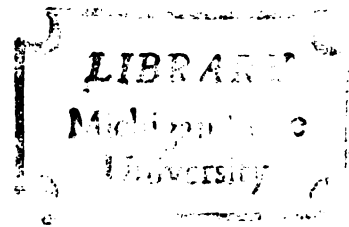


WALT WHITMAN, T. S. ELIOT, AND THE
DILEMMA OF MODERN CONSCIOUSNESS

Dissertation for the Degree of Ph. D.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
RICHARD EARL KOCH
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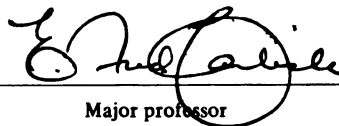
*Walt Whitman, T.S. Eliot, And The
Dilemma of Modern Consciousness*

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ABSTRACT

WALT WHITMAN, T. S. ELIOT, AND THE DILEMMA OF MODERN CONSCIOUSNESS

By

Richard Earl Koch

The poetry of Walt Whitman and T. S. Eliot has often been viewed as if these writers were at opposite ends of the spectrum of modern poetry. Because they are probably the central poets of the modern age, their apparent opposition is particularly important. This study suggests that the major poems of Whitman and Eliot are very different from one another, but also that at their most profound level Whitman and Eliot were engaged in a complementary way in the same search for understanding. And finally, this study suggests that together Whitman and Eliot point toward a way of seeing the world that might move us as a society beyond some of our fundamental philosophical dilemmas.

"Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" by Whitman and "Gerontion" by Eliot are two representative poems which when viewed together, raise central questions about the differences and similarities in the poetry of the two writers. The

differences in the two poems seem at first to be a disagreement about what language can accomplish. Whitman claims language can transcend space and time in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," and the speaker of Eliot's "Gerontion" suggests that neither his senses nor language can find meaning in the world or make meaningful contact with other people. We seem to have a somewhat different relationship with the poet of "Gerontion" than we have with the speaker in the poem, however, which raises the question again about how different the two poets really are. This question and the question about what language can do can be pursued both into the history of language and further into the major poetry of Whitman and Eliot.

Owen Barfield is concerned with the history of meanings of words in poetry and in daily speech. And on several fundamental issues raised by the study of language Barfield is clearly allied with Ernst Cassirer. Both Barfield and Cassirer believe that the fact that language tends to become more and more figurative (more metaphorical) as we trace it back suggests that language had figurative beginnings. And they believe that these figurative beginnings suggest that in earlier societies (in the Classical Age and before) myths were not a case of man making up "stories" to explain his world to himself, but rather the mythical and the concrete (or material) were part of the same moment of perception. So, earlier societies did not

merely explain their perceptions differently from us, but they perceived their world differently. Barfield traces a change in human consciousness, a fundamental adjustment in the way we see our world, and he points out problems that have resulted from our modern way of seeing. Finally, he suggests a potential in language to help us move into a fuller and more satisfying way of seeing our world.

Asking the question about what language can do with the insight into that question offered by Barfield and Cassirer provides a somewhat new slant on the central poems by Whitman and Eliot, Song of Myself and The Waste Land. As we examine the language of these poems we see that both involve readers in similar ways, and on what seem to be intellectual, emotional, and even physical levels. And we see that implicitly in The Waste Land and explicitly in Song of Myself the poets have the same hope for their language and a similar achievement with it. The poems dramatize different visions, but their language creates similar reader experiences. In the direction that the language of both poems points is a potential for moving beyond purely concrete reality and so for solving several fundamental modern philosophical dilemmas.

Eliot's late masterpiece, the Four Quartets, attempts to unite vision and language accomplishment in a way somewhat different from The Waste Land, and in some ways like Song of Myself, though it explores a different ground

than either of those poems. Two of Whitman's later poems, "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," attempt to use the vision of Song of Myself to face man's most frightening limitation, his mortality. In these poems the two poets suggest that part of an understanding beyond usual twentieth-century understanding rests in accepting all of life: pain and joy, potential and limitation, life and death. Through experiencing life with our full beings, including logic and the imagination, a fuller understanding is possible.

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DILEMMA OF MODERN CONSCIOUSNESS

By

Richard Earl Koch

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1974

For MY MOTHER AND FATHER,
with thanks for their
love and teaching

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I wish to thank the members of my dissertation committee: Roger K. Meiners and E. Fred Carlisle, the co-directors, and William A. Johnsen. Over several years now my "co-directors" have counseled and guided me. I am very grateful to Fred Carlisle for introducing me to the ideas and spirit of experience-centered teaching, and to Roger Meiners for sharing with me his profound reading of modern poetry and his response to the ideas of Owen Barfield. Both men have taught me a great deal about literature and the field of English, but even more about being human.

William Johnsen assisted me throughout this study, and as it reached its crossroads he surely and continuously helped me to bring it to a meaningful conclusion. The central point of this study is to an important degree the result of the discussions we had.

Finally, I would like to thank Linda W. Wagner who read large portions of this study and helped shape it. And I would like to thank Alan M. Hollingsworth, Chairman of the Department of English, and James H. Pickering, Chairman of Graduate Studies, for their help and encouragement during my years as a graduate student.

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INTRODUCTION

What is the difference between Pablo Picasso and Andrew Wyeth?

Let me say as I ask this question that I am an amateur art lover, not a knowledgeable art critic. But let us also assume that we will not settle for the quickest, most simple-minded answer (Picasso is crazy, or Picasso is too "far out" for "normal" people). As to why I ask the question at all, perhaps that can be allowed to clear itself up as I go on.

I am using Wyeth here to stand for representational or "realistic" painting. I will not say much about him except to explain that I do not mean to criticize his work or to suggest that it is not valuable and enjoyable. On the other hand, Wyeth's paintings, which characterize American life as we know it in pictures which are somewhat like very clear photographs, does not need defending--everyone can sense that Wyeth sees like we see, and that his paintings have the ability to remind us of things we have seen or of things as we think they would be if we saw them. His paintings seem to capture realistic scenes for us and save them for the future.

Picasso, however, has painted works which are not entirely "realistic" and many of which are extreme in their non-realism--we can hardly tell what they are about. Fortunately Picasso has painted so many paintings in so many styles that we do not need to be art critics to be able to figure out something of what he is doing. In paintings like "The Old Guitarist" the old man and his guitar seem fairly realistic. Of course the old man's face is a gray-blue, which is not very realistic. And this man is sitting more awkwardly than we would imagine an old person (or a young one for that matter) would sit most of the time. And he seems to be sitting in an especially strange place, made up of a series of flat surfaces, like it is all hard clay or cement around him. But, it is not too difficult for us to tell that these somewhat unrealistic touches are meant to emphasize something about the old man. By the way the old man's head is bowed so severely, by his raggy clothes, and by his face we can tell this is a sad picture. And, we can see that the qualities of the painting which are non-realistic emphasize this sadness. The old man is sagging and somewhat emaciated; it looks like he might like to lie down; but the area around him is hard and empty; there really is no place to lie down. And so he remains seated uncomfortably, with his guitar, fighting the impulse of his body to rest. There is a sadness and harshness in life, and perhaps especially in being old, that Picasso is trying

to express. And he has been willing to give up some "realism" in order to capture the essence of this feeling.

In a more "far out" painting, "Three Musicians," Picasso has made the instruments "funny looking," and the musicians do not have faces or bodies in the usual realistic sense, though we can figure where some parts of their bodies are. If Wyeth had painted three musicians we would be able to see "what they look like" and what they had on. However, in this Picasso painting there is a flurry of colors and shapes which even to the amateur eye suggest motion and activity--our eyes busily work around in the painting carried here and there by shapes or a certain continuous flow of one color or another.

Is Wyeth really "realistic" while Picasso is not? Surely sadness is real. And surely when we are watching and listening to musicians there is a continuous motion and flow in the experience. We do not experience musicians like a still photograph, which, if we think about it, would only be "real" if the musicians were frozen and not playing any music at all. In other words so called "realistic" painting like Wyeth's, and so called non-realistic painting like Picasso's capture different qualities of real life, but both present very real experiences, and it depends on how we are looking at it at the time and what part of reality we are talking about whether one is more real than the other. Wyeth's paintings seem more real because they are

part of a conventional way we are used to having art represent life. But Wyeth's paintings are not all that life is.

We would not physically torture ourselves in order to experience pain--because it is real. But, it is a growth in understanding life if we explore normal emotions like sadness, trying to understand them better, and if we explore music as motion in addition to exploring it at a moment of pause or as people playing it in certain costumes. It is not bad to have conventional ways we see things, conventions can be helpful and pleasurable; but a convention that becomes the only way we can do things, or the only way we can see things has become a prison for the mind and body. I believe that man in his fullness is a subtle and profound being, but that in order to achieve his potential he must not build prisons around himself; rather he must use his full imagination to probe for a full and rich understanding of life and of others. I believe that this is part of the meaning of a Picasso painting. And I believe this is the reason why, whether we understand and relate to Picasso ourselves, we should make a habit of warmly accepting experiments like his and we should be willing to try to explore the explorations of others.

But this is to be a study of poetry. I introduce it in this way because I hope that it is, at the same time, a study of the potential of the human imagination, and of the potential for fullness of experience in life. I also

introduce the study in this way because I believe the difference between the world Picasso is painting and the world Wyeth is painting is a complex and important difference. Their difference from one another may show how we can understand ourselves in different ways as we experience life. I will not try to settle this difference in terms of Picasso and Wyeth. But I would like to suggest that the poetry of Whitman and Eliot, which we recognize as being very different from one another first, may be more different than our usual sense of people having different points of view, and second, as Picasso's painting seems to, they may suggest something about the way we might approach life to more fully experience it and understand it.

I began this study because of a growing respect and liking for the poetry of Whitman and Eliot, because my continuing curiosity was provoked by the fact that they are central, important modern poets and yet very different from one another, and because they are both sufficiently complex to yield further understanding of life through the full experiencing of their work. And finally, I have taken the particular slant that I have on their work because of the insight into the modern imagination I believe the work of Owen Barfield provides. His insight needs to be incorporated into our way of thinking about ourselves, I believe; and if I can help bring his insights to provide a helpful perspective on Whitman and Eliot I will be very pleased with that as a contribution.

If there is a moral purpose I have other than the ones I have already listed it would be to oppose a destructive impulse in government and in education today to try to turn education, even education in the arts, into a mechanical process--a situation where "testing results" is more important than teaching students and where things are "simplified" by thinking of students as machines which can be "programmed" a certain way to achieve certain desired results in performance. These tendencies are presently traveling under the names of "behaviorism" and "accountability." It is important for us to look at how people "behave"; that is part of how you evaluate what you are doing in education. And, it is important for teachers to want to be held responsible (accountable) for what they do--that too is a healthy and necessary part of teaching. However, when "behavior" is defined in a mechanical way, and when accountability is defined in terms of computer readouts on mechanically "tested results" this can lead to an over-simplifying and a dehumanizing of the educational process. If you perceive yourself as a person, then the "behavior" you will most want to teach will be that which allows the students under your care to use their imaginations (and the knowledge of your field) fruitfully to meet the challenge of a rapidly changing world full of other human beings. If you perceive yourself more or less as a machine then you will probably most want to teach

performance of mechanical tasks which are easy to measure and numerically categorize. Sometimes this can be done, but it must be done with very great care and with full attention to what it means to be a human being in the world today.

I believe that the poetry of Walt Whitman and T. S. Eliot, the language studies of Owen Barfield and Ernst Cassirer, the painting of Pablo Picasso, and our own sense of the beauty and worth of the human being will prevent us from reducing ourselves as behaviorists suggest, and will instead take us down another road, toward a fuller experiencing of life, a fuller understanding of ourselves, and a greater appreciation for one another.

This study focuses on the poetry of Whitman and Eliot and on the light the language studies of Barfield casts on their work. Because the poems of Whitman and Eliot have been so thoroughly read and explicated I have devoted little attention to that process except perhaps with "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" and "Gerontion" in the first chapter. And, I have also not summarized the scholarship on these two poets because: (1) The scholarship is so voluminous as to unnecessarily burden this study if included, and (2) The general drift of the poems of Whitman and Eliot is so well established by this time that a rehearsal of how the views were arrived at is unnecessary. For those who might like to refresh their memories of this

"drift" of study I refer to, or who might like to inform themselves of who I see as providing me with important preparation for my own study of the poems I have included an annotated bibliography of sources on Whitman, Eliot, language, and modern literature in general, all of which I feel have had some influence on the shape and direction of my thinking at this point in my life.

However, there are several literary works I feel I owe a special debt to. E. Fred Carlisle's The Uncertain Self: Whitman's Drama of Identity places the poetry of Whitman in the context of the existential search for the self (by the poet)--a context which is at once the most sensible and most rewarding that has been supplied for Whitman's poetry to date. I hope my study is complementary to Carlisle's. That is its goal. R. K. Meiners has written a study of the poetry of Robert Lowell, Everything to be Endured, and an essay, "On Modern Poetry, Poetic Consciousness, and the Madness of Poets," which brings the spirit and knowledge of Barfield to bear on modern poetry in ways that have taught me about both in profound ways. Meiners is the modern critic most in tune with Barfield of any that I have read. I also have especially benefited from Herbert N. Schneidau's Ezra Pound: The Image and the Real which studies, through the prose and poetry of Ezra Pound, the full complexity of the image and the use of metaphor in modern poetry; and I am especially indebted to

F. O. Matthiessen's Achievement of T. S. Eliot, which reads Eliot's poetry with great care and with depth of insight into the modern condition of man.

I have been so influenced by Carlisle, Meiners, and Barfield that their work pervades my study even when not formally cited. I rely continually on Carlisle's sense of Whitman's poems in my study, and the most profound example of this may be my treatment of Song of Myself which draws much of its sense of that poem as a process of the poet discovering the full self from Carlisle's book. In Chapter II my examples of dualistic consciousness in modern society--the way we look at the Bible, and the way we treat our environment--are from Barfield and Meiners respectively. I cite these examples only to demonstrate how much I owe to these three writers, and to express my gratitude.

CHAPTER I

WHITMAN AND ELIOT, VISIONS OF DIFFERENT WORLDS

Owen Barfield begins his short book, *Saving the Appearances*, by suggesting that:

There may be times when what is most needed is, not so much a new discovery or a new idea as a different 'slant'; I mean a comparatively slight readjustment in our way of looking at the things and ideas on which attention is already fixed.¹

Barfield then proceeds to challenge the very concept of reality of modern western society. He builds his argument about modern perception through a careful examination of the meanings of words in the English language, and especially through an examination of the language of poetry. Without proposing such a large task as Barfield's, I would like to further examine the language in some of the major poetry of Walt Whitman and T. S. Eliot in the spirit of Barfield, to see if this reveals a new and helpful slant on their work. Whitman and Eliot are both central to the development of modern poetry. And, to the extent we imagine modern poetry as a spectrum at once philosophical and stylistic, Whitman and Eliot become the opposite ends of that spectrum. We sense that Whitman's art and mind is

opposed to Eliot's. I believe, however, that a further study of the language of their poetry in light of Barfield can show that Whitman and Eliot at their most profound level are not opposites but unified in a special way in both their purpose and achievement.

Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" and Eliot's "Gerontion" are two representative poems which will serve to raise the questions that result from looking at Whitman and Eliot side by side. And they can also dramatize the apparent opposition of the two poets as they introduce themes which pervade the major long poems: Whitman's Song of Myself and Eliot's The Waste Land and the Four Quartets. "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" and "Gerontion" both attempt to deal with some of man's primary limitations and to overcome them. And, by the time the poems arrive at their conclusions, they seem to create visions of two very different worlds, Whitman's where at least one primary limitation--time--can be overcome, and Eliot's where time and space seem to be boundaries that are closing in on the speaker, trapping him in a meaningless and fragmented world.

In "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" Whitman attempts to transcend time through two basic methods: first, by creating a joint presence with his reader on the ferry, and second, by using this joint presence, and the shared experience it implies, to help the reader envision time as something like distance, something that we can imagine crossing

to join each other. He begins by referring to a generalization which the reader of a poem implicitly accepts as he begins reading, that the poet cares about his audience. But he also teases us with the suggestion that he cares for us in a way we are not fully aware of:

And you that shall cross from shore to shore years
hence are more to me, and more in my meditations,
than you might suppose.²

By opening with a generalization so broad that the reader easily accepts it Whitman begins to nurture a habit of accepting which he will utilize later in the poem. Next he offers a description of the experiences of crossing the ferry that will not be changed by time, that he and his reader may both experience:

Others will watch the run of flood-tide,
Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and
west, and the heights of Brooklyn south and east,
Others will see the islands large and small;

Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross,
the sun half an hour high,
A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years
hence, others will see them,
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide,
the falling-back to the sea of the ebb-tide. (2, 9-13)

He saves for last, as if to cement his point, those parts of the experience which are most permanent, the sun and the tide. The permanence of those elements of the scene implies his point, that time is not an absolute barrier. Even some physical aspects of experience seem to span infinitely across it.

Then, as he asserts that neither time nor distance can separate us because of our shared experience, he also begins to subtly link time and distance. Our usual sense of time begins to disappear:

It avails not, time nor place--distance avails not,
I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or
ever so many generations hence,
Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky,
so I felt, (3, 1-3)

He substantiates this claim by presenting additional sights that we share, lacing his description with the kind of sensory detail that makes us feel as if we are viewing with him. If he can create the experience for us with his words, then we will feel like we are in the experience with him, as if he has crossed all barriers to join us. Of these sights the most captivating is his description of the sea-gulls. He says he:

Watched the twelfth-month sea-gulls, saw them high
in the air floating with motionless wings,
Oscillating their bodies,
Saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their
bodies and left the rest in strong shadow,
Saw the slow-wheeling circles and the gradual
edging toward the south,
Saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,
(3, 9-12)

It is out of the intensity of this shared experience that the poet asserts exuberantly that nothing stands between him and his reader, "Whatever it is, it avails not--distance avails not, and place avails not" (5, 3). As he has been bridging time with his images he has also completed

exchanging the word time for the word distance, to help us imagine time as something we can travel back and forth on. His images and language make us feel as if he is traveling across time to join us.

The poet moves still closer to us by speaking of the misfortunes we share. He assures us the "dark patches" (6, 1-2) fall upon us all. These are different from the other shared experiences because of their psychic nature. And finally, because of the substantial number of experiences we share, and the degree to which we share them, and because of his subtle reconceptualizing of time, Whitman asserts his actual presence:

Closer yet I approach you,
 What thought you have of me now, I had as much of
 you--I laid in my stores in advance,
 I consider'd long and seriously of you before you
 were born.

Who was to know what should come to me?
 Who knows but I am enjoying this?
 Who knows, for all the distance, but I am as good as
 looking at you now, for all you cannot see me?
(7, 1-6)

It is significant that the word time is not used in this later part of the poem, only distance. The conceptual transformation is complete too, and the poet in this last stage feels a sense of power and of joy in his assumption that he and the reader are now united even across time. He commands the elements of his crossing to remain: "Flow on, river . . .," "Frolic on . . . waves" (9, 1-2). And he suggests that in our relationship with him is a

fulfilling of our best potential: "About my body for me, and your body for you, be hung our divinest aromas" (9, 22). So what began as a peaceful meditation on the Brooklyn ferry has gradually grown in intensity and energy until the speaker suggests it has transformed time and united him with us. His contemplation of his experience has become an attempt finally to recreate that experience for us, and to cause us to feel his presence. In the shared moment of the poem, and in the concrete experience of it, the poet is striving for the language in which poet and reader will recognize a relationship they share across time.

In "Gerontion" Eliot creates a speaker who has a very different experience from the speaker of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." This speaker, instead of confidently asserting his meaningful participation in experience, sees his world as a confusing dilemma and is unable to break through these feelings to make satisfying contact with that world or with other people. Daniel R. Schwarz has described "Gerontion" as the "process of unsuccessful meditation."³ The old man speaker of the poem, Schwarz says, explains his inability to believe through reason and logic while also groping for the faith beyond logic on which his salvation depends. The failure of this effort explains, for Schwarz, the seeming incoherence of the poem, and results in the final section in which "Gerontion's meditation poignantly dissolves into self-deprecation" (50). The old man of this

poem, like the speaker of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," tries to perceive a unity in his experience which will help him have faith and so gain salvation.

In his interpretation Schwarz emphasizes two central qualities of the poem: the old man's intense desire to achieve faith in the meaning of his life, and the man's despairing recognition of the total emptiness of his life and his world. The old man begins by noting his general lack of involvement in events or action:

I was neither at the hot gates
Nor fought in the warm rain
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh . . .⁴

This statement is followed by a series of images which are fragmented and disunified, showing a corrupt and ugly world, a world in which people are reduced to the functions they serve:

My house is a decayed house,
And the jew squats on the window sill, the owner,
Spawned in some estamnet of Antwerp,
Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London.
(7-10)

In the main body of the poem the old man considers and dismisses several potential sources of hope: words, religion, and history. He begins by linking words and religion. "Signs are taken for wonders," he says. And the expression "taken for" implies mistakenly. Then he offers one of man's continuing religious hopes, "We would see a sign!" (17). But in the next three lines he reduces words

to senselessness and dismisses them, as Christ enters ominously. It is implicit, as Schwarz points out, that Christ enters to rebuke those who call for a sign, as he does in the Bible:

The word within a word, unable to speak a word,
Swaddled with darkness. In the juvenescence of the year
Came Christ the tiger (18-20)

In those lines, "Swaddled with darkness" refers to the words but also reaches forward to describe Christ, who in addition to coming in darkness enters as the threatening tiger.

The next part of the poem opens with references to several ways of being devoured, "To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk" (22). Schwarz views this section as a perverse Lord's Supper. At the very least it is an interruption of the old man's attempt at meditation by a brief parade of characters who seem to be engaged in insignificant and unrelated activities. When the old man becomes alert again he begins to consider history, which he views as a temptress who either does not give what is tantalizingly offered, or who offers up meanings which are so incomplete that they nurture the craving in her audience for understanding:

And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late
What's not believed in . . . (39-41)

Here the tiger reappears briefly, but he is not a protector because it is "Us he devours" (49). The ominous appearance of Christ is fulfilled; and the old man, nearing the end of his meditation, mourns his loss of beauty, and the loss of his senses. He identifies with the spider and the weevil which move unceasingly and unheroically toward death. Like Whitman, Eliot here raises the image of the gull; but here it is the gull's death that the old man witnesses: "White feathers in the snow, the gulf claims" (72). The image of the gull entering the whitecapped waves emphasizes the old man's feeling of being isolated and mortal in an infinitely large and mysterious world. He, like the gull, is alone, unstruggling, and waiting for death.

The differences between "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" and "Gerontion" are extreme. Both poems begin and end with their relationship to water, but "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" begins at "Flood-tide" and concludes with a last stanza in which the speaker exhorts the seas to "Flow on" and "Frolic on." "Gerontion" begins "in a dry month" with the old man "waiting for rain." And it ends, not with a rain come to relieve the land and the man, but rather with the drought absorbing the man into it, so he is reduced to "Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season." Whitman's speaker is in a crowd on a ferry and spanning generations through time, while the old man is isolated and alone, except for the boy reading to him. Whitman's speaker attempts to invite us

into the poem, and even into a belief about what the poem can do--it can bridge the gap between generations and transcend the barrier of time. This speaker tries to entice us with visual imagery and to persuade us to let him approach us physically and spiritually.

The old man of "Gerontion" carries on his meditation seemingly unaware of our presence. His opening line, "Here I am, an old man" is as close as he comes to addressing us directly. Even his references to "you," and "us," and "we" seem mainly to suggest that he feels his plight is like that of his whole generation. His remarks are neither conversational nor enticing to the reader. They ramble like a monologue to the self which we are simply overhearing. He does not directly try to persuade us of anything. Indirectly, he builds a case for a certain belief about the world: that it is empty of meaning and hopeless. In "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" the speaker's meditation grows in intensity and meaning and unites him with the reader. In "Gerontion" the old man's attempt at meditation gradually breaks down in its search for a thread of meaning in experience, leaving the old man desperate and alone.

These essential contrasts are even further heightened by looking more particularly within the two poems. The spectrum idea about Whitman and Eliot, the sense that they are in opposition, seems to be more and more confirmed. The different treatments of the sea-gull imagery in the two

poems establish the difference in their stance toward their world even more fully. Whitman's speaker presents the precise sensory experiencing of the flight in his description of their "motionless wings" and of their "oscillating" bodies and of how the "glistening yellow" lights up parts of their bodies. In "Gerontion" there is a brief image of struggling flight in the "gull against the wind," and there is the image suggesting the gull's death, "white feathers in the snow," but it is the fact of the gull's death which is important. The images are not pursued or developed for their potential precision and vitality, rather they are presented in just enough detail to make the gull's death a concrete experience for the old man and for us. It is not the gull's struggle which the old man is concerned with but its results.

"Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" is filled with sights the speaker wishes to share, and he shares them so vitally that we experience them too. Seeing becomes a rich and vital act for him and for us. Whitman brings the act of seeing alive partly through his use of precise and expressive modifiers for the action and for the things that are seen. In addition to the "oscillating" of the sea-gulls he sees the "thickstem'd pipes" of steamboats, "the vapor as it flew in fleeces tinged with violet," and the "scallop-edged waves in the twilight." Even in the nouns and adjectives there is often a verb-like motion and energy to the scene,

as in the "quick tremulous whirl of the wheels" of a steamer and in the "swinging motion of the hulls" of ships. The speaker's exuberance for what he is seeing becomes almost a chant in the third section of the poem where the lines successively begin: Saw, Saw, Saw, and one line later they begin Look'd, Look'd, Look'd, Look'd, and then Saw, Saw again.

In total contrast to this wealth of seeing, and to this enthusiasm about seeing, Eliot's speaker declares:

I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:
How should I use them for your closer contact? (60-61)

A certain loss of the senses is natural in old age, but I do not think we are dealing with an utter loss of the ability to sense here, but rather we are dealing with the old man's attitude toward the experience of sensing or perceiving. Exploring the sensory world with his reason and logic will not yield up to him any feeling of spiritual understanding. And so he feels he must conclude that his senses cannot bring him and others closer together, exactly the opposite conclusion of the speaker of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry."

The way things are seen is a fundamental quality of the old man's experience, and the way he struggles with language to present the experiences to his readers is a fundamental quality of the poem technically. In the early

description of the landlord, fragmentation is a central quality of the scene:

My house is a decayed house,
 And the jew squats on the window sill, the owner,
 Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,
 Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London.
 (7-10)

We see that the last two lines describe the landlord and that the grammar is correct. However, the modifiers are so harsh and so individually set off by their alliteration and also so lengthily drawn out that they take on a life of their own. The descriptions raise partial images which do not necessarily remind us of the landlord and which seem unrelated to one another. Even though the grammar is correct the syntactical arrangement in which descriptions are stacked on top of one another works against continuity and coherence. It seems difficult for the old man to sort through this scene or to see it as a whole, and his language creates for us a sense of the fragmentation it has for him.

In the passage linking words and religion the fragmentation moves toward outright incoherence, as three separate subjects seem to be raised in three consecutive sentences. The most radical shift in subject comes with the entrance of Christ, whose entry as the tiger further complicates our effort to figure out what is happening since it does not describe our traditional sense of Christ:

Signs are taken for wonders. 'We would see a sign!'
 The word within a word, unable to speak a word,
 Swaddled with darkness. In the juvescence of the year
 Came Christ the tiger (17-20)

Our sense that language and religion are in "darkness" is built upon by the mystery of the imagery and the confusion of the lines.

In the section of the poem on history both the nature of history and the nature of sensory experience are presented. History provides just enough clues that we become hungrier for meaning, but that hunger is not satisfied. And sensory experience too lures us to hope but then frustrates us by failing to provide meaningful experience. So, history, the temptress, "deceives us with whispering ambitions" arousing us, but delivering too late when there is only "reconsidered passion." The presentation of history in these images heightens our sense of the old man's experience as one of sensory starvation. The sense of touch denied here is exactly what Whitman fulfills in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" in order to approach us. He says he has:

Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the
 negligent leaning of their flesh against me as
 I sat, (6, 16)

The sense of touching flesh heightens our experience of the power of the vital imagery to draw speaker and reader closer together. In "Gerontion" the speaker has made it clear he sees no such potential.

In contrast to "Gerontion" and the way its syntax and progression of images helps build a fragmented world, Whitman's lines are often conversational, "It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall," and "What I promis'd without mentioning it, have you not accepted?" His images are part of the scene around the ferry, usually related to the ships and the water. And sometimes he pauses over an image, as he does with the sea-gulls, letting it grow into an even fuller experience of seeing. We feel Whitman's speaker talking warmly to us. But we feel the old man of "Gerontion" desperately trying to make sense to himself.

Perhaps at the heart of what seem to be the different worlds of the two poems is the difference in the degree of action in each. In "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" the imagery is in motion and alive. And the speaker himself declares that he is moving toward us. The nouns and adjectives often seem in action, as I have suggested with references to words like whirl and swinging. Whitman develops this sense of motion further through his verbs. In section two he uses a sequence of verbs to make seeing and acting seem one: "Others will enter the gate," "Others will watch," and "Others will see" he says, joining the ideas of entering and seeing, and communicating that there are different ways of seeing (watching and seeing are different).

This poem throughout does not rely on the active verb as much as some of Whitman's exuberant poems. But its

last section opens with an explosion of powerful verbs as the speaker commands the scene around him to remain for those who will follow him. Nearly every line in this stage begins with a verb: Flow on, Frolic on, Gaze, Play, Fly on, Diverge, Flaunt, Burn, Thrive, and Expand. This part opens with the idea of flowing on which is the central one in the poem, and in a way the main goal of the poet. And it ends with expand, another way of putting the same hope. All of these verbs are richly suggestive. Frolicking is a special way of moving which carries with it a whole mood and frame of mind. To gaze is to look in a special relaxed and yet intense way. These words create an atmosphere that they try to draw the reader into. And they suggest, in themselves and in their variety, that the scene itself is alive with both motion and feelings. The passage seeks to involve us in not only the meanings of these words but in the feelings they suggest and in their growing energy as each line opens with action building a chant-like flow of action that can be felt in the act of speaking the passage.

With "Gerontion" again it is different. The unified images are absent. The scene is not alive except with the moods of frustration and despair amidst the fragmentation of images and ideas. Flashes of vitality, as in the "gull against the wind," are not developed. G. R. Hamilton points out in The Tell-Tale Article that there is often a shortage of verbs in Eliot's poetry, a point which seems

basically true, and "Ash Wednesday" is one prominent example. But, in "Gerontion" there is no shortage of verbs. It is the way the verbs operate that is so radically different from Whitman's poem. The majority of the verbs are passive, negative, or forms of "to be." Other verbs creep in as harsh modifiers creating some action, but it is action which emphasizes decay and fragmentation. This means that in the world of "Gerontion" we experience respectively: how things are acted upon, how they do not act, or how--when they act--their action is imprecise and de-energized as in the verb "to be." The old man introduces himself as a man who has not engaged in meaningful action, "I was neither at the hot gates," "Nor fought," "Nor knee deep" he says. We learn that he is passive because he sees no hope of meaningful action. He believes also that he cannot see, "I have lost my sight," and there is nothing to see but a "wilderness of mirrors."

The most disturbing way things are acted upon in the poem is their being "eaten" or "devoured." At one point we are all devoured by the tiger, and because we are encouraged to think of the tiger as Christ, the devouring becomes particularly disturbing. We are not only devoured, but since there is no active stage in the poem, we are devoured without struggle. This feeling of being consumed may be seen as the passive version of Whitman's idea of being unified with. This passive stance of the poem is

dramatized by the fact that the speaker himself engages in only one action in the entire seventy-six lines. That act comes as he declares "I/ Stiffen in a rented house" (50-51). Stiffening in a house, something which occurs perhaps because of inactivity, is the opposite of going out to meet the world.

The poems seem to dramatize different worlds: Eliot's where everything is "fractured atoms," and Whitman's where parts can be "disintegrated yet part of the scheme." One consists of extreme fragmentation, and the other strives for a complete wholeness and unity. The contradiction between them seems absolute. For Whitman's speaker there is a great potential to act on the world and to create relationships, like the one he proposes to have with his readers. And for this speaker even sensory perception is action. Perception is the act of meeting the world. What he sees he also experiences unconfined by time, distance, or any other barriers.

For the old man of "Gerontion" of course these possibilities do not exist. For him there is no possibility for meaningful action or for sensory perception of any consequence. And this is the loss of his senses which he mourns--the loss of the power of the senses to find meaning. He has also lost faith in the power of language to communicate. He feels language can neither sort his world out clearly for him nor make meaningful contact with others.

He understands his situation very well. And as his apparently struggling language gives us glimpses of the world he sees, we come to understand it too. We see that he feels entirely contained in time, entirely cut off from history and from salvation, and that he is desperately aware of his own concreteness, his own mortality.

One of these visions is infinitely preferable to the other. But the question is not so simple as which do we want. It quickly occurs to us to ask, which is right? Or, put another way, how can they both be right? We could talk of optimism and pessimism, but the poems will not be reduced to this. The source of their differences cannot be dealt with merely by suggesting that different people have different temperaments, nor can it be dealt with in a facile comment about keeping a cheery outlook. Each poem does indeed seem to offer an outlook different from the other. But what is meant by outlook here is a more elusive and complex thing than the moods we go through from day to day.

Establishing for ourselves a few standard ways the question cannot be answered leads us back around again to the question: which poem is right about what reality is? We can break that question down somewhat, or at least deal with parts of it, by asking two other questions. What kind of perception is possible (that is, what kind of sensory perception and what kind of understanding)? And, what

kinds of relationships are possible with our world and with other people? One way to pursue these questions would be to turn exclusively to rigorous philosophical inquiry, though it would be difficult to know exactly how or where to turn because the questions are so fundamental and so broad. Another direction we might turn is suggested by the fact that the questions are raised in poetry, and the heart of poetry is language. A central question which will put the consideration of reality properly into the realm of poetry is: Can language accomplish what the speaker of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" claims that it can accomplish? Or, is language limited in the ways the old man of "Gerontion" suggests that it is? Can language transcend the boundaries of space and time? Or, is language, like our bodies, limited to a certain place and a certain moment?

All of these questions so far have assumed a unity of purpose between the speaker of the poems and the poet, and this is a very dangerous assumption, as often wrong as it is right. With Whitman's speaker the identity with the poet seems complete. At least the accomplishment the poet seeks through language seems to also have been the goal dramatized by the speaker in the poem. With "Gerontion" this consideration unlocks new possibilities. For one thing the speaker claims that language cannot achieve meaningful contact with other people, and he seems right about how language works for him, but for us the poem does seem

to communicate meaningfully. We achieve a satisfying degree of understanding and we even have feelings for the quality of the old man's experience, a relationship which seems to contradict the old man's statements about language. But, this does not mean that the poems are the same--clearly they are different to an important degree, as this chapter has been establishing.

The exact nature of the differences and similarities between the two poems is a question which requires further answering. We should pursue these questions further into the poetry of Whitman and Eliot, which I propose to do. But it can also help if we explore the questions about language more generally. By looking at the history of language we can try to see what language has seemed to accomplish in the past and what it seems to be accomplishing in speech today. Owen Barfield is concerned with the history of the meanings of words in poetry and in daily speech, with what words do in relation to the world and in relation to the people who speak them. For this reason, and because of the fundamental nature of his arguments, I believe Barfield is our best guide in this exploration.

Chapter II

OWEN BARFIELD AND THE HISTORY OF MEANING, A NEW WAY OF SEEING

Owen Barfield has been engaged in a study of the history of language and the potential of words for many years and through several books, including Saving the Appearances, History in English Words, Poetic Diction, and other works. On several fundamental issues raised by the study of language Barfield is clearly allied with Ernst Cassirer, though the two argue their cases without reference to one another; and Susanne Langer is convinced that they arrived at their similar conclusions totally independent of one another.⁵ Both Barfield and Cassirer focus their studies on two key words: myth and metaphor. These words are associated with the figurative potential of language, and they are central words because it is generally agreed that language tends to become more and more figurative as we trace it back into history. By figurative I mean that quality of language which allows it to suggest non-logical relationships between events, or between events and their explanations (the Greek and Roman gods of the Classical Age and the way these gods were intimately related to concrete material experiences in the lives of people is one example of this quality of language in action). However, there is substantial disagreement about why language grows more figurative as we look farther back; and there is also disagreement about what this means.

Barfield and Cassirer, however, are in agreement in their explanations. And both choose to put their views in contrast to those of Max Muller, a nineteenth-century student of language. Muller suggests that there was an undetermined point when, in an Age of Metaphor, man created the figurative quality in a language which had previously not known such a quality. Muller feels that metaphor was then used to help man explain his world to himself. Basically Muller is saying that early man observed nature and then made up stories to explain it to himself. Within his theory metaphor is merely an interesting way of comparing one thing with another. And metaphor coupled to myth (the myths of the gods, for example) was simply a tool men used to create a world which was false, but which helped "superstitious" minds feel comfortable in nature because of the way it "explained" nature in fable form (SA, 42).

In disagreeing with this interpretation Barfield repeatedly argues in his studies that there is a fundamental difference between modern man and the man of early societies in their perceptions of their world. He maintains that the differences in the two worlds are not a case of two ages making different interpretations out of the same perception. This means that mythology is not a case of early society "peopling" its world with spirits or creating myths to explain phenomena. Rather early societies perceived myth as part of the phenomena. For them the mythical and the concrete were one thing, viewed as such in the same moment of perception. They both (we would

say both) simply were. For modern man, since the scientific revolution, perception is of concrete or material phenomena which he explains through rational scientific laws or which he feels he will explain once he has had sufficient time to study the phenomena. For us today myth is fiction, and we often consider the basic distinction to be between myth and reality, as if they are opposites (SA, 75).

Barfield begins to help us change this idea as he reminds us, especially in Saving the Appearances, of the nature of our own perceptions. He begins with a discussion of seeing a rainbow, and he argues that we understand that the rainbow is not really out there in any way that is verifiable except to our eyes. We know that if we walk toward it the rainbow will disappear, and that we could not touch it even if it could be approached. We know that it is a phenomenon caused by refraction of sunlight as it passes through particles of water in clouds. In short, we know that the rainbow is the product of this light, water, and our eyes; and we know that as a rainbow it does not exist except to our eyes. We may at first be inclined to think of an object like a tree as perhaps more "real" than a rainbow. We not only see a tree, but we can approach it and touch it. However, in the light of modern physics we understand that the tree also is actually particles (or waves?) which we call atoms. And, if we think about it, we understand that the tree as a tree is the product of those particles and our senses. We understand that both the rainbow and the tree, as we sense them, are "representations" of what

is actually out there. We differentiate these representations from hallucinations by seeking verification from other people that they see or somehow sense them also, thereby establishing them as collective representations. But, even when the representations are confirmed as shared with others, we understand that these representations are not the same as reality (SA, 15-18). And this knowledge--that what we see does not equal all of reality--suggests that people might have seen differently in the past and that we might see differently in the future.

In relation to "Gerontion" and "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" Barfield's argument raises the consideration that what seem to be merely different interpretations of reality may be more profoundly different experiences or perceptions. His argument substantiates that there is such a thing as different consciousnesses which amount to different realities because they are not interpretations but entirely different visions. I am not suggesting that Whitman and Eliot wrote out of different consciousnesses--nothing like this could be suggested without further exploring Eliot's and even Whitman's relationship to their speakers. However, that their poetry might deal with modern consciousness in some way (that is, that it might deal with our fundamental way of seeing the world) is a possibility Barfield's study introduces.

Barfield further suggests the complexity of perception by demonstrating that what seems like a simple sensory perception is often the result of both our senses and a mental

process. His example is our belief that we hear a thrush. Barfield argues that what we actually hear is a sound. "Hearing a thrush" is the result of our at one time undergoing the mental process in which a sound we were hearing was associated with a thrush. It is not important how we learned that the sound was the song of a thrush; it is only important that we see that at one point a mental process was required for us to make the connection. Now when we "hear a thrush" it seems like a perception because our recognition is immediate and happens instantly with our hearing of the sound. The process occurs in a single unbroken movement (SA, 20). Another way of approaching the subject of this close relationship between perception and mental process is to notice that sometimes our mental processes seize upon insufficient sensory data, or misuse adequate sensory data, to conclude that a stranger walking toward us is a familiar acquaintance. When the person gets closer, it may take us longer than we would have supposed necessary to recognize that he is actually a stranger because once we had it in our mind that he was familiar our senses seemed to focus on his familiar characteristics while being inclined to overlook that evidence which could help us correct our error. Perhaps part of what was at work here was a desire to see our friend. All of this suggests the way perception and mental processes tend to flow together and also how impermanent and fragile our perceptions may be.

To suggest differences in past perceptions from our own, Barfield draws on examples from medieval times. In

medieval art there are two qualities which especially suggest a difference in perception. The first is the absence of perspective in the paintings. To Barfield this suggests that medieval man saw the world in a fundamentally different way:

True, it [perspective] is no more than a device for pictorially representing depth, and separateness in space. But how comes it that the device had never been discovered before--or, if discovered, never adopted? There were plenty of skilled artists, and they would certainly have hit upon it soon enough if depth in space had characterized the collective representations they wish (sic) to reproduce, as it characterizes ours. They did not need it. Before the scientific revolution the world was more like a garment men wore about them than a stage on which they moved. (SA, 94)

The second quality now strikes us as quaint. This is the medieval artist's regular practice of using the same human figures and dress to portray the spiritual as well as the physical world. Angels looked like people and "a farm cart would do for Elijah's fiery chariot on its way up to heaven." It was not until the art of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that men felt obliged to supply angels with special costumes "often rather like a nightgown" (SA, 73).

The difference in perception between medieval and modern society as it is expressed in science is not as easy to suggest in a short space, but one example of the difference is the medieval sense of the polarity of actus and potentia which, Barfield notes,

. . . had carried perhaps half the weight of philosophical thought of the Western mind through all the centuries that elapsed between Aristotle and Aquinas.

In this framework it was thought that a phenomenon was in potentia until experienced when it became actual. The

phenomenon had its being prior to being experienced in this way, but it gains a particular way of being seen when experienced. In this framework an unseen rainbow would be classified as in potentia. Yet for Sir Francis Bacon this polarity had become a "frigid distinction" because he felt nature acted according to laws which were meaningless except when experienced (SA, 88-94). Since the scientific revolution it has become common to suggest, for example, that there is no such thing as an unseen rainbow. The exact change in scientific thinking is not so important, however, as our noticing that this is a case in which truly great minds thought one way up until a certain time (near the scientific revolution) when their way of thinking became meaningless for those who followed. It is not that some new discovery built on the old way of thinking. Rather this is a situation in which a "felt reality" vanished almost without a trace. The reality vanished so completely that it simply became meaningless to those who followed. Whether such a perceptual realm has become "unreal" or whether it was ever "real" is not a fruitful direction of thought for our purposes. Rather it is simply important that the distinction in painting and in science is not between a "quaint" belief or method of "superstitious" people and a sophisticated modern perception. Instead it seems to be a case in which equally great minds operated out of different realms of consciousness. And it seems that man perceived his world in a fundamentally different way before the scientific revolution.

Barfield makes his strongest case, however, in his studies of language. It is in language that he shows a difference between past and present perception most clearly. And it is also in language that he brings us back toward Whitman and Eliot. If Barfield shows how language reveals the nature of modern consciousness we can then explore the language of Whitman and Eliot in their poetry to see how they relate to that consciousness. And if Barfield can establish that language has a certain potential to transcend individual realms of consciousness we can explore the poetry of Whitman and Eliot to see if its language uses that potential.

In Poetic Diction and History in English Words Barfield traces language development through a focus on individual words. The word inspiration, for example, reflects man's changing relationship to his world. At first the word suggested to its users that the poet was inspired or "breathed into" by a god or an angel. Of course the poet had no control over this but rather was possessed by it. Later inspiration meant a sort of "divine wind" which would unpredictably blow through the poet. Today we usually think of inspiration as "a mood that may come and go in the course of a morning's work."⁶ The inspiring has not only moved from the outside to the inside, but it has gradually weakened in significance.

In all aspects of language in classical times and before, the spiritual and physical were bound together in ways which were perfectly natural to medieval man, but which are completely lost to us today. When a man was good humoured or

bad humoured or good tempered or bad tempered it was considered a result of one of the four humours (blood, phlegm, bile, and black bile) predominating in his temperament. The stars and planets were considered living bodies and the character and fate of men were determined by the influences which came from them. According to which planet was predominant or in the ascendant in the general disposition of stars at a man's birth he would be jovial (Jupiter), saturnine (Saturn), or mercurial (Mercury). And persons or things which influenced each other in this way were in sympathy or sympathetic.⁷ All of these words describe qualities which were at the same time physical and spiritual.

It is after the Reformation that the group of words hyphenated with self appears. These include: self-conceit, self-liking, self-love, and self-confidence. And words which designated an introspective attitude also began to appear. These were words like aversion, dissatisfaction, and discomposure. Both of these developments suggest an internalizing of consciousness. Prior to this, for medieval man, sad retained its original sense of "sated" or "heavy." Fear meant a "sudden and unexpected event." And, depression referred to the state of the man's internal organs in addition to the way he felt. It is particularly revealing that the verb to personify is an eighteenth-century verb, having no earlier counterparts. Medieval man would not have needed this concept if he was not "personifying" his world with myths (HEW, 170-181).

Barfield uses this evidence to challenge Muller's conclusions about the development of language. He points out that assuming the existence of an Age of Metaphor is illogical since our witnessing that language gets more and more figurative as it goes farther back should suggest that language had figurative beginnings. If we associate figurative language only with the general modern idea of metaphor as comparison we are caught in the awkward illogical bind that Muller is caught in. But, if with Barfield we see that in perception and language the figurative and the literal were one experience, the history of language makes sense as it unfolds. Barfield clarifies his case against Muller by taking issue with him on one important word:

According to Max Muller, it will be remembered, 'spiritus' . . . acquired its apparently double meaning, because at a certain early age, when it still meant simply breath or wind, it was deliberately employed as a metaphor to express 'the principle of life within man or animal.' All that can be replied to this is, that such an hypothesis is contrary to every indication presented by the study of the history of meaning; which assures us definitely that such a purely material content as 'wind,' on the one hand, and on the other, such a purely abstract content as 'the principle of life within man or animal' are both late arrivals in the human consciousness (PD, 80-81).

Cassirer attempts also to trace words and their meanings back to their roots, and he discovers that:

In the creation accounts of almost all great cultural religions, the Word appears in league with the highest Lord of creation; either as the tool which he employs

or actually as the primary source from which he, like all other Being and order of Being, is derived.⁸

And he notes that the name often held the power of the god in these past societies; often a name was "equal to calling a person into being" (53-55). Cassirer, like Barfield, uses this evidence to suggest that for some earlier societies "primary 'experience' itself is steeped in the imagery of myth and saturated in its atmosphere" (10). He also similarly opposes Muller as he argues:

But when we reduce it [Muller's view] to its philosophical lowest terms, this attitude turns out to be simply the logical results of that naive realism which regards the reality of objects as something directly and unequivocally given, literally something tangible

Cassirer concludes that metaphor to the mythmaking mind is not "mere analogy, but . . . real identification" (92).

Finally, for Cassirer the nature of myth in the past suggests a continuing profound relationship between conception and expression. Susanne Langer summarizes this central point in her preface to Cassirer's Language and Myth:

Human intelligence begins with conception, the prime mental activity; the process of conception always culminates in symbolic expression. A conception is fixed and held only when it has been embodied in a symbol. So the study of symbolic forms offers a key to the forms of human conception. The genesis of symbolic forms--verbal, religious, artistic, mathematical, or whatever modes of expression there be--is the odyssey of the mind.

The two oldest of these modes seem to be language and myth. (ix)

To the extent that language is the way in which concepts become fixed, language then is also the way we think. The profound link between language and conception which Barfield and Cassirer describe further suggests that language is a central instrument and a central sign of consciousness--it is a primary instrument through which a certain consciousness is developed and also a central part of that consciousness which we may study to find the nature of that way of seeing, in order to distinguish it from other states of consciousness. And, finally, their studies suggest that the relationship between language and thought in poetry may be more than complementary, and that the language of poetry may reveal more than the author's style; it may reveal the nature of the reality he is living in. And it is also possible that poetry could not only reveal a reality but constitute a probe for a new and different reality, or consciousness.

However, implicit in the idea that language fixes conception is an understanding that language somehow limits conception as it does this. In order to create a focus language must select; and, in selecting, only part of the full reality is captured. Barfield describes what he feels are "two opposing principles, or forces" of selection in language and consciousness. There is the force which tends to split up meanings "into a number of separate and often isolated concepts." Barfield calls this the non-poetic or

prosaic principle. The other force is the "principle of living unity" and "it observes the resemblances between things, whereas the first principle marks the differences." The force which observes resemblances Barfield calls the poetic principle (PD, 87-88). Kenneth Burke, in Language as Symbolic Action, also pursues the idea that language can notice similarity or difference, which he refers to as continuity and discontinuity. Burke calls a language framework (whether literary or scientific) a "terministic screen" through which we view experience. He argues that ". . . any nomenclature necessarily directs the attention into some channels rather than others."⁹ And he points out that when we observe things ". . . many of the 'observations' are but implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made" (46). Different language frameworks allow different perceptions, and they help us to notice different things about reality. Realizing that language to some extent causes different views or slants on experience ought to make us a little wary about declaring that what we see equals reality. For example, our sense that myth is shallow "explanation" is certainly partly due to the state of our language which today itself does not allow for the possibility of unity between the physical and the spiritual. In this very influence which language exerts over us, though, Burke shows how language becomes a source of creative power, a power

through which we at least partially create what we see. Burke believes that this power influences our natural and our spiritual perceptions:

And insofar as man, the word-using animal approached nonverbal nature in terms of his human verbalizing nature, is there not a sense in which nature must be as much of a linguistically inspired thing for him as super-nature. (378)

To the extent that man creates (with words) the nature that he thinks of himself as observing then, Burke concludes, "things would be the signs of words" (379). Burke's perspective here emphasizes how fully words can influence us in the development of our reality, but at other points he would clarify this to suggest that words do not totally create reality, even though they may intensely influence our concept of reality.

At one time language seemed to have the power to create the presence of the gods. In our time language has helped to create a perspective in which only the material seems real, in which we tend to think of ourselves as observing, and only observing, what is out there. In the twentieth century we have tended to draw a clear division between what is me and what is not-me. My-self is in my body, and this includes my spirit if I allow for that at all. And all that is not-myself is out there and cannot get in. A prime example of this perspective in action is the way we have treated our environment. Since it was seen

as out there we felt that so long as we were not directly harming ourselves as we destroyed our environment then we were only harming nature. We are only beginning to sense that there is a quality of life which we were harming all along and that finally we are unified with our environment in profound ways. Another example of this perspective is the modern debate over the Bible. In a material way of seeing either the Bible is historical truth (that is, materially true) or it is merely fiction. Either it is fact or "just stories." Barfield is uncovering a way of viewing the history of meaning that allows for another ground of understanding, one which allows that a perspective may be profoundly important without being empirically true.

This observer-observed relationship in which modern society has seen itself in terms of its world has led to many benefits, one of which is the tremendous technological progress of modern science. But as modern man came to view this as the only way of seeing, as if it were all of reality, there has been a heavy price to pay. Our sense of ourselves as divided from our world has come to be called dualism; and the price twentieth-century man has paid for his acceptance of dualism as reality is that he has continually found himself desiring a life of spiritual significance but at the same time found himself able to affirm only the material as real. We have wished for more than a material relationship with nature and with each other and

also for life after our bodily deaths; but our inability to affirm either such a relationship or such a non-bodily existence as real has often led to an almost desperate frustration and sadness. This is the despair and the sadness that the old man of "Gerontion" is experiencing and describing, and this is the kind of mortality and limited relationships that the speaker of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" is trying to overcome. The central questions of the two poems are also the fundamental questions of the twentieth century.

Just as there is no language framework which allows us to see entirely without operating in a certain context, or which allows us to observe without being influenced by language; there is also the possibility that we might use different language frameworks to help us focus on different aspects of reality. Barfield also argues that man is not all that there is; that man, through his language, does not absolutely create what is out there (just as he does not merely observe it). Perhaps there are situations or times when language establishes a near absolute hold over what man sees. And perhaps the grip of dualistic perception in the twentieth century has been such a case. But it is Barfield's hope that we may move beyond this dualism through the renewed recognition that we participate in the act of perceiving, and through a systematic application of the imagination in the search for a broader reality.

A search for the way out of dualism is, I believe, what Barfield, Whitman and Eliot, and thinkers in many other fields today are engaged in. Modern physics, for example, has been steadily breaking down the formerly neat distinction between the observer and the observed. This is a search in which there are not yet many definite answers. However, Barfield is convinced that there is much need in this search for the concept of polarity. Barfield derives his sense of this concept from Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a thinker he greatly admires.¹⁰ For Coleridge, a relationship in which two things are in polarity to one another means that: we can distinguish between them, but they cannot be divided; or, that the two parts are unified without having become the same, the two parts form a whole but may still be distinguished from one another. This is a concept which it is very difficult to express in language as it has developed up to today.

One example of our difficulty in clarifying such relationships is the form-content discussions in literary study. We know that the form of a piece of literature and its content or subject matter are somehow very closely related, but we have the feeling that they are not exactly the same. Some teachers of literature are fond of declaring that form and content are the same, that there is no way to tell them apart. This approach makes the question simple. And we do have a sense that form sometimes is

content (that is, that form causes the content to be a certain way). And yet, if we think about it, we realize that there are things we would say about form and content individually that we would not say about them jointly--in fact, critics regularly find it helpful to separate subject and structure in their discussions. Clearly form and content are not the same. They are somehow absolutely related in a way that is essential to their individual and joint character, but they are not the same. The notion that things are either the same thing or they are divided and separate is a consequence of dualistic perception and a dualistic language framework. But we are recognizing more and more that this is merely one way of seeing and one way of talking. It seems men have seen and talked in and out of different realities in the past and also that it is at least possible that men may participate in a different reality in the future.

Barfield's studies seem to reveal a potential in language to function beyond a purely dualistic framework. His study of the history of meaning to some extent legitimizes his claim that words "are flashing iridescent shapes like flames--ever-flickering vestiges of the slowly-evolving consciousness beneath them" (PD, 75). This implies a powerful imaginative force potential in language. Cassirer believes that language has limits to what it can accomplish, but he also insists that the subtle extremes

to which language might take us have not been reached. And he and Barfield are convincing in their suggestion that language has considerable power that we have gotten out of the habit of recognizing. As they suggest, language does seem to have the power to help us in a systematic application of the imagination to approach the problem of broadening consciousness.

I believe that one important and appropriate context for the poetry of Whitman and Eliot is to view it as an attempt to cope with and explore the reality described by modern consciousness and also to see it as a probe for a way beyond this consciousness. In "Gerontion" and in The Waste Land I think Eliot explores dualistic perception to its ultimate end, using language in experimental ways to search to the far edge of that way of seeing. I believe Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" and Song of Myself are imaginative attempts to use language to leap beyond dualistic consciousness without denying its existence, or in other words, without denying the material world.

Finally, I think that the later careers of the two poets seem to converge on a point in which the writer realizes the great extent of his participation in a dualistic world and attempts to face this fact of his existence; but rather than seeing himself as mired in this reality or as needing to leap beyond it, the poet accepts the task of probing language and perception for new ways of seeing and

new ways of expressing this seeing. This occurs in poems like Eliot's Four Quartets and with Whitman in works like "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd." From all sides and in all fields the questions are being asked that let us know we are on the threshold of a significant change in consciousness. Whitman and Eliot, as two of the primary spokesmen in modern literature, may be able to help us see what that new state of consciousness will be. It is with this hope that I explore the language and implications of their poetry.

CHAPTER III

SONG OF MYSELF AND THE WASTE LAND, LANGUAGE AS A BRIDGE

Barfield and Cassirer offer a general perspective on language which can assist us in answering the questions raised in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" and "Gerontion." The general point of these language studies substantiates what both poems imply, that language reveals the nature of the reality the speaker is living in. Beyond this Barfield and Cassirer seem to support the implication of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" that language has an imaginative potential to describe relationships that are not purely material or rational. Barfield also expresses the hope that language might be used to help create these imaginative relationships, and in this way it might help modern society move into a way of understanding which is beyond dualism. But how far language itself may carry us is not Barfield's immediate concern. He is more interested in describing a potential in language which seems not to be commonly recognized today. So, the question of whether language can transcend space and time, as "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" suggests, remains to be further explored. And, the question of how language functions in both Whitman and Eliot can now

be asked in terms of Barfield, in terms of how their language relates to the modern dualistic perspective. Whether either or both poets use language in such a way that it can help point to a consciousness beyond dualism, and whether they really belong at opposite ends of a spectrum of modern poetry can also be further explored.

These questions seem to range over several different areas of study, but in our exploring the syntax and diction of Whitman's and Eliot's poetry we can approach them all at once. In studying their language we at first see more fully the nature of the differences in their poems, and we see more clearly their apparent opposition. But in the end, through their language we can discover how, at a more profound level, their poems are unified in their purpose and achievement; both use language in such a way that it points toward a new consciousness. In this discovery about the poems we will be making our fullest use of Barfield's perspective, and we will ourselves be moving beyond a dualistic understanding of the differences between Whitman and Eliot.

Whitman's Song of Myself and Eliot's The Waste Land, two long central poems by these writers, provide a full opportunity to compare their goals and their accomplishments. Both poems develop a concept of how man and his world are related; and both present a theory of time, a perspective on death, and a philosophy of language and its relation to

all of these questions. A general explication of both suggests that they are directly opposed on these fundamental issues. The Waste Land presents a fragmented and frustrating world, while Song of Myself strives for a sense of the unity and meaning in the world. In Song of Myself death is temporary and not threatening. In The Waste Land it is final and the ultimate threat. In Song of Myself life is vital, sensual, and full of possibilities. In The Waste Land life is empty, dulling to the senses, and without possibility. In Song of Myself man seems capable of continually transcending the boundaries of reason and logic and participating in an equally real world of intuition and imagination. In The Waste Land man is totally contained first by his geographical world and second by his own skin because language and the senses do not make imaginative contact with the world. The only hope for minimal understanding in The Waste Land seems to rest in rational introspection.

The poses of the two speakers at the conclusions of the poems highlights their opposition. In the final part of The Waste Land, "What the Thunder Said," the speaker describes the question of whether or not to act as a trap: not to act is to live in emptiness, but to act is to give in to your destructive impulses, creating a situation you cannot recover from:

The awful daring of a moment's surrender
Which an age of prudence can never retract (404-405)

In words like "surrender" and "prudence" the speaker refers to sex, declaring it evil and empty. Sex, of course, is one of the primary ways Whitman describes the experience he advocates. At the conclusion of Song of Myself the speaker invites us to take a journey with him. Despite the risks he has described, he prepares for action. "Now the performer launches his nerve, he has pass'd his prelude on the reeds within" (section 42, p. 75), he says. We understand that he is describing a journey within and beyond the poem, a journey of the spirit and the body, and that he hopes to arrive at a new level of understanding. But whether he achieves his destination or not this speaker, with his decision to act, is in striking contrast to the speaker at the end of The Waste Land, who remains paralyzed by fear.

Despite this high degree of difference in the explicit conclusions of the two poems, however, there is a point in Song of Myself, section thirty-three, where the speaker of that poem moves close to the perspective which dominates The Waste Land. At this point in the poem the speaker moves from the "I see" stance of earlier in the poem to the "I am" stance of the remainder of his song. Instead of "witnessing" and "waiting" or instead of "absorbing" all into himself he becomes the participants of the

experiences he imagines for us. Before, he sat down with the runaway slave. Now, he says, "I am the hounded slave" (italics mine, 11). The risk of assuming this stance of closer identification becomes clear as the catalog of people and experiences shifts from the usual or joyful examples to examples of suffering. It is through this identification with suffering that the poet finally meets the full implications of accepting his physicality and his existence within the world of men. In his effort to triumph over this world he must come to terms with it rather than turn away from the dangers of it, and he must eventually have come face to face with suffering and the threat of death. It would not have been enough to declare his confidence; that confidence must be earned through experience. Sharing in this experience is also a necessary stage for the reader if he is to understand Whitman's invitation fully. It is neither a blind declaring that life is pleasant, nor a shallowly romantic declaration that the spirit is all.

As the list of suffering extends itself, however, the poet begins to flow away from his central purpose and is in danger of being entirely caught in suffering. But he shouts at last:

Enough! enough! enough!
Somehow I have been stunn'd. Stand back!
Give me a little time beyond my cuff'd head,
 slumbers, dreams, gaping,
I discover myself on the verge of a usual mistake.
(69)

His mistake would be to become overwhelmed by this suffering. It is necessary for him to accept this part of experience, but now he will try to move on to a perspective which incorporates the joyful and the painful. By accepting both fully he creates a new possibility for understanding. This possibility and the potential in language for sharing it with his reader is the "supreme power" with which he feels "replenish'd" (38).

I believe that in this section of Song of Myself the speaker approaches the perspective of The Waste Land and then moves on. Whether this speaker experiences and goes beyond the perspective of The Waste Land, or whether he backs off and fails to achieve the same level of understanding as in The Waste Land are questions which come to mind, but which are better asked in light of the use of language in the two poems. And, when we study this use of language I believe our perspective will be altered so that the questions will no longer be raised in these terms. Instead of showing the strength in one poem and a weakness in the other, this passage of suffering in Song of Myself, I believe, offers clues to the deeper experience which the two poems share. In this part of Song of Myself and throughout The Waste Land we learn that the understanding the poems seek cannot be achieved without accepting the full implications of the material world, and this involves suffering. And yet, explicitly at the end of Song of Myself

and implicitly in the language of both poems we learn that suffering may lead to understanding.

As we approach the language in the two poems, however, the results at first emphasize the difference between the worlds dramatized in the poems. The language of each seems to strive for exactly opposite effects on their readers. It is necessary for us to enter our study of their language by this door, the door through which at first their difference is even more clearly revealed. For, only by winding farther and farther along this path, examining their language for its effects, can we arrive at the point where, with a slight turn of the evidence we might cast all that has gone before in a somewhat new slant, a slant which reveals a profound shared experience between the two poems. This shared experience includes their having the same attitude toward language, and it involves their sharing in complementary ways in a probe for new consciousness.

The first words of Song of Myself richly suggest the content and technique of the whole poem. In declaring, "I celebrate myself, and sing myself" the speaker asserts the spirit of celebration and rejoicing, and he seeks to express in language the imaginative power of song. His focus is on the self and the imaginative potential of the self. He also includes our-selves, the readers, in addition to his-self as poet:

And what I assume you shall assume,
 For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to
 you. (3)

The poem is a search for what it celebrates, the full potential of the self. And the poem continually attempts to persuade the reader to assume what the poet assumes, and to invite the reader into a special kind of relationship with the poet. At this point it is perhaps not so different from all other poetry which at least implies an invitation to the reader to explore the self of the poet and to assume what he assumes. However, even this early there are clues in the language that Whitman means the invitation in an exceptional way. The word celebration suggests a thorough and ceremonial joy that begins to specify what we are being invited to assume. And, in the all-inclusiveness of the phrasing about what we share with the poet we get a further clarifying. "Every atom" that "belongs" to him also "belongs" to us. Everything is shared, and shared so completely that the poet and his readers both own it.

The simpler words in this opening part also suggest the character of the invitation; it is physical and sensuous:

I loafe and invite my soul,
 I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of
 summer grass. (1)

In the two words "I loafe" nearly a whole scene is created-- in the vision of sprawled limbs of someone leaning

nonchalantly. And "observing" is a way of seeing carefully that may be done at our leisure. The second of these two lines becomes a physical example of what we are being invited to do as it draws on and on in a leisurely way. It could have been brief; we could have merely "seen the grass." But this speaker chooses to be at his ease "observing a spear of summer grass." The sensuous invitation to join the poet is also heightened by the alliteration with "s" in the first line which emphasizes the parallelism and sharedness of the poem, and by the alliteration of the lilting, relaxing "l" sound of the last two lines.

In terms of the world that is dramatized there could hardly be a more distinctly different opening from Song of Myself than the one we find in The Waste Land. From "I celebrate myself" we move to "April is the cruellest month," from celebration to despair. Just as Whitman's line is total in its joyfulness, Eliot's is complete in its suggestion of hopelessness. The traditional month of hope is not simply disappointing, but it is the "cruellest" month of all. The word cruel expresses a strong sense of life's harshness. Life could be "sad" or even "depressing" before it would have descended to the state where we think of it as actively cruel. The clash between the words April and cruel in the opposition of their suggestiveness creates a friction in this first line and also a sense of betrayal--for both the speaker and reader the promise of April is

betrayed by its joining with the word cruel. In these opening few lines we also learn that winter is kind because it makes us "forgetful." Things are so bad that it helps a little just to forget. The remainder of Eliot's opening passage is also devoted to developing a sense of the deadness of life:

April is the cruellest month, breeding
 Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
 Memory and desire, stirring
 Dull roots with spring rain.
 Winter keeps us warm, covering
 Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
 A little life with dried tubers. (1-7)

This passage too is interwoven with careful alliterative patterns. "Month" is tied to the act of "mixing/Memory" with desire, linking April to confusion. And "cruellest" is linked to "Lilacs" and the "land" through the repeated "l"s, undermining the beauty of lilacs and the promise of the land in spring. The thudding "d" of the first four lines, and picked up again in line eight helps create the feeling of death and harshness which the sense of the words also presents. In line five the importance of "Winter" is that it keeps us "warm." Binding these two words together syntactically and alliteratively emphasizes the paradox--winter ought to make us cold. But the main function of the language and alliteration here is to help create a feeling of things being dead and hopeless.

Barfield, while choosing not to draw the issues surrounding the sound of poetry into his discussion in

general, does affirm in passing that there is an imaginative power in sound as in the meaning of words. Speaking particularly of rhyme but also referring to alliteration and assonance, he says the effects of sound:

. . . may well remind us how much, how very much, is possible to the human imagination, once it has begun to drink, with fuller consciousness, from the primal source of Meaning. It would be pure fantasy to attempt to prescribe in advance what uses man himself shall henceforth make of the material element of language. (PD, 151)

It is in the feelings, sensory and emotional, aroused by the sounds in these passages from Song of Myself and The Waste Land that we get some early clues to the similarity in their use of language. They both use language to achieve mood, but they also use language to draw readers into the poem. And we can explore the nature of the reader's involvement in both poems as we look further at their language.

A central poetic tool for both Whitman and Eliot, and one which they seem to use in very different ways, is the image. Even though their imagery causes different effects in us on one level, however, we can see that the language draws us into experiencing both kinds of images in a similar way. The worlds the images dramatize are very different, but the experience we have with the language of both is somewhat similar.

A key quality of the imagery in Song of Myself is the ability of some images to create a powerful sensory

experience but at the same time to transcend sensory boundaries. A scene in section five between the poet and his soul--described as two lovers--is one example:

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer
 morning,
 How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently
 turn'd over upon me.
 And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged
 your tongue to my bare-stript heart,
 And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till
 you held my feet. (5)

What happens between the lovers is not quite possible physically. A tongue cannot be shoved through someone's chest to the heart. But the poet fulfills the promise of sensual experience in this passage by the way he presents the scene. We are gradually drawn into the scene as each line extends the action of the last, and as the action builds in intensity. The scene is generally introduced in the first line. Then it becomes more specific as the exact arrangement of the lovers is presented in the second line. We sensorily respond to the suggestion of the head turning on our hip, and our shirt being parted, opening our chest to the air--the shirt parted from the "bosom-bone" as if our very flesh were parted--and we are drawn in fully at the suggestion of the cool, wet tongue pressed strongly against the chest. It is impossible, and yet we feel almost the painful sensation of the tongue touching our heart. Our senses jump wildly under the hypnotic suggestion.

Our feeling that more than a sensory event is taking place in this action is also quickly seized on by the poet as in the next lines he moves from sensuality to discovery:

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and
 knowledge that pass all argument of the earth,
 And I know that the hand of God is the promise of
 my own,
 And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of
 my own,
 And that all the men ever born are also my brothers,
 and the women my sisters and lovers,
 And that a kelson of the creation is love, (9)

The vitality and concreteness of the lovers' scene is not lost in this discovery because it occurs as if it were a physical "rising up" and "spreading" around us, the discovery itself taking on the sensory qualities of smoke or air. The discovery is briefly elaborated on, and then its hold on physicality is completed as the section ends with images of concrete things the poet feels linked to through his experience and subsequent discovery.

The diction, syntax, and line length all play a role in the successful communication of this experience to a reader and in successfully involving the reader in the experience. The sense of the action extending and extending is communicated as each line extends the sense of the last, and as each line focuses in more precisely on the scene. Finally, in the third of these lines, the line itself goes on and on past the usual ending place of lines

in this passage as the tongue extends on through the chest to the heart. And in this line the suggestiveness of the word "plunged" and the description "bare-stript heart" creates a feeling of intense and daring action, of plunging onward. Presenting the discovery partially as an image too allows the poet to blend discovery and image in the central statement of this passage, "And that a kelson of the creation is love." The kelson is central to the support of the ship and the source of a primary stability. And the feeling of that support and stability is how love relates to the understanding the poet is striving for.

It is common in Song of Myself for line length to be an important influence on rhythm and mood of experience, and for passages to move from sensual exploration of the concrete into a general recognition and then back into the concrete as in this passage about the lovers, representing the poet and his soul. In the last move to concrete imagery there is the increased depth added by the general insight. Lines tend to be short when an important generalization is offered, or when a new scene is being introduced; and lines tend to race on longer and longer as a scene increases in intensity of feeling or action.

The image is equally central to Eliot's The Waste Land, but the images are designed to dramatize a different world. Often the images are part sensory and part discursive explanation. In much of the poem the images do not

build unified scenes but instead glance off of one another disjointedly, suggesting a disjointed world. There are two primary ways imagery is developed for these effects in The Waste Land. One method is the isolating of particular images so that they are neither very far developed in themselves nor do they relate to one another in any usual way. Early in Part I the poem uses this type of imagery:

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only,
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the crickets
no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock. (19-25)

There are specific elements to this scene, and we experience at least some of these elements vividly with our senses. But they are carefully separated from one another by commas, and they are not modified by words or phrases that might further particularize them or relate them to one another. What modifying that does take place has to do with characterizing them as threatening (the roots clutch), or as dead; or they are described by what they do not offer: shelter, relief, or water. Any natural life they may have had is not developed, and any natural relationships that might have been suggested are left unrepresented. They are a "heap of broken images." And in the words broken, dead, and dry rests the nature of the world as the speaker sees

it. This world is fragmented, lifeless, and made up of unfulfilled dreams. These are what have captured the speaker's attention, and what seem to him to represent reality.

In the opening of Part II Eliot accomplishes a somewhat different feeling from the starkness of the "roots" passage. Here the scene is so elaborately set that it is very difficult to see just what it looks like. We are aware of many things glittering blindingly at us. Whitman asserts full confidence in the potential for finding the spiritual in the concrete, but here in The Waste Land we are smothered in particularities, drowned in glitter and glass. We can identify with the decorative cupid in the scene, who will not look at it. And yet there is an intensity to our experiencing of this scene and of the "roots" passage that is not explained by our looking at it in this way:

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
(Another hid his eyes behind his wings)
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra
Reflecting light upon the table as
The glitters of her jewels rose to meet it,
From Satin cases poured in rich profusion; (4)

Gradually the syntax becomes so contorted that it is very difficult to understand what item or part of the room is being described. In the second line the phrase "where the

glass" seems about to describe the marble floor, but instead "Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines" follows, which describes the location of the glass. Instead of then completing a description of where the glass is, however, the next line describes the vines by noting that a cupid peeks out from them. Finally, the sixth line returns to the glass, but somewhat confusingly it is now described by what and how it reflects. Whereas in the "roots" passage there were numerous commas and few descriptive words so that it emphasized isolation; in this passage there are commas only in the first two lines after which the descriptions tend to run together creating clutter. However, in neither scene does anything actually happen. The scenes and the situations simply exist; they are passively and disturbingly disconnected from people, action, or even other scenes. The images do give us sensory suggestions, but what we see in this and in the "roots" passage comes to us like a disturbing surrealistic painting, in flashes and fragments, controlled by mood.

The language of the two poems seems at this level to strive for nearly opposite effects. Whitman's language expresses sights and sensations, and a vitality and unity between man and the world. Whitman's language explores for the general discovery within the concrete world. His words try to express relationships beyond purely material relationships. The words try to relate images to one

another and to the discoveries which grow out of these relationships. The Waste Land, on the other hand, relies on fragmented and confusing images, unclear abstractions, unexpressive or threatening verbs, laborious or cluttered syntax, and in general a language which raises precise and powerful feelings but which seems extreme in its imprecision in all other ways.

The different worlds dramatized by the two poems is further established by their overall structures. In Song of Myself there is no narrative thread running through the poem tying it together in a story. However, we feel at all times engaged in a dialogue with the speaker, and we can recognize the progress of that dialogue. In The Waste Land there is neither a narrative nor a speaker which runs throughout the poem. Instead there are a series of speakers who are seemingly unrelated to one another, and who often interrupt one another. At times, particularly in Part II, "A Game of Chess," it is not even possible to tell who is speaking.

Yet we are not finally confused by The Waste Land, nor are we left unmoved in our response to it. The diction, syntax, line length, and images of the poem work effectively. If verbs are relatively rare, that serves to emphasize the inactive nature of life as the speaker experiences it, which means that the words of the poem are fully expressive. What the poem communicates with great clarity is the state

of the speakers' minds--they are confused and disturbed--and the poem also shows the relationship these speakers have with language. For them language is a frightful puzzle which they awkwardly labor over in order to try to sort things out. But, seemingly by its very nature--as they use it--language is confused and confusing. To make even the barest progress with it requires endless clarification, to which end they stack endless clarifications on top of one another in their speech.

But for the poet of The Waste Land language is a very different thing. Language creates these speakers and their world for a reader, and then it draws a reader into experiencing that world. The way the language invites us to experience images and then prevents us from fully and comfortably experiencing them creates an almost physical tension in us as we read. By frustrating our attempts to sort out or fully link images to one another the poet creates in us the sense of frustration his speakers also feel. And by vividly creating their frame of mind the poet helps us to experience these speakers in more than a factual way. We feel something of their suffering and sadness through speaking the way they speak as we read their lines, and also through the emptiness which follows each of their attempts to communicate. The speakers are trapped inside of dualistic consciousness. For them there is no reality except material reality and no truth but logic, and

the horror they are experiencing results from their recognition of this and their recognition that this world is without meaning, since it has no meaning beyond material existence. The speakers search for answers in their material world: in sex, through clairvoyantes, through words, or glitter; but they learn the futility of seeking answers as everywhere they turn they find desolation and they find themselves cut off from one another. Their language too is contained in the world of dualism and cannot help them. They are entirely trapped. It is our full recognition of this (and the way the poem causes this recognition) which is part of our relationship with the poet, however. And sharing so fully in his sense of the potential of dualism to become a trap involves us intellectually and emotionally. It is at this level, as we observe how deeply both poems involve the reader, that we begin to see that The Waste Land and Song of Myself are not opposite experiences.

Whitman involves his reader by the way he weaves words and experience inextricably together, and by the way he demonstrates the power of words to suggest a potential for ecstasy in life: ecstasy through sex, through aesthetics (listening to music, for example), and ecstasy through personal relationships. He succeeds in reminding us of this potential for ecstasy because he partially recreates the experience through language. There is a rhythm and sound in our vocalizing his language which sensorily

suggests touching, or seeing, or which emotionally suggests celebration. We feel involved physically with the words. In the passage between the lovers (or poet and soul) in section five the word plunged is a richly suggestive word (suggestive of physical abandon); as a word it involves the parts of our mouth in a series of three different kinds of contact in the sounds of "pl," "nge," and "d." If there is not a sense of plunging in that, there is at least a demanding physical-ness in our saying the word (of course there is some of this in all words, but this is exactly the point Whitman makes in a spectacular way with key words like plunged). And, I have already discussed how the extended line in this scene also draws us physically into the experience. Finally in this scene the poet interweaves words, sensory experience, and abstract discovery so closely that they will not be sorted back out again. Participating in these qualities of the scene all at once, and experiencing them as richly interrelated is an experience beyond a dualistic context. We do not reason and then draw conclusions. We do not experience this scene as out there; we become intermingled with the scene, experiencing it on several levels all at once. By showing that there is this potential in the material world, and by using words to draw us into this experience, as a demonstration of the experience, Whitman is probing with language for a general consciousness beyond dualism. This consciousness he does not fully explain--

and he perhaps does not fully know--but he shows how language can point toward the possibility of this consciousness nevertheless.

In Eliot's poem too, language is a probe. In the world dramatized in the poem language is limited to dualistic expression, but the poem itself probes dualism to its depths, draws us into the poem--and into the feeling of participating in a hysterical search for meaning, and a feeling of frustration when we do not find it. As we speak the lines our senses and our curiosity are aroused, but then we find the words garbled and frustrating; and we find ourselves alternately wearied by the slow sounds and unrelenting starkness or crowded by the unsorted clutter of other sounds and images. Our attempt to visualize this world fully is thwarted; our attempt to speak the words through into clarity breaks down as people interrupt one another and drive speech into chaos. We have some of the physical and emotional experiences of a person living in the world the poem dramatizes. And because we are partly in the world of the speakers of the poem we have a special relationship with the poet, and a deep sense of his concern for us and of his faith in words. We are involved in this world physically, intellectually, and emotionally, as we are in the world of Song of Myself. And this involves us in more than a dualistic relationship with the poet, as well as showing us some of the ways words may be used to at

first break down dualistic expectations, and then create relationships so involving that they move beyond dualistic possibilities.

In trying to choose between The Waste Land and Song of Myself we modern readers have been on the verge of making our usual mistake. This tendency to choose comes from the spectrum idea of modern poetry and from the dualistic notion that two things which are different cannot be related. The difference in the worlds dramatized in the poems adds to this tendency, making the temptation to choose nearly irresistible. However, not only is there no need to choose, but if we choose, we miss the heart of the accomplishment of language in both poems. What is the meaning of this situation in which the poems are at opposite extremes and yet involve the reader on the same level? It does not mean that the poems are the same. Rather they are neither opposite nor the same, they are in a relationship of polarity to one another. One has not succeeded where the other has failed. Of course they do not in any usual logical sense agree in their ideas. But they both use language imaginatively and involve us as readers in an imaginative probe for a solution to the dilemma of modern consciousness.

Eliot's poem shows how sound and meaning can create emotion in a reader. And it shows how diction and syntax can be used to break down logical expectations, causing

frustration and--at a second stage--sadness. And in the move from logic to frustration there is a moving closer to the poem. Logic was our distancing device (it was the way we kept up our dualistic relationship to the poem), and now that we are robbed of logic we find ourselves at the same time closer to the poet and to the experience of the poem. For us as readers the world of dualism has been swept aside. And implicit in this experience is that we and language have the ability to establish relationships which are at the same time closer and more unified than dualism allows, and beyond dualism in understanding--we see what dualism fully is, but we also see a possibility for more in life.

Whitman's language helps thrust him--with his full being--into the concrete world, helping him establish more than an observer-observed relationship with that world. As he draws us also into experiencing the world through his words we find ourselves also living his poem in a very real intellectual and emotional sense also. We find abstract discovery not by logically arriving at it, but the words fuse the concrete and the abstract together--it is in the experience of life for the poet, and in the experience of the words of the poem for us that the abstract has meaning. The words powerfully interweave these elements of life without reducing sensory experience to the logical realm and without denying sensory experience in order to

arrive at the spiritual realm. Whitman's poem suggests that understanding must come through the lived moment (not simply through logical thought), and that the imaginative fusing of words can both create a lived moment and describe qualities of this understanding it offers. In this way it partially points the way toward new consciousness.

Both poems drive their way into the heart of dualistic perception, deliberately creating through language an experience at the edge of dualistic understanding. Both poems stand at the gates of a new realm of consciousness. To pass into that realm I believe we will need both Eliot's ability to break down our tendency to have logical expectations, and the tendency to view our world as out there; and Whitman's ability to fuse the concrete and the abstract, to recognize an imaginative bond between them. The disintegrating of our dualistic attitude can probably only take place, as Eliot's poem implies, through a full experiencing of dualism and a full recognition of its limitations. And the discovery of how we can use our imaginations to describe a new realm of understanding will surely require finding ways to thrust our full beings into experience and also finding ways to imaginatively work with language to recreate that experience, to fully communicate it. This is the lesson in the language of both Whitman's and Eliot's poems. Both poems are engaged, at their deepest level, in the same search; and they are complementary to one another

in a profound way, a way that we do not commonly even consider in our dualistic terminology. With the emphasis on breaking down in one and the emphasis on bringing together in the other (and the implicit moving closer to the reader in both) they are, in a way, a unified experience. If we are to use them to understand the nature of modern literature, and if we are to use them to move beyond dualism as a society we must allow that, using the imaginative potential they create together to seek new understanding ourselves. We must use language as they and Barfield teach us, as an imaginative tool, and as an essential part of ourselves.

Perhaps the accomplishments of the two poems as I have been describing them do not seem so very different from the usual poetic accomplishments. After all few have ever argued that poetry was limited to the material world. In fact poetry and the poetic accomplishment is often defined as a language experience which transcends purely material or logical frameworks. It is true the accomplishments of Whitman and Eliot are not so very different from this usual poetic accomplishment. In a way theirs is the direction perhaps in which all of poetry points, some more profoundly than others. However, there is some difference. Rarely has a realm of reality been challenged so directly and so powerfully in poetry. Eliot's poem is not a shallow presentation of the disintegration of materialism, nor a

superficial announcement about it; rather it creates a full and involving experience of it. And Whitman's poem is not a light emotional moment with nature. Rather it struggles with high energy to fuse nature and mind, to bind them almost electrically through language. Rarely have poets written as richly and powerfully as Whitman and Eliot; and it is partly in the richness of their use of language that its potential is revealed. But it is not necessary to prove that they are completely different from other poets. Perhaps all of modern poetry (at least) might be described as in a general relationship of polarity, the two poles perhaps being most easily recognized as Whitman and Eliot, but not necessarily described in terms of them. If the work of Whitman and Eliot can help us to understand this relationship it is worth pursuing for that understanding alone.

The questions raised by "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" and "Gerontion" about language are not entirely answered. I have not established whether language can do all that Whitman implies that it can in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," though Barfield, Whitman, and Eliot have provided a way of seeing that shows that language is not limited purely to the material realm which the old man of "Gerontion" says that it is. As we have rejected the old man's claim about language, however, we have done so by discovering that there is more to language as the speaker of "Gerontion"

uses it than he claims for language explicitly. This paradox extends through The Waste Land, where again the experience of the reader belies the claim that language is cut off from experience. Though no such paradox exists in Whitman, we discover as we participate in Song of Myself that the poem is a search for what it declares; and the poet tells us that the search continues on beyond the experience of his poem.

Out of the paradox between dramatized vision and the accomplishment of language in The Waste Land--as the speakers describe a world in which it is impossible to find meaning, though we find meaning in our relationship with the poem through its language--Eliot explored further attempting to bring vision and language closer together. He most nearly achieved that uniting of these elements in his later masterpiece, the Four Quartets. That poem presents Eliot at another point within the polarity, and further makes the case that Whitman and Eliot are more closely related than the spectrum idea assumes. In some of his later poetry Whitman tried to extend the language and vision of Song of Myself by focusing on the fundamental material limitation of man, his mortality. The most important of these later poems on death are "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd."

We would not expect any of these poems to solve the question of what language can do, or answer all of the

questions between us and new consciousness. Barfield has demonstrated that the understanding of consciousness requires profound searching and far more than simply intellectual discoveries--it involves a steady groping with our whole beings. And we have discovered from The Waste Land and Song of Myself also that the achievements of language are a subtle and elusive thing to study--the outer limits of language potential is a most difficult place to arrive at. But these later poems of the two writers might be particularly helpful in further pointing the way, since in them the language achievements of the two poets seem not only to continue in their relationship of polarity, but also to converge toward one another.

CHAPTER IV

THE SWAMP, THE DESERT, AND THE WORLD BEYOND

Whitman's "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" represent a very sobering confrontation with death. Like the Four Quartets they are fairly reserved statements, though all three are positive statements. All three also give the feeling of thrashing about for solutions. They resist easy and unsatisfying solutions and instead engage in the painful struggle for understanding. And, finally all three achieve a measure of peace through increased understanding, an understanding which has at its center the absolute necessity of accepting all of life: the material and spiritual, the happy and sad, and the beginnings and endings--of each experience and of life itself. To arrive at this understanding they all use language somewhat agonizingly, emphasizing the imperfectness of language as a tool for overcoming powerful suffering. However, all of them use language as an attempt to overcome its own imperfectness as well as to help them solve the other problems present in each poem. And, in each, language is equal to the task,

bringing understanding, a state of calm, and a determination to move on into new experience living life as fully as possible.

The converging toward one another which takes place in this later poetry of Whitman and Eliot is by no means a completed process. Rather it is simply a direction and tendency in the poems. The Four Quartets move away from the desolate world dramatized in "Gerontion" and The Waste Land toward a more positive vision. And this involves a moving of the dramatized world in the poem closer to the world created for a reader in the language. This seems to be a response by Eliot to the paradox created between language and vision in The Waste Land. The merging of vision and language and their reserved nature perhaps places the Quartets toward the center of the polarity of Whitman's and Eliot's poems. Certainly it is at a different point within the polarity than either The Waste Land or Song of Myself.

"Out of The Cradle" and "Lilacs" strive to assert what Song of Myself asserts about death. But in these later two poems there is much more of an emphasis on the struggle involved in this search. It is the disturbing nature of the problem rather than the exciting potential for transcending it which occupies the main body of the poems. They do not represent a failure to achieve what Song of Myself achieves, however; they represent an experience

different from Song of Myself which is necessary if the perspective of Song of Myself is to be carried successfully through a direct confrontation with death. These two later Whitman poems occupy yet another point within the polarity-- actually two points, in that they differ somewhat from one another. Where Song of Myself asserts powerfully its triumph and unity, and where The Waste Land deliberately exploits the potential in language for fragmentation, these three poems all grope within language for its potential to face fully the harshest implications of dualism and of material reality. The Four Quartets struggles to break the bonds of logic and linear time. "Out of the Cradle" and "Lilacs" struggle to confront and accept physical death.

Within the first twelve lines of the Four Quartets two of its fundamental qualities are introduced. The opening lines present a paradoxical description of time; the paradox is to be a central tactic of this poem:

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.

If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable. (I, 1-5)

The paradox of all time being the same is one central recurring paradox of the poem; the other central paradox is introduced at the beginning of "East Coker," the second of the Quartets, where in the first line the speaker says, "In my beginning is my end." By the end of "East Coker"

this paradox has been reversed to read, "In my end is my beginning." This second version presents the relationship of the concepts more hopefully since now the idea has to do with continuous beginnings instead of continuous endings, but this paradox and the one about time remain to be more fully clarified as the poem unfolds.

The challenge these paradoxes must face in the poem come from the waste land vision, which is still very much a part of the poet's experience. Structurally, The Waste Land imagery becomes a recurring reference point in this poem, almost like the "Unreal City" is a reference point in The Waste Land itself. In the Quartets the reminders of the waste land vision are reminders of what must be faced up to and transcended if we are to find the still point, the point where we understand how all time is one and how beginnings and endings are interrelated.

Very early in "Burnt Norton," the first Quartet, memories of The Waste Land are called up, but the purpose of this seems to be to show how the Quartets are different in tone and purpose from that poem. In line twelve there is a reference to "the passage we did not take/ Towards the door we never opened" especially reminding us of the "key in the door" passage of the final part of The Waste Land. Just a couple of lines later further memories are called up as the speaker questions the meaning and worth of action:

But to what purpose
 Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves
 I do not know. (117)

There is a gentleness in these lines which was not present in The Waste Land. The first passage suggests that the speaker is now going toward the door, apparently to open it--something that was utterly impossible for the speakers of The Waste Land. And the second, though it questions the meaning of action, carries none of the desperate intensity of The Waste Land's "awful daring of a moment's surrender" (49).

Our sense that the speaker is still very much occupied by the world of the waste land is further established by images of desolation in this opening part. The Waste Land might also have had an "empty valley," a "drained pool," and "dry concrete" (118). But again that world is tempered significantly. The sun clears overhead, "And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight" (118). This reserved but hopeful mood does not dominate this long poem, but it defines the middle or balance of the pendulum swing of moods in the poem. In general the Four Quartets is a poem of struggle, both for understanding and for expression. There are moments where the potential for ecstasy is assured, if not experienced, but throughout the painstakingness of the struggle is the controlling feeling. Finally the poem achieves a restrained, yet joyful sense that in the world of The Waste Land there is now hope for understanding.

The particular probing of the Quartets seems to be an attempt to find how the language of dualism can describe experiences beyond dualism. Through a negative process of breaking down the dualistic world, The Waste Land expressed some of the qualities of a realm beyond dualism. Now the Quartets strive for a further positive statement of what that new realm is. There are two stages in this striving in the Quartets. In the first stage of this poem too the process of breaking down the world of dualism is important. For a long time in the poem the paradoxes serve mainly to break our logical expectations by defeating our natural attempts (natural in the sense that it is something ingrained in us through our dualistic way of thinking) to make sense of the poem through logic. This defeat of logical approaches is at first the function of the paradox as a tactic, and it is the first stage of the poem's exploring for a further understanding of a new consciousness.

The second stage begins fairly early but is not finished until the last section. This stage involves the unraveling of the paradoxes and the attempt to describe what is understood. Section five of the last Quartet, "Little Gidding," is where the final and most striking attempt to explain the paradoxes occurs. But this explanation is given its full potential depth through the way the paradoxes have been elaborated on in the course of the poem and through experiments in the poem in which the image,

that is the concrete experience, is explored for the possible unities and positive understandings it can reveal.

Section one of the second quartet, "East Coker," presents the imagery of a mirthful marriage dance in medieval language. It is a very simple "Earth feet, loam feet" dance, but there is a basic goodness in it, and in its implied acceptance of life. The language of the dance is vivid. The dancers go "Round and round the fire/ Leaping through flames," or they are "Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes" (124). There is high energy in "leaping," and it is daringly associated with "flames." And there is a strong though quieter sensory experience in the words "heavy" and "clumsy." The iambic meter emphasizes the regular beat of the dance. This imagery begins to draw us into the experience described, but for the moment the image is not pressed further to reveal a general discovery or to draw the reader into the experience in an extended way. Perhaps at this point the medieval dance imagery simply vividly represents the past. Section two swings back in the direction of The Waste Land, exploring the nature of what we are moving from.

In addition to experimenting with the image to see what it might reveal the poet nearly continuously evolves variations of his paradoxes, which extend the realms to which they apply, which emphasize our need to give up logic in order to understand in a new way, and which also give

hints of clarification of the meaning of the central paradoxes. A point in section III of "East Coker" communicates through paradoxes that we must not assert a logical connection between our method of exploring and the conclusions we arrive at, and that giving up expectations is a way of opening ourselves to experience:

To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.

In order to arrive at what you do not know
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.

In order to possess what you do not possess
You must go by the way of dispossession. (127)

The sequence of paradoxes and the repetition of the command, "You must go" makes the passage intriguing and intense. Section four of "East Coker" states part of what is happening with this use of apparent logic which breaks down. We are warned that our sicknesses must be experienced before we can be restored (127-128). As we experience the breakdown of logic and the positive potential of the image and of the imagination we approach the final understanding of the poem.

While logic and the breakdown of logic are not part of the concern or technique which pervades either "Out of the Cradle" or "Lilacs" both poems do search for the link between the language of the image and the language of discursive thought. The image as a device in these two poems is pressed for what it might reveal about how death

can be faced and overcome. Conquering time, one of the central goals of the Four Quartets, is a search along these lines, and it has its own kind of intensity. But nowhere in the poems studied here besides in "Out of the Cradle" and "Lilacs" is death experienced with such harrowing closeness. And the threat of death being so immanent places a special burden on the language of these poems.

In "Out of the Cradle" the adult speaker begins by formally evoking the experience in his childhood when he first fully felt the prospect of death. As he moves past this evocation into a vivid reminiscence of the scene the imagery creates a vitality in the experience:

When lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month
grass was growing,
Up this seashore in some briers,
Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted
with brown, (180)

The suggestion of scent in the lilacs and the grass, and the visual and tactile suggestions of briers concretize the scene. And as we move in so close to the nest as to see the markings on the eggs the scene becomes fully individualized and infused with life. But, as with the experience of identifying with suffering in Song of Myself there is a risk in the closeness between the speaker and the experience, and also a risk in the moving closer of poet and reader.

And this potential risk quickly becomes real as the boy experiences the death of the female bird in the image of her solitary mate "flitting from brier to brier." As the male bird begins his song the speaker declares that he knows its meaning. But his statement says nothing of what he knows, so his declaration is very preliminary and incomplete. The image of death he is so close to has not been linked to a general or discursive reality which allows him to understand it. However, in the words he finds to express the bird's song the poet creates a moment of intense unity between the boy, the bird, and the sea. And this experience becomes both the boy's first real experience of death and his discovery that he is going to be a poet. The opening of the bird's song captures the rhythm of the sea:

Soothe! soothe! soothe!
Close on its wave soothes the wave behind, (181)

Then the song turns to a desperate calling, "Loud! loud! loud!" (182). There is a progression of moods which take the boy, and the speaker, even closer to the experience, into a somewhat different way of understanding too, though exactly what this is the speaker seems not yet able to explain. He commits himself to perpetuating this bird and his song, but he cannot be more precise yet about what the images and words of the song reveal about the experience of death. His drive to fuse image and understanding in the face of this scene is not yet complete.

In the last stage of the poem, the experience of death, the words of his poem, and the waves of the sea come together for the speaker. He no longer declares full knowledge in the abstract, that struggle has not been successful. With his acceptance of this fact--that death will not be fully understood in the abstract--his words turn again to images. This time the images are not of the scene expressly, but they use ingredients of the scene to characterize several qualities of death which the boy has experienced:

My own songs awakened from that hour,
 And with them the key, the word up from the waves,
 The word of the sweetest song and all songs,
 That strong and delicious word which, creeping to
 my feet,
 (Or, like some old crone rocking the cradle,
 swathed in sweet garments, bending aside,)
 The sea whisper'd me. (184)

Here, in a final turn of the image the boy finds a view of death which will allow him to move on into further experience. Death is the waves creeping up to his feet, an old crone bending over his cradle, and the central word of all words. Death has even become tempting in its deliciousness, but that is kept from overwhelming the boy through his recognition that though death is a natural part of experience, other experiences must be similarly accepted. And his next challenge is to live out the potential he has begun to discover in words and to seek further understanding through words, as the "outsetting bard."

With the birth of the image of the word death as a wave "creeping to my feet" the speaker has given the passage its stability. The answer to what death is must be found in experience. It will not be found in the abstract thoughts beside the sea, but in experiencing the sea and in living, death may be partially understood. And that discovery that the image (and so, the word) has the power to relate death to the waves, and so to relate death to life, and the recognition that words may be used in this way to help us accept death as part of life is the limit of the discovery this poem achieves. But in that acceptance of death and that affirmation of words rests the ability to continue, living fully and using words to explore experience for further understanding.

In "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" there is a similar tension between the speaker's need to express some general discovery which will unlock the mystery of death and allow him to overcome his grief and fear of it and the resistance of words. And here also when he commits himself to the image and probing it beyond a merely factual or informational function discovery is possible. As in "Out of the Cradle" this closeness to the image at first shows the power of death. As Lincoln's coffin passes, in section six, a sense of how heavily death hangs over the scene is contained in the slow moving sentences, the unpleasant verbs and the generally quiet, dark imagery:

With all the mournful voices of the dirges pour'd
 around the coffin,
 The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs--where
 amid these you journey,
 With the tolling tolling bells' perpetual clang,
 Here, coffin that slowly passes,
 I give you my sprig of lilac. (234)

The word dirges is a strong influence with its harsh sounds (in the "d" and "g") and the way it stops us over three sounds on the tongue before it lets us pass. The "dim-lit churches" creates both the image of darkness and the feeling of its images, flickering past in four short syllables as it does. The "shuddering" of the organ characterizes the grieving sound of the dirge and also suggests that the organ itself (and so the scene itself) feels the sense of grief and loss the poet feels. We are drawn into this moment. The images of the scene and the feelings of the poet are in the process of merging, but the experience is not yet providing relief or helpful understanding. The sprig of lilac seems overwhelmed in the sombreness of the procession, and so it is at this point.

As he searches for a way to respond to this overwhelming grief the speaker's diction becomes formal and his syntax a bit complex and confusing. He addresses the star, and the bird. But finally, as he considers what to hang on the walls of the tomb the poet realizes what vitality he must capture if his pictures (or his song) are to be an appropriate response to the death of the vital man he mourns. In the description of the pictures called

for his song begins to recover from its identification with the sadness of death:

Pictures of growing spring and farms and homes,
 . . .
 With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous,
 indolent, sinking sun, burning, expanding the air,
 With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale
 green leaves of the trees prolific,
 In the distance the flowing gaze, the breast of the
 river, with a winddapple here and there. (235)

The contrast with the images of the passing coffin is extreme and suggestive. Now there are floods of yellow gold, where there were only "dim-lit churches." And now the life in the surroundings is aggressive and vibrant, not shuddering. The sun is the "gorgeous, indolent, sinking sun" with the suggestion of human-likeness in the word indolent, and with the whole phrase rolling out in melodic multi-syllable words. Having barely sunk the sun bursts to life, rising in a "burning, expanding" motion. There is a sensory lushness to the scene throughout with its "fresh sweet herbage," and its "pale green leaves"; and there is a peaceful, calm beauty to it too, as we view with the speaker the "breast of the river, with a winddapple here and there." These images help the speaker recover somewhat from his fear and grief. But he still does not have control of his experience or full understanding of it as he hears a bird's song, and as in "Out of the Cradle," it becomes a seductive song of death. The bird sings:

Come lovely and soothing death,
 Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
 In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
 Sooner or later delicate death. (237)

Now death has become an image with life too as it undulates--a gentle flowing movement. And death is also serene and delicate. From being dangerously frightening death has moved to being dangerously seductive. Both dangers are part of the speaker's close identification with it, and part of his willingness to experience it fully and concretely--as vital images which he participates in.

In looking at the image of the dead on a battlefield the speaker at last gains some release through a limited recognition. It is not the dead who suffer. They are "full at rest" (238). It is we who remain who suffer. The grief and sadness are our experience. There are other experiences with death--some sense of it as ecstasy, for example; and there are other experiences of life which we must accept too if we are to understand any part of experience as fully as possible. Understanding death as well as he is able to involves, the speaker realizes, incorporating all of the experiences he has had in the poem--the identification of the image with grief, its identification with vitality, and with ecstasy. Death must be accepted and experienced as part of life. But if death is to be understood, or if any of life is to be understood, it must be as a fully lived part of existence and as related to other

parts of life. It is in the image that words may bring the speaker closer to experience. Only through fully participating in the variety of images and experiences and the way they interrelate can he explore further. Through the tension between concrete experience and general discovery greater understanding can be achieved. So the speaker leaves us with his return to the concrete world, to his present, and we feel him experiencing this moment but also now in anticipation of what each new moment will bring. In the last line though, he remains in this experience standing "There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim" (239).

With the Four Quartets too image drives toward contact with explanation of life. In the first part of "The Dry Salvages," the third quartet, there is a focus on the river and the sea. Water remains an image for mystery (the unknown) and for salvation. But the speaker begins to describe how it might be understood more fully, as he shows several perspectives we might take on it. He explains "The river is within us, the sea is all about us;/ The sea is the land's edge also" (130). The speaker seeks a new way of seeing, an alteration of perception. He sees that the river is within us as well as out there. The sea is the sea and the edge of the land. In both cases it depends on how we see the image and how we use the words whether we experience the sea and river as one experience or another.

Seeing it in a variety of ways seems to be connected to fuller understanding.

It is in "Little Gidding," the last quartet, where the image is worked the hardest in the poem and where something of its vitality is taken into the unraveling of the paradox of beginnings and endings. In section four of "Little Gidding" the imagery is shocking, especially in contrast to the language of the poem as a whole. In the first two lines, "The dove descending breaks the air/ With flame of incandescent terror" (143), the dove's plummeting and bursting to flame is dazzling. Equally vivid is the way love is characterized as "the hands that wove/ The intolerable shirt of flame/ Which human power cannot remove" (144). The sensory experience of this shirt of flames on the chest is extreme. It seems offered as a final purifying process as the poet approaches his last statements.

In the last section of the poem a statement of clarification about the paradox of beginnings and endings is offered. The paradox may be understood in the framework of the search, which has been the framework of the whole poem:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time. (145)

This means that the still point is not a place or a time but a way of understanding. It is not in the future or the

past. It is not beyond life, not purely spiritual. It is not part of some other world. Rather it is a way of seeing experience. And this way of seeing has been described at various points in the poem as: like being a flame, like an ecstatic moment with music, like the feeling of unselfish love, and like those moments when language reaches its potential to express both the particularity of things and also the unity of things. It is a stance toward life in which we see that the past, present, and future are all part of one experience, and that all of life--including death--is related; and we see that in the acceptance of all of life is a potential for further understanding. In this climactic passage each line anticipates the next, and the last is the conclusion (syntactically) that the four together strive for. The brief passage is also rich with words that create a full sense of what is happening. The words explore and arrive communicate daring and discovery; and at last knowing or understanding is possible. Knowing has been the goal for so long in the poem, and for such an interminable time in Eliot's poetry, that this assurance comes like the first rain falling in the desert of the waste land.

In this poem the explanation finally becomes possible as image and discovery are fused together. As in the later Whitman poems I have discussed the images refuse to yield a separate abstract truth. But when the images

establish full contact with the speaker a certain potential becomes apparent, and then when the speaker experiences discovery as concretely as his other images and as part of that kind of experience it becomes possible for a greater degree of understanding to be expressed. In the ending of this poem the images suggested are of the journey, which is characterized especially by the word exploring and the reference to arriving. It is exploring we must continually engage in with our mind, our language, and our full being in order to gain from language and from life what they have the potential to give us. Only when the exploring involves our senses and our imagination can it be fully successful. It is this which the speaker most clearly and firmly learns at the end of the poem. The tension between image and statement has given way to a fusing of the two. This has not revealed all truth, but it has shown the way for further understanding, understanding beyond logic, and beyond dualism. Achieving an understanding by seeing that image and discovery must be interrelated is a way of transforming our experience, seeing it new and more fully.

The final moment of explained discovery in all three of these poems (the Quartets, "Out of the Cradle," and "Lilacs") results from a language and perceptual experience in which the language of vital imagery, and the experience of vital imagery are fully interrelated with

understanding. The understanding is expressed not purely as a concrete image, but as a blend of sensory and intellectual qualities fused together. And the images are not of a scene in nature but of an experience of understanding which the poet has imagined into existence, out of his concrete experience and out of his groping for understanding. In the main body of the poems there is a tension between the lived moment and the attempt to explain, but in an electric moment in each, these two directions become one and a new level of understanding is achieved. This new understanding is sufficient to validate going on in life with new hope, and to create an experience beyond dualism pointing the way for fuller living.

Though the poems are about different concerns, their achievement with language is very much on the same level. They occupy different points within the polarity. The Quartets struggle to breakdown logic, and to fuse the abstract, the image, and the ecstatic experience of the timeless together; "Out of the Cradle" attempts to reconcile the experience of death as the absence of what is known or of what has been experienced with a positive sense of death as part of life, and in the process tries to prod language for a statement--yet the poem succeeds when language flows back into the image in order to make its statement; and "Lilacs" attempts to reconcile the sense of death as destroyer and as indiscriminate reaper with a sense of

it as a positive part of life. In "Lilacs" the potential of words to bring a natural object to the point of seeming human because of the speaker's close identification with it, the personifying and vivifying of nature in the poem, is explored and exploited until the unity between surroundings, words, and poet result in a statement through imagery but not limited to the concrete world. The image has become part of an experience which involves the senses, the intellect, and the imagination. And in this unity is the potential for fuller understanding.

The similar conclusions in the language accomplishment of these poems points helpfully toward new consciousness. We see that logic--the only truth of a dualistic perspective--can be broken down through the paradox as an approach to central qualities of existence, time and death, for example. And we see that if we explore deeply enough into the concrete experience, not allowing ourselves to become lost in it, but probing with our full beings in it and imaginatively relating to it with language, the concrete can yield understanding beyond logic and beyond materialism. Language's role in this search rests, in addition to breaking down logic and groping for explanation, in our imaginatively applying its ability to bring us into close contact, or unity, with our surroundings and with others. Because the poems talk about different concerns, and because language is used differently in each, the poems are not the

same. But because they point beyond dualism they are not entirely different either. They participate in similar searches, as do The Waste Land and Song of Myself. And their search alone takes us into a new realm of understanding, a realm which, however, remains to be further clarified still.

Song of Myself seeks to emphasize and exploit the potential for language to move beyond dualism, whereas The Waste Land emphasizes how dualism must be (can be, and is) broken down as an explanation for experience. The Waste Land and Song of Myself are polar experiences, at extremes from one another and distinguishable from one another. But they are also both essential experiences if the process of growing beyond dualism into new consciousness is to be achieved. And this essential search they share, and this essential understanding they offer to one another when viewed together is the nature of their special unity--their particular polarity. If the entire focus of Song of Myself is forward, and the main focus of The Waste Land is backward, still the Four Quartets is right in insisting that broader understanding rests in our accepting full knowledge of our old way of seeing and also in groping for a new way. Our new understanding is broader both for its full knowledge of where it has been and for its knowledge of some of the ways it must move on.

The different relationship of the speaker to water in each of the poems is a more concrete and surprisingly accurate way to assess the point each poem occupies within the polarity. In these last three poems studied the image of water offers peace and understanding, but in different ways. In Whitman's two poems on death the speaker has gone down to the water for renewal and understanding. In "Out of The Cradle" the waves of the sea, at first threatening, at last provide the experiencing of the concrete world that leads to calm and understanding. In "Lilacs" the thrush sings from the "swamp." And, finally, it is when the general concrete imagery of this poem achieves something of the lushness of the swamp that the poem renews itself, confident in its sense of the fullness of experience. The Quartets reason about water, and about experience; but by altering the way it reasons from one point to the next the poem transcends reason. The sea is the sea and the edge of the land. The river is out there and within us. These are attempts to reason toward a new understanding; but because the statements are both true and non-reasonable--because they are paradoxical, and beyond paradox in that they can be understood even though they are not logical--they transcend reason and the bonds of dualism. "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" perhaps the boldest statement among these poems extends out literally into the ocean for its experience (the speaker is on the ferry), and

"Gerontion" presents the arid desert. In Song of Myself and The Waste Land again we have the poles of the collective relationship. The Waste Land offers the most extended and the most extreme experiencing of the desert--even the thunder is sterile, and the speaker is driven to creating mirages of rain, while Song of Myself thrusts itself wholly into the experiencing of the potential lushness and fullness of experience, incorporating experiences of the ocean and the land and in general offering a perhaps nearly literal swamp of sensual-ecstatic experience to its readers. In the swamp and the desert are perhaps the metaphors for the poles of the polarity we have been studying. And in both images is a suggestion of their need for each other and a sign of a ground of understanding which lies--not so much between them as in a unity which they might achieve when joined to one another in our imagination.

The question: How far do these poems take us? is a most difficult one. None of the poems has created a new consciousness, nor together even do they achieve that goal. However, singly to an important degree, and together profoundly, they have focused on the primary issues, and they have pointed the way language might be imaginatively applied to these issues. To be frank, we do not know the boundaries of language. In several ways these poems have crossed what we have habitually come to think of as the boundaries of language. This poetry demonstrates through

language that words can engage the intellect and the emotions, and additionally that language can involve a reader physically (as we speak the words, and as we experience their effects).

The combination of these involvements, and the combination of experiences in this full involvement may show us a variety of ways that consciously moving closer to experience, moving our-selves closer to material reality and to each other can reveal more of the meaning of experience. Logic is a valuable tool, but there is a unity in life which can only be revealed by giving up logical distance and opening our fuller beings to experience. In language this may be done partly through the imaginative exploration of the image as it relates to an important experience or an important problem. As we move into the experience through a full sense of the concreteness of it a potential for understanding is created. This potential can be fulfilled by maintaining the very difficult balance in which we are very close to experience but not overwhelmed by it. We are fully in the experience (not outside observing it) but we are also applying our imagination through language to explore various aspects of the experience. A combined opening-up to experience--moving closer to it--and applying our imaginations to the experience is possible. These poems achieve such a balance in their best moments. And they draw the readers into the experience, demonstrating

the power of language to achieve the balance by involving us in it.

I would distinguish one last time between the ability of all good poems to show something of what it means to see or live a certain way (to some extent probably all good poems probe the meaning of consciousness), and what it means for poems like the ones I have discussed by Whitman and Eliot to focus unfalteringly on the central issues raised by the consciousness of an entire age. And, though I have made little effort to suggest that the poetry of Whitman and Eliot is better than other poetry--nor do I think it necessary to claim that now, though of course I believe their poetry is extraordinary in its accomplishments--I would distinguish between our usual sense that poems can create emotional or spiritual experiences, and the way these poems push language to our modern conceptual limits.

In accomplishing this much even they achieve part of Barfield's hopes for poetry, that it might achieve understanding beyond dualism; and as we integrate the combined implications of the works of Whitman and Eliot perhaps this new understanding on our part will point the way for a new poetry, which may carry us even further toward a new consciousness. These poems help validate Barfield's claims for the potential of language--they find meaning and understanding in an intense blending of the concrete world with

the human imagination. And they may be joined in our understanding with movements in many other fields toward the overturning of dualistic consciousness as the exclusive reality.

It is fitting that science, where dualism and the scientific method have been so thoroughly wedded, should be involved in this movement, and that writers in science like David Bohm and Thomas Kuhn should be among those who are noticing that there is no such thing as a "neutral observation language," that what we see is to some important degree the result of the way we talk about seeing and what our particular language framework allows us to see. And, it is fitting that science, a field we have in the modern age relied on to point out how sophisticated we are and how quaint people in past ages were, should be a part of challenging this fundamental error we tend to make.

Once we have gotten over the shock of it, it should also delight us to realize that to some extent any age's way of seeing consists of "stories" it makes up to explain the world to itself. For a time the stories seem like reality, but then in glimpses we begin to see differently, and the stories no longer serve so well, and so we create new stories which "fit" better; and then regrettably we tend to adopt these stories so completely that once again the stories seem to be reality. Perhaps in a time like ours, precisely because it is transitional in the

developing of human consciousness, this tendency to adopt the new way of seeing as the whole way may be noted and we may begin to exercise better control so as not to do this, so that we may utilize both dualism and non-dualism, instead of seeing all of dualism as if it were mainly "quaint." Perhaps we might hold on to and try to pass on the understanding that however we explain reality it is just an explanation, and if we are alert to all of our being the explanations will keep changing. And if in this changing we remember and use the best of the old way of seeing there may be a broadening and we may be lucky enough to grow in our understanding of our world. It was not wrong for the modern age to reject classical myth as a full explanation of reality; it is not wrong for us now to probe for consciousness beyond dualism. But, if our new consciousness is to be broader and not simply different we must develop the ability to utilize more than the perspective of one consciousness at one time; the ability to use our imaginations to flow into and out of different consciousnesses must become a way to experience more of reality. In this age we should not try to return to the world of myths, nor should we hold on desperately to dualism, but we should learn from both of these ways of seeing how the new way of seeing may incorporate the positive potential in both and how each can be used to alert ourselves to parts of experience that the other way of seeing is not so

well in touch with. They both ought to be a part of the new consciousness, and they both ought to be searched in for the clues they offer to the developing of this consciousness.

In his own suggestions for solutions to the dilemma of modern society Barfield sends us to the language of poetry and to the works of Rudolf Steiner. If this study returns to the poetry of Whitman and Eliot in anything at all like the spirit that Barfield intends that would be deeply rewarding. But even if it falls short of this, if it serves to increase understanding of this poetry by offering a slightly different slant I will be happy in the hope that this is a small contribution to human understanding and to the appreciation of human potential. Let whatever imagination we possess, and whatever energies we can call on, at least be spent in this direction.

I would suggest that we take Barfield's advice as well as we are able. That we pursue his concerns into the work of Steiner, and that we pursue them into further studies of poetry and into the writing of poetry. I believe that there are signs of a movement in this direction. Certainly in modern poetry several of the best poets have been involved in such a movement. Among those of very recent times Theodore Roethke with his Far Fields and Galway Kinnell with Book of Nightmares are clearly probing language and thought in ways suggested by the works of Whitman

and Eliot, with a focus on the primary issues, with a firm resistance to facile solutions, and with an imaginative resolve to press language to its limits as an aid in this search. In criticism there seems to be a movement toward allowing that the several realities a literary work creates all be considered as valid: from initial emotional response, to the historical perspective, to the statistical analysis of its parts; and there is a movement toward unifying these responses into a whole reality, including the work and the reader's experience of it.

Perhaps what had most been lacking in this striving for a whole experience, after the development of the highly analytical New Criticism, was a personal response, or more precisely an existential response to the literature. But much of the better criticism is beginning to incorporate this perspective. And as this personal perspective again is allowed rightfully into the classroom it might become more clear for more students why anyone would want to read and fully experience works of literature, and how literary works can relate to growing in our understanding of our world.

End Notes

¹Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry (New York, 1957), p. 11. References to this henceforth will be listed in the text by SA and the page number.

²Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," Complete Poetry and Selected Prose by Walt Whitman, ed. James E. Miller (Boston, 1959), p. 116. Subsequent references to this poem are by section and line number. Later references to "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" are references to the poems as they appear in this text. Those poems begin on pp. 180 and 233 respectively, and are referred to by page number only.

³Daniel R. Schwarz, "The Failure of Meditation: The Unity of Eliot's 'Gerontion'," T. S. Eliot, A Collection of Criticism, ed. Linda W. Wagner (New York, 1974), p. 49. Subsequent references to this essay are by page number only.

⁴T. S. Eliot, "Gerontion," T. S. Eliot: The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950 (New York, 1971), p. 21. Subsequent references to this poem are by line numbers

only. References to The Waste Land and the Four Quartets are to those poems as they appear in this text beginning on pp. 37 and 117 respectively. Those poems are referred to by page number only.

⁵Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art: Developed from Philosophy in a New Key (New York, 1953), pp. 237-238.

⁶Owen Barfield, Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning (New York, 1964), p. 109. This is henceforth PD and the page number.

⁷Owen Barfield, History in English Words (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1964), pp. 141-142. Subsequently this text is referred to by HEW and page number only.

⁸Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York, 1946), pp. 45-46. Subsequently this text is referred to by page number only.

⁹Kenneth Burke, Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method (Berkeley, 1966) p. 45. Subsequently this text is referred to by page number only.

¹⁰Owen Barfield, What Coleridge Thought, (Middletown, Conn., 1971), pp. 34-35, and discussed extensively at other points. See Barfield's index for references to the term.

¹¹Walt Whitman, Song of Myself, in Whitman's "Song of Myself"--Origin, Growth, Meaning, ed. James E. Miller (New York, 1964), p. 59. Subsequent references to this poem are by page number only.

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Walt Whitman and American Romanticism

Allen, Gay Wilson. Walt Whitman: A Reader's Guide. New York, 1970.

For my purposes Allen's sense of the mystical experience of Song of Myself, the discussion of Whitman's "epiphany" in the poem and the summary of E. Fred Carlisle's essay on Song of Myself as a search by the self of the poet are most useful. Implicit here is the idea that Whitman may be approached from a variety of perspectives validly.

Carlise, E. Fred. The Uncertain Self: Whitman's Drama of Identity. East Lansing, Mich., 1973.

This study places Whitman's poems in the context of an existential search for the self (by the poet). Particularly referred to is Martin Buber (I and Thou). Carlisle's study is one I hope mine is complementary to; as Song of Myself is a search for existential meaning it also searches for new consciousness, I believe. Both are part of the same search for understanding reality.

Chase, Richard. Walt Whitman. Minneapolis, 1961.

Chase's view that the poem is an attempt to reconcile "democratic man" and the "integrity of the self", is a suggestion of a central conflict and struggle which has helped me to also see the poem as a search. But Chase describes the conflict differently and sees the two halves of it as contradictory.

Feidelson, Charles Jr. Symbolism and American Literature. Chicago, 1953.

The subtle treatment of the work "symbol" in this book helps Feidelson describe nineteenth-century American literature as it relates to modern literature. And it helps him present Whitman's poetry as words which constitute the act of perception for writer and reader, a perspective which helped me see how Owen Barfield might be applied to Whitman.

Matthiessen, F. O. The American Renaissance. New York, 1941.

Matthiessen is particularly concerned to show how the writers of the Romantic movement wrote and thought in relationship to one another. He is nearest my concerns in his suggestion that this movement and our modern age have discovered the value of myth and in his emphasis on Whitman's faith in words.

Miller, James E. Jr. A Critical Guide to Leaves of Grass. Chicago, 1957.

Miller's sense of Song of Myself as an inverted mystical experience is remote from my reading of that poem. But his idea that the poem dramatizes a life of the imagination is very much in tune with my view.

Walt Whitman, A Critical Anthology, ed. Francis Murphy. Baltimore, 1969.

Probably the fullest range of commentary on Whitman in existence in one volume, includes brief essays or statements by contemporaries of Whitman and moderns, friend and foe. The book provided me one of the better overviews of the studies that have been done on Whitman and of Whitman himself.

Wasco, Howard. Whitman Explorations in Form. Chicago, 1966.

Studies the language in Whitman's poetry to determine rhetorical devices. This is more of a formal look at rhetoric in Whitman than a study of meaning in the words and so different from my approach. But it is a helpful specific look at the poetry.

Whitman, A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Roy Harvey Pearce. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1962.

A variety of essays on Whitman's work, including one of the finer defenses of Whitman's style by Walter Sutton. Also an essay partly on Whitman's technique by Roger Asselineau. Both helped me to approach Whitman's poems technically.

Whitman's "Song of Myself"--Origin, Growth, Meaning, ed. James E. Miller Jr. New York, 1964.

Includes essays expressing a variety of perspectives on Song of Myself. Randall Jarrell's comments on that poem as poetry remind us it is worth taking seriously. Roy Harvey Pearce, "'Song of Myself' As Epic", suggests how exhilarating a poem it can be.

T. S. Eliot

Drew, Elizabeth., T. S. Eliot, The Design of His Poetry. New York, 1949.

Drew recognizes the subtlety of myth in earlier societies, which places her in sympathy with Barfield and Cassirer. She also places Eliot's poetry in the context of Freud and Jung, and describes how Eliot's language penetrates below conscious levels of thought and feeling. I have adopted this last view of hers and attempted to show its relationship to a search for new consciousness in Eliot's poetry.

Gardner, Helen. The Art of T. S. Eliot. London, 1949.

A study of the Four Quartets, which Gardner views as containing solutions to the problems presented in Eliot's earlier poetry and as Eliot's later masterpiece. Gardner argues that in this poem "the range of the instrument is greater than before" (p. 2). While I do not discuss this in qualitative terms, her study helped me see a reconciliation in the Quartets between language and vision, or dramatized reality.

Kenner, Hugh. The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot. New York, 1959.

Kenner's idea that the poet is invisible because of his language resists elucidation is along the lines of what has become a usual distinction between Eliot the poet and the speakers in his poems--the speakers do not see all that we, the readers, see. His idea that there is a "functional obscurity" in The Waste Land is also the starting point for my reading of that poem.

Matthiessen, F. O. Achievement of T. S. Eliot. New York, 1959.

One of the finest studies of Eliot, I believe. Matthiessen suggests a focus helpful to me when he says, "Eliot wants to suggest . . . the movement of thought in a living mind" (p. 16).

Montgomery, Marion. An Essay on the American Magus. Athens, Ga., 1970.

Montgomery suggests that between Eliot's earlier poetry and the Quartets there was a change in Eliot because the world was the same in both instances, a position I think I agree with, though I would add that for me The Waste Land and the Quartets both accomplish a similar understanding, one implicitly and one explicitly.

Musgrove, Sydney. T. S. Eliot and Walt Whitman. New York, 1966. First published in 1952.

Musgrove considers this work to be mainly a study of Eliot, and of Whitman's influence on Eliot. Musgrove suggests that something of Whitman's use of language remained imbedded in Eliot's mind, though Eliot came to distrust Whitman's vision. This work is of interest to me because it focuses on the same two poets I do, but it accepts Eliot's conclusion that his world is different from Whitman's. I try to point out an important similarity.

Schwarz, Daniel R. "The Failure of Meditation: The Unity of Eliot's 'Gerontion'," T. S. Eliot, A Collection of Criticism, ed. Linda W. Wagner. New York, 1974.

Schwarz's interpretation of the poem is one I accept and try to work with in order to place it in the context of my study. Schwarz's central idea, that the poem is a failure at meditation, provides helpful language to me in my effort to discuss the poem as part of a profound search for meaning.

Smith, Grover C. T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning. Chicago, 1956.

In a study of a large number of Eliot's works Smith basically suggests the same context for them I do, though he pursues his study in a very different way--for an overview of the works. However, he recognizes that, "Eliot has considered the problem of relating consciousness to externality" (p. 25).

T. S. Eliot; A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Hugh Kenner. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1962.

Most related to my study in this collection is an excerpt from S. Musgrove's book T. S. Eliot and Walt Whitman, in which he argues that Eliot learned from but came to distrust Whitman--a statement I agree with but which even Musgrove would not claim as the whole truth. Also the famous essay in which Donald Davie argues that since "The Dry Salvages" part of the Four Quartets seems to imitate Whitman it must be a satire; an argument I take exception to.

Language

Barfield, Owen. History in English Words. Grand Rapids, Mich., 1967. Originally published in 1926.

A careful study of the history of meaning through a focus on individual words and the development of societies. Because of its extensive working with changes in meaning this book may provide Barfield's most substantial case for his theory about changing consciousness.

_____. Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning. New York, 1964. Originally published in 1928.

This is probably the book by Barfield most essential to my study, because of its focus on the language of poetry and because of its exploring of the relationship between language and mind, and between consciousness and the imagination.

_____. Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry. London, 1957.

This short book provides an overview of Barfield's ideas about the development of human consciousness and brief presentations of his evidence in art, science, and language. In it Barfield also carefully retains a focus on the problem of modern consciousness he wants his study applied to.

_____. Speaker's Meaning. Middletown, Conn., 1967.

Contains four essays on aspects of language development and how it relates to achieving a more accurate sense of history. Barfield also acknowledges a kinship he has with Ernst Cassirer, and suggests that I. A. Richards seems to ascribe to the theory that figurative language began as metaphor (a theory Barfield disagrees with).

_____. What Coleridge Thought. Middletown, Conn., 1971.

Barfield's most recent book and, as the title suggests, his fullest exposition of his slant on Coleridge's ideas. Coleridge is a thinker Barfield seems to admire as much as any in history, and so this book is also a fuller discussion of some key ideas in the other books, Barfield's view of Coleridge's concept of polarity for one.

Burke, Kenneth. Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method. Berkely, 1966.

In his essays Burke particularly explores the relationship between language and conception and language and perception. His study of how language influences what we see I find to be very complementary to Barfield's study of the history of meaning.

Cassirer, Ernest. Language and Myth, Trans. Susanne K. Langer. New York, 1946.

The fact that Cassirer's study and Barfield's seemed to have been independent of one another, and that both are extremely exacting in their arguments, and that both find abundant evidence for their similar positions powerfully substantiates their perspective. Cassirer's presentation is by no means a duplicate of Barfield's. Cassirer's focus on the relationship of myth and reality offers similar conclusions to Barfield's, but they are arrived at through a somewhat different discussion of early religions.

. The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Volume Three: The Phenomenology of Knowledge, trans. Ralph Manheim. New Haven, 1957.

In an introductory note Charles W. Hendel calls this book "the central work of Cassirer's genius" (p. ix) because it represents the study of knowledge and how knowledge is achieved at such a fundamentally important level, and because it is a maturing of Cassirer's thought. The book considers "subjective" and "objective" analysis and other issues important to my study.

Chomsky, Noam. Language and Mind. New York, 1968.

Chomsky approaches language in this volume in order to find out how the study of language can contribute to an understanding of human nature. While Chomsky does not take his study in the direction of Barfield and Cassirer but rather focuses on the structure of modern English, he does also conclude that modern ideas about language being limited to the material and logical are in error, a conclusion which supports Barfield's and Cassirer's.

Fenollosa, Ernest. On the Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry, ed. Ezra Pound. San Francisco, 1936.

Fenollosa's study of the physical or structural suggestion in the Chinese written character suggests

a potential in language to communicate some of the essential qualities of objects or experience. His study supports much of Pound's discussion of the potential for poetry, and it supports Barfield's idea of the potential in language.

Hamilton, G. R. The Tell-Tale Article: A Critical Approach to Modern Poetry. London, 1949.

Hamilton argues that an increasing use of the definite article in modern poetry is part of a deadening of language and vision. He also points out the shortage of verbs on Eliot's poetry, suggesting that that also is a weakening of language. This study highlights a point I try to pursue in Eliot's and Whitman's poetry, though I do not share Hamilton's fear that Eliot's work represents a decline in language.

Langer, Susanne K. Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art: Developed from Philosophy in a New Key. New York, 1953.

Langer describes her sense of how Barfield and Cassirer are related--asserting they arrive at similar conclusions, Barfield primarily through a study of poetry, and Cassirer primarily through a study of science. She suggests the need for art to strive for the goals Barfield and Cassirer envisioned for consciousness.

Lewis, C. S. Studies in Words. Cambridge, England, 1960.

Lewis studies individual words and what he views as their decline in meaning, his is a study in tune with Barfield's in this approach, though Lewis does not try to place this work into the realm of changing consciousness. He says he wants to help people fully read old books.

New Literary History (Fall, 1972).

This issue is devoted to trying to describe the difference in language when it is put to different uses, and devoted particularly to describing the difference between literary and "normal" language. Nearest in spirit to my study, I think, is George Steiner's essay, "Whorf, Chomsky and the student of Literature," 15-34.

Smith, Logan Pearsall. Words and Idioms. Boston, 1925.

Smith's study is both charming and complementary to Barfield's. Beginning with a focus on "English Sea Terms" and what they suggests about the lives of the people who use them, Smith moves on to

assert that the word "romantic" describes a way we feel about an object, not the object itself (p. 82). Basically he argues that words may express more or less of nature as they are used, and depending on how we see words and nature.

Wheelwright, Philip. The Burning Fountain: A Study in the Language of Symbolism. Bloomington, 1968.

Wheelwright explores the ways language limits and conditions what we can even study. In a very real sense Wheelwright argues words refer to what is, since they describe reality for us. In a study of the meaning of the word symbol and of the imagination he also implies a direction for modern art.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. The Philosophical Investigations, trans. G. E. M. Anscomb. Oxford, 1953.

Wittgenstein engages in a large number of relatively brief speculations on language, which in general are in the direction of Barfield's ideas about language, however, and which present lines of thought and examples which are helpful in thinking about language, and about Barfield. This work also contains Wittgenstein's indictment of the behavioral philosophy of education by pointing out how it is so mechanistic as to be useless, "Here I should like to say: a wheel that can be turned though nothing else moves with it, is not part of the mechanism" (p. 95).

Other Sources

Blackmur, R. P. The Lion and the Honeycomb: Essays in Solicitude and Critique. New York, 1955.

Blackmur is concerned with what seems to be a decline in our vital sense of words, and he describes a way of regaining contact with our world and a certain kind of understanding through the use of "analogy" which he means in more than a mechanical or technical way; which he means to some extent in the spirit of Barfield.

Brooks, Cleanth. Modern Poetry and the Tradition. Chappel Hill, N. C., 1939.

Brooks believes the modern tradition is in a state of revolution the order of the "Romantic Revolt" though he does not characterize this as

subtly as Barfield and Cassirer do, or perhaps understand it in the same way. His reading of The Waste Land helps establish the reading that "the statement of beliefs emerges through confusion and cynicism, not in spite of it," (p. 172), a view which I believe relates to my particular slant on that poem.

Cambon, Glauco. The Inclusive Flame: Studies in American Poetry. Bloomington, 1963.

A far ranging study of American poetry that examines nineteenth-century poetry and more modern poetry tracing a co-existing romantic or affirmative impulse and a tragis impulse--to which he links Eliot and others. He is concerned with language and subject in poetry and distinguishes among a great number of poets, providing an outline history of their work.

Dekker, George. Sailing After Knowledge: The Cantos of Ezra Pound. London, 1963.

Pound's strategic and important relationship to Eliot and his place as one the central poet-thinkers of the modern age make certain studies of his work relevant to my study. In this case Dekker provides insight into The Cantos as a search for inner peace and as they relate to The Waste Land.

Dembo, L. S. Hart Crane's Sanskrit Charge: A Study of the Bridge.

Sees Crane's poetry as an attempt to rebuild a world of mythical proportions in the face of the modern way of seeing. And he describes Crane as caught in the modern dilemma in which man "finds himself alone and unimportant in the universe and will not accept his fate" (p. 133).

Emerson, Ralph W. Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. Stephen E. Whicher. Boston, 1957.

Emerson was, of course, very much concerned with the way language and nature relate to one another. His essays most directly related to the concerns of my study are "The Poet" and "Nature". That words have the ability to express more than the surface of nature was one of his assertions.

Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. Princeton, 1957.

Most relevant to my study is the "Second Essay, Ethical Criticism: Theory of Symbols," in which

Frye discusses how the writer ought to relate to the natural reality of his world around him. Although his sense of the relationship of words to nature is not the same as Barfield's (Frye seems to suggest that words can entirely create reality--that man absorbs nature, whereas Barfield asserts that man is not all), Frye's feeling that writers should express as much of nature as they can, and not merely its surface, does support Barfield.

Howard, Richard. Alone with America; Essays on the Art of Poetry in the United States since 1950. New York, 1969.

Talks out of Howard's personal and critical response to a very large number of modern poets, and with some understanding of modern poetry as a struggle for connections in life beyond logic, a perspective which makes it a study somewhat sympathetic to Barfield's.

Kenner, Hugh. The Poetry of Ezra Pound. Norfolk, Conn., 1951.

Intended as an introductory guide to The Cantos especially. Its focus late in the book on Pound's concepts of the "ideogram" and the "Vortex" raise the subject of metaphor in Pound's poetry in an important way, a way that points toward how Pound might be discussed in light of Barfield.

Leavis, F. R., and Q. D. Leavis. Lectures in America. London, 1969.

These lectures discuss in philosophical terms and in regard to C. P. Snow the possibility that "a general impoverishment of life" accompanies the technological advance (p. 13). This provides a look at society in somewhat the same terms I offer in Chapter II of this study.

Meiners, Roger. Everything to be Endured; An Essay on Robert Lowell and Modern Poetry. Columbia, Missouri, 1970.

In describing the process of a Lowell poem and the modern context of Lowell's poetry Meiners achieves both a personal (existential) understanding and a Barfield-ian perspective that describes the state of the modern poet in general. As a devoted and careful student of Barfield's work, Meiners' remarks both led me toward my study and now, I hope, supports my work.

_____. "On Modern Poetry, Poetic Consciousness, and the Madness of Poets," (in publication process, bibliographical information not available).

An essay which describes the way in which modern poetry struggles for new consciousness. Meiners' traces a kind of imagery and other tendencies in the poetry to establish it in the search Barfield has suggested it is in, and Meiners also tries to point to some directions we might take in our own search.

Miller, J. Hillis. Poets of Reality; Six Twentieth-Century Writers. Cambridge, Mass., 1965.

Miller suggests modern poetry is neither an extension of romanticism nor an expression of nihilism but is involved in a journey beyond nihilism toward "a poetry of reality" (p. 1). Miller seems aware of the conflict caused by dualism in modern society (and sees Eliot as a poet who expresses the horrors of dualism), although his sense of how language relates to this and how we might move beyond it is not so sharp as Barfield's. Miller chooses to survey several modern writers as he feels they relate to this conflict. Miller sees romanticism as something that needs to be turned away from. Barfield sees it as a source of insight.

The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds of Modern Literature, ed. Richard Ellman and Charles Feidelson, Jr. New York, 1965.

This book pursues, through introductory essays of the editors and through a very large number of excerpts from poets and novelists, the ways nineteenth and twentieth-century writers have viewed the power of language and the relationship of words to reality. This range provides a good outline of how many writers have related to the concerns of Barfield and Cassirer.

Olson, Charles. Projective Verse. New York, 1959.

This statement of Olson's may be one of the best essay attempts to achieve the mental processes of a poetry which fuses form, subject, language and purpose through the imagination. The transcending of logic and the simultaneity of the processes are two of the keys, Olson suggests. For me this helps describe a poetry somewhat like Barfield believes is possible.

Pearce, Roy Harvey. The Continuity of American Poetry. Princeton, 1961.

Discusses a very large number of poets through stages of the development of American poetry. He discusses how the poets refuse to accept their culture's system of values, a fruitful perspective, though he chooses breadth of coverage over depth of exploration. The relationship of poets to society's values is somewhat along the lines of my study, though not an exactly like concern.

Ransom, John Crowe. Beating the Bushes: Selected Essays 1941-1970. New York, 1972.

Particularly in his essay, "Wanted: An Ontological Critic," Ransom tries to describe what he feels are differences between the language of poetry and the language of science (a distinction which may be less valid as science discards its connection with logic), and which also suggests that poetry strives to recover the denser world of our full perceptions, not merely the world of our logical understanding.

Richards, I. A. Coleridge on Imagination. Bloomington, 1960.

Richards' great admiration for Coleridge combines with his own struggle to relate to Coleridge's thought out of his "technical" and logical mind creates a tension with Barfield's reading of Coleridge. Richard's book does not lose an argument, however, so much as the two views reflect on one another.

. Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment. New York, 1929.

Richards' famous experiment with his students in which he solicited responses from them about poems without revealing the author to them, so that he might use their comments to examine how well "average" people could read poetry. Richards uses their remarks as a springboard into a study of the language and form of poetry.

. Principles of Literary Criticism. New York, 1928.

In this book Richards takes on a massive list of critical concerns discussing what aesthetics is, how it relates to other disciplines and to society. He discusses "Art and Morals," "The Normality of the Artist," and especially the uses of language in poetry and other parts of life.

Riddell, Joseph R. The Clairvoyante Eye: The Poetry and Poetics of Wallace Stevens. Baton Rouge, 1965.

Riddell puts Stevens' poetry properly into the context of a study of "the self-conscious man in a time which . . . can find no adequate forms of belief" (p. v). A subtle reading of Stevens in this light, and since Stevens seems to me to be in the top ranks of modern poets in thought and technique, an important comment on modern poetry.

Rosenthal, M. L. The Modern Poets; A Critical Introduction. New York, 1960.

Strives to locate a large number of poets within a certain context and so is limited both in how deeply it can explore the context and the poets, but the context is a worthy one and the study a fruitful one, compatible with Barfield's, I believe. Rosenthal says our poetry seeks a vital link with whatever in the past was "myth-making" (p. 9).

Schneidau, Herbert N. Ezra Pound: The Image and the Real. Baton Rouge, 1969.

Schneidau explores carefully and excitingly Pound's devotion to the "luminous Detail" and the faith it implies in the relationship of the particular to the universal. Because it takes this perspective and pursues it subtly this provides an important slant on modern poetry and a study complementary to Barfield's.

Tate, Allen. Essays of Four Decades. Chicago, 1959.

Tate's essays cover a tremendous range of concerns, but his perspective in addition to being consistently imaginative steadily probes for an understanding of the modern condition in which man feels isolated from nature but unwilling to accept that feeling as his full human conditions.

Wagner, Linda W. The Poems of William Carlos Williams: A Critical Study. Middletown, Conn., 1963.

Wagner's attention to Williams' "no ideas but in things" theory and his high value for the "local" in poetry helps me place Williams in the search in modern poetry that Whitman, Eliot, Pound and others were also engaged in. Williams' work may not be as profound as Eliot's, but it is a modern example of a poet trying to cope with dualism.

Winters, Yvor. In Defense of Reason. New York, 1947.

Winters may provide a nearly unique slant on modern poetry. The title of his essay collection can be taken fairly literally, as Winters seems to equate logic with truth and sanity. His view is nevertheless very sophisticated and perhaps a helpful contrast to Barfield as well as rewarding in its own right.

Witemeyer, Hugh. The Poetry of Ezra Pound. Berkely, 1968.

A study of Pound's early poetry (his pre-Cantos poetry). For this reason it can serve to complete a sense of Pound's thought and writing when read with Kenner's and Schneidau's work on Pound. Pound's theory and execution in poetry is very much in the same realm as Whitman's and Eliot's, I believe.



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