THESIS

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
3 1293 00087 9795

LIBRARY
Michigan State
University

MSU

OVERDUE FINES ARE 25¢ PER DAY
PER ITEM

Return to book drop to remove
this checkout from your record.

© 1978

RICHARD DENNIS WALTERS

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

THE MOMENT OF TURNING: PROSPECTS FOR RENEWAL IN AMERICAN POETRY

By

R. Dennis Walters

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

1979

ABSTRACT

THE MOMENT OF TURNING:
PROSPECTS FOR RENEWAL IN
AMERICAN POETRY

by

R. Dennis Walters

In The Continuity of American Poetry, Roy Harvey Pearce concludes that the Adamic line of American poetry, having culminated in Wallace Stevens, has reached the end of its development. Other critics argue similarly. The question now, as Roger K. Meiners sees it in Everything to Be Endured, is: Where can the American poet, as a poet, go from here? Meiners offers four alternatives, only one of which seems workable to him--namely, to investigate the Christian doctrines of the Incarnation and the Holy Spirit to see what they might indicate for a poetic direction. My dissertation proposes to do that, by holding up the Christian myth of Adam against the Adamic experience of poets active from about 1950 onward.

The first three chapters outline the current situation. The introductory first chapter recommends that T. S. Eliot's opinion that "all of modern literature is corrupted by . . . Secularism" (in "Religion and Literature") be accepted as a literary judgement about literature, rather than dismissed as a merely pastoral concern. In the second chapter, the Christian teaching about Adam's sin and its consequences is compared with statements in the poetry about the internal

breakdown of self experienced by the poet, who regards himself (in Emerson's phrase) as a "first Adam". Chapter Three maintains that the Christian teaching on the inadequacy of Secularism to solve matters is, in fact, acknowledged by poets, who, despite their efforts to formulate a "myth of self," realize that the imagination cannot "forestall woe" (Adrienne Rich), and who exhibit a nervous preoccupation with the Christian myth.

That myth, outlined in Chapter Four, tells the story of a "second Adam," whose participation in the Truth is revealed rather than ended by the Apocalypse often dreaded by poets. The difference between the two Adams is partly a matter of the ways Truth is regarded: the first Adam approaches it intellectually as abstract, impersonal, and elusive, and so must pursue it; the second Adam apprehends it in the heart (out of which the imagination speaks) as concrete, personal, and spontaneously self-revealing, and so explores what he discovers.

The fifth and sixth chapters form a pair, in which the pattern of activity suitable to a "second Adam" is proposed. The concern among poets that the poem become <u>verbal flesh</u> is viewed according to four incarnational elements common to poetic and religious practice: the covenant, the Word, the principle that the lower nature is assumed into the higher, and the principle of polarity. The experience of inspiration, likewise, is traced in Chapter Six according to a scheme often used in theologies of the Holy Spirit: the ecstatic stage, the stage of messianic orientation, and the creative stage; and

these, in turn, presuppose that the one inspired actively con-spires with "the new breath."

The final chapter concludes that the myth of the second Adam, while theoretically the most congenial to the American poetic tradition, cannot become operable as a direction for poetry without the process known to Christians as repentance, belief, and baptism--a process that many poets now writing have come to appreciate as a poetic necessity for themselves.

Every healthy effort . . . is directed from the
inward to the outward world.

--Goethe

In the long journey out of the self,
There are many detours, washed-out interrupted raw places
Where the shale slides dangerously
And the back wheels hang almost over the edge
At the sudden veering, the moment of turning.

--Roethke

CONTENTS

PREFACE		v
CHAPTER I:	Eliot on the Literary Condition	1
II:	The Epistemology of Loss	7
III:	How to Improve the World (You Will Only Make Matters Worse)	51
IV:	If Not The Place, The Way There	96
V:	Taking In the Whole Body Part 1 - The Incarnation	143
VI:	Breathing with the New Breath Part 2 - The Holy Spirit	183
VII:	The Moment of Turning	239
NOTES		279
BIBLIOGRAPHIES		334
1:	Select Bibliography	334
2:	General Bibliography	348

PREFACE

Some time ago, a friend of mine told a student of comparative literature that I was gathering material for a chapter on the relation between the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation and the writing of a poem. The student, herself an active Christian, responded immediately: "He shouldn't have much to say, then. The two have nothing to do with each other."

Perhaps the student had reasons of her own for believing that, but she may also have been taught it. When I first took up the study of literary criticism I was attending a denominationally sponsored university, where I learned that the Incarnation effectually limits the poetic imagination in several ways. First, I discovered, it limits originality, since orthodoxy will not allow the poet to carry his doctrinal implications too far. He cannot create a ruggedly individualistic Christ-figure, because the doctrine of "rugged individualism" does not accord with that of the Incarnation. Secondly, the Christian doctrine limits what the poet can feel and the degree to which he can feel it. He cannot settle into despair, for instance, while maintaining a basically optimistic incarnational view of life. Thirdly, the Incarnation even limits the mode within which the poet operates. Supposedly, he cannot write a Christian tragedy,

since Christianity affords the hope of redemption and resurrection. What I learned at that university was certainly logical, given the proper qualifications. But the logic led me to one inescapable conclusion not taught in the classroom: the Incarnation is a poetic liability. To retain his imaginative freedom, one would have to suspend his beliefs and act as if the Incarnation and the writing of a poem really did have nothing to do with each other.

It seems to me that literary criticism and theology have somehow cooperated in the growth of such an attitude. Much of the criticism I am acquainted with imports theology as needed, and keeps it in a strictly passive role; whereas theology, formerly queen of the arts and sciences, once graced with the responsibility for forming and directing the rest, seems inclined to that passivity. True, persons involved in both disciplines meet periodically to discuss topics of mutual interest, such as poetry's sense of the sacred, faith and the imagination, and so forth. But the key word is <u>discuss</u>: in literary matters theology does not offer directive teaching, and is not expected to. In fact, the standards of investigation for both sciences underscore their separateness. That is to say, criticism evaluates art, theology evaluates faith and morals--and each tries not to become the object of questioning, meddling, or usurpation by the other. It is not surprising that the tenets of theology should be felt to have little or no consequence for the practice of literature.

The consequences of this division are worse for

literature than for theology, however, because the former bears the entire burden of shaping the attitudes that go into writing poems. The poet who hears no more about the Incarnation than what it will not allow him to write will hardly be drawn to discover for himself what it can do to increase his poetic freedom. He will leave the doctrine alone. Meanwhile, the critic skeptical (and possibly ignorant) of theology will find himself increasingly hard pressed to explain in purely secular terms what an "incarnation of thought" is and why it is worth writing.

Perhaps that is one reason why the inclination to look to theology for direction has grown in recent years. Some critics believe that American poetry has come to something like the end of a line of development. A few of them argue that the American Adamic consciousness, having achieved its culmination in the works of poets like Wallace Stevens, can develop no further in that direction, but that something must be done if our poetic tradition is to survive. Others feel that the Adamic self is recording its own demise, and is searching for what can only be called salvation. Even critics who would not carry matters so far admit the need for a fresh look at the current situation of American poetry and then a new plunge into the unknown. Here and there, someone wonders aloud whether theology might not, after all, be able to suggest avenues of further poetic growth. After surveying several alternatives to such an idea and finding them wanting, Roger K. Meiners, in Everything to Be Endured, recommends an investigation into the companion doctrines of

the Incarnation and the Holy Spirit as possibilities for movement. It is his suggestion that I mean to take up in the following pages.

The thesis I will develop is intended to show that the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Holy Spirit have a great deal to do with the writing of a poem, especially with one written by an American. With a slight shift of their usual application, both doctrines can point the way to a renewal of this nation's poetry that is not only in fundamental accord with its literary tradition, but also radically departs from it. The task of applying theology to American literature is all the simpler in that both work from the Biblical myth of Adam. But before I begin, some further explanation is in order.

When a critic explains how a poem may be understood theologically, he often states or implies a comparison between, say, the personality expressed in the poem and a real personality, or between the creative mind of the poet and that of God. I will need to draw my own share of comparisons; but because they have embarrassing ways of breaking down logically, I would like to avoid as many as possible--particularly with an eye to these two. First, it should not strain credulity to accept the artificial personality of the poem--usually, the "I" or self of the poem--as <u>real</u> in exactly the same sense as one would accept the reality of a natural human personality. Aside from its artificiality--and what creature is not artificial, after all?--the self of the poem is

manifested as a completed (if not very complex) human psyche with its peculiar historical (if severely limited) identity. The limitations of the poetic self will, of course, limit the ways theology may be applied to it; but all else being equal, I plan to treat it as a genuine human self and apply the theology to it accordingly. A fuller discussion of this point appears below in Chapter II. Secondly, though my discussion of creative imagination may imply a comparison between the mind of the poet and the creative mind of God, especially as the doctrine of the Logos comes into play, I do not wish to belabor the analogy. I prefer to treat the poet's imagination as simply that--the poet's imagination, in cooperation with the Word, bringing the poetic word to incarnate reality. Just what that process involves is the subject of Chapters IV-VI.

The apparent contradiction between a radically continuous yet radically discontinuous poetic tradition can be resolved though the myth of Adam. By <u>myth</u>, I mean a story that embodies and explains a complex of truths about the human condition. Whether the story "really happened" historically or not does not matter; what matters is what it explains about the historical present. George Washington did not confess chopping down a cherry tree, as far as historians know, but he did winter his army at Valley Forge; and, used as myth, both stories embody and explain ideals of honesty and perseverance that Americans hold about themselves. The story of Adam has long been used to explain why Americans write the kind of poetry they do--why, in fact, they <u>think</u>

about poetry as they do. Also, in its account of the Fall and its first consequences, it characterizes the direction American poetry has taken since roughly the first years of the twentieth century. If that direction is to change toward something substantially better, while remaining distinctively American, a new Adamic myth will have to be told, one in which Adam becomes what amounts to a new creature. Christianity tells such a story, and what it says for the renewal of American poetry is the subject of the following chapters.

This kind of topic demands a wide-ranging look at the poetry itself. I have attempted a broad survey, but have limited my reading to poems writtin during the twenty-five years from 1950-1975. The dates are arbitrary, and not strictly adhered to. For example, John Berryman's "Ball Poem," written during the '40's, epitomizes the current situation of the American poetic self as I see it, and I have used a key phrase from that poem as the title of the chapter wherein I examine the present situation. Also, William Carlos Williams' Paterson, begun prior to 1950, develops an important theory of poetic language that I felt should be fully represented, or not at all. Secondly, I have limited my reading to short poems (Paterson, again, being an exception), since they present a fairly comprehensive self in a brief span of time, and because their concerns are often rendered with a concentrated power one does not always find in longer works. Finally, I have tried to gather poems and theoretical statements from various "schools" and

"movements" that illustrate what I see as an Adamic view of self and of poetry. Though I do not restrict myself to the better-known poets, I do find myself gravitating to writers like Berryman, Ammons, Levertov, and Roethke.

The more glaring omissions fall into three categories. First, I have generally steered away from religious or devotional poetry that has little to say about Adamic experience, and have preferred works dealing with non-religious topics. The reason is not that religious poetry is bad or irrelevant. It is, rather, that a genuine renewal of poetry will have to alter the consciousness of the self in its ordinary commerce with the world, be that expressed in religious or non-religious imagery. Second, though I use occasional poems written by members of minority or special-interest groups, I do not ordinarily discuss the poetry of the group as such. Again, it is a question of Adamic focus. Black poetry, for instance, strikes me as outward-tending and communal for the most part, whereas by definition Adamic poetry tends inward and rejects community. Feminist poetry shows more of the usual Adamic qualities, but the concern here is less with its feminism than with its Adamic tendencies. Thirdly, by accident or sheer oversight I have bypassed dozens of volumes of poetry that I would have incorporated had there been world enough and time. These omissions can only be regretted.

A word or two about theology. I am writing about poetry from an explicitly Christian point of view for two reasons: first, because the myth I am proposing is Christian (or, more

accurately, Judeo-Christian in that the Christian myth continues the Jewish and is radically part of it); and secondly, it is the only point of view with which I am experientially familiar. Other theologies have views to express on this subject, but I make no attempt to incorporate them. Nor do I claim to present the definitive Christian view on what follows. I expect disagreement from other Christians on some doctrinal interpretations, and welcome any correction or insight that will serve poetry better. As far as possible, however, I wish to avoid apologetics or polemics, and to present the doctrines on their own merits.

It should go without saying that the subject here is poetry, not theology; and therefore it seems only right that someone interested in literature should lead the discussion, rather than a theologian. When an economist and a politician discuss the national budget, one will typically stress fiscal principles, and the other the needs of a constituency. Assuming that they agree on a budget, the appropriate person to explain to a political body how it works is the politician. Because I am not a theologian, I feel no temptation to develop a theology of literature. How a literature might work under the direction of theology is another matter, however, and I do intend to examine standard theological concepts to show how a renewed poetry might take shape.

The professional theologian might feel irritated that a novice would so blithely invade his domain. If he wished, he could point out that I oversimplify complex issues, treat as

settled questions still being resolved, and ignore or blur important denominational differences. He might even wish to argue that I am not dealing with theology at all, but the catechism. He would be right, of course. But I would take him a step further. Rather than the catechism, which is too difficult and abstract for the purpose, I am working out of a primitive kerygma, the basic message of salvation that all Christians have heard proclaimed. For economical reasons, I am calling it theology, but it is actually a simple directional tool. I want to examine where recent American poetry has come from and where it is likely to go without help; to describe in the vocabulary of the Adamic myth where it is possible for the poetry to go with help; and to propose a course of action that will get it there. This "kerygmatic approach" determines the way theological concepts are handled --namely, with emphasis on the practice of imaging and writing poems, and with a view to changing the direction of that practice.

The approach also determines the kind of research I have done. Since the kerygma is virtually the same for all Christians, within certain basic limits, I did not have to go far for material. I chose a few standard Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias, some popular religious books, and a few more technical references where one interpretation of a doctrine seemed to suit the writing of poetry more nearly than another. Two books in particular have influenced my own ideas. One is Owen Barfield's Saving the Appearances which, while not exactly a book about religion, assumes a religious

viewpoint about thinking. The other is *The Conspiracy of God* by John Haughey, S.J., a treatment of the human experience of the Holy Spirit. Both receive frequent mention in these pages.

What follows will raise more questions than it answers, since I do not pretend to treat matters exhaustively. Meiners' book, to which I have referred, takes the position that it can only "suggest the direction in which it seems to me possible to move." I cannot do much more than add an outline of what strike me as the most prominent features of that direction. Aside from the limitations of space, the final four chapters raise a network of theological subjects, any one of which, tied to a corresponding poetic question, would reticulate *ad infinitum*. To take an example: A full treatment of the poem as an incarnation of thought invites some comment on the way a poem may best be regarded as a sacrament (there are at least three major Christian interpretations of a sacrament, by the way, each of which says something different about the poem); a poetic sacrament touches on the role of the poet as a priest (on *that* subject Christians are notoriously divided); and all three imply the existence of some form of poetic community. Faced with such fruitful possibilities, it has seemed wisest to choose a kerygmatic approach, which pares matters down considerably. I can only hope that, once the poet learns what the Christian Adamic myth in general holds for him as a poet, he will investigate for himself the specific questions he needs answers to.

I: ELIOT ON THE LITERARY CONDITION

Toward the conclusion of "Religion and Literature," T. S. Eliot writes:

> What I do wish to affirm is that the whole of modern literature is corrupted by what I call Secularism, that it is simply unaware of, simply cannot understand the meaning of, the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life: of something I assume to be our primary concern.[1]

As if to underscore the point, Eliot later adds that modern literature proclaims "a gospel of this world, and of this world alone." He explains:

> It is not that modern literature is in the ordinary sense "immoral" or even "amoral": and in any case to prefer that charge would not be enough. It is simply that it repudiates, or is wholly ignorant of, our most fundamental and important beliefs; and that in consequence its tendency is to encourage its readers to get what they can out of life while it lasts, to miss no "experience" that presents itself, and to sacrifice themselves, if they make any sacrifice at all, only for the sake of tangible benefits to others in this world either now or in the future.[2]

This said, he does not stop to argue the point. On the one hand, he trusts that no one will be so hasty as to receive "the impression that I have delivered a mere fretful jeremiad against contemporary literature." On the other, he assumes "a common attitude between my readers, or some of my readers, and myself,"[3] namely, a Christian attitude to the world and to what it produces. Hence, he feels that an effort to persuade or prove to his readers that modern

literature is corrupted by secularism is not necessary.

Because I wish to use Eliot's opinion for a purpose different from the one he intended it to serve, I should point out that he has rather little to say about the corruption of modern literature. That is assumed.

Rather, his discussion focuses on the corruptibility of the readers of literature. The heart of Eliot's thinking lies here:

> . ... if we, as readers, keep our religious and moral convictions in one compartment, and take our reading merely for entertainment, or on a higher plane, for aesthetic pleasure, I would point out that the author, whatever his conscious intentions in writing, in practice recognizes no such distinctions. The author of a work of imagination is trying to affect us wholly, as human beings, whether he knows it or not; and we are affected by it, as human beings, whether we intend to be or not.[4]

The influence of literature upon us is greatest, Eliot says, when we do read merely for entertainment or esthetic pleasure. At such times we tend to read the most passively; and "it is literature which we read with the least effort that can have the easiest and most insidious influence upon us."[5] What makes the influence so insidious is that "the fiction that we read affects our behaviour toward our fellow men, affects our patterns of ourselves."[6] We are what we read. And because literature has moved, over the last three hundred years, in the direction of greater and greater secularization, it has drawn our behavioral attitudes after it for that length of time. The common ground, Eliot continues, "between religion and fiction is behaviour. Our

religion imposes our ethics, our judgement and criticism of ourselves, and our behaviour toward our fellow men." It therefore becomes incumbent on all Christians to take a direction opposed to secularism by

> . . . maintaining consciously certain standards and criteria of criticism over and above those applied by the rest of the world; . . . by these criteria and standards everything that we read must be tested.[7]

We will not find these criteria and standards, he concludes, by reading the criticism in the secular press. We will find them in the basic principles of Christianity.[8]

Eliot wrote for a Christian audience, or at least for one which understood the Christian mind. But, lest some readers fail to understand it and, missing Eliot's point, decide that he wants to convert everyone, Vincent Buckley provides a helpful distinction: ". . . Eliot's intention is not to convert, but to protect; he is acting as a pastor, not a proselytizer."[9] The only problem is that Buckley's idea of the pastoral role seems too narrow.

In a negative sense, of course, a pastor does protect by guiding his flock away from pitfalls, traps, and dead ends. But simply guiding away from danger is of questionable value if the pastor has nowhere else to go once the danger is past. In the long run, one who spends all his energy protecting the flock leads it into the opposite danger of confusion, aimlessness, and possible starvation. The chief duty of a pastor is to provide guidance for those under his care. He establishes a common direction. His role is to locate pasturage, and to protect the flock in the course of

directing it there. Ultimately, then, the effective pastor works to the positive.

Eliot claims that he does not wish to use his own pastoral position to deliver a "mere fretful jeremiad against contemporary literature." To appreciate the positive value of what he says about literature, however, it might be useful to establish a perspective on jeremiads and on Eliot's use of them here.

In the first place, the prophet Jeremiah had the two-fold commission to "root up and tear down" and to "build and plant." He had to convey to the Chosen People as vividly as possible what was going wrong among them and what they could do about it. Speaking on God's behalf and at His direction, Jeremiah pointed to the accelerating breakdown in Israel's covenant relationship with God, and warned that the nation's unique identity stood in serious jeopardy. But his overriding purpose was to proclaim a vision of renewal. If Israel changed its heart about the covenant and began to live up to its provisions inwardly, he announced, God would act to restore the relationship, even to the point of making it stronger than before. Hardly fretful, Jeremiah spoke as all prophets do--to lead out of danger and into safety. Eliot delivers that kind of "jeremiad": he reminds a sensitive branch of literature of a problem well within its experience, and states clearly what the problem is. And he speaks--for the readers of poetry, if not to the poets themselves--to the question of what to do about it. Perhaps the only problem with Eliot's performance of his role is

that he left it to others to delineate a path to renewal.

Secondly, as far as the American poetry of the last twenty-five years is concerned, Eliot's is not a mere jeremiad. The Old Testament prophet told Israel that it was afflicted with an incurable running sore. Eliot tells the modern poet that the whole of literature is corrupted by secularism. True, Eliot does not explain or verify the fact of corruption, since he has his eye on a different issue; and his readers, by now living forty years further into the process he described, have probably grown immune to the religiosity of phrases like "the corruption of secularism." Still, American poets record disintegration within the world and the self, and they see no way to escape, halt, or reverse it. They would be tragically misled if they looked upon Eliot's pronouncement as merely protective of a few readers. His opinion constitutes a literary judgement about literature which needs evaluation as such. And if he is right, poets need to know how they can start toward a different kind of literature.

I wish to spend the next two chapters documenting the extent to which Eliot's judgement applies to recent American poetry. I will support the thesis that the poetry is corrupted from within, a state which the poets themselves recognize, and that the corruption is caused and perpetuated by adherence to a secular attitude toward the writing of poems. This situation affects American poetry in all its areas of concern: in its relation to reality, in matters of

its power and purpose, in form, technique, and language--and, at bottom, in the poetic imagination itself. By saying such things, I am far from arguing that Americans write bad poetry. Rather, I want to show how even the best of poems written in the American tradition demonstrate a need for internal renewal along certain definite lines. What these lines are will be examined in the final four chapters.

II: THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF LOSS

1.

Some critics may want to answer Eliot's judgement of modern literature by denying that it applies. A poem, their argument might go, is not a person but an artifact. It creates in imaginations a linguistic experience of reality because it is a construct of words especially arranged and presented for that purpose. During composition it takes shape according to the demands for craftsmanship and integrity which the poet believes appropriate to a work of art. Though it grows out of his sense of self, the poem essentially operates as a fiction; and once it leaves his pen, it becomes independent of him, and may even be said to exist in a completely different spatial and temporal dimension from that of the poet. The poem may be criticized for imperfection from many standpoints, but a critic like Eliot should know better than to introduce a loaded term that invites confusion between artistic and moral levels of existence.

Such an opinion, however, would appear to rest on two prior assumptions. One is that the term corruption indicates a primarily emotional response to the supposed immorality of art, a response carrying religious overtones when the term is juxtaposed with secularism. The other is that the poem's frozen language gives it a kind of absolute

permanence that, together with its independence from the poet, confers as much incorruptibility as human artifacts are likely to enjoy. But both assumptions overlook a good deal.

To begin with, the word corruption admittedly carries great emotional force, enough to call into question its worth as an evaluative term in literary criticism. Even fairly objective references to a dead body as corrupt stir up all sorts of gruesome imaginings; but references to a politician as corrupt deliberately invite the same repulsion one might feel toward a corpse. All too often, the word's usage implies that the speaker is describing his reaction to a thing rather than the thing itself. Understandably, then, persons engaged in the business of determining literary merit bristle when such a strongly negative epithet is hurled against literature as a whole.

Further, corruption sometimes appears in Christian writings as a term of opprobrium. It first entered the mainstream of Christian theology as a result of Augustinian reflections about human nature. On the theoretical level, the doctrine of "corrupt humanity" is not inherently more credible than any other. In a way, it may be less so, because it can be interpreted to suggest that man, once a noble savage, has degenerated into a civilized ape. And there is no evidence to support such a belief.

Whatever the word's pejorative meanings, theology first adopted it for scientific reasons. The world's major religions have all observed a peculiar weakness at the core

of the human personality, and have evolved numerous ways to discuss it. Christian theology alone has several comprehensive terms, each of which points to different aspects of human weakness. The technical virtue of a word like corruption is that it can denote a complex of observable facts, of breakdowns occurring simultaneously at different levels of reality. Eliot appears to have such a complex in mind when he applies the term to literature; and literature, to understand his opinion, has to shift its focus of attention from the word's connotation to its scientific denotation.

Etymologically, corruption refers to the fragmentation of an integrated unit. One thinks of biology: an organism whose parts should cohere begins chemically or structurally to break apart. A corpse corrupts; so does a living body undergoing some sort of physical degeneration, such as tooth decay or deterioration of the nervous system. By a psychological extension, a personality may be said to corrupt when it experiences a coming-apart of consciousness, as with some forms of schizophrenia. Christian theology incorporates all these dimensions and adds the spiritual one. But that dimension has at least two reference points. One applies to a past, primal distortion of the entire human personality. The other applies to a tendency akin to entropy, wherein the person inclines naturally toward all that is meant by the idea of death. Corruption, as I will use it hereafter, refers to a fact and a direction.

And both manifest themselves in human behavior. To a theologian, behavior among human beings falls into the general

category of morality, by which he means anything having to do with the realm of choice. The fact that persons are capable of deliberately performing acts that, by divine and human standards alike, vitiate the self and the society, he might say, evidences a certain corruption of human goodness. But, he would go on, the need for salvation felt by peoples of virtually all eras and cultures betrays an underlying sense that not only are human choices unable to effect lasting good, the very power out of which these choices are made is evolving in the direction of greater and greater ineffectuality. The theologian need not appeal solely to revelation to prove his point. His most dramatic, concise, and easily examined proofs appear in poems. The reason is not hard to find.

A poem represents a consciousness. Its act of speaking to an imagination establishes it, however briefly, as an artificial personality--the ego, "I", or speaker of the poem. From a traditional standpoint, the poem establishes a <u>persona</u> or mask behind which the poet speaks. The audience sees only the mask created by the poetic utterance; but speech without mind--even artificial mind--would be as curious as a smile without a Cheshire cat which, even so, is present until his smile disappears. The less traditionally-minded poet, however, would probably deny the existence of any mask. He would argue that he creates his own real self in his words, and that one of the burdens of his poetry is to destroy any mask. From either point of view, the poem's audience confronts a real personality there, one made of

words.

A glance at the American poetic consciousness of the last twenty-five years or so reveals a state similar to what I have defined as corrupted. Hoxie Neale Fairchild summarizes matters this way:

> No suprahuman Creator or Judge or Redeemer or Lover or Guide. No life beyond the grave. Loss of the traditional symbols of Western culture. No integrating myths. No worship.
>
> No reality independent of the disintegrated observer. No objective sharable truth or truths. No scale of values. Dissociation of sensibility. Discursive and intuitive reason equally distrusted. . . . Solipsism. Nothing to discipline our emotions. No firm roots in domestic or civic ritual. Life patternless, meaningless. Everything "phony".[1]

Statements abound in the criticism to support Fairchild's summary. But the experiential knowledge of corruption lies within the poetry itself. In the following sections I would like to examine that experience in detail.

2.

Epistemology is the study of knowing. In general, it examines the questions: How do I know? and, How do I relate to the known and it to me? The various modes of knowing have made epistemology somewhat popular among poets, for whom intuition is the chief mode ever since the Romantic movement drew attention to it. Paul Carroll echoes the common sentiment nowadays when he calls poetry "a way of knowing, really; the only one accessible to me."[2] On the other hand, the relation of the knower and the known has made epistemology popular with poets for far different reasons. Many poets simply do not know what that relation is or

ought to be. But they are fairly sure what it is not. The old epistemology rested on a stable metaphysics: Being existed external to the mind and could be apprehended in some orderly fashion (even though it could not be fully comprehended) by it. The relation of the knower to the known was--given some evolution in the meanings of the terms--that of subject to object. As far as poetry was concerned, the modality of the relation proceeded through "invention", by which poets meant discovering the Real and "laying it open to view."[3] But the twentieth century poet feels that the metaphysics and any coherent relationship with the Real have collapsed and vanished. He is more than ever concerned with epistemology, but (to use John Berryman's phrase) it is an epistemology of loss.[4]

What the American poetic mind has lost, first of all, is the mind itself, along with any certainty as to beliefs. "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness," intones Allen Ginsberg at the start of his long catalog of gone imaginations.[5] The known order has vanished, the mind cannot find its path:

> This autumn, I
> Cannot find the road
> That way: the things that we must grasp,
> The signs, are gone, hidden by spring and fall, leaving
> A still sky here, a dusk there,
> A dry cornleaf in a field; where has the road gone? All
> Trace lost, like a ship sinking. . . .[6]

At best, the mind can only struggle to hang on to vague remembrances of what the cultural landscape must have looked like. According to Donald Justice:

> The landmarks are gone. Nevertheless,
> There is something familiar about this country.
> Slowly now we begin to recall
>
> The terrible whispers of our elders
> Falling softly about our ears
> In childhood, never believed till now.

Believed or not, the knowing mind discovers itself left with chaos to articulate.[7]

Secondly, something has disappeared from the poet's very heart. In Berryman's "Ball Poem," the poet notices the desperation in the eyes of a boy who has just lost his ball in the water. The same desperation already lodges in behind the observer's eyes:

> . . . I am everywhere,
> I suffer and move, my mind and my heart move
> With all that move me, under the water
> Or whistling, I am not a little boy.[8]

But he is, and has lost a part of his life. Other poets feel the same way. Anne Sexton, for instance, concludes that the logic of abortion will lead her to "loss without death."[9] Denis Johnson, twenty years old when he wrote "Quickly Aging Here," feels old when he overhears his teen-aged wife cursing the stove, and wonders "about everything: . . . things <u>happen</u> and constantly you / wish for your slight home" which cannot be recovered." He ends by asking himself why "we crowded . . . blindly into one / another" as if he and his wife were always on a single bed "and our range of impossible maneuvers was gone."[10] Denise Levertov watches an old man whose impossible maneuvers go on and on. In "The Old Adam," the senile Everyman keens over a picture ("Them happy days-- / gone--gone for ever.") and wanders

around, asking

> over and over the wrong questions.
> Missing his way in the streets
>
> he acts out
> the bent of his life,
> the lost way. . . .[11]

Thirdly, the epistemology of loss characterizes the poet's relationships with the world and with others. Raymond Dipalma and Stephen Shrader, who jointly wrote a poem about epistemology, observe that one knows his place in the universe through the movement of imagination:

> . . . but I must
> Dance! Lord knows, all else is fabulation
> (with a bow to my mentor) at least here I am or
> here I am . . .

The dance expresses relationship--the self bows to his mentor, fabulation--but the knowledge it communicates affords slight comfort: "at least here I am or / here I am . . ." (ellipsis in original). Aside from the imagination's dance the self's contact with reality disappears entirely, and Granada is the setting for their disappearance:

> Granada is famous for its epistemologists. If nothing else
> And that latter is all that's here with a technique all
> its own.
> That is why the articles requested are not forthcoming.

Union with the world vanishes first. Ironically, in a city famous for the study of the knower-known relationship, nothingness (the "that latter" referred to in the poem) "is all that's here." Nothingness operates with a technique all its own, either by denying "the articles requested" by the mind or by eliminating whatever the mind would join itself to. In sexual terms, the mind conceives ideas; but

baths are de rigeur in Granada because, once the communion with reality has gone, the seminal fluid of thought stains and must be washed off. The same is true of human relationships. In the poem, Conchita believes that "one lip kisses the other"; but, with a ruefully cavalier gesture, the speaker remarks, "Dear sir, / Conchita's long dead; and I'm up for that bath."[12]

Though he cannot always describe just what it is he has lost, the poet frantically searches to recover it. In a poem called, "The Lost Ingredient," Anne Sexton recalls the women bathing in Atlantic City's restorative salt water --the first "lost ocean," she calls it, adding, "I don't suppose they knew what they had lost." Herself a woman traveling West, she has just lost "ten Utah driving minutes" in order to touch the Great Salt Lake, a body of water "loosed" from its parent ocean. But there the salt does not restore, it only causes her to itch. Finally in Reno she washes it off and hurries "to steal / a better proof at tables where I always lost." Nothing in her effort at recovery seems to work:

> Today is made of yesterday, and each time I steal
> toward rites I do not know, waiting for the lost
> ingredient, as if salt or money or even lust
> would keep us calm and prove us whole at last.[13]

Cid Corman has also journeyed a long way on his search, and in a quatrain at the end of Once and for All, decides:

> I have come far to have found nothing
> or to have found that what was found
> was only to be lost, lost finally
> in that absence whose trace is silence.[14]

If the loss is indeed final, the prospect frightens Fanny Howe:

> It's not death honey
> scaring me
> but ahh I'm lost I really am conscious
> of being
> not alone in that particular emotion.[15]

Thus the poetic knower has come to realize that the loss he experiences lies within and without his consciousness. Loss summarizes his peculiar epistemology; but that, in turn, rests on a metaphysics of loss.

3.

Criticism has long made it clear that poetry does not arrive at ultimate truth by means of the analytical avenues of philosophy. Poetry synthesizes; it attempts to bring truth whole and alive into the heart by passion. It is interested in reality, in the highest Reality, and it aims to lead the hearer into the metaphysical experience which the self of the poem lives out. Of course, it does not betray the poem to take apart what it has joined together, to analyze what it says about reality or the ways it says it, provided the analytical framework remains true to what is being examined. T. S. Eliot has already established the framework of the present analysis. And, while the words he has chosen appear more frequently in theology than in either literature or metaphysics (which have their own reasons for avoiding such terms), they address what is at bottom a metaphysical question: What does the critic make of this loss which the poet senses in his own being?

In line with Eliot's notion of corruption, it becomes necessary here to introduce the Christian understanding of sin. What the self experiences as loss must be examined in terms of something else, for loss is a negation which cannot be examined in itself. Sin would also appear to be a negation, the denial of a relationship, except that it expresses itself in human behavior and must therefore proceed from something positive, from some character or mode of being. And in fact it is sin, not loss, which provides the ground of experience wherein the knower knows himself.

The English word reveals a stream of associations possibly older than Christianity: sin comes from an old Teutonic form of the verb to be.[16] In a way, sin and being are interchangeable concepts, so that an expression like, "All human beings are sinners," becomes somehow tautological. Sin lies at the origin of human nature because human beings exist. They are themselves, no more and no less: social, yet alone; of infinite imagination, yet limited therein; powerful, yet strangely weak; intelligent, yet prone to mistakes and foolishness; unique, yet like their parents; seeking immortality, yet doomed to die. The English word sin refers to everything which men commonly attach to the experience of living. And it receives from English translations of the Bible an interesting echo: that God made Jesus "to be sin who knew no sin," in order to remake sinners into the "righteousness of God."[17]

Such an understanding, while perhaps fatalistic, does

little violence to the Scriptural concept which, in the Greek at any rate, derives from three distinct words. Anomia refers to a human urge to break rules and to usurp authority; adikia, to the propensity not to give things their due importance or place; and hamartia, an archery term, to the constitutional inability of men to hit the target. So much any good Bible dictionary would say.[18] As it relates to the present study, sin--that is, the composite of lawlessness, injustice, and folly--represents that in human beings which allows or causes them to distort relationships, whether out of weakness or perversity. Though theology concerns itself mainly with the relationship between man and God, it claims that sin snarls all of man's relations in both the human and non-human domains. Or, to use Paul Carroll's expression, the chaos to be articulated comes from within and spreads outward, from human being to human behavior.

What all this has to do with the writing of American poetry becomes evident in the story of Adam. For the American poet knows, in a way that poets of other cultures do not, what it means to be Adam.

Regardless of interpretation, all Christian denominations accept the Biblical story of Adam as an explanation of sin in the world. Adam, "the man" in Hebrew, typifies all men of all ages. His sin is the sin of humanity itself: through a primal disragard of his relationship with the Creator, Adam surrenders himself to the effects of law-

lessness, injustice, and folly in all his associations with himself and creation, as well as with God. Some denominations call this the original sin: whether Adam literally ate of the fruit of the tree or not, a tendency toward rebellion lies at the origin or root of human personality. The myth of "the man" explains all men.

But not everyone recognizes "the man" in himself. Owen Barfield contends that most of modern mankind does not:

> . . . our predecessors were able, quite inwardly, to accept the sin of Adam as being their original sin also. And . . . we are not--because, for us, Adam (if he existed) was after all--somebody else! This has brought with it the loss of the whole concept of the "fallen" as an essential element in the make-up of human beings; which in its turn is responsible for the devastating shallowness of so much contemporary ethics and contemporary psychology.[19]

Barfield, writing from England in the '50's, says much that applies to the ethics and psychology of America in the '70's. And it applies to large areas of the poetry of America over the last twenty-five years. Some poets acknowledge that social evils affect themselves internally but appear to remove themselves from any responsibility for causing what has gone wrong; among the poets I have read, Lew Welch and Robert Bly, to name only two, strike me that way. But not all American poets absolve themselves. Enough, in fact, regard the sin of Adam as their own that they have begun an interesting shift in the poetic view of self--which is, historically, the self of an American Adam.

Roy Harvey Pearce's vast survey of the Adamic mode of writing in America begins from its beginnings in the seventeenth century and goes all the way to what Pearce

considers the end--to Wallace Stevens.[20] In between, he demonstrates how this one pole of literary consciousness has provided American poetry with three hundred years of continuity. (The other pole, not treated here, is the mythic mode. Eliot's poetry, Pearce maintains, carries the mythic consciousness about as far as it can go, as Stevens' does the Adamic.[21]) "The Adamic poem," he writes by way of a general definition,

> is one which portrays the simple, separating inwardness of man as that which at once forms and is formed by the vision of the world in which it has its being. Expressively, this poem is one which makes us aware of the operation of the creative imagination as an act of self-definition--thus, whether the poet wills it or not, of self-limitation. The poem may nominally argue for many things . . . ; but always it will implicitly argue for one thing--the vital necessity of its own existence and of the ego which creates and informs it.[22]

The definition says much about the ways poetry is still being written. But to appreciate the Adamic mode as it appears now, one must understand what it has been like until recently.

Pearce divides the growth of the Adamic mode into roughly two eras. The era of Adam in paradise lasted until approximately the First World War. Characteristally, it was egocentric as well as inward; the poetic self had the power of naming reality, and by that process creating not only the reality but itself; the self thus assumed the function of God, Who became man's means to the realization of self rather than his end. In a sense, then, the self was wholly innocent and in paradise, affirmative of a world in communion with the self and free to know, make, and be

itself.[23] Following the war, Adamic awareness seemed driven into retreat. Remaining egocentric, the self desired to subjectify objects; it spoke more personally and in the present; still holding the power of naming reality, it lost confidence in its ability either to transform or even be sure of it; the self increasingly desired to be God, but began to suspect that, still a maker, it had been shut out of paradise; henceforth, then, it would live in the imagination and apart from the world with which it shared no sense of communion. If separate selves could not be true to each other, each could at least be true to itself, striving for honesty whether affirming or denying the world.[24]

At the end of his study, Pearce remarks that American poets sense a lack of direction. The reason, he feels, is that they have come to the end of a line:

> The continuity of one phase of American poetry ends with Stevens' last poems and their complement in Eliot's. For, if nothing else, the effort of Stevens and Eliot in pushing the implications of the Adamic and mythic modes to their farthest limits (who could conceive of going farther than "The Rock" or the Four Quartets?) has shown us and the poets who speak on our behalf that we have reached a point of no return. Whatever American poetry looks to be in the future, it will be something essentially different from what it has been in the past.[25]

On the face of it, this is a surprising opinion. A reader need only flip open the pages of any periodical or anthology published in the quarter century since "The Rock" to see at a glance that Adamic poetry is still being composed. If the line continues, how can it have ended?

Pearce has a point about Stevens' poem. It is difficult to go beyond the pure Adamism of the icon

> Of the poem, the figuration of blessedness,
> And the icon is the man . . .
> . . . . . .
>
> These leaves are the poem, the icon and the man.
> These are a cure of the ground and of ourselves,
>
> In the predicate that there is nothing else.[26]

Such is Adamic writing at a certain fullness of measure. One of the burdens of this study is to show in what way Pearce is right to feel that the poetry of the future will be essentially different from that of the past.

But another burden is to show in what way he may be wrong. Adam, now aware that he has been shut out of Paradise, has begun to explore the inner and outer darkness for a way through it. In American poetry since "The Rock," the literary and theological Adams merge. The theology of history in Genesis, briefly, says that the man has lost his integrity and his community with God and the world because of his sin; that henceforth he must wander the face of the earth; that he lives subject not only to his knowledge of good and evil but also to their practical consequences. But the theology does not stop there. It contains a promise or two: that the command to "increase and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it" has not been revoked; and that enmity between the seed of man and of evil will result in the defeat of the latter, implying a renewal in Adam's relationship with the good. The experience of Adamic poetry seems to have begun following the general lines of the myth. Adam has been long fallen and has turned his attention to getting up again. At present it seems that a crisis--in

the etymological sense of the word--is brewing, when poets will have to choose the direction American poetry as a whole is to take. The choice will be radical, as Pearce feels it must be, and will indicate whether America will have no poetry, or a poetry of men who have the full range of possibilities open to them.[27]

It does not appear that American poets are drawn to the prospect of having no poetry. According to David Wagoner, even if all of them did agree to be quiet by the swamp, sooner or later they would again begin the ancient croaking.[28] Their choice, then, lies in sorting out the workable from the unworkable alternatives.

4.

If, as Barfield believes, most of us have difficulty accepting the sin of Adam as our own, the poet seems to have no such difficulty. He may not wish to acknowledge sin as such, but he does recognize Adam's metaphysical position in himself: he is fallen. The poet admits, with the protagonist of Berryman's Dream Songs, "It's not a good position I am in."[29]

Aware of the loss within himself ("Making our hollow, diabolical noises . . . / To stop the gaps in ourselves," as Wagoner describes the feeling[30]), the poet looks on himself as someone either cast out of a place or shut in one. For example, S. Foster Damon feels excluded: life is "the big neighborhood party, me lad, / to which you weren't invited." In "Just What's the Matter with Me Anyhow," he contemplates

what to do about his situation--try for revenge ("Swipe all the beer left on the porch to cool!"), or crash the party. But he knows that neither course of action will work:

> (This is one party that you cannot crash.)
> --So, go home; climb in your bed and try to sleep.
>
> (The cold, deep bed and your long, long last sleep.)[31]

The emotional equivalent of being shut out is being shut in. The protagonist of Wagoner's "Making Up for a Soul" imagines himself as Dracula with his spouse, who together "grope from room to room / . . . avoiding mirrors, / Clutching each other fiendishly for life."[32] Though less hellish in the expression, Philip Levine makes the same point. He tells the story of a six-year-old boy, locked in a barber shop "till Monday morning or, worse, / till the cops come." Observing that "we've all been here before," he reminds the boy: "You think your life is over? / It's just begun."[33] Whether cast out or shut in, according to W. S. Merwin, the self grieves not "because heaven does not exist but / That it exists without you." To compensate for the loss, the self attempts to create images of the Real,

> Not seeing the irony in the air
> Everything that does not need you is real
>
> The Widow does not
> Hear you and your cry is numberless.[34]

Sylvia Plath comes to the express realization of her fallen status. Walking through a churchyard near her home, she reflects on her own position relative to the moon, in which she sees her mother:

> . . . She is not sweet like Mary.
> Her blue garments unloose small bats and owls.
> How I would like to believe in tenderness--
> The face of the effigy, gentled by candles,
> Bending, on me in particular, its mild eyes.
>
> I have fallen a long way.[35]

The stanza follows an up-down movement of development. The poet's eyes follow the point of the yew tree, symbolic of Christ, upward to the moon, traditional symbol of purity. Her mind jumps from purity to a comparison of the moon with Mary, both virgin and mother. Here the downward movement begins: The real moon, at one point called an "O-gape of despair," is not sweet because it reveals evil in the form of bats and owls. A change of the face of the moon into the face of a candle-lit statue of the Virgin continues the downward movement: the statue's eyes gaze down without tenderness. The distance from the moon to the earth--or perhaps more significantly from Mary to herself--brings home the understanding of how far the poet has fallen.

"The downward glide / and bias of existing wrings us dry," mourns Robert Lowell about the child in himself that has died.[36] To Theodore Roethke, too, "the spirit moves, but not always upward." In Roethke's vision, the spirit journeys after another life, taking a back-and-forth direction that often leads into "the waste lonely places / Behind the eye."[37]

When spirits dance, thinks Arthur Gregor, they celebrate their fallen nature. He offers his hearer this piece of advice:

> To sway is to depart
> as branches from a stem
> . . . . . .
> and to depart is what is pain.
> What you must know before
> you enter this domain
> and learn the ways of which
> we shall not speak is this
> first truth of what you are:
> a sorrow, a sorrow
> begging for a home. Or you
> would not have come this far.[38]

For other poets, this first truth of what we are is that we are "estranged. Deeply estranged";[39] and Galway Kinnell, reluctant to ask such questions, wonders what to do "if a man feels the dark / Homesickness for the inconceivable realm?"[40]

The self is fallen, estranged--and wounded. Jeremiah's image of the nation's incurable wound has found its way into our poetry: John Berryman, who feels that lovers do "recover pale" from it, maintains that they learn their ancient wound through each other.[41] Weldon Kees prays that time will cleanse "whatever it is that a wound remembers / After the healing ends."[42] But Thomas Merton disagrees that such a simple answer is possible. Changing the imagery somewhat, he reminds "the ladies" (i.e., souls) that time will not cleanse anything:

> Not many days, or many years of that stale wall, that
> smell of disinfectant
> Trying, without wanting, to kill your sin
> Can make you innocent again.[43]

The fact, the natural and irreparable fact, is that the human self--and consequently the invented poetic self--is diseased from within. Paul Zimmer points out the results:

Though apples host the curelest worms,
The hardest beetles, still they shine,
But when the sickness sweeps the tree
They will not shine, they will not shine.[44]

The metaphysics of loss puts Adam in a fallen position; the epistemology of loss articulates the relation of Adam to what he knows, namely, that sin and human being are one. What such knowledge offers the poet in regard to the daily business of life is a wry wisdom. "Pain comes from the darkness," laments Randall Jarrell, "and we call it wisdom. It is pain."[45] It would be painful enough to cope with the idea that the poetic self must function as best it can from a fallen position, since it lies in the very nature of poetry to raise the self up. But corruption is a fact and a direction: the self keeps falling. "Out of control / we seek to be diminished," writes Susan Axelrod.[46] Even a search for the opposite may force the self to "leave behind / even the memory that I was ever a man."[47] And the poetry bears witness to the painful wisdom the poet has about corruption, in the thematic emphasis on isolation, disintegration of consciousness, and a peculiar starvation, which all lead to death.

Isolation. "I'm alone . . . I'm too alone," mourns Berryman's Henry in "Snow Line." He concludes that his position is not a good one to be in chiefly because he is isolated. He does not merely lack companionship; rather, in the deepest metaphysical sense he is himself, singular and individuated. His selfhood raises in Henry the dread that his existence, like that of the divine I Am, makes him

the absolute Other: "I am, outside," he says--adding immediately, "incredible panic rules."[48] Nothing in the world will make up to Henry "for, well, the horror of unlove," as he should know who has tasted "all the secret bits of life."[49]

Robert Creeley's poetry shows how being merely oneself prevents intimacy. Creeley often speaks in the person of a man looking at himself[50] or inviting others to look at him. The sight is not always pleasant, but reveals much:

> I cannot see myself
> but as what I see, an
>
> object but a man
> with lust for forgiveness,
>
> raging, . . .
> . . . . . .
>
> double, split.[51]

The poet, unable to "get off 'the dead center of'" himself, fears "the sudden / thing of being / no one."[52] In the context of his egocentrism, he approaches relationships only to learn that he does not or cannot have the ones he wants:

> I could not touch you.
> I wanted very much to
> touch you
> but could not,

he explains, for his loneliness leaves him with "a pit of fear, / a stench, / hands unreasonable / never to touch."[53] Deeply concerned about involvement with his lover, the poet traces his conduct to an old habitual relationship.[54] For her part, the lover does not show enough interest in him to respond even to his anger: "You were not involved, / even if

your head was cut off. . . ."[55] Occasionally, as in "The Mechanic," the poet finds himself working against the love which would join the weight of relationships in mutual rest.[56] He seldom finds rest--more often, fear of the other ("The World") or the desire to hurt ("A Reason," "A Sight"). In Creeley's poetry, love is distance, that between "the falling back from" on the one hand, and the "stepping into" on the other.[57]

Isolation even taints the sex act. It occurs to Denise Levertov that in intercourse "we look for communion / and are turned away."[58] She notices the isolation afterwards:

> . . . in the pleasure of that communion
> I lose track,
> . . . . . the
> tide swings you away before
> I know I'm
> alone again long since.[59]

But occasionally it intrudes long beforehand, prompting Susan Axelrod to ask:

> What of this loving
> that we do is it to or with
> one another

Her own answer lies in the image of lovers as chameleons, "cold-blooded," lying alongside each other with their "twin pulses beating."[60]

For Richard Wilbur, love comes cursed with a sense of loss. In "The Loves of the Puppets," he portrays two marionettes attempting to make love; but after the first passionate clashes:

. . . they lay exhausted yet unsated;
Why did their features run with tear on tear,
Until their looks were individuated?

One peace implies another, and they cried
For want of love as if their souls would crack.

After a fashion, the puppets eventually succeed by vowing "at least to share each other's lack."[61] But Wilbur distrusts that solution; in some of his later poetry, love leads inevitably to "failure, that longed-for valley."[62] Addressing the Duke of Orleans, he philosophizes, "All men are born distraught / And will not for the world be satisfied."[63] If love is the greatest mercy, it can also turn into

. . . the lover's curse
Till time be comprehended
And the flawed heart unmade.
What can I do but move
From folly to defeat,
And call that sorrow sweet
That teaches us to see
The final face of love
In what we cannot be?[64]

Wilbur's disillusionment with love finds its echo elsewhere. Anne Sexton, for example, claims that we know our isolation because the heart was born old and "knows the decay we're made of." Such knowledge has its effect on her own lovemaking: ". . . if I dream of loving, then / my dreams are of snarling strangers. She [i.e., the heart] dreams that . . . / strange, strange, and corrupt."[65] Joel Oppenheimer feels that individuality comes from the discovery that "each man is / an island, detached." Having neatly reversed Donne's axiom, he expands on his idea:

> . . . we turn our
> backs on each other so often,
> we destroy any community of
> interest. yet our hearts are
> seeded with love and care sticks
> out of our ears. but there is no
> bridge. . . .[66]

"We touch each other / far apart," Johathan Williams says,[67] to which William Witherup adds, "something waiting / in cities and in each of us / . . . is hostile to love."[68] According to Joseph Cardarelli, lovers may share the same bed, but they remain two people; "each has his life / private and sealed."[69]

Disintegrating Consciousness. Aware that it has lost some element within, the poetic self expresses concern that it has begun to break apart.

In an effort to locate the cause of disintegration outside the self, some poets point to the breakdown of order or coherence in the world, or at least of our culture's view of order. Stanley Kunitz, for instance, says that he is "rent / By the fierce divisions of our time," and that the death of the age signifies his own dying.[70] S. Foster Damon ironically uses the strict order of the sonnet to explain the modern chaos that ensued when Ptolemy's "pretty toy" broke down. In "Copernicus Astrologus," he tells how the old system yielded,

> then burst, the simulacrum of a spell
> woven by wizards. Its vanishing revealed
> the endless chaos wherein we ever dwell.[71]

Charles Bukowski echoes the sentiment. "The virus holds," he says in "A Nice Day," but "the concepts give way like

rotten / shoelace." As a result, he feels doom like "something under the sheets with bristles / that stinks and moves / toward me"; and by the end of the poem all coherence is little more than a string of body parts ("belly, bellybutton, buttocks, bukowski," teeth of ice, tear ducts, shoes).[72]

The real breakdown, of course, proceeds within. The outer world disintegrates because the inner one does, a phenomenon that Lawrence Ferlinghetti calls "a solipsism of madness."[73] The whole epistemology comes apart when the self becomes unable to tolerate the "steady storm of correspondences" between both worlds.[74] Theodore Roethke, well acquainted with the storm, often writes of the strain on the mind coping with it:

> What's madness but nobility of soul
> At odds with circumstance? The day's on fire!
> I know the purity of pure despair,
> My shadow pinned against a sweating wall.
> That place among the rocks--is it a cave,
> Or winding path? The edge is what I have.[75]

The same strain leads other minds to despair, which is not the same as madness and is possibly worse. "Philomel," a poem set to electronic music, sounds an antiphonal dirge over the disintegrating self:

> O bright Gull, aid me in my dream!
> Above the foaming breakers cream!
>
> Scream, scream, scream,
> For the scraps of your being:
> Be shrill
>
> The world's despair should not be heard!
> Too much terror has occurred.[76]

Reaction to the disintegration of self ranges among poets from disgust through fascination to affirmation.

Foster Damon cannot overcome his loathing of what he sees in himself: "O ghastly parody / Of my dark soul," he exclaims in one poem where he imagines himself as an actor whose angelic audience has just walked out[77]; in another, he is both "trashy drama" and disgusted audience.[78] Allen Ginsberg, on the other hand, contemplates with enchantment his own decay--aided by drugs. In "Mescaline," he is "rotting Ginsberg" who looks upon his balding head, wonders about death, and concludes: "trash of the mind / trash of the world / man is half trash / all trash in the grave."[79] Again, in "Lysergic Acid," Ginsberg calls himself "a worrier / lost, separated, a worm, a thought, a self . . . / one of the particular mistakes / . . . a separate consciousness . . . / I who am Doomed."[80] Finally, David Wagoner chooses to affirm his disintegration:

> I figure something can be said for it:
> Maybe some people break in better halves
> Or some parts are greater than the whole.[81]

The phrase "better halves" occurs in several of Wagoner's poems, and bears different shades of the same meaning. Such division is, for him, a way of staying alive.[82]

Starvation. But staying alive, or even wanting to, grows increasingly difficult the more the poet finds he cannot satisfy an all-consuming hunger. The best clue as to its nature is found in the sixth chapter of the Old Testament book of Amos, where the prophet warns of a peculiar famine: "not of bread, a drought not of water, but of hearing the word of Yahweh." Because of it, a time of great unrest will result:

people will stagger "from sea to sea . . . seeking the word of Yahweh and failing to find it."[83] A parallel famine appears to grip certain quarters of American poetry.

To start with, poets talk about a hunger eating at them from within. In the Dream Songs, Henry associates his isolation with a lack of food: "There seems to be to eat / nothing," he says, and repeats a few lines later, "I am hungry."[84] To many poets, the general condition of mankind may be summarized in terms of gnawing hunger: "We must all eat something," one poet cheerily announces; "it is the giant's decree."[85] Shirley Kaufman describes how "the hunger travels / an old horizon to a dangerous feast / not yet prepared."[86] Part of her own punishment for being born consists in her failure to obtain nourishment from a mother in whom "something was always breaking down":

> Each day I sucked
> at your virtuous breasts
> and I'm punished
> anyhow.[87]

At its extreme, the existential hunger is symbolized by the vampire, used by David Wagoner in "Making Up for a Soul." Richard Wilbur exhorts his audience to pity the vampire, whose craving cannot be assuaged:

> Think how sad it must be
> To thirst always for a scorned elixir,
> The salt quotidian blood
>
> Which, if mistrusted, has no savor;
> To prey on life forever and not possess it. . . .[88]

Whether predatory behavior expresses itself sexually, psychologically, economically, politically, racially, or in an-

other way, to Dennis Trudell it all amounts to this: "Something is hungry; it is not fed."[89]

As far as the poet himself is concerned, however, the greatest hunger is for the word. In "Looking for Mountain Beavers," Wagoner points to a famine of belief which is eating him even as he hunts for something to believe in.[90] To Joseph Cardarelli, the famine results from the decay of culture and religion: "There is little, save rotten meat," he concludes, ". . . with which to fill our stomachs, / empty as the place wherein we stand."[91] Two poets disagree with him--and, for that matter, with each other. Denise Levertov anticipates a feast for those who will "taste and see / . . . The Lord, meaning / if anything all that lives / to the imagination's tongue." The Lord she refers to is the matter of poetry, through which one satisfies his craving for a world which is "not with us enough." By ingesting "grief, mercy, language," one can

> savor, chew, swallow, transform
>
> into our flesh our
> deaths, crossing the street, plum, quince
> living in the orchard and being
>
> hungry, and plucking
> the fruit.[92]

William Everson, on the other hand, thinks that the world is too much with us and that it does not still the hunger. "How shall the eater who eats but the passable thing of the earth / Be filled with this act of eating?" he wants to know.[93] Couching his own search in the language of hunger and thirst, he describes what life is like for him:

My mouth, puckered on gall,
Sucks dry curd.

My thoughts, those sterile watercourses,
Scarring a desert.

. . . In my belly no substance is,
Nor water moves.

He envisions "water out of deep wells" and "melons sweet on the vine," Scriptural images of experiential knowledge of God. To take this knowledge in, the poet attempts to open himself to the Word: "Sophia, deep wisdom, / The splendid unquenchable fount: / Unbind those breasts."[94]

Death. A Pauline maxim has it that sin pays its wages in death. Because human nature is sinful it dies, and thus reliance on human nature for life turns into a reliance on death. As long as human beings are parented "in Adam" and "in sin," according to St. Paul--that is, as long as they originate from that whose end is death--they have no choice but to move in the direction of the grave. Anne Sexton puts the matter bluntly: "Fact: death . . . is in the egg."[95]

Consequently, death grows up within the self, and only periodically makes its presence there felt. In one of her more complex poems, Sylvia Plath assumes the consciousness of an elm whose tap root has known "the bottom". The tree is leafless and hollow, and houses a cry which emerges nightly:

I am terrified by this dark thing
That sleeps in me;
All day I feel its soft, feathery turnings, its malignity.

As the poem progresses, the tree becomes a zombie "murderous in its strangle of branches." The tree is herself; and

its malign branches "are the isolate, slow faults / That kill, that kill, that kill."[96]

Even the effort to repair the self only holds death off for a time. "I don't operate often," says Mr. Bones, the counterpart of Henry in the Dream Songs; "The reason . . / is: I have a living to fail." Earlier in the Songs (in Song 8), Henry underwent a physical dismemberment at the hands of some medical saviors, and in later songs attempted to return the favor, usually without success. Now Mr. Bones encounters trouble putting things back together: "I am obliged to perform in complete darkness / operations of great delicacy / on my self," he announces. The surgical purpose is to have the patient "brought back to life, or so." But, when asked if he will die after all, he responds, "My friend, I succeeded. Later."[97]

As Sylvia Plath may illustrate, the poetic attitude toward death varies considerably even in the same poet. On the one hand, death is a demon which she must exorcise:

> Herr God, Herr Lucifer,
> Beware
> Beware.
>
> Out of the ash
> I rise with my red hair
> And I eat men like air.[98]

She has tried twice to exorcise death by near suicide, and after the second attempt feels that she has succeeded; so, addressing the vampire image of her father, she gloats over the stake in his fat black heart and chants, "Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through."[99] She is not, however, for

despite her efforts to overcome death she desires it. The only present she wants for her birthday is death.[100] To her, dying is an art which she does exceptionally well: "I guess you could say I've a call."[101] Her horse Ariel kindles the drive in her:

> . . . I
> Am the arrow,
>
> The dew that flies
> Suicidal, at one with the drive
> Into the red
>
> Eye. . . .[102]

While such fascination may strike the onlooker as morbid, to many poets the presence of death in the imagination is part of the writing of poems. In Levertov's mind the two are rarely separated--or separable. Death in the poet heads "blindly for the bone," she says; "we breathe an ill wind," at the same time that we jostle "for elbow-room / moonwards." These opposing tendencies constitute

> an equalization of
> hazards
> bringing the poet
> . . . . . .
>
> to sing of death
> as before
> and life, while he
> has it. . . .[103]

The life-death polarity gives Levertov a sense of poetic direction: The purpose of poetry, she feels, is to fill our "whole space / so no devil / may enter."[104] Like her, Galway Kinnell associates death with the writing of poetry. In "The Porcupine," he identifies the animal's disembowelment with his own imaginative fate:

> . . . fallen from high places
> I have fled, have
> . . . come to myself empty, the rope
> strung out behind me
> in the fall sun
> suddenly glorified with all my blood.[105]

The poem itself is liable to a kind of death. Kinnell's definition of the poem as a palimpsest implies "departure and burnt stone"; and in "The Poem," he asks about those works that time has erased without a trace: "Where are the snows that fell on these graves?" The poet searches a field of bones "dead of non-resurrection," and contemplates his own poetic mortality:

> the surgery of the funeral
> and of the funeral oration, the absence
> of the speech I will have left in the world
> of

Significantly, Kinnell leaves the sentence unfinished, as if to say that the poem, built from the remains of an earlier but departed poetry, will itself depart until nothing is left of it except--possibly--its name.[106]

5.

In general, corruption invades modern poetry on two related fronts, the first being the self created by the poet, and the second being the language used by him to create that self. The first I will touch on briefly; the second will require some explanation.

Though the Adamic self still approaches reality with the fading memory of Paradise and its Whitmanesque omnipotence very much alive, it has become painfully aware of the fall--of the effects of lawlessness, injustice, and

folly on the self and its relation to the world. Its knowledge of these effects has been called an epistemology of loss. But another way of describing it appears over and over in current American poetry: the vision of the valley of dry bones.

In the Biblical vision of Ezekiel, the Spirit of Yahweh takes the prophet in a dream to a valley strewn with bleached skeletons as far as the eye can see. The Spirit asks him, "Son of man, can these bones live?" Taken aback by the question, the prophet evades the obvious answer: "You know, Lord Yahweh." The Spirit then tells him: "Prophesy over these bones. Say, 'Dry bones, hear the word of Yahweh.'"[107]

Most recent poetry only follows the vision to this point in the story. For instance, Kinnell would appear to regard poetry as a nearly extinct species--or at least one headed in that direction--for he places his symbol of poetry, the hummingbird, in a region strewn with

> fistbones unclasping . . .
> fatalist wishbones
> funnybones gone up in laughing gas,
> astralagi from which the butterflies have flown,
> innominate bones
> sacrums of the eucharist-platters of kites,
> and here and there a luz-bone dead of non-resurrection.[108]

In poem after poem, Kinnell indicates that his answer to the Spirit's question (were it ever asked) would be an unequivocal no: the bones cannot live, and the easiest way to avoid further discussion is for the poet to become the Spirit rather than attempt to resurrect the bones.[109]

Wilbur also thinks that, because we live in "a dry world," we "stand in the wind and, bowing to this time, / practice the candor of our bones."[110] (Candor here carries the double meaning of honesty as well as whiteness.) And Roethke often uses the same motif, in one case quoting Ezekiel directly and then turning his question around:

> The wide streams go their way,
> The pond lapses back into glassy silence.
> The cause of God in me--has it gone?
> Do these bones live? Can I live with these bones?[111]

But Roethke seems to have ears for the rest of Ezekiel's story. In the prophet's vision, the Spirit commands him to tell both the bones and the wind that the breath of Yahweh will enter the bones and they will rise. It is important to note that the bones cannot rise under their own power--to this extent, Kinnell and the others are right--but by means of an external agency. The prophecy begins its fulfillment even as the prophet speaks: Yahweh commands His breath into the bones, and immediately they assume flesh and spirit. This is the aspect of the "dry bones" motif that really interests Roethke. Acknowledging his hopeless situation ("A cry comes from my own desert; / The bones are lonely."[112]), he senses that somehow his "spirit rises with the rising wind," making him newly reborn, "wet with another life." And so:

> What came to me vaguely is now clear,
> As if released by a spirit,
> Or agency outside me.
> Unprayed for,
> And final.[113]

Like the others, Roethke portrays Adam after the fall, doomed to a fate from which he cannot extricate himself and which he cannot reverse. The poet finds himself in the valley of dry bones, where, unless an outside agency intervenes, dissolution is total.

It would seem to follow logically that if the poetic self is corrupted, the language used to create it must be too. The poet, at any rate, thinks so. But before explaining why, I would like to mention two things I am not talking about.

One is a linguistic question. In the preface to his Dictionary, Samuel Johnson alluded to a linguistic theory current in his day:

> . . . every language has a time of rudeness antecedent to perfection, as well as of false refinement and declension. . . . Our written language [ought not] to comply with the corruptions of oral utterance, or copy that which every variation of time or place makes different from itself. . . .
>
> . . . I am not yet so lost in lexicography, as to forget that words are the daughters of earth, and that things are the sons of heaven. Language is only the instrument of science, and words are but the signs of ideas: I wish, however, that the instrument might be less apt to decay, and that signs might be permanent, like the things which they denote.[114]

Johnson's observation of linguistic change led him to conclude that language "is always in a state of increase or decay. . . . Tongues, like governments, have a natural tendency to degeneration."[115] Thus, he felt that one purpose of a good dictionary was to slow the inevitable corruption.[116] If one may judge from the popular reaction to the publication of Webster's Third New International

Dictionary a few years ago, Johnson's theory of language remains alive.

Current linguistics, however, does not hold a growth-decay theory of language development. Research indicates that both analytic and synthetic languages naturally evolve in syntax and vocabulary, but that such evolution cannot rightly be called corruption. Thus, English is English, not corrupted German. Linguistics records the facts of change, and leaves to literary criticism all judgement as to whether the use of language has esthetic value or not. As far as linguistics is concerned, the concept of corruption lies outside its scholarly province.

The use of language is another area where caution is in order. Someone might wish to infer from what I have said that I will argue for the "moral degeneration" of poetic language; but if he thinks so, he has misread me. The poet does say a good many things which deserve criticism from a moral standpoint, but someone else must criticise him for it. I said above that theology uses the term corruption in a scientific sense, in an effort to describe observable fact. The poetic use of language is a fact capable, I think, of being described in this manner. In other words, the poetic self has become aware that the disintegration it experiences within manifests itself in language, and that consequently the language has begun to separate from reality.

According to Roy Harvey Pearce, part of the Adamic

mode involves a concern with the power of the poet to name, and thereby create, himself and the world he lives in. The twentieth century Adam, he says, has not lost the power of naming reality, but he no longer trusts his power of transforming it. Johnson's theory of linguistics supposed, in addition to change, a connection between the name and the thing--a marriage between the daughters of earth and the sons of heaven. What should follow from such a union is a race of giants, a poetry that participates from within the natures of both earth and heaven. What has happened instead is that the poet has come to what Barfield calls the "null point between" both; that is, he has arrived at

> the psychic condition which is brought about when the elimination of participation has deprived the outer "kingdom"--the outer world of images, whether artificial or natural--of all spiritual substance, while the new kingdom within has not yet begun to be realized.[117]

Perhaps at one time the marriage between earth and heaven proved reasonably harmonious. But the Adamic poet, living in the imagination and apart from the world, experiences divorce in the language. This is its corruption.[118]

The single most comprehensive statement in recent American poetry on the subject is William Carlos Williams' Paterson, a poem which, on one level, is entirely about the quest for language. One of its central images, in fact, is the kind of marriage Johnson talked about.

In the epic, the citizens of Paterson who populate the city-hero's mind "alight and scatter . . . they walk incommunicado." Like flowers separated from the pollenat-

ing tongue of the bee, these people, out of touch with their language, "die also / incommunicado":

> They may look at the torrent in
> their minds
> and it is foreign to them.
> . . . . . .
> --the language
> is divorced from their minds,
> the language . . the language! (9, 11, 12)[119]

For Paterson divorce, the separation of two things bound together by agreement into a unity, is "the sign of knowledge in our time" (18). The figure is marital, its application epistemological. Interested in the relation of language (on the side of the knower) to reality (on the side of the known)--"two, bound by an instinct to be the same," says Williams (19)--the American poet faces an old task in a new setting. That is, he must find a way of framing "imagined beauty" in its local expression:

> . . . a mass of detail
> to interrelate on a new ground, difficultly:
> an assonance, a homologue
> triple piled
> pulling the disparate together to clarify
> and compress (20)

In book two, the hero begins his search for ways of joining the inner, or mental, stream with the outer one. The problem lies in harnessing the torrent of words, symbolized by the Passaic River falls, so as to bring about the contact. The book centers on finding the sort of <u>movement</u> suitable to the language. Mere ascent in imagination is not enough, for the language (like the falls) is a formless roar whose "composition and decomposition" become the poet's despair (75). Descent through memory, however,

complements the rising imagination, since it leads to discovery by remembrance of the forms of language: "The descent beckons / as the ascent beckoned" (77). Even so, the hero has not yet established the unifying movement. In fact, by the end of book two, he is nearly back where he started on the issue of love and divorce. When the mountain, the female representation of the outer world, engages him in an argument over his responsibility to provide a form to her formlessness, he responds that the language is worn out. Her insistence on such a marriage results in a waterfall of empty words with divorce at the bottom: divorce from place, from knowledge, from learning ("the terms / foreign, conveying no immediacy"), and from time and therefore memory (83-84).

Still, Paterson the poet cannot give up; he is under the "crassest necessity" to keep inventing the structure that provides for the marriage of word and thing. Book Three illustrates the difficulty in a series of three sections. The first proposes a marriage riddle that, in paraphrase, goes something like this: How is reality, disorganized and often ugly, to be directly embraced by a poetic beauty which must "compose" it? Efforts to answer the riddle go around and around, until its insolubility generates a rampaging mental tornado. The next section shows how the fire of poetic inspiration can result in a smoke and fury of inarticulateness, with an account of a blaze that destroys the Paterson library's collection of the classics. The final section presents the logical

counterpoint to the theme: a flood of words that sweeps away the "beautiful thing" and rots out the old language.

Attention in Book Four turns to the problem of germinating a new language out of the local rhetoric. The poetic effort leads through antagonism ("Dissonance . . . / leads to discovery" by a process of dissection) and a gestation (the "pregnant ash" out of which discovery emerges). The symbol of the imagination engaged in this effort is Madame Curie, the pregnant scientist whose breakdown of uranium led to a "luminosity of elements," the "radiant gist" of a localized power (176, 186).

Despite the dissonance (which threatens divorce), the poet wants eventually to arrive at his "virgin purpose, / the language" (187). The sexual imagery of Book Four becomes even bolder in Book Five: the virgin (Imagination) and the whore (Memory) become an identity (210) which the poet must accept before his love can be loosed to flow (216). This seminal flow, like the course of the river, is circular: by returning to its origins, the language finds ways to produce once more (cf. 233). The womb of language is its rhythm, its music:

> We know nothing and can know nothing
> but
> the dance, to dance to a measure
> contrapuntally,
> Satyrically, the tragic foot. (239)

Williams' knowledge of the dance led him to what he called the variable foot, a rhythmical device he began to employ partway through Paterson, and developed in his later poetry.

But the variable foot did not amount to a final answer to the question of divorce. After his death, notes for a sixth book to Paterson were found, in which the poet began reworking the problem of language again.

Williams' understanding of the relation between the daughters of earth and the sons of heaven never reached the point of finality. As the development of Paterson shows, his theory of language tended to emphasize its motion. Thus, early in the poem, he realized that "no ideas but in things" could not be translated to mean "no ideas but in the facts." His own epistemology had, as he put it, "hung too long upon a partial victory":

> So you think because the rose
> is red that you shall have the mastery?
> The rose is green and will bloom. . . . (30)

The thing grows; the poet knows its growth, its dance, and that is all he can know. For Williams, any other attitude amounts to acceptance of the divorce between the word and the thing. But it is only a start toward a complete epistemology. Paterson contains "hints of composition" but no final statements. Williams invites other poets to "music it yourself," as he did.

And they have. "Alienation as a subject for poetry," says Allen Tate,

> seems to take two directions: first, the relation of the poet to the world . . . ; and, secondly, poems about the meaning of poetry itself. I suppose never before in the history of poetry in any language have so many poems been written as in the American English of this century, about poetry.[120]

Poet after poet has taken up the same struggle for language that Williams was engaged in. And, like him, they have found it hard work.

Denise Levertov, for instance, has written a book of poems largely about poetry, called The Jacob's Ladder. In the title poem she calls poetry "a stairway of sharp / angles, solidly built. . . . The poem ascends."[121] Even so:

> Nothing
>
> is ever enough. Images
> split the truth
> in fractions[122]

Often, it seems that the poet is trying to overcome the language by means of language, rather like a person trying to overcome gravity by pulling himself up by the shoes. "The language is odd," complains William Bronk; "we have to grope for words for what we mean."[123] To Ginsberg, the results are far less than satisfactory: himself a pourer of words, he laments that the prophetic words of the Good Grey Poet (Whitman) have produced little besides democratic lies. Then he refers to the imagist ideal of language:

> Ezra Pound the Chinese Written Character for truth
> defined as man standing by his word
> Word picture: forked creature
> Man[124]

Still, the one perfect word remains the ideal of the poet, ever striving to speak it. In "The Knowledge of Light," Henry Rago states his belief that if reality came "perfect to / The curving of one word" the results would "widen . . . /

Sphere into sphere" as the mind's universe expanded.[125] More realistic poets treat this as a daydream. To Edgar Paiewonsky, who has "lost the breath to say my yes-and-no's," the thing dominates the word: "Between these words the paper sings aloud."[126] Alienation is ultimately part of language: "my tongue . . . discovers a foreignness / that is native," concludes Philip Levine.[127]

III: HOW TO IMPROVE THE WORLD

(YOU WILL ONLY MAKE MATTERS WORSE)

1.

Though Eliot has little to say about corruption as such, he entertains some definite opinions about the force which sustains it in literature:

> What I do wish to affirm is that the whole of modern literature is corrupted by what I call Secularism, that it is simply unaware of, cannot understand the meaning of, the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life.[1]

It would appear that, in his view, there was a time when literature was not so corrupted, for he refers to its "gradual secularization . . . during at least the last three hundred years."[2] At any rate, he feels that as things now stand secularism within the literature and a secularist approach to the writing of it have brought about the disintegration described in the previous chapter.

Eliot wants to paint a clear picture of secularism. The supernatural life, he says, is our primary concern because of its inherent importance. Since it differs radically from the natural life, the latter is basically opposed to it:

> My complaint against modern literature . . . is not that [it] is in the ordinary sense "immoral" or even "amoral". . . . It is simply that it repudiates, or is wholly ignorant of our most important and fundamen-

> tal beliefs; that in consequence its tendency is to encourage its readers to get what they can out of life while it lasts, to miss no "experience" that presents itself, and to sacrifice themselves, if they make any sacrifice at all, only for the sake of tangible benefits to others in this world either now or in the future.[3]

As an orientation to purely natural life, secularism does allow for the development of strict moral codes, but ones which are "temporal, material, and external in nature." So, while capable "of great good within limits," it establishes a way of life independent of and directionally opposed to the supernatural life. The two are incompatible: secularism preaches "a gospel of this world, and of this world alone," and consequently opens the door to corruption.[4]

If Eliot's opinion on corruption is justifiable in regard to the poetic self, flat rejection of his opinion on secularism would appear hazardous. As before, his theological vocabulary strikes to the heart of a literary issue. Because of secularism, American poetry at large has now reached a point where the possibilities for a future direction are nearly exhausted. And if secularism is adhered to as a guiding principle in the writing of poems, the poet (to use John Cage's phrase) will only make matters worse for himself.[5]

To learn more about why matters would get worse, I propose to examine briefly what Christianity in general has to say about secularism before turning to the American poetry of recent years.

2.

As far as Christians are concerned, the tendency to divide the universe into two realms, the secular and the sacred, originated early in the Old Testament. At the time of the Israelite escape from Egypt, it became apparent to these former slaves that the God with no image--no real name either, for that matter--Who brought them out had left them, in effect, with a twofold choice. On the one hand, they could choose to break with their slavery to idols, since their experience had rendered such images of divine activity empty of meaning.[6] On the other hand, they could replace the idols by making the imageless I Am the center of their relationship with the world. The writer of Deuteronomy summed it up this way:

> Hear, O Israel! the Lord your God is One Yahweh. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength.[7]

There was, moreover, no question as to the either-or nature of the choice; it meant living with the One Yahweh or living, as the rest of the nations did, with many images (one of whom, it turned out, could be Yahweh Himself). Nor was there any doubt that the choice was of the first importance. Not only had this I Am initiated the choice by His action among them, but the historical identity of the Israelite people depended on choosing rightly.

And so, throughout the Old Testament runs a string of

dichotomies meant to indicate which choice a person has made. Thus, for example, he is either for God or against Him. That is, either he accepts God and the way of life that God directs for His people, or he rejects it: there is no middle ground. If a person does not declare himself in one category, he automatically falls into the other. The world, then, is Israelite or pagan, clean or unclean, virtuous or wicked, wise (knowing God through experience and practiced in His ways) or foolish (ignorant of both). Scripture scholar John McKenzie points out that

> the sages of the Old Testament do not imagine a passage from one class into the other, once a man has definitely chosen one or the other. . . . They were convinced of the importance of the critical decision in human life, whenever it comes: the decision which turns the life of a man in one direction or another and which, once made, is irreversible.[8]

The New Testament continues this dichotomizing attitude. The parables of Jesus abound with figures that illustrate the same oppositions, such as the guests included in the marriage feast and those shut out of it, good and bad fish, sheep and goats, and so on. He says the same things without figures: a person must be for Jesus or against him; no one can serve both God and money; one is a citizen either of the kingdom of God or of the kingdom of this world. Taking up the theme, other New Testament writers discuss people whose minds are either in the light or in the dark, spiritual or unspiritual, transformed into Christ or conformed to the times, and which think with the mind of Christ or with that of the prince of the world. There is

little gradation here. A man's heart tends in the direction of his treasure, and there is no third ground in which it can lie buried.

Modern Christians face the same choice, though many of them have begun to think of it in less absolute terms. Perhaps fearful that, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "in human affairs generally, what we call 'God' is being more and more edged out of life, losing more and more ground,"[9] these Christians have tried to regain their territory by questioning the validity of any distinction between the sacred and the secular. In some quarters, the scepticism has produced a deeper appreciation of the Scriptural warning not to love the "world". In others, the distinction between one realm and the other has become blurred to the point where the two are virtually identical.

In a book which he edited called Adversity and Grace: Studies in Recent American Literature, Nathan A. Scott, Jr., begins his discussion of "the world" with a definition. "The world," he believes, is the context of human history, the dimension of the human condition:

> In the Biblical perspective, the material of faith . . . is simply this actual world--where man must hold out against this and take a stand against that and resist whatever threatens to stain or contradict or blaspheme the Glory. The sphere of faith, in other words, is the shifting, conditioned, ambiguous site of history itself.[10]

Quoting Bonhoeffer's remark, Scott maintains that the faith of a Christian is meant to be applied directly to the human condition. That is, the "religious" life of man is meant to be "worldly" by being deeply engaged "with the

full human and cultural reality of the particular to which history commits him."[11] Since the People of God live their lives in an actual historical setting, a Christian should rest assured that "the Holy and the Sacred are to be encountered in the true depth of that historical reality."[12]

This definition leads Scott to conclude that "the Bible does not accord ultimate validity to any distinction between the Sacred and the Profane"[13], nor does modern theology. Such a distinction, he argues, depends on a metaphysic which grew out of the renaissance analogy of the world to a machine, such as a clock. R. G. Collingwood explains the logic:

> The movements which [the world] exhibits . . . are imposed upon it from without, and their regularity is due to "laws of nature" likewise imposed from without. . . . The world is a machine in the literal and proper sense of the word, an arrangement of bodily parts designed and put together and set going for a definite purpose by a mind outside itself.[14]

From a theory of physics, the analogy became elevated to a metaphysics, and was elevated again to something Scott calls a Deus ex machina theology. God stands apart from the world He created, according to this theology. The world does not participate in His life. Human beings are part of the world mechanism, somehow distinct from it yet subject to its physical and temporal laws, and therefore in a realm separate from the divine. A theology of two realms, Scott argues, "invites man to conceive of himself as a point of intersection between two spheres, the natural and the supernatural, the temporal and the eternal." But the metaphysics underlying this kind of theology has disappeared: "'The

linchpin' of the whole structure is gone: the Deus ex machina is simply no longer comprehensible by the modern imagination."[15]

What is comprehensible by the modern imagination, he feels, is simply the view of "the world" as "the site of history itself."[16] Man's place is in the world, his faith is engaged with it, his life is secular in virtue of his very mode of existence. It is in the world that man encounters Immanuel, "the Beyond in the midst of life."[17] What distinguishes the Christian from other men in the world, to Scott, is "his faith as to whence it is from which come the great gifts of courage and creativity and peace." The world is not divided into separate realms for God and for man. "The world . . . is one."[18]

It would seem to Scott, then, that Eliot's use of the term secularism is not just ultimately invalid from a Biblical perspective. It is also "repugnant to the newly emerging Christian sensibility."[19]

I have dwelt so long on Scott's interpretation of the idea of secularism for two reasons. The first is that his is a fairly widespread view among Christians at present. It is attractive because it points up the real damage to Christian thinking that an abuse of the "two realms" theory has had, and it emphasizes the power that man's faith in God's actual presence through history can have upon that history. The second reason--one of more immediate importance here--is that Scott applies his interpretation to modern

literature. His view serves to reinforce the critical notion that the idea of a secular literature, as distinct from a sacred one, is irrelevant. He also supports an attitude that many poets since Pound and Williams have shown works for poetry: that the proper material for the poetic imagination is the historical and concrete particular. Richard Wilbur's poems, for instance, often touch on this theme. In one poem he advises the poet to

> Speak of the world's own change. Though we cannot conceive
> Of an undreamt thing, we know to our cost
> . . . . . .
> How the view alters.
>
> . . . What should we be without
> The dolphin's arc, the dove's return,
> These things in which we have seen ourselves and spoken?[20]

As Wilbur reminds the poet, love does call him to the things of this world.[21]

However, as it turns out, Scott uses the expression "the world" much differently from Eliot; in fact, the two men do not refer to the same phenomenon. Scott's "world" is the particular historical dimension in which men live and move and have their temporal being. Eliot's is a lack of concern for what really counts in human life, regardless of the historical particulars. The two views are by no means exclusive, but they are different. And the critic cannot apply Scott's definition to the literary problem Eliot is raising.

Before going on, I would like to clarify a point which Scott has raised. Given his understanding of what "the world"

is, he may be correct in holding that "the Bible does not accord ultimate validity to any distinction between the Sacred and the Profane." But the case is otherwise for one who looks on "the world" as Eliot does. According to McKenzie, the New Testament uses the word kosmos in several ways. Ordinarily, the word refers to the physical creation, something a modern writer might call the universe. But it may also mean one of the two "protagonists of the drama of salvation," the other protagonist being Jesus Christ.[22] Two Scriptural authors will illustrate the latter use of kosmos. To St. Paul, though God is not opposed to the world, the world is hostile to Him. The reason for its opposition is the sinfulness lying at the root of human nature. Of course, the believer cannot withdraw from the world, but he must not allow himself to be conformed to it either. With the other writer, St. John, "the opposition between God and Christ and the world is more sharply polarized." McKenzie summarizes St. John's position:

> . . . sinful humanity, to whom this mission of salvation comes, does not receive the mission nor the emissary; and it is in this aspect that "the world" in J[oh]n becomes polarized into a kind of anti-God, a constant reality which is neither saved nor capable of salvation. The world recognizes and acknowledges neither Jesus nor the Father; indeed, the world hates Jesus. . . . The world can be redeemed and reconciled to God only by ceasing to be the world. The disciples, though they are men and live in the world as the universe and the scene of human life, do not belong to the world just as Jesus does not.[23]

The division of reality into two realms is absolute. And whatever the "newly emerging Christian sensibility" may

want to feel about this side of the Scriptural viewpoint, the fact remains that it is there and confronts that sensibility. It is the viewpoint from which Eliot speaks about literature.

What is this "world" then? I should begin by stating one thing which it is not. It is not a metaphysical concept, properly so called. Scott, of course, correctly points out that it has been interpreted on the basis of a medieval and renaissance metaphysics whose "linchpin" has disappeared. But the Scriptural idea has little to do even with the Greek philosophy of its time. Its thought is fundamentally Semitic and nonintellectual (in the modern sense of that word).[24] The Bible, which uses concretely a vocabulary that today's readers would accept as abstractions,* is referring to an obstacle in the way of man's relationship with God.

That is to say, the "world"--the domain of the secular+--is a social attitude. It is, says McKenzie, "mankind as fallen, as alienated from God and hostile to God and to Jesus Christ."[25] The alienation and hostility are simply facts of the human position and do not need to be emotionally felt or consciously intended to be real. Since all indi-

---

*Says Owen Barfield, "Throughout the recorded history of language the movement of meaning has been from concrete to abstract." (Saving the Appearances, p. 117)

+The terminology here is inevitably confusing. Whenever possible, I will prefer the term "the secular," and will use "the world" (in quotes) as a synonym only when anything else would be awkward. The term world without quotes will denote the physical universe.

viduals experience sin, all groups do too. For all practical purposes, sin belongs to the human character and forms the basis of human life as it operates on its own resources without God. As the social extension of the character of sin, "the world" is the basis of social existence without God. In short, the secular is solely and completely a human environment.

But I must get even more specific. The secular manifests itself as a cultural mind-set which, as Eliot says, "is simply unaware of, cannot understand the meaning of," or repudiates the centrality of God's role in the universe. A prime reason is that the world's beliefs operate horizontally, according to a man-oriented view of reality. It is a perfectly natural view to have. For human existence is the single most readily appreciated fact of human experience. Human beings are the psychological center of their universe; the centrality of any other being would require a different mode of representing reality.[26] How can One Who cannot be represented by the human mind in an image, Who cannot be adequately named in an utterance, Who cannot even be shown to exist with a conclusive logical proof be given a place which, by definition, puts the human person in a secondary position? So mankind is brought by its imagination, its language, and its thought to accord God no place at all or, more likely, one subordinated in practice to itself. While much of mankind does desire the real God and actively pursues some relationship with Him,

the secular mind-set orients God to man's designs rather than man to God's.

And it orients man to "the world". The secular dominates his dreams, his ideas, his values, his systems, his social structures. Man's problem, to use the Scriptural way of putting it, consists not so much in having to live in the secular domain as in having to cope with the overwhelming pressure exerted on him to belong to it. He is born in its hospitals, plays in its streets, learns his lessons in its schools, enjoys its entertainment, competes by its rules, marries its citizens, and teaches its wisdom to his children. As the social extension of sin, the secular follows the principles of lawlessness, rebellion, and folly in setting forth its norms of behavior. If a person becomes dissatisfied with his heritage, he must use a means of escape taught him by "the world": break the rules, fight it off, or go mad. He has no escape from within. For man on the inside and God on the outside, "the world" is naturally a closed system.

Perhaps because of that, man has always wanted to escape. In part, his desire to get out stems from the effects of his being constantly in his own company. Nathan Scott observes of recent literary attitudes to the city, for example:

> It often seems . . . that what the literary imagination finds most expensive in the urban experience is the city's enclosure of man in the world of artifacts, a world of his own creation in which, wherever he turns, he beholds nothing other than extensions of his own

> image. For, in this way, the city becomes a place of illusion and unreality . . . , and life everywhere seems to have the aspect of something gratuitous and arbitrary, for it seems universally to be a consequence of human artifice.[27]

In part also, the urge to escape the secular comes from the effects of sin on human nature. "The world" creates an environment in which one form of lawlessness, rebellion, or folly works to destroy whatever order there is, while another form of the same trinity tries to resist the destruction. The secular encourages the very corruption it wants to stand against.

If, in Christianity's view, man could escape the secular under his own power, he would have done it long ago. In fact, he has devised a number of approaches that, in Eliot's words, are capable of great good within limits. But they have their built-in problems. Like attempting to look at electrons through an electron microscope, human approaches have ways of knocking the real issues aside, distorting the perspective, and suggesting at best superficial remedies. Generally, these remedies seem to fall into three categories.

The first may loosely be called transcendence, the human effort to rise above human limitations in order to achieve union or communion--the two experiences have important differences--with an external and infinite All. Whatever form of union is sought, it always depends solely on personal effort. It may involve following a moral or legal code, practicing rigorous self-discipline, or under-

taking some kind of individual or social action to abolish an evil or promote a good. In any case, the person trying to transcend the secular attempts to reshape or re-create himself or his environment so as to assimilate or be assimilated into the Truly Real.

Another approach is to withdraw from the secular, usually into the self. Rather than working to achieve oneness with an external Infinite, the withdrawer heads in the opposite direction, toward establishing union with an Infinite Within. He appears to have two related practical goals. One is to free himself from limitations imposed on the self by external forms, real or illusory. The other is to acquire knowledge through a combination of body, intellect, intuition, and imagination. The one undergoing withdrawal from the secular finds his source of freedom and creativity within himself, and he rejects any outward thing that would hinder or thwart inner harmony.

I have hideously oversimplified these two approaches, as anyone would know who has tried either of them. Both avenues of escape resemble each other in certain respects, as in their search for freedom from limitation. Both employ similar methods, such as meditation and self-discipline. And both approaches may combine into one, so that escape from the secular becomes a matter of achieving contact with a Transcendent-Immanent Being. I mention them separately in order to characterize their general directions: tran-

scendence aims to rise above or surmount limitation,* whereas immanentism seeks to liberate the inner self.

The third approach to the problem of the secular is simply to stay within it and deny all need or possibility of escaping it. Far from constituting a blithe, out-of-hand rejection of other attitudes, acceptance of the secular rests upon a hard look at the facts of life. To all appearances, there is no other environment for man to live in than the human. Escape from a man-made environment cannot realistically take place in this life, and we have precious little evidence of another; so it is pointless to try. The approach allows for variations, from stoicism through hedonism to fatalism. But full acceptance of the secular demands entry into the present conditions of existence, and a willingness to use the principles operative in the environment for achieving whatever happiness can be gained.

Eliot argues that Christians must "tirelessly criticize" even the best of what they read "according to our own

---

*Fr. William F. Lynch, S.J., author of Christ and Apollo: The Dimensions of the Literary Imagination (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), offers a variation of the direction in which transcendence might aim. From a generally Scriptural background, he argues that the proper direction of transcendence is not up-and-out, but through: "We must go through the finite, the limited, the definite, omitting none of it lest we omit some of the potencies of being-in-the-flesh" (p. 7). He feels that his attitude is more in harmony with Christian theology than the other attitude. I tend to agree with him, and much of my own argument presupposes his point of view. I might add, however, that even this direction, if undertaken solely at human initiative and by human power, is as secular as any other.

principles, and not merely according to the principles admitted by the writers and by the critics who discuss it in the public [i.e., secular] press."[28] Because a principle is something from which everything else follows, Christians must come to know the one which stands at the root of their activities: "It is the Spirit that gives life," says Jesus; "the flesh has nothing to offer."[29] Whatever does not have its origin in the Holy Spirit has its origin in a secular principle, and it takes an active relationship with the Spirit to tell the difference. Thus Christians are faced by their principles with the stark conclusion that transcendence is secular when it has its roots in human effort; immanence is secular when it has its roots in human knowledge; and stasis is secular when it has its roots in human experience. If the secular approach to overcoming the tendencies of humanity worked, the Christian mentality would have no problem with it. But, as Leon-Joseph Cardinal Suenens writes, it only succeeds in making matters worse:

> The ultimate problem from which we suffer lies neither in our institutions nor in things; it is within us, in our hearts and in our souls. This interior evil is the reason why the same social abuses arise over and over again, no matter what social system is tried. Because we do not try to change the source of injustice itself, all our efforts only serve to make it change position.[30]

Corruption, says Christianity, originates with sin in human nature. Because "the world" is the social extension of human nature and its principles, it cannot overcome corruption without ceasing to be the world. The best it can do is stall for time.

3.

Part of the reason Nathan Scott involves himself in a study of the secular in literature is that he wants to show how Nietzsche's "death of God" theory applies to modern literature. He concludes generally that, just as God is "dead" to the modern imagination, which no longer requires a divine stop-gap to explain the order of the universe, so He is "dead" to the literary imagination as well.[31]

The idea that God is dead or at least missing from the modern consciousness has come in for discussion within the context of American poetic criticism. Roger Meiners, for example, asks:

> William James aside, how does one will belief? We have received notice that God is dead, and we know that principles of order are hard to come by. We can, of course, refuse to accept the notice of death. . . .[32]

The point is sometimes made that the American poet does not have a crisis of faith--or, for that matter, much of a problem. Paul Carroll accepts it as a given that "we have no values in this country." Asserting that American writers no longer propose answers, he adds, "There's nothing very grandiose or religious, even, in their work. It's something very concrete, very American."[33] He is right: religious imagery abounds in American poems, but little religion in the usual sense. This lack of concern with God in poetry has led theologian John Killinger to speak of

the "Paradox of the Manifest Absence" in world literature as a whole:

> I am not sure that even Sartre and Camus should be classified as thoroughgoing atheists; they are only so dedicated to humanism that they would consider it a betrayal of their first cause even to deal seriously with the question of God.[34]

The same holds for the American poet. The problem is not that he no longer writes religious or devotional poems--John Berryman and Anne Sexton alone would show that qualified poets still do--but that the bulk of his writing does not show much unconscious infusion of his attitudes by religion. God is manifestly absent.

According to Eliot, secularism in literature shows itself in three principal ways. In the first place, a secular literature is either unaware of or does not understand the primacy of the supernatural life; the supernatural is seen in natural terms rather than in its own terms. Its most important aspects get sandwiched into the humdrum business of everyday life, as James Schuyler cannot resist pointing out:

> . . . not forgetting the big church with the doleful
> bells
> cheerily summoning housewives to early mass
> ("The good thing about religion is
> it gives a man a sense of his place in the universe")[35]

Kirby Doyle feels that it is

> STRANGE
> . . . how on a streetcorner in front of Penney's
> a clean old man with REPENT in his hatband
> hawks the unknown sayings of Jesus
> for a nickel. . . .[36]

The clean old man, like the evangelist in Paterson, underscores the point that no one is really interested. But

even a poet familiar with the unknown sayings of Jesus often interprets the supernatural order in the light of the way things ought to work naturally. When, in 1950, the pope defined for Roman Catholics what the belief in the assumption of the Virgin Mary into heaven would be understood to mean, Robert Lowell was mystified:

> The lights of science couldn't hold a candle
> to Mary risen--at one miraculous stroke
> angel-wing'd, gorgeous as a jungle bird!
> But who believed this? Who could understand?

A Catholic at the time, Lowell found himself unable to "will belief" in what was naturally so ridiculous. Since he could not fathom the apparent conflict between science (symbolized in the poem by the electric razor in the pope's right hand) and an all-too-tame faith (the pet canary on the pope's left hand), the poet "much against my will / . . . left the city of God where it belongs" and returned to the disintegration of Paris.[37] John Berryman also uses the Virgin as a starting-point for his own puzzlement: "I suppose she is the Queen of Heaven / under Your greater . . . / more incomprehensible but forgiving glory."[38] The poems in Delusions, Etc., show a mounting struggle over the religious discoveries he recorded in Love & Fame. What Berryman finds incredible, in the last analysis, is not the Virgin's glory but his own. The promise of glory for "Henry Pussycat . . . sounds incredible-- / if he can muster penitence enough-- / he can't though."[39] Unable to believe in glory, he ends Delusions with a reference to himself as a beaten and rejected King David: "yea, / all the black same I dance my blue head off!"[40]

A second way secularism emerges in literature is through repudiation of belief in the supernatural, often fairly explicitly. Donald Finkel does it through sarcasm: ". . . whom Christopher has joined together, let no man sunder, / for he has packed us cheek to cheek like tiles on a bathroom floor." He goes on to invite the participants at a prayer meeting to

> . . . fill their lungs as they can, under the circumstances,
> let them all begin to holler at once, according to their custom, like one vast apocalyptic Recess,
> let each one and his brother turn up his scrubbed, gleaming face to the sun, and yell.[41]

A. R. Ammons repudiates belief by means of a kind of prayer. In "Hymn IV," he addresses a party known only as "you":

> You have enriched us with
> fear and contrariety
> providing the searcher
> confusion for his search
> . . . . . .
> I give you back to yourself
> whole and undivided[42]

Ammons regards any overall "formulation that saves" as a form of condemnation[43], and asks the person to whom he prays to "dispossess me of belief: / between life and me obtrude / no symbolic forms."[44] Two other writers do employ symbol to show that form is all that religion has left. In a poem about the modern break with religion, Charles Olson uses the kingfisher symbol, asking, "who cares / for their feathers / now?" He goes on:

> The legends are
> legends. Dead, hung up indoors, the kingfisher
> will not indicate a favoring wind,
> or avert the thunderbolt.[45]

Galway Kinnell, skeptical of the notion of an afterlife, says much the same thing with the traditional Christian symbol of the fish. Noticing fish being gutted in a market, Kinnell ruminates:

> Fishes do not die exactly, it is more
> That they go out of themselves, the visible part
> Remains the same, there is little pallor,
> Only the cataracted eyes which have not shut ever
> Must look through the mist which crazed Homer[46]

The third and most common manifestation of secularism is in the way poetry centers on "the world". To Eliot's way of thinking, secularism orients itself primarily to the here and now--toward "this life while it lasts" with its experiences and its tangible benefits. If what Pearce has said about the Adamic mode of writing is correct, secularism is virtually traditional in American poetry. He also talks about the mythic mode of American writing, and I do not mean to suggest that it is any less secular.* But it is easier to see the influence of "the world" on poetry because the Adamic mode, as Pearce describes it, is practically secular by definition.

Pearce says that the Adamic poem "portrays the simple, separating inwardness of man" as lying at the center of consciousness. "The poem may nominally argue for many things," he continues; "but always it will argue for . . . the vital necessity of its own existence and of the ego which creates and informs it." The Adamic self is ego-

---

*At least, as I use the term. Pearce regards the mythic mode as "ultimately Christian," an assessment with which I cannot agree. See The Continuity of American Poetry, p. 431.

centric, in other words, the operation of the creative imagination chiefly employed in naming and thereby creating both the reality and itself.[47] Whether it wants to or not, the self functioning in this mode assumes the position of God and puts any real God in a subordinate position. Of Emerson, for instance, Pearce says:

> Emerson . . . was only bringing to full consciousness . . . the antinomianism latent in the thought of his Puritan forebears: that somehow man was a "first Adam," to whom God was a means and not an end--and was thereby a poet.[48]

And of Wallace Stevens, who ended his poetic career during the period I am considering:

> The poetry which Stevens wanted was to be grounded in a humanism so powerful that even God would be under its sway. . . . God, then, has not given reality to man; nor has man given reality to God; he has given God to reality.[49]

The Adamic self thereby takes on an infinitude that proceeds from what Pearce calls "his own radically humanistic immanence"; and from that selfhood he exercises an "infinitely fecund power of a man to make, and only thus to know, himself."[50]

The first Adam, having subordinated God and reality to the self, becomes engaged in Carroll's "very concrete, very American" process of writing poetry. Proclaiming himself as American as Ben Franklin, whose wisdom, orgies, and "passion for himself / serve me as a soul," William Brown longs for even more: "the big harvest / where I shall be both / green giant and hanged god / reborn in the rice fields."[51] Allen Ginsberg resorts to chants and invocations to integrate God "into my own consciousness and therefore to become God

or to say I am God, or to say in the poem, 'I am God,' or to imagine I am God--rather than that God be something external to me."[52]

Being God gives the poet certain advantages in his poetry. It conveys to him infinite power. Geof Hewitt has called poetry "the grand reassurance that we can still change the outside world, or make it disappear."[53] Stanley Kunitz agrees that, because of the imagination, "what happens to us is false," and that within the imagination we find "an action fit / for a more heroic stage / than body ever walked on."[54] Out of his power, the poet can live in and confer holiness. He withdraws from the outer darkness into his own visionary world[55]--"imagination's holy forest"[56] --from which he "turns windlass sighs to haul up from himself / his precious element, sacred and for use."[57] So the poet is in a position to rely totally on his own nature, either directly or by means of his art. "Everybody is God," exclaims Ginsberg, "and it's time they siezed power in the universe."[58] Michael McClure, in a pregnant phrase, reminds the poet of his passage from ancestral myths to the myth of self, a myth of Adam's return to the garden.[59] And Edward Field speculates:

> If I were naked I think my body
> Would know where to go of its own accord:
> . . . . . .
> . . . not in a straight line, of course,
> But this way and that, as human nature goes,
> Finding, if not the place, the way there.[60]

Nakedness characterizes the original state of Adam. But in the ancestral Genesis myth, Adam eats of the fruit

of the tree of knowledge and realizes his nakedness--that he is only human. His reaction is to put on clothes to hide himself. Sylvia Plath, who knows how far she has fallen, expresses weariness at this constant investiture of self:

> There is no terminus, only suitcases
>
> Out of which the same self unfolds like a suit
> Bald and shiny, with pockets of wishes,
>
> Notions and tickets, short circuits and folding mirrors.[61]

Denise Levertov realizes the human direction, despite the myth of self-creation: "The rivers / run out of Eden. / Before Adam / Adam blazes."[62] And behind Adam swings the revolving sword, directing him into his own environment, into "the world". For in creating himself, he creates "the world."

4.

Toward the end of his long essay on Lowell called Everything to Be Endured, Roger Meiners points to a tendency inherent in the Adamic mode of expression. Arguing that modern literature is an extension of romantic themes and aspirations, he says:

> . . . there is something inherently apocalyptic about the romantic imagination. . . . Even if we argue, as many have, that the personality is continuously creative and self-created, these very conceptions posit the continuous dissolution of the personality's past. The past recedes first into the unconscious, then into collective memory; and the very process points forward to the dissolution of the personality, the end of self-creating. And this raises the very conception of an ending, of an apocalypse.[63]

It is difficult to tell whether the self ought to regard its apocalypse as a consummation devoutly to be wished or evaded. Meiners alludes to Wallace Stevens' interpretation of "decreation" as a process of coming to the final triumphant resolution of everything in man;[64] but there is another side of the coin. The poet feels drawn to Stevens' version of revelation; but the prospect of the dissolution of personality--which implies the ending of his own selfhood --arouses dread that things might not turn out that way. Besides, the poet already experiences dissolution within the self in ways that promise anything but final triumph.

The poet's ambivalence may be illustrated by juxtaposing two contrary opinions about the current direction of Adamic poetry. In his preface to a recent anthology, Al Lee writes:

> One quality that distinguishes the younger poets, perhaps even from those a few years older who are themselves part of the new poetry, is the far-off places they have gotten to. There are things happening in their poems, stories being told, that we aren't used to in poetry, that we have only lately learned to imagine in public.[65]

From a very different viewpoint, Meiners would appear to agree, though he would call such happenings part of "a desperate attempt to break out of these oppressive circumstances."[66] Lee, who apparently sees no oppression to break out of, regards the focus in poetry as having shifted from "apparatus" to an esthetic of open possibilities.[67] Again, Meiners seems to agree, but for a different reason. He asks a searching question:

> To be blunt, the only real problem of modern "aesthetics" is: is life worth living? . . . We contrive elaborate schemes for discussing our post-lapsarian knowledge, and we publish the results . . . in a strange spirit of exorcism: if we are knowing enough, the problems may go away. But they will not.[68]

At least they have not as yet, and show no signs of doing so. The tendency toward dissolution goes on apace, the apocalypse delayed by the secularist approach of shifting from one alternative to the next. Meiners, in fact, discusses a few of them.

The first alternative for poetry, he says, is to establish a direction toward "a principle of order that will lead us to something like a metaphysics." To serve as a genuine principle, the foundation of order would have to be at once simple, real, comprehensive of all that is, and knowable (meaning, in practice, something to which the mind can "belong", something capable of being spoken). Principles of order, he notes, are hard to come by: the old ones no longer suit the modern mind, and more suitable ones have not yet emerged to take their place. The poetic imagination is constrained to find,

> as Arnold said, . . . the "great subjects," to find a world where . . . it is not foolish or tedious to speak of death, friendship, love, and hate as "great subjects." In other words, we would have to find some way to believe in the "sacred texts"; in less vivid language, to believe in a real principle of order in the world to which poetry and social action alike respond.[69]

The attempt, he feels, may seem improbable. The very phrase, "great subjects," suggests some measure of return to the patterns of order by which they are great. And it does not appear that a return of that kind remains open

to the modern artist or thinker.[70]

Yet some poets hope to find principles that will serve in the interim. Paul Carroll, for example, wants to turn a negative force into a positive one by articulating chaos. He is not alone. Joseph Brown, writing under the pseudonym "luke", feels that his Christianity allows him to use absurdity as a "positive condition of humanity--a starting point for choice."[71] Robert Bly likes poetry characterized by "a leaping about the psyche," an "expression of a certain rebellious energy" unconfined to technique.[72] On the other hand, a few poets are trying to feel their way toward something more orderly than sheer chos or absurdity. Robert Creeley describes his own work as beginning out of ignorance ("I write what I don't know.") and taking on order as he writes.[73] A. R. Ammons turns the geography of Corson's Inlet into a remarkable metaphor of his discovery of tentative and limited orders rather than a grand design.[74] Perhaps such efforts will lend poetry a direction of significance (as Ammons would say) if not a metaphysics.

A second alternative, according to Meiners, is to disbelieve "any principle of order other than that of the creative human intelligence."[75] Essentially, this amounts to wholsale withdrawal into the world of the imagination, and reliance on the finite to "create infinity within these [personal] boundaries."[76] Meiners does point out that the acceptance of a transcendent principle of order is not at odds with the creativity of the human imagination. The

Judeo-Christian tradition has always regarded man's creative activity as a reflection of God's, and this tradition has carried over into theories of the poetic imagination, notably those of the Romantic poets. Nevertheless, he continues, "for the last 150 years the creativity of man has largely become not a corollary of, but a substitute for, a transcendent principle of order."[77] This substitution is at work in poets as far apart in time as Emerson and Stevens. It is a pronounced feature of the Adamic imagination, in fact, and leads J. Hillis Miller to this conclusion:

> If any spiritual power can exist for the new poetry it must be an immanent presence. There can be for many writers no return to the traditional conception of God as the highest existence, creator of all other existences, transcending his creation as well as dwelling within it. If there is to be a God in the new world it must be a presence within things and not beyond them.[78]

It is just such an attitude which unites poets so very different in other ways as Williams, Stevens, Roethke, Snyder, Kinnell, Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti, McClure, Kunitz, Benedikt, and many more.

Immanentism is the direction now in effect, and there is no question of its capacity for great good within limits. It has brought into poetry new forms and techniques, new esthetic insights, new visions almost without number, and new vitality. And, as Meiners puts it, immanentism has brought poetry to a "freedom from the tug of the infinite" which could itself turn out to be "the truth that will set us free" indeed. But he finds a serious flaw in it:

> If the old beliefs in the transcendent froze men into dogmas, locked them motionless into orthodoxies, then the new immanentism seems to be having trouble finding anywhere to rest, or any means of telling one moment from the next.[79]

A few pages later, he develops his thought further:

> . . . a plunge into the immanent, into the ceaseless creativity of the person bounded by--Nothing--is not without its risks, its besetting decadence: indiscrimination. Is it worse to go mad from being unable to place things together . . . , or because you can't tell one thing from another; indeed, find it increasingly difficult to speak of things, discover their boundaries wavering?[80]

Restlessness is characteristic of Ginsberg's poetry, which goes at the problem of the self's language over and over, as it is of Berryman's, which goes at the self over and over. "Is it worse to die," Meiners asks again, "with Parmenides or Heraclitus, from the inability to move or the inability to cease from moving?"[81]

The third alternative for poetry is what he calls paralysis: "one is caught between the two previous alternatives, unable to accept either and unable to mediate between them."[82] The poet cannot transcend limitations because the old principles of order have worn out, the "great subjects" have dried up, and nothing has taken their place. Nor can he withdraw from the chaotic outer darkness because it will not be withdrawn from so conveniently and because within himself he can find nowhere to rest. Thus caught, he can do nothing, go noplace. And so the self created in his poetry becomes isolated from nature, inactive, intransitive, reflexive, "caught in something like pure ennui," lonely, plagued with the sense that nothing is worth doing.[83]

As an instance of what he is talking about, Meiners writes that "something like paralysis lays its cold hand on experience in the latest poetry of Robert Lowell,"[84] and cites large sections of For the Union Dead and Near the Ocean to illustrate his point. Furthermore, he wonders if the same blight is not settling into American poetry at large. He traces the sequence of what he calls the "archetypal modern situation" in poetry: obsessive and claustrophobic isolation, desperation and extremity in the personality's drive to break out of its confines, ending in the question of whether the effort is worth the trouble anyway.[85] He closes his book with a comment on one of Lowell's poems in Near the Ocean:

> When Lowell writes "O to break loose" one wishes that he could do so. In wishing it, we wish also for ourselves, knowing that, if there is any breaking loose, it must be into a place where we can see and act simultaneously; into a vision which, if not something so large as the whole, is yet more than a point edging into Nothing.[86]

But no one can break loose from the waiting grave, says Mark Strand, unwittingly emphasizing Meiners' point. To Strand, the fact that "the dead / shall inherit the dead" provides the chief reason why

> people from offices huddle together,
> telling the same story over and over
>
> Everyone who has sold himself wants to buy himself back.
> Nothing is done. . . .[87]

It would appear, then, that transcendence, immanence, and paralysis have been tried in American poetry and have, in one respect or another, failed it. A fourth alternative

is possible, but Meiners does no more than indicate it briefly.

5.

Like the others, it has to do with the source of what J. Hillis Miller termed "spiritual power" for poetry. Meiners admits that his suggestion sounds at first "naive and provincial"; but it is "the only one in which I can personally put much hope." He refers to an application of the Christian teachings on the Incarnation and the Holy Spirit to the writing of poetry.[88]

When he mentions the Incarnation, Meiners puts aside thoughts of "a naively anthropomorphic deity" and its connection with a tournament-field theology of earthly life. The Incarnation, to him, represents a point of view about human existence on the one hand ("which says that it was not only possible, but necessary, for man to live between two worlds"), and one about a principle of order in the world on the other ("which says that the transcendent principle and the immanent principle are essential, and that man denies either term of this polarity to his own destruction"). Meiners notes that Christianity is not the only religion which teaches such a point of view. But what interests him about the Christian doctrine is that, of all versions, it is the only one "that ties it to an event in human time and by implication places a trememdous burden upon man to understand history and the manner in which he participates in it." Meiners' purpose in discussing

the area is to raise the question of "what was incarnated and into what," and to suggest an avenue for poetic investigation.[89]

As for the Holy Spirit, Meiners rejects the way some poets have identified It with the imagination. He does see a connection, though, between the Christian teaching on the Holy Spirit and "the very involved question of the role of imagination in human affairs." But the length of his essay will not allow him to pursue this intriguing question any further.[90]

It is at this point that my own investigations into the prospects for renewal in American poetry really begin. But I must delay further development of Meiners' ideas until the beginning of the next chapter. For the moment, I am concerned with another effect of secularism on poetry which the religious nature of his thinking brings up. Again, it has to do with the concept of spiritual power.

Every poet knows that a poem holds a certain kind of power over the imagination. Randall Jarrell, for instance, sees in the behavior of a mockingbird the ability of a poem to imitate life:

> A mockingbird can sound like anything.
> He imitates the world he drove away
> So well that for a minute, in the moonlight,
> Which one's the mockingbird? which one's the world?[91]

To Donald Finkel, the poem has a sexual allure. It is like "a good bra" that lifts the truth up and holds it out: "Devious or frank, in any case, / the poem is calculated to arouse" a reader to the point where his imagination and the poem are "equally beautiful."[92] The poem can even endow the poet with a kind of immortality. Ralph Pomeroy

invites his words to live their lives with him: "Together, who knows? / we may last awhile."[93] Unconventional as these expressions sound, they are no less traditional than Samuel Johnson's confidence that in language the daughters of earth consummate a marriage with the sons of heaven to produce a race of giants.

But in American poetry, the question of power becomes a matter of the Adamic experience. Daniel Hoffman, for example, uses the excitement of his infant daughter at seeing and naming a boat to describe his own excitement over the ability of the "verbal imagination":

> the world without description
> is vast and wild as death;
>
> the word the tongue has spoken
> creates the world and truth.[94]

The idea occurs elsewhere too: the poem does more than simply imitate life or create an experience in the imagination. It has the power create both world and truth. Hoffman seems to suggest, with certain linguists[95], that such power comes from the nature of language itself, as it relates to thought. Perhaps. But the need to <u>insist</u> on creative power of such magnitude appears to come from something nearer to the heart of the Adamic condition.

In "The Mockingbird," Jarrell observes how the bird monopolizes the world around him:

> . . . Hour by hour, fighting hard
> To make the world his own, he swooped
> On thrushes, thrashers, jays, and chicadees--
> At noon he drove away a big black cat.
>
> Now, in the moonlight, he sits here and sings,

imitating all the animals he has driven off.[96] Likewise, the poet monopolizes the world by removing himself from it and acquiring the ability to "sound like anything." Jarrell sees this behavior as a legacy given by the Indian Powhatan to "the father of us all, John Smith":

> "American,
> To thyself be enough! . . ." He was enough--
> Enough, or too much. The True Historie
> Of the Colony of Jamestown is a wish.[97]

The call of John Smith to become "enough, or too much" provides the basis of the American literary consciousness in its simple, separating inwardness. Jarrell's next lines imply that this consciousness even separates man from himself. The protagonist of the poem, asked by a witch to make three wishes, keeps insisting, "Make me what I am." The witch replies:

> . . . "Mortal, because you have believed
> In your mortality, there is no wood, no wish,
> No world, there is only you. But what are you?
> The world has become you. But what are you?
> Ask;
> Ask, while the time to ask remains to you."
>
> The witch said, smiling: "This is Jamestown.
> From Jamestown, Virginia, to Washington, D. C.,
> Is, as the rocket flies, eleven minutes."[98]

The allusion to nuclear missiles, the ability of the mind to create its own destruction, gives a chilling urgency to Paul Carroll's statement: "the new American writing is an attempt among writers to find again: Who am I? It's a very powerful literature that's being written right now."[99]

Powerful, yes. But the question has arisen among these very poets: Is it enough after all? does poetry actually do

anything? Most poets acknowledge with Paul Goodman the conventional idea that "by literature Sheherezad a thousand / midnights his prone violence appeased"[100]; Geof Hewitt writes that "the artist retains the power of infiltration, of helping madmen to see things straight." But the question persists. Even Hewitt acnnowledges the need for a poetry that goes beyond what is written now, one "that not only cries out for, but begins to show us how to find, peace and justice."[101] Stuart Peterfreund wants to know if American poetry can and will get down to some basic practicalities:

> Can it roast a duck?
> Can it have a baby?
> Can it do an adagio dance?
>
> And will it dance
> With grease on its mouth?
> And blood on the darkest part
> Of its inner thighs?[102]

"I think we have to face, finally," says Edward Dorn, "that there has to be some hope for something actionable to come out of all this."[103] Philip Dow puts it in italics: "<u>What does this do to save my life</u>?"[104]

Dorn's concern arises in the context of the practical questions that gripped poets in America from about 1961 onward. They had to discover how to make their art "actionable" in terms of the Vietnam War and a host of other issues facing the country. Some poets--Levertov, Lowell, Ginsberg, and Bly among them--wrote on social questions, and a few of them tried to find theoretical justification for a poetry of radical politics that would still be esthetically good. Their overall goal was a long-range one, despite its immediacy: poetry was to help save the life of the society. Ac-

cording to Denise Levertov, poetry "has a social effect of some kind whether or not the poet wills that it have. It has kinetic force. . . ."[105] Elsewhere she argues that the effect of poetry is specifically to "change the chemistry of the soul, of the imagination"; which is why the socially concerned poet must take active responsibility for what he writes.[106] Her views on the power of poetry to effect an inner as well as a social change appear to be shared by several of her colleagues. Whether poetry has actually made that power felt in society remains to be seen, but certainly it has tried:

> ONLY WHAT IS HEROIC AND COURAGEOUS MOVES OUR BLOOD
> we are lost within ourselves and tangles
> of a narrow room and world if we do not speak out, reach [out
> and strive from individuality.[107]

But the ultimate issue about poetry for many poets is more personal: what does this do to save my life? In his survey of the religious situation in modern poetry, Hoxie Neale Fairchild claims that "the obsessive question for modern literature is, in however vague or precise a sense, 'What shall I do to be saved?'" He quotes the opinion of Lionel Trilling, "a complete secularist":

> No literature has ever been so shockingly personal as ours--it asks every question which is forbidden in polite society. . . . It asks us if we are content with ourselves, if we are saved or damned--more than anything else, our literature is concerned with salvation. No literature has even been so intensely spiritual as ours.[108]

Fairchild cites Trilling only this far; but in his next sentence of the essay quoted, Trilling says more about

spirituality in literature: "I do not venture to call it religious, but certainly it has the special intensity of concern with the spiritual life which Hegel noted when he spoke of . . . the secularization of spirituality."[109] Exactly; Paul Carroll, who also said that our literature is not religious, would probably agree that it is spiritual and secular both. That is, the questions raised by our poetry address themselves to elemental concerns of the spirit--"What does this do to save my life?"--but the answers are secular in the sense I have defined.*

Critics have long been familiar with the notion that "there is something inherently religious about poetry, and something inherently poetic about religion."[110] The two think and communicate similarly in their imagery, their sacramental and incarnational view of life, and their affinity for ceremony. I believe it was Denise Levertov who said that we cannot talk for long about writing poetry

---

*Many Christians regard the concept of a "secular spirituality" as a paradox at best, though they have grounds for considering it a contradiction in terms. I have tried to emphasize that they regard the secular and the spiritual realms as radically opposed to each other. An appreciation has risen among some Christians for the ancient Semitic view of the human person as composed of body (soma), soul (psyche), and spirit or life-breath (pneuma). Thus, a truly "spiritual" person, according to St. Paul, is one whose internal energies center upon and take their vitality from what the human spirit is most sensitive to: "the affairs of the [Holy] Spirit." A "secular" person centers upon and draws vitality from the affairs of the body and the soul; he is by definition "unspiritual". The distinction is concrete and practical: the results of spiritual and unspiritual living appear in a person's conduct and attitudes. See Rm. 8:5-9; Gal. 5: 17-23.

without turning inevitably to the vocabulary of religious faith.[111] And in many ways, esthetic and spiritual experiences are alike.

But similarity is not identity. One does well to remind himself occasionally that poetry and religion are at least functionally distinct, for many since Arnold's time appear to have forgotten that.[112] Over the past twenty-five years, certain religio-poetical statements have been made whose logic, when carried to its conclusion, leads to a gospel which literally offers a form of salvation.

Eliot would call it a secular gospel. The Adamic consciousness, which reduces God from an end to a means and thereby promotes the "myth of self," is fertile and salvific: it is "both green giant and hanged god." In various contexts the self becomes identified by the Old Testament divine Name--I Am--and the creative power of the Holy Spirit becomes without qualification that of the imagination. The poetic self is the secular redeemer. It is, to itself, enough since it creates and so controls itself, the world, and truth. The self is enough for others as well. Hauling up from itself its precious element, sacred and for use, it speaks "the word / That will bring the belligerents of the world / To the negotiating table."[113] It helps madmen to see themselvs, the world, and truth aright. That is the salvation it offers.

It is a considerable gospel. But a gospel is not just the development of a religious philosophy; it is the pro-

clamation of a reality at once promised and experienced, and it is proclaimed by those who have in some way seen and heard its reality. If, then, American poetry offers a gospel of secular salvation, its witnesses are proclaiming it within a context of the corruption of the self, the world, and truth.

Of the corruption of the self, little remains to be said beyond what the last chapter described as an epistemology of loss. The self searches for what it knows most poignantly, the lost ingredient "that would keep us calm and prove us whole at last."[114] Ultimately, the poet comes "to myself empty, the rope / strung out behind me . . . / suddenly glorified with all my blood."[115] Having fallen a long way (Plath), the self seeks to be further diminished (Axelrod), or at best to keep itself alive by going to pieces (Wagoner). Philip Dow, whose protagonist raised the question of salvation, answers:

> His words stall for time,
> slave for the mortgage on his bones:
> he knows he is the fool
> who cannot solve it!
> yet, he goes at his heart over and over,
> repairing.[116]

Jarrell calls the acceptance of this futility "the difficult resolution."[117]

From the corruption of the self, the corruption of the world follows logically. The witch in Jarrell's "Jamestown" reminds the self that "the world has become you. But what are you?" In the poet's relation with the world, the breakdown of meaning is already well under way, as Barfield

observes.[118] William Carlos Williams (in Paterson) and Allen Ginsberg (in "Wichita Vortex Sutra") have pointed out how such a breakdown necessarily involves the language of poetry. A much younger poet, Peter Fellowes, agrees. Addressing a tree, which he compares to a nerve-end of the Earth, he begs:

> forgive me, Mr. Tree--
> there's nothing left between us.
>
> . . . . . .
> We were the sum of incidence,
> consumers of every meaning.
>
> We've dreamed too much!
> and dreamed away the sticks and stones.
> From branch to twig,
> thoughts rarefy and lose their heads.[119]

So the imagination which articulates the world has dreamed away the reality. And, having driven the world off (Jarrell), the mimetic imagination is left to articulate chaos (Carroll) or absurdity ("luke"). Owen Barfield does believe that the imagination has a "figurational" or "directionally creator" role to play which goes beyond mimesis and is "beginning to be dimly realized." But he warns that, in its work of figuring forth the world, "both the good and the evil latent in the working of imagination begin to appear unlimited."[120] It is not yet clear which direction a figurational imagination would take; but at present, the relation of the poetic self and the world is deteriorating.

So is the self's relation to truth. This is an immensely complicated subject, and I do not pretend to do it justice either here or in the following chapter on that topic.

But it is important, I think, to point to the fact that not all American poets are satisfied with the way their art renders truth. Part of the difficulty stems from the nature of language itself. Eliot once wrote how "words strain, / crack and sometimes break, under the burden" of trying to "reach / The stillness."[121] Like him, poets occasionally notice how words and images seem to "split the truth in fractions."[122] For poets like Eliot and Williams, one solution to the problem is to trust to the total form, pattern, music, or dance; so it is for Stanley Kunitz:

> I have learned,
> Trying to live
> With this perjured quid of mine
> That the truth is not in the stones,
> But in the architecture.[123]

Some poets, though, mistrust even this: to John Weiners, the very act of writing a description is "a deceit, an easy trap to fall into."[124] In the long run, though, the effort to build an architectural pattern is useless if there is nothing to build--which brings up the notion of truth itself. Few these days dare to give an affirmative answer to the old question, "What is truth?" for it would appear that the linchpin of the whole epistemology went with the metaphysics and one is left with particular <u>truths</u>. The modern mind has not yet come to the point of admitting that the self, the world, and truth all cohere in a center that Eliot called "the stillness". Some poets, then, who talk about truth answer "What is it?" in the negative:

> . . . . Truth's author itself is nothingness
> And though I make it vital that nothingness
> itself will collapse
> There is nothing. . . .[125]

The collapse of any principle of order has revealed "the endless chaos where we ever dwell"--so that there really is nothing to rely on and nowhere to go.[126] The attitude that poetry has only a negative relation to the truth is by no means universal, obviously. But, as the insistent rejection of "large truths" by poets like A. R. Ammons points up, it is limited and therefore fragmentary.

What, then, does poetry do to save my life? If even a secular form of salvation is the question, the answer would appear to lie, for poets, outside the competence of either poetry or the imagination alone. For one thing, there is a curious reluctance among poets to trust themselves to the power of their own art. Geof Hewitt, for instance, unconsciously hedges when he declares that poetry can "indeed still change the outside world" and that "the artist retains the power of infiltration"[127]--as if to concede that the power of poetry has suffered some degree of loss. The modern poet's accomplishment, to Stuart Peterfreund, is to have "made of the world a positive, though not necessarily optimistic, vision"[128]--a decided shift away from the optimism of fifty years ago. And Marvin Bell frankly chides himself for "speaking openly as if / the moral of aesthetics is that the parable convinces."[129] Secondly, frequent explicit references occur in recent poetry to the discovery that human nature is not made substantially better by this

art. "It doesn't get better," laments Joel Oppenheimer; "on the other / hand, even with the answers, where / would we be, out in the cold. . . ."[130] John Berryman, in love with his "excellent baby," poetry, often found little solace in it:

> Crackles! in darkness HOPE; & disappears.
> Lost arts.
> Vanishings.
>
> Walt! We're downstairs,
> even you don't comfort me
> but I join your risk my dear friend & go with you.
> There are no matches[131]

Perhaps the bleakest statement about poetry's power to save comes from Adrienne Rich. Her protagonist, disillusioned by the historical events around her, is

> writing blind with tears of rage.
> In vain. Years, death, depopulation, fears
> bondage: these shall all be borne.
> No imagination to forestall woe.[132]

6.

Enough has now been said to indicate that T. S. Eliot had reason to feel as he did about modern literature. The experience of American poetry in the last quarter century should demonstrate that he did not have in mind a superficial moralism about impiety in poetry. True, a good deal of American writing may be called immoral or amoral; but, as Eliot has said, to prefer that charge is insufficient. His is a serious, even complex, literary judgement about literature.

Poets and critics may still prefer not to believe that American poetry is corrupted by secularism. That is their

privilege. But they must be aware, when they dispute with Eliot, of the use to which he puts his Christian terminology. A corrupt poetry is not just morally degenerate verse, but poetry which portrays a consciousness disintegrating at its very center, whether that consciousness attempts to remain moral or not. By the same token, a secular poetry is not just writing which fails to mention God or to maintain the properly religious attitude. It is writing which, knowingly or not, relies upon the self's unaided natural ability to correct the central problem of its nature. Corruption is a direction which American poetry will continue to take as long as it is encouraged by a secularist apporach to the writing of poems.

Yet anyone who has read much recent American poetry realizes that there is more to it than corruption and secularism. Despite the bleak landscape, signs within the poetry indicate that a way to break loose from the corruption of secularism is being sought and may be near to being found. Part of the problem is one of articulation. But the greater part is one of appropriation--of clearing away the obstacles which keep the imagination from taking the new course, and of beginning actually to move in the direction indicated. Appropriation is a matter for the poet himself, however. He needs to cultivate, in Roy Harvey Pearce's words, a "proper sense of direction" for himself. The articulation is the business of the present study. And it is the nature of the direction I am about

to consider that it be proper in the original sense of the word--that it belong to and proceed from the poetic imagination itself.

IV: IF NOT THE PLACE, THE WAY THERE

1.

In the fall of 1964, Emmett Jarrett and Ron Schreiber began to edit a periodical called things, through which they hoped to influence the direction of American poetry. As they explained it, the title of the magazine came from William Carlos Williams' motto, "No ideas but in things," which summarized for them the editorial policy:

> Williams foreshadowed a period in which the poet's voice must be . . . the voice of a society in which individuals seem to shrink from a world that may end. In this half-century, there must be a literature of direct statement because things need to be stated directly: facts have too long been muffled by private verse and public rhetoric.

In their efforts to simplify the process of communication in poetry, the editors said they would look for a poetry of things, facts, direct statements.[1]

For the first issue, Jarrett and Schreiber enlisted the support of Denise Levertov. And she gave it, in the form of several poems and an essay called, "An Admonition," addressed to the editors themselves. There, she advised them that:

> Our still tentative awareness of the great gulfs of the unconscious, in constant transformation like

> the marvelous cloudscapes one sees from a jet plane, must surely lead to awe, not to supposed simplicity. Therefore if our poetry is to seek truth--and it must, for that is a condition of its viability, breath to its lungs--then it cannot confine itself to what you . . . have called direct statement, but must allow for all the dazzle, shadow, bafflement, leaps of conjecture, prayers, and dream-like substance of that quest. . . .
>
> We need a poetry not of direct statement but of direct evocation: a poetry of hieroglyphics, of embodiment, incarnation; in which the personages . . . are of the living imagination.[2]

Levertov admits that she does want a direct poetry: "poems direct as what the birds said, / hard as a floor, sound as a bench." But she has more in mind: poems "mysterious as the silence"[3] which call the poet to "leave the open fields / and enter the forest" to listen "to the hum of the world's wood."[4] Facts alone, she warns the editors of things, do not amount to truth, that breath to poetry's lungs. Because the unconscious has its great gulfs, the poet who seeks truth must not only state it but evoke it from within his living imagination.

For Jarrett and Schreiber, the imagination appears to have fallen from the position of figuring things forth from within.[5] The old expressions of a living imagination--the indirect language of allusion, ornament, form, and "humanist tradition"--no longer mean much to them. Since they have so shrunk from the world that they cannot create it by the word spoken from the imagination, they call for "innovation in the content and language of a poem." The imagination, in other words, must go out to the world, must let the world figure forth the word. They assume, then, that both the world and the language will create a poetry of greater immediacy if

used in a more nominative fashion than the older, less direct, poetry could create.

Some poets recognize the dangers of such an esthetic, however. "Landscapes are all we get," observes Peter Fellowes. "This cloud not really very like / the whale, just cloudy," epitomizes for him a poetry of "four elements / agenda": nature as yet unactivated, still to be realized in the poem, because seen as a world of unrelated and therefore meaningless objects.[6] When things are seen as objects, Barfield says, they are not regarded as having a "within" of their own capable of giving life to the word. They merely exist outside the poet--and consequently outside his imagination.[7]

Yet it is unfair to conclude that the editors of things advocated a poetry of "mere objects". Clearly they did not. They reacted against what they considered an inhuman literature: against empty techniques, statistics, generalizations, stale language. They wanted a living quarry, what Fellowes calls "this bird / who brings the taste of meaning / naturally as flight, or seed / he later eats."[8] To achieve full power, the editors felt, contemporary poetry would have to state and even effect living relationships:

> To speak to men, a writer must speak of men. . . . Ideas are only important . . . when human contact is enforced through acute use of language. . . . We shall publish stories which present a human situation . . . to which a reader must respond.[9]

Apart from the force implied, this program sounded convincing. But Levertov's point remained: a poetry that represents life must proceed from a living imagination, one engaged in seeking the truth rather than in simply stating facts.

So the surface question of how to write poetry goes to the heart of imagination itself. It is embarked on a restless search for the truth, traditionally depicted by American poets in images of the westward migration or the trek into the forest, but now seen also in Biblical quest imagery. Barbara Greenberg, delayed at the start and "leaning to the tower for a sign, / a wink, a warning" that will permit her to leave, wonders if her path will lead toward a parting of the clouds or of the sea.[10] Similarly, Muriel Rukeyser's way leads across "the river of crisis toward the real."[11] As a poet, Rukeyser must pass through a Red Sea of "opposites, from I to opened Thou, / city and cleave of the sea."[12] W. S. Merwin, who "would have preferred a quiet life," feels compelled by "the old hunger" of his poetic vocation to take up the search:

> Snug on the crumbling earth
> The old bottles lay dreaming of new wine.
> I picked up my breast, which had gone out.
> By other lights I go looking for yours. . . .[13]

Whether, with Ammons, he seeks to "yield to a direction of significance / running / like a stream through the geography of my work";[14] whether, like Roethke, he initiates the journey out of the self and into "the interior"[15]; in any case, the American poet has begun to move, trying to find, "if not the place, the way there."[16]

A proper direction is essential. Whether the poet wants to find the place or the way there--a direction implies both--he faces the radical choice outlined at the beginning of the last chapter, of taking a secular or non-secular route. He has at least three secular alternatives, but he

will not avoid corruption of the poetic self and its language by choosing any one, or any combination, of them. Does this mean, then, that the American poet is considering a non-secular avenue to truth in poetry, that he is actively taking up the implications of the Incarnation and the Holy Spirit for his art? Perhaps. It is certainly tempting to the Christian mind to suppose that he might be.

2.

At least two critics find indications of a non-secular tendency. Hoxie Neale Fairchild, who examines an impressive array of British and American poetry for its religious inclinations, feels that Christianity has begun to re-emerge in contemporary poetry. Chiefly because of "the general psychic pressure of the Situation as represented in modern literature,"[17] he writes, "the dry and scattered bones of Christianity have shown unexpected signs of life."[18] Citing the work of Robert Lowell, Thomas Merton, Vassar Miller, John Logan, and Daniel Berrigan, Fairchild argues that religious activity is particularly strong among poets of the Roman Catholic tradition.* The Catholic tradition, in fact, provides him with the greatest evidence of a Christian

---

*"In the United States, almost all contemporary religious poets of intrinsic literary worth are Roman Catholics." (Pp. 449-450) Fairchild's statement needs correction in at least two ways, it seems to me. First, while the poets mentioned do come from a Roman Catholic background, not all of them regard themselves as Catholics; at any rate, Lowell and Logan do not. Second, Robert Duncan, Theodore Roethke, and others are preoccupied with religious themes and problems, yet—as far as I know—are neither Catholic nor Christian.

revival in poetry.[19] But Fairchild does not jump to conclusions. Though he would like to point to a full-fledged revival, he realizes that the conditions for a broadly cultural religious poetry are not right:

> After a fashion, there has been something of a revival. But the sympathetic scholar had better not hail it with rapturously confident enthusiasm. He is studying the Christian poetry of a predominantly non-Christian world, a poetry which is often submerged in the Situation which it seeks to amend. . . . [Poetry] may in some measure stimulate apprehension of religious truths, but this will seldom occur unless poet and reader start from the same basic spiritual assumptions and share, though on different levels, the same conventions of linguistic communication.

Then, on the subject of communication, he adds wryly: "Nowadays the only religious poetry of any intrinsic literary value is of the highbrow, by the highbrow, and for the highbrow."[20]

While Fairchild directs his attention to specifically religious poetry, Vincent Buckley includes all sorts of poetry, religious or not. In Poetry and the Sacred, he carries Fairchild's idea of a current lack of "basic spiritual assumptions" a step further:

> Personally, I notice few religious presuppositions, Christian or otherwise, in . . . contemporary poetry; indeed, it is worth hazarding the guess that the critics and poets who show any real interest in religion* are, in fact, a minority.[21]

---

*In a note to me, R. K. Meiners responds to Buckley's phrase: "When one sets the relative superficiality of 'interest in religion' beside Owen Barfield's 'there will be a revival of Christianity when it becomes impossible to write a popular manual of science without referring to the incarnation of the Word' [Saving the Appearances, p. 164]--one knows one is dealing with quite different levels of experience."

The remark must be seen in its context. A few pages earlier, Buckley quotes Frank Kermode's opinion that modern literature is "primitivist even in its seemingly sophisticated symbolist modes, myth-making, intuitionist, anti-rational, drawn to magic as an alternative science, and given to themes of apocalypse."[22] Buckley answers that literature as a whole cannot be viewed adequately in such terms. Some poetry--such as Lowell's, which is admittedly given to themes of apocalypse[23]--also calls for a religious interpretation. Poetry has an inherent impulse toward the sacred, he feels[24] despite the apathy of poets and critics for religion. This inherent impulse may account for a preoccupation which Buckley finds in current poetry:

> Taking, then, a broad and casual look around the literary scene, one might conclude that poetry as a venture has been secularised, or is at least a long way along the path to complete secularisation. I do not think this impression is accurate. In addition to the minority of religious poets, Christians and others, there are somewhat nervous signs of a preoccupation with the Christian myth.[25]

While Fairchild's and Buckley's opinions do not exactly coincide — a revival after all, is not the same thing as a preoccupation — they do point to a certain intensity of interest in the Christian message. The question is, How does one characterize that intensity so as to guide the interest into poetically fruitful channels? To find out, it will be necessary to look more closely at what the poet is saying about his search for truth, and at his manner of saying it.

Ralph J. Mills once commented that the poetry of

Brother Antoninus often introduces "materials that would seem to have outlived their poetic . . . value except in the hands of an ambitious innovator or formalist. The materials I refer to are Biblical story and incident."[26] Yet a cursory glance at any representative anthology published in the last two decades will turn up dozens of references to Biblical materials. What is important is not the references themselves or their frequency, but the uses to which they are put: they serve a mythical function in connection with the poetic self. We have seen, for instance, how the story of Adam explains the pattern of American poetic consciousness up to Eliot and Stevens. Now the Adam story is essentially a genesis myth: the myth of how the self began, of how it fell, and how it has begun to investigate from its fallen position the self's relation to itself and the world. Beyond that, the poet is interested in the human search for redemption and the possibility of being redeemed. So he introduces materials from the Bible.

The story of the Exodus, for example, explains much about the circumstances of the poet and his poetry. Muriel Rukeyser uses it to describe her excape as a poet from a life of "building lack upon lack" in an urban environment. The city, for her, is at once the "cleave of the sea" through which she escapes and the wilderness into which she wanders. She passes from personal slavery to faith, from self-involvement to what she calls an "opened Thou . . . the world, the song of the world." Aiding her escape is the Old Testament image of the presence of Truth:

> The wilderness journey through which we move under
> the whirlwind truth into the new, the only

> accurate. A cluster of lights at night: faces
> before the pillar of fire.[27]

Harvey Shapiro, on the other hand, applies the same story differently, interpreting the Exodus as an escape from one form of bondage into another. Commenting on how "everything gets tamed," he sees in the burning bush episode the beginning of the way "the pronominal outcry, as if uttered in ecstasy, / Is turned to syntax." The passage out of the "savagery of Egyptians, / Who betrayed the names of their gods / To demons," leads to the mountain--and the imposition of Law:

> Mountain, fire, and thornbush.
> Supplied only with these, even that aniconic Jew
> Could spell mystery. But there must be
> Narrative. The people must come to the mountain.
> Doors must open and close.[28]

Where Shapiro sees a tamed poetry, Denise Levertov sees one of quiet power. Referring to an incident in the Hebrews' wilderness journey, she urges her audience not to fear that "there is no water / to solace the dryness at our hearts." Poetry draws water from the rock: "That fountain is there . . . / with its quiet song and strange power / to spring in us, / up and out through the rock."[29]

The poet also turns to New Testament imagery to describe his search for what amounts to a new life. In nine lines of "In the Night Fields," W. S. Merwin brings in allusion after allusion: to "old bottles . . . dreaming of new wine"; to the parable of the foolish virgins looking for oil for their lamps ("by other lights I go looking for yours"); to Jesus' disciples picking ears of wheat in a field; and to the saying that "man cannot live by bread alone."[30] The

search for new life is often discussed in the classic Christian image of a second birth, usually a rebirth of the imagination or its language. Muriel Rukeyser compares the effect of a fire striking "its word among us" to "waterlilies / Reaching from darkness upward to a sun / of rebirth."[31] Stan Rice wants to "shed my used tongue" and "be born again in my own Body / at last: / . . . freshly spoken."[32] For Denise Levertov, one of two things must happen in order for the poet to move forward:

> I remember
> a dream two nights ago: the voice,
> 'the artist must
> create himself or be born again.'[33]

According to the New Testament, there is only one way for a person to be born again: his first self must die, according to the pattern established at Golgotha. To say the least, poets who use crucifixion imagery have some very mixed feelings about the death it represents. To many of them, the Christian myth ends at the crucifixion. In Charles Olson's eyes, the kingfisher is "dead, hung up indoors."[34] Daniel Hoffman uses a similar image; drifting "in the confusions of our light," he sees "a horned owl / Nailed beneath a crown / Of antlers on the barn door," shriveling in the wind.[35] Galway Kinnell uses the symbol of a fish nailed to wood, the fishmonger "like Christ" making it into flesh for the first time in its life.[36] What such imagery means for poetry is clear in Kinnell's "The Poem," in which the poet hunts the rare wild hummingbird of poetry amid the bones of poems "dead of non-resurrection."[37] However, other poets see in the crucifixion a direction toward renewal. Brother

Antoninus views the cross as a symbol of integrity instead of death, its "radials" leading "all unregenerate act / Inward to innocence."[38] As a poet, William Brown sees an advantage for himself in sharing with the world's peasantry a desire to be a hanged god.[39] For the crucifixion reveals; it is a way by which Arthur Gregor sees a scene of nature, held together by a word, coming into its own.[40] Daniel Berrigan reminds poets that a myth which stops at death will not indicate a direction for them: "Breathe deep, question his wounds / What way now? / Dead lips refuse all answer."[41] As he says in one of his titles, "Death Casts No Light on the Mind":

> It is not for that; not
> permeable at all, an Easter Cross.
>
> A cross to die on is plain as day.
> . . . . . .
> Now when he died there, and was lowered
> the imagination springs free.[42]

The Christian myth does not end with crucifixion--or even, for that matter, with resurrection.

It tells of the experience of Pentecost, the release from within men of an exceptional power belonging to an agency other than the self. In poetry, Pentecostal imagery describes the promise — occasionally the experience — of personal revitalization. Sometimes a personal experience is treated in the poem. In terms of Ezekiel's vision, Theodore Roethke feels "released by a spirit, / Or agency outside me."[43] His dry bones brought to life, he exclaims, "A raw ghost drinks the fluid in my spine / . . . I find my loving heart, / Illumination brought to such a pitch / . . . As if reality had split apart / And the whole motion of the soul laid bare."[44]

At other times, the references to Pentecost describe what happens, really or hopefully, in poetry itself. Ron Loewinsohn looks forward to writing a poem of sudden insight:

> The daisy made recognizable
> suddenly
> by a flash of
> magic light, the tongue
> of fire, Pentecost. [45]

Daniel Hoffman prays for "a gift of tongues" for his poetry, interpreting the gift to mean "that words bear / witness, true / to what we hear / chiefly in silence."[46] To Thomas Merton, Pentecost brings meaning,[47] but to Arthur Gregor it brings the giver of meaning, the Firebird itself. In "Gift of the Firebird," the bird warns the poet that "I may be in your eye and heart / but I am never owned . . . / I yield so you will let me go." It then bestows on him the gift of the fiery feather, explaining:

> it will slay falsehoods and mists,
> will free you from the grip of those
> whose trickery does not live
> unless you take it to be true. [48]

A poetry that slays falsehood and mist carries great power, and poets often write about the power of their art in images which Christians inevitably associate with Pentecost. There is, for instance, the appearance of that mysterious bird which, as Peter Fellowes puts it, "brings the taste of meaning / naturally as flight"; Cid Corman notices a similar appearance in "There Are Things to Be Said."[49] Roethke uses the image of the dove in reference to his work as a poet. Asking, "among us, who is holy? / What speech abides?" he reproves himself for betraying his imaginative witness "by my unguarded mouth," as other poets have done: "They have

declared themselves, / Those who despise the dove." Later, after invoking "Whitman, maker of catalogues" for inspiration, he wonders if his approach to reality carries him "toward God or another condition." He decides the poet moves toward God, and is "immoderately married" by Him to reality: "I have merged, like the bird, with the bright air, / And my thought flies to the place by the bo-tree."[50] Another Pentecostal image is the wind, seen as a power, guide, or revealer. In Expressions of Sea Level, A. R. Ammons writes several poems about the mind's affinity with the wind, "so close / a neighbor to my thoughts."[51] In "Guide," the wind admonishes the poet to "stop not-being and break / off from is to flowing"; but when the poet asks how to do this, "the wind was gone and there was no more knowledge then."[52] The results in "Mansion" are happier, though, because the poet becomes the wind's home:

> So when it came time
> for me to cede myself
> and I chose
> the wind
> to be delivered to
>
> The wind was glad
> and said it needed all
> the body
> it could get
> to show its motions with[53]

A third image associated often with Pentecost is fire. Language was the power that made the preacher Savonarola burn "the wild burn," says Stan Rice, who wants to burn with it himself.[54] The word is an arm of flame striking through a wall of form for Muriel Rukeyser; elsewhere, she sees the pillar of fire as the nighttime manifestation of the truth she follows into the wilderness.[55] Fire is a part of poetry

for Robert Duncan; "the art should never be free," he writes, "of that forge, / that loom, that lyre-- / the fire, the images, the voice."[56]

Over all, then, there would appear to be a significantly active presence of the Christian myth in American poetry, although this is not to say that other myths are not active too. Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Philip Lamantia, Karl Shapiro, and Diane Wakoski--to name but a few--seem to feel more comfortable with the myths of other religions or of history than they do with Christianity. Yet the broad span of American poetry reveals a predominant inclination to look at experience in terms of the Christian story and its images. While that inclination does not amount to anything like a revival in the classic sense, the sheer number of allusions to Christianity, and the way they are used (sympathetically or not) does point to a strong interest. Vincent Buckley calls it a preoccupation with the Christian myth, and I think he is right. But it does not seem to be a preoccupation with faith in Christianity. Fairchild points out that:

> the profusion of Christian myth and symbol in contemporary poetry indicates little or nothing as to [poets'] actual beliefs. Such images, however, shed a quasi-religious aura upon a good deal of non-Christian verse, and there is always the possibility that a poet may sooner or later be trapped by his own metaphors.[57]

Entrapment hardly seems likely on a significant scale, however. While "the dry and scattered bones of Christianity have shown unexpected signs of life,"[58] precious little evidence exists to indicate that they are shaping themselves into a

religious life. The myth is present but not the religious presuppositions that support it.[59] The preoccupation, in short, is directed at the Christian myth not for the sake of the myth, but rather for the sake of the poetry.

The poet who asks of the crucifixion, "What way now?" may want a personal answer for himself; but it is significant that he asks the question as a poet. The Exodus represents a way for the imagination to escape from a life of "building lack upon lack," to enter the realm of the "only accurate" where poetry can be drawn like water from a living imagination. His new life involves an imaginative rebirth and a regeneration of language. The cruifixion at once draws reality into coherence as well as indicating how the imagination is to pass through death to a new dimension of poetic life. Pentecost suggests a renewal of power both for the poetic self and for language. In other words, the American poet has entered upon an Adamic preoccupation: he is not particularly interested in becoming a Christian himself or in writing Christian poetry, but he does want to know how the Christian myth of life might be turned to a myth of poetry.

The signs of preoccupation are, as Buckley has said, somewhat nervous. After all, the integrity of the corrupting poetic consciousness is at stake, and secularist solutions have only made matters worse. Even the disagreements among poets over just what the Christian myth will accomplish suggest uneasiness. Does poetry follow a whirlwind truth through a sea of opposites into the new--and if so, will its

pronominal outcry once again be stifled by syntax at the Mount of Technical Orthodoxy? What does it mean for the poetic mind to shed its used tongue and be born again of the Spirit? Is direction impossible because the myth explains nothing, or is it possible that the imagination can "die" in order to "rise again"? Is Pentecost another "divine madness" theory, or does it say something else about poetic inspiration?

3.

When a person is preoccupied, his mind wrestles with a question of importance to him, dwells on it constantly, goes at it over and over again until exhaustion or a solution results. For the American poetic mind, concern about the corruption of secularism and how to be saved from it has given rise to a preoccupation with the myth of Christianity. In a sense, the preoccupation is only natural, for the American consciousness has traditionally viewed its experience in terms of the myth of the "first Adam". But it has not, as a rule, looked any further.

Perhaps there was not much need to, until recently. The American Adam lived in Paradise, at one with himself and the world, creating it and himself through the discovery of his American language and the new American imagination. But as the twentieth century progressed, there crept into him an awareness that he had somehow "fallen"--that something within himself and his language was missing and that there was nowhere to go and nothing to do. Yet lately, in numerous poems on a wide range of topics, the American poet has

represented himself as virtually every figure in every situation belonging to the typology of redemption. In the person of the Israelite people, he has escaped slavery to alien images and entered a covenant of participation in the life of the imageless I Am; has spoken as a prophet, through whom the imageless One spoke of transferring the covenant from tablets of stone to the heart; has become Jesus of Nazareth, in whom the inwardness of the Divine Name was fully realized;[60] has sat in the upper room with the Christian people, who experienced the seal of the covenant inwardly for themselves at Pentecost. If a myth explains anything, it should follow that the American Adam need no longer seek redemption from the corruption of secularism: redemption should already have occurred. But experience, as recorded in the poetry, would seem to indicate that the disintegration of self goes on apace. And every now and then, the poet casts a nervous eye at the moment of final resolution, the Apocalypse at which the world, its images, and its consciousness will end.

Because the poet has looked mainly to the narrative portions of the Bible, his view is likely to be that the Christian myth, except for whatever the Apocalypse might entail, ends shortly after Pentecost. There are a few indications, however, that some poets see more to the myth. Roethke, for example, refers to the fulfillment in his own life of Ezekiel's prophecy over the dry bones. And, as it turns out, there is more--nearly half of the story, in fact. After Pentecost, the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit

combine to produce a basic change in the person of Adam. He becomes a new creation; without ceasing to be himself, the "first Adam" becomes transformed into the "second Adam." And through him all of creation becomes glorified in a new Earth and a new Heaven. This part of the myth, hinted at in the Gospels, is developed mainly in the letters of St. Paul. Without it, Pentecost loses its real significance, and the apocalypse dwindles to little else than catastrophe.

St. Paul applied the expression, "second Adam," to Jesus Christ. According to him, the Adam of the Genesis myth is a prefigure or type of Christ.[61] Just as the first Adam, as a living being, established the natural pattern of humanity, the second Adam, as a life-giving being, establishes human life on a spiritual pattern,[62] and, as the head and focal-point of creation, maintains that pattern "in the Spirit".[63] St. Paul extends his Adamic concept from the person of Jesus to the Christian people (usually seen as a collective person). Accordingly, when anyone is "born into Christ" by his baptism in water and the Holy Spirit, a radical transformation begins to take place: he changes ancestry. Whereas before he belonged to the race of Adam, he now becomes one of the sons of God.[64] In effect, he becomes a new man.[65] Because he belongs to the body of Christ, he participates directly in the life of the second Adam. What this means in practice is that, even in his earthly life, man begins to think with the mind of Christ and act according to His personality.[66] Gradually and in seminal form, he enters a new dimension of consciousness,

divesting himself of the secular and putting on a "fresh, spiritual way" of thinking.[67] Eventually, he is completely transformed by the renewal of his mind.[68]

The events of the Incarnation and of Pentecost then, form the center of the mythical pattern, not its conclusion. The type of the second Adam becomes fully delineated in the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension: the life of Jesus becomes the norm for those born of God. But the Christian life cannot be lived by will power alone. It requires a Pentecost in the experience of each Christian to make it spiritually possible.[69] For its part, the Apocalypse does signal the end of the secular consciousness, but its primary purpose is to reveal the consciousness of the sons of God.[70] The myth of the first Adam culminates in the ascension of the Incarnate Word; that of the second Adam begins with the coming of the Spirit and ends with the completed expression of the personality of Christ on the last day.

According to Roy Harvey Pearce, the myth of the first Adam, which explained the direction of American poetic consciousness almost from its beginnings, reached its fullest expression in the work of Eliot and Stevens. With them, he feels, Adamic poetry has reached the end of its line.[71] Perhaps it has, in a way. But it is difficult to imagine an American writing poetry that is not somehow characterized by the Adamic. So ingrained has the myth become in the American consciousness--especially since Emerson and Whitman articulated it openly--that it practically defines that consciousness. The advantage which Christianity has for the

American outlook is that it explains in Adamic terms how the human consciousness is wholly renewed from within. Adam remains Adam, but the entire basis on which he participates in reality changes as his imagination is re-integrated by the new pattern. Should the myth be appropriated into American writing, Adamic poetry would still result--but along a directionally new line.

Everything in America's literary history suggests that, often despite themselves, American poets take their myths seriously. If their preoccupation with Christianity is to result in a feasible direction for American poetry, they will have to take the whole myth seriously, since there is no Christian myth without the story of the second Adam. Taking the myth seriously implies both coming to an understanding of what it says to the poetic imagination, and finding a way to appropriate it. As for the first, the coming pages can only suggest the direction which Christianity provides through the second Adam. As for appropriation, those poets who take the myth seriously for their art will be occupied with turning myth into history; but Christian history, full as it is of division and apparent failure, is not always the best guide to appropriating the myth. The best guide is the pattern contained in the myth itself.

To see what the myth of the second Adam has to say to American poetry, I will shortly have to return to the center of things, to the Incarnation and the Holy Spirit. But to do so adequately, I must first take up a subject I merely touched on in the last chapter--the relation of the poet to truth.

4.

Charles Olson once told an audience at Beloit University that his idea of truth in poetry was "held" by three Greek words: topos, typos, and tropos. "Tropism, I think, is the riddler of the lot," he said in the second of his three lectures on truth. "As you know, it means simply turning. . . . I still have a queer imprint or stamp of believing that the meaning . . . of tropism in ourselves is the sun." As if to explain his remark, he shifted his discussion to two other Greek words whose etymologies held special meaning for him: heliotrope and "photo-copic".

Just as an imprint or stamp suggested to Olson the reversed figure on the type-face which prints the character, the photo-copying process meant turning dark images to light ones. ". . . This word was suddenly the whole meaning with photo--how can I say it?--photo-copic: that we are darkness. That, like, our condition inside is dark." Olson did not have moral darkness or evil in mind here; he seemed instead to be visualizing the "self's insides" which lie beneath the level of awareness: "The unknown is . . . your self's insides." The poet, he said, does not write poetry in order to throw some garish light on reality (". . . not making pictures, I don't mean black sun or black light"). Rather, by writing the poem he himself becomes photo-copic, turning from dark to light: "I mean, literally to light that dark is to have come to whatever it is that any of us seeks."[72] The poet

turns to light by obeying his instinct to "kneel or lean to the sun, or whatever that heliotrope, like, is."[73]

Turning to the sun--seeking truth, as Levertov said--concerns not only the poet but his poetry: it is the condition of poetry's viability, breath to its lungs. It is important to notice the emphasis on movement, on search. The heliotrope is what interests Olson. Although the meaning of tropism in ourselves is the sun, the act of turning, of lighting the dark, of becoming photo-copic is what interests him. Nowhere in his Beloit lectures does he talk about the sun <u>per se</u>. Instead, he focuses on the turning, since it defines our coming to "whatever it is that any of us seeks." The search attracts Levertov too. The poet, like a dog "engaged in its perceptions," keeps "changing / pace and approach, but / not direction--'every step an arrival.'"[74] She learns to "affirm / Truth's light at strange turns of the mind's road" as she seeks her way toward "a place of origin."[75] Poetry is viable as long as it is on the way to truth; it loses viability to the extent it does not search.[76]

Poets, of course, have always realized their artistic need to seek truth. But as their understanding of what the seeking entails has developed over roughly the last two hundred years, their emphasis appears to have shifted from finding the place to finding the way there. For example, poets writing in the Augustan era tended to concentrate on disclosing the place, truth itself, known at least in its general outlines. "The business of the poet," Samuel Johnson wrote, "is to examine, not the individual, but the species;

to . . . rise to general and transcendental truths, which will always be the same."[77] One hundred fifty years later, the tendency was almost completely reversed. In the modern period, poets worked to discover truth in the particular thing, since ideas exist only in things. The business of the poet, wrote William Carlos Williams, is "not to talk in vague categories but to write particularly, as a physician works, upon a patient, upon the thing before him, in the particular to discover the universal."[78]

The main difficulty for poetry in changing the emphasis from the place to the way there is that too many things dazzle the mind. As Paul Carroll's "Ode to Severn Darden" illustrates, things truly exist, but they do not necessarily add up to truth.[79] In fact, one frequently meets with poets who conclude from their experience that the universe is incoherent and meaningless (Fellowes), absurd ("luke"), or chaotic (Damon), and who regard truth itself as nothingness (Corso) or emptiness (Kerouac). On the other hand, the imagination has felt its call to the things of this world since long before Johnson. Perhaps the modern difficulty with truth lies less with the world than with the way the imagination apprehends it. "These apples," Donald Finkel reminds his reader,". . . will inform you, / <u>if you choose to attend</u>, that the world you move in / is round, palatable, composed, and incorrigibly itself."[80]

And so poets have chosen to attend——both to the apples and to their own act of paying attention. Allen Tate noticed twenty years ago that American poets of this century

have written more poems than ever before about poetry,[81] and the number of such poems has, if anything, increased since then. The reasons for writing them may vary considerably; but whatever the reasons, poems about poetry seem to have an epistemological function. The poem is a way of knowing, at least for the poet. In a poem which depicts what results when the poet chooses to attend, it may happen that the poet will realize afresh how he knows what he knows. And realizing <u>that</u>, he may come to understand how he knows the world for what it is, in its authenticity.

In "Matins," for example, Denise Levertov writes about herself paying attention to the details of the morning's ritual. The authentic, she discovers while brushing her hair rhythmically, consists in <u>recognizing the known</u> for itself. For her, recognition involves an imaginative break through the shell of the real so that she can nourish herself on the egg inside. It also involves a pursuit of truth:

> verisimilitude draws up
> heat in us, zest
> to follow through
> follow through
> follow
> transformations of day
> in its turning, in its becoming.

Because the authentic, like the day, undergoes transformation, it has about it a quality that always barely escapes the poet's grasp: "It rolls / just out of reach, beyond / running feet and / stretching fingers." And as the poet follows it, she invites "Marvelous Truth" to "confront us / at every turn, / . . . dwell in our crowded hearts."[82]

Another poet remarkable for his paying attention both

to reality and to his own involvement with it is A. R. Ammons. His aim has been to establish a direction of significance for his poetry, and the direction he has followed can be most readily studied in his Collected Poems 1951-1971.[83] As a poet, Ammons wants to turn "between made sights and recognitions," using language so deftly that he may "pick hyacinths / here and tender / in the ruse" ("Garden," pp. 195-196). But he realizes that a poetics capable of rendering a thing in verbally palpable form demands an epistemology. He must bring his mind to become what it sees and make how it works ("Medicine for Tight Spots," p. 280). He must also bring it to bear on what cannot be seen, the "underlying that takes no image to itself" ("Identity," p. 115). In this respect, Ammons' pursuit of truth leads him unabashedly into a domain which poets have traditionally regarded with suspicion: metaphysics.[84]

A close observer of physical nature, Ammons recognizes the incorrigible selfhood of each thing, and maintains that nothing in creation is lowly ("Still," p. 140). But differences, which he characteristically calls "contrary notions" ("Pluralist," p. 289), exist even within the same thing. For instance, he comments on the relation between the motionlessness of a mountain and the way the wind causes it to move ("Virtu," p. 198); he sees the opposition of age and youth in the young maple's falling leaves and its branch-tip buds ("Here & Now," pp. 264-265); and he explains the need of a spider web to have a tight pattern at the center and a variable outer edge ("Identity," pp. 114-116). In spite of

all the contrary notions, the changes, and the enormous variety of things, Ammons notices an underlying sameness. Although he insistently distrusts an overall arbitrary order ("Looking Over the Acreage," p. 267), he concludes that there exists an unrepresented reality that permeates and is partially manifested in particular things:

> I will show you
> the underlying that takes no image to itself,
> cannot be shown or said,
> but weaves in and out of moons and bladderweeds,
> is all and
> beyond destruction
> because created fully in no
> particular form.
>
> ("Identity," p. 115)

Ammons seems to revel in metaphysical polarities: the one and the many ("One: Many," pp. 138-140), transcendent and immanent ("He Held Radical Light," p. 192), universal and particular ("Bees Stopped," p. 5), permanent and mutable ("Expressions of Sea Level," pp 134-136), spiritual and corporeal ("Bridge," pp. 84-85). In "Two Possibilities," he raises the question of how to relate the poles: perhaps he should emphasize one principle or the other. But he decides on another solution: "there is an interval designed, / apparently, for design." The imagination should assume a stance between poles, locate an area of poise ("Terrain," pp. 89-90) where contemplation can fuse them into a single body ("The Put-Down Come On," pp. 263-264). Ammons frequently uses the word balance to describe his imaginative stance.

In "Corson's Inlet" (pp. 147-151), he explains how it works in practice. His first step is to get rid of useless

preconceptions and formulas, and deal with the thing itself. Because he finds in physical nature "no arranged terror: no forcing of image, plan, / or thought: no propaganda, no humbling of reality to precept," he would let the physical indicate the metaphysical. In nature there are no hard lines or changeless shapes; so, for the poet, there can be no eternal formulations of General Truth:

> Overall is beyond me: is the sum of those
> events I cannot draw, the ledger I cannot keep,
> the accounting beyond the account. . . .

Through his own senses, the poet observes the manifold events, transitions, and risks which everything in the terrain around him undergoes. He observes a certain arrangement of contraries: in the sight of a flock of birds taking off, he sees nature striking a balance between the gathering for flight of individuals and the common lift-off of the group:

> an order held
> in constant change: a congregation
> rich with entropy: nevertheless, separable, noticeable
> as one event,
> not chaos.

While each being, in the smaller view, manfests "an order tight with shape," the larger view reveals "no lines or changeless shapes." The poet himself, then, makes the larger arrangement, imaginatively summarizing an order out of the many goings-on:

> the possibility of rule as the sum of rulelessness:
> the "field" of action
> with moving, incalculable center:
> . . . . . .
> orders as summaries, outcomes of actions

The arrangement which the poet makes at a given moment is only

provisional, because he perceives nothing completely. Later he will fasten into another order an enlarging grasp of disorder as he perceives things from another point in time: "tomorrow a new walk is a new walk."

Like Olson, Ammons pays more attention to the tropism than to the sun. He does "consider the radiance, that it does not withhold / itself but pours its abundance without selection." But he is more interested in the way each being "is accepted into as much light as it will take" ("The City Limits," p. 320) and on the way each positions itself to receive the light (e.g., "The Quince Bush," pp. 217-218). His metaphysics does acknowledge the existence of an absolute, eternal, and imageless One, but he prefers to keep at a safe distance from it. Urged by his guide, the wind or spirit,[85] to break off from <u>is</u> to <u>flowing</u> ("Guide," p. 79), he lets go of the motionless center and marvels at his peripheral speed ("Locus," pp. 204-205). Epistemologically, though his attitude as knower is to maintain a fluid balance between the universal and the particular, he seems to tip the balance toward the latter: ("Overall is beyond me," he says). He likewise avoids the "wafered concision" of definitions ("Hymn IV," p. 42), preferring to leave such "precise damnation" to the "saints" gathering in the real places ("The Confirmers," p. 261). When his mind becomes what it sees, it is shaken out of formulations and "untold" by the reality of the thing ("Medicine for Tight Spots," p. 280). It therefore continually looks for the form things want to come as, and remains available to any shape ("Poetics," p. 199).

As a summary of Ammons' poetic thought, the last few paragraphs undoubtedly do him an injustice. But they may indicate how far he has taken the pursuit of truth in his poetry. He has ventured deep into the realms of metaphysics, the study of unrepresented being and its modes, and of epistemology, the relation between himself as knower and what he knows. Moreover, his poems are about poetry, which becomes for him the vehicle and the ground, the method and the reason, of his search for truth. And in his search, he is not unlike Olson and Levertov in certain respects.

First of all, the three poets affirm that truth--as distinct from particular truths or from nothingness--exists, though none of them specifies what truth itself is. Ammons, who talks about it as a sameness which underlies particulars, feels that an attempt to specify truth only limits it. Levertov addresses it as an inner principle of animation, but one whose form is not necessarily identified with the body which it animates. And Olson, aside from a hint that truth might be the "self's insides" made light, says little else about it.* As a rule, they seldom use the definite article with the noun: they speak of truth, but not of the truth.

Secondly, they see truth as something abstract. The idea of being, of which truth is a metaphysical property, cannot

---

*In his Beloit lectures, Olson's discussion of topos (place), typos (character or stamp) and tropos (turning) simply describes three avenues of approach to what a given poet might regard as truth. His "Letter to Elaine Feinstein" in Human Universe and Other Essays (ed. Donald Allen, New York: Grove Press, 1967) mentions the same trinity (p. 97), and his essay, "Equal, That Is, to the Real Itself," emphasizes the topological approach (pp. 119-121).

be conceptualized adequately without a high degree of abstraction. Also, truth which is the result of human reasoning is abstracted by the intellect from individual cases and concluded in the form of a universal or a generalization. The imagination which aims to show forth that which takes no image to itself must concretize the abstract by showing the concrete reality as it participates in truth; or it must render the abstract conclusions of the intellect in concrete form. Either way, the imagination relates indirectly to truth via the intellect, whose mode of operation is to abstract from particulars. Ammons' poetry, especially, is firmly grounded in the physical realities of everyday life; but it proclaims over and over the reality of that which cannot be seen except with the eye of the mind.

Thirdly, because it is indefinite and abstract, truth is elusive. It hides its total reality, weaves in and out of particulars, evades the poet's grasp. The poet himself thus finds it necessary to turn continually to what the particulars show him of truth; he continually looks for truth, pursues it, prays for it to confront him at every turn of the mind's road. Though occasionally aided in his search by a guide or spirit, he never possesses truth once and for all. To do so would mean an end to the search, a beginning of overall arbitrary orders and fixed shapes, and death to the imagination. The poet must be released from <u>is</u> to <u>flowing</u> in order to follow a truth rolling just out of reach.

These three attitudes--that truth is undefined,

abstract, and elusive--are not peculiar to these three poets. To some extent, they characterize the thinking and imagining of us all. When we are asked what truth is, assuming we do not shy away from the question ("Who knows? It's different for each person."), we may answer it somewhat as Olson does by examining the ways we approach reality. And if we feel that a focus on the approach is insufficient, we may, with Ammons, begin to look at the nature of reality itself. Out of the first answer we devise an epistemology, and out of the second a metaphysics. The progression is natural and logical and intellectually necessary. And there is no doubt that these are valid ways to seek truth--or write poetry, for that matter.

But they are not the only ones, nor are they always the best for all purposes. For one thing, the imagination which consistently works from the materials of the intellect is somehow working against the grain. The imagination is called to the things of this world; it bears the imprint of the thing. In its relation to truth, it is incorrigibly prone to define, concretize, and invent. Moreover, the poet concerned with truth may well ask himself what difference it makes to find the way there if he will not admit to finding the place. What can a truth which is indefinite, abstract, and elusive do to save his life? how will it help him find peace and justice? If it has the power to set him free, to make some practical difference in his life, then it must operate in a manner different from whatever his mind or his culture may led him to think.

5.

One of Martin Heidegger's primary philosophical objectives, according to Nathan Scott, is to refute the notion "that truth resides in some human perspective rather than in Being itself." From the time of the Greeks, notably Plato,

> the assumption perennially informing the Western tradition has been that truth is resident in the schemata of human intelligence. . . . Thus the great bequest of Platonism to Western mentality has been the superstition that truth follows upon a proper deployment by the intellect of its own counters and that, in the ascending scale of ontological priority, certain human principles and idealities hold the sovereign place.

Against this "heresy of 'humanism,'" Heidegger argues that "the locus of truth . . . is not in this or that perspective (or category, or proposition, or system) that may be imposed upon reality, but is rather in the 'unhiddenness' or transparency of Being; which is to say that truth is not an achievement but a gift, something granted and received."[86]

The influence of Platonic thought on Christianity is well known. To the extent that Heidegger's opinion about Platonism and the Western mentality reflects the actual state of affairs, it describes an approach to truth also common in Christian thinking. Yet the fundamental Christian idea of truth does not derive from Plato or from Greek philosophy. It comes instead directly out of the earlier Judaic traditions of thought and worship, and out of Christian reflection, in the context of the Jewish experience, on the meaning of Jesus of Nazareth. In most respects, the basic

Christian idea of truth resembles Heidegger's, except that it is much more concrete than his "transparency of Being".

In order to understand what the Christian view is, we must see how truth was thought of in ancient Judaism. We can grasp the "nonintellectual character" of Jewish thought most readily by taking a quick look at the Hebrew language. In John McKenzie's opinion ancient Hebrew

> is the speech of the simple man who sees motion and action rather than static reality, static reality as concrete rather than abstract. It prefers nouns to adjectives, for it does not even like the obvious distinctions between a substance and its properties. It sees reality as it is sensible than as it is intellectually apprehended, in its large outlines and in its superficial and palpable qualities. . . . Johannes Pedersen has said that thinking, for the Hebrews, was "to grasp a totality"; for the modern man, thinking is rather the analysis of a totality.[87]

The difference of Jewish thought-patterns from our own may help to explain why Hebrew contains no distinct word for true and truth. The closest equivalent--'emet and its cognates--means something more like firmness or solidity.[88] Truth is predicated of things which can be relied upon to hold secure, to withstand testing or examination or stress, like a dependable bow or a precious metal. Like firm ground a true thing can be trusted not to give way or collapse, and like a block of granite it is impervious to change. Truth is the real or genuine article. By extension, a man's word is true not primarily because it is correct but because it is reliable, and his promise is true when he is sure to fulfill it. God is truth in all these senses: He is reality, genuineness, solidity, unchangeability, reliability. The opposite of truth, to the ancient Jewish way of thinking, is

error in the form of the lie. Like a bow that twists when drawn, the lie does not hold firm; like fool's gold, it looks genuine but will not endure testing; and like marshy ground, it cannot be relied upon for support. A man's word is false when it deceives, and his promises untrue when he will not fulfill them. Foreign gods are lies in all respects: not genuine, but destructible, empty, and unreliable in word and deed.[89]

Truth regarded in such a way involves a kind of knowledge different from, and psychically more complex than, intellectual apprehension.[90] Truth is known through an encounter, is met face to face, is understood through personal experience. Such knowledge suggests, as it often does in English, <u>possession</u> of truth. For example, the artist possesses skill in his art; husbands and wives have personal and sexual knowledge of each other. Experiential knowledge also implies <u>acceptance</u> of the known, both in the passive sense of receiving a gift, and in the active sense of desiring and embracing the gift given.[91] A person who knows truth does more than assent to it. He pursues it, takes it, holds it as his own; in short, he commits himself to it. Knowledge is literally a cordial matter: it is the heart rather than the mind which knows truth since the heart is the seat of understanding, affection, and commitment.[92]

The Greek words for <u>true</u> and <u>truth</u> (<u>alethes</u>, <u>aletheia</u>) connote reality as intellectually apprehended, but the New Testament use of them generally harks back to the earlier Hebrew meaning. As before, truth refers to the real, the

genuine, the solid, the permanent; in this sense, the grace or gift of God is true and is known. That gift is Jesus. St. John's gospel, for instance, quotes Jesus as arguing at one point that he speaks the truth of the Father, from Whom he proceeds. But his audience will not receive the truth Jesus speaks because they have committed themselves to the devil's lie instead of to God. Jesus claims that his word is reliable, and that those who adhere to it will know truth in the Hebrew sense. That is, they will be freed, not from ignorance, but from the lie and from the sin which acceptance of the lie involves. They will even be made holy in the truth, since their knowledge will bring them into contact with ultimate Truth, the God Whose touch sanctifies. Jesus carries the idea of truth further by identifying himself with it: "I am . . . the Truth."[93] Whoever knows Jesus possesses, accepts, and commits himself to the way things are in a concrete and personal manner. St. Paul, writing sometime prior to the publication of St. John's gospel, occasionally uses aletheia in the Greek sense of reality as apprehended through reason.[94] But more often he writes out of his Jewish background: truth is the reliable, the liberating, the sanctifying; and that truth is in Jesus.[95]

Because of their concrete manner of thinking about truth, ancient Jewish Christians were able to appreciate certain characteristics of truth which the modern mind appears to have neglected.

For one thing, truth was definite rather than indefinite. Early Christians usually, unabashedly, spoke of

ἡ ἀλήθεια , the truth.[96] The truth was originally approached through the Law, and later through Jesus, whose claim to be the truth made truth itself as specific as it could humanly be. There was only one truth; whatever did not participate in it participated in a lie. The truth did not change, and so was not different for each person; instead, each person was made different through knowledge of the truth.

Secondly, the truth was not regarded as a formulation or a conclusion or the contents of a body of doctrine, so it was not abstract. All of these would have participated to some degree in the truth, but the truth itself was a person.* Early in Israelite history, when Moses saw the apparition in the burning bush, the name revealed to him indicated that God was a personal presence: I Am. The prophets, in confirming the personality of Yahweh, insisted on its total difference from what human beings know as personality. According to Isaiah, nothing in all of human experience serves as an adequate comparison with Yahweh. Though He relates personally with men and speaks in terms of their experience with other men, His thoughts and His ways are absolutely incomparable.[97] Owen Barfield reflects on the Israelite attitude:

---

*In some religions, notably Hinduism, personality stands in relation to being somewhat after the manner of the part to the whole: the All can be conceived just as well as an impersonal force. In Judaism and Christianity, personality represents the culmination of being: God's personality is the fullness of being. Cf. Huston Smith, The Religions of Man (New York: Harper & Row, Perennial Library, 1958), pp. 74-75, 256-257.

> . . . God the father is not less, but more 'other' from me than are the phenomena. But if I think of Him as other in the same mode as the phenomena, then I substitute an idol for Him.
> . . . Original participation is . . . the sense that [there] stands behind the phenomena, and on the other side of them from man, a represented, which is of the same nature as man. It was against this that Israel's face was set.[98]

But once it had learned that the truth, as a person, was absolutely distinguished from man, Israel had to learn how the truth was personally identified with him at the same time. "The Word was made flesh," like man in all things except the lie of sin.[99] The truth, totally unique, nonetheless became known in common human form.

Thirdly, the truth revealed itself. To the extent that a definitely personal Other could not be compared to anything in human experience, it had to reveal itself if men were to know it. There were, as St. Paul points out, certain things which men could discover about the truth through their own reason--and they were at fault if they refused to.[100] But they could not be expected to discover all they needed to know by themselves. "I have not spoken in secret. . . . I have not said . . . , 'Seek me in chaos.'" Instead, the truth spoke of its own accord with directness and clarity. Men did not have to seek the truth; it sought them, penetrating into mouth and heart.[101] Its self-revelation was entirely spontaneous: it alone spoke what is right and poured out wisdom and truth on men and women alike in prophecy, signs, and wonders.[102]

When the modern Christian comes right down to basics, he does not think much differently about truth than his religious ancestors did. Sometimes he does fall into the

"heretical humanist" mistake of locating truth within his own mind; and occasionally he puzzles over the unresolved questions (such as how an infinity can be limited and remain infinite) and the apparently unnecessary elements (such as why truth should be personal). Usually, however, he realizes that, if the locus of truth is not in a perspective imposed by the mind on reality but in the "unhiddenness" of reality itself, then the mind must take reality as it comes. The ancient Christian claimed to take it this way: what he knew was not merely some human thinking but God's word.[103] For himself, the modern Christian, often despite his long intellectual tradition but also with its help, knows that he is called to accept the truth in the same "pre-philosophical," experiential, concrete way his forebears accepted it.

The claim among poets like Olson, Levertov, and Ammons has long been to take reality as it comes: "I look for the forms / things want to come as."[104] But perhaps the claim needs to be bolstered with a clearer understanding of what it means to approach reality through the concrete rather than the abstract. Levertov invites us to "<u>taste and see</u> / . . . <u>The Lord</u>, meaning / if anything all that lives / to the imagination's tongue."[105] The starting-point for truth is the same to the poet as it is to the Christian: <u>things</u>, comprising more than merely the physical facts, comprising all that touches ordinary human life ("grief, mercy, language, / tangerine, weather"). Somehow it has turned out that the Christian, who takes reality as it comes, ends by discovering a concrete, personal, self-revealing truth; while many poets,

who take reality the same way, find themselves pursuing a vague, abstract, and ultimately humanistic truth. Such poets may have no desire to turn Christian, but they can begin to regard the world as the Christian does. They can cultivate a similar frame of mind, a similar desire for the truth, and a similar manner of "lighting the dark."

First, as to the frame of mind. Poets raised on Coleridge's theory of imagination understand that they virtually think with their imagination. In Coleridge's view, the powers of sense perception and reason are linked by the imagination:

> it is a reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the reason in images of the sense, and organising (as it were) the flux of the senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors.[106]

In the Biographia Literaria he calls imagination an "esemplastic power." In its primary operation, it serves as the "living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception." And in its secondary phase it "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or, . . . at all events, it struggles to idealize and unify."[107] In other words, in its connection with the process of thought the imagination compiles a whole out of parts; it expresses and empowers the experience of reality as a "unity in multeity."[108]

I have shown that the ancient Hebrews regarded thinking as an effort to "grasp a totality," to realize a unity in multeity. And I mentioned that, for them, thinking took place in the heart as the seat of all understanding,

decision, and even feeling. Presumably imagining, as Coleridge describes it, would have taken place in the heart too. We do not, of course, look at thinking today as the Hebrews did. Our understanding of physiology has caused us to relocate the processes of thought to the brain--a more precise association, perhaps, but less integrated. Feeling, with us, has remained metaphorically with the heart; thinking, rarefied upward to the head, now becomes the analysis of a totality rather than the grasp of one; and the imagination, in its quest for an integrated vision of truth, is pressed more and more into the service of the intellect. Yet the goal of the American poetic mind is symbolized by Pound's ideogram: the imagination knows, or ought to know, in much the same total way as the ancient Hebrews knew, through the experience of the heart. Truth in poetry is, or perhaps should be, a cordial instead of a cerebral pursuit.

Secondly, as to the wish for truth. Vague and indefinite as some poets are about truth, many in recent years have sought some form of personal contact with the universe. The editors of <u>things</u> want a poetry of human meaning; and Levertov, while, correcting their approach, supports their desire. Commenting on the poetry of Roethke, Nathan Scott links the quest of knowledge to a desire for personal contact:

> . . . any truly cognitive encounter with the world inevitably involves its being drawn into a kind of family relationship with the human spirit, since . . things do not even begin to exhibit any sort of significant meaning or value until we identify ourselves with them in one way or another. The act of knowing, in other words, "is born and nourished in some kind of <u>enthusiastic</u> association."[109]

A "family relationship" which depends on the unilateral identification of reality with the self leads to frustration. But one that depends on an enthusiastic--or "engodded"--association raises at least the possibility of something mutual. "We covet a relationship to all the things and creatures of the earth," says Scott, "that is grounded in a dialectic of reciprocity, of exchange, of love."[110]

Actually, a poet like Arthur Gregor covets a relationship with something larger than things and creatures. Because he wants to know how he stands "vis-a-vis / the multiplicity of things" and how he is to sing in the dark, he asks himself about an ambient presence:

> How can you live, how exist
> without assurance of
> or at least the memory of
> someone, something
> fantastic, marvelous
> always behind you,
> a hand, grip on your shoulder
> a presence surrounding you
> as a shell surrounds what lives inside?
> Song closer to you than flutter to wing!
> Word more antique than age![111]

Marie Ponsot, who feels that "we dare not not care" about the love shown by a personal truth, argues that "We but begin to hope to know, having known / The no-man's echo of your knowing voice," and prays that It will prepare her to "feast your coming."[112] "The deracinated metropolitan," writes Scott of the modern poet, "wants again . . . to find himself living . . . under the law of participation"[113]; that is, of a participation expressive of an I-Thou relation to the world, one suitable to his creativity as a poet.[114]

Thirdly, as to the manner of "lighting the dark." The

argument up to now has been that the the poet can know reality experientially "in the heart," and that he wants to experience a personal, mutual relationship with the way things are. We may go a step further by suggesting that some views of the way a poem is written tend in the direction of realizing what the poet has the heart and the desire to experience.

Poetry has always been somehow connected with the revelation of truth. One typical connection is that the revelation comes out of the poem. John Logan seems to have had this in mind when he referred to James Joyce's use of "religious terms like 'Epiphany' to describe what he thought was going on in art."[115] But another connection being increasingly realized is that the poem comes out of the revelation. What is revealed to the poet guides and informs the composition of the poem. To Denise Levertov, for instance, the experience which occasions the poem is the communication to the poet of an "order, a form beyond forms, in which forms partake. . . ."[116]

That a revelation occurs before--and even during--the writing of the poem causes Levertov to redefine the poet as a "discoverer" of the poem rather than its maker.[117] Her definition of the poem as a discovery echoes an old Puritan theory —— itself rising out of the entire rhetorical tradition—— that the poem "invents", "comes upon", or "lays open to view" that which is real. But whereas Puritan "invention" relied upon simple observation and judgment modified by doctrine, and made of the poet a reporter,[118]

Levertov's "discovery" includes contemplation of and meditation upon a "constellation of experiences," and makes of the poet an explorer.[119] The poet discovers by paying heed to all reality: "Giving one's attention is a vital part of the poetic process; it is a means of realizing the present experience, in which all art must be rooted."[120]

Paying attention has always been considered hard work. Like a scientist who sees not the specimen under his microscope but a reflection of his own eye looking, it is all too easy for the poet's attention to be diverted to himself; in such a case, what is revealed looks remarkably like the poet. But a worse, and far more common, problem arises when the poet becomes too aggressive, and interferes with the communion which revelation is supposed to produce. "Annul in me my manhood, Lord," Brother Antoninus prays:

> If by that total transformation
> I might know thee more.
> . . . . . .
> What uselessness is houseled in my loins,
> To drive, drive, the rampant pride of life,
> When what is needed is a hushed quiescence?
> "The soul is feminine to God,"
> And hangs on impregnation. . . .

While experience indicates that the truth reveals itself, the poet's natural inclination is to usurp "the energizing role" and create something himself. But what he creates is a "wrenched inversion" which "divides the seeker from the Sought."[121] To avoid that, he must actively keep himself passive and accepting; he must seek to yield. Poets who write of paying attention often emphasize the need for the disposition to hear. Coleman Barks advises his audience to act like someone floating on his back in a river:

> Lay back your head and listen
> to whatever will be with us
> to the waters pressing on each eardrum
> for the life inside[122]

The poet does engage in activity, certainly. Peter Fellowes calls himself a predator, hunting in his imagination for "this bird from nowhere / . . . who brings the taste of meaning." But--significantly--he stalks the bird in his sleep.[123]

The truth, revealing itself through the poet's active passivity, can lead him to an experience much like that of religious prophecy. One hears a great deal about prophecy in current poetry: Susan Axelord maintains that the poet walks "thigh-deep" in its fecund earth[124]; and Allen Ginsberg, calling himself a poet-priest, feels that his work is prophetic.[125] But prophecy calls for discernment. Not everyone who claims to prophesy actually does, and not all prophets prophesy all the time. Some of the criteria used in religious prophecy can apply to that of poetry as well.[126]

One criterion is "the word of the Lord," a message originating from a source other than the prophet. The "word" comes to the prophet's heart as something to be transmitted; it is not his own idea, and may even contradict his opinions or preferences. But, though the "word" is not the prophet's, the words used to convey it are. As long as the message is accurately transmitted, the prophet is free to use his own style and imagery to deliver it. The poet who regards himself as a prophet remains faithful to the "forms things want to come as," though his poetic language is his to develop. Another criterion is the urge or even the compulsion to prophesy. This also comes from outside the prophet. It is not the same as his psychological need to say something, but

is rather a sense that he is being prompted to deliver the message given to him. The true prophet knows the difference between his own impulses and the urging of the Other, just as the true poet knows when it is time to write a poem and when it is not. "The condition of being a poet," Levertov writes, "is that <u>periodically</u> . . . a cross section, or constellation, of experiences . . . demands, or wakes in him this demand: the poem."[127] Robert Duncan describes his own experience:

> Eternity
> already gone up into "MUST MUST MUST"
> the Poet, his heart urgent,
> leaping beyond him, writes: "MOVE
> INSTANTER, ON ANOTHER!" "Prophecy,
>
> which uncovers the mystery of future events
> but which also reveals what lurks in the heart". . . .[128]

When the prophet responds to the "word of the Lord" and His prompting, the message has an inherent power. The prophet does, in Whitman's phrase, sound "his barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world." But the force of the utterance does not depend primarily on the vigor of the language; it depends primarily on the impact of the truth itself. By the same token, when the "word" does not come and the demand is not felt, the "prophecy" comes off flat and uninspired, however true it may be technically. Other things being equal, the same may be said of poetry.

Truth, or at any rate the search for it, is the condition of poetry's viability, breath to its lungs. For the poet and the consciousness which he creates, truth will always involve a heliotrope, a continual turning of self to the sun. But such a turning implies that the self, like a

sunflower, knows the direction in which to turn and can position itself to receive as much of the light as it will take.

The analogy goes no further, however; for, unlike the sunflower, the self can choose both the direction and the amount of light it will take. One such choice is to look on truth as an intellectual ideal, metaphysically abstract and indefinite as the form which underlies all particulars, and only partially realized through imaginative grasp of concrete things. Because truth in this sense is elusive, the poet constantly pursues it, finding not the location of truth but, in phenomena, the way there. A much different choice entails a shift in the self's way of thinking about and imagining things. According to it, the truth becomes understood through experience within the heart. As it pays attention within the heart to reality, the self learns to sense truth revealing itself through the imagination as a definite, concrete personality. And because truth in this sense is not elusive, the self realizes that it continually discovers the place where truth may be found.*

---

*The common belief that truth when found no longer has to be sought strikes me as unacceptable for at least three reasons.

In the first place, although the truth is self-revealing, it never reaches the point where one may say that it has revealed all of itself. The truth is definite in that it is clear, direct and unhidden, and metaphysically singular; but it is not defined or limited in itself, and cannot reach the end of its self-revelation. Besides, there is the capacity of the human mind to consider. Even in its knowledge of ordinary phenomena, the mind apprehends much but comprehends relatively little. Its ability to know and understand, while potentially infinite, is acutally very limited; but the more it is confronted with the truth, the more the mind's capacity

---

enlarges. Just as a person keeps returning to a good poem because it always seems to say something different, so he keeps coming back to the same truth over and over. The truth has more to say, and the mind has a growing ability to hear it.

Secondly, the knower has more to contend with than simply understanding bits of information. He is engaged in a personal relationship with the truth. As in all personal relationships, this one is maintained by being pursued. Friends who fail to keep in touch eventually lose their knowledge of each other. The person who claims to have found the truth must continually renew his relation to it lest the relation deteriorate.

Thirdly, the truth in revealing itself also reveals the knower to himself; like a mirror, it shows the knower what he looks like. A person who knows the truth soon learns that he is known by it, and that one of the natural results of coming to know the truth more and more is an increased understanding of his own personality. In the unlikely event that the knower exhausted the truth, he would thereby exhaust the knowledge of himself--and that has not, I believe, ever truly happened to any human being.

The poet's job in seeking the truth is to find it. And when he has found it, he will probably discover that his <u>real</u> search has barely begun.

V: TAKING IN THE WHOLE BODY

PART 1 - THE INCARNATION

"What can the spirit believe?" inquires the young girl in one of Theodore Roethke's love poems: "It takes in the whole body."[1] One does not have to read far into Roethke's poetry to discover there a definite relation of spirit to flesh. Some interplay, some movement or exchange between the two occurs nearly everywhere. Occasionally, the movement from one to the other is swift and subtle, for the spirit often appears very physical, and the flesh may take on "the pure poise of the spirit."[2] But Roethke never equates spirit and flesh, and his exchanges between them are not without a definite pattern. The young girl states it exactly: the spirit takes in the whole body. "The eternal seeks, and finds, the temporal . . . / Things without hands take hands: there is no choice."[3] It is the spirit which draws flesh into reality: "I think a bird and it begins to fly."[4]

A similar pattern in the relation of spirit to flesh is visible in some of the later poetry of William Carlos Williams. Readers of Williams may sometimes expect little more from him than an apt verbal rendering of the thing, a

statement of its physical presence: of the face of an artist ("Self-Portrait"), of the tapestry showing a unicorn tethered to a pomegranate tree ("A Formal Design"), of the bunch of roses kept on ice ("To Flossie").[5] Such an expectation falls considerably short of what Williams offers. In "Shadows," he maintains that

> . . . we experience
> violently
> every day
> two worlds
> one of which we share with the
> rose in bloom,
> and one,
> by far the greater,
> with . . .
> . . . . . .
> the world
> of the imagination. (151)

Perhaps the dimension of the spirit is more restricted in Williams than in Roethke, but it is there ("Only the imagination is real! / I have declared it / time without end." 179), and it influences the corporeal dimension according to the same pattern as in Roethke. "No ideas but in things" can be read to mean that the imagination takes in the whole body. According to Williams, the Eucharist is the body of the Lord because "the blessed plants / and the sea, yield it / to the imagination / intact. And by that force / it becomes real. . ." (93). Likewise, the tortured body of a mustard flower, when taken up by the imagination, is naturalized, acclimated, and chosen as the poet's own, and thereby becomes a sacred healing force (89-91). It is spirit which translates the body to understandable language (22); it is the verb which calls into being the made poem (110; cf. 120).

Roethke and Williams illustrate a desire which, while possibly common to all poets, seems especially characteristic of those I have called Adamic. They want to write a real--as distinguished from a realistic--poem. Their drive is to create a form of art which does more than imitate reality, does more even than communicate a reality other than itself. They want to write a poem which is the reality it communicates. Adrienne Rich, for whom life is "this act of translation, this half-world," experiences personally the "absence / of men who would not, women who could not, speak" to it.[6] In "The Fact of a Doorframe," she describes poetic language as "hewn of the commonest living substance / into archway, portal, frame," and grasps for its "ancient and stubborn poise."[7] Likewise, as Cid Corman feels the delight of naming things, they "begin to seem, / as they are sounded, real."[8] Arthur Gregor asks the reader to accept his poems as "powerful embodiments."[9] Denise Levertov puts the matter this way:

> Just as the activity of the artist gives body and future to "the myterious being hidden behind his eyes," so the very fact of concrete manifestation, of paint, of words, reaches over beyond the world of inner dialogue. When Helion says that then art becomes a realization, he clearly means not "awareness" but quite literally "real-ization," making real, substantiation. Instead of description, expression, comment--all of which only refer to an absent subject--art becomes substance, entity.[10]

A page or so later, she calls art "not reference but phenomenon"; and then adds: "A poem is an indivisibility of 'spirit and matter' much more absolute than what most people seem to understand by 'synthesis of form and content.'"[11]

As language, of course, a poem is a phenomenon; but a poem is never merely language. Words appropriately selected and arranged have at least the effect of clothing an ordinary idea in pleasing dress. Yet Adamic writers feel that there is more to poetry than the "dress of thought." Levertov often quotes Wordsworth that a poem is the incarnation of thought; it is body translated into language (Williams); the bird which, when thought, flies (Roethke). Hence the continual search for the language by which Williams hopes to reconcile the divorce between words and things[12]; for a vocabulary which would enable Henry Rago to bring the world "perfect to the curving of one word"[13]; for a way that Levertov can write poems hard as a floor, sound as a bench, yet mysterious as silence.[14] That the poem should be its own reality is pointed up by recent poets' efforts to sculpt words into visually "concrete" poetry.

Some of the reasons why the poet wants his poem to be a reality have already been examined. Since something within himself is being lost, perhaps he can make something outside of himself to hang onto:

> Come words!
> and nourish the surprises of order.
> Take on your lives
> and live them with me.
>
> Together, who knows?
> we may last awhile.[15]

The Adamic poet wants a poetry of salvation. He is looking for ways to develop a poetry of enough spiritual power to reverse or at least halt the prevailing corruption of secularism. He also wants to establish something positive:

"one marching language in which the word 'peace' will be said for the last time,"[16] in which the disintegrating self will be transformed once and for all into something new. Unfortunately, the Adamic poet has created in his poetry a consciousness like his own, one which experience corruption within itself and its language. Far from speaking peace for the last time, the created self cannot transcend or withdraw from the natural direction. The self requires a different direction, one leading to a new consciousness, where that indivisibility of spirit and matter of which Levertov writes can be realized.

In Everything to Be Endured, Roger Meiners has suggested the possibility of such a direction. He calls for "some re-thinking of the idea of Incarnation, to ask what was incarnated, and into what?" He also believes "that it is necessary to think of what is implied in the ancient doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and what its relation may be to the human spirit, and to the very involved question of the role of imagination in human affairs." While some re-thinking may be necessary for theology, it is clear that Meiners' attention is on literature. The doctrines of the Incarnation and the Holy Spirit have something to do with the writing of a poem, but just what is not always apparent. Still, they provide a direction--perhaps not the only one, says Meiners, but "the only one in which I can personally put much hope."[17]

This chapter and the one following attempt a very limited amount of the re-thinking Meiners calls for. Space will not allow me to do more than borrow a few basic

theological insights. There will be little, if anything, original here as far as the Christian doctrines are concerned. As for the poetry, because I am interested in establishing an overall view of the way these doctrines might apply to it, certain specific questions will have to go unanswered here. The reader may learn from these pages, for example, what I think a "poetic incarnation" is like, but he will find few hints about how to write a poem that encompasses one.

I want to make it clear also that, though separate treatment is necessary, the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Holy Spirit actually go together. The Incarnation is not ordinary embodiment; it takes place and is sustained by the power of the Spirit. Likewise, the Holy Spirit cannot be known as a personal agency without the Incarnation, by which the Spirit is revealed and communicated. (Both doctrines, incidentally, imply a teaching about the Father; but that lies outside the present discussion.) Both doctrines <u>together</u> have something essential to do with a direction toward wholeness, since only both--and not each separately--fully explain how a poem can exist as an "indivisibility of spirit and matter."

1.

The idea of language as an "incarnation of thought" seems to have entered the mainstriam of English poetic thought with Wordsworth, in reaction to the neoclassic figure of language as the <u>dress</u> of thought.[18] Certainly Wordsworth's

opinion excited Thomas de Quincey, who called it "by far the weightiest thing we ever heard on the subject of style."[19] Excitement led to acceptance, and soon incarnation entered the lexicon of criticism. It became so commonplace that whatever theological weight it may have held for Wordsworth and de Quincey it eventually lost even for professedly Christian writers. Thus, C. S. Lewis, in making a point about the psalms, refers offhandedly to a poem as "a little incarnation," with no apparent theological meaning.[20] And Sister Bernetta Quinn, writing about the process of metamorphosis in poetry, seems to have little theology in mind when she quotes the opinion that "poetry must transmute life into a new incarnation of image and rhythm."[21]

But several poets and critics do have theology in mind. In her "Notebook Pages," Denise Levertov comments on Wordsworth's metaphor in language reminiscent of St. John's gospel: "The music of poetry comes into being when thought and feeling remain unexpressed until they become Word, become Flesh. . . ."[22] She offers her poem, "The Man," as an example of the word made flesh:

> . . . If one is a poet, then the envisioning, the listening, and the writing of the word, are, for that while, fused. For me . . . this poem bodies forth the known material that led to it.[23]

Elsewhere, she calls for "a poetry of hieroglyphics, of embodiment, incarnation,"[24] because poetry is "an incarnation--not reference, but phenomenon."[25] She wants, in other words, a poetry that lives up to its nature.

Others carry the logic of incarnation further. Hoxie Neale Fairchild points out that poetry has a view of life

and a technique "which [illustrate] the Word made Flesh"; poetry, he says, is sacramental.[26] Henry Rago feels that the words of a poem indicate a desire to "be more than a poem," to be Eucharistic flesh and blood[27]--a theme developed by Nathan Scott in a chapter of The Wild Prayer of Longing called, "The Sacramental Vision."[28] Carried yet another step, an incarnational view of poetry, expressed sacramentally, makes of the poet a priest. Such is the opinion of Allen Ginsberg, John Logan, Jerome Rothenberg, and Levertov herself,[29] following the Shelleyan train of thought.

By making explicit the theological side of Wordsworth's metaphor, these poets and critics take the understanding of the poem as an incarnation of thought far beyond weighty matters of style. The poem is an incarnation stylistically, they seem to hold, because it is first an incarnation in fact.

The word incarnation generally means that an immaterial reality, a spirit or a mental abstraction, takes on a body.[30] Incarnation involves greater definition and concreteness than personification, which need not apply to anything physical and may not, in any case, amount to more than a figure of speech. By incarnation, a thing emerges from the immaterial realm into the material, while yet retaining the aura of its immateriality; known by others to be more than just physical, in shape and substance it is physically perceived. C. S. Lewis calls the poem an incarnation in this general sense because "what had been before invisible and inaudible"--a thought--can now be seen and heard.[31] But when the theology of the Word made Flesh is invoked to explain the effect of a poem, something happens to the concept of poetic incarnation.

On the one hand the definition contracts, so that the poem has certain specific qualities; while on the other hand the connotations expand, raising implications that touch every area of the poem's life.

At the denotative level, as I said above, the Incarnation is not ordinary embodiment. Thousands of human children are born every day, yet none is regarded as the incarnation of anything spiritually preexistent. From a theological perspective, only one incarnation is believed ever to have occurred in human history--and it, in altered form, is still occurring.[32] The reason derives from what is involved in the unique comm-union of the eternal and the temporal, and from the universal permanence of what is accomplished by it. Only one Incarnation is occurring because only one <u>can</u> occur, or needs to. Other events that can be justifiably called incarnations are patterned on that One.

At the connotative level, on the other hand, the Incarnation extends to all the details of ordinary life. It demands that those touched by it live an "incarnate life."[33] As they learn to cooperate with the principle of Christ's life in them, people begin to act and think differently. On the surface, they are freed from doing wrong by performing acts consistent with the acts of Christ; more importantly, they are freed from a reliance on the principle of sin the more their basic attitudes about God, themselves, and others are changed into those of Christ. For persons aware of the implications, the Incarnation no longer operates as a piece

of doctrine or an item of history. It becomes their way of acting on phenomena because it becomes their way of seeing them in the first place--becomes, in a sense, their very eyes.

What has all this to do with the writing of poetry? Simply that the poem reflects the principle it comes from. Earlier I called the corruption of secularism both a fact and a direction for American poetry. I argued then that, where secularism operates as the poem's underlying principle, the poem is corrupted in the strict sense; that, however slightly affected, the Adamic self experiences disintegration within, while the language undergoes divorce from the phenomena without; and that both self and language tend in the direction of further breakdown. The reverse of this point can now be made if the poem is looked on as an incarnation in the theological sense. Where the Incarnation serves as the poem's original and final principle, things radically different from each other begin to come together. The self of the poem becomes a second Adam as it communes with the Word; the language communicates that self to the world; and the poem as a whole is given "body and future," becomes an integrated--and integrating--phenomenon. Though it will always be a "little incarnation" and somehow fall short of perfection, it is still based on a principle of wholeness, and tends inevitably in that direction.

I will assume in what follows that the poet wishing to effect an incarnation of thought in his poems will be unable to do so to the extent that he works from any other principle than the Incarnation itself. Perhaps the

assumption leaves me open, with W.H. Auden, to the charge of maintaining "that the Incarnation has made a free play of the imagination impossible."[34] It is a necessary risk. I do not want to set up rules for the writing of poetic incarnations, nor to say anything directly about diction or style or subject matter. Such affairs the poet can best settle for himself. But I do intend to show that the same basic elements which go into the theology of incarnation go into the poetry, and I mean to imply that contrary elements will not work to achieve an incarnation in either sphere.

The teaching on the Incarnation most commonly held among Christians is that the fullness of the Trinity's second Person is united with the fullness of human nature in the person of a historically identifiable man.[35] The doctrine can be reduced to at least four elements, all of which, taken together, comprise what I would call the "principle of incarnation": the covenant, the Logos or Word, the raising of the lower nature to the higher, and the polarity of both natures within one person.

2.

The first element needed for an incarnation, then, is a covenant. A covenant is a solemn legal contract, but the nature of the contract is less important than what it allows the contracting parties to achieve. A covenant creates a community. It establishes a bond of personal union, typically involving the formation of a family relationship among hitherto unrelated parties. As an agreement of

personal union, a covenant emphasizes less what the parties are to do for each other than what they are to be for each other. Activities are important, but their value depends on the relationship: the duties and obligations, the mutual exchange of resources, and even the penalties all serve the growth of the family bond, and are not held as the purpose of the agreement. The purpose is to form individuals into a cohesive unit. The true effect of a covenant, then, is not to limit individual freedom but to expand it, first by increasing the resources available from those of one person to those of many, and second by aiming at shalom, utter peace or fullness of well-being in the dealings of the parties with each other.

Because it establishes a family, a covenant has as one of its chief characteristics its permanence or--in the language of the Bible--its reliability, its truth. Covenants are sealed with an oath, but ideally the nature of the relationship agreed upon makes the oath superfluous. Just as the members of a natural family stay related forever, the members of an "artificial" or covenanted family expect their agreement to hold for a long time--and that everyone will live by it for as long as it is in effect.

The basic idea of a covenant does not in the least change when God is regarded as one of the covenanting parties, but its significance does. Jews and Christians constantly remind themselves what it means for the I Am, the eternal and holy, freely to commit Himself to a family relationship with temporal, profane creatures. It means

that the One agrees to live in common with the many, the Reality draws the appearances into in Its life, the Forever enters the history of the transient and becomes the goal of history, and so forth. As in a covenant between two human beings, God's covenant with men focuses on what the relating parties are to each other ("I will be your God and you will be my people."). The relationship is doubly permanent, since it has both the permanence of the family bond and the steadfastness of God Himself. Thus it is pointless to raise legal questions such as "what would happen if God failed to keep His end of the bargain"; He keeps it because He is always the Truth, and therefore always reliable.

The relationship, however, does call for a certain give-and-take between God and men. Karl Rahner describes God's part of the agreement as one of self-communication with the universe. That is, God not only reveals to men certain things about Himself, but He also draws the world to Himself in order to establish a real communion of persons.[36] His willingness to bend down to the human sphere this way was called by the Jews hased, mercy--a term which capsulized for them the whole meaning of covenant. The human part of the agreement was to accept the self-communication of God, not only by coming to know what He says about Himself, but also by cooperating in the process of becoming personally one with Him.

Thus the covenant provides the context in which God's ultimate self-communication, the Incarnation, occurs; but it does more. It provides the criteria for recognizing such an

occurrence at all. As men increasingly realize what the covenant means in practice they begin to see that, in general, the more they know themselves to be "set apart" to receive the communication of God, the more they experience it coming to them from within themselves. Among the first covenants recorded in Scripture is God's promise to Noah of His kindness to all human beings.[37] The process of setting a people apart begins with Abraham, to whom God pledges a specific line of descendants in a specific territory.[38] Later, He reveals through Moses that He regards the Israelites as "a kingdom of priests, a holy nation"; and He ordains a pattern of life designed to lead them to a share in His own holiness.[39] The Mosaic covenant, written in stone, emphasized outward observances; but the prophets soon begin to teach that God will move His covenant inward, and that its outward fulfillment will come from within the heart.[40] And so it happens that, from within man, God's covenant reaches fulfillment as a man: "The Word was made flesh."[41]

Now if one can accurately describe a poem as an incarnation, he must first see it as the expression of a covenant between the poet and the world around him. To look once again at Nathan Scott's view of cognition:

> . . . any truly cognitive encounter with the world inevitably involves its being drawn into a kind of family relationship with the human spirit, since . . . things do not even begin to exhibit any sort of significant meaning or value until we identify ourselves with them in one way or another.[42]

Literary criticism has often pointed out that the poet enjoys certain relationships with the world: he is its

creator or recreator, its imitator, its moral legislator, its mediator, and so on. Such titles indicate his activity relative to the world, but they do not necessarily imply a long-term personal involvement with it. That kind of involvement is often looked on as impossible or at least difficult to maintain; in fact, the current argument has it that modern civilization is forcing the poet out of whatever family relationship he still has with the world. If so, he is unfortunate. His poem is a way of knowing. To the extent that "any truly cognitive encounter" inevitably involves a family relationship with the world, to at least that extent the poem involves it.

By means of a covenant, the poet chooses the kind of relationship he will have. It may be that modern civilization is forcing him to relinquish a natural or unconscious family relationship; Owen Barfield, anyhow, thinks so, for he argues that "original participation" has been waning since the Scientific Revolution.[43] But he sees the emergence of another kind of participation, a conscious figuration enhanced by systematic use of the imagination, a "final participation" that depends on choice and is the proper goal of the imagination.[44] The poet decides what he will be for the world and what the world will be for him. By means of a covenant the poet chooses a <u>family</u> relationship. Every time he writes a poem he announces the familiarity between his imagination and the world's physical, psychological, and spiritual realities: "The soul descends once more in bitter love to accept the waking body," says Richard Wilbur of the

poet's work[45], and calls upon his imagination to "Put on the reins of love."[46] Cid Corman also observes how "flesh of mine drawn to this world / looks for as long as it can," even when the effort proves vain.[47] If indeed it is love which calls him there, his relationship with the world is deeply personal.* And within it there transpires a mutual exchange that expands the resources of both parties, the world providing a basis of continnuing experience, the poet raising that experience to new levels of existence. For example, Corman regards the creation of the unicorn as a fruit of such a loving poetic exchange:

> This is the non-existent beast.
> They didn't know it but somehow —
> its movement, its manner, its throat,
> even its quiet eye's gleam — loved
>
> True, it wasn't. But loving it
> it became . . . .[48]

The poet is "drawn to love by love, / everlasting in / revolving splendor."[49] Hence there develops over time a bond of peace as the knowledge, love, and mutuality fructify in words.

Such kinship is not merely a thing of the moment, a union of imagination and reality that lasts only as long as it takes to write the poem. The connection begins a long time, perhaps years, before the words expressing it even come to mind; as Levertov points out, one has to acquire the "constellation of experiences" which awaken in him the

---

*And ultimately affirmative. Though the poet may dislike many things about the world and freely say so, his quarrel, like Frost's, is ultimately a lover's quarrel.

demand for the poem.[50] Also, because a poet may write many poems during his life, he keeps expressing his relationship with the world from different points of view and at different stages of growth. He goes at the language over and over, honing it to achieve sharper and cleaner expression. The success of his work depends, for him, as much on the firmness of his covenant as it does on his verbal abilities. When his covenant is stable, he can validly insist, with Williams, on his vocation: "I <u>am</u> a poet! I / am. I am. I am a poet."[51]

In at least two senses, the poet's role in his covenant is to communicate himself. The first sense entails revelation. On the one hand, the poet invents or discovers facets of his own person to the world through the made self of the poem. And on the other, he reveals the world to itself by taking it into the poem and figuring it forth again.[52] In the second sense, he brings about a communion of persons, a frequent theme of James Dickey's poetry. The world ordinarily participates in the collective and private human consciousness[53]; but the representations of self in the poem also allow the poet to participate the consciousness (so to speak) of the world--to re-enter it phenomenally, to give himself anew to its existence. In such a gift there is something of that <u>hased</u> which characterizes God's covenant with man. That is, the poem is a gratuitous act, a sign and partial effect of the poet's free choice to be one with the world.[54]

The element of covenant, then, provides the context

of the poem; it also stipulates the criteria for recognizing when an incarnation of thought has occurred. As Robert Creeley says, "The plan is the body" —— though one must know where to find the plan and how to read it.[55] First there comes a "setting apart" of both poet and audience, and next an experience of the poem coming to both from within. For the poet, the task of setting himself apart involves getting beyond the point where the externals of format and stylistics take up the bulk of attention--beyond even the point where the imagination composes the material and shapes it into coherent images--down to the point where the heart may be said to "know" the poem, what is said in the poem. As the river "flows out of the / mountains into / my eyes," Corman writes, "the heart / becomes a sea."[56] It is within his heart that the poet knows the word of truth; and it is from there that he feels the demands of prophecy, the urge to say the word out, to substantiate it with his images and his words. For the audience (which will, at a later time, include the poet), "setting apart" means cultivating a mind-set by which the poem is seen to go beyond the figures and the wording--effective as these may be in their own right--to what is figured thereby within them, to the word spoken in their own heart. The physical aspects of the poem, the words heard or seen, are in one sense a meeting-place —— an accumulation of presences, Arthur Gregor says.[57] On those occasions when the poet, speaking out of his heart, encounters an audience set to receive his word in their own, a distinct poetic consciousness is realized. The poet's

covenant is fulfilled with an incarnation.[58]

I now turn to the concept of the logos or word as the second element of incarnation.

3.

It is characteristic of some Scriptural authors that, instead of aiming at verbal precision, they seem to intend its opposite. St. John, for example, uses the word light to mean nearly everything that most people of his day associated with the phenomenon. And with the word logos, he becomes culturally all-embracing. He draws not only from ancient Hebrew associations, but also from those of a philosophically rich Hellenic culture. All of these meanings he combines in the few sentences of the prologue to his gospel: "In the beginning was the Word . . . , and the Word was made flesh."*

The Greek usage of logos "admitted of the double meaning 'thought' and 'speech,' ratio and oratio," says R. G. Bury[59]; but the first part of this inward/outward duality seems to have received more of the emphasis than the

---

*Owen Barfield distinguishes between expressive and communicative uses of language: "The goal to which expression aspires, or the criterion by which it must be measured, is something like fullness or sincerity. The goal toward which communication aspires is accuracy. Both functions must be performed in some degree--and at the same time--otherwise there is no language at all. . . . On the one hand they tend to be mutually exclusive; . . . but on the other hand the relation is a dynamic rather than a quantitative one. . . . The two functions conflict, but they also co-operate. You can say, if you like, that the concern of communication is with the how, whereas the concern of expression is with the what." Owen Barfield, Speaker's Meaning, pp. 35-37. Italics in original. St. John seems to incline toward expression.

other. Heraclitus taught that the Logos, an emanation of Primal Fire, was the pneuma or vital stuff of all material being, "divine reason immanent in nature and in man."[60] The Stoics later interpreted his theory to mean that the Logos operated as a structural principle in natural objects. It was a creative principle as well, since each thing developed according to the "spermatic logos" within it.[61] When the word logos was used in ordinary speech to mean a linguistic unit, it retained its inward emphasis: an utterance ex-pressed the idea within.

The Hebrew emphasis, on the other hand, rested on the outward and the phenomenal. In Hebrew, a word had a psychic energy that, once released, could not be retracted, and that brought to full reality as a thing that which was spoken. When God's pneuma hovered over the waters, His word became the light, the land, the vegetation, and all living creatures. Besides speaking the world into existence, God's word created and renewed men's hearts, accomplishing even there what it was sent out to do.[62] Even when used to refer simply to a message, word denoted something more than audible: "The Lord showed Himself to Samuel . . . by His word"; "The word which Isaiah . . . saw."[63] According to Philo Judeus, the visible world is "the uttered speech of God; for, as he explains, when God speaks we do not hear His words but see them, since His every word is a work."[64]

These inward and outward strains begin to merge in the Old Testament wisdom literature. Proverbs, Wisdom, and Ecclesiasticus all represent God's wisdom as a personal

being, distinct from God yet nearly identical to Him. Begotten from all eternity and enduring forever, Wisdom shares the intelligence, omnipotence, holiness, and immutability of God. As the "breath of the power of God," she is with Him at creation and personifies His word.[65] She pervades all things and "penetrates all intelligent, pure, and subtle spirits," her special mission being to dwell in and among men.[66] Personification of God's wisdom or word as a near divinity caused no difficulty for Jewish monotheism, as long as the distinction between the word and the God who spoke it was maintained.

Most of St. John's prologue reiterates the distinction: the Word existed in the beginning with God, served as the sole channel of creation, and came into the world as its life. Yet early in the prologue he inserts a jarring note: ". . . and the Word was God." He identifies the two in a way that a Greek would not understand entirely but that a Jew, who would understand all too well, could not say. He asserts that the Word of God is beyond an emanation of divinity and is far more than a personification. "The Word, which he has just distinguished from the person of God, is nevertheless a divine being in his own right," says Bruce Vawter. "We immediately see, therefore, that the Word of which he is speaking is a 'he' and not an 'it.'"[67]

In the doctrine of a personal Logos or Word which becomes incarnate, many theologians find a way of broaching the subject of Jesus' divinity that is "more accessible to our understanding than the two-natures-one-person model of

classical Christology."[68] The Logos doctrine retains the classical duality, but translates it into one of inward ratio and outward oratio, what (or who) is spoken on the one hand and the visible speech on the other. The Word is begotten by means of the divine pneuma within the Father, and proceeds from Him, gradually penetrating into the consciousness of the human race. "What the Spirit of God speaks is reified when it is received," writes John Haughey. As the one man in whom the inwardness of the Word was fully realized,[69] Jesus "went from seeing that he was spoken to, to understanding that he was wholly spoken by the Father."[70] Jesus, then, is the oratio, the outward Logos, the complete expression by God of Himself to man.[71]

What is incarnated is the Word, and what it comes into is flesh. Though St. John clearly means that the Word became a human being, he does not specify the humanity of the Word; that will become apparent as his story of Jesus unfolds. Instead, he points to the more generally phenomenal side of things: the immaterial Word takes on the same corporeality as the rest of creation.

But it would be a mistake to read only body where John uses the word flesh. The word body is used where something more specific is meant.[72] But here the broader term is used, thus avoiding--for modern minds, anyhow--what Barfield has called "the direst possibility inherent in idolatry." He explains:

> It can empty of spirit--it has nearly succeeded in doing so--not only nature, but also Man himself. For among all the other idols is his own body.

> And it is part of the creed of idolatry that, when we speak of Man, we mean only the body of this or that man, or at most his finite personality, which we are driven more and more to think an attribute of his body.[73]

John does not treat the Incarnation as merely a physical event. On the contrary, when he says that the Word became flesh, he refers to a psychological and spiritual event as well.

Moreover, the term flesh suggests the idea of a capability awaiting fulfillment. Whatever there may be in St. John's prologue of the Aristotelian idea of potency becoming actualized, there is certainly the Jewish understanding that nature is incomplete until God communicates His fullness to it. All flesh is grass, Isaiah remarks: "The grass withers, . . . but the word of our God endures forever."[74] The flesh of the psalmist faints for the Lord, through whose word alone he can live; Job hopes that in his flesh he will see God; indeed all of creation, says St. Paul, waits with groaning for its full adoption into God's family.[75] According to Karl Rahner, nature is fundamentally capable of receiving God, in much the same way that a question is capable of receiving its answer. And in the Incarnation, God's self-communicating love is made evident in man's and nature's "radical openness".[76] "John says that the Word became flesh," writes Bruce Vawter. "He has deliberately chosen the most uncompromising word that was available to him in order to express the reality of the Incarnation."[77]

Most applications of the Logos-doctrine to the

writing of poetry strike me as inadequate. The doctrine does have some implications for the workings of poetic language. But it originally grew out of an analogy with language, and a strange turnabout occurs when the effects of poetic language are explained by analogy with an analogy. That the idea or message of the poem should be compared to the Word would be more fruitful were it not that the Logos-doctrine points beyond a message to something more substantial. It points to the communication of a living person. To apply the doctrine, then, we must look first at the person of the poet himself, then at the person he communicates.

When Denise Levertov claims that "we need a poetry . . . of direct evocation,"[78] she allows the inference that there is missing in American poetry at large a calling-out of what lies within. The Adamic poet, by definition, does not evoke; he invokes. As a "simple, separating inwardness," he speaks within himself, creating and defining himself to himself. As a prophet, Allen Ginsberg is:

> A lone man talking to myself, no house in the brown
> [vastness
> to hear,
> imagining the throng of Selves
> that make this nation one body of Prophecy.

His "act done by my own voice" is published nowhere but "to my own senses, / . . . all realms within my consciousness fulfilled."[79] The heat of reality burns itself into the mind, says Adrienne Rich, "as if it had no more question / of its right to go on devouring / the rest of a lifetime, / the rest of history."[80] For her, poetry is an interior

monologue because "the mind collecting, devouring / all these destructibles / . . . is the only poem."[81] Rather than carry the word outward to a world looking for revelation, the Adamic poet withdraws inward and names reality to the self. Calling himself a "custodian of close things" and "a coalescent dust," John Woods states his position as a poet: "Inside, / I stand." He pulls away from his external senses in order to sing an imagined Eden which he can enter to "name the kneeling animals."[82] But his poem ends within; Adam proposes to speak the names, but does not end by realizing them outwardly.[83] Because of the orientation inward, the Adamic consciousness produces a poetry of description, expression, comment, and direct statement, much of which carries great force but (as Levertov says) "all of which only [refers] to an absent subject."[84] It does not produce a poetry of incarnation because "the act of realizing inner experience in material substance is in itself an action <u>toward others</u>."[85]

A poetry of incarnation comes from a consciousness for which both <u>ratio</u> and <u>oratio</u> are an imaginative way of life. In contrast to the Adamic "simple, separating inwardness," such a consciousness might be described as dual, communing, and outward-tending.

By <u>dual</u> I mean that the poet of direct evocation knows the existence within himself of a second consciousness. He knows his own there, of course. But during composition he is aware of another, completely different from his own, definite, personal, self-revealing--the Truth at work in his

heart. In "The Hand Upon His Head," Arthur Gregor describes such a presence within poets:

> He is at once their ideal, distant from them,
> and the voice that commands them, though not
> by words, the figure in their dreams,
> the cause of their passage, the throb
> in their being that spurs them on:
> and he it is, he in them, who goes.

Gregor acknowledges the same personal presence within himself: "HE is the instigator / HE / my response."[86] It is no coincidence that some poets discuss composition as a process of paying attention to "the hum of the world's wood," Levertov's expression for mystery.[87] The poet at work expects to hear the Truth utter mysteries to his imagination. He does not listen for a voice but, in a sense, for a breathing. He wants to hear the logos, the inner fire of things, the structural principle on which the world is built, the spermatic utterance by which creation creates. He listens with his imagination's ears, but also with its eyes, since all that he sees is a representation, the Word become visible works. Of these, the poet himself is one; the logos operates as his inner principle, penetrates his spirit. From the beginning of composition, then, the Word is present with the poet; and by the time of its ending, the Word will have penetrated the self of the poem, residing with it as well.

The inner presence of the Word gives occasion to the act of communion by which the Word, in a sense, becomes the poet. Such identification does not erase the distinction between them, however. The Adamic poet cannot commune because he recognizes no real distinction between himself and

the Word: he is the word he speaks. Communion implies difference, but achieves sameness--and this at varying levels.[88] At the level of dialogue, the poet asks the question that occasions the poem, and receives the Word in answer through his imagination. At the level of knowledge, he starts to become, in the epistemological sense, the Word that he knows. And at the level of full communion, each of the two takes on some of the personal characteristics of the other so that, to the extent indicated by the subject of the poem, the poet imaginatively goes out to penetrate what is spoken by the Word, and the Word comes in to the particular self being formulated by the poet. In such a manner, says Wilbur, "one may see / By what cross-purposes the world is dreamt."[89]

Ultimately, the direction of poetic consciousness turns <u>outward</u>. It does so because the Word itself tends toward outward realization; because the poet's commitment is to the world; and because the poem, as realized, is an indivisibility of inward spirit and outward matter. Occasionally, a poet notices such a turn of imagination. Albert Gelpi remarks that, in "The Trees," Adrienne Rich traces "a movement from within out, so that the empty forest 'will be full of trees by morning.'"[90] Another poet sees that something contained within the imagination also comes out. In "Winter Song," written for Owen Barfield,[91] Roger Meiners records a vision:

> though cold hardens the ground
> the sun burns within:
> heat which the winter surrounds.

> Then I saw a fair white beast
> shining through winter's door
> as though the sun had leaped
> from the frozen earth's core.[92]

And so the poem, like Thomas Merton's night-flowering cactus, lifts its "sudden Eucharist / Out of the earth's unfathomable joy," and becomes the outer realization of the Word within:

> I am intricate and whole, not art but wrought passion
> Excellent deep pleasure of essential waters
> Holiness of form and mineral mirth. . . .[93]

The purpose of the poem is not to come back into the imagination, says Corman, "but / to go forth."[94]

When poetic consciousness thus turns outward, the Word is made flesh anew. Just as the Word of God takes on more than the physicalness of a body in becoming human flesh, the poem assumes more than the outwardness of sound, diction, imagery, and rhythm when it becomes an incarnation. Levertov indicates that the flesh of a poem is more than its body when she couples incarnational poetry with hieroglyphics.[95] The hieroglyph is a visible word. In a single picture it unites "that in nature which the phenomenon represents . . . with that in man which the name represents."[96] It illustrates the close relationship between words and things. As Barfield sees it:

> It is . . . possible, when thinking of the relation between words and things, to forget what 'things,' that is phenomena, are; namely, that they are collective representations and, as such, correlative to human consciousness. But those who decline to adopt this expedient, will find it impossible to sever the 'thing' by a sort of surgical operation from its name. The relation between collective representations and language is of a most intimate nature... . .[97]

The poem is a name and, like the thing it names, a representation. But if it is truly to be a phenomenon in its own right as the Incarnation is a phenomenon, the poet must work to give his poem not just body but flesh. He is not out to shape a statue made of words, but to breathe life into the self of the poem and into the things which that self utters. He aims to figure forth a "whole body," to create from words a physical, psychological, and spiritual personality.

As verbal flesh, the poem is also a capability awaiting fulfillment. During his lectures on "Poetry and Truth," Charles Olson had this to say about poems:

> . . . Herodotus' stories are known to the Greeks as logoi. May I get that to you? Actually logos, in my mind right now, logic . . . is, like, only story. . . . At this point, happily, we can say mythththology [sic] is stories of myths--which is the word "mouth." Muthos is mouth. And indeed logos is simply words in the mouth. And in fact I can be even stiffer an etymologist and tell you . . . that what you have to say muthologos is, is "what is said of what is said"--as suddenly the mouth is simply a capability, as well as words are a capability, they are not the ultimate back of it all.[98]

Olson's remarks take on greater significance when we recall that, to the Christian way of thinking, the things represented by words are themselves "what is said." The ultimate back of it all is the Word communicating itself in the poem. But, to paraphrase John Haughey's theological dictum, the Word which the poet speaks out is only reified when it is received.[99] Just as sound does not exist until an ear hears it, the poem remains only words in the mouth until its "sound forces in the mind / from the heartstrings"

an opening where the Word can penetrate "the isolated satyr each man is."[100]

4.

Of the elements remaining for a basic understanding of the principle of incarnation, only two need concern us here. Both are implicit in what has already been said. I will attempt to sketch the theology of both elements, and then to extend some of their applications to the writing of poetry.

The third element, then, describes how beings having different natures or modes of existence come into a relationship whereby each participates the nature or existence of the other. Without losing its own identity, the lower nature is taken into the higher one, and so transcends itself.

The impression is often given that reality works the other way around, that the higher nature is taken into the lower one. God is seen to become a man: the Son of God puts aside His infinity and omnipotence, descends from heaven onto the earth, and enters human nature in all respects except sin. The formula is certainly true to Christian belief; the idea appears everywhere in Scripture, theology, art, and general piety. But <u>as stated</u>, the formula "God becomes a man" places the focus of God's activity on man, since its direction is toward him rather than toward God. Such an expression may give rise to the opinion that, on the one hand, human nature not only receives but contains the

infinite; and that, on the other, God's nature is lowered to the human level or in some respects cast in the image and likeness of man.

C. S. Lewis explains that the Incarnation actually follows a pattern traceable everywhere in nature:

> On the ordinary biological view . . . one of the primates is changed so that he becomes a man; but he remains still a primate and an animal. He is taken up into a new life without relinquishing the old. In the same way all organic life takes up and uses processes merely chemical. But we can trace the principle higher as well as lower.[101]

We might expect to find it operative, for instance, in religious experience. And we do. The covenant operates on the basis of "lower into higher," for by it God lifts a people from their slavery to His splendor.[102] In Christian baptism, the candidate is immersed in God; he emerges from that bath with his own humanity intact, but living now the life of God. Just as no man can come <u>personally</u> to God unless drawn to Him,[103] so no one can come to Him <u>by nature</u> except that way. Thus, Lewis concludes, "we are taught that the Incarnation itself proceeded 'not by the conversion of the godhead into flesh, but by taking of (the) manhood into God. . . .'"[104]

Karl Rahner looks at the same pattern from the viewpoint of self-transcendence. He is not thinking of the self-transcendence discussed in Chapter III, the kind supposed to result from human will power alone. What Rahner has in mind requires human actions, but does not depend on "autonomous finite movement." It comes about by God's self-communication, by His outpouring love at work within

human self-abandonment and hope. Inevitably, as the lower nature is raised it begins to experience a twofold freedom: freedom from bondage to corruption and death, on the one hand; and freedom to become perfect--thoroughly made in its rightful image and likeness, whole, entire--as God is perfect, on the other. Rahner argues that, when man's upward drive meets the full self-communication of God in time and space, the Incarnation occurs.[105] In the man Jesus, the Spirit of God takes in the "whole body," and ever afterward all of human nature is more than it was.

The fourth incarnational element, polarity, sustains what the third accomplishes. I have not noticed theologians using the term polarity to discuss the Incarnation--they may have reason to avoid the word--but their treatments of the "hypostatic union" of two natures in one person leave no doubt that a polarity exists. And in any case, the word has its advantages, since it can be used both to show that the Incarnation is more "natural" than it is often thought to be, and to illustrate the dyamism of the Word made flesh.

It would be easy to think that, in the Incarnation, two opposing orders of existence are "yoked by violence together." After all, the natures of God and man exist not merely poles but worlds apart. For such incompatible entities to cohere with each other in the same person, it would seem necessary to apply a force capable of suspending the ordinary laws of combination. Yet Christianity takes a very different view, and points to the normal composition of human nature to show why.

All human beings, it says, demonstrate a polarity within themselves of spirit and matter. Though the two principles have essentially little in common--spirit, for example, is neither quantified nor individuated, whereas matter is both--their coherence alone specifies humanity as distinct from other animal natures. Spirit and matter actually have an affinity for each other, as opposites frequently do: the one as a power to in-form and realize matter, the other as a capability of being formed as an individual being. The result is the human person, whose psychological and physical sides affect and are affected by each other.

The Incarnation is unique in human history and may, for that reason, have required a special exercise of divine power to bring it to pass. But it is not unique as a polarity of opposing principles; it is only so in terms of the principles opposed. And as it happens, everything we have seen of the Scriptual view of history--the growth of the covenant relation between God on the one hand and man on the other, man's increasing awareness of the Word penetrating his own spirit, the Scriptural theme of God drawing man to Himself--all indicate that the human and divine principles are not worlds apart. They cohabit the <u>same</u> world and incline toward each other. Thus in the Incarnation there is no forcing of nature. Rather, everything suggests that the hypostatic union culminates all natural polarities.

And because of this union, a powerful dynamism surrounds the Incarnation. Just as the poles of a magnet

create a field of energy that affects the polarity of other metals in the vicinity, there exists between the two poles of the Incarnate Word a vitality described by St. John as a fullness of grace, truth, and glory "as of the only Son from the Father."[106] Internally, it is experienced by Jesus as an awareness of his identity with, yet distinction from, the Father, and as an assurance of power--both to lay his life down and to take it up again. From without, his personal magnetism aligns with him all those drawn into its ambience. More than just the charisma of an effective speaker, the polarity within Jesus is felt by others as an awesome power--not of coercion, but power to expel demons and to heal, power giving life and authority to his words, power raising his hearers into the grace, truth, and glory of the sons of God.[107] A common argument in apologetics says that, were such power missing, the Incarnation could not be shown to exist.

Before applying these last two incarnational elements to the writing of a poem, it might be helpful to summarize where we stand with respect to the first two. As an incarnation of thought, the poem is written in the context of a covenant between poet and world. The poet, that is, chooses a relationship by which he communicates himself personally with the world. He writes not as a simple, separating inwardness, but from the experience of a dual, communing, and outward-tending consciousness. Knowing that the phenomena are outward realizations of what is said by the Word, the poet communes inwardly with it in order to

speak it out from himself. His imagination thus "bodies forth" what it knows and has become: the Word is made flesh in the poem as a created consciousness, which is fully realized as it is received.

The phenomena taken into the poem during its process of outward phenomenal realization are now raised to a new dimension of existence. Without relinquishing their own natures as things, they are brought to participate in the life of imagination.

It might seem at times that the imagination should, or actually does, participate in the life of the thing. The poet knows the truth of Edgar Paiewonsky's comment that "between these words the paper sings aloud,"[108] and so he looks for a way to get his words to sing as loudly. He talks about treating reality as a child does, by seeing shapes into driftwood and cloudscapes[109] and injecting his imagination into the invisible life of the thing.[110] The poet does work this way, of course. But saying that "the imagination enters the thing" can mean that the imagination comes down to the level of phenomena--as if it were fired from a source outside itself, and as if phenomena or appearances could not only receive but contain all that imagination is.

For a poetry of incarnation, it makes more sense that the imagination takes in phenomena, than that it is taken into them. Albert Hofstadter explains it this way:

> The poem is a sublimation of the sexual relation in the precise sense that <u>it elevates what lies below</u>. It raises to the height of sublimity the nethermost energies of existence. It lifts up the

> images that belong to the complexity of life into a unity in which they belong to one another forever, simple in their intricacy, purged . . . of all need to reproduce images.[111]

The poet recognizes that his imagination works according to such a principle. Richard Wilbur experiences the movement of a fire engine as "sheer verb," and instinctively carries it "into my mind, / Ladders and brass and all."[112] Through the descent of imagination into reality, which reconciles both inner and outer worlds, Wilbur feels that "The low is lifted high; / The stars shall bend their voices / And every stone shall cry."[113] Henry Rago notices a similar process of elevation. Rago believes that a poet essentially writes a single poem, "one metaphor, deeper each time / With the life that fills it," whose meaning comes "from the overflow of meaning / Demanding even as the poem is heard / The next poem, and the next, / That are one poem."[114] From this one poem, cities begin "rising to their names," and "trees, stones, beasts . . . / [Take] new being in the names they had known forever, / The old names falling away like dark encrustations."[115] Denise Levertov feels that "the world is / not with us enough"; its phenomena are things the poet must "breathe . . . , bite, / savor, chew, swallow, <u>transform</u> / <u>into</u> our flesh."[116] The principle that the world is drawn up into the imagination is one that Roethke, quoted on this point at the beginning of the chapter, affirms. "Things without hands take hands: there is no choice," he says; the spirit "takes in the whole body."[117] To paraphrase C. S. Lewis, a poetic incarnation proceeds not by the conversion of imaginative activity into things, but

by taking of the phenomena into the imagination.[118]

And in this way the world transcends itself. Inherent limitations tend to frustrate its urge upward. According to Richard Wilbur's parable, the plant bursting out of its seed "takes aim at all the sky / And starts to ramify"; but ramification is the plant's "doom of taking shape, of being self-defined."[119] The creature, a "mere utterance," lives wholly within its own skin.[120] But taken into the imagination, it encounters the Word afresh, and emerges freshly spoken in the poem. As Wilbur's aspen tells the stream:

> Out of your sullen flux I shall distill
> A gayer spirit and a clambering will,
> And reach toward all about me, and ensnare
> With roots the earth, with branches all the air
> Even if that blind groping but achieves
> A darker head, a few more aspen-leaves.[121]

To Wilbur's way of thinking, however, the imagination acting in the poem may do more than grope for a new reality. Like a beacon, it "gives clearance to / Our human visions, which assume / The waves again, fresh and the same"[122]; in its "very happiest intellection / A graceful error may [even] correct" the world.[123] In the poem, the world takes on whatever wholeness human imagination can give it, since it is there that its image achieves liberation.[124] When the world's upward drive meets the self-communication of the poet in time and space, an incarnation occurs in the poem; and ever afterward the world lives more fully than it once did.

But there is more to incarnation in poetry. Within the poem there is also the holding of the world in a

relationship of polarity to the self of the poem. Not all poetry admits of such a relation. Though Paul Carroll claims that "the tree is why we write,"[125] he usually confines himself to statements about it. Self and world coexist in his poems; but on those occasions when they have any bearing on each other,[126] the relation is usually nominal and static.* John Berryman, on the other hand, is anything but static. His strenuous efforts to connect with a reality other than the self leave him with a sense of futility. Since the galaxies "fly / distinctly apart, by math and observation," he entertains little hope of a stable relationship between himself on the one hand and anything else on the other. "I know You are there," he tells the world's creator; "the sweat is, I am here."[127] In a genuine polarity, the relation between poet and world is stable, yet dynamic. The tree is the speaking tree[128] and the world at large a way of speaking[129]; for his part, the poet inclines "toward the essence, the impulse of creation, / . . . passing among / and acting on all things / and their relationships, / moving the constellations of all things."[130]

Such a polarity does not depend immediately on the style or forcefulness of the language used in the poem. To say it did would be to invite, rather than solve, problems.

---

*Carroll often relies heavily on nouns and participles --witness his lengthy catalogs in the odes to Claes Oldenburg (Odes, pp. 22-25), Severn Darden (p. 34, a foldout), and the ode called "Where Do We Come From?" (pp. 28-33)--while his verbs, in contrast, seem stale and ordinary. The exceptions--e.g., "Winter" (pp. 65-66)--make me wish they were the rule.

For if poets as adept as Carroll and Berryman have not discovered a language strong enough to yoke the opposites of self and world, seemingly only someone possessed of miraculous powers of rhetoric would be able to achieve a poetry of incarnation. Such is not the case, fortunately, as a glance at the nature of language will show.

What Levertov says of the poet is actually true of any speaker:

> In the infinite dictionary he discovers
> gold grains of sand. Each has its twin
> on some shore the other side of the world.[131]

In all words there exists a correspondence between what is represented to human consciousness on the one hand and the verbal representation on the other. While each end of the correspondence is as distinct from the other as matter is from spirit, they form the unit known as a word when the speaker "gives to what he gazes at / the recognition no look ever before granted it."[132] For within the word, the two sides of consciousness, the within and the without, meet.

A poetry of incarnation assumes the polarity inherent in all language. What makes the poem unique is that, within it, the self speaking is held over against the world spoken in such a way that their sameness outweighs their difference. The demand in such a polarity is less for an "acute use of language"--since any good poem demands that--than it is for a certain orientation of the poles toward each other. The task for the self is to realize its desire to touch "down to the dense, preoccupied / skeptical green world, that does not know us,"[133] to "utter each to each our absolute

presence."[134] Muriel Rukeyser defines the poem as a "meeting place," an act done "in relation with."[135] Arthur Gregor goes even further, describing the poem's Word as a personal "center where disparate oppsites meet / or spurt forth from"; he adds:

> The embodiment of this contrariness
> is not for logic, not for words.
> What thus escapes the mind
> only images and a response of
> living things can incorporate . . . .[136]

The poem of incarnation is a polarity, a union of opposites. As the poet fulfills his covenant of self-communication; as the Word, through him, penetrates and unites with the made self of the poem; and as the world is raised through the poem to a share in imagination's life; then, within the poem, self and world come together as one.

The poem thus has a potential effectiveness like that of a field of magnetic energy. In Rukeyser's imagery, the polarity between the self and "the little stone in the middle of the road" moves the constellations of all things in "spirals and fugues":

> . . . the power most like music
> Turneth all worlds to meaning
> And meaning to matter, all continually,
> And sweeps in the sacred motion,
> Spirals and fugues its lifetime,
> To move my life to yours. . . .[137]

Where a power such as this missing, the poem cannot be shown to be an incarnation of the Word.

VI: BREATHING WITH THE NEW BREATH

PART 2 - THE HOLY SPIRIT

1.

Any link between the Holy Spirit and the writing of a poem inevitably raises questions about poetic inspiration. But one interested in the connection between the two soon runs into a curious problem: the theology is well developed but the literary criticism lags far far behind. Dozens of books about the activity of the Spirit in human lives have appeared in the last ten years alone.[1] But treatments of literary inspiration published during this century come to a mere handful. Of these, most avoid locating the source of a poet's inspiration outside himself. Of those locating the source within, many try to construct what C. S. Lewis would call a "pathological biography" of the poet. And none, to my knowledge, has yet looked at inspiration in terms of the Adamic experience of writing a poem.[2]

A few critics and poets even counsel against getting involved in the subject. Lewis, for example, believes that the question of what impels the poet to write--the poem's "Efficient Cause"--has no literary importance.[3] X. J. Kennedy regards too close an inspection as dangerous to creativity:

> The goose that laid the golden egg
> Died looking up its crotch
> To find out how its sphincter worked.
>
> Would you lay well? Don't watch.[4]

But despite critical neglect or advice to the contrary, the American poet frequently does watch the way his poems come out. He writes poems not only about poetry but also about himself in the act of writing poems. Admittedly, the posture looks to an outsider like the artist's a futile preoccupation with his creative powers. On the other hand, we already know why the American Adam is so preoccupied--and notice without much surprise his tentative leanings toward the myth of the Holy Spirit. A story that begins with the creative Spirit hovering over the chaos, and that ends with the same Spirit revealing the new Adam in all his glory, holds something for disintegrating imaginations. So the question of what impels the American poet to write involves matters far more serious than the way the mind's sphincter works.

According to Owen Barfield, a historical transition has taken place between two opposite psychologies: from the ancient psychology of inspiration to the contemporary one of imagination. The transition, he says, involves a shift:

> from a view of art which beholds it as the product of a mind, or spirit, not possessed by the individual, but rather possessing him; to a view of it as the product of something in a manner possessed by the individual though still not identical with his everyday personality--possessed by him, whether as his genius, or as his shaping spirit of imagination, or as his unconscious mind, or whatever name we may prefer to give it. His own, but not himself.[5]

Which of the two psychologies the American poet inclines

toward becomes evident when, for example, one recalls the current "belief in the subconscious as creator, in the poet as a vehicle for the passage of the poem."[6] But the transition has not resolved itself completely. Barfield calls the modern psychology "a struggle to reject the old concept of inspiration--and yet somehow retain it"--a struggle that catches the poet up in a "kind of polarity of contraries."[7] The concept of inspiration grew out of an understanding that the mind, or spirit, which urged the poet to speak was a divine agency; it worked independently of him and, whether spontaneously or by invitation, "fell" on him or entered him from without. Now perhaps the "polarity of contraries" Barfield alludes to represents a struggle to reject, yet retain, an ancient belief. Or it may invole something more. The evidence suggests an effort by the Adamic poet both to possess another spirit independent of his own and to be possessed by it at the same time.

Though, as Barfield says, a psychology of imagination is "fundamentally active" and includes the act of self-surrender,[8] the poet recognizes periods during which he remains entirely passive, waiting for "something to happen." Unless his mind is descended upon or caught up somehow, he often feels that he cannot write:

> Interviewer: You have spoken of a poem being created almost "in a fit," or in a seizure. Does it ever bother you to think that these attacks may not come? . . .
> Creeley: It bothers me very damn much, but I've never found a cure for it. I don't know another writer who hasn't faced the same dilemma. But I don't know what one can do about it except hold on.[9]

Without a fit to "buckle" his poems into concreteness, Ned O'Gorman feels "like a drudge doing / the last bit of a marble passageway to a conclusion."[10] Mark Halperin suspects that he waits in vain. He has come to his poem at night hoping to wrestle, like the patriarch Jacob, with an angel, but it does not attack; instead, "when you try to listen / it is your own heart / coming from a long way off."[11] To W.S. Merwin, inspiration seems willfully elusive --the light avoids his eye--and he chides himself for "coming late, as always":

> How many times have I heard the locks close
> And the lark take the keys
> And hang them in heaven.[12]

Doubtless, the poet is inclined by his psychology to try to possess the sources of his inspiration. But he also feels that the imagination has nothing to possess until something takes possession of it first.

Just what that something is depends largely on where the poet chooses to look for it. Because he experiences it within, the poet may identify the bringer of inspiration with his own subconscious mind raising to consciousness a sudden constellation of experiences. For him, the underside of the mind contains all "the buried strangeness / Which nourishes the known" (Wilbur, "A Hole in the Floor"). But its presence, while constant, is not always detectable (Levertov, "To the Muse"). And since its operations lie below conscious control, the poet seeking inspiration will try to avoid certain choices, such as that of subject matter (Creeley),[13] since "nothing comes of choosing really / in

this bed we have fallen into" (Coleman Barks, "Choosing"). Instead, he will try to "get back to pure imagination" through sleep, from which he brings forth "the baby he'd been hiding / Wrapped in his skin, maybe his heart."[14]

Or the poet may decide that, in addition to the subconscious mind, an agency somehow distinct from it also works on his imagination. That agency could be the poem itself. James Dickey feels "the poem . . . beginning to move / Up through my pine-prickling legs . . . / Taking hold of the pen by my fingers."[15] If Dickey intends "the poem" as a metaphor for the subconscious, Robert Duncan seems to take the image literally. To him, "the poem" means "the reality of the poem——the creative nexus or true poem that moves the poem-- . . . the source, not the product." A living being in its own right, it comes to the poet spontaneously, and has the feel of a personal presence: "I cannot make it happen or want it to happen; it wells up in me as if I were a point of breakthrough for an 'I.'"[16] Duncan does not see this "I" as an individualized person but as a myth; and as a myth, it has an authority virtually divine:

> The surety of the myth for the poet has such force that it operates as a primary reality in itself, having volition. The mythical content comes to us, commanding the design of the poem; it calls the poet into action, and . . . he must answer to give body in the poem to the formative will.[17]

In "What Happened: Prelude," Duncan suggests that the poem's myth is not to be confused with its ideas ("mechanical grotesques" which "ask only / obedience to the letter"), still less with its techniques (Mr. Fair-Speech and By-Ends,

who drop inspiration in favor of "what works"). The myth is the "fire, / the passionate dream and true love" of the poem.[18]

Again, the poet may look to some of the more usual mythical sources. Not that he believes in gods or muses as such, but his language does indicate some kind of inspiration from without. Roger Meiners speculates that if "some occulted power" would return to show him how to climb the hill, "why, then we'd be in business."[19] Sylvia Plath, desiring, "occasionally, some backtalk / From the mute sky," tries to convince herself that she expects no miracle "to set the sight on fire / In my eye." Skeptical yet politic about inspiration, however, when Plath sits down to write she finds, like Mark Halperin, that:

> The wait's begun again
> The long wait for the angel,
> For that rare, random descent.[20]

"Commanches know / The Great Spirit, when it possesses them," remarks Daniel Hoffman; and as a poet "bound / By the hungers of his tribe," he tries to run the "fleeting creature" of the poem to earth, aided by an "unpremeditated gift / Of spirit."[21]

"My spirit rises with the rising wind," exults Theodore Roethke. Speaking of release, rather than possession, of inspiration, he concludes "What Can I Tell My Bones?" with this statement:

> What came to me vaguely is now clear
> As if released by a spirit,
> Or agency outside me.
> Unprayed-for,
> And final.

The cause or agent of his release, says Roethke, is external. He sees his personal talent as "a wind trapped in a cave," in need of deliverance "from the rational into the realm of pure song." This deliverance he associates with another wind which fills him and "rocks with my wish," granting him its "vast permission" to "stretch in all directions" and be "several". His release, moreover, calls for little effort on his own part: it is unprayed-for, spontaneous, "a gust blowing the leaves suddenly upward." Yet despite its suddenness, a sense of finality pervades the experience, leading him to exclaim: "I'm wet with another life. / Yea, I have gone and stayed." The rising wind around him and his response to it, in short, lead Roethke to account for his inspiration in terms of an external agency. Since the poem recreates the coming to life of Ezekiel's dry bones, Roethke appears to be speaking about the Holy Spirit.[22]

I have already commented on the Spirit's presence in current American poetry in Chapter IV. To be sure, the Spirit receives less direct attention from poets than the Incarnation does (no poet has championed a "spirit-filled" poetry as ardently as Levertov does an incarnational poetry, for instance). But the Spirit is present. And the pattern of Its activity in human life seems to be regarded by some poets as more than a metaphor for the self. It forms the environment that creates the organ: "It was the song of doves begot the ear / And not the ear that first conceived of sound," observes Richard Wilbur.[23] In mythical terms, the activity of the Spirit explains something about what

happens during the writing of a poem. The Spirit is an inspiring agent which, though recognized within, yet comes in some way from without, and whose coming is both unprayed-for and final.

The way American poets view the externality of the Spirit would itself make a profitable study. Unquestionably, many like Wallace Stevens identify the Holy Spirit with the creative imagination.[24] But others see a difference--or at least use imagery that strongly indicates a difference. "What we need," says Robert Tyler:

> . . . is an absolute gift
> not to be expected
> from these chilled bones
> but a sort of grace
> like a new religion.[25]

A. R. Ammons, who delivers himself to the wind to serve as its "mansion," regards it as independent of and superior to himself, in that it gives movement to all creation and can either communicate or withhold knowledge and direction.[26] Ned O'Gorman takes a similar position. To him, the Spirit creates, sustains, and takes an active part in the life of the planet; It also springs "the latch upon this birdsong," and even becomes the birdsong itself.[27] And he sees the possibility of a "beautiful collision" between the poet's mind and the "shaping light" that makes "all things clang."[28] According to Nathan Scott, Roethke's imagination of things rests on an intuition of the absolute otherness of the spiritual reality that animates and empowers all modes of existence.[29]

One feature of the Spirit's actions that interests poets is the surprising nature of Its movement. Ammons and

Gregor often refer to the sudden, unpredictable comings and goings of the wind. In "The Way Out," Muriel Rukeyser says that the truth she follows is a whirlwind. Ron Loewinsohn emphasizes the desirability of rapid, startling images when he invokes on himself the "flash of / magic light, the tongue / of fire, Pentecost."[30] In inspired poetry, Wilbur finds that a "showered fire we thought forever lost / Redeems the air. Where friends in passing meet, / They parley in the tongues of Pentecost."[31] The phenomenon of tongue-speaking likewise attracts, by virtue of its truth "to what we hear / chiefly in silence," the attention of Daniel Hoffman[32] and Robert Duncan (who also covets the ecstatic speech of prophecy).[33]

A few poets look beyond the exhilaration of the Spirit to Its quietly abiding presence. Arthur Gregor realizes that his first delirious contact with the firebird has left him with "health where withering was, / success in skills I wanted most" as a poet, and above all an insatiable yearning for the firebird itself.[34] Philip Lamantia seeks the same "constant flight in air of the Holy Ghost," with that flight's mystical implications for himself as an inventor of names:

> It is Nameless what I long for
> a spoken word caught in its own meat saying nothing
> This nothing ravishes beyond ravishing
> There is this look of love Throne Silent look
> of love[35]

For the poet, contemplation does more than satisfy personal longing. According to Robert Duncan, it is a way of cooperating in "the aroused process. Attending. From the

first inspiration breathing with the new breath."[36]

2.

On the face of it, very little distinguishes these attitudes toward the Holy Spirit from the attitudes the same poet might express toward any other occulted power, be it the subconscious or an agency derived from other myths. He feels the same spontaneous movement, the same enthusiastic response, the same desire to yield to the promptings, the same ebbing of fervor after a time, the same search for a continuous presence within. So what benefit could he receive from the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit in particular?

This study began by showing how American poets are even now recording the corruption of self in poetry and how, despite the recognized failure of the poetic imagination to halt or even slow further breakdown, they still seek a poetry that will prove the self whole at last. In such a context, it is pertinent to ask whether the agent of poetic inspiration is itself whole or divided. As long as the power which inspired the poem was thought to be something more than the poet--a god or a muse--the question could not have been raised without blaspheming. It was enough to agree that the recipient of inspiration--the poet--was mad. But when the old mythical patterns unravelled and the models of a secular psychology were woven in their place, the agent of inspiration came to be identified with the recipient. So what was dangerous to ask of the gods can now be asked in

regard to the poet himself.

Psychology has not determined whether a poet who feels moved to write is trying to compensate for divisions within himself or to celebrate a sense of his integrity. Some Freudians look at the evidence in terms of division. "We are all divided selves," writes Anthony Storr. "Creative people may be more divided than most of us, but, unlike neurotics, have a strong ego."[37] The poet's conscious mind controls and directs whatever the "depressive, schizoid, obsessional and hysterical mechanisms" that motivate creativity raise to it from the subconscious.[38] Taking an opposite view, Phyllis Bartlett notes that "there are contemporary thinkers who . . . see in any artist's need for expression a sign of health, not of neurosis. In this diagnosis they agree with Jung rather than Freud."[39] Inspiration would then be guided by a principle of Dionysian unity, according to which the poet first regresses "toward archaic, undifferentiated modes of thought and perception" before progressing toward Apollonian separation and analysis.[40] The need to create would therefore imply "not the disintegration of personality but its enhancement."[41] Currently, it is difficult to determine which of these views psychology as a whole is more inclined toward.

Yet we see woven into the fabric of psychology the strands of old myths: of the hysteria (supposedly caused in women by the womb) associated with inspiration; or of Dionysos and Apollo, representing in artistic consciousness the polarity of spontaneity and order. Psychology, in fact,

weaves its own cloth. It not only reinterprets the figures and stories of ancient myth but, as Howard Nemerov points out, itself "begins and ends in myth,"[42] constructing behavioral models designed to explain why human beings act as they do and to suggest avenues of desirable change.

In one respect, however, the poet is liable to feel uneasy with psychology's myths. They are not comprehensive enough: they suggest truths about human behavior that are predicated on larger assumptions about human being. They do not tell the story that the poet ultimately needs to hear. He represents himself as Adam, "the man". Adam behaves internally and externally; but the poetic record depicts a fallen Adam, man divided in being, who behaves. So the question, Is the agent of inspiration divided or whole? can be answered only by a myth more thoroughgoing than one of subconscious activity.* Whether creative behavior compensates for division or expresses a drive toward health, the poet knows that if inspiration does proceed from himself, and if he is divided after all, then the division will carry itself over into his poems.

He still derives some intellectual benefit from Dionysos and Apollo. But as an Adamic poet, he stands to gain more from an agency that belongs to the mythical

---

*It is probably true that the subconscious mind plays a larger and more complex role in the inspiration of a poem than we presently realize, and in some cases (such as drug-induced poetry) may play the only role. I assume that the poet's subconscious works upon his conscious imagination. The focus of attention here, though, is the activity of an agent outside even the subconscious, one that affects the whole mind.

structure according to which he views his experience. The Holy Spirit belongs to that structure. It brings the Incarnate Word, the second Adam, into vivid reality. And It initiates, guides, and can be discerned through all experience of the Word. Just as the difference between the Word and the poet is real, the difference between the giver and the receiver of inspiration is real. The most immediate benefit coming to the poet from the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit is a kind of relief: the agent of inspiration is whole. And one of Its works is to bring to wholeness the inspired self It breathes into.

There is more to it than that, of course; much more. The doctrine can be used to show how a poetry of incarnation might be feasible, provided it were taken seriously. It is worth noting that ancient Jewish theology held that the Ruah Hakodesh inspired poetry as readily and normally as It did prophecy or wisdom——and thereby transformed poetry into the Word of God.[43] Christian theology, perhaps more reserved in the face of gentile literatures, at least agrees in theory. But it would add that a poetry inspired by the Spirit differs in character from a poetry inspired by another agent. Having said that, theology says little else; it does not primarily concern itself with the writing of poems, after all. Yet the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, particularly in its mythical expression, suggests much about the origins of a poem in the imagination, the conduct of the poet during composition, and the shape and effect of the finished product. To draw out the implications, I would like to

break the following discussion into a three-part scheme typically used by Biblical scholars to trace the growth of the doctrine in Scripture: the ecstatic stage of awareness, the messianic stage, and the creative stage.[44]

3.

To ancient Greeks, ecstasy referred to a type of madness, possibly a kind of psychosis. A person in ecstasy was thought to stand physically, as it were, "outside his mind." His soul withdrew temporarily from the body, leaving it entranced, insensate, and--strictly speaking--irrational. Later, Christian mystics dropped the notion of madness, but retained the word to describe a state in which the person's spirit was felt to be transported spontaneously out of the body, leaving the spirit free to commune directly with God. In both senses, one part of the self objectively stood out of or aside from another part; and both meanings survived into early modern English.[45]

Current English, however, has kept only the ghost of older ecstasies. As the phenomenon seems to occur now, the self objectively remains intact, but the person enjoys the sort of feelings he might have if his soul really did leave the body: exaltation, euphoria, intense and rapturous contemplation of some object. The following description of poetic inspiration might be called ecstatic in the current meaning of the term:

> The poet feels an unmistakable sense of being absorbed by something like an "authoritative vision" which at once excludes all other interests and generates ideas of its own, of great force and intensity.

> He has a feeling of inexhaustible abundance urging him to work at full tilt while the abundance lasts, and a corresponding loss of a sense of time.
> Despite external conditions, he feels a joyful confidence that something important and exciting is happening.
> He has intuitive vision of a whole reality, which he normally sees only in fragments.
> He has a sense of illumination, of being in an area of light, revealing the true nature and meaning of things.[46]

And so on. The feelings may range in intensity from the relatively mild and emotionally detached to the exalted and frenzied.

Descriptions like this are so amply documented as to be beyond serious challenge. But the problem with them is that they draw attention to the feelings of the poet--to their intensity and their effects on behavior. Often, the poet himself gives the impression of believing that the feelings and the inspiration are directly proportional, if not identical. Yet the long history of poetry reveals many cases where, if anything, the opposite is equally true: where emotions run high, but with little real inspiration to match. Obviously, the poet can hardly ignore his feelings. But he can use them as indicators of the time when an experience much closer to ecstasy in the older etymological sense begins to take place.

Cecil M. Bowra points out that "most of us, sooner or later, discriminate between authentic poetry and mere verse, between the real thing and the manufactured article, between le vers donné and le vers calculé, between what has a strangely unreckonable power and what is merely apt and adequate."[47] The poet at work is alive to the distinction.

Perhaps intuitively, he understands the given quality of power, and recognizes his own need to accept the poem rather than calculate it. "The soul is feminine to God," Brother Antoninus reminds himself, "And hangs on impregnation, / Fertile influxing Grace." But the useless urge to "drive, drive, the rampant pride of life" is houseled in the poet's loins.[48] He seems to stand in his own way. His very limited personality, his education and background, his values in life, his talent, his mood during composition, his awareness of circumstances, his sensitivity to image and word, his very desire to write this poem or write it this way--any or all can obstruct the flow of imagination. So he seeks an ek-stasis. "We look for a way / out of words," says Corman,[49] for a way of having that part of himself which interferes with authentic poetry put aside from the heart, the source of poetic imagination. But since thought "will / not eliminate / thought,"[50] he must invite ecstasy by his "hushed quiescence" (Antoninus)[51], the unconditional surrender of his mind to that of another (Kenneth Hanson).[52]

But the poet wants more from ecstasy than a being-put-aside. Because his poetic goal is for the mind's "manufactured article" to be transformed into the heart's "real poem"--Roethke would call it being delivered from the rational into the realm of pure song--his imagination must be transformed as well.

Sister M. Bernetta Quinn believes that to write a poem is to effect a transformation in its material because the poet is concerned with "metamorphosis in its highest

finite forms: baptism and the resurrection of the body to glory."[53] With the vocabulary of sacramental theology, she indicates a specific process of change involving the poetic imagination. When a Christian refers to baptism, he is thinking of a total immersion in the Holy Spirit, for which bathing in water is the sign. Now an adult's awareness of being completely environed by Spirit often generates strong emotion; but the point of the baptismal experience, according to theologian Thomas Smail, is not ecstatic feeling but real change:

> What the Spirit does in us . . . has only peripherally to do with the generation of feeling, the stirring of subjectivity, the moving of emotion; it has centrally to do with a change in the whole shape and form (morphe) of our living personality. When we look to Christ, whatever we feel with our emotions, something happens to us, we are being changed, literally 'meta-morphosed', we used to be in one morphe but now we are coming into another.[54]

It is the change from the Old Adam to the new, and for the imagination it entails more than a mere shift of viewpoint. It activates a change of: personal origin, from flesh to spirit; represented self, from formation in the image of the first Adam to formation in the image of the second; orientation, from salvific ambiguity* to salvific intent; status, from slave of circumstance to the freedom of the Spirit; and so on.[55] Baptism culminates in the resurrection of the body to glory because of the spiritual logic which says that things born of the Spirit eventually become spirit.[56]

---

*E.g., the drive toward transcendence coupled with a tendency to corruption.

With each immersion of self in the Spirit, the baptism-metamorphosis-resurrection cycle is repeated and Adam is raised gradually "from one degree of glory to another"[57]—occasionally despite himself. For the momentum of baptism can feel unpleasant, like the onset of childbirth forcing the self from one world into another. "Tonight / we cue our braying / at a whine on the wind," frets the protagonist in a poem of mine: " . . . some womb would work us out."[58] In any case, as Bernetta Quinn concludes: "The poet will not submit . . . to that chrysalis which rationalists keep telling him is his true domain. Consciously and subconsciously, he wants to transcend the limits of the senses, the boundaries of matter."[59] Ecstasy, the removal of control over the self and the self's immersion in the Spirit, is the poet's introduction to change.

And inspiration is its means. Inspiration signifies an "in-breathing", but not (at first) by voluntary inhalation. Rather, the word suggests mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, the blowing of vital breath from one pair of lungs into another;—or, as Cid Corman describes it in "The Light," "air, the / insepar- / able push / from into."[60] Again, because inspiration involves a "polarity of contraries," one might compare it to electromagnetism, created by passing a bar magnet through a coil of wire, and thereby generating an electrical current. In James Dickey's electrical imagery, the inspired poet is one in whom "all things connect and Stream / Toward light and Speech."[61] Inspiration is the transfer of energy or power from a source which itself loses

no energy in the process to an inert receiver which thereby gains all its energy. The power of the source becomes the power of the receiver, and the receiver loses all power the moment the source withdraws it or is cut off. The power of inspiration may come to the poet from one or both of two directions: from outside or inside himself.

It often seems that inspiration comes to the poet from outside himself, or that he feels inclined to look to an external agency before looking within. Corman tells the parable of two basins in a fountain, both aware:

> . . . of the
> so vital
> vertical
>
> jet rising
> and falling
> over them
>
> filling them
> both even
> as they wait.[62]

In a similar vein, traditional theologies usually emphasize the Holy Spirit's externality and freedom from control. The Spirit is absolutely Other and, like the wind, comes and goes at will. To underscore Its freedom, the evangelist John describes the Spirit as something which works primarily <u>upon</u> the believer rather than <u>within</u> him.[63] Now someone who believes himself operated upon from without tends to view his relation to that agency in terms of <u>possession</u>.

<u>Possession</u> is a word that appears frequently in theologies of the Spirit: ". . . we seem to have a sense that we are more possessed by the Spirit than possessor of the Spirit"; "the Holy Spirit . . . only takes possession of

man for the Son and the Father"; and so on.[64] Occasionally, the word conjures up visions of frenzy, hysteria, bacchic fury; the idea of "poetic madness" can mean that. For example, James Dickey implores the "Dear God of the wildness of poetry" to unleash its fierce pentecost once again:

> Let something come
> Of it something gigantic legendary
>
> Rise beyond reason over hills
> Of ice SCREAMING that it cannot die,
> That it has come back, this time
> On wings, and will spare no earthly thing:
>
> That it will hover, made purely of northern
>
> Lights, at dusk and fall
> On men building roads . . . .[65]

Possession does mean a "taking hold of," but in theology it also signifies ownership instead of frenzy. The person who actually possesses a thing exercises an owner's authority over it. And by authority, in turn, I refer mainly to the prerogative of an author to give whatever life he chooses to whatever he creates. In "Encounter in the Cage Country," Dickey experiences this aspect of authority: when his eyes meet the leopard's, he feels "inside and out / Of myself," and acknowledges its life-mission to inspire him with its animal power.[66] The possessed poet, then, comes into the "magnetic field" of another's authority over reality. Inspiration transfers to him the same authority over his material.

Of course, the poet tries to possess the Spirit which possesses him, as Arthur Gregor likes to point out. When a person comes into inspiration, he has the ecstatic experience of feeling "as if his worldly being / had left him, and a

white presence / had cast itself across him like a shade."[67] But, says Gregor, the poet does not remain passive in ecstasy. He has to contend with the "dilemma of wanting not just / to taste but to possess / glorious, impossible love" so as to create "not merely an angelic creature / but fiery, perfect flesh and blood— / . . . a reality."[68] Under inspiration, the poet becomes the "catcher of what is free and yet / not free from being caught by him";[69] he is the possessor "of the single substance / of which all . . . / are made"[70]— namely the inner form of reality.[71] Theologians agree that man possesses the gift of the Spirit, implying, as before, a certain ownership and authority over It. According to Thomas Aquinas, a gift is only possessed to the extent that the receiver can freely use and enjoy it.[72] The poet uses the Spirit by using the authority transferred to him in the same way that the Spirit uses authority: to give life. He will recognize enjoyment from the feelings of absorption, urgency, and confident gladness that characterize inspiration. The poet will know he has come into full possession of the Spirit, however, when he can use and enjoy It freely--for instance, when he can risk beginning a poem without waiting for ecstasy and trust that he will receive the needed promptings as he writes.

The other side of inspiration from without is inspiration from within. According to a Pauline theology of the Spirit,[73] a person who consents to be baptized (immersed) in the Holy Spirit receives It as a Presence acting not only upon but within his own spirit, in the same way that the

owner of a house would normally occupy it. The indwelling of the Spirit, says Jesuit theologian Robert Gleason:

> is not merely moral, in the sense that it could be had by any man, including a sinner, who set his mind to think of God. The sources of revelation speak of a new ontological presence of God, of the Spirit, of the Trinity. They speak of the substance of the Divinity inhabiting the just . . . .[74]

There is more to this Presence than ontology, of course. As with the Word, there is a real union of persons.[75] But in contrast to the Word, which having penetrated the heart is fully realized when spoken out from it, the Spirit comes from without and reifies the Word within, thereby transforming the heart into the likeness of what it will speak. Thus, a person who believes himself operated upon from within tends to view his relation to the Spirit in terms of <u>personal influence</u> rather than possession.

C.W. Emmet holds that the secret of inspiration is "the action of mind upon mind," either through "the direct methods of speech and instruction" or through more subtle influences.[76] Almost certainly, the "direct methods" do not mean that the poet writes from dictation. To take a parallel case, the religious prophet attributes his prophesying to the impulse of the Holy Spirit. But, while he senses that the conceptual and emotional content and some of the principal words originate from the Spirit, he does not read Its script; he uses his own vocabulary, imagery, and style of delivery. Though the poet's vision may likewise consist of an idea and some words communicated to him, the work of figuring the poem forth belongs to himself.[77]

Like Gregor's diplomat, the poet becomes "Radiant as light in glass" with the immanence of his inspiration; and because he carries it within himself like "a resting place / that does not let one down," he is:

> not a naive emissary.
> Carefully he speaks and to the point,
> is at ease with the world
> though reticent.
> A true servant at his post . . . .[78]

More will be said on this subject in the final section of the present chapter.

The "subtle influences" of the Spirit often bring about a deeper, more effective inspiration, and may actually be more common. The indwelling Spirit has immediate access to the subconscious of the poet. In John Haines' imagery, It takes the poet by the hand and leads him "Deeper and deeper, / A luminous blackness opening" into an ecstasy that removes the interference of the conscious self and culminates in vision:

> as though a heavy wind
> were rising through all the houses
> we ever lived in ——
>
> the cold rushing in,
> our blankets flying away
> into the darkness,
> and we, naked and alone,
> awakening forever . . .[79]

The Spirit's purpose in the subconscious is to free the poet from his nature's bondage to the principles of sin and corruption discussed earlier, and from their effects on his poems.[80] Working far below the surface, the Spirit integrates the personality at its roots, either healing divisions without the poet's awareness or raising them to

the level of consciousness where he can manage them himself. It also makes conscious access to the poetic subconscious easier by ridding the poet of his conscious fears of and resistance to the dreams, memories, and attitudes of the subconscious.[81] Through direct and subtle methods, then, the poet is fired from within, and it is his enflamed heart that enlivens the poetic images.[82]

Yet inspiration from within can pose a threat to the Adamic mind. For this way of firing the heart only happens if the poet lets the Spirit of the Word go beyond possessing to actually living in the imagination. The threat for a solitary, egocentric, and inward poet would not lie mainly in the thought of being possessed from without, since he knows that possession works both ways. The real threat would be that, once inspired, he could not follow his usual Adamic bent. He could not, for example, retire inward from his ek-stasy to hoard a "silent, solitary illumination, en-stasy,"[83] without meeting the inspiring Presence there also. He could not take inspiration into himself without being turned in imagination outward again to the world. On the other hand, a twofold promise may outweigh any threat. First, the inspired poem will have a pneumatic dynamism that comes to it when the poet truly owns the Power that owns him; and second, the self of the poem will tend toward wholeness the more the indwelling Spirit heals division within the poet's imagination.

A corollary to all that has been said is this: The poet's experience may have led him to believe that

inspiration comes and goes, and that it may not last as long as it takes him to get the poem on paper. True enough, his awareness of inspiration fluctuates. He does not always feel the urge to write, and when he does, the sense of urgency evaporates after a while. However, that is not the same as saying that inspiration itself comes and goes. The vocabulary we have used to discuss it--possession, ownership, indwelling presence--implies something permanent. At-homeness is established in the soul (Gregor); in the luminous darkness the poet awakens forever (Haines).[84] Inspiration remains.

4.

Central to the experience of being inspired, according to Cecil M. Bowra:

> is something which may be called an idea, though in some ways it is too vague to deserve the name. It has a powerful character and atmosphere of its own, and though at first it is too indefinite for intellectual analysis, it imposes itself on the poet with the majasty and authority of vision. Even if he does not fully understand it, he feels it and almost sees it.[85]

The excitement and fireworks of the first stage of inspiration could prove distracting to the poet. He may have come into some unusual or intense experiences, and will have begun or refreshed his relationship with a power of creativity that vastly exceeds his own. Thus he may let himself forget that excitement and fireworks are not what inspiration is for. What it is for, of course, is the content, the idea, the vision that Denise Levertov and others call the poem's Word. In inspiration, the Spirit links the imagination directly to

the Word. The point at which It does separates the ecstatic from the messianic, or Word-oriented, stage.

To explain this, it may help to distinguish two closely-related sets of questions. One concerns the way a poet seeks inspiration: In view of what has been said about the Word, why should the poet bother with an external agency like the Spirit, when all he need do is commune with the Word already in his heart? In other words, what functions do the Spirit and the Word have with respect to each other? The other set concerns the way the poet finds inspiration: What does it mean for the Spirit to focus inspiration on the Word? How does that orientation show itself in the poem?

In answer to the first set of questions, Christian teaching has always emphasized that the work of the Spirit is best understood Christologically.[86] The theology of the Word grew out of a philosophy in which terms like logos and pneuma were often used inseparably, and St. Paul was fond of expressions that virtually identify the two.[87] New Testament Christianity spoke of Jesus as the logos of Yahweh and the power at work within Jesus as the pneuma of Yahweh: Word and Spirit, each functioning in unbreakable polarity with the other.[88] One thing the poet can take for himself from this is that, regardless of the pole he feels most inclined toward, he inevitably comes under the other's influence as well.

Yet significant differences in their activity do exist: "Here is the / word," says Corman, "there is / what it means."[89] The Word spoken by God in the Biblical myth

becomes the reality of all things; as personified, it penetrates the heart of man and resides there as divine Wisdom; and because of the covenant it gradually becomes realized in human flesh. The Word is dynamic in and of itself, never failing to bring to realization what is spoken. But it does not speak itself. It is spoken by the power of the Spirit hovering over the cosmic and human chaos, breathing the breath of God's mouth into the old creation and the new. As one theologian summarizes it: "the Word brings the Spirit to the heart, and the Spirit brings the Word within the heart."[90]

The manner in which the poet seeks inspiration can make a difference in the result, particularly if he seeks it in a way that overlooks or eliminates the Spirit. The poet does not merely look for something to write about, but for something to say--and that not in the sense of finding something he can pump his personal heat into, but of locating an utterance which contains its thermal dynamics within itself and which, when spoken, will cast its own fire upon the earth. In a sense, his problem is not so much to find the Word, since it is with him all the time. The problem is to find breath to speak it out in all its power. He can, of course, turn his imagination directly to the content, verbally structuring this particular Word in hopes that a soul will be infused as the body comes together. Or he can turn immediately to the Spirit, the Word's inner fire, and wait for It to lead him to the appropriate incarnation. Either choice is risky, but some poets have their preferred

risks. Cid Corman decides that "at every breath/ am I brought back to breath."[91] Implied in Robert Duncan's distinction between the poem's ideas (mechanical grotesques) and its "fire, / . . . and true love" is, it seems to me, an urge to look to the Spirit for the Word.[92]

To turn now to the second set of questions. The typical experience of inspiration, wherein the poet finds his attention riveted almost exclusively on a certain vision, illustrates clearly enough what it means for inspiration to be Word-oriented. For the inspired poet, the Word:

> is at once their ideal, distant from them, and the voice that commands them, though not by words, the figure in their dreams, the cause of their passage, the throb in their being that spurs them on. . . .[93]

But since the poem is inspired to become more than the dress of thought, to become in fact its incarnation, there is more at stake than fixing one's attention on an object. Among other things, the Spirit directs the poetic imagination toward:

1) <u>speaking the Truth</u>. This has less to do with the poet's choice to be truthful than with the Spirit's guidance. The Spirit of the Word is by that fact the Spirit of Truth and cannot lead the poet (or his audience, for that matter) to a lie. At the very least, what It inspires will be true to the poem's subject--and here I am not speaking so much of realism or verisimilitude, which may have to be sacrificed for a variety of artistic reasons,

but of something that could be more accurately called the poem's "underlying wisdom".* More importantly, since the Spirit "reaches the depths of everything, even the depths of God," and always effects what It speaks,[94] the inspired poem will somehow embody the concrete, personal, self-revealing Truth Himself--and will do so not by way of a vague gesture toward "the way there," but so as to discover "the place."[95] Arthur Gregor says as much in his "Lament for a Gifted Man":

> You could not accept
> the apparition was
> for our sake, not yours,
> could not give yourself
> to it enough to become
> the radiance you were possessed of.
> Now emptied of what
> is so much bigger than you are,
> you stumble on,
> err, err,
> a rower without oars,
> and are off course
> no matter where you are.[96]

2) <u>fulfilling the covenant</u>. As I showed earlier, the relationship between the Word and the spoken world exists in the context of a covenant, which attains fulfillment in Adam as the Word is breathed into him by the Spirit. Inspiration is a covenant phenomenon. It activates the poet's own covenant with the world, urging its repeated expression in words: "the Poet, his heart urgent, / leaping beyond him, writes: 'MOVE / INSTANTER ON ANOTHER!'"[97] But more than that, since a covenant allows a lower order of being to be assumed without loss of identity into a higher order, the

---

*Such a wisdom would have to be measured according to the standards of the Word itself rather than according to those of the secular mentality discussed in Chapter III.

poet's relationship with the world is raised by the Spirit to the level of the Word's and becomes one with it. Thus, for Corman, light becomes flesh in the sun, as "enact- / ed, unrend- / ed, pene- / trating" as the in-spired air.[98] Only so does the poem's word finally incarnate the Word.

3) participating in the Word's apocalypse. This, again, depends less on the poet's intention or talent than on the Spirit's inspiration. Whatever participates in the Word, and in however limited a manner, participates in its fullness. A Spirit-inspired poem contributes to the revelation of that fullness in two ways. First, it discloses the way creation participates in the Word. Already the poet claims that in and through his poems one comes to see who he is; in the inspired poem, as John Haughey puts it, "what one is being led to become comes into being."[99] Secondly, the particular incarnation which the poem is nonetheless incarnates the Word in its fullness. True enough, the poem remains a single lyric on a narrow topic. But the Word, however limited its form, is unlimited in nature; and through inspiration, the self of the poem reveals some measure of that infinity. "I am the future, / dream of making it / speak," proclaims the self of a poem by Corman, who observes that such an apocalypse is not yet fully demanded of an art form "capable / of an energy / to this end."[100]

At this point in the "messianic stage", if the poet were to halt inspiration to observe what is going on--though, as X. J. Kennedy says, the practice has little to recommend it--he might notice that something rather curious happens.

So wholly captivated is his imagination with the Word that the Word virtually becomes his inspiration.[101] The poet is aware of the Word alone, or possibly also of his own reactions to its presence. Philip Booth describes his experience:

> In a flat month
> in a low field
>
> I hit on a word
> with just one
>
> meaning. One.
> It got to me,
>
> hard. I stood
> back up, grabbing
>
> for balance

—but, he concludes, to no avail: "the word itself / would have the last / word."[102] Meanwhile, the Spirit seems to disappear. It is as if the host at a banquet, having turned over the festivities to the guest of honor, were to slip quietly away. Actually, the Spirit is always there, always inspiring. But It takes a position behind the scenes; and should the poet wish to locate It, he would have to divert his attention from the Word--at some risk to inspiration itself.[103] Inspiration is not a Spirit-conscious affair.

Theologians often puzzle over the Spirit's hiddenness. The following comment by John Haughey is fairly typical:

> It would seem that there is a conspiracy of silence about the personality of the Holy Spirit . . . . What the Spirit is like, who the Spirit is, the characteristics of the Spirit, these questions have received such scant attention from theologians and hierarchs that one would almost have to suspect a pact several thousand years old to ignore the subject.[104]

Haughey finds many reasons for the silence, such as the

spiritual inexperience of many Christians, and the tendency of theology to focus on "the nearest point of access we have to the Godhead; Jesus Christ."[105] But the main reason, he feels:

> should be traced to the Spirit Itself. It seems that a major characteristic of the Spirit's personality is transparency. The Spirit aims at being inconspicuous. In activity It points to the Other. . . .[106]

The phrases used in Scripture and theology to discuss the Spirit suggest transparency: one lives <u>in</u> the Spirit or works <u>through</u> It, but he does not come <u>to</u> It in a final sense. Unlike the incarnate Word, the Spirit assumes no hypostasis, no outward appearance. It does not even act on Its own authority, but speaks what It hears from the Father. Its whole purpose is to take the glory proper to the Word and declare it. Consequently, though the Spirit expands human consciousness of the Divine Reality, It does not obtrude directly on consciousness. Rather, It remains hidden in the background.[107]

Readers of poetry sometimes discern a transparency there, but do not always trace it to inspiration. They see it as a trait of the poet himself. Wallace Stevens, for example, regards the poet as "the transparence of the place in which / He is. . . ."[108] Commenting on this passage in <u>Testimony of the Invisible Man</u>, Nancy Willard explains: "To be transparent means to have an extraordinary negative capability that lets you suspend all the ideas you live by."[109] No doubt. But it would be interesting to learn how the egocentric Adamic poet achieves such invisibility while

cultivating the myth of self in his poems. Perhaps he has an instinct for transparency. But a few poets see it as a fruit of inspiration. Ammons (e.g., in "Saying" and "Project") and Roethke (e.g., in "The Abyss" and "The Renewal"), to name two, admit that a natural opacity of self interferes with their freedom to write about things other than the self, and that whatever transparency they enjoy as poets is given them by the wind.

5.

Once the poet's attention becomes fully Word-oriented, something else happens. A host of associations--motions and emotions, images and figures, phrases, sets of lines, structural details, rhythmical patterns, and so on--invades the mind, and the poet feels the need to capture everything somehow on paper. Thoughts move quickly. Prominent ones are easily remembered and taken down. But sometimes extraordinary visions leap like flame through the imagination and vanish before the poet can recall them. He works hard to record what rises so effortlessly before him, knowing all the while that, for the moment, his effort comes in response to an initiative taken by something inside him. He has entered the <u>creative stage</u> of inspiration, wherein the Spirit leads him to give the Word some definite verbal shape.

Inspiration is a creative, and not merely ecstatic or contemplative, power. It enables the poet to manifest the Word in language, and then works in the manifestation to re-create it in the hearer. That is a mere summary, for

actually several kinds of creative activity come into play. With the doctrine of the Spirit as a guide, we can examine three of those which apply most directly to poetry: drawing out the potentialities of things already in existence, making the creature into a likeness of the creator, and perfecting what is made.[110]

In inspiration, the Spirit draws out the potentialities of things. The Genesis myth represents the original chaos as an ocean of poetntial energy where nothing is differentiated and no relations between things exist.[111] Over it blows a powerful wind that at Yahweh's command divides dark from light, earth from sky, sea from land; and that, by setting boundaries, places each thing in relation to something different from itself. The inspiration to create, in other words, seems to head in two directions at once. On the one hand, it leads to separation, the conferring of definition, identity, and autonomy from within the thing; on the other, it unites these distinct entities through the bonds of association now made possible between them. Inspiration prcduces neither total separation nor total sameness, both of which are chaos, but a polarity between the two that undergirds all order. Moreover, inspiration brings out the potential of things to have life. Life, to be sure, is a difficult concept. It comes in endless varieties on a thousand different planes, and can be said to function not only within but between organisms. But common to all life, in the Biblical view, is pneuma, the breath infused into the body by the Spirit.

A side of creative inspiration sometimes overlooked is its tendency to renew order and life. "When you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust," the psalmist says of animal and human lives; but "when you send forth your Breath, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth."[112] Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones illustrates the inability of things to sustain their private and corporate lives; but by receiving the breath of Yahweh, they live again. It is important to note, however, that the revived bones do not live in quite the same way as before. Their dissolved identities are not reinstated but remade, their disintegrated relationships not repaired but rebuilt. They have their own identities, but with an element added: through the prophet's speech and the wind, the bones breathe with a new Breath.

Another Genesis myth deserves comment here. Theologians observe that the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost with Its gift of tongues has reversed the myth of the Tower of Babel. That story explains that the human tendency to exalt the self leads to failure in communication, dysfunction in language, and breakdown in society. But "the Power that the Spirit-Gift released," says Haughey:

> . . . initiated a time of perfect and effortless communication between men. What we see happening at Pentecost to men who were strangers but now can hear and speak to one another is peculiarly the work of the Spirit, since it is peculiar to the Personality of the Spirit to knit people together,

> to enable relationship to grow where there were only "I's" before. The babel of languages symbolized man's incapacity to be present to another as himself, and to have the other present to himself as other.

When Spirit invades spirit, however, the capacity to present oneself and to entertain presence is created, speech transformed, and the communicative power of language renewed.[113]

Two applications to poetry suggest themselves. One is that inspiration creates for the poet a sense of the within and the between of things, from both of which (and not just from one only) he will write his poem. During the ecstatic stage, the Spirit drew him away from the need to manufacture identities or force relationships. Then having brought him to the Word at the next stage, It now unfolds before him a vision of what things are as regards the Word to be spoken, and of an order appropriate to them in that context. When the imagination perceives chaos or distrusts its own relationship with the things of the world, the Spirit rebuilds and revives. "Be compassed by wind," Philip Booth advises the poet; ". . . You've come to assume / protective color; now / colors reform to / new shapes in your eye."[114] Thus, adds Corman, the poet learns how "to put things / together / as if they were / not broken," so as to achieve in poetry "something / inseparable / from what was / otherwise thought."[115]

The other application has to do with the renewal of poetic language. How such a renewal would effect a poetry of

incarnation has already been touched upon. But the poet has a related concern: how to break through the babel of private languages epidemic in current poetry so that he can communicate with an audience. One recognizes the Adamic nature of the problem when he learns that the idea of rhetoric, which "presumes that there are people to talk to," has "nearly vanished from our discussions of and thinking about poetry" because it was not meant to occur in isolation;[116] while he knows, on the other hand, that the desire for a speech that will enforce communication through "acute use of language" has intensified. Adrienne Rich, for example, fears her lover's silence, "this inarticulate life." As both lover and poet, she waits for inspiration to break through the silence:

> I'm waiting
> for a wind that will gently open this sheeted water
> for once, and show me what I can do
> for you, who have often made the unnameable
> nameable for others, even for me.[117]

The poet has prayed for a gift of tongues with which to bear witness, and a function of creative inspiration is to give that gift. Inspiration reverses babel: it brings not only words, but selves, together. It is important that Richard Wilbur's friends, on meeting, "parley in the tongues of Pentecost."[118] And when Robert Duncan calls himself "the point of breakthrough for an 'I'", he says a great deal. For an "I" can break <u>out</u> of the poet--or <u>into</u> another "I". The Spirit commences such a breakthrough

when It presents the language in which the Word is to be verbally incarnated. It draws the poet communing with the Word into the poem, and from there brings the poem into the hearer. The inspired poem is itself the transformation of speech, the renewal of communication.

The Spirit makes the creature into a likeness of the creator. In Chapter IV, I discussed Charles Olson's idea that the perception of truth is a "photo-copic" process, a turning of the poet from dark to light. His comparison receives an interesting echo from the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and, modified in its light, further illuminates the creative work of the Spirit in the inspiration of a poem.

On the principle that we become what we look at, Jewish wisdom held that the sight of God's glory, when it did not kill the beholder, would change his appearance to resemble what he beheld. St. Paul, for example, recounts how the face of Moses temporarily became luminous after seeing the splendor of God, and explains that a similar-- but permanent-- change takes place in all who possess the Spirit:

> . . . we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.[119]

Glory is light that, radiating from an object, makes it visible and causes it to stand out from its surroundings.

Because light is taken into the body through the eye, it has what might be called a photographic effect on the rest of the body. Thomas Smail comments on the passage from St. Paul:

> In this verse we can identify an original prototype from which a reflected image is being made. The prototype is "the glory of the Lord" (doxa Kuriou), and the copy is the "likeness" (eikon) into which "we are being changed," so that the glory which is original to him, is refracted and reflected in us. The copy is made by exposure to the original. It is by beholding his glory that we begin to be changed into his likeness.

The Holy Spirit is the "active medium, the light in between" the original and the copy, which "carries what is in the original and makes it appear again in the likeness." The Spirit does not merely produce an internal, invisible change, but generates in the likeness a glory that "will have outer and visible form. . . . He operates in the Body and his business there is to produce visible glory, which all who have eyes for reality can see."[120] It follows by the same token that those who see the glory of the original in the likeness turn into likenesses of the original themselves.

What this doctrine implies for the writing of a poem becomes clearer when we examine the concept of likeness used here. Eric Auerbach, whose semantic history of "figura" led

him to the word's Greek origins, lists five equivalents in common use among his pagan and Christian sources: morphe (form), eidos (appearance), schema (bearing or "figure of movement" as used in dance or the theater), typos (imprint), and plasis (molded shape).[121] Eikon seems not to have been used much in discussions of poetry. It meant the image that meets the eye, such as a statue or a mirrored reflection, and only by metaphorical extension did it apply to a living image.[122] It is strange, in view of the Israelite hostility towards eidola, that the Bible seems more than sympathetic to the idea of a likeness (eikon) of the Lord. But the reason, according to Gerhard Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, is that, whereas Scripture views an idol as a representation empty of inner substance, it treats an icon as having a real "within". The New Testament in particular:

> does not limit images to a functional representation present to human sense but also thinks of it in terms of an emanation, of a revelation of the being with a substantial participation (μετοχή) in the object. Image is not to be understood as a magnitude which is alien to the reality and present in the consciousness. It has a share in the reality. Thus, εἰκών does not imply a weakening or a feeble copy of something. It implies the illumination of its inner core and essence.[123]

God, of course, is an original, not an image; but He has for His immediate likeness the Word, which is at once the "first impression" (archetypos) and the original from which all other likenesses are made (paradeigma).[124] The eikon exists in some manner distinct from the original, but never separated from it. The original "is always present in the image," says

Kittel, illustrating with an example from Romans 1:23:

> . . . we read that man exchanged the δόξα of the immortal God for the ὁμοίωμα εἰκόνος of mortal man. . . . The distinctiveness of the expression lies in the juxtaposition of ὁμοίωμα, which means the copy, and the εἰκών, which is the original copied, i.e., <u>the thing itself and its form</u>.[125]

St. Paul's description of the Word as a "likeness of God" emphasizes "the equality of the εἰκών with the original." By the same token, the likeness of man to the Word is "identical with the δόξα, with the divine essentiality now present" in the Word. Hence the significance of saying that those who behold the glory of the Lord attain to a share in it by being metamorphosed into its <u>eikon</u>.[126]

The inspiration to write a poem involves the tendency to create in words a likeness of glory:

> Sun in
> the window ——
> an eye
>
> for an
> eye awa-
> kening.[127]

Continuing the photographic analogy, the Spirit shines upon the original phenomenon and upon the poem that will become its copy. It serves as the active medium, causing the original to radiate its particular glory, and transforming words into its reflection (icon). Now the "original" may actually be a copy itself: Owen Barfield reminds us that the things of nature are appearances or collective representations that participate the creative activity of the Word.[128] Or the original may be the Word itself, the paradigm of creation and the reality whose glory the Spirit is most concerned to

reveal. Either way, as the Spirit begins to expose language, rhythm, and imagery to the light radiating into the imagination from the original, It progressively realizes a living likeness. The poem, too, is an embodiment, having "outer and visible form." The creative Spirit produces in that form a visible glory, "which all who have eyes for reality can see."

The analogy of inspiration with photography has its virtues and its defects. One of its virtues is that it demonstrates the presence of an original in a likeness. It can be pressed further, in fact: the technology of photocopying documents shows that a likeness can so closely resemble an original as to <u>be</u> the original, for all practical purposes. But the analogy has the defect--for most American minds, at any rate--of emphasizing the external. A photograph is just that; it has no "within" of its own, and may be discarded without a second thought. An Orthodox or Byzantine Christian, however, would be horrified at the thought of throwing an icon away, since it <u>does</u> have a "within" of its own. The represented is in the representation. And here the icon becomes a better analogy for the poem than the photograph. As an icon, the poem goes beyond the one or two senses most immediately affected; it illuminates the "inner core and essence" of the original, in which it substantially participates. Though it belongs to a different order of experience from the original, the poem has a certain equality with it: as "the original copied," it is linguistically "the thing itself and its form." That is why, on the one hand,

Arthur Gregor can insist that the poet become the radiance he is possessed of,[129] and why, on the other hand, David Young should not consider it unusual that a man would swallow a bird and subsequently take on its behavior.[130] The imagination, says Corman, becomes what it looks at: as the river "flows out of the / mountains into / my eyes the heart / becomes a sea."[131] The poem becomes an icon as inspiration transfers to it the characteristics of the original.

The Spirit perfects what It makes. To an age that questions the possibility of excellence or flawlessness in anything, it sounds ingenuous to speak of bringing to its perfection a poem that one is writing. But a less jaded age thought differently. To Chaucer and Shakespeare, perfecting something meant completing it, carrying it through, bringing it to full development. The poem was perfect when it was thoroughly made: when it said what it was supposed to say, and when it accurately reproduced or reflected the original it was designed to copy. The Oxford English Dictionary notes that some of these older meanings have grown obsolete.[132] But I wish to reinstate them here for two reasons. First, they imply that perfecting a work belongs to the task of making it, as a matter of course. And second--the point I want to develop--theologies of the Spirit use the verb perfect primarily in its older sense.

God's perfection, of course, means flawlessness, but that in turn presupposes His essential completeness or fullness (something a medieval theologian would have called pure act). To Him, then, belongs the work of perfecting what

He creates:[133] that is, finishing the creative process and signifying its completion. We already know, for instance, that Adam suffers from a tendency to imperfection. But the Spirit reverses that by activating a covenant: It descends upon Adam and dwells within him to bring the Word gradually to realization within, then evokes the Word from him as an incarnate reality, and through that incarnation completes the transformation of all flesh into the likeness of the Word. The end of the creative process, in other words, is the revelation in men of the Man, the completely mature new Adam, "the fullness of him who fills the whole creation."[134] The sign of its ending is the "fruit of the Spirit" which marks Adamic behavior ever afterward. Being permanent, both the completion and its sign are compared in classical theology to the final act of writing a document: the fixing of a seal.[135]

Everyone knows of a poet's temptation to keep revising his poems. There always seems to be some change he can make to bring his words just a syllable closer to the imaginative ripeness he is striving for. Assuming that his revisions come out of a sense of the poem's inspiration, they represent his effort to respond over the months or even years to its force or direction.

In terms of inspiration itself, however, the poem reaches perfection much earlier. The poet may scarcely have begun to write when the feeling of being inspired culminates. What happens is that the Spirit, possessing and dwelling in the poet, fulfills a covenant leading him into communion

with the Word; and between the poet and the Word there develops the Adamic self of the poem, the dual, communing and outward-tending consciousness described in the previous chapter. When this self attains full development in the imagination--when it becomes the "fiery, perfect flesh and blood"[136] that will be spoken forth--the creative stage of inspiration is completed. The sign of completion shows in the accuracy and the integrity of the self that are given into the poem. Whatever the state of the written version, as inspired the poem has now attained "the evident conclusion of being," in Jack Gilbert's words:

> The thing steady and clear. Then the crescendo.
> The real form. The culmination. And the exceeding.
> . . . . . The beauty
> That is of many days. Steady and clear.
> It is the normal excellence, of long accomplishment.[137]

And so inspiration is sealed--not, that is, sealed from the poet so that he no longer has access to it, but sealed for him, so that he can use the time he needs to get the poem onto paper and revise it when necessary without jeopardizing the inspiration.

6.

John Haughey professes to dislike the term inspiration for what he feels is an important theological reason:

> I think the phrase "the inspiration of the Holy Spirit" implicitly denies our belief in the reality of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. "Inspiration" connotes something coming in out of the blue, rather than up from the depths of my own spirit in union with the Spirit. The word conveys poorly the relation between the spirit of the person and the indwelling Spirit.

Searching his theological vocabulary for a better term, he selects another one based on the concept of spiration: "The promptings of the Spirit . . . would be more accurately called 'conspirations,' I submit, since what is produced by following them is partly stamped by the Spirit and partly by the human spirit acceding to them."[138] Aware that the word has a sinister meaning in English, Haughey refers explicitly to its Latin etymology: "When It is received the Spirit becomes a Conspirer in a man, with the recipient and the Spirit breathing as one. . . ."[139]

The poet, too, might wish to object that the foregoing theory of inspiration denies him a creative role. It might appear from what has been said that a Spirit coming in out of the blue does all the real imagining, while the poet like Its good secretary merely takes dictation and smoothes over the technical rough spots. There is some truth to this. I have tried to describe a particular kind of inspiration: one that proceeds from the Spirit and is directionally opposed to the corruption of secularism. Given the source and the direction, as well as the poet's natural inclinations, it seems logical that whoever wants to cooperate with inspiration would sense the limits of his own responsibility. He would not lightly contradict what inspiration suggests, for example, and he would recognize intuitively the risk in adding or deleting anything. That he is willing to surrender himself to the possession of the Spirit early on signifies a further willingness to let It indicate where the imagination will work and what it will say.

The poet, however, does not slavishly record everything that presents itself to him. He probably could not, even if he wanted to. For one thing, inspiration typically begins so spontaneously, burns through so rapidly, and vanishes so abruptly that the nimblest writer would have little time to do more than pay reasonably close attention to what is going on. Secondly, inspiration does not always come in the form of distinct language patterns. It may be felt as a vague need to write, or consist chiefly of non-verbal images and emotions. Perhaps a major reason why inspiration leaves so much up to the writer is precisely so that he will bring all the recources of his imagination (aided by memory, as William Carlos Williams learned) to bear on the Word.

The poet knows that some form of cooperation is necessary for him. For Charles Olson:

> your own ability
> may be a factor in time, in fact that
> only if there is a coincidence of
> yourself & the universe is there then
> in fact an event.[140]

In "A Rectification of the Lyric," Ned O'Gorman refers to the poet's search for "the bud, / the phrase, the climax" of light; and later, in "As It Was Then It Will Not Be Now," he draws out the earlier poem's implied sexuality to dramatize how the light-creating Word demands his own creativity:

> It would be as it never was before
> and logos, multifoliate and
> winged, chained my genitals
> like anchors to the burgeoning suns.[141]

Theodore Roethke makes a similar point in terms of a release from bondage: "The mind enters itself and God the mind, /

And that one is One, free in the tearing wind."[142] The poet realizes that he conspires with the new breath.

But what does "breathing with the new breath" mean? The poet has different ways of describing what he thinks it means: confronting the world "as it sits in my backyard and in the back of my head" (Peter Fellowes); relaxing in imagination so as to take "more and more deeply the print" of the world's bedspread (Coleman Barks); listening to the unconscious (Colette Inez) or, even more deliberately, positioning the consciousness to listen:

> In the breath shaping the song, in the motion between
> The heart's motion and the pulsing world
> Attend. . . .
> (Henry Rago)[143]

One would hardly wish to discourage responses like these. Unfortunately, the Adamic poet has grown up in an atmosphere of total openness to any inspiration that comes along, regardless of its source: for "what is he but response?" Gregor asks.[144] In view of the radical divergence between secular and spiritual inspirations, and of his disillusionment as to the effects of the former, he cannot afford that kind of openness. What he needs instead is a stance from which he can govern the ways he confronts, is impressed by, or listens to the world. He also needs one that will keep a balance between the dictates of inspiration and his own imaginative bent. And he needs a stance that will insure his movement from within outward. Such a stance is best characterized by religious persons as "being a witness to what is seen and heard."

Not just bearing witness, being one. The first thing that ordinarily comes to mind about a witness is his act of giving testimony. A person who encounters a fact or a truth or who holds an expert opinion first indicates his willingness to tell what he knows without deviating from the truth. Once he receives the summons to testify, he does so in his own words and actions, rather than someone else's, to insure the credibility of his witness. Daniel Hoffman thus sees the poem as a witness that, "true to itself, by what craft / and strength it has," lives up to its function if "it endures / The journey through the dark places / To bear witness, / Casting its message / In a sort of singing."[145] Now theology does apply this behavioral understanding to someone inhabited by the Spirit.[146] But theology's more fundamental concern is for the person of the witness himself--not, that is, what he does but what he is. Poet Charles Olson appears to have this in mind when he asks the theologically practical question:

> . . . how do you, how as a person, not only as a poet, does one live one's image, rather than use it simply for writing. . . ? And we are determined to make our image a union of ourself, I think, and have no other choice, whether we'd like it or not[147]

Like the poem he writes, the poet too is an image of what he looks at, an expression of the Spirit in him--in effect, a witness.[148] To be credible "as a person, not only as a poet," he must know how to live his image rather than simply use it. And that implies a union of self with Spirit. As Gregor describes it, the poet seeks to flow:

> . . . into that which flows into him as a
> wave into the sea
>
> and the sea into waves

and both are water
and both are one.[149]

Such a union permits him to function as "the drawbridge / giving passage to / a long line of figures and boats" from within himself.[150] In more practical language, the poet seeks to achieve a union between the passive and the active sides of a polarity inherent in himself, by imaging the Word, and imaging the wind.

Enough has been said about imaging the Word to provide a clear idea of what it means. The poet writes in communion with the Word because the Spirit unites him to it. And since he becomes the Word he speaks, being a witness does not mean bearing testimony onee in a while but participating the Word continually so that it shines out through him.[151] By implication, he remains loyal to the Word and obedient to inspiration.

As for the other half of the polarity, we are told that "the wind blows wherever it wills," and that the same is true of all who are "born of the Spirit.[152] One mark of genuine inspiration is freedom. To paraphrase Haughey, inspiration comes at the moment when the new Breath that is breathed into the poet drives out all the poisonous fumes of corrupted self-images he has unwittingly inhaled from his milieu and from other poets, and recreates Its own traits instead.[153] Chief among these traits is the freedom to love:

> The witnesses that the Spirit's coming creates are lovers. . . . We witness to what we love, whether we realize it or not. We inevitably point to where our hearts are by the things we say and do. The effect of the Spirit on a man is that his loves get changed or rearranged, and everything about him points to that which is

> changing in him and to the new comprehension of his own lovability.
>
> Our loving and our witnessing, therefore, are intimately related

because they derive from an authentic self-image.[154] To love the things of this world, the self, and the poem as the Spirit loves them is the poet's freedom and his power.

But he will need to resolve in concrete terms what the relation between obedience and freedom entails in his response to inspiration. A secular mind sees the two at odds with each other, and feels constrained to choose conformity or nonconformity. A spiritual mind understands that the "polarity of contraries" between possessing the Spirit and being possessed by It demands the exercise of authority on both sides. On the one hand, the poet needs to submit: to hear the Word of the poem, to speak faithfully what he hears, and to dismiss whatever his own inclinations might steer him toward. Submission also means control over one's reactions to inspiration, a healthy respect for the conventions of poetry, and a concern for the audience that will hear the Word in the poem. "I know that I cannot alone / accomplish the next step," says Gregor of his own writing; he can only

> keep one foot raised in readiness
> but must wait, wait
>
> until the guide
> I've come to trust
> places it
> on what I will accept
> as the right track.[155]

On the other hand, the poet needs the freedom to exercise his own authority: to give the Word image and figure, to use whatever technique of development he deems appropriate, and

to discern the inspired Word from the thoughts and associations of his own mind. Freedom also means the right to manipulate such variables as tone or approach that affect the way the Word is presented; to take the initiative in changing the conventions of poetry to suit the poem, where a change would be appropriate; and to withstand pressures to yield to mere fashion in writing. James Dickey speaks of inspiration not only in terms of its dazzling initative, but also in terms of his "long - awaited / Blinding, blood-brotherly / Beyond-speech answer."[156] Because obedience and freedom are polar opposites, they incline toward each other. Obedience to inspiration produces freedom, freedom allows a response to the Word, and the authority in both poles generates a power that gives the poem incarnate life.* This is the cycle Richard Wilbur refers to when, invoking his own imagination, he says: "Come stranger, sister, dove: / Put on the reins of love."[157]

---

*The polarity of obedience and freedom clarifies a distinction (much needed in discussions of this sort) between originality and creativity. In "Playing the Inventions," a poem about Bach's music, Howard Nemerov reflects that "originality / Is immaterial, it is not the tune / But the turns it takes you through" that matters. Creativity is something else again: "The tune's not much until it's taken up." Taking up an ordinary melody is accomplished in Bach through a combination of imaginative play ("modeling what it would know") and adherence to a pattern ("repeating the accident to make it fate"). The result is an invention, a discovery of truth. The poet, likewise, cannot always be original--but he can be creative. He can create a poetic self out of a common

> Word that holds space and sequence in the seed,
> That splits the silence and divides the void
> In phrases that reflect upon themselves,
> To be known that way and not in paraphrase.

See Nemerov's The Western Approaches: Poems 1973-1975 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 78-79.

Generally, then, inspiration does not work automatically, or produce poems of unrestrained spontaneity. It requires a deliberate exercise. To repeat something I said earlier: The mark of a poem's incarnate reality and of its inspiration is the kind of power discernible within it. The inspired poem draws its audience into a recognition, acceptance, and further realization of the Word. That power belongs to the Spirit, and forms part of the poem's "given" character. But in inspiration, the Spirit communicates power to Its witness, the poet. He, in turn, communicates it at his own discretion and in his own manner to the poem. The poet does, of course, enjoy a certain natural power as part of his Adamic heritage. For he is a witness to the human significance of facts and events and is able to convey it more or less without help. But with the power given him by the Spirit, he has the further capacity of witnessing to mysteries, in the theological sense--that is, to the meaning of realities as the Word speaks them.[158] Such power is usually exercised in terms of what a theologian would call a charism, or spiritual gift.

And here I am aware of entering a theological and literary gray area. Virtually every theologian confesses that "the Spirit is power, and each individual Christian is endued with power from on high."[159] But not all agree as to the ways this power is manifested in practice, nor do all admit that charismatic activity in the Pauline sense[160] (the sense I am thinking of) still occurs or is normative in the lives of Christians. Enough do, however, to make this aspect

of the doctrine of the Spirit worth mentioning.[161] As for literature, it is instructive to note how many of the Pauline gifts are mentioned by American poets in their work, and how often. One sees references everywhere to miracles, tongues and interpretation of tongues, prophecy (these four seem to occur most often), healing, wisdom, and discernment of spirits. Granted, most references are metaphorical and some are antagonistic; but nearly all say something about the poem's ability to communicate powerfully. And one cannot help but remark on the non-metaphorical view of prophecy in, for example, the poems of Ginsberg and Duncan or an essay like Nemerov's "Poetry, Prophecy, Prediction."[162] So, again, the subject is worth mentioning. As it happens, mention it is all I can do here.

It is important to distinguish types of charimatic activity. All good poetry may be called charismatic in a general sense. It reveals the poet's natural gifts with language; furthermore, it attracts listeners not once but many times, presents a vivid poetic self, and creates the poetic experience in the imagination. C.M. Bowra might say that it was at least "apt and adequate" poetry. But some poems are gifted in a higher, more specific sense with the "strangely unreckonable power" of inspiration.[163] Their magnetism cannot be accounted for in the usual terms of talent or vigorous style--much less in terms of an "ecstatic" or incantatory technique. It can only be reckoned in terms of an energy that stands behind talent, style, and technique, that uses all three, and that at the same time elevates them

above their natural capacities. That energy breathes from the Spirit and finds expression in the poet's use of specific charisms.

Logically, the poem serves most readily as a vehicle for what have been called the "word gifts." Prophecy, the gift by which the poet "does . . . not invent the world that will be there in the future, but [brings] into being the mind that will be there in the future,"[164] has already been discussed. Two related gifts may be equally significant. Through the "utterance of knowledge" and the "utterance of wisdom," the poet speaks forth the understanding given him of the Word and of its ways. Probably, the "gift of tongues" would have to be understood for poetry more or less as Daniel Hoffman understands it--not under the aspect of glossalalia, but under that of contemplation, by which the poet bears witness true to what he hears in silence.[165] The advantage of the "word gifts" for poetry is that their power operates from within the poem itself. Other gifts (such as healing and miracles) may have something to do with writing a poem, but it would seem that their effect is largely extrinsic.

The point, however, is not what gift the poet does or wants to exercise but the extent to which he conspires with the Spirit. Inspiration itself is the chief gift. It comes spontaneously, like the wind, and its purpose is to make like itself "all who are born of the Spirit." Inspiration cannot be demanded and probably cannot be earned; it can only be awaited and accepted when and as it comes. But--and this is

the central guarantee the doctrine of the Holy Spirit holds out--come it will to anyone who wants it badly enough, and is willing to cooperate with it. The Spirit, after all, does not write poems. It fires the imagination from within by the Word; and as the poet writes, It breathes life into his body of words. In a sense, therefore, the poet has the pivotal role in inspiration. For the Spirit blows where It will; but it is only as the poet learns to breathe with this new breath that It is channeled into and breathes through the language of poetry.

VII: THE MOMENT OF TURNING

1.

In 1973, M. L. Rosenthal published "Some Thoughts on American Poetry Today," in which he concludes:

> For the moment, discussions of schools and movements in poetry have rather burnt themselves out. Our breaths are gathering for a new look at just where we are now, and then a new plunge into the unknown. . . .[1]

We seem to have heard this before. A decade and a half earlier, in fact, Roy Harvey Pearce was writing that American poetry had come to something like the end of a line. He saw in the loss of a sense of direction for poetry the effort to establish another path; and, like Rosenthal, he sensed the imminence of a new kind of writing.[2] Since then, nearly twenty years have passed. Have we done nothing in all that time except look at "just where we are now"? or are we gathering breath for a new plunge at last?

One might argue that, even if we <u>have</u> done nothing but look at the current situation, the time has been well spent. On the cultural level, a quarter-century of elaboration seems necessary for us to absorb any theme fully into our poetic consciousness.[3] It has been somewhat longer than that since, according to Karl Malkoff, the emphasis in

poetry shifted from ethics to epistemology,[4] and since John Berryman first characterized the latter as an epistemology of loss. Ethics presumes a relationship between one self and another; epistemology presumes a basic metaphysical community between the knowing and known selves. During this twenty-five year period, the American poet has felt that any community he enjoys with the known world, with others, and with the self has been progressively breaking down, and that even the language of poetry has been losing its power to effect anything real. In an effort to create a controllable world and to realize a truth that will reverse the disintegration, the poet has withdrawn into his imagination. But withdrawal has only made matters worse: control of an inner world cannot be maintained when its inherent truth--the heart of epistemology——has evaporated into an abstract, impersonal, elusive, and therefore non-relational ghost. Having cut himself off from the outer world, the poet has trapped himself within himself. As he sees things now, unless some revolution frees him from his prison, the end of his poetic consciousness looms in sight. For more than a century, the American poet identified himself as a "first Adam". That Adamic myth, it appears, has led to a preoccupation with the Christian myth. If, as Lionel Trilling says, the central question of American literature is, "What shall I do to be saved?" the answer would appear to lie in the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Holy Spirit. So far, at least, the poet has come in a quarter century. For him to have absorbed this much in so little

time is no mean feat.

But he does not appear to be gathering breath for a plunge in that direction just yet. For one thing, discussions of schools and movements have not quite burnt themselves out. Malkoff's Handbook of Contemporary American Poetry, published the same year as Rosenthal's article, shows that active discussion of burgeoning new literatures, of Imagism flourishing in its stylistic and philosophical descendants, and of the "confessional school's" fascination with taboo subjects is still going on. Developments like these tend to ramify, evolving other strains of writing that promise to meet specific needs in American poetry, though how most of them will affect the Adamic situation remains to be seen. For another thing, although the poet has begun to see his situation as corrupted in the sense defined earlier, and has evidenced a preoccupation with the Christian myth in terms of a possible solution, he has not always understood how the myth applies to the writing of a poem--or even that it does. A handful of poets and critics have proposed the likelihood of a connection, and occasionally one of them speculates about it. I hope to have shown by now that the Christian myth will apply at virtually all stages of poetic composition, and that it holds out the prospect of a poetry at once Adamic and new. The question now is: Given the theory, what should the poet do to apply it? For only when he is willing to act on the theory will he be ready to plunge anew into the unknown.

The Christian answer to that question is neither new

nor very subtle, but it is the only one that Christianity has to offer. The core of it appears early in the Acts of the Apostles:

> Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do [to be saved]?" And Peter said to them, "Repent, [believe the good news] and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and your children. . . .[5]

Peter's message is immediately practical, in that it consists of three uncomplicated steps toward a promised goal. If he were addressing the poet instead of religious converts, Peter would probably say much the same thing: "Turn from the myth of self with its simple, separating inwardness; rely on the self-revealing Truth; and plunge the Old Adam into the Word, so that the corruption of self can be reversed. If you do, you will receive the inspiration of the Spirit to make your poems incarnate realities. This promise extends to you, the selves you create, and all who read or write poetry after you." As before, the point is simple, direct, unqualified--and no more novel in the paraphrase than in the original.

And it will offend some poets. The idea is quaintly old hat (Doyle). No one really cares any more (Olson). It would not improve the situation (Oppenheimer). Quite the reverse: since the formulation that saves damns (Ammons), such a pat answer would lead to smugness or conformity, as the histories of both religion and poetry demonstrate (Finkel, Harvey Shapiro). Even though the myth of self

offers little protection against destruction (Jarrell), it at least affords a direction for poetry (Field). Besides, the summons to "repent, believe, and be baptized" has all the marks of a return to ways of writing poems that the poet no longer believes in (Enslin) or has the heart for (Lowell). A dead poetics does not rise again (Kinnell). All in all, the poet feels that he has tried the Christian myth before without success (Weiners) and does not care to try it again.

On the other hand, his use of old stylistic patterns in new settings has shown him the difference between <u>return</u> and <u>renewal</u>. Stanley Kunitz has the latter in mind when he remarks that "the way backward and the way forward are the same," since the way backward often leads to radical innovation. He cites the examples of Hopkins, "who went back to Old English for his sprung rhythm; of Pound, who turned his ear on Provençal song; of Berryman, who dug up inversion and minstrel patter for his <u>Dream Songs</u>." Far from trying to resuscitate old grammar, old music, and old comedy, these poets sought to shake off the drowze of linguistic habit. The stylistic results, Kunitz feels, were "all acts of renewal, not tired replays of the style of another period."[6]

In matters deeper than style the poet also "sings / a new song / made of old / flints struck." The flints alone produce nothing; but from them, says Theodore Enslin, the poet ignites "new fires / / new flames."[7] The chief flint, as it were, is the very heart from which the poet's mouth speaks. And William Carlos Williams, for whom the

heart and the poem are all apiece,[8] warns that:

> unless there is
> a new mind there cannot be a new
> line, the old will go on
> repeating itself with recurring
> deadliness[9]

The Christian myth, like a flint-striker, has the power to effect a renewed mind, and therefore a renewed line, if properly handled. As I will show, the instructions for use can apply as much to the writing of poems as to anything else: repent, believe, be baptized.

These three acts--to take up Charles Olson's analogy again--form a single "tropism", one movement of turning. The movement begins as repentance, a turning away; becomes belief, a turning toward; and ends as baptism, a turning into. In the sections below, I will discuss some of the ways repentance and belief can apply to the writing of a poem. (Baptism, the immersion of self in the Word, was discussed briefly in the previous chapter.) Before proceeding, however, I should point out that separate treatment of repentance, belief, and baptism could create a misleading impression. In Christian experience, these three cannot occur apart from each other without losing their own effectiveness. Repentance without faith, for instance, puts new names and faces on the self but leaves the old arrogance[10]; and faith without the plunge of baptism is dead.[11] But when all three operate together so that the turning is complete, the conditions will be right for the Word and the Spirit to work of themselves in the poem.

2.

Generally, to repent means to change direction. That is, the person who repents chooses to turn from or abandon the course of behavior he has been following. But a mere shift of activity would accomplish little unless it were accompanied by a change in the frame of mind that motivates it. Specifically, then, the person changes his attitude--his heart--about what he does, so that his observable behavior alters from within. For one who writes poems, the decision to repent means more than refining the imagery he will use or selecting better subjects to write about. It involves a directional change in the imagination itself, as it works out of the heart.

The view of self in Diane Wakoski's poem, "In Gratitude to Beethoven," may illustrate the point of imaginative departure. To start with the following lines:

> This is all literary invention, a way of
> speaking when there is no life.
> Must it be the reality?
> No one has ever moved more than the surfaces,
> the images. Where is the reverence
> for the dialogue,
> the process?

The speaker here demonstrates Williams' idea that the mind and the poem are all apiece, for she regards <u>herself</u> as the "literary invention" of which she complains. Early in the poem she imagines her body unfolding like a flower from the inside out, and marvels in disbelief at "the ugly processes that make a living body." With that, she characterizes herself as a "strange combination of images": the series of

predatory animals killing and being killed, the guerilla fighter asleep with one eye open, the cancerous growth of a malfunctioning organ. The only directional coherence she can find in these self-images is "perhaps the thread of destruction." Not that she wants to go that way. "In Gratitude to Beethoven" appears in a collection of poems called Inside the Blood Factory, and the self of this poem desires to create a kind of life-blood: "that ultimate human good--love." She finds elements of it in Beethoven's music. But Beethoven himself is no more than an image--a violin, a harp, a piano--whom she wishes to replace with someone living. But her friends and "all you loving people" disappear just when she needs them most: it is "their way of dealing with the proliferation of images." By the end of the poem, the speaker has revealed the full extent of her nature as a literary invention, and has shown that even she cannot move "more than the surfaces, / the images."[12]

I would like to make two points from this example. First, because corruption extends inward to the self's very roots and outward to its relationship with the world, only a change of attitude delving that deep and reaching that far will effectively turn it around. Michael Benedikt reminds the poet that "we have lingered too long in the house of many means and now our ends are desperate" and in need of total "condemnation and / or urban renewal"; after all, he adds, "some flesh is real and ill."[13] Secondly, because the imagination works at the level of images or appearances, there will be no escape from "literary invention" without

eliminating the imagination altogether. Rather, a change of poetic attitude would emerge from the imagination itself and involve the images or appearances, foremost among which would be the image of Adam.

Based on his reading of current poetry, Karl Malkoff sees an extensive shift of emphasis regarding the poetic self already under way. As he states it:

> Whatever their particular philosophies, . . . the dominant bias of contemporary American poets has not been existentialist, if existentialism can be thought of as an attempt to reaffirm the power of the self to deal with experience. Contemporary American poetry, on the contrary, can be thought of as an attempt to escape from the tyranny of the self, to establish alternate modes of relating to reality.[14]

That is not the happiest way of putting his case. Existentialism is also thought of as the attempt to reaffirm the self <u>despite</u> experience, and I have already alluded to the American poet's effort to cultivate a myth of self in the face of the self's ongoing dissolution. Yet it remains true to say that the poet often looks on the self as a tyrant, or worse, and that he does want to escape its confinement.

Escape is certainly one of the desperate ends Michael Benedikt has in mind. "Let me out! Let me out! LET ME OUT!" he screams from within himself.[15] Diane Wakoski wants to "smash through the fortified walls of myself / with a sledge" in order to relate (interestingly enough) to "This King: The Tombed Egyptian One."[16] The drive toward freedom from self may be one reason why the poet so insistently reminds himself to treat with reality on its terms rather

than his own. Expanding on Charles Olson's dictum that the poet must forget he is a man, Gilbert Sorrentino tells an interviewer: "The poet's job is not to take that door over there and lay on that door what his idea of that door is. The poet's job is to reveal that door in its essence," a task which calls for him to "know your place as a poet in the world--all you are is someone who reveals the essence of things."[17] Repeatedly, the poet must destroy his ideas as well as construct them[18]; he must become, in Ammons' words, a "surrendered self among unwelcoming forms."[19] Many times it happens, however, that surrendering the self, hammering through it, or clamoring for release fail to work; when it comes time to write, Donald Finkel cannot seem to "divest himself,"[20] and Robert Creeley confesses a similar difficulty:

> I suppose it's
> letting go, finally,
>
> that spooks me.
> And of course my arms
> are full as usual.
> I'm the only one I know.[21]

For escape, a number of poets recommend a surprising alternative.

The self, they claim, has to die. Robert Duncan regards his art as an "aggregate of intentions" put to death in order for the poem to live. The corrupted self comes face to face with the words of Jesus:

> over this gateway of a whole civilization
> carved the words <u>unless the grain die</u>
>
> A million reapers come to cut down
> the leaves of grass we hoped to live by
> except we give ourselves utterly over to the
> end of things[22]

To Henry Rago, the writing of poetry costs "a whole life: I praise / Beginning with that cost."[23] He explains that the cost involves death, in that the "essentially religious experience" undergone by the literary imagination ranges "from an increased sense of one's being to a willingness to surrender that being, to be changed; even--in some way--to die."[24] Theodore Enslin believes that death is "a joy / in the living, / rightly taken," since it is sought "with a sense of life / still in us." It is, in fact, an act of repentance:

> the conversion
> of dying
> to what we are doing,
> turning a wrist,
> or ranging away.

Consequently, it demands not only a mental appreciation but a behavioral response: "I walked out / on the concept / to know the real thing."[25]

Christianity teaches that knowing the real thing belongs to the Adamic mythical pattern of suffering, death, resurrection. Without death, it says, escape from the self is impossible. Mere prayers for release, however earnest, do not to Heaven go, and efforts to smash through the self's fortified walls, however determined, cannot puncture them. Though the corrupted self naturally tends toward final dissolution, it may endure indefinitely; it persists, according to Roethke, "like a dying star."[26] To the Christian way of thinking, not suicide but death rightly taken is the only feasible way out. It serves as a turning-

point, and in that sense Christianity has always invested the metaphor of dying to self with a certain literalness. For instance, death is radical and all-inclusive. It represents the end of everything connected with the temporal side of consciousness, and cannot be reversed. The Christian, therefore, does not simply avoid sinning, he considers himself dead to sin as a behavioral principle; he does not suppress or repress what is earthly or secular in himself, he kills it altogether.[27] For him, dying lies at the bottom of all repentance: as far as possible, he decides to turn permanently away from his old self so as to turn toward the new one. For the poet, likewise, such a turning-point is crucial. It begins in the imagination with his decision to break with the image of himself as a first Adam.

A word which expresses for him that decision is iconoclasm, one whose importance Owen Barfield never tires of stressing. Near the end of Saving the Appearances, Barfield reminds his readers that the modern way of representing the world tends to empty of any participation in their originals all the images of consciousness, including the image of self. Representations become objects devoid of spirit; icons pale into idols.[28] Such a view of reality, he maintains, transfers to the subjective state of the idolator in two ways. First, the idolator becomes what he looks at: if his representations lack a "within" of their own, he eventually comes to share their emptiness.[29] Second, he becomes incapable of grasping any form of parabolic utterance--"any parable, any metaphor, any symbol, any

sacrament."[30] To take an example: Because the idolator's imagination relies on the literal and the inward,[31] he cannot apprehend a poetry of incarnation which is, in Denise Levertov's words, primarily suggestive, evocative, and hieroglyphic; nor can one whose own images "have no breath in their mouths"[32] accept the inspiration to incarnate. Parabolic utterances will prompt the idolator to seek explanations. But, says Barfield, "explanations are of no avail [for him]. They will merely substitute one sort of idol for another."

The solution to idolarty in both life and art, Barfield thinks, entails a change of imaginative direction. The artist stands in a "directionally creator relation" to the appearances, whether he wills to or not, and their fate depends on his orientation toward or away from chaos, inanity, and impersonality.[33] In order to orient himself away from these, the artist must make a "voluntary inward motion in the direction of iconoclasm," and suffer "that change of direction of the whole current of a man's being--the <u>metanoia</u>, or turning about of the mind, for which the heart's name is 'repentance'. . . ."[34] Barfield warns that a total redirection of consciousness affecting all imagery and representation is violent, but it does not involve coercion:

> Henceforth the life of the image is to be drawn from within. The life of the image is to be none other than the life of imagination. And it is of the very nature of imagination that it cannot be <u>inculcated</u>. There must be first of all the <u>voluntary</u> stirring from within. It must be, not indeed self-created, but certainly self-willed, or else--it is not imagination at all; and is

> therefore incapable of iconoclasm. Iconoclasm is made possible by the seed of the Word stirring within us, as imagination.[35]

If the predominant movement of imagination heretofore has been from without inward, iconoclasm means the choice to break the pattern or redirect it to move from within outward; for that, as we saw in Chapter Five, is the direction of the Word.

Some iconoclastic impulse has begun to show itself here and there in American poetry, though it seems confined mainly to the area of poetic language. Albert Hofstadter, remarking that language is impossible without images, also believes that "a speech and a song, made of images, that breaks the whole bitter fury of image-existence," is possible.[36] And in "The Attending," Henry Rago envisions a language whose

> words are
> Broken on the poem as the waves are broken,
> As the poem at last is broken
> On a farther music
> And poem after poem--how many!--
> Broken.[37]

When it comes to the self, however, the poet has to contend with an Adamic imagery buried so deeply in his consciousness that he feels disinclined to challenge it. In "Adam Before His Mirror," Ned O'Gorman's protagonist rhapsodizes:

> . . . You are the stillness
> and the moving in my brain.
> You are the span and fathom
> of my chest. You are the arch
> and vaulting of my skull. You are
> root of my hand and exultation
> in my reins. You are my image.
> I am the stress and raiment of clay.[38]

Yet for Thomas Merton, the poet is a prophet, "Fighting the

strenuous imago all day long."[39] And in a poem called "The Death of Europe," Charles Olson realizes that, "The images / have to be / contradicted / The metamorphoses / are to be / undone."[40] "Tonight," adds Robert Creeley about his view of himself, "let me go / at last out of whatever / mind I thought to have / and all the habits of it."[41]

The American poet can appreciate what a change of direction would mean for himself, and in some ways he would like to achieve one. But whether he actually will change, whether he will repent and move away from the image of himself as a first Adam--there is the issue. The crisis-point of American poetry lies there, in the initial decision either to adhere to the old way or to abandon it. If the poet keeps going as he has, it is virtually certain that the incarnation of the Word, as discussed above, will not happen in his poetry; that the inspiration of the Spirit will not take place; and that the poet will remain a first Adam, locked within himself. But if he decides to turn after all, then--who knows what the Word will do? To find out, the act of turning must shift its focus from repentance to faith.

3.

Of course, repentance implies faith already at work. The poet turning from the myth of himself as a first Adam exercises his belief that the myth has reached the end of its effectiveness, and so puts himself in position to turn toward one that he believes might serve his art more effectively. It sounds like a matter of simple choice--perhaps too simple.

As one poet has asked: "William James aside, how does one will belief?"[42]

The Christian answer is that, in a sense, one does not have to will it. At the outset, faith is a gift offered to anyone who will receive it, regardless of his personal circumstances.[43] The Truth spontaneously reveals Himself and is heard; the Sower broadcasts His seed, which takes root everywhere. Barfield's mention of "the seed of the Word stirring within us, as imagination," which I quoted above, occurs during his reflections on the Parable of the Sower, where he adds: "It was an attempt [by Jesus] to awaken his hearers to the realization that this seed was within their own hearts and minds, and no longer in nature or anywhere without." The Word makes iconoclasm and final participation voluntarily possible, and its stirring within is the gift of faith.[44]

The will somehow comes into play, then, but the context in which it acts makes considerable difference. Many psychologies posit a dualism between the will and the intellect, which makes it possible to imagine various ways in which these two might oppose one another. A classic example has to do with faith. If, on the one hand, a person regards faith as pure habit, he can select, reinforce, or change what he believes by sheer willpower. On the other hand, if someone else says that faith belongs primarily to the intellect and concerns the truth or falsity of a proposition, he cannot will belief because he cannot force the mind to accept as true what it knows as either false or questionable. William James

sought to reconcile that dualism, and psychology, though it has refined the terms of the discussion, still grapples with it. A Biblical psychology, however, begins from the understanding that truth and falsity are defined in practical terms according to what is reliable and what is not. The knowledge of truth means its acceptance in the heart, where those decisions that direct a person's life are also made; indeed, to know and to decide amount to virtually the same thing for him, since he only takes into the heart what he chooses to take. Belief, in other words, is a comprehensive psychic act by which the person sets himself to rely on what he deems reliable.[45] He wills belief in the same way he knows truth. The question that now asserts itself is, How does he come into the knowledge (acceptance) of truth in the first place?

The clearest answer in the Bible occurs in Romans 10:14-17. There, St. Paul asserts that faith comes from hearing the Word spoken forth--a statement far less innocuous than it appears. In the Biblical view, The Word has power in and of itself to achieve the purpose for which it is spoken. The speaking releases that power in a person's heart and forces him to decide whether he will open or shut his ears to the Word. If he has ears to hear, the very hearing implies the further decision to obey (the two verbs have the same root meaning).[46] The idea that hearing leads to faith explains a pattern behind many Biblical conversion accounts, including that of Paul himself. Typically, the convert first hears that his behavior is frustrated because, consciously or not,

he has come up against the will of God. When he indicates a willingness to hear more, he is told the mythical pattern of Jesus' life and urged to appropriate it into his own, on the promise that, as he does, the myth will realize itself within him.[47] The unconverted, though, are not the only ones who need to hear the Word spoken. The experienced believer needs it even more as his maturity of understanding increases; and Paul, who repeatedly comes back to the myth of the second Adam in his letters, advises the faithful to go on speaking the Word to each other and to hold fast to it in their hearts.[48]

Should the poet feel inclined to dismiss all this as pious theory, he might reflect on his own experience as a poet. By instinct and training, he develops in himself the capacity to hear with the ears of imagination. James Dickey's "To Landrum Guy, Beginning to Write at Sixty," opens with a description of the aging but inexperienced poet "consumed by the effort of listening."[49] In "A Cardinal," W. D. Snodgrass tells of his own efforts to listen creatively[50]; and W. S. Merwin wonders at the intensity of a man in the garden listening "to the turning / Wheel that is not there."[51] By listening, the poet opens himself to hear the voice of the world, as Merwin's "On the Subject of Poetry" and Denise Levertov's "Night on Hatchet Cove" illustrate. Listening also opens him to the voice of inspiration, to which he strives to be especially docile: Merwin associates inspiration with hearing in "The Poem," and so does Daniel Hoffman in "A Gift of Tongues."[52] There is a danger, though. Because he

listens with the imagination, what the poet hears may tend to corroborate what he has already told himself. For instance, as Snodgrass interprets the song of the cardinal, the bird is saying:

> "The world's not done to me;
> it is what I do;
> whom I speak shall be;
> I music out my name
> and what I tell is who
> in all the world I am"

--a message the poet accepts for himself and builds upon in the following stanzas.[53] Likewise, Alfred Hamilton hears a rooster crowing, and applauds the way "this iconoclast of old . . . / Bespeaks of himself" as "the savior, . . . the guardian of the new dawn."[54] But whether the message confirms or challenges an existing belief, the poet makes a <u>volitional response</u> to what he hears. He may turn away from it, as Robert Lowell does: "I stop in our Christmas-papered bedroom, hearing / my <u>Nolo</u>, the non-Messianic man. . . ."[55] Or he may turn toward it: to Henry Rago, the comic plane of understand creates a music that invites consent.[56]

If hearing a word spoken by others builds faith, hearing it spoken by oneself secures faith. Owen Barfield points out how the collective representations of a culture change over a long period of time--partly through indoctrination, partly through a more gradual process of linguistic and social development. As an example, he explains that:

> in so far as the aberrations of the formally representational arts . . . are genuine, they are genuine because the artist has in some way or other experienced the world he represents. And in so far as they are appreciated, they are

> appreciated by those who are themselves willing to make a move towards seeing the world in that way, and, ultimately therefore, seeing that kind of world.[57]

In the nineteenth century, Emerson, Whitman, and others experienced the poet as a first Adam and represented him that way. The ensuing cultural dialog[58] so embedded that vision of the poet in the American mind that it has become second nature for twentieth century writers to see themselves as that kind of Adamic figure. But another kind is possible, as the poet is beginning to hear. The more he listens imaginatively to the myth of the second Adam and begins consciously and systematically to represent himself that way, the more likely it is that he will eventually come to see himself as that kind of poet. Conscious figuration, like hearing, is affected by choice. And, as Barfield might say, only as the passive receptivity demanded by hearing is united with the voluntary creativity demanded by imagination will the Adamic appearances finally be saved.[59]

Before taking up the subject of faith's expression in poetic speech, I should mention that Christianity warns its adherents against two particular obstacles to faith. Both have to do with hearing, and both have insinuated themselves into American poetry. One is a certain kind of noise. The other, referred to above in a different context, is excessive self - scrutiny.

By noise, I do not mean the sounds of violence that Galway Kinnell, for instance, would hear in the drone of the SAC bomber.[60] I refer instead to the noise created by the poet himself--noise generated by an artist less interested in

hearing than in making himself heard. Hugh Nelson, worried that he will become "a recorder of sounds," warns his muse to "accept / me as I am and the world / as it will be / never yours entire."[61] Donald Finkel exhorts everyone to "turn up his scrubbed, gleaming face to the sun, and yell."[62] Allen Ginsberg launches his "Poem Rocket" in order to "send up my message / Beyond / Someone to hear me there."[63] And others like them scream and hurl execrations and generally magnify the fury of chaos.[64] Genuine rage, of course, is something else; but as John Unterecker learns by degrees in a poem called "Orations", even that ought to yield priority to the sound of the Other.[65] The poet needs to hear the whispering of Elijah's still small voice, or he can say nothing in his turn.[66] Robert Duncan regards his own speech as pretense because the language of the poem comes ultimately from beyond both speech and hearing.[67] In fact, agrees Henry Rago, it comes from and creates a silence that "yields these words. / It holds my word."[68] To hear it, the poet must create a like silence within himself, "like / the sudden halt of great machines."[69]

A second impediment to hearing is self-scrutiny. The hearing of the Word implies obedience to it, and obedience is a form of action. But an excessive scrutinizing of one's behavior tends to impede action, a phenomenon already known in literature through the protagonist of Dostoevski's Notes from the Underground. In effect, when the poet steps back to criticize how he is listening, he is no longer in a position to listen; failing to hear the Word, consequently, he

cannot rely on what It might be telling him. Emmett Jarrett's poem, "The Edge of the Roof," shows what happens next. Jarrett states his problem with writing poetry in the metaphor of a kite: "The structure / soars but is subject to crash, / and the string may break." That possibility--a real one, to be sure--leads him to gaze in horror at the exposed position he occupies as a poet:

> How did I get here?
> What am I doing
> on this small pedestal
> at the edge of the roof?
> I did not notice
> where I was going. Now
> I am afraid to fall.

Though the poet admits he might fly, he will not allow himself the risk. Distrust of the Word and the wind numbs him into a gargoyle's immobility.[70] The extremity of Jarrett's alienation casts a dubious light on Allen Tate's theory that alienation makes a fit subject for modern poetry.* Perhaps.

---

*Tate's opinion, quoted in a different light in the previous chapter, appears in his essay on "Modern Poetry" (Essays of Four Decades, pp. 211-221). Stated more fully, Tate's belief is that a certain withholding of self from the common run of humanity, with its idolatry of the means as the end, is necessary for the poet to remain human. Alienation gives him the latitude to develop an "aesthetic-historical mode" of knowledge that allows him to approach the world through his heightened sensitivity to his own feelings, beliefs, and experiences. It helps him resist "the strong political pressures which ask the poet to 'communicate' to passively conditioned persons what a servile society expects them to feel." Finally, it encourages the use of violent language that forces "into linguistic existence subjective meanings and insights that poets can no longer discover in the common world." Tate concludes his essay with this statement: "Modern American poetry, limited in scope to the perceiving, as distinguished from the seeing eye, has given us images of the present condition of man that we cannot find elsewhere; and we ought to have them. We should be grateful that we have got them."

Alienation may have all the virtue that Tate claims for

But it also encourages the sort of inwardness that thwarts belief in an outward-directed Word. X. J. Kennedy's advice about inspiration ("Would you write well? Don't watch."[71]) applies to faith--and even demands it.

Faith indicates the appropriate poetic action: "I believed, therefore I spoke," says the Biblical poet.[72] In the transition from hearing to speaking lies the dark unknown of all writing. The imperative to utter the poem comes from beyond the poem itself and wakes in the poet a demand for its expression.[73] But the demand may assert itself before the poet is in a position to comply; he may feel compelled to speak anyhow, and may wish to resist speaking until he has the opportunity. Whether he prefers to operate on a rush of intuition or with careful deliberation, he has no guarantee that what he finally says will accurately convey what he hears within him--or, assuming that it will, that what he says will

---

it, but it is at best a two-edged blade, since it can destroy as well preserve the poet's humanity. The danger is most easily seen in Tate's use of the word common to imply the subhuman or the bovine, as in the case of the "common man's" servility. But common may also imply the sharing of humanity, as in a community, which can elevate ordinary human beings above their natural states. While the poet need not bow to pressures to "communicate" (a word which itself suggests a community between poet and audience) according to a group's servile expectations, neither should he bow to the opposite servility of self-exclusion from those to whom he would speak; for then, as he has already begun to experience, he would hold nothing--not even language--in common with his audience. Tate, of course, does not go so far; but a poet like Jarrett does. It ought to be made clear that the poet, like the prophet, works from the polarity of being at once separate from and part of common humanity. To fulfill his role, he cannot rest content with a merely perceiving eye, which by definition tends inward and limits the "aesthetic-historical mode" to the singular and the present. He requires the seeing eye as well, that would deepen his sensitivity to the common experience of man and his vision of its apocalypse.

work as a poem. Like Jarrett, the poet must decide whether to soar out from the roof or sit tight. If he decides to try his wings, he will experience the wind's unpredictability both in the process of speaking and in the finished speech.[74] Most poets like the exhilaration. A. R. Ammons enjoys "the freedom that / Scope eludes my grasp, that there is no finality of vision, / that I have perceived nothing completely . . . ."[75] In Cid Corman's experience, the emerging poem is an "event so / taken to / heart heart at / height flings out" spontaneously[76]; and he advises the poet not "to come back / ever" from the unknown, "but / to go forth."[77] Theodore Roethke observes that, "Every sentence is a cast into the dark."[78] Denise Levertov agrees that the poet "launches into the unknown" and calls poetic speech an act of faith.[79]

But not of blind faith, necessarily. For the poet who relies on the myth of the second Adam, the unknown is not wholly unknown since the myth reveals the substance of what he is to trust. He will know, for example, that the Truth does not evade him but seeks to dis-cover Itself through poetic invention; that the Word Who speaks him speaks also from him; that the Spirit, which blows where It wills, nonetheless descends where invited and remains; and that, through his own conspiracy in rather than domination of the creative process, he brings the Word into poetic flesh. Like a pilot who understands in theory how a plane flies, the poet knows how the myth is supposed to work. He does not know for certain that it will, until he turns theory to practice. For him, faith means taking an "as if" approach to composition:

writing from within the myth of the second Adam as if it will lift him imaginatively off the ground. Then, once up, he has the air to consider. He never quite knows what a Spirit-inspired Word will do, or lead him to do, in the poem. His poetic skill translates faith into a confident riding of the wind.

4.

One American poet who has gone far toward realizing a new poetic self is Theodore Roethke. One may debate his success, in that the self of his poems retains many qualities of the first Adam. It is egocentric, for example: "one comes upon a preoccupation with the poet's own self as the primary matter of artistic exploration and knowledge," Ralph J. Mills explains.[80] And it remains solitary even after the experience of renewal, as in "The Exorcism." On the other hand, Roethke's Adamic self does tend away from "the self-involved: / The ritualists of the mirror, the lonely drinkers, / The minions of benzedrine and paraldehyde, / And those who submerge themselves deliberately in trivia" ("Fourth Meditation," in Collected Poems, p. 169)[81]; it turns instead toward personal integration and communion with the world ("The Dying Man," pp. 153ff).[82] And without doubt, Roethke enjoys the sensation of movement:

> In the long journey out of the self
> There are many detours, washed-out interrupted raw places
> Where shale slides dangerously
> And the back wheels hang almost over the edge
> At the sudden veering, the moment of turning.
> ("Journey to the Interior," p. 193)

Success aside, the "I" of this poem heads resolutely through

the turns of repentance and belief, toward immersion into the second Adam.

The need for movement in some direction becomes evident the more we notice the self standing at that point of crisis Roethke calls the edge--be it the edge of a field, an abyss, a river, an ocean, a city, or an unspecified landmark of the imagination. Occasionally, the edge means something less ominous: a place of still joy, where one expects the "pure moment" in which to seek out eternal purpose ("I'm Here," p. 163; "Fourth Meditation," p. 168). But usually it signifies a place or time of passage from one locale to another. The self may reach the edge only to turn back: to the old woman, the weeds hissing at the edge of a field symbolize "love's worst ugly day," when her spirit moves down instead of up ("First Meditation," p. 157); in "The Longing," the slag-heaps at the edge of raw cities indicate the point of the spirit's regression into a half-life (p. 187). Or the self may choose to cross over, to enter the "waste lonely places / Behind the eye; the lost acres at the edge of smoky cities" ("First Meditation," p. 157). The edge has poetic as well as spiritual significance. The poet sings into a fissure at the edge of a raw field ("The Song," p. 146); he sees his father, changed into "another man, / Walking the edge, loquacious, unafraid," and is encouraged to seek his own metamorphosis ("The Dying Man," p. 155); he associates "the fluttering on the sill of the eyes" with the passage of imagination from sleep to consciousness ("I'm Here," p. 162); as a poet, he wants to dream beyond his life, beyond "the edge

of all the land, the final sea" ("The Abyss," p. 221). Ralph J. Mills defines Roethke's edge as "that precarious border . . . between ecstasy and the void."[83] It is that; it is also the dividing line between sensual and spiritual imagination, the "dry border" between visible light and the "dazzling dark behind the sun" ("The Wall," pp. 154-155). As long as he is human, a composite of flesh and spirit, the poet cannot stand wholly on one side of his nature or the other. The imagination inclines toward the spiritual; but "the edge is what I have" ("In a Dark Time," p. 239) since it is the position from which the poet gathers his material:

> The edge is what we have
> In the grey otherwise,
> The instant gathers.
> ("Song," p. 258)

Significantly, then, the moment of turning in the poet's journey to the interior occurs at the edge of a cliff. The self encounters many such edges on the way, points at which the imagination turns away from sensuality "toward the other side of light" (p. 195).

Whether the turning from "detours, washed-out interrupted raw places" be slight or sharp (pp. 193, 194), for Roethke it always involves a change of imaginative course. The wheel of time turns constantly away from itself ("The Far Field," p. 200); the poet also turns from it by abandoning his natural heart and its wild disordered language ("Her Becoming," p. 166). It is deadly work:

> I turned upon my spine,
> I turned and turned again,
> A cold God-furious man
> Writhing until the last
> Forms of his secret life

Lay with the dross of death.
("The Exorcism," p. 147)

For Roethke, the writing of poetry demands that the poet be prepared to die[84]: "All visions are of death," he concludes.[85] The poet is "that final thing, / A man learning to sing," because once and for all death enlarges his capacity to sway with the world ("His Words," p. 153): "Thus I endure this last pure stretch of joy, / The dire dimension of a final thing" ("The Tree, The Bird," p. 248). Obviously, if the self dies the imagination dies with it. In "Infirmity," the poet's ailing body signals the death of his image of himself, introducing the theme of iconoclasm:

> The instant ages on the living eye;
> Light on its rounds, a pure extreme of light
> Breaks on me as my meager flesh breaks down--
> The soul delights in that extremity.
> (p. 244)

Because a sensual eye cannot keep the image pure ("The Wall," p. 154), and because the imagination craves more of the world than an after-image of the inner eye ("The Exulting," p. 155), it strives to break from the low place of "my own dead salt" ("The Exorcism," p. 147). The poet standing in the wreckage of water at the edge of the sea describes how a stone breaks the eddying current, and sees there the loss and discovery of himself ("The Long Waters," pp. 196ff). And he vows, "I'll make a broken music or I'll die" ("In Evening Air," p. 240).

While being renewed through death, the lost self "changes, / Turning toward the sea, / A sea-shape turning around" ("The Far Field," p. 201). What frightens the poet in the early stages of writing is that he does not know quite what to do:

Beginner,
Perpetual beginner,
The soul knows not what to believe,
In its small folds, stirring sluggishly,

. . . . . .
A fearful ignorance.
("What Can I Tell My Bones?" p. 171)

Yet he must do something: "Which is the way? I ask, and turn to go, / As a man turns to face on-coming snow" ("The Decision," p. 245). His efforts to write are often accompanied by the realization that the self does indeed teeter on an edge, that it rocks between dark and dark ("The Abyss," p. 221). If he cannot see his way, perhaps he can hear it, for in the dark sight and hearing tend to fuse ("Infirmity," p. 244), and he can listen for "the barest speech of light among the stones" ("What Can I Tell My Bones?" p. 173). Still, he must not respond to any voice he hears, for he will hear his own echo, leading him to despair ("In a Dark Time," p. 239): "The loneliest thing I know / Is my own mind at play," he remarks ("His Foreboding," p. 215). Instead, the poet listens with the imagination for the speech of creation--and even for its transforming silence ("Her Becoming," pp. 165, 167). His response takes the form of obedience to "the wind at my back, / Bringing me home from the twilight fishing"; and obedience leads him, climbing and turning, into:

A terrible violence of creation,
A flash into the burning heart of the abominable;
Yet if we wait, unafraid, beyond the fearful instant,
The burning lake turns into a forest pool,
The fire subsides into rings of water,
A sunlit silence.
("The Abyss," p. 221)

And so the poet speaks--or better, sings--in communion with

the world ("The Song," p. 146). The singing does not confer certitude, necessarily, but it does permit the hopeful motion of the poem: the verbal "faring-forth" of imagination, which is Roethke's definition of the act of love ("The Motion," p. 243).

5.

In one of his conversations with Eckermann, Goethe contends that a poet "deserves not the name while he only speaks out his few subjective feelings; but as soon as he can appropriate to himself, and express the world, he is a poet." Expanding on that idea, he continues:

> . . . All eras in a state of decline and dissolution are subjective; on the other hand, all progressive eras have an objective tendency. Our present time is retrograde, for it is subjective; we see this not merely in poetry, but also in painting, and much besides. Every healthy effort, on the contrary, is directed from the inward to the outward world. . . .[86]

Aside from the validity of his generalizations and his possibly outmoded critical vocabulary, Goethe makes three points of interest to the American poet. First, he implies a causal connection between the breakdown of a culture and the writing of that culture's poetry, a connection Eliot suggests when he calls modern literature corrupted by secularism.*

---

*Unlike Eliot's Goethe's interests here are expressly literary rather than pastoral. He points directly to the incursion of social disintegration <u>into</u> poetry instead of warning that social disintegration can be accelerated <u>by</u> poetry; yet he and Eliot do agree that dissolution seeps into poetry from without. In their context, Goethe's remarks are part of his reflections on the visit of a Dr. Wolff from Hamburg, an improvisatore whose subjectivity he contrasts with the objectivity of Molière. With respect to social influences on art, Goethe complains that the presence of adolescent girls

Second, he confirms the importance of a direction for the imagination, particularly one whereby the imagination draws the world into itself and speaks it forth again. Thirdly, though neither Adamic nor incarnational, Goethe's language here makes it clear that the inner condition of a poetry and its direction go hand in hand since, for him, an integrated poetry turns outward. A century and a half before it became evident in American poetry, the need for renewal in European poetry was being voiced.

But not in exactly the same terms. At the risk of some overgeneralization myself, I would guess that no European literature has so completely absorbed a dominant myth into its poetic consciousness as American literature has absorbed the myth of Adam, nor has European literature come as close to realizing the mythical pattern in its history. The reason may lie in the fact that European literature has never known a time when it did not exist, has not needed to discover its peculiar identity, and can scarcely imagine itself coming to the end of its line; consequently, it has not required a myth to interpret the beginning, middle, and end of its history. That is not to say that European literature has no guiding myths of imagination. It has several, but they tend to apply in schematic and non-historical fashion to the workings of imagination _semper et ubique_. A Nietzschean theory of creativity, for example,

---

in theater audiences has forced playwrights to produce "pieces which are weak, and therefore _proper_," and advises Eckermann to avoid the theater. (Italics in original. See _Conversations of Goethe_, pp. 166-168.)

draws on Greek mythology to explain how the imagination functions according to an Apollonian-Dionysian polarity. The figures of Apollo and Dionysos reveal something about the poetic mind; but they are not identified with the poet himself, nor are their stories his story. The Judeo-Christian experience of Europe has invited a gradual identification of the mind of the poet with the mind of God, but the purpose is the same: to understand how the creative imagination as such operates. In fact, such an identification does not involve myth because God has no story: He neither begins, develops, nor ends, and His infinite creativity cannot experience or ever need renewing. On the other hand, the figures and stories of Jesus, the saints, and Adam himself appear everywhere in European literature and often carry a mythological significance as regards the human condition at large. But, once more, they are not commonly invoked to explain what it means for the European poet to write a poem, or to guide him through the trial of imaginative disintegration. Whatever the prospects for renewal in European literature, they are not approached through a dominant poetic myth.

In contrast, the prospects for renewal in American poetry are latent in the Old Testament myth of Adam because that myth, received in narrative terms, tells the poet's own story. It places him squarely in the world of time and circumstance, and requires him to choose how he will develop there. It interprets the history of his poetic awareness from a beginning that has occurred in fact to an end which

threatens to overtake him whatever he may do to avoid it. Once blessed with the epistemology of Eden by which, linguistically omnipotent, he named and so created the world and himself, the Adamic poet now retains an epistemology of loss wherein he experiences divorce from the language, removal from the outer world, and fragmentation within. Yet he retains his creative drive, and now searches for restoration of its capacities.

One avenue to restoration is certainly closed. The poet will not recover his pristine Adamic self, his paradisal imagination. ". . . There is no returning to that garden," writes Vassar Miller in an early poem; "No, not to Adam's. We must keep our own, / Remembering."[87] The prospect of returning to the garden even in memory raises the question whether the other alternatives--withdrawal inward and paralysis--are truly open. But in the keynote poem of one of his last books, Robert Lowell seems to indicate that they are not:

> Poets die adolescents, their beat embalms them,
> the archetypal voices sing offkey;
> the old actor cannot read his friends,
> and nevertheless he reads himself aloud,
> genius hums the auditorium dead.
> The line must terminate. . . .[88]

The line must terminate: not this or that poet's or this or that school's, but the whole Adamic line. Other traditions could replace it, such as a cosmopolitan kind of writing[89] based on the recognition that American poetry, after all, begins from and is nourished by the European experience. But a more proper alternative--proper, that is, to the American line of development--is to end one Adamic tradition by

beginning another, by absorbing the myth of a second Adam into the poetic consciousness and learning to write poems according to the pattern it reveals.

Such a myth transforms the existing tradition. It keeps the poet in the temporal, physical world and, by cutting him loose from its secularism, permits him to devote himself to it more freely. It elevates the history of consciousness from its origins in the flesh to a new origin in the Spirit, and leads the imagination toward an end which is not catastrophe but revelation. It confers on the poet a fresh, spiritual way of knowing, yet plunges him into physical realities as well; through communion with the outer world and the inner Word, he incarnates both in words. Finally, the myth of the second Adam changes the poet's search for restoration into a gradual finding, an invention not only of the way there but the place as well. The prospects for renewal in American poetry are excellent from one point of view, because the myth of the second Adam is a myth of renewal.

But to accept the myth is to accept baptism, and that very word prompts a second look. The myth of Adam renewed is a specifically Christian one; the poet who would plunge himself into it, if only for poetic reasons, must reckon with its Christianity. He will have to face up to a basic question that it asks of him, and to overcome his fears of "constricting orthodoxy."

In his essay on "The Generation of 1962," Paul Carroll notes how indifferent poets seems to be "to the traditional

attitude one was taught to call religious: namely, . . . Whom do men say the Son of Man is?" Whereas earlier generations of poets grappled with "the anguish both of the question and of the possible answers," current poets "ignore not only the question of Christ but also the attitude which favors that answers to it are viewed within a Christian context which names one either Christian, heretical or heathen."[90] Carroll may not be entirely right about the young poets, who, though they prefer to ignore the question and its possible answers, still demonstrate the nervous preoccupation with Christianity mentioned in Chapter III. But he is certainly right in saying that their spiritual experiments--the list covers ten categories, and more could be added[91]--attempt to evade or ignore a Christian context. He is also right about the Christian response, which categorizes all such attempts as generally secular. Without denying their occasionally real value for poetry, they have little to do with a poetic myth of the second Adam. That myth necessarily asks who the Son of Man is. The poet who works with it, however briefly or experimentally, cannot skirt the question or its answers.

Which brings up the question of orthodoxy. The word means right opinion, in this case, a view of Christ generally consistent with that held by the Christian community at large. The poet who begins from the position that the community's way of thinking opposes or limits the individual's will, if he does not actively subordinate the former to his own way of thinking, at least try to avoid getting hemmed in by it.[92] Harvey Shapiro's "Mountain, Fire, Thornbush" registers the

fear that the community's "right opinion" will lead to the imposition of the Law on poetry and the closing of doors on its freedom. Wishing to shape his own beliefs, Ira Sardoff tries to avoid encirclement; he admits a secret desire "to make oneself whole / without closing the circle forever."[93] Yet an orthodoxy exists: the community maintains that its opinion is right and, once again, the poet must decide how he will accept it. To soften matters somewhat, though, it is only fair to add that the Christian community preaches something that might be called a loophole in its orthodoxy. "The letter kills; it is the Spirit that gives life"[94]--and the poet knows from experience what it means to look to the Spirit for poetic life. The Spirit speaks to the heart from which imagination operates, and It speaks the myth, rather than a creed that interprets myth. There is an "orthodox myth," to be sure. But because it addresses the heart instead of the intellect, its orthodoxy comes closer to one of love instead of idea. Here too the poet can cite experience to show that no orthodoxy is so strict, or so liberating, as one born of love.

Granted that prospects for renewal look good from the mythical standpoint, they appear less exciting when examined pragmatically. For instance, we are told that we live in a "post-Christian era." Aside from the likelihood that the term applies better to the disappearance of Christendom than of Christianity, it gives the impression that the Christian myth is something modern culture has outgrown. The attitude hardly makes a poetic myth drawn from Christianity attractive.

I was once asked what the poet would do if the Holy Spirit ceased to exist a hundred years from now, and had to admit that the question needed raising. Christian pastoral experience, moreover, prompts the suspicion that a renewal of poetry along the lines I have described may not occur until the poet has exhausted the available alternatives to it. He has not exhausted them yet. Carroll's list of spiritual experiments--the word is revealing, and can apply to Christian spirituality as well--shows that the poet can turn to almost anything that will distract him from his Adamic predicament. Finally, it will be difficult for any renewal to take hold as long as a vision for it remains uncultivated by the persons most intimately concerned: the poets. This last point deserves some elaboration.

Whereas a fad skyrockets to great heights of popularity and then fizzles out, genuine renewal tends to become only moderately popular at best, yet will often endure for generations and influence developments not directly connected to it. The Imagist movement, for example, began among a half dozen poets who, personally convinced of their poetic ideal, committed themselves as a group to seeing it realized in their work, and to advertizing its feasibility for poetry in general. The image did not serve them as a gimmick to make their poems quotable; the image <u>was</u> the poem, the union in language of thought and thing. Though not a fad, the original impulse of the movement waned after a few years without achieving great popularity. Yet it lived on in the minds and writings of its originators, who matured in their

own practice of the ideal, and it deeply influenced vast segments of American poetry that do not claim descent from Imagism. A renewal of the Adamic self would most likely proceed similarly. The individual poet would plunge himself into the Word and begin to write in conspiracy with it; he would commit himself to a small group of like-minded poets who would encourage renewal among one another; and gradually, the beliefs and experiences of the group would spread abroad and affect the writing of other poets.

A small group would probably generate two principal types of literature: a representative body of poems, and some prose explaining the poetic theory. The poetry, of course, would come first. One can only speculate as to what it would be like. For example, it would hopefully avoid setting the poetic self up as "the primary matter of artistic exploration and knowledge."[95] By their fruit are they known: If a second Adam truly behaves as a dual, communing, outward-tending consciousness, he will not as a rule feel compelled to emphasize the workings of his own imagination. The self will have a place in the poem, but not the central place: that belongs to the Word. It would be important, however, for the poet to discuss his imagination in the theoretical literature. This, for its part, would serve essentially the same function as a theology; that is, as a way to interpret the poet's experience of the Word, and to teach other poets how to enter a similar experience themselves.

My own gues is that Adamic renewal, when and if it does come, will not come easily. It will entail a shift of

polarity at the heart of American imaginations that will profoundly alter every mode of identification, of perception, of rational thought, of belief, of linguistic usage, and of artistic propriety that goes into the writing of a poem. As with a shift of the earth's polarity, the immediate outward effects on poetry will appear cataclysmic, even though the inner change, radical as it must be, will nonetheless be simple. All this is dramatic language, but it is a dramatic turnabout I am looking toward. And, if I may be permitted to end such a study this way, I would like to use a poem of my own composition to visualize what I think might happen. The poem is called:

"A Geological Speculation"

What if
     our earth's
          center
     went ec-
          centric,
if its core of
     molten stone merely
slipped
     aside
to yield focus
     to the fire
          itself?
and what if
     that re-
          centering
     caused
the world's polarity to
     shift,
the wobble at
     its axis
     steady, and
gravity's uneven
     pull
          swerve
to align
     on the new north?

Oh we'd feel

an earth-
quake then,
of strength enough
to stun
to stillness
all
our measuring.
Perhaps it would rock
the oceans
loose,
and with them
drench into life
the desert's dry
through,
and even surge
to pound
the mountains' granite
down.

And it might be
that,
all our houses
sheared
open
by the stress,
lords would
overthrow themselves to
labor,
and slaves
be forced to
take on
freedom,
and isolate I's
conjoin
into we.

There would be deaths--
perhaps many,
perhaps repeated
in
and out:
we'd know
calamity
in such distress.
But what if
all this surface
madness
were really something
less, were simply
a planet's grimace,
strain of our
outer crust to
pivot
with the
newness
at its heart?[96]

NOTES

NOTES TO CHAPTER I, pp. 1-6

1. T.S. Eliot, "Religion and Literature," in Selected Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1960), p. 352.

2. Ibid., p. 354.

3. Ibid., p. 352.

4. Ibid., p. 348. M.H. Abrams comments: "If the poem works, our appreciation of the matters it presents is not aloofly contemplative, but actively engaged. . . . We are interested in a fashion that brings into play our entire moral economy and expresses itself continuously in attitudes of approval or disapproval, sypathy or antipathy." Literature and Belief (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 16-17.

5. Ibid., p. 350.

6. Ibid., p. 347.

7. Ibid., pp. 347, 353.

8. Ibid., p. 354.

9. Vincent Buckley, Poetry and Morality (London: Chatto and Windus, 1959), p. 132.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II, pp. 7-50

1. Hoxie Neale Fairchild, Religious Trends in English Poetry, vol. 6: 1920-1965: Valley of Dry Bones (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 3.

2. From an interview conducted by David Ossman in The Sullen Art (New York: Corinth Books, 1963), p. 21.

3. See Roy Harvey Pearce, The Continuity of American Poetry, (Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 32ff.

4. John Berryman, "The Ball Poem," in Short Poems (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux; 1967), p. 14.

5. Allen Ginsberg, "Howl," in Naked Poetry, ed. Stephen Berg and Robert Mezey (The Bobbs-Merill Company, Inc., 1969), p. 189.

6. Robert Bly, "The Fire of Despair Has Been Our Savior," The Light Around the Body (New York: Haper & Row, 1967), p. 48.

7. Donald Justice, "The Snowfall," in The Summer Anniersaries (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1960), p. 8. Paul Carroll, in Sullen Art, pp. 20-21.

8. John Berryman, "The Ball Poem," Short Poems, p. 14.

9. Anne Sexton, "The Abortion," All My Pretty Ones (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961), p. 21.

10. Denis Johnson, "Quickly Aging Here," in Quickly Aging Here, ed. by Geof Hewitt (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Anchor Books, 1969), p. 326.

11. Denise Levertov, "The Old Adam," O Taste and See (New York: New Directions Books, 1964), p. 48.

12. Raymond Dipalma and Stephen Shrader, "The Andalusian Lute: Another Baedeker," in Quickly Aging Here, p. 162. During composition, these poets sometimes sit facing away from each other.

13. Anne Sexton, "The Lost Ingredient," in Selected Poems (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 23.

14. Cid Corman, "I Have Come Far to Have Found Nothing," in Once and for All: Poems for William Bronk (New Rochelle: The Elizabeth Press, 1975), epilogue (not paginated).

15. Fanny Howe, "Jasmine and the Gypsies," in Aging, p. 305. Eggs (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1970), p. 67, has a slightly different version, published after the version in Quickly Aging Here.

16. Walter W. Skeat, An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1882), p. 555.

17. Cor. 5: 21; RSV translation. Italics mine.

18. I am using the Dictionary of the Bible, ed. John L. McKenzie, S.J. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1965), entry under "Sin," pp. 817-821; the Hebrew language uses more than three words to discuss sin, but their meanings are equivalent.

19. Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Harbinger Books, 1957), pp. 183-184.

20. Roy Harvey Pearce, Continuity, pp. 3, 433.

21. Ibid., p. 433; see pp. 296-318.

22. Ibid., p. 187.

23. Ibid., pp. 153-269 passim.

24. Ibid., pp. 253-429 passim.

25. Ibid., p. 433.

26. Wallace Stevens, from Part II of "The Rock," The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954, reprinted 1961), pp.526-527.

27. Pearce, Continuity, p. 433.

28. David Wagoner, "The Poets Agree to be Quiet by the Swamp," in Staying Alive (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), p. 24. Also in Collected Poems 1956-1976 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), p. 67.

29. John Berryman, "Dream Song 28: Snow Line," in 77 Dream Songs (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1964),

p. 32.

30. David Wagoner, "Making Up for a Soul," in Staying Alive, p. 55.

31. S. Foster Damon, "Just What's the Matter with Me Anyhow," in Possibilities of Poetry, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Dell Publishing Company Delta Books, 1970), p. 471.

32. Wagoner, "Making Up for a Soul," in Staying Alive, p. 55.

33. Philip Levine, "To a Child Trapped in a Barber Shop," in Not This Pig (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), pp. 32-33.

34. W. S. Merwin, "The Widow," in The Lice (New York: Atheneum, 1967), pp. 34-35.

35. Sylvia Plath, "The Moon and the Yew Tree," in Ariel (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 41.

36. Robert Lowell, "Night Sweat," in For the Union Dead (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1964), p. 68.

37. Theodore Roethke, "Meditations of an Old Woman: First Meditation," in The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1966), pp. 157, 159.

38. Arthur Gregor, "Spirits, Dancing," in Selected Poems (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1971), p. 63.

39. Robert Duncan, from "A Part-Sequence for Change," in Roots and Branches (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), p. 168f.

40. Galway Kinnell, "Ruins Under the Stars," in the 1964 edition of Flower Herding on Mount Monadnock (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company), pp. 54-55. Kinnell has at least two other versions of this poem in print, both of which appear in later works and omit the lines I have quoted: The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ into the New World: Poems 1946-1964 (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1974, p. 167, and Poems of Night (London: Rapp & Carroll, 1968), p. 2.

41. John Berryman, "Canto Amor," in Short Poems, p. 65.

42. Weldon Kees, "Small Prayer," in Poems 1947-1954 (San Francisco: Adrian Wilson, 1954), p. 82.

43. Thomas Merton, "There Has to Be a Jail for Ladies," in Emblems of a Season of Fury (New York: New Directions Books, 1963), p. 31.

44. Paul Zimmer, "Apple Blight," in The Voice that Is Great Within Us: American Poetry of the Twentieth Century,

ed. Hayden Carruth (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1970), p. 694.

45. Randall Jarrell, "90 North," in Randall Jarrell: The Complete Poems (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1969), p. 114.

46. Susan Axelrod, from part I of "Snips and Snails," in Aging, p. 178.

47. Donald Finkel, "The Flagpole Sitter," in Simeon (New York: Atheneum, 1964), p. 39.

48. John Berryman, "Dream Song 28: Snow Line," in 77 Dream Songs, p. 32. Also, "Dream Song 46," p. 50.

49. Ibid., "Dream Song 74," p. 81.

50. Robert Creeley, "A Reason," in Words (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), p. 93. See also "The Pool," in For Love: Poems 1950-1960 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), p. 141.

51. Idem, "Anger," in Words, pp. 65-66.

52. Ibid., "A Sight," pp. 101-102.

53. Idem, "A Form of Women," in For Love, pp. 56, 57.

54. Ibid., "The Operation," p. 34.

55. Idem, "Anger," in Words, pp. 65-66.

56. Ibid., "The Mechanic," p. 50.

57. Ibid., "Distance," pp. 69-73.

58. Denise Levertov, "The Ache of Marriage," in O Taste and See, p. 5.

59. Ibid., "Losing Track," p. 74.

60. Susan Axelrod, "Chameleon," in Aging, pp. 174-175.

61. Richard Wilbur, "Loves of the Puppets," in The Poems of Richard Wilbur (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Harvest Books, 1963), p. 12.

62. Ibid., "In the Smoking-Car," p. 38.

63. Ibid., "Ballade for the Duke of Orleans," p. 40.

64. Ibid., "Someone Talking to Himself," p. 37.

65. Anne Sexton, "Old Dwarf Heart," in All My Pretty Ones, p. 10.

66. Joel Oppenheimer, "Leave It to Me Blues," in A Controversy of Poets, ed. by Paris Leary and Robert Kelly (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Anchor Books 1965), p. 328.

67. Jonathan Williams, from part VI of "Mahler," in Voice, p. 654.

68. William Witherup, from part II of "Marian at Tassajara Springs," in Aging, p. 239.

69. Joseph Cardarelli, "Refrain," in Aging, p. 62; and Philip Levine, from part VII of "Silent in America," in Not This Pig, p. 49.

70. Stanley Kunitz, "The Dark and the Fair," in The Terrible Threshold: Poems 1940-1970 (London: Secker & Warburg, 1974), p. 36.

71. S. Foster Damon, "Copernicus Astrologus," in Possibilities of Poetry, p. 475.

72. Charles Bukowski, "A Nice Day," in Penguin Modern Poets 13: Charles Bukowski, Philip Lamantia, Harold Norse, no editor cited (Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 15-16.

73. Lawrence Ferlinghetti, "Poem 13," in Pictures of the Gone World, reprinted with A Coney Island of the Mind (New York: New Directions Books, 1958), p. 92.

74. Theodore Roethke, "In a Dark Time," in Collected Poems, p. 239.

75. Ibid.

76. John Hollander, "Philomel: Echo Songs," in Possibilities, p. 446.

77. S. Foster Damon, "To Thine Own Self," in Possibilities, p. 472.

78. Ibid., "Finis Coronat--" p. 476.

79. Allen Ginsberg, "Mescaline," in Kaddish and Other Poems (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1961), pp. 83-85.

80. Ibid., p. 86.

81. David Wagoner, "Going to Pieces," in Staying Alive, p. 29, and Collected Poems, p. 73.

82. Ibid., p. 30.

83. Amos 6: 11-12; Jersalem Bible translation.

84. Berryman, "Snow Line," in 77 Dream Songs, p. 32.

85. Stuart Peterfreund, "Miller," in Aging, p. 182.

86. Shirley Kaufman, "The Hunger," in The Floor Keeps Turing, (Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 1970), p. 6.

87. Ibid., "I Hear You," pp. 30-31.

88. Richard Wilbur, "The Undead," Poems, p. 23.

89. Dennis Trudell, "Going to Pittsburgh," in Aging, pp. 105-107.

90. David Wagoner, "Looking for Mountain Beavers," in Staying Alive, p. 36.

91. Joseph Cardarelli, "To Rimbaud in Hell," in Aging, p. 70.

92. Levertov, "O Taste and See," in O Taste and See, p. 53.

93. William Everson (Brother Antoninus), "The Screed of the Flesh," in The Crooked Lines of God: Poems 1949-1954. (Detroit: University of Detroit Press, 1959), p. 44.

94. Everson, "I am Long Weaned," in The Hazards of Holiness: Poems 1957-1960 (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1962), p. 45.

95. Anne Sexton, "The Operation," in ALL My Pretty Ones, p. 13.

96. Sylvia Plath, "The Elm," in Ariel, pp. 15-16.

97. John Berryman, "Dream Song 67," in 77 Dream Songs, p. 74.

98. Sylvia Plath, "Lady Lazarus," in Ariel, p. 9.

99. Ibid., "Daddy," p. 51.

100. Ibid., "A Birthday Present," pp. 42-44.

101. Ibid., "Lady Lazarus," p. 9.

102. Ibid., "Ariel," p. 27.

103. Denise Levertov, from "Three Meditations," in The Jacob's Ladder (New York: New Directions Books, 1961), pp. 30-31.

104. Ibid.

105. Galway Kinnell, "The Porcupine," in Body Rags (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1968), pp. 58-59.

106. Kinnell, "The Poem," in Body Rags, pp. 27-29.

107. Ezek. 37:1-4.

108. Kinnell, "The Poem," in Body Rags, p. 28.

109. See "Spindrift," "Freedom, New Hampshire," "Ruins Under the Stars," "Another Night in the Ruins," "The Bear," etc.

110. Wilbur, "Fall in Corrales," in Poems, p. 53.

111. Roethke, "What Can I Tell My Bones?" in Collected Poems, p. 172.

112. "I Cry, Love! Love!" in ibid., p. 93.

113. "What Can I Tell My Bones?" in ibid., p. 173; cf. "The Renewal," p. 135.

114. Samuel Johnson, "Preface to the Dictionary," in the Rinehart Edition of Samuel Johnson: Rasselas, Poems, and Selected Prose, ed. Bertrand H. Brown (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1958), pp. 227, 215-216. Italics in original.

115. Ibid., pp. 232, 236.

116. Ibid., p. 233.

117. Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 178.

118. Cf. Allen Tate, "Modern Poetry," a 1955 essay reprinted in Tate, Essays of Four Decades (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1968), pp. 211-221; also, "The Man of Letters in the Modern World," pp. 3-16 of the same volume.

119. William Carlos Williams, Paterson (New York: New Directions Books, 1963), pages mentioned in citation, above. All references to Paterson are from this edition, and I cite page numbers parenthetically.

120. Allen Tate, "Modern Poetry," in Essays of Four Decades, p. 215.

121. Levertov, "The Jacob's Ladder," in The Jacob's Ladder p. 37.

122. Ibid., "A Sequence," p. 9.

123. William Bronk, "A Postcard to Send to Sumer," in Voice, p. 456.

124. Allen Ginsberg, "Wichita Vortex Sutra," in Planet News (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1968) p. 119.

125. Henry Rago, "The Knowledge of Light," in A Sky of Late Summer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 9.

126. Edgar Paiewonsky, "Days," in Aging, p. 242.

127. Philip Levine, "Silent in America," in Not This Rig, p. 43.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III, pp. 51-95

1. T. S. Eliot, "Religion and Literature," in Selected Essays, p. 352.

2. Ibid., p. 347.

3. Ibid., p. 354.

4. Ibid.

5. From a title to a poem by John Cage, "Diary: How to Improve the World (You Will Only Make Matters Worse) 1965," in Possibilities, p. 152.

6. Cf. Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances, pp. 107-115, 174-178.

7. Deut. 6:4.

8. John L. McKenzie, S.J., The Two-Edged Sword: An Interpretation of the Old Testament (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Image Books, 1966), p. 246.

9. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, trans. Reginald Fuller and ed. Eberhard Bethge (London: William Collins Sons, Fontana Books, 1959), p. 91.

10. Nathan A. Scott, Jr., ed., Adversity and Grace: Studies in Recent American Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 6.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., p. 11.

13. Ibid., p. 6.

14. R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of Nature (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 5.

15. Scott, Adversity and Grace, p. 10.

16. This view is given some interesting support in Collingwood's The Idea of Nature, pp. 9ff.

17. Scott, Adversity and Grace, p. 15.

18. Ibid., p. 14; italics in original.

19. Ibid.

20. Richard Wilbur, "Advice to a Prophet," in Poems, pp. 6-7.

21. Ibid., p. 65; see especially ll. 26-27.

22. John L. McKenzie, S.J., Dictionary of the Bible, entry for "World," p. 943a.

23. Ibid., p. 943b. I have deleted the Scriptural references.

24. McKenzie speaks of the "nonintellectual character" of Biblical thought; see entry for "Truth," p. 901a.

25. Ibid., p. 943a.

26. Cf. Barfield, Saving the Appearances, pp. 16ff.

27. Nathan A. Scott, Jr., The Wild Prayer of Longing: Poetry and the Sacred (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 47.

28. T. S. Eliot, "Religion and Literature," in Selected Essays, p. 354.

29. Jn. 6:63, Jerusalem Bible translation.

30. Leon-Joseph Cardinal Suenens, "The Christian in the World," in A New Pentecost?, translated by Francis Martin (New York: The Seabury Press Crossroads Books, 1974), p. 173.

31. Nathan A. Scott, Jr., The Broken Center: Studies in the Theological Horizon of Modern Literature (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966) pp. 145ff.

32. Roger K. Meiners, Everything to Be Endured: An Essay on Robert Lowell and Modern Poetry (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, Literary Frontiers Edition, 1970), p. 75.

33. Paul Carroll to David Ossman in The Sullen Art, pp. 19, 20.

34. John Killinger, The Failure of Theology in Modern Literature (New York: Abingdon Press, 1963), p. 40.

35. James Schuyler, "The Elizabethans Called It Dying," in The New American Poetry, 1945-1960, ed. Donald M. Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1960), p. 222.

36. Kirby Doyle, "Strange," in New American Poetry, pp. 162-163.

37. Robert Lowell, "Beyond the Alps," in For the Union Dead, pp. 55-57. I am aware that this poem is far more complex than I have represented it as being; see Meiners, Everything to Be Endured, p. 46.

38. John Berryman, "A Prayer After All," in Delusions, Etc. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux Noonday Edition, 1972), p. 46.

39. Ibid., "How Do You Do, Dr. Berryman, Sir?" p. 67.

40. Ibid., "King David Dances," p. 70.

41. Donald Finkel, "A Joyful Noise," in A Joyful Noise (New York: Atheneum, 1966), p. 39.

42. A. R. Ammons, "Hymn IV," in Briefings: Poems Small and Easy (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1971), p. 41.

43. Ibid., "Square," p. 80; see also "The Confirmers," p. 85.

44. Ibid., "This Black Rich Country," p. 17.

45. Charles Olson, "The Kingfishers," in The Distances (New York: Grove Press, 1960), pp. 5, 6.

46. Galway Kinnell, from "The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ into the New World," in Poems of Night, pp. 31-32.

47. Roy Harvey Pearce, The Continuity of American Poetry, p. 187.

48. Ibid., p. 189.

49. Ibid., p. 381.

50. Ibid., p. 428.

51. William Brown, "Wondering How," in North American Review 252/2 (January, 1967): 13.

52. Allen Ginsberg to David Ossman in The Sullen Art, p. 89.

53. Geof Hewitt, from the introduction to Aging, p. xii.

54. Stanley Kunitz, "Revolving Meditation," in Terrible

Threshold, p. 55.

55. Stuart Peterfreund, poetic statement in Aging, p. 350.

56. Denise Levertov, "A Letter to William Kinter of Muhlenberg," in The Jacob's Ladder, p. 44.

57. Kenneth Pitchford, "Reflections on Water," in Controversy, p. 363.

58. Allen Ginsberg to David Ossman in The Sullen Art, p. 88.

59. Michael McClure, "The Flowers of Politics II," in The New Book / A Book of Forture, (New York: Grove Press Evergreen Original, 1961), p. 40.

60. Edward Field, "A View of Jersey," in New American Poetry, p. 227.

61. Sylvia Plath, "Totem," in Ariel, p. 76.

62. Denise Levertov, "Shalom," in O Taste and See, p. 37. Italics mine.

63. Roger K. Meiners, Everything to Be Endured, p. 79. In a letter to me, dated November 29, 1977, Meiners explains this passage as follows: "I would . . . point out how the enterprise of the romantic imagination has led, in the 'postmodern' era and mind, to the incessant preoccupation with decentering, . . . de-definition, de-struction. All of this . . . suggests the inevitability, in certain minds (not my own), of the creating mind creating not only its own dissolution, but of its very preconditions. Again, perhaps the temporal reference of 'past' is too simple since it's more than a temporal process: logical and metaphysical as well."

64. Ibid., p. 80.

65. Al Lee, ed., The Major Young Poets (New York: World Publishing Company, Meridian Books, 1971), p. 9.

66. Meiners, p. 10.

67. Lee, pp. 6-7.

68. Meiners, p. 7. Italics in original.

69. Ibid., p. 75.

70. Ibid., p. 74f. Cf. Fairchild, Valley of Dry Bones, pp. 458-460, on the impossibility of resurrecting dead metaphors.

71. "luke" (Joseph Brown, S.J.), poetic statement in Aging, p. 348.

72. Robert Bly, "Looking for Dragon Smoke," in Naked Poetry, pp. 161, 164.

73. Robert Creeley, "Notes Apropos 'Free Verse,'" in Naked Poetry, p. 186.

74. A. R. Ammons, "Corson's Inlet: A Book of Poems (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965), pp. 5-8.

75. Roger K. Meiners, Everything to Be Endured, p. 75.

76. Ibid., p. 76. Meiners is quoting Rilke's Tuscan Diary.

77. Ibid.

78. J. Hillis Miller, Poets of Reality (Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1965), p. 10.

79. Meiners, p. 76.

80. Ibid., p. 84.

81. Ibid., pp. 76-77.

82. Ibid., p. 77.

83. Ibid., p. 73.

84. Roger K. Meiners, Everything to Be Endured, p. 77.

85. Ibid., p. 10.

86. Ibid., p. 89. Italics in original.

87. Mark Strand, "The Way It Is," in Darker (New York: Atheneum, 1970), pp. 45-47.

88. Meiners, pp. 77-78.

89. Ibid. Italics in original.

90. Ibid., pp. 77-78.

91. Randall Jarrell, "The Mockingbird," in The Complete Poems, p. 281.

92. Donald Finkel, "Hands," in A Mote in Heaven's Eye (New York: Atheneum, 1975), p. 40.

93. Ralph Pomeroy, "To Words," in Poetry 103, 3 (December, 1963): 161.

94. Daniel Hoffman, "In the Beginning," in A Little Geste and Other Poems (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 4; also in Able Was I Ere I Saw Elba:

Selected Poems 1954-1974 (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1977), p. 24.

95. See Edward Sapir, Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1921), pp. 14-16. Also see Benjamin Lee Whorf, "A Linguistic Consideration of Thinking in Primitive Communities" (pp. 65-85), and "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language," (pp. 134-159) in Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf, ed. John B. Carroll (Technology Press of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology: New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1956).

96. Randall Jarrell, "The Mockingbird," in The Complete Poems, p. 281.

97. Ibid., "Jamestown," p. 257.

98. Ibid.

99. Paul Carroll to David Ossman in The Sullen Art, p. 19.

100. Paul Goodman, "A Classical Quatrain," in The Lordly Hudson: Collected Poems (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), p. 47.

101. Geof Hewitt, introduction to Aging, p. xvi.

102. Stuart Peterfreund, "American Poetry," in Aging, p. 180.

103. Edward Dorn to David Ossman in The Sullen Art, p. 85.

104. Philip Dow, "The Life of the Poet," in Aging, p. 59. Italics in original.

105. Denise Levertov, "A Testament and a Postscript: 1959-1973," in The Poet in the World, (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1973), p. 6.

106. Ibid., "The Poet in the World," p. 114.

107. Michael McClure, "The Flowers of Politics, II," in A Book of Torture, p. 39.

108. Hoxie Neale Fairchild, Valley of Dry Bones, p. 8.

109. Lionel Trilling, "On the Modern Element in Modern Literature," in Varieties of Literary Experience: Eighteen Essays in World Literature, ed. Stanley Burnshaw (New York: New York University Press, 1962), p. 413.

110. Fairchild, Valley of Dry Bones, p. 455.

111. Levertov, The Poet in the World, p. 7.

112. Cf. Ibid., p. 456. Also, William T. Noon, S.J., Poetry and Prayer (Rutgers University Press, 1967), pp. 8f; and Henry Rago, "Faith and the Literary Imagination--The Vocation of Poetry," in Nathan A. Scott, Jr., ed., Adversity and Grace, p. 243.

113. David Hilton, "In Praise of BIC Pens," in Chicago Review 20, 4 (May, 1969): 212-213.

114. Anne Sexton, "The Lost Ingredient," in Selected Poems, p. 23.

115. Galway Kinnell, "The Porcupine," in Body Rags, p. 59.

116. Philip Dow, "The Life of the Poet," in Aging, p. 59.

117. Randall Jarrell, "The Difficult Resolution," in The Complete Poetry, p. 398.

118. See Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances, pp. 116-125, 144-145.

119. Peter Fellowes, "A Change of Heart," in Aging, p. 259.

120. Barfield, p. 145.

121. T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," in The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1971), p. 121.

122. Denise Levertov, "A Sequence," in The Jacob's Ladder, p. 9.

123. Stanley Kunitz, "Revolving Meditation," in Terrible Threshold, p. 55.

124. John Weiners, "A Series 5.8," in Controversy, p. 479.

125. Gregory Corso, "Notes After Blacking Out," in New American Poetry, p. 209.

126. S. Foster Damon, "Copernicus Astrologus," in Possibilities, p. 475.

127. Geof Hewitt, introduction to Aging, pp. xii, xvi. Italics mine.

128. Stuart Peterfreund, idem, p. 350.

129. Marvin Bell, "Communication on His Thirtieth Birthday," in A Probable Volume of Dreams (New York: Atheneum, 1969), p. 65.

130. Joel Oppenheimer, "Leave It to Me Blues," in Controversy, p. 328.

131. John Berryman, "Despair," in Love & Fame (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1972), 2nd ed. revised, p. 65.

132. Adrienne Rich, "Charleston in the 1860's," in Poems Selected and New, 1950-1974 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975), p. 103.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV, pp. 96-142.

1. Emmett Jarrett and Ron Schreiber, eds., "Prospectus," in things 1 (Fall, 1964): 2-3. In Paterson, incidentally, Williams rejected the interpretation of his line which would have taken it to mean, "No ideas but in the facts."

2. Denise Levertov, "An Admonition," in idem, pp. 4-5, 7. Italics in original. Reprinted in The Poet in the World, pp. 57-61.

3. Idem, "Illustrious Ancestors," in The Jacob's Ladder, p. 87.

4. Idem, "The Novices," in O Taste and See, p. 57.

5. Cf. Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances, pp. 133-141.

6. Peter Fellowes, "Predator," in Aging, p. 262.

7. Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 63.

8. Fellowes, "Predator," in Aging, p. 262.

9. Jarrett and Schreiber, "Prospectus," in things, p. 3.

10. Barbara L. Greenberg, "Boarding of Pan American Flight 207 Will Be Delayed Ten Minutes," in Michigan Quarterly Review, 6, 3(July, 1967): 210.

11. Muriel Rukeyser, "Waterlily Fire, i: The Burning," in Waterlily Fire: Poems 1935-1962 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), p. 193.

12. Idem, "The Way Out," from "Akiba," Waterlily Fire, p. 189.

13. W. S. Merwin, "In the Night Fields," in The Moving Target (New York: Atheneum, 1963), p. 30.

14. A. R. Ammons, "Corson's Inlet," in Corson's Inlet, p. 5.

15. Theodore Roethke, "Journey to the Interior," in Collected Poems, p. 193.

16. Edward Field, "A View of Jersey," in New American Poetry, p. 227.

17. Hoxie Neale Fairchild, Valley of Dry Bones, p. 439.

18. Ibid., p. 438.

19. Fairchild, pp. 449-450, 454ff.

20. Ibid., p. 498.

21. Vincent Buckley, Poetry and the Sacred (London: Chatto and Windus, 1968), p. 72.

22. Ibid., p. 68. Buckley's reference is to an essay by Frank Kermode, "The New Apocalyptists," in Partisan Review, Summer, 1966, p. 351.

23. See ibid., pp. 70-71.

24. Ibid., pp. 16-21.

25. Ibid., p. 72.

26. Ralph J. Mills, Contemporary American Poetry, (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 93.

27. Muriel Rukeyser, "The Way Out," in Waterlily Fire, p.189.

28. Harvey Shapiro, "Mountain, Fire, Thornbush," in Mountain, Fire, Thornbush (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961), p. 25.

29. Denise Levertov, "The Fountain," in The Jacob's Ladder, p. 55.

30. W. S. Merwin, "In the Night Fields," in Moving Target, p. 30.

31. Muriel Rukeyser, "Waterlily Fire, v: The Long Body," in Waterlily Fire, p. 198.

32. Stan Rice, "Rebirth," in Aging, p. 211.

33. Denise Levertov, "In Memory of Boris Pasternak," in The Jacob's Ladder, p. 33.

34. Charles Olson, "The Kingfishers," in The Distances, p. 6.

35. Daniel Hoffman, "Signatures," in Striking the Stones (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 46-47.

36. Galway Kinnell, "The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ into the New World," in Poems of Night, p. 32.

37. Idem, "The Poem," Body Rags, p. 28.

38. Brother Antoninus, "The Making of the Cross," in The Crooked Lines of God p. 22. This usage of crucifixion imagery is familiar to students of Jungian psychology, in which the cross becomes a symbol of transformation and individuation; see, for instance, Carl Jung, The Collected Works of C G. Jung: Vol. 5, Symbols of Transformation, An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia, translated by R.F.C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), pp. 368, 392, 432-433.

39. William Brown, "Wondering How," in Aging, p. 284.

40. Arthur Gregor, "You Were There," in Figure in the Door (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1968), p. 33.

41. Daniel Berrigan, S.J., "Kinder Times?" in The World for Wedding Ring (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), p. 67.

42. Idem, "Death Casts No Light on the Mind," in Wedding Ring, p. 55.

43. Theodore Roethke, "What Can I Tell My Bones?" in Collected Poems, p. 173.

44. Idem, "The Renewal," in Collected Poems, p. 135.

45. Ron Loewinsohn, "The Thing Made Real," in Meat Air: Poems 1957-1969 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970), p. 3.

46. Daniel Hoffman, "A Gift of Tongues," in Broken Laws (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 67.

47. Thomas Merton, "The Sowing of Meanings," in Selected Poems of Thomas Merton (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1959), pp. 70-72.

48. Arthur Gregor, "Two Poems for the Firebird, i - Gift of the Firebird," in Selected Poems, p. 207.

49. Cid Corman, "There Are Things to Be Said," in Voice, p. 528.

50. Theodore Roethke, "The Abyss," in Collected Poems, pp. 220-222. The bo-tree, of course, is a Buddhist source of revelation.

51. A. R. Ammons, "Grassy Sound," in Expressions of Sea Level (Ohio State University Press, 1963), pp. 55-56.

52. Ibid.,"Guide," pp. 26-27.

53. Ibid., "Mansion," p. 41.

54. Stan Rice, "The Power," in Aging, p. 215.

55. Muriel Rukeyser, "Waterlily Fire, i: The Burning," and "The Way Out," in Waterlily Fire, pp. 193, 189.

56. Robert Duncan, "At the Loom, Passages 2," in Bending the Bow (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1968), p. 11.

57. Hoxie Neale Fairchild, Valley of Dry Bones, p. 438.

58. Ibid.

59. Vincent Buckley, Poetry and the Sacred, p. 72.

60. Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 170.

61. Rom. 5:14.

62. 1 Cor. 15:45-49.

63. Coloss. 1:15-20; Eph. 1:19-23; Rom. 8:1-4.

64. Rom. 8:14ff.

65. 2 Cor. 5:17.

66. Rom. 8:9-11, Gal. 5:16-26.

67. 1 Cor. 15:36-49; 1 Jn. 3:9; Eph. 4:23.

68. Rom. 12:2.

69. Jn. 1:12-13; Gal. 3; Rom. 7:12-8:13.

70. Rom. 8:19; Coloss. 3:3-4.

71. Roy Harvey Pearce, The Continuity of American Poetry, p. 433.

72. Charles Olson, in a lecture given Wednesday, March 27, 1968, at Beloit University; transcribed as Poetry and Truth by George F. Butterick, ed. (San Francisco: Four Seasons Foundation, 1971), pp. 43-44. Italics in original.

73. Ibid., p. 50. The "sun" in Olson's context could be either the poet himself or his feeling; cf. p. 44.

74. Denise Levertov, "Overland to the Islands," reprinted in The Jacob's Ladder, p. 73.

75. Ibid., "The Illustration," in Ladder, p. 40.

76. Cf. idem, "The Tide," "The Jacob's Ladder," and "Turning," in Ladder, pp. 14, 37, 82; also "To the Muse," in O Taste and See, pp. 25-27.

77. Samuel Johnson, Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia, in

Rasselas, Poems, and Selected Prose, pp. 527, 528.

78. William Carlos Williams, Autobiography, p. 391. Quoted by M. L. Rosenthal in "William Carlos Williams: More than Meets the Eye," The William Carlos Williams Reader, ed. M. L. Rosenthal (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1966), p. xxviii.

79. Paul Carroll, "Ode to Severn Darden About Angels, the Common Cold, Nuclear Disarmament, and Popcorn," in Odes (Chicago: Big Table Publishing Company, 1969), p. 34.

80. Donald Finkel, "Still Life," in Simeon, p. 73. Italics mine.

81. Allen Tate, "Modern Poetry," in Essays of Four Decades, p. 215.

82. Denise Levertov, "Matins," in The Jacob's Ladder, pp. 57-60; cf. Robert Creeley, "The Door," in Naked Poetry, pp. 176-179.

83. A. R. Ammons, Collected Poems 1951-1971 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1972). To save space in notation, references made in my text to poems contained in this volume will be cited by title and page number, unless otherwise noted.

84. Hyatt Waggoner feels that Ammons' poetry since Tape for the Turn of the Year has undergone a change of emphasis: "In the inseparable union of physics and metaphysis in Ammons' imagination, the emphasis may have shifted from the meta to the physics, but the union has not dissolved. . . ." Waggoner would like to call Ammons a philosophical poet, but with the understanding that, like Emerson, "he deals with the perfectly concrete felt motions and emotions of the particular self he is and . . . looks for and sees 'Correspondences' between these motions and those of animate and inanimate nature. . . ." Hyatt H. Waggoner, "On A. R. Ammons: Some Notes and Reflections," in Salmagundi 22-23 (Spring-Summer, 1973): 290-291,287.

85. Cf. ibid., p. 286.

86. Nathan A. Scott, Jr., Negative Capability: Studies in the New Literature and the Religious Situation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), pp. 63, 64.

87. John L. McKenzie, S.J., The Two-Edged Sword, pp. 33-34.

88. Idem, Dictionary of the Bible, "Faith," p. 267b.

89. Ibid., "Truth," p. 901a.

90. Ibid., "Knowledge," p. 485b.

91. Ibid., pp. 485b-486a.

92. Ibid.; see also "Heart," pp. 343b-344a.

93. Jn. 14:6.

94. E.g., Rom. 1:18-19.

95. E.g., Eph. 4:21; cf. McKenzie, Dictionary, pp. 901b-902b.

96. While some passages in the Greek do not use the definite article, a large number do. See, for example, Jn. 8:34-47; 2 Cor. 4:2; etc, in Greek New Testament, ed. R. V. D. Tasker (Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp. 155-156, 279.

97. Is. 45:5; 55:6-9.

98. Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances, pp. 159, 111.

99. Jn. 1:4; 2 Cor. 5:21; cf. Barfield, pp. 159, 169-170.

100. Rom. 1:18ff.

101. Is. 45:19; Dt. 30:11-14.

102. Is. 43:12; Acts 2:17-21.

103. 1 Thes. 2:13.

104. A.R. Ammons, "Poetics," in Collected Poems, p. 199.

105. Denise Levertov, "O Taste and See," in O Taste and See, p. 53.

106. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, quoted from The Statesman's Manual in Shedd's edition of Coleridge's Complete Works (Vol. 1, p. 436) by Owen Barfield, What Coleridge Thought (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), p. 112.

107. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Co.; Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1834), pp. 167, 172.

108. Barfield, What Coleridge Thought, pp. 79-81.

109. Nathan A. Scott, Jr., The Wild Prayer of Longing, p. 82. The quote is from Conrad Bonifazi. Italics in original.

110. Ibid., p. 48.

111. Arthur Gregor, "The Likeness," in Figure in the Door, pp. 3-4.

112. Marie Ponsot, "Subject," in True Minds (San Francisco: City Lights Pocket Bookshop, Pocket Poets Series, 1956), p. 26.

113. Nathan Scott, The Wild Prayer of Longing, pp. 48-49.

114. Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances, pp. 144,156-160.

115. John Logan to David Ossman in The Sullen Art, p. 44.

116. Denise Levertov, "Some Notes on Organic Form," in The Poet in the World, p. 7. See also Linda W. Wagner, Denise Levertov (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1967), p. 7.

117. Ibid., pp. 7-9; also Wagner, p. 18.

118. Roy Harvey Pearce, The Continuity of American Poetry, pp. 22, 32.

119. Levertov, The Poet in the World, pp. 7, 8.

120. Wagner, Denise Levertov, p. 18.

121. Brother Antoninus, "Annul in Me My Manhood," in The Crooked Lines of God, pp. 86-87.

122. Coleman Barks, "Choosing," in Aging, p. 90.

123. Peter Fellowes, "Predator," in Aging, p. 262.

124. Susan Axelrod, statement in Aging, p. 349.

125. Allen Ginsberg, "Death to Van Gogh's Ear!" in Kaddish, p. 61.

126. Time has prevented me from pursuing this interesting subject, but there are numerous works readily available which describe the theology and the experience of charismatic prophecy. The more scholarly treatments include McKenzie's Dictionary, "Prophet, Prophecy," pp. 694a-699b, and his Two-Edged Sword, pp. 50-55; also A Theological Word Book of the Bible, ed. Alan Richardson (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), "Prophecy," pp. 178b-182b. The opinion among some scholars is that prophecy disappeared from religious experience after New Testament times (see McKinzie's Dictionary). Others disagree. See, for example, Michael C. Harper, Prophecy: A Gift for the Body of Christ (London: The Fountain Trust, 1964); Arnold Bittlinger, Gifts and Graces: A Commentary on 1 Corinthians 12-14, trans. Herbert Klassen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967); Donald Gee, Concerning Spiritual Gifts (Springfield: Godpel Publishing House, no copyright date); and Bruce Yocum, Prophecy (Ann Arbor: Word of Life, 1976), the most thorough treatment I have found in English.

127. Denise Levertov, "Some Notes on Organic Form," in The Poet in the World, p. 8. Italics mine.

128. Robert Duncan, "Passages 31: The Concert," in Tribunals: Passages 31-35 (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1970), p. 2. Duncan alludes to some lines from Charles Olson's "Projective Verse."

NOTES TO CHAPTER V, Pp. 143-182

1. Theodore Roethke, "The Young Girl," in Collected Poems, p. 207.

2. Ibid., "Meditation at Oyster River," p. 191.

3. Ibid., "Infirmity," p. 244.

4. Ibid., "The Dying Man, 4: The Exulting," p. 155.

5. William Carlos Williams, Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1962), pp. 3, 40, 45 respectively. Page numbers in the text refer to material cited in Pictures.

6. Adrienne Rich, "This Apartment Full of Books," in Twenty-One Love Poems (Emeryville: Effie's Press, 1976), page unnumbered.

7. Idem, "The Fact of a Doorframe," in Poems Selected and New, p. 232.

8. Cid Corman, "Delight in Knowing," in Once and for All, page unnumbered.

9. Arthur Gregor, "The Look Back," in The Past Now: New Poems (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1975), p. 3.

10. Denise Levertov, "Origins of a Poem," in The Poet in the World, p. 49.

11. Ibid., p. 50.

12. A dominant theme of Paterson.

13. Henry Rago, "The Knowledge of Light," in A Sky of Late Summer, p. 9.

14. Denise Levertov, "Illustrious Ancestors," in The Jacob's Ladder, p. 87.

15. Ralph Pomeroy, "To Words," in Controversy of Poets, p. 369.

16. William Knott, "To American Poets: Part 1," in The Naomi Poems Corpse and Beans (Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, Big Table Books, 1968), page uncertain.

17. Roger K. Meiners, Everything to Be Endured, pp. 77-78.

18. See William Wordsworth, "Essay upon Epitaphs, III," in The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed. W.J.B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1974), vol. II, p. 84; also, editors' textual note, pp. 114-115.

19. Thomas de Quincey, "Style," in The Collected Writings of Thomas de Quincey, ed. David Masson (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, revised and enlarged edition of 1890), vol. X, p. 229.

20. C.S. Lewis, Reflections on the Psalms (London: Collins Fontana Books, 1958), p. 12.

21. Sr. M. Bernetta Quinn, The Metamorphic Tradition in Modern Poetry, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955), p. 9.

22. Denise Levertov, "Notebook Pages," in The Poet in the World, pp. 16-17.

23. Ibid., "Work and Inspiration: Inviting the Muse," p. 38. Italics in original.

24. Ibid., "An Admonition," p. 61.

25. Ibid., "Origins of a Poem," p. 50.

26. Hoxie Neale Fairchild, Valley of Dry Bones, p. 455.

27. Henry Rago, "Faith and the Literary Imagination," in Adversity and Grace, p. 254.

28. Nathan A. Scott, Jr., The Wild Prayer of Longing, pp. 43-75.

29. See Allen Ginsberg, "Death to Van Gogh's Ear!" in Kaddish, p. 61; David Ossman's interviews with Jerome Rothenberg and John Logan in The Sullen Art, pp. 31, 43-44; and Denise Levertov, "Origins of a Poem," in The Poet in the World, p. 47. The poet's priesthood was a theme of Shelley's Defence of Poesy, as well.

30. Cary Nelson seems to take a predominantly physical approach to incarnation in The Incarnate Word: Literature as Verbal Space (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973).

31. C.S. Lewis, Reflections on the Psalms, p. 12.

32. Cf. George S. Hendry, The Gospel of the Incarnation (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958), pp. 148-170.

33. Hendry's phrase; see "The Incarnate Life," in ibid., pp. 92-114.

34. Vincent Buckley, Poetry and the Sacred, p. 66. He seems to refer to an essay in The Dyer's Hand by W.H. Auden (New York: Random House, 1962) called, "Christianity and Art."

I am not convinced that Auden does make "a free play of the imagination impossible." Auden does say this:

> When art is sacred, not only are there orthodox subjects which every artist is expected to treat, and unorthodox subjects which no artist may treat, but also orthodox styles of treatment which must not be violated. But, once art becomes a secular activity, every artist is free to treat whatever subject excites his imagination, and in any stylistic manner which he feels appropriate. (Dyer's Hand, p. 460)

These remarks need to be seen in context with his opinion that "to the imagination, the sacred is self-evident" (p. 456; cf. also pp. 54-57). For he maintains that, to the imagination, the Incarnation is not self-evident; that, in fact, "the coming of Christ in the form of a servant who cannot be recognized by the eye of flesh and blood, but only to the eye of faith . . . , is impassible to the imagination." (P. 457) It is caught by the contradiction between [Christ's] profane appearance and sacred assertion." (Ibid.) I find no statement here as to how the imagination is to deal with the contradiction--only with how it deals with the self-evident.

Buckley may be right in another respect, though. Auden would probably hold that the imagination cannot relate to the sacred (or, in my own terminology, spiritual) in the same way it relates to the profane (secular) without making the former into the latter. To that extent, Auden does believe that "a free play of the imagination" is impossible. Hence, his comments on orthodoxy.

35. The reader might find additional material helpful. The following general reference works summarize the usual Christian teaching: Catholic University of America, New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967); Karl Rahner, ed., Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi (New York: The Seabury Press, Crossroads Books, 1975); Alan Richardson, ed., A Dictionary of Christian

Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969). The following offer specialized treatment: Heinrich Emil Brunner, The Word of God and Modern Man (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964); George S. Hendry, The Gospel of the Incarnation, op. cit.; Alfred E.J. Rawlinson, ed., Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation by Members of the Anglican Communion (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928); Thomas Forsyth Torrance, Space, Time, and Incarnation. A popular explanation of the Incarnation may also be found in C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952).

36. Karl Rahner, "Incarnation," in The Concise Sacramentum Mundi, p. 690.

37. Gn. 9: 8-11.

38. Gn. 15: 1-21.

39. Ex. 19ff.

40. Jer. 31: 31-34.

41. Jn. 1: 14. Cf. Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 170.

42. Nathan A. Scott, Jr., in The Wild Prayer of Longing, p. 82. It should be evident here that I am using the term world not only to refer to physical and temporal phenomena, but also to a corporate person.

43. Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances, pp. 58-64, 92-95.

44. Ibid., pp. 133-147.

45. Richard Wilbur, "Love Calls Us to the Things of This World," in Poems, p. 65.

46. Ibid., "All These Birds," p. 102.

47. Cid Corman, "Flowering Color," in 'S (New Rochelle: The Elizabeth Press, 1976), page unnumbered.

48. Ibid., "This Is The Non-Existent Beast," in 'S, page unnumbered.

49. Ibid., "Except We Are Loved," in 'S, page unnumbered.

50. Denise Levertov, "Some Notes on Organic Form," in The Poet in the World, p. 7.

51. William Carlos Williams, "The Desert Music," in Pictures from Brueghel, p. 120.

52. Cf. Wilbur, Poems: "The Aspen and the Stream," p. 34,

and "Looking into History," p. 85.

53. Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances, pp. 22-35, 138.

54. E.g., Howard Nemerov, "Lion & Honeycomb," in Poems on Poetry: The Mirror's Garland, ed., Robert Wallace and James G. Taafe (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1965), pp. 32-33.

55. Robert Creeley, "The Plan Is the Body," in Selected Poems (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976), p. 182.

56. Corman, "I Want Nothing," in 'S, page unnumbered.

57. Arthur Gregor, "The Hand Upon His Head," in The Past Now, p. 7.

58. Cf. Corman, "Thanks to Zuckerandl," in Once and for All, page unnumbered.

59. R. G. Bury, The Fourth Gospel and the Logos-Doctrine (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Limited, 1940), p. 7. See Barfield on another kind of inner-outer duality in Speaker's Meaning (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1967), pp. 20-21, 52-54.

60. Ibid., p. 2.

61. Ibid., p. 3. Cf. Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 169.

62. Gn. 1; Ps. 33:6; Is. 55:10-11.

63. 1 Sm. 3:21; Is. 2:1.

64. Bury, The Logos-Doctrine, p. 7. Cf. also McKenzie's discussion of the dynamic and dianoetic meanings of word in Hebrew experience, in Dictionary of the Bible, pp. 938f.

65. Wis. 7:22-8:4; Pr. 8:22-31; Ecclus. 24:1-22. See also the notes on these texts in the Jerusalem Bible. In Wis. 18:14-16, the word of God is personified in the masculine as a warrior who comes among men armed with a sword. The typical personification is feminine.

66. Wis. 7:23; Ecclus. 24:8ff.

67. Bruce Vawter, C. M., The Four Gospels: An Introduction (Garden City: Doubleday & Company Image Books, 1967), vol. I, pp. 54-55.

68. John C. Haughey, S.J., The Conspiracy of God: The Holy Spirit in Man (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1973), p. 20.

69. Cf. Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 170.

70. Haughey, Conspiracy, p. 21.

71. John Coventry, S.J., Christian Truth (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), p. 50.

72. E.g., Heb. 10:5, "You have prepared a body (soma) for me," in contrast to Jn. 1:14, "The Word was made flesh (sarx)."

73. Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 131.

74. Is. 40:6-8.

75. Ps. 63:1; Jb. 19:26; Rm. 8:19-23.

76. Karl Rahner, The Concise Sacramentum Mundi, pp. 690, 697.

77. Bruce Vawter, The Four Gospels, vol. I, p. 62.

78. Denise Levertov, "An Admonition," in The Poet in the World, p. 61.

79. Allen Ginsberg, "Wichita Vortex Sutra," in Planet News, pp. 126, 128.

80. Adrienne Rich, "Burning Oneself In," in Poems Selected and New, p. 207; cf. also "Burning Oneself Out," pp. 208-209, and "The Ninth Symphony of Beethoven Understood at Last as a Sexual Message," p. 205.

81. Ibid., "Images for Godard," pp. 171-172.

82. John Woods, "When Senses Fled," in On the Morning of Color (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), pp. 11-12.

83. "When Senses Fled" is the introductory poem to On the Morning of Color, and as an introductory poem it might not need to complete the movement outward. But Woods' intention nonetheless appears to remain generally inward-tending. See "On Genius, Interrupted" (p. 15), "The Flood" (p. 21), "The Way Out" (p. 24), and "Imagine All Our Poets Singing" (p. 45). Some poems in the volume, though, admit of a different interpretation: "Poem at Thirty" (p. 13), and "Poem by Water" (p. 29).

84. Denise Levertov, "Origins of a Poem," in The Poet in the World, p. 49.

85. Ibid.; italics in original.

86. Arthur Gregor, "The Hand Upon His Head," in The Past Now, pp. 12, 13.

87. Idem, "The Novices," in O Taste and See, p. 57.

88. Cf. William T. Noon, S.J., Poetry and Prayer, chapters 1-3.

89. Richard Wilbur, "An Event," in Poems, p. 106.

90. Albert Gelpi, "Adrienne Rich: The Poetics of Change," in American Poetry Since 1960, ed. Robert B. Shaw (Cheshire: Carcanet Press, Ltd., 1973), p. 135.

91. ". . . in final participation . . . the heart is fired from within by the Christ; and it is for the heart to enliven the images." Owen Barfield, in Saving the Appearances, p. 172.

92. Roger Meiners, "Winter Song," in Journeying Back to the World (Columbia: University of Missouri Press Breakthrough Books, 1975), p. 77.

93. Thomas Merton, "Night-Flowering Cactus," in Emblems for a Season of Fury, p. 50.

94. Cid Corman, "To Look at a Free Tree," in Once and For All, page unnumbered.

95. Denise Levertov, "An Admonition," in The Poet in the World, p. 61.

96. Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 85. Barfield is here writing in the context of medieval thought, specifically that of Thomas Aquinas. I quote Barfield out of his context because the medieval view of language seems to me to reflect Levertov's modern attitude about it.

97. Ibid., p. 82. Cf. pp. 28-35.

98. Charles Olson, lecture of March 27, 1968, in Poetry and Truth, p. 47. According to an editor's note, Olson got his material from Jane Ellen Harrison's Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion.

99. John C. Haughey, The Conspiracy of God, p. 21.

100. Robert Duncan, "Passages 31: The Concert," in Tribunals, p. 3.

101. C.S. Lewis, Reflections on the Psalms, p. 97.

102. Ex. 19:4, 6; Ez. 16:4-14ff; also Dt. 7:6-8; Ps. 65:4.

103. Jn. 6:44; 12:32; cf. Rm. 8: 22-25, 29-30.

104. Lewis, Reflections, p. 97. Insertion in original; quotation is not identified.

105. Karl Rahner, "Incarnation," in The Concise Sacramentum Mundi, pp. 698-699.

106. Jn. 1 :14.

107. Jn. 1 :12.

108. Edgar Paiewonsky, "Days," in Aging, p. 242.

109. See Hy Sobiloff, "The Child's Sight," in Breathing of First Things (New York: The Dial Press, 1963), p. 15; also Denise Levertov, "An Admonition," in The Poet in the World, p. 61.

110. Galway Kinnell, "Flower Herding on Mount Monadnock," in Poems of Night, p. 63.

111. Albert Hofstadter, "The Poem Is Not a Symbol," in Philosophy East and West xix, 3 (July): 321. Italics mine. Using the poetry of Yeats as an example, Hofstadter takes aim at the Freudian interpretation of a poem as a symbol or sublimation of, or "higher substitute for," the sexual relation. He argues that the poem is a sublimation in a different sense. I do not believe, incidentally, that he would object to the concept of a sacramental or "sign" poetry, which is directly related to my topic, since a sacrament signifies what is higer--not lower--and effects the "lifting up" of which he speaks. A possible example of Hofstadter's point is the body of the fallen stewardess, which unites and gives meaning to the farms and farmers of Kansas, in James Dickey's "Falling," Poems 1957-1967 (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), pp. 295ff.

112. Richard Wilbur, "A Fire-Truck," in Poems, p. 35.

113. Ibid., "A Christmas Hymn," in Poems, p. 57.

114. Henry Rago, "The Promising," in A Sky of Late Summer, p. 54.

115. Ibid., "How Bright the Earth Spun Like a Jewel" (p. 31), and "Poem for an Anniversary" (p. 43).

116. Denise Levertov, "O Taste and See," in O Taste and . p. 53. Italics mine. Cf. also Dickey's "For the Last Wolverine," in Poems 1957-1967, p. 276.

117. Theodore Roethke, "Infirmity" and "The Young Girl," in Collected Poems, 244, 207.

118. C.S. Lewis, Reflections on the Psalms, p. 97.

119. Richard Wilbur, "Seed Leaves," in Walking to Sleep (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969), pp. 16-17.

120. Ibid., "The Proof," p. 45. In Wilbur's context, the "mere utterance" is the poet himself.

121. Ibid., "The Aspen and the Stream," p. 34.

122. Ibid., "The Beacon," p. 82.

123. Ibid., "Mind," p. 72.

124. Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances, pp. 132, 146-147, 185f.

125. Paul Carroll, "Ode to the Angels Who Move Perpetually toward the Dayspring of Their Youth," in Odes, p. 11.

126. The "Ode to Severn Darden" indicates--to me, at least--that they do not; see Odes, p. 34.

127. John Berryman, "Certainty Before Lunch," in Delusions, Etc., p. 65.

128. Muriel Rukeyser, "The Speaking Tree," in Waterlily Fire, p. 187.

129. Ibid., "The Way Out," p. 190.

130. Idem, "The Six Canons," in The Speed of Darkness (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 104.

131. Denise Levertov, "Growth of a Poet," in The Freeing of the Dust (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1975), p. 77.

132. Ibid.

133. Ibid., "Knowing the Unknown," p. 6.

134. Ibid., "Voyage," p. 105.

135. In an interview with Muriel Rukeyser conducted by the New York Quarterly, the following question was raised:

> Interviewer: . . . In your recent poem "Yes, We Were Looking at Each Other," . . . this element [i.e., personalism] seems to be fused with a commitment regarding the outside world ("We fought violence and knew violence," "We hated the inner and outer oppression."). . . .
> Rukeyser: Well, certainly all you say and all besides. That's the center of it, but it's that in relation with. . . . The poem seems to be a meeting place just as a person's life is a

> meeting place. . . . It isn't that one brings life together--it's that one will not allow it to be torn apart. . . .

William Packard, ed., The Craft of Poetry (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1974) p. 171. Italics mine.

136. Arthur Gregor, "Two Poems on the Same Figure: 1, Phrase Retrieved from a Dream," in The Past Now, p. 23.

137. Muriel Rukeyser, "Spirals and Fugues," in The Speed of Darkness, p. 32. The line, "Moving the constellations of all things," is repeated verbatim from "The Six Canons" earlier in the volume.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI, Pp. 183-238.

1. I have been able to sample only a few of the hundreds of works available in English on the Holy Spirit, my purpose being not to look for the best or most significant theology, but to look for what seemed typical or representative among the Christian denominations of the general Christian teaching on the Spirit. Aside from the works I will cite below, I have consulted, for example, Hendrikus Berkhof, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964), and Henry van Dusen, Spirit, Son, and Father (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).

2. The works I have consulted on poetic inspiration include the following: Phyllis Bartlett, Poems in Process (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951); Cecil M. Bowra, Inspiration and Poetry (London: Macmillan and Company, 1955); John Press, The Fire and the Fountain: An Essay on Poetry (London: Oxford University Press, 1955); Owen Barfield, Speaker's Meaning, op. cit.; Max Reiser, Analysis of Poetic Thinking, trans. Herbert M. Schueller (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969); Anthony Storr, The Dynamics of Creation (New York: Atheneum, 1972); Colin Martindale, Romantic Progression: The Psychology of Literary History (Washington: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, and New York: John Wiley & Sons Halstead Press Books, 1975). Though it is a study of the doctrine of the Trinity based on an analogy with the mind of the creative writer, Dorothy L. Sayers' The Mind of the Maker (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941) was helpful in this respect.

3. C. S. Lewis, "Psycho-Analysis and Literary Criticism," in Selected Literary Essays, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 286.

4. X. J. Kennedy, "Ars Poetica," in Nude Descending a Staircase (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1961), p. 53.

5. Owen Barfield, Speaker's Meaning, pp. 81-82. Barfield here concludes a remarkably complex argument, the groundwork of which he lays in the earlier chapters on the meanings of words. The gist of the book's development follows:

The first chapter, "The Semantic Approach to History and the Historical Approach to the Study of Meaning," outlines his view that all mental progress "is made possible precisely by [the] discrepancy between an individual speaker's meaning and the current, or lexical, meaning" (p. 31). But a similar discrepancy operates within all language, he maintains, where the tension emerges as a polarity between communication (accuracy) on the one hand and expression (fullness or sincerity) on the other (pp. 35-38). And polarity, he warns, is not a logical concept, but "requires an act of imagination to grasp..." (p. 39). The same polarity, he says in the second chapter, guides the progress of linguistic change from literal to figurative usage and "inner" to "outer" meanings, or vice versa (pp. 40ff; he makes some of the same points in his essay on "The Meaning of 'Literal'," in George Watson, ed., Literary English Since Shakespeare (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 22-34). Underlying all linguistic change, however, is the principle that language norms are habits and that words mean what they are generally used at any time to mean. It is a principle that Barfield insists upon (pp. 28-31, 40, 71, etc.), and that guides his discussion of the psychology of inspriation.

Barfield maintains that Western ideas about inspiration, as opposed to individual creativity, have changed largely "because human consciousness itself--the elementary human experience about which the ideas are being formed--the whole relation between man and nature or between conscious man and unconscious man--has itself been in process of change." Further, he believes that such a view "follows of necessity from the principle that words mean" what they are used to mean (p. 71). With that, he traces the parallel histories of ideas about poetic method and ideas about poetic psychology to show that a shift from one view to a very different one has gradually taken place, as is indicated by shifts in the meanings of the words used to talk about these ideas. As I construct it schematically--see the following page--the argument of Barfield's chapter on "The Psychology of Inspiration and of Imagination" develops a complex series of events. (I should note here that the terms "quasi-mimetic" and "quasi-creative" are my own, and do not represent concepts that Barfield would necessarily endorse.) The history of these ideas, he says, unfolds like this:

	POETIC METHOD		POETIC PSYCHOLOGY
	Art Generally (esp. Visual)	Poetry as One of Arts	
Mimetic	E.g., Olympian Zeus: "The same image remains unchanged in the mind for years." (Dio Chrysostom)	Poetry imitates nature; but nature imitates an eternal immaterial reality; thus, poetry imitates an imitation. (Plato)	Superindividual Psychology: Theory of *mania* or divine madness as an *enthousiasmos* (possession by a god): inspiration.
"Quasi-Mimetic"	Imagination is an artist who carves what she has not seen. (Philostratus)	Poetry imitates the eternal immaterial reality itself, "in parallel with" material reality. (Neoplatonists)	Renaissance Psychology: Theory of possession *by* a godling or a genius.
"Quasi-Creative"	Art does not imitate, but reascends to the *logoi* (inner principles) used in the creation of nature. (Plotinus)	The poet makes himself, "as it were, a new God" (Scaliger)--a metaphor that has expanded in meaning.	Romantic (Coleridgean) Psychology: theory of possession *of* genius: imagination forms images which are more than copies of nature: Imagination.
			ADD: 19th century psychology of unconscious: Spencer, Dallas, Freud.
Creative		The poet *creates* (post-Romantic)	

Based on this interpretation of history, the author concludes that a shift from a psychology of inspiration to one of creative imagination has occurred.

On the whole, I see no reason to quarrel with Barfield's generalization. I might add, however, that the shift from one to the other has not completely eliminated the older psychology. Barfield says that the modern poet recognizes something at work in the imagination that is "his own, but not himself." I would go further and hazard the guess that a psychology of creative imagination: a) can never be wholly individual, so as to eliminate all trace of a super-individual awareness; b) can never be creative in the absolute sense, but will always retain something of the mimetic; and c) that the ancient and modern psychologies stand over against each other in the manner of Barfield's "polarity of contraries," with the emphasis lying for a while on the one pole rather than the other. My reasons for thinking so are too cumbersome to explain here; but the opinion itself is something I apply in this and the following sections.

6. Linda Wagner, Denise Levertov, p. 20.

7. Barfield, pp. 79-80; italics in original. Barfield describes the term "polarity of contraries" as an imaginative (non-logical) concept different from a coincidentia oppositorum or a paradox; it is a concept which contains contraries within itself that "exist by virtue of each other as well as at each other's expense." But, he maintains, such a polarity is not only a form of thought but "the form of life..., the principle of seminal identity." As such, it is the "formal principle which underlies meaning itself and the expansion of meaning" (pp. 38-39). Arthur Gregor echoes the same understanding in a poem called, "Phrase Retrieved from a Dream," in The Past Now, p. 23.

8. Barfield, pp. 83ff.

9. Interview with Robert Creeley, conducted by Linda Wagner and Lewis MacAdams, Jr., for the Paris Review XI (Autumn, 1968). The interview seems to be a combination of two taken by Wagner and MacAdams separately; the version from which I quote is reprinted in A Sense of Measure ed. Robert Creeley (London: Calder and Boyars, 1973), pp. 97-98. In the question, the interviewer adds this comment: "It seems such an American phenomenon to believe that the force of inspiration disappears in time." Without knowing to what specific phenomenon he refers, I can only question the statement. Shelley observed the decline of the "force of inspiration" in his "Defence of Poetry," and one can only assume that the divine afflatus left Virgil's Cumaean Sybil at some point after its descent (see Barfield, Speaker's Meaning, p. 84).

10. Ned O'Gorman, "The Art of Poetry, or What Occurred in a Day--Block Island," in The Flag the Hawk Flies (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972, p. 21.

11. Mark Halperin, "Wrestling with an Angel," in Backroads (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976), p. 15.

12. W. S. Merwin, "The Poem," in The Moving Target, p. 41.

13. Asked if he consciously chooses his subjects, Robert Creeley once replied, "Not that I'm aware of." See A Sense of Measure, p. 98.

14. Howard Moss, "Finding Them Lost," in Mark Strand, ed., The Contemporary American Poets: American Poetry Since 1940 (New York: Mentor Books New American Library, 1969), p. 251.

15. James Dickey, A Dog Sleeping on My Feet," in Drowning with Others (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1962), p. 15.

16. Robert Duncan, The Truth and Life of Myth: An Essay in Essential Autobiography (Freemont, Michigan: The Sumac Press, 1968), p. 26.

17. Ibid., p. 21. Italics mine.

18. Idem, "What Happened: Prelude," in Roots and Branches pp. 97-106 passim.

19. Roger Meiners, "Working at Night in a Mountain Cabin," in Journeying Back to the World, p. 24.

20. Sylvia Plath, "Black Rook in Rainy Weather," in The Colossus (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), pp. 42-43.

21. Daniel Hoffman "Comanches," in The Center of Attention (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 37.

22. Theodore Roethke, "What Can I Tell My Bones?" in Collected Poems, pp. 171-173.

23. Richard Wilbur, "Lamarck Elaborated," in Poems, p. 75.

24. See, for instance, the following poems by Stevens: "Things of August," "The Lack of Repose," "The Bed of Old John Zeller," "The Bird with the Coppery Keen Claws," "Description Without Place," "Ghosts as Cocoons," and "Thinking of a Relation Between the Images of Metaphors." See also Adalaide K. Morris, Wallace Stevens: Imagination and Faith (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 5, 118-121.

25. Robert L. Tyler, "What We Need in Southern Humanities Review iv, 4 (Fall, 1970): 299.

26. A. R. Ammons, in Expressions of Sea Level: "Mansion" (p. 41), "Guide" (pp. 26-27), "Grassy Sound" (pp. 55-56). Hyatt Waggoner, however, seems to hint at an identification of the Spirit with "the deeper self" in Ammons; see "On A. R. Ammons," in Salmagundi 22-23 (Spring-Summer, 1973): 286.

27. Ned O'Gorman, "Nine Prayers to the Trinity to Be Sung by the Nuns of Regina Laudis at Matins," in The Flag the Hawk Flies, pp. 25-27.

28. Idem, "Two Homilies," in The Night of the Hammer (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1959), p. 28.

29. Nathan A. Scott, Jr., The Wild Prayer of Longing, p. 85.

30. Ron Loewinsohn, "The Thing Made Real," in Meat Air, p. 3.

31. Richard Wilbur, "October Maples, Portland," in Poems, p. 24.

32. Daniel Hoffman, "A Gift of Tongues, " in Broken Laws, p. 67.

33. Robert Duncan, in The Truth and Life of Myth, p. 17; see also Tribunals, "Passages 31: The Concert," p. 2.

34. Arthur Gregor, "Two Poems on the Firebird, II--Addressed to the Firebird," in Selected Poems, p. 207.

35. Philip Lamantia, "Still Poem 9," in New American Poetry, p. 157.

36. Robert Duncan, The Truth and Life of Myth, p. 25.

37. Anthony Storr, The Dynamics of Creation, op. cit., p. 229.

38. Ibid., p. 188. Storr, of course, is using these terms in their clinical sense.

39. Phyllis Bartlett, Poems in Process, op. cit., p. 6.

40. Colin Martindale, Romantic Progression, op. cit., p. 15. Compare his idea of regressive thought with the ancient Hebrew idea of knowledge, outlined in Chapter IV, above.

41. C. W. Emmet, "The Psychology of Inspiration: How God Teaches," in The Spirit: God and His Relation to Man Considered from the Standpoint of Philosophy, Psychology, and Art, ed. B. H. Streeter (London: Macmillan and Company, 1920), p. 223.

42. Howard Nemerov, "Einstein & Freud & Jack," in The Western Approaches: Poems 1973-1975 (Chicago: The

University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 20. For an overview of the idea of myth used here, see M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, third edition (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 102-104; William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature. revised by C. Hugh Holman (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1960), pp. 298-300; and Donald L. Gelpi, S. J., Charism and Sacrament: A Theology of Christian Conversion (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), pp. 116-117. Herbert N. Schneidau develops a much different view of myth in Sacred Discontent: The Bible and Western Tradition (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1976).

43. Rabbi Herbert Parzen, "The Ruah Hakodesh in Tannaitic Literature," in The Jewish Quarterly Review 20 (1929-1930):75.

44. This kind of schema is used in Dale Moody's Spirit of the Living God: The Biblical Concepts Interpreted in Context (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968). A much more exhaustive treatment may be found in George T. Montague, The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition (New York: Paulist Press, 1976).

45. Oxford English Dictionary.

46. This is a summary of an account given by Cecil M. Bowra in Inspiration and Poetry, pp. 4-11 passim.

47. Bowra, p. 2.

48. Brother Antoninus (William Everson), "Annul in Me My Manhood," in The Crooked Lines of God, p. 86.

49. Cid Corman, "We look for a way," in Once and for All, page unnumbered.

50. Ibid.

51. Brother Antoninus, Crooked Lines, p. 86.

52. Kenneth O. Hanson, "Take It from Me," in The Contemporary American Poets, pp. 128-129. In Hanson's poem the speaker is reacting to the promise of a Greek peasant to teach the poet to think like a Greek.

53. Sr. M. Bernetta Quinn, The Metamorphic Tradition in Modern Poetry, pp. 9, 12.

54. Thomas A. Smail, Reflected Glory: The Spirit in Christ and Christians (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), p. 27.

55. Cf. Gelpi, Charism and Sacrament, op. cit., pp. 123-124.

56. Jn. 3:6; compare with St. Paul's notion of a "spiritual body" in 1 Cor. 15.

57. 2 Cor. 3:18.

58. R. Dennis Walters, "Forced Herding," in Noise on a Quiet Wind (Ann Arbor: private publication, 1976), p. 25.

59. Quinn, Metamorphic Tradition, p. 13.

60. Cid Corman, "The Light," in Out & Out (New Rochelle: The Elizabeth Press, 1972), page unnumbered.

61. James Dickey, "Power and Light," in Poems 1957-1967, p. 257.

62. Corman, "Two Basins," in O/I (New Rochelle: The Elizabeth Press, 1974), page unnumbered.

63. John McKenzie, S.J., The Power and the Wisdom: An Interpretation of the New Testament (Garden City: Doubleday & Company Image Books, 1972), p. 159; italics mine. Also McKenzie, Dictionary, p. 844.

64. Haughey, Conspiracy, p. 78, and Michael Schmaus, "Holy Spirit," in Rahner, ed., Concise Sacramentum, p. 647.

65. James Dickey, "For the Last Wolverine," in Poems 1957-1967, p. 277.

66. Ibid., "Encounter in the Cage Country," p. 275.

67. Arthur Gregor, "The Hand Upon His Head," in The Past Now, p. 4.

68. Idem, "The Love-Fanatic," in Selected Poems, pp. 103, 104.

69. Idem, "Two Poems on the Same Figure: 1, Phrase Retrieved from a Dream," in The Past Now, p. 23.

70. Idem, "First Snow, Brooklyn Harbor," in Selected Poems, p. 116.

71. Cf. ibid., p. 113.

72. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica I, Q. 43, art. 3c; cited in Robert W. Gleason, S.J., The Indwelling Spirit (Staten Island: St. Paul Pulbications, Alba House, 1966), p. 5. Gleason expands on the theological significance of Aquinas's statement:

> Revelation speaks not only of a new presence but also of a new possession of God by the just soul. Since the only way a spirit can be possessed is by acts of love and knowledge, it is evident that

> with justification comes some new capacity to know and love God. The just soul is indeed capable of enjoying the divine guest. The divine indwelling cannot be explained as a dead presence, an inert gift, however new and important that gift might be. Rather it implies the taking possession of that gift, the use and enjoyment of that gift. It implies a spiritual exchange between the persons involved. It will result in a profound joy to the just soul who lays hold of and enjoys the divine Guest. (P. 12)

73. McKenzie, The Power and the Wisdom, p. 159.

74. Gleason, Indwelling Spirit, pp. 5-6. Gleason uses the traditional argument that, whereas God exists in creatures by reason of His power, essence, and immensity, He exists personally in the believer through the latter's acceptance by faith of divine justification, something which the sinner, by definition, does not accept; see pp. 4-10.

75. A union, Gleason adds, that modifies the believer, not the Spirit; ibid., pp. 9-10.

76. C. W. Emmet, "The Psychology of Inspiration," in Streeter, The Spirit, p. 199.

77. See Bowra, Inspiration and Poetry pp. 4ff.

78. Arthur Gregor, "The Diplomat," in Selected Poems, p. 129.

79. John Haines, "Into the Glacier," in The Contemporary American Poets, p. 124. Haines, however, appears to use the glacier as a metaphor of the subconscious.

80. Cf. 2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 15:35-50; Gal. 5:17ff, 6:8; also McKenzie, Dictionary, pp. 843-844.

81. See Gregor, "The Hand Upon His Head," in The Past Now, pp. 7ff.

82. Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 172. Some Catholic theologians suggest another influence of the Spirit, namely, that It inspires a person from within the specific Christian community to which he belongs (e.g., Gelpi, Charism and Sacrament, pp. 113ff). The Spirit, according to this view, links individual Christians into a common visible unity, in such a way that the internal and external life in the Spirit of any one Christian feeds the internal and external life in the Spirit of the others. The Spirit dwells at once in each and in all; consequently, when It inspires the community from within, It thereby inspires the

individuals in the community from within. Such a concept does have some application to poetic inspriation. I do not include it in my discussion because poets do not form a community among themselves in quite the same way Christians do. In a loose sense, however, a "community" of poets does exist--a community of interest in the art if not one of personal commitment to each other--in which the lives and works of each poet somehow affect not only other poets but also the culture at large. To the extent, then, that the Spirit can be said to inspire even one poet from within, It can be said to affect the whole "community" of poets.

83. Gary Snyder, "What You Should Know to Be a Poet," in Regarding Wave (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1970), p. 40.

84. Gregor, "The Hand Upon His Head" and "The Diplomat"; Haines, "Into the Glacier."

85. Cecil M. Bowra, Inspriation and Poetry, p. 6.

86. Smail, Reflected Glory, p. 25.

87. E.g., "The Spirit of Christ at work in you"; see McKenzie, Dictionary, p. 843.

88. J. Massingberd Ford concludes that some parts of the New Testament develop a binitarian view of God, which elsewhere becomes a trinitarian view. See "The Spirit in the New Testament," in God, Jesus, and Spirit, ed. Daniel Callahan (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), p. 235. In another essay from the same volume ("The Spirit in Orthodox Theology and Life"), Thomas Hopko discerns a polarity in all dimensions of Church life between "Word and Spirit, incarnation and inspiration, passover and pentecost, nature and person, body and members, unity and multiplicitly, ontological assumption of full humanity by God and personal participation in full divinity by men." (Pp. 262-263)

89. Cid Corman, "Thanks to Zuckerandl" in Once and for All, page unnumbered.

90. Hendrikus Berkhof, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, p. 38. In context, Berkhof uses Word to mean the Christian message, though his capitalization implies the personal substance of the Word.

91. Corman, "To dicker with shadows," in 'S, page unnumbered.

92. "Those who are bearers of the Spirit of God are led to the Word," says St. Ireneus; "...without the Spirit there is no seeing the Word...." Quoted by Michael Schmaus in Rahner, ed., Concise Sacramentum, pp. 645-646.

93. Gregor, "The Hand Upon His Head," in The Past Now p. 12.

94. See Haughey, Conspiracy, pp. 76, 77; he is quoting 1 Cor. 2:10.

95. Cf. Emmet, in Streeter, ed., The Spirit, pp. 215, 221.

96. Gregor, "Lament for a Gifted Man," in Selected Poems, p. 130.

97. Robert Duncan, "Passages 31: The Concert," in Tribunals, p. 2. Cf. idem, The Truth and Life of Myth, p. 21.

98. Corman, "The Light," in Out & Out, page unnumbered.

99. Haughey, Conspiracy, p. 95.

100. Corman "The Sense, " in O/I, page unnumbered; italics in original.

101. Cf. A. R. Ammons, "Poetics," in Briefings, p. 44f.

102. Philip Booth, "Word," in Available Light (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), p. 66.

103. See Ammons, "Project," "Admission," "Transfer," and similar poems for examples of the poet's Spirit-filled orientation to the Word.

104. Haughey, Conspiracy, p. 69.

105. Ibid., p. 1.

106. Ibid., p. 70.

107. See Thomas Hopko, in Callahan, ed., God, Jesus, and Spirit, p. 262; Jn. 16:13-15; and Haughey, pp. 90,91.

108. Wallace Stevens, "Asides on the Oboe," in Poems by Wallace Stevens, ed. by Samuel F. Morse (New York: Random House Vintage Books, 1959), p. 103.

109. Nancy Willard, Testimony of the Invisible Man: Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Francis Ponge, Rainer Maria Rilke, Pablo Neruda (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1970), pp. 111-112.

110. Edwin H. Palmer writes that the Spirit's creative work is manifold: to actualize the potentialities of matter, to elicit the glory of the world, to impart life, to renew creation, and to give divine life to human beings. See Palmer, The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit: The Traditional Calvinistic Perspective (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), pp. 22-26.

111. In his Dictionary, McKenzie aruges that the idea of

creation out of nothing, while compatible with Scriptural thought, does not belong to it. Chaos is "mere shapeless matter," which is given shape by God's word (p. 159). Cf. Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 149.

112. Ps. 104:29-30.

113. Haughey, Conspiracy, p. 85.

114. Philip Booth, "How to See Deer," in Available Light, pp. 31-32.

115. Cid Corman, "The Job," in Livingdying (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1970), page unnumbered.

116. Roger Meiners, Everything to Be Endured, pp. 25, 28.

117. Adrienne Rich, "Your silence today is a pond," in Twenty-One Love Poems, page unnumbered.

118. Richard Wilbur, "October Maples, Portland," in Poems, p. 24.

119. 2 Cor. 3:18; Paul is referring to Ex. 34:29ff. The Revised Standard Version suggests reflecting as an alternate translation in place of beholding.

120. Smail, Reflected Glory, p. 25.

121. Eric Auerbach, "Figura," in Scenes from the Drama of European Literature (New York: Meridian Books, 1959), pp. 14-15ff.

122. A Greek-English Lexicon, ed. Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968): εἰκών.

123. Gerhard Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), vol. 10, p. 389.

124. Ibid., p. 394.

125. Ibid., p. 395; italics mine.

126. Ibid., pp. 395-397.

127. Cid Corman, "Sun in the window," in O/I, page unnumbered.

128. Cf. Barfield, Saving the Appearances, pp. 19-21, 82, 169f.

129. Arthur Gregor, "Lament for a Gifted Man," in Selected Poems, p. 130.

130. David P. Young, "The Man Who Swallowed a Bird," in The Major Young Poets, p. 180.

131. Cid Corman, "I want nothing," in 'S, page unnumbered.

132. OED, definitions 1 and 5b of the participle, and definition 2 of the verb, are examples.

133. Palmer, Person and Ministry, p. 21.

134. Eph. 1:23; cf. 4:13-16. See note g on Coloss. 1:19 in the Jerusalem Bible.

135. Gelpi, Charism and Sacrament, p. 132.

136. Gregor, "The Love-Fanatic," in Selected Poems, p. 104.

137. Jack Gilbert, "The Abnormal Is Not Courage," in The Contemporary American Poets, p. 113.

138. Haughey, Conspiracy, p. 79.

139. Ibid., p. 75. The term, in itself, is not new, even to literature. Henry James used it to describe the way the various parts of an image work together. See The Art of the Novel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 151.

140. Charles Olson, "The Lamp," in Archaeologist of Morning (London: Cape Goliard Press, 1970), page unnumbered.

141. Ned O'Gorman, The Buzzard and the Peacock (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964): "A Rectification of the Lyric" (p. 31) and "As It Was Then It Will Not Be Now" (p. 59).

142. Theodore Roethke, "In a Dark Time," in Collected Poems, p. 239.

143. The poets cited here are Peter Fellowes, Coleman Barks, and Colette Inez, pp. 360, 339, and 361 (respectively) of Quickly Aging Here; and Henry Rago, "The Attending," in A Sky of Late Summer, p. 12.

144. Gregor, "The Unworldliness that He Creates," in Selected Poems, p. 143.

145. Daniel Hoffman, "The Poem," in Able Was I Ere I Saw Elba, p. 82.

146. Cf. Gerhard Kittel's Theological Dictionary under μάρτυς.

147. Charles Olson, in Poetry and Truth, pp. 33-34.

148. Haughey, Conspiracy, p. 86.

149. Gregor, "The Unworldliness that He Creates," in Selected Poems, p. 143.

150. Ibid., "Dubrovnik," p. 157.

151. Cf. Smail, Reflected Glory, pp. 55-56.

152. Jn. 3:8; cf. 2 Cor. 3:17.

153. Haughey, Conspiracy, pp. 91, 92.

154. Ibid., p. 87.

155. Gregor, "The Guide," in The Past Now, pp. 25-26.

156. James Dickey, "The Flash," in Poems 1957-1967, p. 258.

157. Richard Wilbur, "All These Birds," in Poems, p. 102.

158. Cf. Leon-Joseph Cardinal Suenens, A New Pentecost?, p. 87.

159. McKenzie, The Power and the Wisdom, p. 163.

160. See the lists of charisms mentioned in Rm. 12, 1 Cor. 12-14, and Eph. 4. Theologians seem to respond more readily to the "Isaian charisms" mentioned in Is. 11:2.

161. See, for example, the bibliography to Gelpi's Charism and Sacrament.

162. In Nemerov, Reflexions on Poetry and Poetics (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1972), pp. 208-221.

163. C. M. Bowra, Inspiration and Poetry, p. 2.

164. Nemerov, Reflexions, p. 218.

165. Daniel Hoffman, "A Gift of Tongues," in Broken Laws, p. 67.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII, pp. 239-278

1. M. L. Rosenthal, "Some Thoughts on American Poetry Today," in Salmagundi 22-23 (Spring-Summer, 1973), p. 70.

2. Roy Harvey Pearce, The Continuity of American Poetry, p. 433.

3. See Karl Malkoff, Crowell's Handbook of Contemporary American Poetry (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1973), p. 2.

4. Ibid., p. 3.

5. Acts 2:37-39; bracketed interpolations are from Acts 16:30 and Mk. 1:15.

6. Stanley Kunitz to Robert Boyers at Skidmore College in 1972; interview published under the title, "Imagine Wrestling with an Angel," in Salmagundi 22-23:74. Reprinted by Boyers, ed., in Contemporary Poetry in America: Essays and Interviews (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), p. 39.

7. Theodore Enslin, "And If He Sings," in The Median Flow (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1975), p. 168.

8. William Carlos Williams, "To Daphne and Virginia," in Pictures from Breughel, p. 76.

9. Idem, Paterson, book 2, p. 50.

10. The expression comes from Theodore Enslin's "For Blacks and Women and the New--For Everyone," in Landler (New Rochelle: The Elizabeth Press, 1975), p. 54.

11. Cf. James 2:14ff.

12. Diane Wakoski, "In Gratitude to Beethoven," in Inside the Blood Factory (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1968), pp. 27-30.

13. Michael Benedikt, "The Esthetic Fallacy," in Sky (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1970), p. 66.

14. Malkoff, Crowell's Handbook, pp. 42-43.

15. Benedikt, "Let Me Out," in Sky, pp. 63-64.

16. Wakoski, Inside the Blood Factory, p. 33.

17. Gilbert Sorrentino to David Ossman in The Sullen Art, pp. 53, 54.

18. See Nancy Willard, Testimony of the Invisible Man, p. 11.

19. A. R. Ammons, "Gravelly Run," in Corson's Inlet, p. 64.

20. Donald Finkel, "Getting Started," in A Mote in Heaven's Eye, p. 61.

21. Robert Creeley, "Soup," in Hello (Taylor's Mistake, New Zealand: Hawk Press, 1976), page unnumbered; see also "A Sight," in Words, pp. 101-102.

22. Robert Duncan, "Passages 33: ΟΝΟΜΑ ΒΙΟΣ ΕΡΓΟΝ ΔΕ ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ," in Tribunals, p. 13.

23. Henry Rago, "Praise of Comedy: A Discourse," read into his essay on "Faith and the Literary Imagination," in Scott, ed., Adversity and Grace, p. 258.

24. Ibid., pp. 240-241.

25. Theodore Enslin, poem X in Landler, pp. 28-29.

26. Theodore Roethke, "Meditation at Oyster River," in Collected Poems, p. 190.

27. Cf. Rm. 6:1-11, and Coloss. 3:1-5.

28. Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances, pp. 177-178.

29. Ibid., p. 178.

30. Ibid., p. 180; see pp. 174-179. Italics in original.

31. Ibid., pp. 159-163.

32. Ibid., p. 176; Barfield is quoting Ps. 135.

33. Ibid., pp. 131-132, 144-147, 156.

34. Ibid., p. 180.

35. Ibid., p. 179.

36. Albert Hofstadter, "The Poem Is Not a Symbol," in Philosophy East and West, xix, 3 (July): 229.

37. Henry Rago, "The Attending," in Sky of Late Summer, p. 11.

38. Ned O'Gorman, "Adam Before His Mirror," in Adam Before His Mirror (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), p. 16.

39. Thomas Merton, "Advice to a Prophet," in Emblems of a Season of Fury, p. 37.

40. Charles Olson, "The Death of Europe," in Distances, p. 69.

41. Robert Creeley, "The Mountains in the Desert," in Selected Poems, p. 42.

42. Meiners, Everything to Be Endured, p. 75. In his essay on "The Will to Believe," James argues for the practical need to decide a belief for oneself on matters of importance, such as moral issues, when an intellectual judgement cannot be made, in opposition to the skeptical position of choosing not to believe. James's thesis is, "briefly stated, this: Our passional nature [specifically, the will] not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds...." (Author's italics omitted.) Though "the question of having moral beliefs at all or not having them is decided by our will," the will itself follows (but does not appear to direct) even an inconclusive intellect: "... in abstracto, ...we have the right to believe at our own risk any hypothesis that is live enough to tempt our will.... In concreto, the freedom to believe can only cover living options which the intellect of the individual cannot by itself resolve...." Not to choose a belief is, in effect, itself a choice of belief. See William James, The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1897), pp. 11, 22-23, 29. One reason for setting James's opinion aside may well be that he overlooks the element of personal commitment that belief, as such, implies, the intellect to the contrary notwithstanding.

43. E.g., see Karl Rahner's article on "Faith," in The Concise Sacramentum Mundi, pp. 496ff.

44. Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 179.

45. See entries under "Knowledge" and "Faith" in McKenzie, Dictionary of the Bible, pp. 485-488 and 267-271.

46. Cf. Heb. 4:12; Mt. 13;9; Acts 2:37. Etymologically, to obey is "to hear toward," that is, to listen as a servant would listen to his master.

47. See Acts 2, 3, and 10 for examples.

48. E.g., 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tm. 4:1ff; Coloss. 3:16.

49. James Dickey, "To Landrum Guy, Beginning to Write at Sixty," in Drowning with Others, p. 87.

50. W. D. Snodgrass, "A Cardinal," in Heart's Needle (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1959), pp. 26ff.

51. W. S. Merwin, "On the Subject of Poetry," in The Dancing Bears (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p. 61.

52. Denise Levertov, "Night on Hatchet Cove," in The Jacob's Ladder, p. 13; Merwin, "The Poem," in Moving Target, p. 41; and Daniel Hoffman, "A Gift of Tongues," in Broken Laws, p. 67. Other poets or poems are more visually oriented; to Levertov, inspiration is associated with something barely glizpsed or freshly noticed, as in "To the Muse," in O Taste and See, p. 27.

53. Snodgrass, "A Cardinal," in Heart's Needle, p. 31.

54. Alfred Starr Hamilton, "Guardian," in Aging, p. 12.

55. Robert Lowell, "No Messiah," in The Dolphin (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), p. 74.

56. In "Praise of Comedy: A Discourse," Henry Rago says that comedy entails freedom of choice and invites choice, whereas tragedy entails necessity and chooses us. See Scott, ed., Adversity and Grace, p. 259.

57. Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances, p. 146; italics mine.

58. R. W. B. Lewis's The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955) treats the development of the Adamic ideal as a complex dialog. A major point of the book is that, once discussion of the poet as Adam began to take place, the terms of the debate entrenched themselves even in the minds of those most opposed to them. What the Party of Hope said the Party of Memory had to repeat in order to dispute or adapt; and vice versa. Repetition confirmed the basic idea, and eventually the concept could not be overlooked if one wanted to discuss American letters at all.

59. Cf. Barfield, Saving the Appearances, pp. 146-147.

60. Galway Kinnell, "Vapor Trail Reflected in the Frog Pond," in Body Rags, p. 7f.

61. Hugh Nelson, "Sounds," in things i, 2 (Summer, 1965): 25-26.

62. Donald Finkel, "A Joyful Noise," in A Joyful Noise, p. 39.

63. Allen Ginsberg, "Poem Rocket," in Kaddish, p. 39.

64. One's own predelictions are bound to dictate the examples he would put in this category; I would class here much of the drug-inspired poetry of Ginsberg, McClure, Lamantia, and others.

65. John Unterecker, "Orations," in things i, 1 (Fall, 1964): 32-35. The title has a double meaning: the poem begins with speechifying and ends with something akin to prayer.

66. See Ronald Johnson's opening lines to "Letters to Walt Whitman," in Valley of the Many-Colored Grasses (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1969), p. 89.

67. Robert Duncan, "Passages 33," in Tribunals, p. 11.

68. Henry Rago, "The Promising," in A Sky of Late Summer, p. 55.

69. Ron Loewinsohn, "The Stillness of the Poem," in Meat Air, p. 9.

70. Emmett Jarrett, "The Edge of the Roof," in things i, 2 (Summer, 1965): 17-18.

71. X. J. Kennedy, "Ars Poetica," in Nude Descending the Staircase, p. 53.

72. In 2 Cor. 4:13, St. Paul thus paraphrases Ps. 116:10.

73. See Henry Rago, "Faith and the Literary Imagination," in Scott, ed., Adversity and Grace, p. 251; also, Denise Levertov, "Some Notes on Organic Form," in The Poet in the World, p. 7.

74. Rago, pp. 244, 247.

75. A. R. Ammons, "Corson's Inlet," in Corson's Inlet, p. 8.

76. Cid Corman, "Back," in O/I, page unnumbered.

77. Idem, "To look at / a free tree," in Once and For All, page unnumbered.

78. Theodore Roethke, Straw for the Fire: From the Notebooks of Theodore Roethke, 1943-1963, selected and arranged by David Wagoner (Garden City: Doubleday & Comapany, 1972), p. 261.

79. Levertov, The Poet in the World, p. 7.

80. Ralph J. Mills, Theodore Roethke (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), pp. 7-8.

81. Unless otherwise noted, page numbers in this and the following paragraph refer to works found in the Collected Poems.

82. Cf. Mills, p. 8; also, Rosemary Sullivan, Theodore Roethke: The Garden Master (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975), p. 190.

83. Mills, "In the Way of Becoming: Roethke's Last Poems," in Arnold Stein, ed., Theodore Roethke: Essays on the Poetry (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965), p. 127.

84. Roethke, in Straw for the Fire, p. 262.

85. Ibid., p. 263.

86. Conversation dated January 29, 1826, in Johann P. Eckermann's Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann and Soret, translated by John Oxenford (London: George Bell & Sons, 1874), pp. 166, 167; also reprinted in Walter Jackson Bate, ed., Criticism: The Major Texts (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1952), p. 403.

87. Vassar Miller, "No Return," in Adam's Footprint (New Orleans: New Orleans Poetry Journal, 1956), p. 34; and idem, Wage War on Silence (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1960), p. 23.

88. Robert Lowell, "Fishnet," in The Dolphin, p. 15.

89. Such a view is proposed by Pearce in Continuity, p. 433.

90. Paul Carroll, The Poem in Its Skin (Chicago: Big Table Publishing Company, 1968), pp. 231, 232.

91. Ibid., p. 232.

92. Cf. Quentin Anderson, The Imperial Self: An Essay in American Literary and Cultural History (New York: Random House Vintage Books, 1971), pp. 3ff.

93. Ira Sardoff, "Feeling and Form," in Settling Down (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1975), p. 18.

94. 2 Cor. 3:6.

95. Ralph J. Mills, Theodore Roethke, pp. 7-8; italics mine.

96. R. Dennis Walters, "A Geological Speculation," unpublished.

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

1. Select Bibliography

The following works are cited in the body of the text:

Abrams, M. H. Literature and Belief.
New York: Columbia University Press, 1958. Criticism.

Allen, Donald M., ed. The New American Poetry, 1945-1960.
New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1960. Poetic Anthology.

Ammons, A. R. Briefings: Poems Small and Easy.
New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1971. Poems.

--------. Corson's Inlet: A Book of Poems.
Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965. Poems.

--------. Collected Poems, 1951-1971.
New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1972. Poems.

--------. Expressions of Sea Level.
Ohio State University Press, 1963. Poems.

Auden, W. H. The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays.
New York: Random House, 1962. Criticism.

Auerbach, Eric. Scenes from the Drama of European Literature.
New York: Meridian Books, Inc. 1959. Criticism.

Barfield, Owen. Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry.
New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World Harbinger Books,
1957. Anthropology.

--------. Speaker's Meaning.
London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1967. Linguistics.

--------. What Coleridge Thought.
Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1971. Criticism.

Bartlett, Phyllis. Poems in Process.
New York: Oxford University Press, 1951. Criticism.

Bell, Marvin. A Probable Volume of Dreams.
New York: Atheneum, 1969. Poems.

Benedikt, Michael. Sky.
Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1970. Poems.

Berg, Stephen, and Mezey, Robert, ed. Naked Poetry.
Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1969.
Poetic anthology, criticism.

Berkhof, Hendrikus. The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.
Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964. Theology.

Berrigan, Daniel, S.J. The World for Wedding Ring.
New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962. Poems.

Berryman, John. Delusions, Etc.
New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1972. Poems.

--------. Love & Fame.
New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux; 1972, 2nd edition,
revised. Poems.

--------. 77 Dream Songs.
New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1964. Poems.

--------. Short Poems.
New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1967. Poems.

Bly, Robert. The Light Around the Body.
New York: Harper and Row, 1967. Poems.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. Letters and Papers from Prison.
Trans. Reginald Fuller. Ed. Eberhard Bethge. London:
William Collins Sons, Fontana Books, 1959. Theology.

Booth, Philip. Available Light.
New York: The Viking Press, 1976. Poems.

Bowra, Cecil M. Inspiration and Poetry.
London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1955. Criticism.

--------. Inspiration and Poetry: The Rede Lectures.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951. Criticism.

Brown, William. "Wondering How." In North American Review
252, 2 (January, 1967): 13. Poem.

Buckley, Vincent. Poetry and Morality.
London: Chatto & Windus, 1959. Criticism.

--------. Poetry and the Sacred.
London: Chatto & Windus, 1968. Criticism.

Bury, R. G. The Fourth Gospel and the Logos-Doctrine.
Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, Ltd., 1940. Theology.

Carroll, Paul. Odes.
Chicago: Big Table Publishing Company, 1969. Poems.

Carroll, Paul. The Poem in Its Skin.
Chicago: Big Table Publishing Company, 1968 (Second Printing, 1969). Criticism.

Carruth, Hayden, ed. The Voice That Is Great Within Us: American Poetry of the 20th Century.
Toronto: Bantam Books, 1970. Poetic anthology.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. Biographia Literaria; or, Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions.
New York: Leavitt, Lord & Co., and Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1834. Criticism.

Collingwood, R. G. The Idea of Nature.
London: Oxford University Press, 1967. Philosophy.

Corman, Cid. Livingdying.
New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1970. Poems.

--------. 0/I.
New Rochelle: The Elizabeth Press, 1974. Poems.

--------. Once and For All: Poems for William Bronk.
New Rochelle: The Elizabeth Press, 1975. Poems.

--------. Out & Out.
New Rochelle: The Elizabeth Press, 1972. Poems.

--------. 'S.
New Rochelle: The Elizabeth Press, 1976. Poems.

Creeley, Robert. For Love: Poems 1950-1960.
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962. Poems.

--------. Hello.
Taylor's Mistake, New Zealand: Hawk Press, 1976. Poems.

--------. Selected Poems.
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976. Poems.

--------. A Sense of Measure.
London: Calder and Boyars, 1973. Criticism.

--------. Words.
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967. Poems.

Dickey, James. Drowning with Others.
Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1962. Poems.

--------. Poems 1957-1967.
Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1967. Poems.

Duncan, Robert. Bending the Bow.
New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1968. Poems.

Duncan, Robert. Roots and Branches.
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964. Poems.

--------. Tribunals: Passages 31-35.
Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1970. Poems.

--------. The Truth & Life of Myth: An Essay in Essential Autobiography.
Freemont, Mich.: The Sumac Press, 1968. Criticism.

Eckermann, Johann P. Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann and Soret.
Trans. John Oxenford. London: George Bell & Sons, 1874. Criticism.

Eliot, T. S. The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950.
New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1971. Poems, drama.

--------. Selected Essays.
New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1960. Criticism.

Enslin, Theodore. Landler.
New Rochelle: The Elizabeth Press, 1975. Poems.

--------. The Median Flow: Poems 1943-1973.
Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1975. Poems.

Everson, William (Brother Antoninus). The Crooked Lines of God: Poems 1949-1954.
Detroit: The University of Detroit Press, Contemporary Poets Series, 1959. Poems.

--------. The Hazards of Holiness: Poems 1957-1960.
Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1962. Poems.

Fairchild, Hoxie Neale. Religious Trends in English Poetry; vol. 6, 1920-1965: Valley of Dry Bones.
New York: Columbia University Press, 1968. Criticism.

Ferlinghetti, Lawrence. A Coney Island of the Mind, and Pictures from the Gone World.
New York: New Directions Publishing Company, 1958. Poems.

Finkel, Donald. A Joyful Noise.
New York: Atheneum, 1966. Poems.

--------. A Mote in Heaven's Eye.
New York: Atheneum, 1975. Poems.

--------. Simeon.
New York: Atheneum, 1964. Poems.

Gelpi, Albert. "Adrienne Rich: The Poetics of Change."
In American Poetry Since 1960: Some Critical Perspectives.
Ed. Robert B. Shaw. Cheshire: Carcanet Press, Ltd., 1973. Criticism.

Gelpi, Donald L., S.J. Charism and Sacrament: A Theology of Christian Conversion.
New York: Paulist Press, 1976. Theology.

Ginsberg, Allen. Kaddish and Other Poems, 1958-1960.
San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1961. Poems.

--------. Planet News, 1961-1967.
San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1968. Poems.

Gleason, Robert W., S.J. The Indwelling Spirit.
Staten Island, New York: St. Paul Publications, Alba House, 1966. Theology.

Goodman, Paul. The Lordly Hudson: Collected Poems.
New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962. Poems.

Greenberg, Barbara L. "Boarding of Pan American Flight 207 Will Be Delayed Ten Minutes." In Michigan Quarterly Review 6, 3 (July, 1967): 210. Poem.

Gregor, Arthur. Figure in the Door.
Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1968. Poems.

--------. The Past Now: New Poems.
Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1975. Poems.

--------. Selected Poems.
Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1971. Poems.

Halperin, Mark. Backroads.
Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976. Poems.

Haughey, John C., S.J. The Conspiracy of God: The Holy Spirit in Men.
Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1973. Theology.

Hendry, George S. The Gospel of the Incarnation.
Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958. Theology.

Hewitt, Geof, ed. Quickly Aging Here: Some Poets of the 1970's.
Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1969. Poetic anthology.

Hilton, David. "In Praise of BIC Pens." In Chicago Review 20, 4 (May, 1969): 212-213. Poem.

Hoffman, Daniel. Able Was I Ere I Saw Elba: Selected Poems 1954-1974.
London: Hutchinson & Co., 1977. Poems.

--------. Broken Laws.
New York: Oxford University Press, 1970. Poems.

Hoffman, Daniel. The Center of Attention.
New York: Random House, 1974. Poems.

--------. A Little Geste and Other Poems.
New York: Oxford University Press, 1960. Poems.

--------. Striking the Stones.
New York: Oxford University Press, 1968. Poems.

Hofstadter, Albert. "The Poem Is Not a Symbol." In Philosophy East and West xix, 3 (July, 1969): 221-233. Criticism.

Hollander, John. "Philomel." In Perspectives of New Music 6, 1 (Fall-Winter, 1967): 134-141. Poem.

Howe, Fanny. Eggs.
Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1970. Poems.

James, William. The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy.
New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1897. Psychology.

Jarrell, Randall. The Complete Poems.
New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1969. Poems.

Jarrett, Emmet. "The Edge of the Roof." In things i, 2 (Summer, 1965): 17-18. Poem.

Jarrett, Emmett, and Schreiber, Ron, eds. "Prospectus." In things i, 1 (Fall, 1964): 2-3. Criticism.

Johnson, Ronald. Valley of the Many-Colored Grasses.
New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1969. Poems.

Johnson, Samuel. Rasselas, Poems, and Selected Prose.
Ed. Bertrand H. Bronson. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1952. Poems, criticism.

Justice, Donald. The Summer Anniversaries.
Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1960. Poems.

Kaufman, Shirley. The Floor Keeps Turning.
Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 1970. Poems.

Kees, Weldon. Poems 1947-1954.
San Francisco: Adrian Wilson, 1954. Poems.

Kennedy, X. J. Nude Descending a Staircase.
Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1961. Poems.

Killinger, John. The Failure of Theology in Modern Literature.
New York: Abingdon Press, 1963. Criticism.

Kinnell, Galway. The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ into the New World: Poems 1946-1964.
Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1974. Poems.

--------. Body Rags.
Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1968. Poems.

--------. Flower Herding on Mount Monadnock.
Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1964. Poems.

--------. Poems of Night.
London: Rapp & Carroll, 1968. Poems.

Kittel, Gerhard, ed. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. 10 vols.
Trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964. Reference, dictionary.

Knott, William. The Naomi Poems Corpse and Beans.
Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, Big Table Books, 1968. Poems.

Kostelanetz, Richard, ed. Possibilities of Poetry.
New York: Dell Publishing Company Delta Books, 1970.
Poetic anthology.

Kunitz, Stanley. "'Imagine Wrestling with an Angel': An Interview with Stanley Kunitz." By Robert Boyers.
In Salmagundi 22-23 (Spring-Summer, 1973): 71-83.
Criticism.

Kunitz, Stanley. The Terrible Threshold: Selected Poems 1940-1970.
London: Secker & Warburg, 1974. Poems.

Leary, Paris, and Kelly, Robert, eds. A Controversy of Poets.
Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Anchor Books, 1965.
Poetic anthology.

Lee, Al, ed. The Major Young Poets.
New York: The World Publishing Co., Meridian Books, 1971.
Poetic anthology.

Levertov, Denise. The Freeing of the Dust.
New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1975.
Poems.

--------. The Jacob's Ladder.
New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1961.
Poems.

--------. O Taste and See.
New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1964.
Poems.

Levertov, Denise. The Poet in the World.
New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1973. Criticism.

Levine, Philip. Not This Pig.
Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1968. Poems.

Lewis, C. S. Selected Literary Essays.
Ed. Walter Hooper. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969. Criticism.

--------. Reflections on the Psalms.
London: Collins Fontana Books, 1965. Theology.

Loewinsohn, Ron. Meat Air: Poems 1957-1969.
New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970. Poems.

Lowell, Robert. The Dolphin.
London: Faber and Faber, 1973. Poems.

--------. For the Union Dead.
New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1964. Poems.

--------. Near the Ocean.
New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1967. Poems.

Malkoff, Karl. Crowell's Handbook of Contemporary American Poetry.
New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1973. Criticism.

Martindale, Colin. Romantic Progression: The Psychology of Literary History.
Washington: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, and New York: John Wiley & Sons Halstead Press Books, 1975. Psychology.

Meiners, Roger K. Everything to Be Endured: An Essay on Robert Lowell and Modern Poetry.
Columbia: University of Missouri Press, Literary Frontiers Edition, 1970. Criticism.

--------. Journeying Back to the World.
Columbia: University of Missouri Press Breakthrough Books, 1975. Poems.

Merton, Thomas. Emblems of a Season of Fury.
New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1963. Poems.

--------. Selected Poems of Thomas Merton.
Intro. Mark van Doren. New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1959. Poems.

Merwin, W. S. The Dancing Bears.
New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954. Poems.

--------. The Lice.
New York: Atheneum, 1967. Poems.

--------. The Moving Target.
New York: Atheneum, 1963. Poems.

Mills, Ralph J., Jr. Contemporary American Poetry.
New York: Random House, 1965. Criticism.

--------. Theodore Roethke.
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963.
Criticism.

Miller, J. Hillis. Poets of Reality.
Boston: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1965.
Criticism.

Miller, Vassar. Adam's Footprint.
New Orleans: New Orleans Poetry Journal, 1956. Poems.

--------. Wage War on Silence.
Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1960. Poems.

McClure, Michael. The New Book / A Book of Torture.
New York: Grove Press Evergreen Original, 1961. Poems.

McKenzie, John L., S.J. Dictionary of the Bible.
New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1965. Reference,
Dictionary.

--------. The Power and the Wisdom: An Interpretation of the
New Testament.
Garden City: Doubleday and Company Image Books, 1972.
Theology.

--------. The Two-Edged Sword: An Interpretation of the
Old Testament.
Garden City: Doubleday and Company Image Books, 1966.
Theology.

Nelson, Hugh. "Sounds." In things i, 2 (Summer, 1965):
25-26. Poem.

Nemerov, Howard. Reflexions on Poetry & Poetics.
New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1972. Criticism.

--------. The Western Approaches: Poems 1973-1975.
Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975. Poems.

O'Gorman, Ned. Adam Before His Mirror.
New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961. Poems.

O'Gorman, Ned. The Buzzard and the Peacock.
New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964. Poems.

--------. The Flag the Hawk Flies.
New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972. Poems.

--------. The Night of the Hammer.
New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1959. Poems.

Olson, Charles. Archaeologist of Morning.
London: Cape Goliard Press, 1970. Poems.

--------. The Distances.
New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1960. Poems.

--------. Poetry and Truth: The Beloit Lectures and Poems.
Transcribed and edited by George F. Butterick. San Francisco: Four Seasons Foundation, 1971. Criticism.

Ossman, David. The Sullen Art.
New York: Corinth Books, 1963. Criticism.

Packard, William, ed. The Craft of Poetry: Interviews from The New York Quarterly.
Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1974. Criticism.

Palmer, Edwin H. The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit: The Traditional Calvinistic Perspective.
Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974. Theology.

Parzen, Rabbi Herbert. "The Ruah Hakodesh in Tannaitic Literature." In The Jewish Quarterly Review 20 (1929-1930): 51-76. Theology.

Pearce, Roy Harvey. The Continuity of American Poetry.
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967. Criticism.

Penguin Books. Penguin Modern Poets 13: Charles Bukowski, Philip Lamantia, Harold Norse.
Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969. Poems.

Plath, Sylvia. Ariel.
New York: Harper & Row, 1965. Poems.

--------. The Colossus.
London: Faber and Faber, 1967. Poems.

Pomeroy, Ralph. "To Words." In Poetry 103, 3 (December, 1963): 161. Poem.

Ponsot, Marie. True Minds.
San Francisco: City Lights Pocket Bookshop, Pocket Poets Series, 1956. Poems.

de Quincey, Thomas. The Collected Writings of Thomas de Quincey: New and Enlarged Edition, vol. X. Ed. David Masson. Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1890. Criticism.

Quinn, Sr. M. Bernetta. The Metamorphic Tradition in Modern Poetry. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955. Criticism.

Rago, Henry. A Sky of Late Summer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969. Poems.

Rahner, Karl, ed. Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi. New York: The Seabury Press, Crossroads Books, 1975. Reference, theology.

Rich, Adrienne. Poems Selected and New: 1950-1974. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975. Poems.

--------. Twenty-One Love Poems. Emeryville: Effie's Press, 1976. Poems.

Roethke, Theodore. The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke. Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1966. Poems.

--------. Straw for the Fire: From the Notebooks of Theodore Roethke, 1943-1963. Selected and arranged by David Wagoner. Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1972. Criticism, poems.

Rosenthal, M. L. "Some Thoughts on American Poetry Today." In Salmagundi 22-23 (Spring-Summer, 1973): 57-70. Criticism.

Rukeyser, Muriel. The Speed of Darkness. New York: Random House, 1968. Poems.

--------. Waterlily Fire: Poems 1935-1962. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962. Poems.

Sardoff, Ira. Settling Down. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1975. Poems.

Scott, Nathan A., Jr., ed. Adversity and Grace: Studies in Recent American Literature. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968. Criticism.

--------. The Broken Center: Studies in the Theological Horizon of Modern Literature. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966. Criticism.

--------. Negative Capability: Studies in the New Literature and the Religious Situation. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969. Criticism.

Scott, Nathan A., Jr. The Wild Prayer of Longing: Poetry and the Sacred.
New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971. Criticism.

Sexton, Anne. All My Pretty Ones.
Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1961. Poems.

--------. Selected Poems.
London: Oxford University Press, 1964. Poems.

Shapiro, Harvey. Mountain, Fire, Thornbush.
Denver: Alan Swallow, 1961. Poems.

Smail, Thomas A. Reflected Glory: The Spirit in Christ and Christians.
Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975. Theology.

Snodgrass, W. D. Heart's Needle.
New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1959. Poems.

Snyder, Gary. Regarding Wave.
New York: New Directions Publishing Company, 1970. Poems.

Sobiloff, Hy. Breathing of First Things.
New York: The Dial Press, 1963. Poems.

Stein, Arnold, ed. Theodore Roethke: Essays on the Poetry.
Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 1965. Criticism.

Stevens, Wallace. The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens.
New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1954 (1961 printing). Poems.

--------. Poems by Wallace Stevens.
Ed. with intro. by Samuel F. Morse. New York: Random House Vintage Books, 1959. Poems.

Storr, Anthony. The Dynamics of Creation.
New York: Atheneum, 1972. Psychology.

Strand, Mark, ed. The Contemporary American Poets.
New York: Mentor Books, New American Library, 1969. Poetic anthology.

--------. Darker.
New York: Atheneum, 1970. Poems.

Streeter, B. H., ed. The Spirit: God and His Relation to Man Considered from the Standpoint of Philosophy, Psychology, and Art.
London: Macmillan and Company, 1920. Theology.

Suenens, Leon-Joseph (Cardinal). A New Pentecost?
Trans. Francis Martin. New York: The Seabury Press, Crossroads Books, 1974. Theology.

Tate, Allen. Essays of Four Decades.
New York: William Morrow & Co., Apollo Edition, 1970. Criticism.

Trilling, Lionel. "On the Modern Element in Modern Literature." In Varieties of Literary Experience: Eighteen Essays in World Literature.
Ed. Stanley Burnshaw. New York: New York University Press, 1962. Criticism.

Tyler, Robert L. "What We Need." In Southern Humanities Review iv, 4 (Fall, 1970): 299. Poem.

Unterecker, John. "Orations." In things i, 1 (Fall, 1964): 32-35. Poem.

Vawter, Bruce, C.M. The Four Gospels: An Introduction, 2 vols.
Garden City: Doubleday & Company Image Books, 1967. Theology.

Waggoner, Hyatt H. "On A. R. Ammons: Some Notes and Reflections." In Salmagundi 22-23 (Spring-Summer, 1973): 285-293. Criticism.

Wagner, Linda W. Denise Levertov.
New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1967. Criticism.

Wagoner, David. Collected Poems 1956-1976.
Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976. Poems.

--------. Staying Alive.
Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966. Poems.

Wakoski, Diane. Inside the Blood Factory.
Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1968. Poems.

Wallace, Robert, and Taafe, James G., eds. Poems on Poetry: The Mirror's Garland.
New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1965. Poetic anthology.

Walters, R. Dennis. "A Geological Speculation." Unpublished poem, 1976.

--------. Noise on a Quiet Wind.
Ann Arbor: Private publication, 1976. Poems.

Wilbur, Richard. The Poems of Richard Wilbur.
New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World Harvest Books, 1963. Poems.

Wilbur, Richard. Walking to Sleep: New Poems and Translations.
New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969. Poems.

Willard, Nancy. Testimony of the Invisible Man: Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Francis Ponge, Rainer Maria Rilke, Pablo Neruda.
Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1970. Criticism.

Williams, William Carlos. Paterson.
New York: New Directions Publishing Company, 1963.
Poem.

--------. Pictures From Brueghel and Other Poems.
New York: New Directions Publishing Company, 1962.
Poems.

--------. The William Carlos Williams Reader.
Ed. with intro. by M. L. Rosenthal. New York: New Directions Publishing Company, 1966. Poems, criticism.

Woods, John. On the Morning of Color.
Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961. Poems.

Wordsworth, William. The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, vol. III.
Ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1974. Criticism.

2. General Bibliography

The following works are cited in the notes or were consulted for reference material, but are not cited in the text.

Abbott, Walter M., S.J., ed. The Documents of Vatican II.
New York: Guild Press, America Press, Association Press, Angelus Books, 1966. Theology.

Abrams, M. H. A Glossary of Literary Terms.
New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971 (third edition).
Reference, dictionary.

Ammons, A. R. Diversifications.
New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975. Poems.

--------. Northfield Poems.
Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966. Poems.

--------. Uplands: New Poems.
New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1970. Poems.

Anderson, Quentin. The Imperial Self: An Essay in American Literary and Cultural History.
New York: Random House Vintage Books, 1971. Criticism.

Auerbach, Eric. Mimesis.
Trans. Willard Trask. Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Anchor Books, 1953. Criticism.

Barfield, Owen. "The Meaning of 'Literal.'" In Literary English Since Shakespeare.
Ed. George Watson. London: Oxford University Press, 1970. Criticism.

Bate, Walter Jackson, ed. Criticism: The Major Texts.
New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1952. Criticism.

Bittlinger, Arnold. Gifts and Graces: A Commentary on I Corinthians 12-14.
Trans. Herbert Klassen. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967. Theology.

Boyers, Robert, ed. Contemporary Poetry in America: Essays and Interviews.
New York: Schocken Books, 1974. Criticism.

Brockington, A. Allen. Mysticism and Poetry on a Basis of Experience.
London: Chapman & Hall, Ltd., 1934. Criticism.

Brown, Raymond E., S.S. New Testament Essays.
Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., Image Books, 1968. Theology.

Brunner, Heinrich Emil. The Word of God and Modern Man.
Trans. David Cairns. Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964. Theology.

Bruns, Gerald L. Modern Poetry and the Idea of Language: A Critical and Historical Study.
New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974. Criticism.

--------. "Poetry as Reality: The Orpheus Myth and Its Modern Counterparts." In ELH 37, 2 (June,1970): 263-286. Criticism.

Callahan, Daniel, ed. God, Jesus, and Spirit.
New York: Herder and Herder, 1969. Theology.

Carroll, Paul, ed. The Young American Poets.
Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, Big Table Books, 1968. Poetic anthology.

Catholic University of America. New Catholic Encyclopedia.
New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967. Reference, encyclopedia.

Chaplin, James P. Dictionary of Psychology.
New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1968. Reference, dictionary.

Coventry, John, S.J. Christian Truth.
New York: Paulist Press, 1975. Theology.

Crystal, David. Linguistics, Language and Religion.
New York: Hawthorn Books, 1965. Linguistics.

Dennis, Carl. Climbing Down.
New York: George Braziller, 1976. Poems.

Dickey, James. The Suspect in Poetry.
Madison, Minn.: The Sixties Press, 1964. Criticism.

van Dusen, Henry. Spirit, Son, and Father.
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958. Theology.

Gee, Donald. Concerning Spiritual Gifts.
Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, no copyright.
Theology.

Ghiselin, Brewster. The Creative Process: A Symposium.
Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952.
Criticism.

Ginsberg, Allen. Allen Verbatim: Lectures on Poetry, Politics, Consciousness.
Ed. Gordon Ball. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974. Criticism.

Harper, Michael C. Prophecy: A Gift for the Body of Christ.
London: The Fountain Trust, 1964. Theology.

Howard, Richard. Alone with America: Essays on the Art of Poetry in the United States Since 1950.
New York: Atheneum, 1969. Criticism.

James, Henry. The Art of the Novel.
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934. Criticism.

Jarrell, Randall. Poetry and the Age.
New York: Random House Vintage Books, 1953. Criticism.

Jennings, Elizabeth. Christian Poetry.
New York: Hawthorn Books, 1965. Criticism.

Jung, Carl Gustav. The Collected Works of C. G. Jung: vol. 5, Symbols of Transformation, an Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia.
Trans. R. F. C. Hull. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956. Psychology.

Kinnell, Galway. The Book of Nightmares.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971. Poems.

--------. What a Kingdom It Was.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, and Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1960. Poems.

Lane, Gary, ed. A Concordance to the Poems of Theodore Roethke.
Programmed by Roland Dedekind. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1972. Reference, single author.

Levertov, Denise. Footprints.
New York: New Directions Publishing Company, 1972. Poems.

--------. Relearning the Alphabet.
New York: New Directions Publishing Company, 1970. Poems.

--------. The Sorrow Dance.
New York: New Directions Publishing Company, 1966. Poems.

--------. To Stay Alive.
New York: New Directions Publishing Company, 1971. Poems.

Lewis, C. S. Mere Christianity.
New York: Macmillan Company, 1952. Theology.

--------. Rehabilitations and Other Essays.
London: Oxford University Press, 1939. Criticism.

Lewis, R. W. B. The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century.
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955. Criticism.

Liddell, Henry G., and Scott, Robert, eds. A Greek-English Lexicon.
Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968. Reference, dictionary.

Lowell, Robert. History.
London: Faber and Faber, 1973. Poems.

--------. Life Studies, and For the Union Dead.
New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux Noonday Press, 1964. Poems.

--------. Selected Poems.
New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976. Poems.

Logan, John. Cycle for Mother Cabrini.
New York: Grove Press, 1955. Poems.

Ludwig, Richard M., ed. Aspects of American Poetry.
Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962. Criticism.

Meltzer, David, ed. The San Francisco Poets.
New York: Ballantine Books, 1970. Poetic anthology, criticism.

Merton, Thomas. The Geography of Lograire.
New York: New Directions Books, 1969. Poems.

Merwin, W. S. Green with Beasts.
London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1956. Poems.

Miller, J. Hillis. Poets of Reality.
Boston: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1965. Criticism.

Monette, Paul. The Carpenter at the Asylum.
Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1975. Poems.

Montague, George T., S.M. The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition.
New York: Paulist Press, 1976. Theology.

Moody, Dale. Spirit of the Living God: The Biblical Concepts Interpreted in Context.
Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968. Theology.

Morris, Adalaide Kirby. Wallace Stevens: Imagination and Faith.
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974. Criticism.

McLeod, James Richard. Theodore Roethke: A Bibliography.
Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1973.
Reference, single author.

Nelson, Cary: The Incarnate Word: Literature as Verbal Space.
Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973. Criticism.

Nemerov, Howard, ed. Poets on Poetry.
New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1966. Criticism.

Noon, William T., S.J. Poetry and Prayer.
New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1967.
Criticism.

Olson, Charles. Human Universe and Other Essays.
Ed. Donald Allen. New York: Grove Press, 1967.
Criticism.

Orr, Gregory. Gathering the Bones Together.
New York: Harper & Row, 1975. Poems.

Ostroff, Anthony, ed. The Contemporary Poet as Artist and Critic.
Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1964. Criticism.

Perkins, David, ed. English Romantic Writers.
New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967. Criticism.

Poirier, Richard. The Performing Self: Compositions and Decompositions in the Languages of Contemporary Life. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971. Criticism.

Preminger, Alex, ed. Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics.
Frank J. Warnke and O.B. Hardison, Jr., assoc. ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press Enlarged Edition, 1974. Reference, encyclopedia.

Press, John. The Fire and the Fountain: An Essay on Poetry. London: Oxford University Press, 1955. Criticism.

Rawlinson, Alfred Edward John, ed. Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation, by Members of the Anglican Communion.
London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1928. Theology.

Reiser, Max. Analysis of Poetic Thinking,
Trans. Herbert M. Schueller. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969. Criticism.

Richardson, Alan, ed. A Dictionary of Christian Theology.
Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969. Reference, encyclopedia.

--------. A Theological Word Book of the Bible.
New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962. Reference, dictionary.

Roethke, Theodore. The Collected Verse of Theodore Roethke, and Words for the Wind.
Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961 (10th printing, 1971). Poems.

Randall, Dudley, ed. The Black Poets.
New York: Bantam Books, 1971. Poetic anthology.

Sapir, Edward. Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech,
New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1921. Linguistics.

Sayers, Dorothy L. The Mind of the Maker.
New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941. Theology.

Schneidau, Herbert N. Sacred Discontent: The Bible and Western Tradition.
Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977. Anthropology.

Scott, Nathan A., Jr., ed. The New Orpheus: Essays toward a Christian Poetic.
New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964. Criticism.

Sexton, Anne. The Death Notebooks.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974. Poems.

Skeat, Walter W. An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language.
Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1882. Reference, dictionary.

Snyder, Gary. A Range of Poems.
London: Fulcrum Press, 1971. Poetry.

Stokes, Terry. Boning the Dreamer.
New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975. Poems.

Sullivan, Rosemary. Theodore Roethke: The Garden Master.
Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975.
Criticism.

Tasker, R.V.D., ed. The Greek New Testament, Being the Text Translated in The New English Bible, 1961.
Ed., Intro., Text. Notes, and App. by R.V.G. Tasker, D.D. Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, 1964. Theology.

Tate, James. Absences: New Poems.
Boston: Little, Brown and Company, Atlantic Monthly Press Book, 1972. Poems.

--------. The Lost Pilot.
New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967. Poems.

Thrall, William Flint, and Hibbard, Addison. A Handbook to Literature,
Revised and enlarged by C. Hugh Holman. New York: The Odyssey Press, 1960. Reference, encyclopedia.

Torrance, Thomas Forsyth. Space, Time, and Incarnation.
London: Oxford University Press, 1969. Theology.

Wagner, Linda W., and MdAdams, Lewis. "Interview with Robert Creeley." In Paris Review XI (Autumn, 1968).
Criticism.

Watkin, E. I. Poets and Mystics.
Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1968; original publication, 1953. Criticism.

Webb, Eugene. The Dark Dove: The Sacred and Secular in Modern Literature.
Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975.
Criticism.

Whorf, Benjamin Lee. Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf.
Ed. John B. Carroll. Cambridge: The Technology Press of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1956. Linguistics.

Wordsworth, William. William Wordsworth: Selected Poems and Prefaces.
Ed. Jack Stillinger. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, Riverside Editions, 1965. Poems, criticism.

Yocum, Bruce. Prophecy: Exercising the Prophetic Gifts of the Spirit in the Church Today,
Ann Arbor: Word of Life, 1976. Theology.

Zukofsky, Louis. All the Collected Short Poems 1923-1964.
New York: W.W. Norton & Company, the Norton Library, 1965. Poems.