

There is now neither laughter nor sleep in the night, love having been constructed on a superficial awareness of individuality. When this superficial nature of individuality becomes apparent, the corresponding concept that all boundaries are therefore arbitrary follows; therefore "every meaning had grown meaningless" (133). With the morning comes the renewed knowledge that boundaries need not exist, that the stones and the speaker can be one.

As if all things had died, and rose again.
I touched the stones, and they had my own skin.
(133)

The stones first discovered in "the pit" show the meaning of "The Pure Fury", the indistinct, unindividual rage for life - the primordial growth first discovered in "Root Cellar". Man's desire to individualize himself, to seize the world, exists only because he has forgotten "the thing he almost was/ When the pure fury raged in his head" (133).

The pure admire the pure, and live alone;
I love a woman with an empty face.
Parmenides put Nothingness in place;
She tries to think, and it flies loose again.
How slow the changes of a golden mean:
Great Boehme rooted all in Yes and No;
At times my darling squeaks in pure Plato.
(133)

The pure fury is also a woman, who by transcending all distinctions approaches a state approximate to that of "Root Cellar": she is beyond the Yes and No of Boehme, beyond Aristotle's "golden mean", which balances the

contraries of the universe. In the same vein, the woman is the "dream of death" in the last verse, who robs the fighting protagonist of his breath. Perhaps not an individual woman, woman here seems to be associated with the ancient Greek chthonic furies who avenged deviant social behavior.¹³ Furies return to undifferentiated earth those who had attempted to distinguish themselves as individuals, comparable to woman who consumes the self-hood of a man. It is this dilemma which could not be solved with superficial knowledge.

When will that creature give me back my breath?
 I live near the abyss. I hope to stay
 Until my eyes look at a brighter sun
 As the thick shade of the long night comes on.
 (134)

"The thick shade of the long night", the eclipse of the self, comes in "The Renewal", the ninth of the sixteen poems. The "glories" of the "motions of the soul", at first longed for by the static tree, can be found through love. "Love alters all. Unblood my instinct, love." (135) Falling into the waters both of universal love and the collective unconscious, he is "unblooded", his selfhood destroyed along with his rigidity: "A raw ghost drinks the fluid in my spine" (135). All forms of self are lost, what remains is "love". "I know I love, yet know not where I am" (135), and this loss of self results in temporary panic. "I paw the dark.../ Will the self, lost, be found again? In form?"(135)

But this lost self is also a renewed self. The second verse is portentous of birth, echoing Milton's description of creation - "Dark hangs upon the waters of the soul" (135) - and the fourth verse fulfills the birth; the concept of self expands, "and I am everywhere" (135). Ontologically it may seem that the speaker here is no further than he was in "All the Earth; All the Air". However, "The field is mine! is mine!" (122) from "All the Earth, All the Air", is only superficially similar to the line quoted above from "The Renewal". He has now become a part of the world.

If "I am everywhere", then where is the "other"? Sensuality, defined by Roethke in his journals as "the will to die"¹⁴, is the struggle of two beings to occupy the same place, to hold the same territory of identity. For although something in the couple in "The Sensualists" rejects the violence of intercourse, and tiptoes "down the hall" (136), the actual purpose of sex in this poem seems to be the dionysiac loss of identity. It is demonic and in opposition to a greater good. Thus the woman cries, "O angel, let me loose" (136), which refers, syntactically, to the woman "pure as a bride", who looks on in horror.

A similar problem, more carefully delineated, is demonstrated in "Love's Progress". In the first three verses the sensual progress of love is recorded, the closeness becoming violence as the attempt to transcend boun-

daries is made. By verse four a terrible recognition occurs. In "The Dream", the speaker is "a wet log" singing "within a flame" (120). Now the log "sings in its flame" (137), and by verse five, "...would drown in fire" (138).

Entering the being of another has resulted in loss of self, in fragmentation of self.

Father, I'm far from home,
And I have gone nowhere.
(138)

The son is lost again. There is "I", the ego, and "home", the self, and love has separated the two. As in "I Need, I Need", when the world is first perceived as separate it is then regarded as dangerous ("I know what you is: You're not very nice", 75), when identity is fragmented ("true love broke my heart in half", "The Surly One", 138), it follows that the ego must fear the self. And, indeed, this is the case here:

I fear the shadows most
That start from my own feet
(138)

And in "Plaint", the protagonist asks:

I lived with deep roots once:
Have I forgotten their ways -
(139)

The split is resolved in "The Swan" and "Memory". Peace is made with the reality of "that coursing blood" and the power of love to bring one out of the self, without the denial of either factor.

My darling does what I could never do.
 She sighs me white, a Socrates of snow.
 (140)

Theories of love and idealism, however, have nothing to do with this integration. Essential humanity is acknowledged, "A man alive from all light I must fall" (140). Unlike the advice in "The Sententious Man" ("The spirit knows the flesh it must consume", 131), the human and the divine can exist together, the spiritual existing through the human.

I am my father's son, I am John Donne
 Whenever I see her with nothing on.
 (140)

This is the union of contraries toward which all of the Love Poems have been directed - the vision of the swan, perfect, transcendent, yet real in a moment in which "lost opposites bend down" (141). It is, of course, the unity of which Donne himself speaks in poems such as "The Extasie" and "The Cannonization".

Perhaps the essential difference between Roethke and Donne, however, is that Roethke is far more limited by time. In "Memory", the kind of vision which brought "The Swan" to its peak, is acknowledged and accepted as momentary. The lover, "half-bird, half-animal" (141), half spirit, half flesh, is united with the speaker in "the slow world of dream", when "the outside dies within/ and she knows all I am", but this physical and spiritual moment must be accepted rather than sought. In Blake's

words,

He who binds himself to a joy
Does the winged life destroy;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sunrise.

"Eternity"

Outside these moments, the protagonist remains essentially alone. The love poems move from dream as fulfillment to dream as compromise. The journey has not ended.

Above and below are bound to one another. The word of him who wishes to speak with men without speaking with God is not fulfilled: but the word of him who wishes to speak with God without speaking with man goes astray.... True address from God directs man into the place of lived speech, where the voices of the creatures grope past one another, and in their very missing of ^{one} another succeed in reaching the eternal partner.

Whether the title of the third section of Words for the Wind was taken from this excerpt from Buber's Between Man and Man cannot be conclusively determined. It is clear, however, that the poems of section 2 have led to the state Buber describes. The protagonist at the close of the Love Poems is not fulfilled. In Voices and Creatures, the last sentence of Buber's statement is dramatized, although it remains for The Dying Man and Meditations of an Old Woman to complete the entire journey.

Like the experience of birth, the experience of love forces the individual out into the universe, and leaves him there. But, unlike the loss in Praise to the End!, the awareness which ends the love sequence is an unwilling compromise made after great efforts to overcome separation.

Thus the first four poems, "The Shimmer of Evil", "Elegy", "The Beast", and "The Song", are tortured agonies of separation from other objects, other beings including God, the collective unconscious, and mythical unity, as well as the individual past and the temporal layers of identity. These "voices of the creatures" who "grope past one another" culminate in "The Exorcism", a poem which finds identity beneath all the mistaken layers.

In a dark wood I saw -
 I saw my several selves
 Come running from the leaves,
 Lewd, tiny careless lives
 That scuttled under stones
 Or broke, but would not go.
 I turned upon my spine,
 I turned and turned again,
 A cold God-furious man
 Writhing until the last
 Forms of his secret life
 Lay with the dross of death
 I was myself, alone.

(147)

The monumental effort to release the essential self from what has become the trappings of self which isolate, is described without all the fancy journies of past works. Spinning, spiralling, sending off centrifugally now false aspects of self is a subject which would have called for "pyrotechnical displays" in earlier poems. Here there can be no more tricks, for the purpose of the "turning" is to purify the self of tricks, of facades, the necessity of purification being an anger with, and the anger of God.

To go beneath, beyond these "careless lives", is to

The full moon, Yeats' phase of complete subjectivity, gradually diminishes; the dark wood of "The Exorcism" in which fragmentation occurs, smoothes itself into a wall, divisions between self and other return - what belongs to the self draws "closer in", and what belongs outside returns "As if out of my side" (148). And as distinctions appear, the sanctity of all creatures also becomes evident:

And things throw light on things,
And all the stones have wings.
(148)

The holiness and distinctiveness of each creature is concomitant with the concept of eternal life. Tillich's concept of eternity as above time is echoed in "A Walk In Late Summer" in which the prospect of death has no power.

It lies upon us to undo the lie
Of living merely in the realm of time.
(149)

In "Snake", this lie is undone. The snake exists as if outside temporal bonds, a thing of "pure, sensuous form" which the protagonist longs to become.

The snake is also a creature, and included in the poet's world because of its existence. But the snake can easily be accepted; its beauty and integrity are admirable. It is a greater feat to include the slug. Blake's categories include the lamb and the tiger, passive good and violent evil, but the slug is useless, ugly, merely disgusting, far more difficult to include in the world.

These last three poems, "Snake", "The Slug", and "The Siskins", are all reaffirmations of the value and holiness of individual creatures, and each being is given an entire poem in praise.

The relationship between the self and the external world has once again been approached through nonhuman creatures. In "The Dying Man", a human being is approached. Exactly how much Roethke owes to Yeats is worked through in this poem, in an attempt to establish a viable relationship. A distillation of Yeats' theories is first presented in the words of the dying man; then the poet attempts, fails, revises, and adapts Yeats, concluding ultimately with a position far different from the master himself. The critics' complaint that later Roethke is an imitation of Yeats is here negated. Roethke's smug epistolary comment that he had indeed surpassed Yeats¹⁶ is true insofar as Roethke seems to have resolved, at least in this poem, some of Yeats' ultimate philosophical paradoxes.

Yeats' compressed speech, part 1 of "The Dying Man", explains his desire to transcend, to become pure art, a work of art like the byzantine bird who form he would take "once out of nature" ("Sailing to Byzantium"):

I am that final thing,
A man learning to sing.
(153)

His soul, like his body, is to be deserted, but, as Mal-

koff points out:

My soul's hung out to dry,
Like a fresh salted skin,
(153)

describes a curative process, so that even though the dying man may not use it again, it will be used in a different, cured, form.

The immediate reaction of the speaker in What Now? is one of self disgust; the hatred of the clumsy, imperfect body, caught in the bind of the instant. The reaction is comparable to Yeats' "What Then?", in which Yeats, reviewing his life, finds it lacking in something ideal, as Plato's ghost sings to him, "What then?". The reaction, then, is yeatsian. Love here is of the flesh, and then of the spirit.

I burned the flesh away,
In love, in lively May,
I turn my look upon
Another shape than hers
Now, as the casement blurs.
(154)

Similar in context to "Speech After Long Silence" among other poems by Yeats, in which "Bodily decrepitude is wisdom; young/ We loved each other and were ignorant"¹⁷, these lines contrast the love of the flesh with "another shape". There is, however, a further complication: wisdom may come from without, the "beating at the gate" (compare to "The Ghost of Roger Casement" or "What Then?") or from within, the unconscious. As the second section

of "The Dying Man" closes, it appears to come from both directions.

Who's beating at the gate?
Who's come can wait.

3. The Wall

A ghost comes out of the unconscious mind
To grope my sill: It moans to be reborn,
(154)

"I thought myself reborn", the speaker claims at the beginning of What Now?, but he now comes to discover that the influence was external. In The Wall something far deeper is reborn, in opposition to the yeatsian dichotomy.

The ghost which comes from the unconscious is opposed to the yeatsian "figure at my back". In following Yeats blindly he has come to a dead end as blind as the dead end in "Love's Progress".

Father, I'm far from home,
And I have gone nowhere.
(137)

I found my father when I did my work,
Only to lose myself in this small dark.
(154)

The father seems to come from within, someone discovered, not followed. He must therefore reject the personally impossible yeatsian hypothesis: in his own way he found his father (The Lost Son, Praise to the End!), but has since been misled by inappropriate ideals. In "Four For Sir John Davies" he rose "from flesh to spirit". If he accepts Yeats his own form of transcendence becomes impossible.

When figures out of obscure shadow rave,
 All sensual love's but dancing on a grave.
 (154)

The wall of the title is between Yeats and Roethke.

In "The Tower" Yeats writes:

And certain men...mistook the brightness of the moon
 For the prosaic light of day -
 O may the moon and sunlight seem
 One inextricable beam,
 For if I triumph I must make men mad. 18

He has not triumphed. Momentarily "A madman staring at perpetual night" (155), the speaker breathes "alone until my dark is bright". And Yeats' prayer in "The Tower" is fulfilled.

Who would know the dawn
 When there's a dazzling dark behind the sun?
 (155)

Yeats himself rose above the desire for the world that the speaker expresses, "I love the world; I want more than the world,/ Or after-image of the inner eye."

(155) Physically shrunk, Yeats was spiritually "another man" above the world of mortals, "He quivered like a bird in birdless air/Yet dared to fix his vision anywhere."

(155) The speaker himself has created his identity through participation in this world; his ability to rise above it is admittedly limited. Through his unity with earth, he achieves eternity in an antithetical manner from Yeats.

I think a bird, and it begins to fly.
 By dying daily, I have come to be.

 I shall undo all dying by my death.
 (155)

The conclusion: There can be no final answer but endurance. The desire to retain the life of the senses is certain to conclude in failure. The "imagination" fails similarly. Success lies in existential resistance to the limitations of man. By not endeavoring to escape, to transcend, but struggling, Roethke's hero, like Camus' Sisyphus, affirms himself -

he dares to live
 Who stops being a bird, yet beats his wings
 Against the immense immeasurable emptiness of things.
 (156)

The distinction Roethke traces here between himself and Yeats has been noted generally by Delmore Schwartz in a review of Words for the Wind, and is useful in any consideration of Roethke's later works.

The attitude and emotion in [Among School Children] is precisely the opposite of Roethke's; for Yeats, in this poem, as in so many of his later poems, is full of a contemptus mundi, a scorn of nature, a detestation of history, which has left him an old man, however gifted: He too like the scarecrow face of the Leda-like beauty with whom he had been in love, has been by "the honey of generation betrayed". And this is why he ends his poem by saying: "How shall we know the dancer from the dance?", a Hericlitean statement that all is process and nothing is reality, except, as in other poems, the frozen artificial reality of Byzantium.¹⁹

Yeats' cadence is not the only thing Roethke gives back to him. In "The Dying Man" he tries Yeats on for size, finds it does not fit, and returns the clothes. All further echoes of Yeats are filtered through this major alteration of the yeatsian philosophy.

The last lines of "The Dying Man" cannot be stressed enough. Their importance in the whole volume of Words for the Wind is central for they define man's relationship to the universe. In "Ash Wednesday" Eliot proclaims:

And God said
Prophecy to the wind, to the wind only for only
The wind will listen.

Whether Roethke's title was influenced by these lines or not, it is nevertheless true that Words for the Wind is written in the face of death, in the face of meaninglessness. In fact, one of the major differences between Eliot and Roethke can be seen in comparing Roethke's last lines in "The Dying Man" and lines from "Ash Wednesday" that are so similar they may well have been plagiarized by Roethke.

Because these wings are no longer wings to fly
But merely vans to beat the air
The air which is now thoroughly small and dry
Smaller and dryer than the will
Teach us to care and not to care
Teach us to sit still.

One might well hear at this point the prophet Roethke-Yeats of "The Dying Man" intoning, "He dares not to live". Within the context of Words for the Wind, only complete commitment to struggle, to involvement in the world, is existence.

With "Meditations of an Old Woman", the theory is put into practice. With remarkable spontaneity, the old woman tackles the existential problem faced by many contemporary old women, such as those of Frost, Yeats, and

Eliot. Frost's "Pauper Witch of Grafton" almost negates the values of existence in the face of old age.

You can come down from everything to nothing.
 All is, if I'd a known when I was young
 And full of it, that this would be the end
 It doesn't seem as if I'd had the courage
 To make as free and kick up in folk's faces.
 I might have, but it doesn't seem as if.

Or, in "Provide, Provide", the speaker sardonically suggests power as the alternative to the helplessness of old age.

Make the whole stock exchange your own!
 If need be occupy a throne,
 Where nobody can call you crone.

The problem is of old age, its weakness and physical powerlessness. Death is secondary, a problem outside the realm of social concerns. When death is the primary consideration, however, as with Roethke's old woman, there is a need to adapt the self to the weakness, "I need an old crone's knowing"(157). Since she is an old crone, she must develop her spirit to confront this truth, which is in itself a monumental act, a resistance to blindness.

The antithetical approach is provided in "Ash Wednesday", in which the speaker, an old man, attempts to rise beyond the problems which confront him, as in the previously quoted excerpt. His unwilling return to the things of the earth near the conclusion of "Ash Wednesday" is a "falsehood". When...

...the lost heart stiffens and rejoices
 In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices

And the weak spirit quickens to rebel
 For the bent golden-rod and the lost sea smell

the speaker prays,

Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood
 Teach us to care and not to care
 Teach us to sit still.

Yeats' old man in "The Tower" attempts the same kind of super-vision, the triumph over the betraying senses. And it is probably both Eliot and Yeats whom Roethke attempts to answer in "Meditations". The old woman, unlearned in mysticism, unaided by scholars, cannot come to the purely theoretical position of these wise masters, but finds a more personal, human vision.

Since it is highly unusual for Roethke to employ a full scale persona, especially of another sex and of a greater age, it is necessary to consider the reason for the appearance of the old woman at this point. Certainly it is quite possible to note a progressively greater skill in comprehending and adapting other personalities in Words for the Wind, concomitant, perhaps, with the poet's own ability to leave the self. This theory would suggest that Roethke himself developed as a person and a poet as he developed the implications of his theme, at best a hypothetical assumption. It is also possible, and far more logical, to explain the existence of this particular persona in a more pragmatic, dramatic context. The old woman, having left the life of activity, of passionate

encounter, of the overwhelming experience of reality, is in a position to reflect on all that has been described in Words for the Wind. She has lived through it all, and explains near the beginning that activity and meditations can not be carried on simultaneously - one must follow the other so that the meaning and the wholeness of the experience can be comprehended. The old woman, with her passivity and desire for fulfillment, is thus an ideal example as well as an ideal narrator for the final stage in establishing a relationship with the world.

Her initial desire for "an old crone's knowing", leads the old woman to perceive life as a dual journey. Moving forward in time, one comes to a point after which the self no longer progresses, but moves backward, re-valuing, reinterpreting.

All journeys, I think, are the same:
 The movement is forward, after a few wavers,

 And we ride, we ride, taking the curves
 Somewhat closer, the trucks coming
 Down from behind the last ranges,
 The black shapes breaking past;
 And the air claps between us,
 Blasting the frosted windows,
 And I seem to go backward,
 Backward in time.

(158)

This image becomes meaningful only in context of the following image of the song sparrows, one inside and one outside of a greenhouse - the self in the present and the self in the past. For the journey within a journey is the

journey of meditation, of self contemplation, having nothing to do with the reality of existence. Meditation cannot run simultaneously with life. Thinking, one cannot act. Either the understanding precedes the real situation and then proves inapplicable, or it comes too late.

The ticket mislaid or lost, the gate
Inaccessible, the boat always pulling out
From the rickety wooden dock,
The children waving;

(158)

Meditation simultaneous with movement, although ideal, is impossible. Both forces are equally strong, and viable, but do not lead in the same direction.

Or the two horses plunging in snow, their lines tangled,
A great wooden sleigh careening behind them,
Swerving up a steep embankment.

(158)

Therefore, when action becomes grotesque and awkward, like the movements of a crab, the backward movement of meditation is necessary so that the journey may continue at least. From this negative comparison, the old woman shifts to a positive image of the same direction - the upstream journey of the procreating salmon which although ultimately fatal, is both necessary and fruitful.

In the language, meter, image pattern and sentence structure of "Dolor" (LS) which also describes "waste, lonely places", the old woman describes the emptiness of the world "behind the eye", the world of no journies, neither active nor meditative. This is the alternative to

which the old woman tends at the beginning of the poem, "On love's worst ugly day" when "a tree tilts from its roots," (157). The wasteland she describes is the extension of this world: a wasteland in which vines, in a temporal extension of the vines of love in the love poems, grey "to a fine powder" (159), and "there is no riven tree" (159). And because the old woman does not choose to be a part of this wasteland, but renews herself through meditation, enlivens herself with the wind and the fire, she can affirm:

In such times, lacking a god,
I am still happy.
(160)

These "spots of time", once the momentary awareness of time has gone, have an antithetical effect: "The prattle of the young no longer pleases" (161). Aware of time and the replacement of the old by the young, she complains, "Behind the child's archness/ Lurks the bad animal" (161). Spring, with its connotations of rebirth, is "The April cheeping" (161) and the old woman remains pressured by a world in which time in its pettiness continues.

Her youth is reviewed as a period of half-life. As Eliot says in "The Dry Salvages", "We had the experience but missed the meaning." "So much of adolescence is an ill defined dying,/ An intolerable waiting," (162) agrees the old woman. The young woman becomes caught in the sensuous fullness of the roses.

The scent of the half-opened buds came up over me.
I thought I was going to smother.
(162)

As an old woman, however, she is in control over the roses,
in control of the senses.

But these roses; I can wear them by looking away.
The eyes rejoice in the act of seeing and the fresh
after-image,
Without staring like a lout, or a moping adolescent;
Without commotion.
(163)

The difference is the growth of the spirit, "the bird",
almost freed when the woman almost dies of the fever, al-
most freed to become part of "A congress of tree-shrews
and rats" (163). The memory of this "coming out of
sleep", this awareness of loss of self, the growth of spi-
rit, leads to the concluding wish to join in this realm
beyond time.

What's weather to me: Even carp die in this river.
I need a pond with small eels. And a windy orchard.
(164)

The distinction in movement is between rivers and wind,
the river continuing in a progressional flow and the wind
blowing "where it listeth". In the river "even carp die".
A pond, however, is static, and eels when killed grow
back anew. In the pond, and the windy orchard, the old
woman has come to a place where she can possess all of
nature, to where she can possess "this valley,/ Loose in
my lap,/ In my arms" (164). The old woman becomes a part
of the world and rises above it by drawing it into her.

The kind of ecstasy intended in "If the wind means me,/ I'm here!/ Here." (164) is the ecstasy borne of the awareness of the unity and timelessness of nature. She has learned in section 1 of "Her Becoming", to receive passively the wholeness of stimuli, to accept all of nature, to delight in that which a short while before could only disturb her, youth.

But even as the earth is perceived as it was in "Four For Sir John Davies", "itself a tune" (165), the song is felt to come "from the folds of my skin" (165), the vision a personal one. At first the old woman questions whether the face which "floats in the ferns" is divine, a resurrection of the god she had previously killed with her rejection of nature, "Do maimed gods walk?", or second best, a divinity of the individual, "Dare I embrace a ghost from my own breast?". But the visionary mist soon fades completely, and the old woman is once again imprisoned in her senses, having come no further than her adolescent experiences with the roses.

A ghost from the soul's house?
 I'm where I always was.
 The lily broods. Who knows
 The way out of a rose?
 (165)

The whole principle of order so painstakingly built up in the first two poems has fallen apart, "the loud sound of a minor collapse"(165). Lost again, the old woman

retraces the journey of life in dreamlike incantatory verse, stealing "from sleep" the brutal vision which could help here of the separation of body and soul into "the cold fleshless kiss of contraries", and their reorganization into "mutilated souls in cold morgues of obligation" (166).

The remembrance which follows contrasts clearly with the present state of identity. The young girl running in the wood, comparable to the dissociation from civilization of Ike McCaslin in Faulkner's "The Bear", is the facing of the true self. The holy of holies of identity is reached, the pure subjectivity of Yeats' moon, which from a crescent becomes indescribable.

Who can believe the moon?
 I have seen! I have seen!
 The line! The holy line!
 A small place all in flames. (167)

This ecstasy, which continues through to the end of "Her becoming", is contemplated in "Fourth Meditation" with the same result as "Praise to the End!": "O the songs we hide, singing only to ourselves....But the time comes when the vague life of the mouth no longer suffices" (168). As in "Where Knock", "the dead make more impossible demands from their silence" (168). The existence of death in itself forces a reconsideration of the value of the self, individuality, entirely. "The river moves, wrinkled by midges" (168). "I'm no midge of that or this" (165), said

the old woman at the peak of her power, at one with the universe she possessed, but in her review there is neither power nor song.

The paradoxes which constitute a woman are related to these antithetical states of mind. A woman, "contained", "a vessel", "a mouth", "a meal of meat", is complete, waiting to be completed, an incorporator, and that which is incorporated. But as she has been drawn to the subject of woman by her examination of "the vague life of the mouth" (168) she is forced to move out into even greater generalities by the very line of inquiry she pursues. It is not only the old woman, nor generic woman, but all of mankind who are self-involved, who are trained not to know,

.....the soul's authentic hunger,
Those cat-like immaculate creatures
For whom the world works?
(169)

Furthermore, the nature of woman as the old woman describes it is,

To prefer a window to a door?
A pool to a river?
(169)

implying the external oriented, non-progressional vision of the female sex. The preference of "a pool to a river" is concomitant with the disdain for the self and is responsible for the old woman's subsequent acceptance of the "cat-like immaculate creatures". Her prayer for them is one of resurrection and unity of being:

body and soul in their resultant fall. Although the songs are from "a spiral tree" (171), in the fearful ignorance the sense of direction is lost and all seems disconnected and futile.

A vine lashing in dry fury,
A man chasing a cat,
With a broken umbrella,
Crying softly.

(171)

This uselessness of action, this helplessness of the individual appears unending, for the greater the development of the individual the more he is aware of the inconsequence of life:

The self says, I am;
The heart says, I am less;
The spirit says, you are nothing.

(172)

If The Lost Son and Praise to the End! are concerned with the development of the self, the Love Poems and Voices and Creatures with the "heart", then Meditations of an Old Woman deal with the beginnings of the "spirit". And the first stage of awareness is of the insignificance of individuality, the distance of the spiritual from the self, and the inability to accept this state of affairs. To say that all shall be well, as Eliot does in Four Quartets, is to fake the "Dark night of the soul"²⁰, since it is impossible to prophecy the future from the depths.

"What can I tell my bones?" (172) cries the old

woman as the new vision of the same situation fills her. For her bones are to be left behind as the focus of her identity shifts: "Do these bones live? Can I live with these bones?"(172, emphasis supplied). The center of existence has suddenly been transferred from the body to the spirit, and what remains is "to be delivered from the rational into the realm of pure song" (172) to become a part of the vast spirit of God. Rhythmic momentum is gathered, as "I rock in my own dark", and the transfer of existence is enacted.

By this very transference of the center of existence daily life becomes acceptable, even desirable.

A prisoner of smells, I would rather eat than pray.
I'm released from the dreary dance of opposites.
(173)

The failure of Voices and Creatures to find a place for man in the world is here overridden. The "true address" from God of which Buber writes "directs man into the place of lived speech, where the voices of the creatures grope past one another, and in their very missing of one another succeed in reaching the eternal partner."²¹

In the Four Quartets Eliot transcends the "dreary dance of opposites" through negation of the flesh. The old woman no longer needs to negate either flesh or spirit but accepts both in their equal limitations. It is impossible to become spirit without destroying the flesh, but it is possible to be both, in fact to be both

is to fulfill the potential of man. So the old woman leaves her "father's eye", yet "shakes the secrets from my deepest bones", transcends the limitations of the flesh by accepting the fleshness of existence.

My spirit rises with the rising wind;
I'm thick with leaves and tender as a dove,
(173)

The spirit rises because of this closeness to the life of the earth.

And the unifying force, and the concluding perfection attained is love.

By midnight I love everything alive.
(173)

It should be clear by now that the quest for love has been the purpose of Words for the Wind, and that the poems have traced the growth of agape from eros. The old woman who has learned to embrace the world and the divinity in a spontaneous act of love did not necessarily have to pass through the eroticism of "The Sensualists" or the cavern of "The Pure Fury", but her state is a greater one, a fusion of all the agonies of awareness in each section of Words for the Wind.