note in this section of "Little Gidding." In the lines preceding the word "Rose," the poet associates the idea of commemorating the memory of dead men with the idea of intoning words or performing rites in order to raise up spectres. In mythology, Adonis returned to life because of Venus' fidelity to his memory and her pleading with Proserpine to release Adonis from the underworld. Those who took part in rites commemorating the death and resurrection of vegetation gods intoned words and entered into prescribed rituals in order that the deities might once again bless the earth.

Doing things backwards is a divination charm in rose-lore which is supposed to assure the 'summoning of spectres.' The difference is that the rose-garden rite

assures a vision of a living man or woman; the rite in this passage speaks of the vision of men of the past. The fact that they are spoken of in the negative, as men who can no longer return to earth, denies the efficacy of black magic in reviving the past. Even though they cannot be revived, however, the influence of their lives--or rather, their deaths--on the present is just as efficacious as the return of a god to earth; by their death, unity is achieved. In mythology, the lamentations and tears of the followers of Adonis brought purification to the earth; in this passage, the prayers of the men of the present over the war-dead purify motives and restore good to the country.

Part V of "Little Gidding" mentions the rose twice. The first is in a passage in which death and time predominate.

> We die with the dying:
> See, they depart, and we go with them.
> We are born with the dead:
> See, they return, and bring us with them.
> The moment of the rose and the moment of the
> yew-tree
> Are of equal duration. A people without history
> Is not redeemed from time, for history is a
> pattern
> Of timeless moments.

The second appears in a passage dealing with the discovery of the meaning of life.

> All manner of thing shall be well
> When the tongues of flame are in-folded
> Into the crowned knot of fire
> And the fire and the rose are one.

Here are passages which bring to mind the eternal rose or still-point of existence, and vegetation rites. To appreciate the full significance of the first passage, research into the meaning of the yew-tree as a symbol would be necessary. However, standing by itself, the rose is a symbol of sensual desire or transient love which, in comparison to eternity, lasts but a moment. If the desire causes restlessness and torment, the experience seems to last an "eternity," but, when measured against timelessness, it lasts but a moment. The moment when human love is fully realized seems to be a timeless moment, but, in reality, is a moment in time. Rose annals produce many stories of transient love, some of which present pleasurable experiences, others telling of sorrow and tragedy in love. In mythology, Venus offered pleasure to her pursuivants; in her own love for Adonis, however, she found tragedy. Ill-fated lovers such as Cleopatra and Antony, Tristan and Iseult, Mem and Zin, and Tannhäuser and Venus, found the moments of happiness to be transitory. Dietrich and his group of courtly lovers, as well as Nourmahal and her Sultan, found their moments of love to be diverting and enjoyable. All of these figures are both dead and living. As individuals, they are out of life; but as memories, they remain in life as examples of various experiences in love. As symbols of tragedy or joy, they are reborn in anyone who lives a moment similar to theirs.

In another sense, the "moment of the rose" refers not to time but to eternity. It is the eternal timelessness when all that was transitory is caught up into an eternal whole. The "timeless" moment in time, mistaken for the "beginning," is more often the end. On the other hand, the end of the transitory "is where we start from." "The moment of the rose" is the still-point of existence, the rose-garden in which all loves end. It is the reconciliation of the opposites in the wheel of life. The spoke of happiness is as long or as short as the spoke of sorrow. Both travel in two directions: away from the center and toward the center. Acts leading away from the center end in frustration and restlessness because they are opposed to or find opposition in another point of the wheel of existence. Acts leading toward the center terminate in happiness because all opposing forces are reconciled at this point on the wheel of life. In Eastern thought, the still-point is represented by Buddha or Siva or Brahmā, each of whom is associated in some way with the rose. In Western thought, Eliot's comments on timelessness, beginnings, and endings evoke beliefs and legends in which Christ and the Blessed Virgin figure. Christ and Mary either are or have rose-gardens where mortal life ends and eternal life begins. In Christian rose-lore, Christ's garden is timelessness--those who visit Him there, discover on their return to their homes, that moments on

earth tick into years and centuries while an endless "moment" is enjoyed in eternity. In Christian lore, the rose is also a memento of the suffering which must be endured in time if eternity is to be achieved. This is illustrated by the legend in which the Child pelted Susan with a shower of roses to test her endurance, and by the bride-of-Christ story in which roses covered Christ's wounds.

A final application of rose-lore to this passage is from vegetation rites. It was only after the death and burial of a god-substitute that plants could grow. Through imitative rituals, the rebirth of spring occurred, just as it was believed to have occurred originally through the death of a god. When Adonis or Attis died, the whole earth died; when they returned to earth, life returned.

> We die with the dying:
> See, they depart, and we go with them.
> We are born with the dead:
> See, they return, and bring us with them.

The second of the rose-passages in Part V of "Little Gidding" identifies the flower with fire. Here, again, the general picture created is that of the still-point which is the beginning of life even though it comes at the "end of all our exploring." This general picture is created by juxtaposing various eternity symbols, three of which have to do with this paper: the gate, the fire, and the rose. The gate suggests the "little door" into the rose-garden which is left unopened because of fear, cowardice, impure

intention, or attraction to other objects. Dietrich of Bern overcame the barrier keeping him from the garden and was rewarded with love. Midsummer's Eve maidens walked into their gardens and found love. The German maids and the Sultan's daughter, who walked into Christ's rose-garden found Paradise. Those who walked into Venus' rose-garden found the center of beauty and love. On the other hand, a monk who denied the goodness of an earthly paradise was punished with its loss; Adam and Eve, whose sin caused the white rose to turn red with shame, lost Paradise when they misused it; and Tannhäuser, who walked into a false garden, was punished with the torments of satiety and despair. All of these examples indicate that entering the rose-garden is a desired end; leaving the rose-garden brings unhappiness. The fire of sensual love keeps the individual from entering the true rose-garden. When he does attain it, it is because the fire has been transformed into the pure flame of eternal love. The rose of this passage also has a two-fold meaning: it is the rose of sensual desire, exemplified in rose-lore by various instances of earthly love and its pursuit; it is also the rose of eternal love, exemplified in rose-lore by various instances of heavenly love. The fire of sensual desire becomes the rose of eternal desire in the rose-garden. Or, the rose of sensual desire becomes the fire of eternal desire at the point of self-perfection. Each term is

antithetical; each term is synonymous. 'Fire consumes fire; fire redeems fire.'[7]

In this passage is the familiar still-point of existence. When the rose of sensual desire has been transformed into the rose of eternal love, and the "fire and the rose are one," then does real existence begin; for, it is at this point that conflicts cease, and unity and perfection begin.

Murder in the Cathedral

Eliot uses the rose as a death symbol in Murder in the Cathedral.

> I have smelt
> Death in the rose, death in the hollyhock, sweet pea, hyacinth, primrose and cowslip. I have seen
> Trunk and horn, tusk and hoof, in odd places....

Although this flower is generally considered the sign of life, youth, beauty, and joy, in this passage it recalls many facts, legends, and myths which associate it with death: England's civil war, fought under the standards of the red and the white roses; the Talmudic legend of the dream of Eve; the Greek myth concerning the transformation of Rhodanthe; the Roman Catholic Golden Rose; the story of the Roumanian Prince Trandafir; the rose of the Virgin given to incurably-ill children; the rose of omen visible through the sick-room window; and the rose of warning appearing in the monks'

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7 "Little Gidding," Part IV.

chairs to warn them of impending death. In Murder in the Cathedral, the death of Thomas is inevitable. The visionary women of Canterbury sense this through the subtle yet extraordinarily clear manifestations of an uneasy and disrupted Nature. Here, again, the world is out of harmony; things are not in their proper element. The 'trunk, horn, tusk, and hoof' are in 'odd places.' Where there should be nourishment, there is corruption; where there should be corruption, there is incense; where there should be beauty and life in the rose, there is death.

Certain of the above allusions are more dramatic than others in their application to Eliot's play. For instance, the Talmudic legend of Eve's dream bears close parallels. The Chorus has a presentiment of death which is fulfilled in a short time; there are the despairing lamentations of the Chorus (which claims to bear as much guilt as the actual murderers); Thomas, as a priest and archbishop, is the shepherd who is clothed in the purifying robe of martyrdom; and the Te Deum is the song of praise lifted by the Chorus to God for making a saint.

In the Greek myth, proud Rhodanthe is pierced with Apollo's sun-arrows and thus changed into a rose for usurping Diana's place in the temple. It is in the temple that Rhodanthe met her death; it is in a temple that Thomas met his; both, for a time, used the temple for sanctuary. Rhodanthe was punished for her pride; Thomas, also.

Rhodanthe's physical beauty is forever commemorated in the rose; Thomas' spiritual beauty is commemorated in his beatification.

Ill-omen as well as honor are associated with the Golden Rose conferred by the Pope on Laetare Sunday. Because several of the recipients of this award have met violent deaths or have suffered various kinds of tragedy, those who are superstitiously inclined might draw the conclusion that outstanding service to the Church brings the reward of death. The application to Thomas is apparent.

There is a similarity between the legend of Trandafir and the events in Becket's life. Thomas, a 'nobleman' of the Church, who had enjoyed power and prestige for many years, realizes their emptiness and wishes to be taken from the earth. Having lived in miserable exile for seven years, he voluntarily chooses death that he might be at peace again. Just as Trandafir offered his natural life in exchange for a higher one, so Thomas sacrificed his for a greater.

Less striking but perhaps more obvious is the parallelism between the War of the Roses and the Becket story. Unreconcilable differences between Church and State or man and State bring death to Thomas, just as differences between civil factions bring death under the banners of the red and the white roses. It is death which reconciles Lancaster and York in the Tudor Rose; it is death which reconciles Church

and State and brings a hope for spiritual regeneration in the land.

The similarity between the Chorus' rose and the German rose of warning is also apparent. The flower blooming out of season is a warning to the women of Canterbury that their priest will die; the rose in the chair warns the monk that he will die. In both stories, the acceptance of death brings peace; its rejection brings disaster or promises to do so.

The Family Reunion

In Part II, Scene II, of The Family Reunion, Eliot uses the rose-garden twice, as a symbol of opportunity lost or reality rejected, as well as a symbol of the still-point of existence. Agatha says:

> I only looked through the little door
> When the sun was shining on the rose-garden:
> And heard in the distance tiny voices
> And then a black raven flew over.
> And then I was only my own feet walking
> Away, down a concrete corridor
> In a dead air.

As in "Burnt Norton," this rejected garden is the center of existence, the still-point which reveals that any other existence is shadow.

> The things I thought were real are shadows, and the real
> Are what I thought were private shadows.

It is possible that the "little door" to this rose-garden

opens onto a sensuous love reminiscent of the anthropomorphic attachments of the gods and goddesses of love. It is possible that its unlatching promises the delights and pleasures of Eastern court-yards. It is possible that in this rose-garden the seeker will find a mate. In other words, the garden in The Family Reunion could symbolize an ideal human love. However, in the light of the passages which precede and follow, this garden goes beyond the garden of human delights to the timeless garden of self-realization--the still-point of existence. Though there are two people speaking (Agatha and Harry), each is speaking to himself in a moment of self-understanding when the real is recognized as real and the shadow as shadow. In "Burnt Norton," it is the "door we never opened;"[8] in The Family Reunion, it is the door 'through which I looked.' In "Burnt Norton," it is "we" who walk from the garden or toward the still-point; in The Family Reunion, it is Agatha alone whose 'feet walk away, down a concrete corridor in a dead air,' and Harry alone who 'drags his feet among shadows.' Each speaks of being alone in terrifying situations, of walking alone in endless circles, until "the chain breaks" and "the wheel stops." Even when Harry comes to that point in his contemplation when he realizes his relationship to Agatha--

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8 Underscoring of "we" and "I" is mine.

that is, when he is ready to follow Agatha "through the little door"--she silences him with the reminder that

> We do not pass twice through the same door
> Or return to the door through which we did
> not pass.

Both made a mistake once in confusing shadow with reality. They will not make the same error. Each will find his own still-point, his self-fulfillment.

In this passage there is little of purely human happiness. There is pain and agony and loneliness--experiences which stand out in sharp contrast to the joys and pleasures found in Olympian, Persian, and Midsummer's Eve rose-gardens. Before the wheel of conflicting desires can stop, before the still-point or nirvāna can be achieved, there must be the "shrieking forms in a circular desert," "dissolving bone," "barred windows," and "the giant lizard." The rose-garden is had through pain and torture.

The most obvious rose allusion in The Family Reunion is the mandala figure which may be a quartered circle, an encircled point, a rose-window, or an eternal rose of souls. Here, it is the encircled point formed by a "circular desert" and a "single eye above the desert." This wheel is in constant motion outside the center; because of the continuous pull of opposites--brought about by mistaking shadows for reality--there is no repose. It is only when the opposites are resolved that "the chain breaks;" in other words,

when reality is recognized as reality and shadow as shadow, then there are no longer any opposing forces which prevent the soul from full self-realization. Freed from the ever-revolving wheel of conflicting desires, a human finally finds his rose-garden or nirvāna or the reason for his being.

Whether or not Eliot had the three-legged First-man in mind when he wrote this rose-passage in The Family Reunion is not known. However, he does use three universe symbols in close proximity: the rose, the sun, and feet. The feet are Agatha's, but they are disembodied; they are fixed in an endless 'over and under' movement by her 'unwinking eye' which, in the next passage, becomes the 'single eye above the desert,' and finally, "the judicial sun/ Of the final eye...." The "final eye" refers to the still-point of existence where the wheel stops. It is immediately after this dialogue on the experiences along the way to self-fulfillment that the rose-garden appears a second time in this play.

> O my dear, and you walked through the little door
> And I ran to meet you in the rose-garden.

Where the rose-garden is, there shines the sun. Where there is sun, there is life. Outside the garden, away from the sun, are "dead air," "desert," "stone passages," "shadows," and sterile "disinfectant." In this passage, as in others

of Eliot, the rose serves to point out the contrast between real and artificial life, as well as the difference between senseless and meaningful pain.

If Amy's assertion in the third scene is correct--that Harry is going to become a missionary--then, the rose-garden which he will eventually attain is the garden of Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary where time is still. If he realizes his goal of expiation and service, his reward will be a symbolical garden full of roses, just as the reward to various saints for their lives of expiation and service was the real or symbolical rose.

From the above application, it is evident that Eliot's rose is much more than a flower. In "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," it is the antithesis of beauty, desirability, and vitality. It is representative of the sordid, mean, and degenerate in life. In The Hollow Men, it is again a symbol of devitalized existence and degeneracy, but it is also a symbol of perfection. In Ash-Wednesday and "Burnt Norton," the rose means perfection. In "East Coker," it is an omen of sorrow and disaster, as well as a symbol of sensual and purified love. In "The Dry Salvages," it is an omen of sorrow, disaster, and death. In "Little Gidding," it means sterility, misfortune, death, vitality, and perfection. In Murder in the Cathedral, the rose is an omen of death, as well as a symbol of vitality. In The Family Reunion, it is

a symbol of perfection. With only one exception, all the general categories into which rose-lore falls are represented here, either in a positive or negative sense: love, beauty, perfection, vitality, good fortune, degeneracy, and death. The only rose symbol which seems to have no application is the rose of secrecy.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Studying T. S. Eliot's rose-passages against a background of various stories and facts about real and imaginary roses, suggests that the poet made a deliberate choice in his use of this flower. In individual passages, he interweaves many of the same ideas or symbols which are interwoven and interrelated in rose-lore. He places his rose in situations or against settings which bear a striking similarity to rose-incidents of the past. Or, on the contrary, he emphasizes the difference between his rose of the present and the rose of the past by placing it against a backdrop completely opposite in detail.

Frequently, Eliot places the rose in passages with sun, fire, or wheel images. In primitive mythology, or in folk practices and beliefs deriving from primitive mythology, these images concur, each representing life, life-processes, or a vital existence. When the rose is not a symbol of the sun, fire, or wheel, it is an integral element in rites and ceremonies whose end is to promote or produce life. When Eliot places the rose beside the sun or fire or wheel, he emphasizes, with this juxtaposition of seemingly disparate objects, a theme which recurs throughout his poetry and plays: the urgent need for vitality in existence. He, as it were, is the ancient representative of a dead people, who must invoke or placate the gods of fertility in

order that productivity may return to the land. When his rose is fresh and strong, it is a symbol of man's spiritual vitality; when it is artificial, it is a symbol of man's degeneracy and his abuse of life. When Eliot's rose is in the sun, the onlooker has a vision of perfect order on either a physical or spiritual level; when the rose is in shadow--without the life-giving sun--the onlooker experiences frustration and sorrow. When Eliot's rose is enkindled with a sacred fire, spiritual perfection is the result; when it is enkindled with a selfish or purposeless fire, devitalization is the result. Whether or not Eliot was conscious of the similarities between his use of the rose and its use in the past, is unknown. However, similarities are apparent to rather an obvious degree.

Many of Eliot's rose-passages are concerned with the above themes drawn from mythology. There are several, however, which seem to draw directly and consciously from the rose-lore of history, religion, and popular belief. Eliot's use of the rose in a passage about a civil war which united opposing factions into one solid country seems too exact a reference to the War of the Roses to be coincidence. His association of death and out-of-season or out-of-place flowers would have little relevancy were it not for traditional beliefs linking early and late roses with disaster. His use of a "litany rhythm" in a passage about a perfect Lady, who

bears the title "Rose," is, again, too close to the rose-lore of Christian tradition to be accidental or coincidental. The repetitious occurrence of the rose and the still-point wheel in nirvāna passages is a restatement of Eastern religious thought.

A study of Eliot's individual rose-passages reveals the above. A study of his over-all use of the rose symbol reveals certain definite patterns of thought which bear a remarkable similarity to the more serious considerations attached to the rose of the past. Eliot uses it repeatedly as a symbol of perfection--perfection in a moment of time, or perfection in eternity. He uses it repeatedly as a symbol of love--impure and pure; earthly and heavenly; sterile and fruitful; transient and eternal. It recurs as a symbol of death--death of body and death of spirit; living-death and life-producing death. It recurs as a symbol of fire, both destructive and beneficial. These are all major significations of the rose in rose-lore. It means self-fulfillment and the attainment of the Divine; it means various varieties of love; it means death, both as an evil and as a good; it means fire, the destroyer and the restorer.

The evidence of the whole, as well as the evidence of the parts, indicates that Eliot chose the rose, not merely because it is a well-known flower, but because it has its roots buried well in the past. Thus, with one word, the

poet is able to suggest hundreds; with one image, he can conjure up the past in order to give meaning to the present.

Inasmuch as this study has been limited in scope to that body of rose-lore common to the Indo-European peoples, there still remains a great deal to investigate. Wherever the rose grows, there is a possible source of myths, legends, secular and religious beliefs and customs, which might amplify the material presented in this study, thus offering an even fuller appreciation of Eliot's rose-passages. It is possible, too, that since a study of just one of Eliot's twenty-nine varieties of flowers and blossoms yields so much applicable material, a study of his other flowers would produce an equally significant body of information.

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APPENDIX 1

LIST OF "ROSE" PASSAGES IN ELIOT'S POEMS AND PLAYS, 1909 TO 1950[1]

1 The text used is T. S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950.

APPENDIX 2

LIST OF PASSAGES IN ELIOT'S POEMS AND PLAYS, 1909 TO 1950, RELATED TO ROSE-LORE[1]

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1 The text used is T. S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950.

APPENDIX 2

Subject — page

Garden:

Gate or Door:

Fire:

ABSTRACT

The frequent occurrence of the rose in T. S. Eliot's poems and plays, from 1909 to 1950, suggests that the poet chose this flower image for its connotative and evocative power. In Chapter One, various instances in which the rose has appeared in myths were investigated. They showed that the rose is a symbol of the divine, of love, beauty, perfection, fertility, license, debauchery, chastity, pride, secrecy, and infidelity; it was closely associated with mysteries of life and death, burial and resurrection.

Chapter Two considered folk-lore and historic incident. It was found that the rose was prominent in national events, ceremonies and celebrations, in public and private festivities, in legends of lovers and heroes, in courtship customs, and in popular superstitions concerning birth, life, and death. Among the people, it was a symbol of the basic desires and actions of man. It came to signify love, licentiousness, opulence, death, good fortune, fertility, health, innocence, chastity, fidelity, piety, courage, secrecy, and war.

Chapter Three considered the significations of the rose in religious beliefs and practices. It is associated with or is a symbol of divinity, sanctity, virtue, final attainment or perfection, the miraculous and portentous, and fecundity.

ABSTRACT

In Chapter Four, Eliot's twenty "roses" were examined for possible relationships to the rose-lore of mythology, folk-lore, historic incident, and religion. It was discovered that these passages, with the exception of one, gained in meaning by alluding to rose-lore.

The conclusion reached was that Eliot uses and relates many of the same ideas or symbols which are found and related in rose-lore. He places his rose in situations or against settings which bear close resemblance to incidents in rose-lore. He uses it repeatedly as a symbol of perfection, love, death, and productivity.

It was suggested that the rose-lore of other peoples be investigated as a complement to this study, and that the remaining twenty-eight flowers and blossoms in Eliot's works be examined for their mythological, folk-lore, historic, and religious significations.