



THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

A STUDY OF THE POETRY OF WILLIAM EVERSON

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
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Norman, Oklahoma

1966

A STUDY OF THE POETRY OF WILLIAM EVERSON

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PREFACE

I would like to acknowledge the aid of Steve Eisner and Allan Campo, both of whom generously gave me significant material regarding the poet; of William Everson himself, whose letters and whose annotations on my earlier study of him were invaluable in completing this present study; and of Joe Fritz, my director, whose comments and suggestions were rewarding, enlightening, and useful.

The most significant of the new materials I have used to amend my earlier study (an M. A. thesis) of William Everson are: first, a copy of Prodigious Thrust, his unpublished autobiography; secondly, letters from the poet commenting on my interpretations of his work; thirdly, a number of unpublished and/or little known works (e.g. poems and prefaces) by William Everson; fourthly, a copy of my M. A. thesis annotated by Everson; and lastly, an M. A. thesis by Allan Campo, "Soul and Search: Mysticism and its Approach in the Poetry of Brother Antoninus."

Regarding my use of Everson's annotations of my work, I have accepted his corrections totally when they dealt with factual content (e.g. date of college attendance, where he lived, etc.). However, when matters of interpretation

arose, I considered his comments merely as those of another critic. As a result, some of his analyses I accepted as more valid than my original analyses, some I rejected completely, and some I included as possible alternative interpretations. Should anyone be interested in the extent to which Everson's comments influenced my interpretation of his works, he need only consult Steve Eisner, friend of Everson, and former editor of the University of Detroit Press; Eisner's files will contain the copy of my thesis that Everson annotated, as well as all the letters sent me by the poet.

A STUDY OF THE POETRY OF WILLIAM EVERSON

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Biography and Bibliography

William Everson was born in Sacramento, California, in 1912, son of a German-Irish mother and a Norwegian bandmaster and printer. His parents moved to Selma in Fresno County where their son was educated until his graduation from high school in 1931, at which time he entered Fresno State College. After attending a semester he dropped out, was employed, or worked only as a seasonal fruit laborer, then finally enlisted in the Civilian Conservation Corps. Receiving his discharge after ten months, in the fall of 1934 he returned to Fresno State College, where his poetic vocation began when he encountered the verse of Robinson Jeffers, who became the chief influence of his earlier poetry. He published his first collection a year later, These Are The Ravens, an eleven page pamphlet containing poems written at Cain Flat, Fresno, Selma and Sunnyvale between 1934 and the fall of 1935.

Returning to Selma to write in 1936, here Everson

married in 1938 and earned his living part of the time as a laborer in the San Joaquin Valley, from which region in 1939 came his second collection of poems, thirty-eight pages entitled San Joaquin. Besides laboring in the vineyards--which becomes a recurring image in his poetry--he laid concrete irrigation pipe. This closeness to the land is reflected in the poetry written during these years.

Everson's poetry had been published in Poetry by Miss Monroe in 1937, which, as he later stated in a letter to the editors of Poetry, had been of great encouragement to him at that time for his poetry had hitherto been virtually unread. However, in 1940, disgruntled by rejection slips from Poetry, which, stated Everson, favored verse dealing with the class struggle theme, he "scrawled a facetious, hurried scrap with a social message, concocted a fantastic letter, signed it as William Herber."¹ The proletarian "hurried scrap" was published by Poetry along with an excerpt from William Herber's letter:

I am writing from a camp fire near a small town between Bakersfield and Tulare, California. I have had no address for three years . . . have just finished working the fruit in Imperial Valley and am on my way to Oregon . . . Before I became a 'fruit bum' I had a couple of semesters in college and got interested in poetry there.²

At the instigation of his friends Everson decided to

continue the hoax by sending a second poem. This also was accepted, but before it was published he recanted, and partly in humiliation for deciding to continue the affair, and partly to deprecate the critical standards of Poetry's editors, Everson wrote them a scathing letter confessing his part in the hoax, but also condemning the "slobbering sentimentality of the literary tapeworms." His refusal to become further involved in the hoax was motivated, says Everson, by a belief in the profound seriousness of the role of the poet, a concept he would later expand.

In 1942 he published The Masculine Dead, a book containing forty-four pages of poems written between the fall of 1938 and the early winter of 1940 at Selma. The title poem gives witness, Everson later said, to his fascination with death, and to the unconscious effect upon him of the approach of war. At first determined to stay aloof from considering the dilemma of the war, after The Masculine Dead was published Everson became a pacifist, and the theme of pacificism was salient in his poetry at this time. In 1943 after the outbreak of World War II Everson was drafted as a conscientious objector and stationed at Camp Angel in Waldport, Oregon. Here he headed a fine arts program and aided in the foundation of the Untide Press. Out of esprit de corps he contributed to a camp publication, The Illiterati, which prefaced its volume with the proposal of creation, experiment and revolution to build a warless

and free society; a suspicion of tradition as a standard and eclecticism as a technique; and a rejection of war and any coercion by physical violence in human associations. Fellow writers in this quarterly were Henry Miller, Alex Comfort, and Kenneth Patchen.

While at Camp Angel five pamphlets of his poetry were published by the Untide Press which he helped to found. The first of these was Ten War Elegies, published in 1943; nine of these anti-war poems were written between 1940 and 1942 at his home in Selma, the tenth at Camp Angel. This volume was followed by The Waldport Poems, a letterpress issue published in 1944, the poems of which were written at Waldport; War Elegies also in 1944, which was a reprint into letterpress of Ten War Elegies with an additional elegy; The Residual Years, a mimeographed pamphlet published the same year and which brought into print the remaining unpublished verse of 1940-42; and Poems MCMXLII, published in letterpress in 1945, containing verse written at Selma in 1942.

Released from Camp Angel in 1946 Everson settled in the San Francisco Bay region, where he became associated with the anarcho-pacifist group around the poet Kenneth Rexroth. Having divorced his previous wife he remarried, and established his own handpress "following the inspiration of Eric Gill, the English sculptor, typecutter and printer. ^{and?} Everson had met Rexroth on furlough in San Francisco in 1945, and Rexroth in turn introduced Everson's work to

James Laughlin, the avant garde publisher of New Directions who featured The Waldport Poems in his New Directions Annual for 1946. The favorable reception accorded this work led Laughlin to offer book publication, and in 1948 The Residual Years appeared under the New Directions Imprint. Essentially a cumulative edition of previous publications, it consists of three parts in reverse chronology. The first five-part section, "Chronicle of Division," is comprised of poetry composed at Waldport and Cascade Locks, Oregon, in the years 1943-46 and includes a reprint of The Waldport Poems as one of its parts. In section two of The Residual Years, Poems MCMXLII, The Residual Years (the earlier pamphlet), and War Elegies are reprinted. Poems in section three were selected by Kenneth Rexroth from the three earliest publications: The Masculine Dead, San Joaquin, and These Are The Ravens. As indicated by its reverse chronological structure the volume is intended to show his development as a poet and the direction of his thought.

During 1948 Everson met and later married by common law an ex-Catholic.³ The record of Everson's encounter with this woman, an encounter which he states was crucial to his conversion to Catholicism, is contained in Prodigious Thrust, his unpublished (except for excerpts) autobiography, the writing of which he terminated in 1956. In this work Everson is seen as poet, printer, monastic, and apologist;

but chiefly the book is concerned with the story of Everson's conversion, a narration which is at times disgustingly arrogant in its tone and shallow in its apologetics, but which is at other times powerful and profound, bringing to mind works such as Pascal's Pensees and Augustine's Confessions. Everson's narration of the encounter with the woman who would lead him to his conversion reveals the ambivalent directions--sensuality, puritanism, Eros and Agape, to name some of the extremes--in what Unamuno would describe as a man "of flesh and blood." And as such, though the narration is fraught with contradictions and many tyrannical assertions, when one considers it in terms of Everson's earlier and later development, it is none the less a moving narration of his quest for meaning.

On July 23, 1949, after having completed three months of formal instruction in the parish inquiry class, Everson was baptized at St. Augustine's Church in Oakland, California. In 1950 he began a fourteen month period with the Catholic Worker Movement at Maurin House in Oakland's slums. In 1951 he was received as a donatus, or lay brother without vows, in the Dominican Order. He tried the clerical novitiate in 1954 but left it, and served as a lay brother at St. Albert's College, the Dominican House of Studies in Oakland. In 1957 he re-emerged as a member of the San Francisco Renaissance in the Evergreen Review. Since that time he has given public readings in colleges and universities throughout the United States.

Between The Residual Years (1948) and The Crooked Lines of God (1960) Antoninus published several volumes privately: A Privacy of Speech (1949), thirty-one bound pages of poetry written at Cascade Locks, Oregon in 1946, and the first book printed by Antoninus on the handpress; and Triptych of the Living (1951), his second book from the handpress, twenty-nine bound pages of his first distinctly religious poetry; An Age Insurgent, a twenty page pamphlet, was issued in 1959.

However, after his conversion Everson did not publish anything publicly until 1959, when his first major post-conversion work, The Crooked Lines of God, which he himself designed and printed, was published by the University of Detroit Press. This volume brings together poetry written between 1949 and 1954. Part one of its triune structure reprints Triptych of the Living and includes other poems written at Berkeley in 1949-50. Part two contains poetry written at Maurin House, 1950-51. Part three contains poetry written in the Dominican Order, 1951-54.

Reception by the Critics

Everson's early volumes of poetry were published by little known publishers and did not establish his reputation as a poet to any great extent. The attention of critics has for the most part been limited to The Residual Years, The Crooked Lines of God, and Hazards of Holiness. As early as 1939, however, in his foreword to Everson's San

Joaquin, Lawrence Clark Powell, observing the author's poetic development since These Are The Ravens in 1935, foresaw his possibilities. Drive, anguish, a love of the land, yet a suspicion of regionalism--these according to Powell characterized the author and his verse. He regarded Everson as "a man who was making poems not because it was smart and fashionable to do so, but out of a real aching need." His realization of his indebtedness to other writers, Jeffers in particular, and his desire to forge beyond past achievements Powell applauded as indicative of the seeds of genuine talent. He quotes a letter from Everson in which the author answers his own question of whether to print San Joaquin:

It is necessary to get it down in the clarity and permanence of type: to get it actually behind me: to assemble it as an interval of my life: to leave it behind me so that I can go on untroubled to what there is for me, and seek to develop and mature beyond this book and its problems. It seems so transitory and so young. I think of The Women at Point Sur and the Waste Land and The Ghost in the Underblows, and my daring to write becomes mere impudence.⁴

Although the majority of critics praised The Residual Years, the volume was also met with strong negative reaction. On the affirmative side the San Francisco Chronicle stated that Mr. Everson "meets his inevitabilities positively and

heroically with astonishing mastery over language.⁵

Regionally, Thomas Parkinson of the Pacific Coast Spectator, while seeing flaws in style and a sense of form, stated:

"For all these qualifications, The Residual Years, in its honesty and directness, is a very impressive book."⁶

And, Dudley Fitts of the Saturday Review of Literature also acknowledged what Parkinson calls an "awkward earnestness" in Everson's poetry and further described it as strongly felt poetry with a depth of vision. Of

"Chronicle of Division," the opening section of The Residual Years, Fitts states "there is something much more than the ordinary in the assurance of its psychological probing."⁷

Building on a cumulative effect, though not having a more than elementary feeling for structure, certain of his poems, says Fitts, are "completely integrated and achieved,"⁸

Fitts warns, however, that "his insistent, almost lurid eroticism is apt to betray him . . . into the hands of the leeches."⁹ He concludes his review with, "The Residual Years is germinal, and its proliferation haunts the mind."¹⁰

On the negative side, however, Leslie Fiedler of the Partisan Review saw little to recommend the book. Fiedler regarded Everson as a failure in the emergent movement which Fiedler termed as "neo-Romanticism," which he further states, involves "a restoration to legitimacy of the more dangerous uses of emotion."¹¹ Fiedler observes the printing

of the volume--"a magnificent piece of printing"--and states that it "oddly asserts in typography the form his verse intrinsically denies."¹² Everson's themes, says Fiedler, are: "the scared hatred and veneration of sex, and the queasy fear of violence that rules a new generation as the fear of innocence and gentleness once rode an earlier."¹³ With the exception of one episode in "Chronicle of Division," states Fiedler, Everson's lack of structure and his misuse of feeling combine to make his verse a failure.

In any case, points in which all the critics including Fiedler agree, are that Everson's The Residual Years, whether it be a success or not, has "feeling" as one of its main concerns, and that the author's intention, unlike that of many fellow writers more strictly interested in style, has been to acquire lucidity from life's revelations.

The reaction of critics to The Crooked Lines of God was similar to that of the critics to The Residual Years, although the volume was more widely reviewed. Critics generally agreed that Antoninus' style, however previously influenced, was his own. Rexroth, reviewing the volume as "A Struggle to Prepare for Vision" in the New York Times Book Review states point-blank that Everson was able "to transform Jeffers' noisy rhetoric into genuinely impassioned utterance, his absurd self-dramatizations into real struggle in the depths of the self."¹⁴ Moreover, in the opinion of Rexroth, Everson is "probably the most profoundly moving

and durable of the poets of the San Francisco Renaissance."¹⁵
He states of his style:

His work has a gnarled even tortured, honesty, a rugged
unliterary diction, a relentless probing and searching,
which are not just engaging, but almost overwhelming . .
. . anything less like the verse of the fashionable
quarterlies would be hard to imagine.¹⁶

Thomas McDonnell of The Critic and James Tobin of
Spirit alike hailed Antoninus as a poetic genius, praising
his expression of personal engagement in the Christian way.
McDonnell states of The Crooked Lines of God: "a landmark
in contemporary Christian poetry."¹⁷

An anguished intensity, existential involvement with
Christianity, concreteness, a complete commitment to
communication--these are considered by his favorable critics
to be the traits of Antoninus' poetry. The general commentary
of affirmative criticism is well summarized in Ralph J.
Mills's review in New Mexico Quarterly:

Unlike a majority of the finest modern poems, these are
neither oblique nor essentially symbolic. Instead they
are built up out of tortuous and forthright meditations
on personal experiences . . . on sacred writings of
legends. It is impossible to give an impression of
Brother Antoninus' poetry by quotations, for the real
effect is a cumulative one and, as such, is nearly
overwhelming.¹⁸

There were, however, several major nay-sayers within the span of critics. Rosemary Deen of "Commonweal," for example, in a cleverly written review, praised Antoninus' bluntness in the volume's early poems, but believed him guilty of an insistence on, rather than a creation of, intensity, and further criticized his manner of treating the "problem" of erotic-religious motifs. Having perhaps forgotten that Manichaenism was a heresy, Miss Deen states: "One way of handling the problem is Donne's way, but Brother Antoninus eschews wit for the boldness of naturalism and explicit detail."¹⁹ While Miss Deen saw fault in Antoninus' flowing Eros, James Dickey of Sewanee Review, who felt as if he were "reviewing God," complained of an arid Agape. "Dry sermonizing . . . nearer to being apologetics than poetry," states Dickey, who is struck by "the author's humorless, even owlsh striving after self-knowledge and certitude."²⁰

Critical reactions toward Hazards of Holiness were roughly similar to those critics exhibited toward The Residual Years and The Crooked Lines of God. Antoninus is charged with being crude in style and content, with exhibiting a hatred of sexuality and a hatred of self, and with excessively indulging himself in themes of violence. John Logan, a Catholic poet himself, levels a number of these charges at Antoninus, and further claims that Antoninus' poetry is in parts less experiential than it is

imitative of the poetry of men such as John of the Cross, John Donne, and Gerard Manley Hopkins. Yet none the less, after severe criticism of Hazards of Holiness Logan states:

Yet after all this is said, still for sheer power and for a certain kind of bravery and commitment to art, willing to take risks in language and risks in self-revelation, one can find very little indeed to compare with Brother Antoninus' The Hazards of Holiness. It is a moving book.²¹

Herbert Kenny of The Catholic Reporter, in a review made impressive by the knowledge he exhibits about both art and religion, praises Hazards of Holiness knowledgably, while admitting technical and artistic flaws. Moreover, Kenny sees in Antoninus a mind in tune to certain currents of the time; Kenny asks:

Is it too much for an affectionate laity to hope that the Hazards of Holiness may be the first of a series of personal revelations or dramatic dynamic works from the religious of the United States; that the new freedom that is lending splendor to the ecumenical movement, and the continuing colloquies with non-Catholics may fluoresce into artistic works hitherto unmatched in American Catholicism.²²

Thus, Kenny sees the poetry of Brother Antoninus as differing crucially from previous Catholic poetry in the United States because Antoninus breaks from the parochialism pervading their art.

Robert Creely, who both praised and criticized Hazards of Holiness in Poetry, has thought sufficiently of Antoninus to have later agreed to write an Introduction to a forthcoming collection of Antoninus' poetry titled Single Source.

Antoninus: The Beat Generation and
the Poet-Prophet

In various of his interviews, public appearances, and essays, Brother Antoninus has revealed his opinion concerning the Beat Generation, its relation to the currents of the time, the role of the poet in general, and the role of the religious poet in particular. It is significant that in these encounters with the public he brings forth the concept of the poet-prophet.

Brother Antoninus is deeply concerned with the Beat Generation, not as an outsider, but as one whose past roots were nurtured in similar anarchistic soil; for, as has been mentioned, even after his release from the conscientious objector camp, Everson was in league with Kenneth Rexroth and his anarcho-pacifist group in the San Francisco Bay Region. Opposed to those who see the San Francisco Renaissance as consisting merely of a sensational assemblage of Whitmanian romanticism, Antoninus in a post-conversion essay, "Dionysus and the Beat Generation" (1959), views their outgrowth as the most significant re-emergence of the Dionysian spirit in a painfully Apollonian twentieth

century.²³ At the basis of the movement, he states, is an effort to find a formality-free religion, one which is pure spirit and no letter; this was also his attitude prior to his encounter with Catholicism. The structure, security, and rationality of the institutional world, says Antoninus, are opposed by the visionary's disengagement, ecstasy, and irrationality. "Beat means beatitude" is their negative affirmation. The ineffectiveness of the Apollonian rational enforcement stems, says Antoninus, from deficiencies in the attitude of its collective mind which is to an extent retroactively responsible for the annihilation of the African Negro, and the atom-bombing of the Orientals, offenses which persist as a fear and compulsive guilt in the American unconscious. Reparation demands that the collective mind use means to satisfy the desires of the unconscious in the individual and collective psyche. But the Apollonian, rigid in the letter of civilization, suppresses the ecstatic urge of both reveler and prophet. The beats distinguish themselves from other generations of revolt, he states, by their refusal to establish a counter-institutional world, seeing any form of solidification as compromise to the way of the square.

That the Beat Generation, though dangerously reckless, is an essentially serious movement is evidenced, says Antoninus, by its creation of art which is preoccupied with the real rather than the pseudo. Echoing Hulme he states

that by their deliverance to the depths of the psyche the beats have in some cases managed to liberate art from a fastidious concern with surfaces which has dominated literature since the Renaissance. Though tearing blindly at times, they have exposed the seriousness of the disordered human spirit. The gash in fallen man, he concludes in his essay, cannot be healed by any natural resolution of Apollo and Dionysus. Only a supernatural culture anchored in basic Christian mysticism, the sacraments and collective ritual, and cruxed in the realization of expiation and self-sacrifice inherent in the Christ-immolation, is capable of salving the wounded human soul, which since the Fall has been torn by the conflicting forces of instinct, ego and intuition.

That the above summary reveals the workings of a specifically Catholic mind is undeniable, but Antoninus departs from the conservative faction in his faith by the very fact that he so highly praises a movement the motivating vision of which differs drastically from conservative Catholicism. Biographically the essay is also important in that it marks a crucial change from the opinions Antoninus held during the writing of Prodigious Thrust. In that earlier work he (probably projecting his own feelings of guilt and hatred toward the past) severely criticized the consciences of his anarchistic friends, suppressed his doubts, and often unqualifiedly affirmed

an Absolute. But in "Dionysus and the Beat Generation" a different Antoninus emerges, a man who once again is sensitive to "the human condition," and who, though he believes he has found a Way, is not deaf to those marching to a different drummer.

Related to his perspective of the Beat Generation is Antoninus' view of the poet as prophet. In a transcribed interview printed in the "Catholics and Creativity" edition of The American Benedictine Review, Antoninus states that a basic tension exists in society between the charismatic man and the institutional.²⁴ While the latter must by his nature defend the stable structure of society by proscribing and even persecuting the former until the validity of his invective is clarified, the charismatic man must by his vocation attempt to break through the barrier of the institutional to a new illumination. The rationale of the charismatic is mysteriously rendered inexplicable to the institutional, and vice versa. While the pharisee exists by an egoistic identification with the institutional world, says Antoninus, the charismatic man, mystic or artist, is characterized by a transcendence of ego-limitation. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, when the charismatic man makes his pronouncement he incurs the almost unconscious condemnation and wrath of the institutional order.

Delineating the tensions of an artist in a religious

community Antoninus states his belief that Hopkins in a sense censored himself as a poet. Faced with the conflict between obedience to his superiors and obedience to his own private vision, Hopkins neither totally affirmed his vocation, nor did he let his religious life assimilate it. He let his gift be literally incarcerated by his superiors, whereas the true charismatic person lives to the death his vocation, being as wise as serpents and simple as doves, like Theresa of Avila who instigated her reform outside the knowledge of her superiors. Or one might add, like Chardin, who continued his investigations into evolution despite criticism from his superiors.

Briefly describing the different kinds of artists Antoninus discloses certain biographical preliminaries to his conversion. The Apollonian artist, he states, will do competent work in the colleges, will become an instructor and constantly adapt himself to the institutional way. The charismatics or Dionysians on the other hand are allured to the universities by the promise of understanding unoffered them in the practical world. Refusing to reduce their drive to the teaching formula, they--unless they are hypnotized by some stronger personality--leave. Feeling he had nothing to gain, Everson states that he left Fresno State after attending a semester and became a solitary projecting against the world, having no communication with it, save for his pacifist phase, until his conversion.

The pseudo artist, says Antoninus, is one unwilling to carry his gift to that point "where the art drops away and a superior principle subsumes it."²⁵ The great artist, he states, is marked by his willingness to cancel his art out at this point, knowing his search is for that life beyond art. The artist, however, is not in his art to be a theologian or preacher or function in any category.

To Antoninus the Beat's severance from dialogue with the squares is their fatal flaw, refusing, as they do, to illuminate their explorations of the unconscious to the collective mind, thus frustrating their role of poet as prophet by keeping their illuminations imprisoned in their own egos. A relating with the structured institutional order is necessary, says Antoninus, if the visionary perspective is to have any transforming effects. His conversion, he states, resulted from his charismatic-institutional modality. Dubbed after his conversion as "beat to the square, and square to the beat," Antoninus, acknowledging his sympathy with the Beats, once stated: "I have attempted to reach an equation point between the mystic and the beatnik."²⁶

Crucifixion, Antoninus believes, is inherent in the mission of the charismatic man who, rather than transcending the human tragedy falls ever more deeply into it in order to become a dispenser of grace. To a University of Detroit audience he stated:

I am a prophet, not in Whitman or Merton's vein, for with them their ego gets in their way. They become the pointing finger, not the one who points it . . . The man of genius must recognize that he must be crucified . . . Always interrogated he stands silent before Caiphas and Pilate. When he is crucified, his germ of truth is watered, it is fertilized by his heart's blood. It will grow, because it is uncontaminated with ego . . . My crucifixion stands off there in time and I'm like a man walking toward it in a trance . . . 27

Artists today, Antoninus believes, function as mystics revealing their unique vision of unknown parts of the human psyche to the collective mind. Antoninus states that while the religious artist receptively moves up the ladder of infusion from the practical to the aesthetic and finally to the mystical infusion, his art does not occur on the ascent but on the descent. Partaking of the higher mystical infusion, however, the artist's aesthetic projection, by reason of its overflow, is greater than the mere receptive contemplation. Speaking further on the "overflow," Antoninus states that the paintings of Roualt, whom he considers the epitome of the modern sacred artist, do not communicate; they reveal. There is a connaturality surpassing mere communication, a fusion of the aesthetic and illuminative truth that becomes prophetic.

Antoninus' emphasis on the withdrawal-and-return rhythm of the religious artist differs from Merton's emphasis in his aesthetics, and differs also from Maritain's in The Degrees of Knowledge. If I read correctly, both Merton, the popularizer of ideas on mysticism, and Maritain, the learned scholar of mysticism, emphasize the upward movement of the mystic to the contemplative realm, and not the movement that returns and touches. Toynbee would say, I believe, that they are in a sense more Platonic than Christian, in that they emphasize the Vision of Truth, rather than, as Christ and St. Paul, the relating of this vision to others. One might also add that Antoninus' ideas on the "overflow" of this vision suggest what is implicit in his later religious poetry, the idea--usually taboo to Catholic writers--of continuing revelation, that art can clarify and expand the religious vision we have inherited.

Regarding Everson-Antoninus' position in relation to the movement of the Beat Generation, Kenneth Rexroth sees his conversion to Catholicism as a logical ramification of the religious tendency which is integral to the movement. Of the poetry of the San Francisco Renaissance in general, Rexroth states: "I suppose, in a religious age, it would be called religious poetry, all of it. Today we have to call it anarchism."²⁸ As it manifests itself in the individual, this religious tendency, says Rexroth, will seek something "bigger than yourself." Catholicism is considered

by Rexroth to be one of the:

few ~~organized~~ systems of social attitudes and values which stand outside . . . the all corrupting influence of our predatory civilization . . . Not the stultifying monkey see monkey do [Catholicism] of the slothful urban backwoods middle class parishes . . . but the Church of saints and philosophers--of the worker-priest movement and the French Personalists.²⁹

The obscurantism of American Bishops, a stagnating Baltimore Catechism brainwashing mentality, primitive views on birth control, and a general Augustinian view of man as a depraved animal to be controlled by the divinely instituted Church--all of these are still driving forces in the Catholic Church and give evidence to the fact that a "monkey see monkey do" Catholicism is the rule rather than the exception. The significance of men such as Chardin, Marcel, Unamuno, Graham Greene, and, to a certain extent, the later Antoninus, does not lie in their adherence to the laws and doctrines of Catholicism, for they are generally critical of the letter of the law as such. Instead, they are important because they have not let their religious vision be fixed by their theologians. They did not desire--as many Catholics do--to stamp the consciousnesses of the flock (making them obedient); rather, they desired to expand and deepen their consciousnesses (making them free). The difference, needless to say, is crucial.

NOTES

¹William Everson, "Letters to the Editor," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, LVI (May, 1950), pp. 108-09.

²Will Herber [William Everson], "Notes on Contributors," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, LV (February, 1940).

³"Beat Friar," Time, LXXIII (May 25, 1959), pp. 58-59.

⁴William Everson, San Joaquin (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press, 1939), x.

⁵San Francisco Chronicle (November 7, 1948), 12.

⁶Thomas Parkinson, "Some Recent Pacific Coast Poetry," Pacific Spectator, IV (Summer, 1950), 297-8.

⁷Dudley Fitts, "Subjective Weighing and Writing," Saturday Review of Literature, XXXI (November 20, 1948), 32.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Leslie Fiedler, "Some Uses and Abuses of Feeling," Partisan Review, XV (August, 1948), 924-5.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Kenneth Rexroth, "A Struggle to Prepare for Vision," New York Times Book Review (March 27, 1960), 10.

¹⁵Kenneth Rexroth, "San Francisco Letter," Evergreen Review, I (1947), 8-9.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Thomas McDonnell, "A Review of Brother Antoninus' The Crooked Lines of God and Selected Poems by Thomas Merton," The Critic (April-May, 1960), 30.

¹⁸Ralph J. Mills, New Mexico Quarterly (Summer, 1960), 199-200.

¹⁹Rosemary Deen, "Poetry of Conversion and the Religious Life," Commonweal (March 11, 1960), 656.

²⁰James Dickey, "On Detecting the Suspect in Poetry," Sewanee Review, IXVIII (Autumn, 1960), 669.

²¹John Logan, The Critic, XXI, (April-May, 1963), 85-86.

²²Herbert Kenny, "The hazards of religious poetry: a shocking book," The Catholic Reporter, Kansas City, Mo. (September 21, 1962).

²³Brother Antoninus, "Dionysus and the Beat Generation," Fresco, IX (Summer, 1959), 2-9.

²⁴Brother Antoninus, "The Artist and Religious Life," The American Benedictine Review, II (1960), 223-38. To show Antoninus' later reaction to my summary of his comments on Hopkins in "The Artist and Religious Life," I have included his marginal note. "The tone implies greater condemnation than I indicated. I find this painful." p. 16. M. A. thesis.

²⁵Ibid., 233-34.

²⁶"Brother's No Beatnik," The Detroit Times (April 16, 1959).

²⁷This quotation was taken from the written files of Steven Eisner, editor of the University of Detroit Press. Eisner wrote down what has been quoted while he attended one of Antoninus' appearances in Detroit. Eisner states that while the statement is not verbatim, it is still essentially accurate. The following is Antoninus' marginal comment on my thesis: "I could only have been thinking of Merton's apocalypse poems excoriating New York, poems he left out of his Selected Poems. I don't know what aspect of Whitman I had in mind." p. 18.

²⁸Kenneth Rexroth, "San Francisco Letter," Evergreen Review, I (1957), 9.

²⁹Ibid., 8.

CHAPTER II

THE RESIDUAL YEARS: A QUEST

The Residual Years, published in 1948, is a synthesis of various earlier collections of Everson's poetry. The dates at which the poems were written range from 1934 to 1946. As the author apprises us in his introduction, the earliest of the poems was written in a labor camp for the unemployed in the aftermath of the depression, and the latest in a camp for conscientious objectors in the aftermath of World War II. The entire volume is a diary-like account of Everson's quest for meaning, a search which moves through stages of participation mystique, pantheism, pacifism, and the idealization of conjugality. As he moves through these various views of reality, however, Everson never totally negates his former affiliations. His veneration for nature, the life drive, and eros never ceases, even when these individually are seen as incapable of completing him.

Everson's personal view of meaning changes as he continually strives to move beyond present chaos in order to find a future stability. As his view of meaning changes, one can note his increasing concern with the problem of human

imperfection and limitation. This concern with imperfection we will see is connected with his earlier poetry in These Are The Ravens and The Masculine Dead, both of which in part dealt with the theme of Thanatos and the tension between Eros, the life drive, and Thanatos, the desire for death, or for the fixity of death. This tension, which Freud discusses in terms of the Pleasure Principle and the Reality Principle, is in great part responsible, states Freud, for one's attitude toward the fixed structures, the institutions, of which civilization is comprised. This tension is clearly evident in Everson's work from These Are The Ravens through Hazards of Holiness. His "charismatic-institutional modality" is his later approach to the problem. However, his quest in The Residual Years does not arrive at a solution; instead, it ends with the determination to attempt self-transformation by an acceptance and confrontation of imperfection, which, he has discovered, is integral to existence.

Everson's comments in the introduction to The Residual Years reveals explicitly that he considers it a record of his search for insight into the significance of life. He states of the movement of the volume:

The development, if it is related to mankind, may be seen in the gradual realization of man as a conscious being, who learns to perceive a sequence in the episodic welter of his past, drawing as it lengthens a continuity at once purposive and obscure, the disparity between expectation and fulfillment forever

yielding the impact of joy and anguish which, for me, establishes so profoundly the meaning of life as revelation.¹

Thus, having ascertained that the poet sees life as gradually yielding its revelations, the purpose of this chapter is to trace the significance of certain predominant ideas in The Residual Years. These concepts are: first, the meaning of nature; secondly, man as a creature of evolution; thirdly, eros and its relationship to perception; fourthly, Everson's changing views of meaning; and fifthly, evil or imperfection as a constituent of Everson's conception of meaning. We may also keep in mind the fact that, although Everson after his conversion may be hesitant to state it bluntly, he none the less sees his poetry as "revelation" still, as an amendment or addition, depending on one's point of view, to our heritage of religious vision.

The Meaning of Nature

Regarding the first topic--the metamorphosis of Everson's idea of nature--though Everson himself in a later essay, "A Tribute to Robinson Jeffers," states that a consequence of his encounter with the poetry of Robinson Jeffers in 1934 was an abandonment of the agnosticism he had inherited from his father and a conversion to Jeffersian pantheism, the substance of this "pantheism" in his nature poetry must be qualified. It is not an intellectualized pantheism, one that is rationally rendered or philosophically explained. Rather, it is one in which the poet "feels" more

than thinks; there is an intuitive relationship in which the poet is mystically at one with nature. Thus, the majority of his nature poems are impressionistic rather than descriptive or discursive. And, following from this non-rational approach, there is not an intense concern for complexities of style as such. The structure of most of Everson's nature poetry is simple: first and least important, a scene is briefly described; secondly and most important, the poet's impression of the scene is given. Though this part of the paper is concerned primarily with the intellectual rather than the stylistic development of the poet, the structure of certain poems will be briefly noted.

Everson's early relationship to nature can be described as approximating primitivism. By primitivism here is meant a feeling of oneness with nature, and a feeling that one is not distinct from, but participates in nature's cycles. In "San Joaquin," for example, the poet sees himself as emanating from nature.

I in the vineyard, in green-time and dead-time, come
to it dearly,
And take nature neither freaked nor amazing,
But the secret shining, the soft indeterminate
wonder.

I watch it morning and noon, the unutterable sundowns;
And love as the leaf does the bough.²

This oneness of man with nature is expanded also to a

belief in the substantial homogeneity of all living beings, a theme implicit in "The Roots." Not only is the poet a part of past living beings, but his very words are fashioned by their experiences.

England: gaunt raiders up from the narrow sea;
 In the dark of the ridges,
 Broken under the waves of conquest,
 The shattered tribes;
 Those gazers out of the stricken eyes,
 Under the spell of that moody country,
 Shaping the sounds: from the ruinous mouths,
 The core of existence caught on the tongue,
 And the words fashioned.³

Moreover, there are blood ties between the past race and the present poet.

They are lost in the years of that unknown time,
 But the single rhythm of the ancient blood
 Remembers the anguish, the hate and desire;
 The lips shape a word and it breaks into being
 Struck by the wind of ten thousand years.

And I, not English, in a level valley of the last
great west,
 Watch from a room in the solstice weather,
 And feel back of me trial and error,
 The blunt sounds forming,
 The importunate utterance of millions of men

Surge up for my ears,

The shape and color of all awareness

Sung for my mind in the gust of their words.⁴

The blood imagery in "The Roots," allied as it is to the race, "the single rhythm of the ancient blood," conveys what Levy-Bruhl calls the primitivistic notion that blood is the common bond uniting all living beings. This blood image also occurs in "Feast Day," a poem celebrating what Everson in his introduction to The Residual Years calls the "religiousness of nature." The inclusion of bread-wine sacramental imagery intensifies the religious aspect of this theme:

. . . this house in the vineyard

Under the height of the great tree

Loosing its leaves on the autumn air.

East lie the mountains;

Level and smooth lie the fields of vines.

Now on this day in the slope of the year,

Over the wine and the sheaf of grain

We shape our hands to the sign, the symbol,

Aware of the room, the sun in the sky,

The earnest immaculate rhythm of our blood . . .⁵

Recognition by the poet of nature's religiousness results in his mystical intercourse with it, a theme expressed in "August." The poem is quoted in its entirety because it exhibits the simple scene-impression structure of most of

Everson's nature poetry. Moreover, the last two lines reflect the poet's intuitive rather than rational relationship with nature.

Smoke color:

Haze thinly over the hills, low hanging,
But the sky steel, the sky shiny as steel, and the
sun shouting.

The vineyard: in August the green-deep and heat-
loving vines

Without motion grow heavy with grapes.

And he in the shining, on the turned earth, loose-
lying,

The muscles clean and the limbs golden, turns to
the sun the lips and the eyes;

As the virgin yields, impersonally passionate,
From the bone core and the aching flesh, the offering..

He has found the power and come to the glory.

He has turned clean-hearted to the last god, the
symbolic sun.

With earth on his hands, bearing shoulder and arm the
light's touch, he has come.

And having seen, the mind loosens, the nerve lengthens,
All the haunting abstractions slip free and are gone;
And the peace is enormous.⁶

Before pursuing the poet's intellectual development, we may observe that the imagery of the above quoted poems:

"San Joaquin," "The Roots," "Feast Day," and "August," is extremely elemental. The sun, the sky, vines, grain, blood--these constitute the greater part of Everson's imagery. There is not in these poems the attempt to be either sophisticated or profound; the poet's aim is but to give an impression of the nature he reverences.

The above-mentioned poems are also alike in that each celebrates a definite sense of union with living nature. And the vitality of this nature is for the time being unshaken by the war and peace of humanity. This theme is expressed in "These Have The Future," a poem in which the vines are symbolic of nature's permanent and stable life-force.

The towns will be altered, roads break,
The rivers shift in the grooves of their beds,
All through the valley the subtle and violent forms
of transition
Work to their ends, but the vineyards thrive,
Come time and war and the links of quiet,
As now to the eyes of the low winter light
They yield the good presence of peace.⁷

However, the poet begins to perceive that the ways of nature are ambiguous, and in certain poems, "Walls" for example, he expresses concern over nature's inscrutabilities. The mountains in "Walls" are symbolic of a vague meaning which is not contained in nature and which eludes man.

East, the shut sky:

Those walls of the mountains hold sunrise and wind
under their backs.

If you tread all day vineyard or orchard,
Or move in the weather on the brimming ditch,
Or throw grain, or scythe it down in the early heat,
Taken by flatness, your eye loving the long stretch
and the good level,

You cannot shake it, the feeling of mountains, deep
in the haze and over the cities,
The mass, the piled strength and tumultuous thunder
of the peaks.

They are beyond us forever, in fog or storm or the
flood of the sun,
Back of this valley like an ancient dream in a man's
mind,

That he cannot forget, nor hardly remember,

But it sleeps at the roots of his sight.⁸

Thus, the "feeling of mountains," that "they are beyond us forever," suggests that nature does not completely satiate, that further goals exist. This feeling of unsatisfaction also occurs in "Fog," a poem in which the poet reveals the fact that, for the time being, his heart-based intuitive bond with nature has been broken, although his empirically oriented eye and rational mind are still operative in nature's fog.

Perceiving outside the borders of pain

Disaster draw over:

The mark of the pinch of the coming months.

There was above us the sheet of darkness . . .

.

And it rode us, blown in on the wind,

Above and beyond and the east closed under;

It let down the ruin of rain.¹¹

The poet's strongest assertion of man's split with nature, however, occurs in part two of The Residual Years, in the poem "Lava Bed." As the title indicates, the poet can no longer lie with his mistress nature; unlike the animals, his probings cannot reach her core. He states:

Fisted, bitten by blizzards,

Flattened by wind and chewed by all weather

The lava bed lay.

Deer fashioned trails there but no man, ever:

And the fugitive cougars whelped in that lair.

Deep in its waste the buzzards went down to some

innominate kill.

The sun fell in it,

And took the whole west down as it died.

Dense as the sea,

Entrenched in its years of unyielding rebuff,

It held to its own.

We looked in against anger,

Beholding that which our cunning had never subdued,
Our power indented,
And only our eyes had traversed.¹²

Thus, nature is no longer considered the plenum of reality; and from part two on, nature becomes more and more symbolic to the poet. He has grown out of his earlier uncontrived intuitive participation in nature, and now sees nature in terms of a larger design within which the self is placed. The poet is no longer merely interested in giving his impression of nature, but in finding meaning for himself in a world in which nature is but a part. Logically, his search for meaning now becomes more intellectual than it had been previously. That this shift in perspective does not, however, exclude nature entirely is observable in the summarical poem of part two, "Invocation." In this poem the poet asks that his thirtieth year yield him fruition, and he sees nature's fruitions as symbolic of that he desires to attain.

I aimlessly wander,
And everywhere that my chance eye falls
Behold in the multiforms of life
Your summer fulfillment:
The sap-swollen grape and the peach in its prime;
The melons fat in their August fullness;
Even the shy and outcast weeds,
The fugitives of the summer ditches,

Strew their teem for the wind's hazard,
 And the quail are grown,
 And the blackbird,
 All his lucky brood,
 Replete in their prime.
 These in such fortune
 Shine with the flush of your rich excess--
 The inexhaustible plenty,
 Poured stintless out of spring's fructification.
 Such am I seeking.¹³

Nature as symbol is most clearly seen in section five of "Chronicle of Division." Still in the conscientious objector camp, his marriage broken, and unsatisfied with his present vision, the meaning of his life eludes him, save that he can progress only by encountering imperfection. He, like Whitman and Arnold, to whom he intentionally alludes--note the "solitary self" and the shingle imagery--stands on the shore and observes the "ebb and flow of human misery."¹⁴ The sea is symbolic of the race, its strivings and failures; and of time itself, in whose continuum the individual, like "The footprint on the wet shingle" is "Easily erased." However, the sea also is a symbol of the self, into which the individual must "Dip down, dip down" in order to find whether bedrock exists.

There mumbles the sea.

(Dip down, dip down)

There mumbles the sea,
 But a mnemonic speech that never comes clear.
 And the solitary self
 Broods on its track,
 The footprint on the wet shingle,
 Easily erased . . .

.
 The lurch rhythm and the dull beat
 Tramp out the pace of the blood's scansion.
 The dead warriors of all the past,
 In a ragged surge at the raw future,
 Plunge and fall back.¹⁵

Thus, from an intuitive and mystical union with nature which was impressionistically expressed in his poetry, Everson, scrutinizing nature's mysteries and its impregnability to man's penetrations, has evolved to a stage in which nature is not regarded as the whole of reality, but as symbolic of some ambiguous larger reality which the "solitary self" must discover.

Evolving Man

The second topic to be considered in this chapter is that of Everson's view of man as a creature evolving out of past conditions and limitations. Before tracing Everson's expression of this idea, it would be well to note that images of emergence and growth, such as flowers, seeds, and roots, are frequent in Everson's poetry. Evolution

as a theme does occur in part three, but its most elaborate expression takes place in part two. In general, the poet sees man as having evolved from an animal state. Primitive man, of course, was closer to bestiality than is man presently. Everson admires the instinctual vitality of primitive man, but he does not believe in returning to a state of noble savagery; instead, he favors man's painful groping toward further levels. The higher the stage achieved, according to Everson, the greater man's veneration for life. In part one, Everson's concern is more for the evolution of self than of man in general, although the latter is implicitly contained in the former.¹⁶

We have already seen in "The Roots" in part three that Everson conceives of the past race, "The shattered tribes; Those gazers out of the stricken eyes," as shaping the words of the poet, pushing through his lips their racial revelation. However, as Everson views man, man not only wishes to speak the knowledge of the past, but his very efforts at completion become efforts mystically representative of the former gropings of the race--a theme expressed in "Orion." In this poem the poet strongly stresses the effect of the past on the present. His present erotic drive is viewed as a manifestation of a similar drive for satiation which moved the past race.

We, come at the dead of night
To the stale air of a drab room

High on the edge of an empty street,
Feel under the wind of our own compulsion
Those seekers before in the drained ages,
Daring the dark, daring discovery in the shut rooms,
Secretly meeting at river's edge under scant stars.
They sought and were lucky and achieved fulfillment;
They hung at last on the old fury,
And ground with their loins,
And lay sprawling and nude with their hearts bursting,
Their emptied flesh,
The spent mouths gasping against the dark.
They pound in our limbs at the clenched future.
They drive us above them, beating us up from that
dead time,
Thrusting us up to this hanging room,
This toppling night, this act of their need
Forming again from the sunken ages.¹⁷

This unhidden sensuality is less an attempt to be sensational than it is a reflection of the poet's attitude towards an earlier, more primitive existence. The fierceness and vitality of the primitive in "Lines For The Last Of a Gold Town," is juxtaposed with that of modern order and in some ways found more favorable. In the poem the poet observes the effect of time on the courthouse in which Murietta, a Mexican-born bandit of the early West, had been condemned, and the poet hears sounds of the

vitality of the past.

There can be heard over the earth,
Running in deep and vibrant gusts, the broken music;
Blowing, the reverberation of uttered sound,
Of bawd's talk and the squaw's talk and the male-
throated laughter,
Primal and harsh and brutally intense.

The mind's eye fashions the picture: glare on the
night and the shacks crowded,
The congestion of flesh, of reeking animal flesh;
blood burning, nerves blazing.

And one turns to the years,
Through the soft disintegration, thinking:
Where are the seekers and where are the whores?
What has come of the roaring, the lewd language,
the riotous lusts and the acts?--

Here, where are only slow trees and the grass,
And this empty hulk and symbol of an order jeered at,
Spat at, hooted and scorned in the days of its birth.¹⁸

Thus, the poet looks favorably upon a past primitivism which the present lacks.

This primitivism is viewed from a different standpoint by Everson in part two, however, as for example in the poem, "The Outlaw." The killed outlaw is regarded as a man who never knew

. . . that what brought him such bounty

For yet in my blood are Leif the Lucky,
And Thald, and Snorre, and that fierce
old man
Who fought all day in the walls,
Going down at last with his throat
pierced,
His great beard bloody and stiff.
There are the stunned eyes and the
gibbering mouths,
Those who endured crazy with hate,
And who bore in their loins the warped
seed
That never forgot.

I, the living heir of the bloodiest men
of all Europe;
And the knowledge of past tears through
my flesh;
I flinch in the guilt of what I am . . . 20

This tie with animality is not restricted to the past race, however, but also includes present forms of animal life. In "The Hare: An Earlier Episode," for example, the poet recalls the time when he slew a hare and felt empathy with it as it died, an empathy not merely emotional but anchored in the realization of their common animal matrix. The poet sees "My torn flesh and my splintered bone / Tangled with his."²¹

The race itself is expressed as emerging through bestiality toward higher stages. This growth, moreover, is nourished by traits specifically human. As the poet states in "Now In These Days:"

We know only by love,
By the act of contrition,
By the humble dreamers of all lands
Enduring misery and hurt and holding
no hate,

Can the agonized race

Climb up the steeps to the last levels.²²

Thus, although the poet admired past fierceness in "Lines For The Last Of A Gold Town," and saw himself related to it in "The Vow," he yet realizes that love, contrition, and humility, traits humanitarian rather than bestial, are the catalysts of evolutionary progress.

However, the fact of progress in the evolutionary continuum does not isolate modern man, who is on a higher

level, from primitive man on his lower level. In his striving for truth man is genetically enforced and stimulated by the past, and in fact becomes a representative of the past race. This theme is expressed in "Do You Not Doubt," a poem in which the poet determines to fight "wedging fate."

And though the spectacular agitation
of pain

Quench you at last,
Be yet prepared to use as you can
The augmentation and heritage of the
race,
The continuity of mind beyond mind
Grappling with truth,
As if all who have hammered against
the dark
Beat from your brow.²³

In "Invocation" several aspects of the evolution theme converge: the personal soul's evolution, its relationship with animality, and the emergence of the race itself. Regarding the individual soul, the poet considers his past experiences as revolving peripherally about some yet untouched core, which core stimulates his drive for meaning.

The soul that sleeps in the definite
frame
Has hardly been limned.

Only the skimming surface storms have
 blundered about it,
 While the howling heart swept on its
 dance.²⁴

Delineating his belief in the soul's evolution through
 more primitive forms of existence, the poet states:

Was I not fish?
 In the windless womb,
 In the Wilderness,
 Was I not frog?
 Turned I not in the turtle's torsion?
 Crept I not in the snail's span?
 I hold at the heart,
 At the timeless center,
 All features,
 All forms . . .²⁵

In this same poem the poet also states that by compassion
 for the agony in the lives of others, and by the insight
 gleaned from compassion, one can, realizing the need of the
 human person for attainment, propel the furtherance of
 the race.

Thus of the pity its further perception:
 The spirit cleansed,
 The ego chastened,
 The bawling senses hushed in the fury of
 their animal roar.

The multitudes in their terrible might
Grope up the levels of evolution,
And locked in the self the extensional
conflict,

As the emergent soul,
Clotted and clogged in the hampering
frame,

Stares out in its need,
And perceives that there,
In the partial attainment,
Can the great toll and wastage of the
past

Be somewhat redeemed.²⁶

It is significant that at this period in his life (in "Invocation" Everson states he is entering into his thirtieth year.) Everson's view of meaning, however noble, is nonetheless quite general, consisting chiefly in a veneration for life and his desire that the soul and the race emerge to higher and purer states. Though the substance of these higher states is ambiguous, his desire to emerge is yet more specific and concrete than his earlier broad reverence for nature. The approach of the war broke the poet's feeling of fulfillment in nature and forced him to consider the dilemma of man. It is also significant that in "Sea," the chronologically last of the poems, the poet, having lived through the war to a time of peace, has

narrowed his focus even more from the race to the self. However, even in this poem, the poet parallels his personal conquests and failures with those of the race, "The dead warriors of all the past," who, like the sea, "In a ragged surge at the raw future, / Plunge and fall back."

Thus, racial evolution never leaves the mind of the author of The Residual Years, but his perspective moves further from a consideration of mankind to center on the self. Thus far in our study we can observe a pattern: in part three, the chief concern was nature; in part two the poet focused on man; and in part one the poet has converged even further to the self. Everson added "because at the very moment I was drafted the marital problem erupted and forced reflection on the self even though life in the camp was crying out for social and political action."²⁷

Eros and Perception

The individual, like the race, strives for fulfillment, and this effort in Everson's poetry is manifested chiefly in the erotic act--the third topic to be studied in The Residual Years. However, the sexual act, though it is often described in sensual detail in Everson's poetry, does not seek satisfaction in itself, but in something beyond itself. This something, by the way, never becomes clear to Everson in The Residual Years. However, Everson believed that by entering the irrational darkness of the erotic act, one can come to see, to perceive; in its night is

Here in the room the streams of compulsion
Have formed in the rhythm of these gathering
loins,
And feeling behind them the tides of all
being-- . . .

.

They suck into union,

A part in the torrent of those shattering

stars,

And time and space a waveless sea . . .28

This seed of the earth,
This seed of the hungering flesh
Drives in the growth of the dark.²⁹

In part two in "The Divers," the poet describes a widower's past life with his wife in terms of their delving into the erotic current together, and rising purified, nourished and enlightened.

In love they lived,
But like deep-dredging divers,
Who trudgen down to obliterate depths,
And yet rise unto air,
By air sustained;
So these in their concourse
Followed the under-towing torrent
To the deep dark of such descent,
And yet rose up,
Rose up renewed,
To sight sea dapple,
Its living light,
And gulp the good air.³⁰

In "Weeds" man's erotic actions are clearly close to earth. A soldier and his lover leave a meadow where they have stayed all night, "Bearing mallow, dock, / The odor of weed and in the weed stain, / And the harsh print of the earth."³¹ This animal closeness to earth in "The Brother" is manifested in a compulsive urge:

Caught in a tuggage she could not
control,

She could not contain . . .

She crept to the brother's bed.³²

But in "The Friends" the urge is clearly balanced by free and rational decision:

They endured no regression
 Who knew that even in this,
 The tidal dark, the volcanic night,
 The rash eruptive rush of the blood,
 The discriminative mind makes its
 choices.³³

And in "The Presence" one sees the ability of eros to break through the ego's fixity, its "modes of arrest" and "taut adjustments," strictures which Freud would consider as sublimations of thanatos in the self. By thanatos is meant the self's desire, if not for death itself, for the womb-like state of death, ordered and secure, in which there is no consciousness of unfulfilled desire, the cause of pain. The ego, according to Freud, is constructed for the purposes of self-preservation and self order, and its norms are projections of this desire for order. In "The Presence" this order (instigated by thanatos) is destroyed by the force of eros: "The shape stoops in the mind, hairy and thick; / And the norms vanish." Yet, ironically, however brutal the power of eros, what it can lead to--according to the mind of the poet at this time--is the only thing that can even approximate a meaningful human encounter with death.³⁴

They will be used;
 And bleeding will find it thin comfort
 to know
 That what they went down to is greater
 than they had ever feared;
 Than they dreamed . . .
 As great almost as that which watches
 the bone,
 And puts out the eyes,
 And blackens in time the faces.³⁵

In "Though Lying With Woman," perhaps the most overtly sensual of Everson's poems, the poet outlines a number of sensual excesses, then states that the lunge of the senses should spring toward something beyond themselves.

Though lying with woman
 Taking deep joy from her rich knees,
 Or threshing that dream in the lonely
 circle of masturbation,
 Or seeking it locked in a boy's limbs,
 Though lurching with wine,
 Though craftily teasing the beggared
 tongue,
 Though dazzling with speed the wide
 and staring flowers of sight,
 Be sure that over those eyes,
 Back of that brain . . .

.

Be sure that your joy breeds from a
 beauty

Existent beyond it and out of its reach.³⁶

However, it is significant that though Everson will expound this theme several times--"Be sure that your joy breeds from a beauty / Existent beyond it and out of its reach"--he experientially still remains attached to eros until part one of The Residual Years.

"Lay I In The Night" is a key poem in part two; in it the poet parallels his fruition to nature's, and his fruition is seen as existing both in instinct and thought, which manifest themselves in eros and poetry.

Thought I of those wide and winter-
 soaked fields

Verging on Spring,
 Their mushrooms rising into the rain,
 Bearing leaves, sticks,
 Loose crumbs of earth on their table-
 tops,
 Their stumps soft and brutal with life.

Thought then: I also lean of the verge,
 My young time pouring across me,
 Flesh violent with love,
 Brain coiling and breeding these
 germinal poems,

All my power and all my need

Bursting me into the full of my life.³⁷

"Lay I In The Night" is also a poem of determination; the poet, facing the future, wishes to go beyond rationality and sensuality, "Feeding my brain and my drinking nerves." What the poet must encounter in order to go beyond is imaged in the sea, its tide and current. The sea is a constant symbol of the unknown to the poet, and it is by going through the tide that the poet is able to be enlightened. In other words, in order to find some stable fixity, he must constantly face the world of flux.

. . . let me turn to the tide of this
forming time,
Dredging beneath the blind surf of
events

For the stone levels I know are there.³⁸

Once order is found in the world of chaos, Everson asks that he be enlightened to the limit of his capacity:

Built on such a base,
Let consciousness load through the
gates of my mind
All that my being can bear.³⁹

Eros plays an important role in part one of The Residual Years. The autobiographical narrative is concerned mainly with the poet's experience with his wife: her infidelity, their split, his seeing that the broken union

of love is another loss which he must live through. In the first sequence of "Chronicle of Division," the poet questions the body's need for social contact:

But the body itself,
Though it turns and cavorts,
And schools forever to the avid throng,
Does it not tire?

Will it not also
Some subsequent day,
Aware of stillness and peace,
Be glad to be wholly alone?⁴⁰

However, this mood is brief, and the poet states immediately afterwards: "The man struck from the woman-- / That is the crime."⁴¹ The love union is thus still considered to be the highest possible consummation.

It is when he receives a letter from his wife, informing him of her infidelity, that the poet realizes the limitations of his former union with her:

The man, gazing into her eyes,
Is unable to see the continents
 sunken behind her sight,
The whole regions of being
His limited presence can never
 disclose.⁴²

The poet considers his past love as a stage in his life which painfully bore him its insight.

He could only behold,
 And learn of its presence
 What soft revelation life can
 make clear.⁴³

He does, however, meet his wife again, but after intercourse is given to know without doubt that she is not his.

. . . after the body has had its word
 What then of the heart,
 That had not spoken?
 What of the mind?

 What of the eye,
 That looks in her own,
 And sees in its orb another's face?⁴⁴

Now the sea, the unknown, like Whitman's "dark mother" assumes a bestial aspect to the poet. He desires to receive consolation by meditating on the sea:

He will drink through the mortal means
 of his sight

The lain sea,
 Like a beast in its smoulder.⁴⁵

However, the poet is able to stifle his bitterness until letters from his wife lessen, at which time it bursts forth: "Oh, bitch and bastard! Clasp in your coupled rub and make mad!"⁴⁶ The letter of rejection thereby remains in possession of the poet. At the chronological end of

the narrative, as the poet watches the tide of the sea, a new letter becomes a mark of loss and a symbol of the limitation which he now, in his most anguished state, decides to accept.

Thus, the implicit realization that eros must reach for something beyond itself becomes factual experience to the poet by his relationship with his wife. Though eros does not sate, however, it does school and point to a further completion, a completion never clarified in The Residual Years; for, as has been mentioned earlier, there is not a disentanglement of the poet's knotted quest, but instead a resignation to the fact that imperfection underlies the total milieu of human experience.

Thanatos

There is in the earliest of Everson's poems the struggle or tension between eros and thanatos. Perhaps it is the crucial tension not only in his early poetry but also in his post-conversion works. The life drive and death wish which so early concerned him are also his concerns in Hazards of Holiness, transmuted though they be into terms of being and nothingness. In a letter he states:

The early These are the Ravens was really a Thanatos preoccupation. Eros delivered me from that and then the war threatened Eros . . . You did not grasp the interior crisis that the war brought on, and which

I have seen only in retrospect: the threat of death to Eros. It all broke open, like a burst boil, in The Masculine Dead. After that, after that terrible Thanatos statement, I could accept what was coming with more serenity, and go on to the better poems, and to conscription itself. But it was the Thanatos theme that underlay it all.⁴⁷

We can see a haunting expression of the thanatos theme in the poem "These are the Ravens:"

These are the ravens of my soul,
Sloping above the lonely fields
And cawing, cawing.

I have released them now
And sent them wavering down the sky
Learning the slow witchery of the wind,
And crying on the farthest fences of the world.

His expression of this theme in The Masculine Dead is heightened by the fact that he literally lived the theme of thanatos. In a letter to Allan Campo he says "I had a vasectomy and no children, and in that kind of thing I was cutting myself off at the roots. Life denying, no matter how much I said I was life celebrating."⁴⁸ This biographical fact is seen in The Masculine Dead in the lines:

They stir in the dark,
Their blind hunger aching for life.
I have closed the door, severed the cord.
Let them dream in their darkness forever.⁴⁹

The eros-thanatos tension is evident in all three sections of The Residual Years; in Part Three, in "Muscat pruning," the poet says, reminding the reader of Frost, "I have a hundred vines to cut before the dark"; and in "Orion" the conflict is seen more intensely as a kind of creative tension:

Sleep, flesh; dream deeply you nerves.
 The storms of the north are over Alaska.
 The seed of the earth,
 The seed of the hungering flesh,
 Drives in the growth of the dark.⁵⁰

In part Two we can see an ironic foreshadowing of events to come in the life of the poet. In "The Hare: An Earlier Episode," a poem expressing Everson's veneration for life, we see him paralleling his own mortality with the death of the hare he has killed, and we see that he regards the death of the hare as the death of his own animal self, of his own life drive, of eros within him. In Freudian terms, the Reality Principle now begins to operate; Everson sees somewhat more clearly the limitations of Eros.

My torn flesh and my splintered bone
 Tangled with his.
 Against the impossible fact of
 redemption,
 (No act undone,
 The hare mewling and jerking

Down time from now on)
 I draw all my strength,
 And wear as I can the measure of pity,
 The meed of forbearance,
 And the temperance fathered of guilt.⁵¹

This foreshadows Everson's Christian themes. Later he will see St. Paul being thrust from his horse prior to his conversion as symbolic of the spent libido. And his present dogmatic stance--"the impossible fact of redemption"--will be transferred to another dogmatic view later in Prodigious Thrust. This view of the self's limitation as seen in the poem above becomes even more acute in Part One of The Residual Years, in which the poet's problems converge and incite his realization of "The self's knowledge in the self's lack, / And the riddle of error." Thus, another dimension is added to Everson's view of meaning at the end of the "Sea" section. Neither his participation mystique, his marriage, and his pacifism--all expressions, in a sense, of eros, nor his anarchism and his masculine quest for meaning--qualified expressions of thanatos, had proved sufficient. And thus, at the chronological end of The Residual Years we see Everson having tempered his views of both eros and thanatos, and, perhaps, psychologically disposed for what would appear as a new synthesis of the two in the religion to which he converted.

Everson's Changing View of "Meaning"

The fifth major topic to be considered, Everson's view of "meaning," has of course been partially covered in the earlier discussions of nature, evolving man, eros and perception, and thanatos. As might be gleaned from the discussion of nature, when Everson was most intensely in his pantheistic-primitivistic stage, meaning accrued from the intuitive and mystical participation of man in nature. It was not a philosophical or contrived world view in that the poet was not in his mind split from the world, and thus did not take a reflective attitude toward it. And in general, the poetry in part three is concerned with meaning only indirectly. However, there do exist poems in the third part which express Everson's uneasiness when comparing his own life with those more heroic; there is also in part three a touch of Americanism, and most pronounced, a strong sense of racial affiliation with the past. This affiliation, expressed chiefly in "The Roots," and "Orion," has already been touched upon in the discussion of man as an evolutionary creature. The Americanism in "These Have The Future" is not of the ultra-democratic-America is the greatest poem--Whitman type; nor is it that reverse admiration-by-disparagement type expounded by Ginsberg. It is not driven by a strong sense of nationalism, but by Everson's belief that the American scene is displacing the

European. Everson states in "These Have The Future,"

So sleep the vines, as the vineyards

of Europe,

Feeling back of them hundreds of

years

The intervals of silence dividing

the wars,

Now gather their strength in the

cold weight of winter

Against a new Spring.

They have the past but these have

the future.⁵²

Like Emerson and Whitman, Everson looks ahead to a future poet who will sing of the American landscape:

In the long time hence,

When those tides of the future have

formed and gone down,

Some poet born to the voice and the

music

Will live in this land, it will sound

in his verse,

And waken the sight of the men of his

time

Who before had no eyes but for splendor.⁵³

In "The Illusion" meaning is expressed in the poet's view that his life in comparison with others is slothful

and undemanding. Significantly, the heroic encounter of others, as Everson views it, has a definite tone of savagery about it.

Think of the torn mouths begging
 release down the years;
 Sit in your peace, drinking your ease
 in a quiet room,
 Soft in your dreams--and the men falling.

 You rest in your peace,
 They pitch and go down with the blood on
 their lips,
 With the blood on the broken curve of
 their throats,
 With their eyes begging.⁵⁴

In part two of The Residual Years meaning is expressed chiefly in the erotic relationship and the poet's veneration for life, which veneration, occurring parallel to the outbreak of World War II, is personally concretized in Everson's pacifism. The tension between eros and thanatos has been discussed above, so the primary concern of this study of the poet's idea of meaning as it occurs in part two of The Residual Years will be Everson's pacifism. His pacifism is a logical ramification of his feeling an affinity with life in general, a theme expressed in "The Hare," and "Invocation"; and it also follows from his

sense of guilt accruing from the violence of his Viking ancestors, a theme asserted in "The Vow." In this latter poem Everson states:

I, the living heir of the bloodiest
 men of all Europe;
 And the knowledge of past tears
 through my flesh;
 I flinch in the guilt of what I am . . .

 And I vow not to wantonly ever take life;
 Not in pleasure or sport,
 Nor in hate,
 Nor in the careless acts of my strength
 Level beetle or beast;⁵⁵

The poet also vows to expiate for offenses of his past. Everson seldom mentions sin, perhaps for fear lest it be associated with orthodox conceptions, but he does have an innate sense of human error for which man is responsible.

And seek to atone in my own soul
 What was poured from my past;
 And bear its pain.⁵⁶

"The Vow," reveals that although reverence for nature is now not his total concern, he still feels a religious bond between himself and the natural world.

Delicate and soft,
 The grass flows on the curling palms of
 my hands.

The gophers under the ground
 Fashion their nests in the cool soil.
 I lift up my eyes,
 And they find the bearing that swings
 the sky,
 And I turn toward home,
 Who have gathered such strength as is
 mine.⁵⁷

"The Vow" is dated Autumn, 1940. In "Now In These Days," dated winter, 1941, the poet, observing the war approach, takes consolation in others who share the stance of pacifism.

Now in these days,
 The tag-end of peace,

 We watch the gathering days,
 The gathering doom,
 And read in our books and hear in
 our music
 The high morality of those dauntless
 men who could never be bought,
 The indestructible will raising through
 sloth,
 And we know we have not been alone.⁵⁸

Moreover, the poet expressly manifests his rejection of the nationalistic spirit: "For we are the ones, / Who

outside the narrows of nationalism and its iron pride, /
 Reject the compulsion."⁵⁹ Antithetical to nationalism
 Everson proposes individual introspection:

Only as each man sees for himself
 The evil that sleeps in his own soul
 And girds against it
 Will the peace come.⁶⁰

By a blunt introversion man can grow in consciousness
 and thus move a step forward towards fulfillment. In
 "Lay I In The Night" the poet states: "Let consciousness
 load through the gates of my mind / All that my being can
 bear."⁶¹ In "Eastward The Armies," the fact of military
 preparation for war identifies itself in the poet's mind
 with that which is opposite to consciousness:

Now in my ear shakes the surly sound
 of the wedge-winged planes,
 Their anger brooding and breaking
 across the fields,
 Ignorant, snug in their bumbling idiot
 dream,
 Unconscious of tact,
 Unconscious of love and its merciful
 uses,
 Unconscious even of time . . .⁶²

In part two of The Residual Years the poet expounds
 an existential view of meaning. In order to find the truth,

man must first break through stereotyped modes of perception. His view of life must not be molded by a priori external doctrines, but must arise from an inner estimation of his possibilities. In "The Outlaw" Everson states his view of the typical human condition:

We . . . bound not in our patterns,
Sense but see not the vestigial
usages grooving our lives.
Like some latter day outlaw we
crouch in our rooms,
Facing the door and the massed future,
And draw doom down on our heads.⁶³

In "Invocation" the poet perceives patterned action as the enemy of organic fulfillment of the individual. However, only by extreme effort is one able to see through categorical modes of perception and thus probe through the accidental to the essential.

There runs the war,
In the half-perceived but unattended,
There at the marginal edge of perception,
There must it be met.
There at that line let me level the
screens from my blindered eyes:
The habitual framework of human use,
That man in his labor has builded around

him--64

Part one of The Residual Years, the autobiographical narrative of the poet's life in the conscientious objector camp, his split with his wife, and his decision to go on in spite of loss, is chiefly concerned with the poet's growing realization that limitation and imperfection are immanent in life. However, various other concerns do enter into the poet's now broader scrutiny of life. For example, although Everson distinguishes himself from those who are pacifists on religious grounds, his mind does indicate a growing interest in religious figures, probably because he as pacifist finds identification with the suffering religious prophet. Moses and Christ in particular are briefly mentioned: Moses chiefly as a prophet, and Christ as scapegoat expiator and the man who actualized human potency to the full. The Moses allusion occurs when the poet realizes no absolute seal of certitude or approval will be given him for the pattern of his life: "What Voice shall speak from the burning bush?"⁶⁵ Everson's second allusion to Moses occurs when he is breaking rocks in the labor camp. This manual labor he regards as symbolic of the fact that the pacifists are ironically dispersers of the water of life, in that they are a pure strain of peace in an otherwise warring world. He states: "To sunder the rock--that is our day."⁶⁶ The allusion to Christ occurs when Everson rhetorically invokes external justification for his life: "Sweet Jesus boned and gutted on the fecund tree! Open your blood-filled mouth and speak!"⁶⁷ Everson's

other allusion to Christ occurs when he questions the possibilities of himself achieving personal completion. For looking into the depths of himself after his wife has left him, he "finds murder there" and bitterness. He asks:

Where lies the line that draws division,

The wish from the act?

Christ canceled it out.⁶⁸

However, these allusions to Moses and Christ are in no sense indicative of any adherence to or even sympathy with doctrinal revelation or religious formalism on Everson's part; instead, they are appeals to cultural images, symbols or touchstones in our historical awareness that he can appeal to. Having lived through various phases of idealistic attachment: to nature, to humanity, to his wife; and having seen the privation existing in each of these, Everson has gradually come to reject any of them as being the ultimately significant. Though this is not stated explicitly, it is none the less observable. However, it must be stressed that Everson, as his mind is expressed in The Residual Years, is never tempted to adopt a formalistic view of the universe. Everson never arrives at a large ordered perspective, though he does, in fact, glean myriad epiphanies from life.⁶⁹ This is obliquely corroborated in "The Answer." In this poem, poetry itself is seen as meaningful in that it articulates personal experience into universal terms.

Sucked from their secret recesses

of mind

The shadowy traces of all intuition

float into being,

And the poem emerges,

Freighted with judgment,

Swung out of the possible into the

actual,

As one man's insight matches mankind's

at the midpoint of language.⁷⁰

This last line indicates a basic theme that runs throughout The Residual Years, and which is stated by the poet in his introduction: it is insight into life for which the poet strives; inherent in his quest is a rejection of traditional views of life. Prior to his conversion to Catholicism (and in a sense even afterwards), Everson's life is a record of a man constantly deviating from the norm realizing that its conventional securities may veer him from the path to truth. He never has recourse during The Residual Years to what is ideologically normative or conventional. He is a man searching for meaning by gathering insights, and not by accepting and rejecting whole systems of thought. His pantheism is not a philosophical one; his "Americanism" in "These Have The Future" is not a patriot's whole-hearted acceptance of democracy in toto; and his view of imperfection is not contained within a larger framework of divine theology.

Evil As A Constituent of Everson's

View of Meaning

The fifth topic, evil as a constituent of Everson's view of meaning, has, of course, like his view of meaning itself, been partially covered in the earlier discussions of nature, emergent man, and eros and thanatos. It is important to note that the word "evil" is seldom used by Everson. He uses the word, I believe, but twice: first in "The Hare: An Earlier Episode," when describing the time he killed the hare: "Then surely that time / Evil hooded my heart;"⁷¹ and secondly in "Now In These Days," a poem asserting the theme of pacifism:

Only as each man sees for himself
The evil that sleeps in his own soul,
And girds against it,
Will the peace come.⁷²

These few mentionings of the word evil indicate an important aspect of Everson's poetry: that while it is a diary of a man's struggle for meaning, this struggle is not permeated with easy encomiums or condemnations. This accrues from his refusal to accept traditional classifications of value, and from the fact that in The Residual Years he has not arrived at a framework of even personal value; he amasses accretions of insight, and one can see his intellectual growth moving from part three to part one, but these insights never have more than a nebulous organization. Hence, Everson has no

absolute norm from which he can easily type human experience as being evil. He does use many related terms: flaw, defect, hurt, doom, bitterness, violence, hatred, guilt--words which certainly imply what we would call evil; but his only uses of the word evil occur in poems expressing his veneration for life.⁷³

Another reason can be given for his infrequent usage of the term. Evil is a judicial word, and as such, almost inevitably contains social connotations. As is evident from a reading of his poetry, however, social invective and didacticism are far from Everson's intentions. It might be argued that his pacifist poems are an example of social commentary--this is true, but they are so only secondarily; first they expound a larger veneration of life in which is contained social implications. It is the larger principle and its internal application to himself with which he is most concerned, rather than its external social ramifications. And thus, because of the extremely personal tenor of his poetry, and because Everson in The Residual Years does not see value in terms of an ordering myth or rational framework, it would be more accurate to speak of Everson being concerned with imperfection rather than evil, since the word imperfection carries with it less moralistic trappings.

We have seen how in part three in "The Ruin" and "Fog" the poet confronts disharmony in nature, and how in

part two in "Lava Bed" he succinctly asserts man's inability to probe nature's depths. This is his reflection of disappointment in man's incapacity. However, in the epigraph poem in part two, Everson expresses a belief in man's inherited imperfection. Though this conception seems close to the doctrine of original sin, taken within the larger context of the poet's thought in The Residual Years, it is far removed from any suggestion of religious orthodoxy. He states:

What deficit at birth
Blinded her eye?
What scant, what dearth
Blanks out her own, her immeasurable
worth? 74

In part two limitation is a central theme of several poems. And neither is this limitation discussed in philosophical terms; instead, it is described as the source of human anguish. In "The Divide," for example, man's lack of commitment, in this case to a woman, mars his attempts at fulfillment:

Wanting one foot in freedom,
He found in his dolour that freedom
comes dear,
And would carry the mark of that
mistake to the grave's lip.⁷⁵

In "The Divers" the poet describes a widower's anguish, an

anguish, however, which tempers him. This too is an inseparable part of limitation; it not only yields anguish, but the possibilities of perfection.

It is in "The Master" and "The Siege" in part two that Everson makes his most assertive observations on imperfection and defect. Both poems are overtly concerned with physical flaws, but each can be interpreted symbolically. In "The Master" the poet states:

The furious cripple
Who raged in the circle of his wounded
pride . . .

.....
The painter . . .

Knowing year upon year the patient
encroachment

Inch up his flesh;
The leper, outcast on his island;
The cancerous king.
And my mother, who bore in her breast
the pus-pouring lung--

These, these in their bondage,
These in the durance of imperfection,
These hover my mind.⁷⁶

He realizes physical imperfection as an innate element in man; it is "The indigenous monitor perched forever in the faulty flesh." Moreover, though imperfection eventually

conquers the body, this conquest yet carries with it a purgation or refinement: "The great chastening presence."

In "The Siege" Everson describes the lot of a politician who, after he has lost an election, bears further misfortunes: a promiscuous wife and daughter, a suicidal son, and disease in himself. He bears these attacks, however, and "old age found him maimed but intact." He has grown to consider his particular tragedies as meaningful in a larger perspective, although this perspective is unclear in its design.

What would surely have shriveled his
soft youth,

He painfully carried,
Seeing always outside the local assault
The wider war that is waged beyond.
He took wave upon wave,
Each of them schooling in some subtle
way

His means of response,
And stood at last in his surface scars,
In the benign and limitless central
peace of the old fighters,
Who know what war is,
How constant its means,
How vast its scope,
And how obscure are its ends. 77

Though man is beset by "wave upon wave" of assault and is to a great extent driven by instinct, he does not, in Everson's poetry, cease to be a free agent. In "Do You Not Doubt" the poet states: "However we spaniel to wedging fate / The inherent choices of human attempt / Are opening yet."⁷⁸

It is this "wave upon wave" lashing by imperfection, and man's essential freedom to work with and through loss and limitation, which is a major concern in part one of The Residual Years. In "Sea," the last poem in the volume chronologically, the poet faces the sea, meditating on the meaning of his past. He scrutinizes his former union with nature:

Raids and ransacks,
Rakes up its rich hoard.
The greenful seasons,
Vineyard and valley,
The good and the glad.⁷⁹

and his former union with his wife:

. . . the plenitude of touch,
And the face . . .
.
And the rapturous body,
Its naked divestment,
Its total request . . . ⁸⁰

but finds no central thread save that by probing into

himself he has come to a more intense realization of human conflict, ugliness, and defect:

The plundering hand
Like a mad king,
Reels through the rooms,
Seizes and shakes and finds no clue,
Loots to the last,
Descends to the sunken tomb in the
self,
The trapdoor clamped in the murky
cellar,
Heaves open its hole,
Drops keening down;
And there discerns,
On the tumorous wall,
Like a human skin
Peeled from the flesh and stretched
up to dry,
The raw map of the world.
.
The purplish bruise of a total war
Festers and seethes.⁸¹

Thus, it has been revealed to him that the human situation is mapped by lines of defect. The realization of man being schooled by waves of loss and recognitions of defect is indexed by Everson's action on the shore.

His slow hand picks up a stone,
 Thumbs the scuffed edge,
 Wave-work,
 That has taken away,
 Left its crease and its wrinkle . . . 82

And though the crease and wrinkle do not restore the rock to its previous state, their impact yet " . . . brings out a beauty," and the poet concludes, as he stands on the shore beset by "The film. / The long stooping ledges. / The drop," that he, too, can achieve this quality by confronting imperfection.

A flaw, yes, but of beauty,
 His.
 If he wants.
 If he wills. 83

The Residual Years ends with no resolution to Everson's quest for meaning, save that he is determined to rise by facing imperfection. Everson's poetry in this volume is more concerned with questions of truth than it is with stylistic forms. Except for some of his nature poems in part three, Everson is not lyrical in his interpretation of reality. Part three, we recall, contained chiefly the poet's intuitive impressions of nature and did not intend to expound rational truths. However, after moving through his pantheism-primitivism stage, Everson constantly examined human actions in order

to find a base of meaning for himself, the "stone levels" below "the blind surf of events," as he states in "Lay I In The Night." In the same poem he pleads: "Let consciousness load through the gates of my mind / All that my being can bear."⁸⁴ His search for the stone levels led him through various attitudes towards reality. However, during the course of his psychological transformation, Everson did arrive at certain constants: that the religiousness of nature was not sufficient to man's need for completion; that man is emerging from his bestial ancestry; that man inherits from the past both its guilt and certain powers of insight; that man's individual efforts are representative of the race; that the life-drive, chiefly manifested in eros, moves through instinctual darkness to perception; that, in general, perception and individual epiphanies constitute the revelation which can forward man's development, and these are gained by the individual accepting and affirming the fact that limitation and defect are integral to the human situation.

NOTES

¹William Everson, The Residual Years, New York: New Directions, 1948.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., 129.

⁸Ibid., 136.

⁹Ibid., 145.

¹⁰Ibid., 140.

¹¹Ibid., 132.

¹²Ibid., 103.

¹³Ibid., 86.

¹⁴Whether consciously or unconsciously, Everson is, I believe, punning on the word shingle, just as Arnold was in "Dover Beach," the difference being that Arnold's denotative referent was the roof image, and Everson's was the shore rock. Psychologically, both Everson and Arnold in their respective poems consider war, love and fidelity, and the problem of faith. That Arnold's dilemma, similar in so many respects to his own, should unconsciously flow into Everson's mind is not, in my opinion, hard to imagine.

¹⁵Ibid., 56-57.

¹⁶Everson commented: "Residual Years oversimplified this aspect due to Rexroth's editing. A perusal of San Joaquin would reveal more complexity of mood and idea." p. 32, M. A. thesis by Fred Rizzo on Everson.

¹⁷Ibid., 133-34.

¹⁸Ibid., 143-44.

¹⁹Ibid., 97.

²⁰Ibid., 120.

²¹Ibid., 111. Looking ahead we can note that Everson maintains his "animal sense," what he calls a "prime animal aptitude for life"; for ever during the days when he wrote Prodigious Thrust, days when the

Super-Ego of radical Catholicism lay heavy on his head, and Everson preached Spirit with a vengeance, he none the less had a penetrating vision of the common dilemma of the animal kingdom (though his emphases are different). See pages 342-43.

²²Ibid., 118.

²³Ibid., 106-07.

²⁴Ibid., 87.

²⁵Ibid., 90-91.

²⁶Ibid., 91-92.

²⁷p. 38. M. A. thesis by Fred Rizzo.

²⁸Ibid., 134-35.

²⁹Ibid., 135.

³⁰Ibid., 72-73.

³¹Ibid., 94.

³²Ibid., 77.

³³Ibid., 75.

³⁴We can see here Everson's early confrontation with impulses in the self he will later term Apollonian and Dionysian; the former giving birth to civilization

(which can be seen as a projection of the ego's desire for order); the latter giving birth to the necessity of recognizing the natural, the flesh and blood in man, and demanding a life free of fixities. In general, though these are simplifications, the Apollonian can be regarded as having many notions in common with the Institutionalists (Antoninus termed his Prodigious Thrust phase as "Essentialistic."), and the Dionysian can be seen as having many traits paralleling those in what Antoninus later calls the Charismatic personality.

³⁵Ibid., 123.

³⁶Ibid., 104.

³⁷Ibid., 110.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid., 19.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., 27.

⁴³Ibid., 18.

⁴⁴Ibid., 29.

⁴⁵Ibid., 39.

⁴⁶In his annotations Everson revealed that the new letter told him of her inability to accept the break in their marriage, to choose either man.

⁴⁷Letter, January 18, 1964.

⁴⁸Letter quoted on page 66a of Campo's thesis. Page numbers in Campo's thesis are subject to change since he sent me a draft and not the final copy of his thesis.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰The Residual Years, 135.

⁵¹Ibid., 112.

⁵²Ibid., 129.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid., 127-28.

⁵⁵Ibid., 120.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., 129.

⁵⁸Ibid., 118.

⁵⁹Ibid., 117.

⁶⁰Ibid., 118.

⁶¹Ibid., 110.

⁶²Ibid., 98.

⁶³Ibid., 97.

⁶⁴Ibid., 89.

⁶⁵Ibid., 15.

⁶⁶Ibid., 21. Everson annotated: "This was unconscious. The parallel to Moses never occurred to me." p. 52, M. A.

⁶³Ibid., 60.

⁶⁴Ibid., 48-49.

⁶⁵Everson comments that he is unlike Jeffers in this respect, then says "actually I accepted Jeffers' cosmos as the framework, and (ruled? worked?) within it as implicitly as the Christian poet does (in) his theology." 53, M. A.

⁶⁶Ibid., 101.

⁶⁷Ibid., 112.

⁶⁸Ibid., 118.

⁶⁹Everson commented here: "My most direct philosophical confrontation with the problem of evil was in "Invocation", but I do not use the word. Strange." 55, M. A.

⁷⁰Ibid., 67.

⁷¹Ibid., 69.

⁷²Ibid., 82.

⁷³Ibid., 85.

⁷⁴Ibid., 106.

⁷⁵Ibid., 58.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid., 59. Everson here commented: "'This was actually my first real acknowledgment of Original Sin. Note the unconscious theological implication of the 'world.' i.e. Christ's 'this world.'" However, I do not see how this can be called a "first real acknowledgment of Original Sin" if it is an "unconscious theological implication." This is, I think, hindsight on Everson's part. Otherwise one would have to say that every poet's vision of evil as inherent in the world would be a "real acknowledgment" of the theological notion of Original Sin.

⁷⁸Ibid., 106

⁷⁹Ibid., 58.

⁸⁰Ibid., 110.

84Ibid., 110.

83Ibid.

82Ibid., 57.

81Ibid., 59.

CHAPTER III

THE CROOKED LINES OF GOD: THE SELF, THE RACE, AND CHRIST

Between The Residual Years and The Crooked Lines of God, various events occurred in William Everson's life that were to change its direction crucially. In 1949, the year after he published The Residual Years, in which he relates his unfulfilled quest for the stone levels beneath the surf of events, Everson converted to Catholicism. In 1950 he was drawn to a Catholic Worker House in Oakland's slums, during which time, he states in his introduction to The Crooked Lines of God, he suffered a "crucifixion of the sensibility." During these years he encountered and imbibed the erotic religious psychology of the Spanish Baroque, which would influence much of his subsequent poetry. In any case, his life underwent a significant transformation: from an anarcho-pacifist he changed to a Catholic, and came under the influence of various periods of its historical tradition. Everson, however, in his comments on my earlier study stated: "No, I became a Catholic anarcho-pacifist, as are the Catholic Workers,"¹

But a problem of definition arises upon a perusal of Prodigious Thrust, for his autobiography does not--except for certain uncommon passages--reveal anything typical of what is generally regarded as an anarchistic mind. The doctrine and dogma of the Catholic Church, Everson--however inconsistently--affirms with all the enthusiasm of the "true believer." However, Everson had now found meaning. And his expression of this meaning in The Crooked Lines of God has a definite linkage with the insights expressed in The Residual Years. In the latter volume, we recall, Everson was intensely concerned with the self's relationship with the race, with the meaning of imperfection, with the significance of eros, and with man's emerging consciousness in general. His perspective was essentially a psychological one. That he was at least generally acquainted with the psychological currents of the time is borne out in his short poem, "The Raid," in The Residual Years. This poem--not analyzed by Everson until 1956--can be seen as unconsciously portraying the disastrous effects of regressing to incest.² In the poem the planes are phallic symbols; they attack a maternal island, achieve their ecstasy, but are destroyed in the sea:

They came out of the sun with their
guns geared,
Saw the soft and easy shape of that
island

Lain on the sea,
 An unawakening woman . . .

 Each of them held in his aching eyes
 the erotic image,
 And then tipped down . . .

 And saw sweet chaos blossom below,
 And felt in that flower the years
 release.

 The perfect achievement.
 They went back toward the sun crazy
 with joy . . .
 Where the ships would be waiting.
 None were there . . .

 Only the wide waiting waste,
 That each of them saw with intenser
 sight,

 Who circled that spot,
 The spent gauge caught in its final
 flutter,
 And straggled down on their wavering
 wings

. . . for the low hover,

And the short quick quench of the sea.³

"The Raid," however, with its allegorical symbolism, is not a typical poem in The Residual Years, and the poet later commented that there is absolutely no instance of a contrived assimilation of textual psychology in the book.⁴

Because of so many striking similarities between the ideas of Jung and the ideas of Everson in The Crooked Lines of God, I had presumed in my earlier study that Everson's poetry in this volume had been greatly influenced by Jungian psychology. Everson commented: "Only in the second phase . . . beginning with Hazards in 1957. Crooked Lines ought to have been dealt with as a continuation of R. Y. before the need for psychological analysis occurred."⁵ None the less, a Jungian approach to the poetry in The Crooked Lines of God reveals much about the mind of the poet at this time. Namely, we will note how The Crooked Lines of God--however different its premises--can be seen as a logical extension of Everson's quest for meaning in The Residual Years, and also how it provides a link to Hazards of Holiness. By summarizing certain parts of four of his post-conversion writings: "Dionysus and the Beat Generation," "Catholics and Creativity," his introduction to "In The Fictive Wish," and "A Tribute To Robinson Jeffers," we will gather the substance of his concept of the self, of Christ, and of the Oedipal tension; it will

then also become evident that Everson's (Antoninus') approach has much in common with that of Jung. Then the Jungian view of the self, of Christ, and of the Oedipal tension will be outlined, and the poetry of The Crooked Lines of God will be discussed from a Jungian perspective.

Important in Jung's perspective of the self are the anima and shadow archetypes, the mandala, the union of opposites (termed syzygy by Jung), and his concept of the libido--all of which will be defined. All of these concepts are related to the process of the self achieving selfhood, which means the fulfillment and maturation of the human person.

Having established the fact that in terms of Jungian psychology a prime constituent of self-integration is an increased consciousness, there will be a shift in focus from the self to the race. One of Jung's disciples, Erich Neumann, in his The Origins and History of Consciousness, has traced archetypal phases in the racial consciousness of humanity, by examining the image content of myths composed during various stages of civilization. It is Neumann's thesis that the race and the self can be mythically observed as emerging from the sea of unconsciousness, and that certain elements characterize the individual who has conquered the unconscious and risen through and above mother earth and the race. This great individual is complete in himself, containing both male

and female principles--Christ is seen by Antoninus to be the supreme exemplification of this conquerer of the unconscious.

After tracing the affinities between Antoninus, Jung, and Neumann, the distinction between Antoninus' Catholic Christian view of God and the psychologists' view will be made. Also, the fact that certain elements in the psychological process of self-integration are inherent in the traditional mystical process of interior sanctification, and that both exist in The Crooked Lines of God, will be pointed out.

Antoninus and Depth-Psychology

Brother Antoninus has in various of his post-conversion writings integrated the discoveries of depth-psychology into his own Christian world-view. A brief summary of those parts of his writings relevant to this synthesis will both prepare the ground for a study of his poetry and indicate the direction the study will take. However, anticipating the study of the poetry, the points to be stressed are his concept of the self, his view of Christ, the importance he attaches to the Oedipal tension, and the general psychological orientation underlying his perspective.

In "Dionysus and the Beat Generation," written in 1959, Antoninus states that the American Beat Generation is an exemplification of the revolt of the Dionysian spirit

against the doctrinaire Apollonian strictures of the twentieth century. Elaborating on the components of the tension existing between Apollonian rationality and Dionysian irrationality, Antoninus conceptualizes the psyche as torn between instinct, ego, and intuition. Instinct corresponds to the unconscious and irrational animal surge of man, while ego consists in his rational consciousness, and intuition is his unconscious communion with divinity above the ego. He states:

Ego stands against the uprush of Dionysus from below and the downrush of the Spirit from above--both ecstatic factors, and both feared by it. For Ego is actually a kind of conscious differential, militating between the instincts and the intellectual intuition, subject to tremendous invasion from either quarter.⁶

These tensions in man are synthesized, says Antoninus, only by a voluntary expiation of the ego, and it is in Christ that one finds the ideal synthesis. "On the cross we see the true Person, symbol of the perfect synthesis between body and soul, instinct and intelligence, Eros and Agape . . ."⁷ A natural synthesis will not resolve the unconscious forces with the ego, "For it is only in the efficacy of that total Archetype (Christ) that each man can approach, through his own interior abnegation, the expiatory act that achieves his beatitude."⁸ Thus, in Christ the conscious and unconscious are mutually operative, mutually

concerned with the welfare of the total person. In the same essay Antoninus applauds the insistence by the depth psychologists on the fact that man's instinctual base must not be ignored. He states: "Perhaps depth psychology's greatest contribution is to have discovered that the desperate failure of Apollonian culture to effect any synthesis with the unconscious is bringing its own doom down on its head."⁹

In an interview transcribed in The American Benedictine Review in 1960, the Brother, describing the creative tensions of the artist in a religious community, conceives of the artist as being "attuned to the irrational unconscious." Artistic projection of this attunement is dubiously regarded by the rational mind of society. "Any real breakthrough from the unconscious side," states Antoninus, "is a highly suspect phenomenon to the institutional mind."¹⁰ Moreover, most of the arts have since the Renaissance ceased to have a collective appeal, for, out of the Renaissance, Antoninus states, "emerged the individual ego freed from the collective."¹¹ Giving examples of certain arts which have remained collectively desirable, Antoninus explicitly employs a Jungian term: ". . . the perdurable convention of icon witnesses to its place in the collective unconscious."¹² Discussing the similarity between the artistic and prophetic minds, the fact that both see collective society from a perspective

differing from that of the institutional mind, the Brother reveals that his rationale was guided by the work of a Dominican influenced by Jung.¹³

Both in his introduction to In The Fictive Wish and in an article, "A Tribute To Robinson Jeffers," Antoninus presents the incest tendency as a determinant factor in man's experience with his unconscious. In the introduction he looks back to The Residual Years and summarizes it as

. . . the struggle to overcome the false blockage which the earliest familial influence (the ferocious conflict between father and son for the possession of the mother), had occasioned in the soul, with all its destructive irresolution shut down and stifled at the heart's center, working there its frightful damage of sin and guilt.¹⁴

In "A Tribute To Robinson Jeffers," Antoninus in retrospect sees the Oedipal tension as the magnet attracting him to the works of Jeffers.

. . . In the terrible narratives, in the themes of incest and patricide, violence and destruction, I found the outlet for all the unconscious passion I had not realized was obsessing me. We were both sons of fathers twenty years older than the women they married. Upon us the mother projected that fateful fascination youthful maternity so often bestows upon the first male to open the womb. Heirs of blind

Oedipus (Squires' view that because Jeffers thought kindly of his father he did not suffer from the Oedipal flaw I regard as psychologically naive), we transposed the maternal imago to unspoliated nature, and projected the deep paternal hostility upon civilization and its structures.¹⁵

Thus, in Antoninus' view, the psyche (unless otherwise stated, psyche in this thesis means the self, the totality of the human person) contains a component which is conscious and rational--the ego; a component which is unconscious and irrational--the instinct; a component which is unconscious and supra-rational--man's intuitive bond with divinity.¹⁶ These components war against one another; peace is possible only if the psyche negate its ego and yeild to its intuitions. It is the intuitions which guide the psyche's use of ego and instinct.

Moreover, Antoninus conceives of a collective unconscious and acknowledges that certain elements of his perspective are Jungian. Also, Antoninus conceives of the Oedipal tension as an unconscious factor which determines much of conscious human action. In brief, the Oedipal tension consists in the unconscious desire to be united to the mother, and involves a consequent unconscious hatred of the father, because he possesses the object of desire. In man this tension is able to be projected onto the external world;

as Antoninus stated of himself in his essay "A Tribute To Robinson Jeffers," the state as the system of authority can become the hated father figure, and nature as the milieu of undemanding repose and beauty can become the object of love. This, of course, is much simplified; the Oedipal tension will be elaborated upon further in appropriate sections of the chapter.

Christ: The Shadow, The Anima, and Eros

Thus, having suggested Antoninus' psychological perspective, a brief outline of certain aspects of Jung's view will be given, and points of affinity between Jungian depth-psychology and Antoninus' poetry will be shown.

Jung views the human as existing on two strata, the conscious and the unconscious. The ego is the subject of consciousness, which associates itself with rationality and light. The ego is the "I" aware of its own thinking processes. But the human person also contains an unconscious, the contents of which are little known or completely unknown. This area of the person is associated with irrationality, instinct, animality, and darkness. The unconscious is further divided into two sections, the personal and collective. The personal unconscious consists of those contents accumulated in the history of the individual, and includes repressed memories, emotions, and wishes and personal subliminal perceptions. For example, a child may at one moment have an intense feeling

of hatred for one of its parents, but consciously knowing this feeling to be wrong, or fearful of the consequences of its expression, will not allow it to be expressed, but suppress it from his consciousness into the unconscious, the basement of the psyche. But the hatred, fear, and attendant guilt, though refused recognition, wait at the door of consciousness, ready to burst out of the basement, given the opportune moment.

Whereas the personal unconscious contains purely personal experiences, the collective unconscious contains instinctive forms of behavior that have been carved on the human organism in its very beginnings. These instinctual forms or primordial images are called archetypes and are universally present in the race. Jung writes of these archetypes:

Instincts are the most conservative determinants of any kind of life. Mind is not born as a tabula rasa. Like the body, it has its pre-established individual definiteness; namely, forms of behavior. They become manifest in the ever-recurring pattern of psychic functioning. As the weaver bird will build its nest infallibly in its accustomed form, so man despite his freedom and superficial changeability will function psychologically according to his original patterns--up to a certain point; that is, until for some reason he collides with his still living and ever present instinctual roots.¹⁷

Herein lies the rationale behind Jung's studies. By portraying the fact that these archetypes exist, and by making certain characteristics of the archetypes conscious to man, man can have more insight into the springs of his motivation; in other words, he can see more clearly just what the nature of man is, and thus be able to act more effectively in order to fulfill his nature. This will be further clarified in the following discussion of certain of the archetypes.

Two of the archetypes bear need of further explanation since they are involved in Antoninus' poetry; these are the shadow and the anima. Our instinctual urges, bestiality, irrationality--these are associated with the shadow. The shadow is that part of man containing that which is evil, inferior, diabolic. The anima, on the other hand (the animus in woman), is that archetype which is the complement to consciousness; that is, in man the complement is feminine, the anima; in woman the complement is masculine, the animus. It is this archetype which moves us to complete ourselves. The anima, in other words, attracts man to everything that would fulfill him as man. Since, generally speaking, man compared with woman is regarded more as thinking than loving--and thus, to fulfill himself, needs an object of love--the anima is that which moves him to love. Thus, says Jung, the anima in man is characterized by eros, since his conscious life is characterized by logos.

The anima is sometimes equated with the soul by Jung, since it is the vitalizing content of man--that which moves him to fulfill. Both the anima and the shadow are at times used by Jung as synonyms for the unconscious itself. How can this be--the shadow as evil, and the anima as vitalizing love--how can these two apparent opposites be equated with the unconscious? The seeming contradiction is resolved when we consider Jung's constant insistence on the veracity of the dictum that good comes out of evil. He quotes a German alchemist: "Out of the gross and impure One there cometh an exceeding pure and subtile One."¹⁸ And herein lies the foundation for Jung's criticism of the modern conception of Christ. Regarded as totally good, containing not even the possibilities of evil, Christ has ceased to function as an archetype which can be experienced by the human, to whom evil is a reality that must be reckoned with. And herein also lies the foundation of Antoninus' conception of Christ. Throughout his poetry Christ is, besides God, concretely man, and as man, rooted in the same instincts which contain in themselves the possibilities of evil. Jung states that in order for a man to achieve wholeness, he must face his shadow, his animal instinctual heritage, and by means of this encounter discover the even more basic life drive of the soul (the anima): "Out of the gross and impure One there cometh an exceeding pure and subtile One." I will quote in full,

however, Antoninus' reaction to this interpretation.

No. I accept the impeccable reality of Christ in traditional dogma, and reject Jung's thesis that Christ has ceased to function as an archetype which can be experienced by the human. It would be possible to treat of Christ as confronting the Shadow but my Poem "Gethsemani" was written in terms of conventional dogma.

I think the Shadow the historical Christ confronted in the Garden of Olives was the collective Shadow, not his personal one. The archetype Jung demands of Christ is supplied by the Saints. Christ himself constitutes a different archetype altogether. Jung's autobiography clearly reveals the unconscious hostility that informed his myopia.

. . . I do not mean to reject totally the view that Christ's psychology did not evolve with his life. Obviously he "grew." But according to traditional dogma this growing, this accomodation of instinct to reason must have gone on via a process of perfect proportioning, because of Christ's perfection. He did not achieve perfection through the process of integration. He possessed perfection, and possessing it, assimilated instinct to consciousness in direct relation to his increase in experience. Thus when he encountered Satan in the desert his psychology was a

different thing than yours or mine, because it was founded on a different base. Without doubt, being human, he possessed an anima and a shadow. Because they signify possibility and are hence constructs of the imagination, they carried the appeal of the possible, and he felt it. But he could not experience the awful shabbiness and insecurity before their manifestation that we do. Thus the temptation in the desert--the archetype is there--there is a trial--but unlike the mythic hero or the secular man, the issue is never in doubt. Of the reductive process I depict in the ordeal in Gethsemani, I would say that the imagination is faced by the unshakable commitment of the spirit to relinquish its projective alternatives and accept the one because informed by the determining principle.¹⁹

I interpret Antoninus' comments--and interpretation is necessary--as a rephrasing in different terms of the mystery of how Christ, according to traditional dogma, can have two natures, divine and human, yet be one person. When one emphasizes his divinity, as did the Middle Ages, the human Christ is ignored; when one emphasizes his humanity, his divinity, according to orthodox theologians, falls into the shadows. Antoninus has here restated the problem. And he can be asked, as can any who espouse the view that Christ was totally perfect, how Christ

could "grow" in any sense, since Perfection, according to orthodox theologians, Aquinas for example, means that there is no potency, for potency implies a lack, but that there is pure act, pure being. And thus, one can challenge, I believe, Antoninus' view of Christ on the grounds that it, as Jung says, does not include enough of the human in it. For if there is an "unshakable commitment" and if "the issue is never in doubt," how are we to identify Christ's immersion in the human condition with our own? And thus, we are forced to see Christ not primarily as a person who reveals the heroic possibilities in man, but instead as the savior, as the one who saves us from the human condition. Needless to say, though this may involve what is called a realistic view of evil in the world, as all such views it is apt to condone inertia. Christ has conquered the dragon, the devil--why need we act heroically? A liberal view of Christ that would challenge Antoninus' view is to be found in Kazantzakis' The Last Temptation of Christ, within which is a Christ who is weak, who is prone to sin, who doubts, but who nevertheless prevails. The serious reader at the end of this book asks himself:

"These are the same dragons of life that I face. Can I confront them this heroically?" The psychological ramifications of these different emphases are, of course, incredibly complex. When one takes most of his time to define the divine, he inevitably ignores the human, and it is, after

all, the human that Christ was interested in. It is for this reason that even non-religious readers are able to identify with the main characters in many of the novels of Graham Greene, Miguel Unamuno, and Francois Mauriac, because we are immersed in the destructive elements of the human condition. And it is also because of this reason that Antoninus is a religious poet superior to most, because, though he does at times dodge into dogma, he nonetheless confronts the problem of evil in a substantial number of his poems.

With his own emphases, Antoninus does portray the passion of Christ in Gethsemani as resulting from Christ encountering his bestial heritage--his shadow. Gethsemani itself is a fertile place of nature:

Seed of the earth
Rain-loosened: foxtail, filaree;
Seed of the wild grass new-bladed,
Broken from winter,
Drenched with the dew of nightfall,
Hemming the grove of olives;²⁰

And being nature, it also contains its dark aspects, thus preparing for Christ's confrontation with the dark elements in his own psyche:

. . . its each tree a black
Earth-hugging clump,
Deploys downslope,
Creates the scene's dim format.²¹

Antoninus makes clear the fact that Christ is totally man.

The disciples observe Christ:

They see him kneel . . .
 They see him shudder, raise
 The outlifted arms, cry up,
 Pitch forward,
 Fall . . . 20

Antoninus further states:

Flesh can fear
 Soul can fear affliction
 And Christ feared both.²¹

And now Christ meets his bestial heritage:

The great ominous Flogger,
 Off in time,
 Hunches his hairy shoulder,
 Waits.
 The loaded whipbutt
 Taps on the knobbed hand.²²

Moreover, Christ's encounter with his shadow becomes universalized:

Whatever the world will suffer
 Is here foresuffered now . . .²³

Thus, from meeting his own natural grossness, Christ as a human has emerged purified in love. The divine source of this love, however, is central: "A love from God to God to God / and thence to man." But Antoninus focusses on

the divine in this particular part of the poem the fact is that we are engaged in the poem, we are made to empathize, not because of the focus on God, but because we see a Christ of flesh and blood trembling in time of trial.

As proof for the existence of the shadow, the anima, and the various other archetypes in the collective unconscious, Jung cites the fact that mythological images common in ancient literatures are found today in the dreams of people who have had no possible conscious personal experience of such contents.

Also by his studies of ancient myths, modern dreams, and the course of human history in general, Jung, like others before him, discerns beneath the make-up of individual striving an inherent raw will for life, a drive toward selfhood--which is fully realized individuality. This basic striving is not reduceable to any one instinct, as the sexual or feeding instinct, but underlies all appetites, compulsions, and desires. To indicate that this prime urge has a spiritual direction, Jung quotes and comments on Socrates' view of eros. As god of love eros to Socrates is not simply a representative of the erotic or sexual instinct, which is in general a desire for union with the sensible, but one which attempts to go beyond the sensible to the spiritual. Before citing the quotation, it would be well to recall Everson's scrutiny of eros in The Residual Years, which, though for the most part restricted

to sexual encounters, is nevertheless realized by the poet to be a reaching through matter and sensuality. In the poem "Though Lying With Woman," for example, after describing various sensual excesses, the poet writes:

"Be sure that your joy breeds from a beauty / Existent beyond it and out of its reach."²⁴ Jung, moreover, insists

that even the most phallic of poetry has its ultimate reference in the libido. He states: ". . . a phallic symbol does not denote the sexual organ, but the libido, and however clearly it appears as such, it does not mean itself but is always a symbol of the libido."²⁵ For

Jung, however, the libido had a different significance than it did for Freud. The libido in Jung's mind contained those complexes of archetypes the most basic of which is the anima. The anima, Jung constantly suggests, is teleologically loaded, whereas Freud was less eager to assert an ultimately meaningful orientation in the libido. Note Jung's emphases in the following: Jung quotes a dialogue given by Socrates and comments on the quotation.

In the dialogue, Diotima tells Socrates that eros is

the intermediary between mortals and immortals . . . a mighty daemon, dear Socrates; for everything daemonic is the intermediary between God and man." His function is to "interpret and convey messages to the gods from men and to men from the gods, prayers and sacrifices from the one, and commands and rewards from the other,

thus bridging the gap between them, so that by his mediation the universe is at one with itself." Diotima gives an excellent description of Eros: "He is bold and forward and strenuous, always devising tricks like a cunning huntsman; he yearns after knowledge and is full of resource and is a lover of wisdom all his life, a skilfull magician, an alchemist . . . 26

Thus, eros, the libido, is a many faceted life urge lunging from the mortal to things immortal, and attempts like the magician and alchemist to transform basics of existence to a higher mode. The Jungian view of the libido and Antoninus' view of the life-drive are basically the same. Antoninus' idea of the life-drive of eros will be given later in conjunction with an extended explication of "A Savagery of Love," one of Antoninus' major poems.

According to Jung, the libido's movement toward fulfillment is greatly influenced by the incest tendency with which each man is born. This tendency as it appears symbolically in myths is indicative of a desire for rebirth; that is, by re-entrance into a mother image of some sort one can conceive a new self. The actual physical act of incest, however, is even in most primitive cultures restricted by taboo. This restriction does not remove the desire for renewal and rebirth through the mother imago, says Jung, for the desire remains in the unconscious. But the taboo blocks the libido's regressive path to real incest, and

makes it possible for the libido to be canalized into mother analogies such as wife, occupation, and city.

As is evident, the early dependent relationship of the child to the mother is useful for the protection and growth of the child, but for an adult to remain dependent on his mother would be tragic to his personality. However, projecting the maternal image to the wife and city enables the adult to lead a creative and useful existence.

The libido's movement toward wholeness is witnessed in myths and dreams, says Jung, by archetypal images symbolizing totality or perfection. Two of these images are especially pertinent to the poetry of Antoninus: the mandala and the syzygy. The mandala is a symbol of unity and a symbol of the self; it manifests itself chiefly as a circle or square, or any concentrically arranged figure. It is a magic circle, within which one can be transformed. In myths and dreams the mandala has appeared as a well, sometimes as a garden with a fountain in its center; in both cases the water symbolizes renewal or transformation. In other myths and dreams it has appeared in the form of an area within which there is an animal. For example, in one dream analyzed by Jung, the center of the area is occupied by an ape, which indicates that transformation is possible by a facing of one's bestial heritage--for the center expresses the means of renewal.

In Christian Scripture Christ occupies the center of

the mandala, the square or circle. For example, Christ is often seen atop the sphere of the world. Also, Christ appears between his four evangelists, and on the four-armed cross. Thus, Christ to the Christian is the symbol of the perfection of the self, although, in Jung's opinion, the symbol fails today because the human can find personal affinity only in that which allows for his instinctual nature, and Christ's instinctuality is seldom stressed.²⁷

Here again Antoninus' view of Christ differs from a conventional contemporary view, in that he constantly portrays Christ as having thoroughly human instincts. Though unconsciously, Antoninus employs the mandala in several of his poems: "The Making Of The Cross," "Gethsemani," "A Savagery Of Love," and, less overtly, in "A Canticle To Christ In The Holy Eucharist." In "The Making Of The Cross," the cross itself is a mandala. It is described as "joined, quartered, / As is the earth; spoked, as is the Universal Wheel." Moreover, it is significant that the components of the cross are derived from the chain of created being; in conjunction with the making of the cross are mentioned rough fir, a wren, hawks, a vulture, nails of pure ore, pelt bellows, and a thorn-bush; moreover, added to the "possibles of evil" in creation which crucify Christ are "The evil and the wastage and the woe" of Adam's sin. Christ is, in fact, crucified on the tree of being.

In a letter Everson states that he thinks that Christ's heart, and not the garden itself, is the mandala in "Gethsemani."²⁸ Earlier I had written that it is the garden because it is nature, and it is the place where Christ meets his bestial heritage, his shadow, and thus becomes a symbol of the self. One's transformation is possible by a confrontation of the "great ominous Flogger;" Christ's ego consciousness meets his irrational instinctuality and assimilates its contents. The negative possibility of yielding to, rather than assimilating, irrational instinctuality, is seen in the image of

. . . the damned, those Light-deniers,
Indriven on their choice . . .

Caught in the terrible downdraft . . .²⁹

Christ's assimilation of their evil (since his is a universal encounter) is seen in the image of enfolding:

Here at the instant of decision
His scopeless love enfolds,
Wraps them in tenderness,
Pleads.³⁰

Moreover, the diamond ray of love resulting from the passion is described as moving " . . . from God to God to God, / And thence to man,"³¹ the four-in-one structure also being symbolic of the psyche's achievement of selfhood.

As evidence that it is Christ's heart and not the garden which is the mandala in "Gethsemani" Everson points

to the following lines in the poem:

. . . Their pain
 Reaches already to this swollen Heart
 That lugs and labors like a giant sea
 Clasping its wounded islands,
 Toning its solemn note upon that shore,
 To weep out its geologic woe alone

to:

And grappled into the heart,
 A great shuddering embrace of absolute
 assent.³²

However, as in the "Sea" section of The Residual Years, the sea is a symbol of the troubled flux of the human condition, and the garden is a universal symbol, an archetype, a topos, of the situation of man; thus, though Antoninus may emphasize the heart of Christ as the mandala, as a divine source of transformation, one may legitimately point to the natural element in which the divine is couched (the garden itself), and to the human element, the "giant sea," the turbid ebb and flow of human misery, within Christ's heart. The poem suggests, regardless of Antoninus' interpretation of it, and in spite of his unfortunately univocal interpretation of hell, an interpenetration of divine and human such as Chardin expresses in his Hymn to the Universe, a rare example of religious writing in which neither God nor Man is slighted in the author's meditations

on Matter and the Almighty, the Immanent and Transcendent Divinity.³³

In "Canticle to Christ In The Holy Eucharist," a poem which emphasizes imagery denoting divine immanence rather than divine transcendence, a mandala can be seen as existing in the image of Mt. Tamalpais itself, which, Antoninus notes in a letter, as a mountain in general can be seen as a Jungian maternal symbol, and as a particular topographical figuration has been seen in legend as a reclining Indian maiden. However, just as in "Gethsemani" Christ could be seen as the center, the specific means of transformation within the larger mandala of the garden itself, so too, perhaps, can "the deep madrone . . . the tall grove with the redwood" be seen as the center of transformation. It is here that the doe and buck mate, and their mating suggests the mystical union of the soul with God. And in the lush natural and erotic imagery of the poem we can see how Antoninus departs from the mystical view of a John of the Cross. Whereas John of the Cross in poems such as the "Dark Night of the Soul" emphasizes the hiddenness of God, the God just beneath the surface, Antoninus, whether consciously or unconsciously, suggests a more comprehensive view of divinity living in and with and through all of creation. I use deliberately the prepositions used in the Catholic Mass to describe the pervasiveness of the divine presence, a pervasiveness ignored by most of the so-called

orthodox, who would rather make their easy and stereotyped distinctions between the sacred and the profane, the godly and ungodly. Although Antoninus himself in Prodigious Thrust, a work which comes after The Crooked Lines of God, becomes a victim of the institutional mentality for a while, in this poem, as in "Canticle to the Waterbirds," and in a different way in "A Savagery of Love," he sees divinity--however smudged and smeared and stifled--in earth. In this respect he is again similar to Chardin, who in his The Phenomenon of Man, The Divine Milieu, and Hymn to the Universe constantly emphasizes the divine immanence.

The oral images (e.g. milk, mouth, and food) and the vaginal images (e.g. wound, gash, and broken honeycomb), besides exemplifying Antoninus' "prime, animal aptitude" described earlier in the volume in "The Uncouth," and besides suggesting his psychological rapport with the Church at the time, also contribute to the imagery of mystical union. If we can regard the mystical process as demanding some kind of purgation or death of self, and ending with some kind of vision or illumination, then we can see in the rich imagery that follows a movement from death to the self to an illuminative rapport with divinity, a rapport imaging, in traditional Christian terms, the Beatific Vision.

I fed on that terror as hunger is stanchèd
on meat, the taste and the trembling.

In the pang of my dread you smiled and
swept to my heart.

As the eagle eats so I ate, as the hawk
takes flesh from his talon,
As the mountain lion clings and kills, I
clung and was killed.

This kill was thy name. In the wound of
my heart thy voice was the cling,
Like honey out of the broken rock thy name
and the stroke of thy kiss.

The heart wound and the hovering kiss they
looked to each other,
As the lovers gaze in their clasp, the
grave embrace of love.³⁴

In "A Savagery of Love" exists the image of a syzygy, a union of opposites, an image meaningful not only in psychological terms, but also in terms of the mystical process. In myths and legends, ancient and modern, in the alchemical writings, and in the dreams of contemporary man, there appears a synthesis of opposites; for example, there may be a mergence of fire and water, male and female, body and soul, light and dark. This mergence is often expressed in myth as a hermaphroditic union. Hermes, for example, the messenger between the gods and man, is sometimes seen in myths with breasts.

An instance of the union of opposites in Christianity

is the notion of Christ and his bride, the Church. The hermaphroditic union, says Jung, is also an image symbolizing the self; for the self is a perfect example of opposites, containing the light and order of rationality, and the dark and chaos of the unconscious. And for the self to be whole--individuation is the term proper to Jung--the conscious and the unconscious must effect an appropriate polarity.

The union of opposites is often mythically articulated in the vision of a divine couple, or a mating of the gods, indicating that the human mind associates the idea of sexual completion with transcendence. The union of opposites, says Jung, is also a constantly recurring theme in the writings of the alchemists. Alchemy, the pseudo-science concerned with the transforming of base metals into gold and silver, was in great part, says Jung, a projection of an unconscious desire for transformation--the transmutation spiritually desired by the alchemist was unconsciously transposed into material terms. This is significant to The Crooked Lines of God, because the titles of its three parts indicate the alchemical process of attempting to change by pseudo-chemistry base metals into royal. The three parts are titled: "Out of the Depths"--getting the metal from the earth; "In the Crucible"--the attempt at refining the metal; and "Out of the Ash"--taking out the finished product.³⁵ In any case, the alchemists had

perfection in mind, and they often symbolized this perfection with images of complementing parts, unions of opposites: fire and water, male and female, etc.

The encounter and union of opposites achieves its fullest expression by Antoninus in "A Savagery of Love." Summer and winter, light and darkness, head and heart, dark continents and the "hole in the sky," body and soul, active and passive, the Adamic tree of life and the tree of death, the mating eagles, Magdalene as personified Eros and Christ as the Crucified Logos--all of these unions find their supreme exemplification in the figure of Christ as symbolically hermaphroditic.³⁶ Moreover, in "A Savagery of Love," the image of Christ as hermaphroditic is related to Christ's defeat of the incest tendency innate in man, and to Antoninus' view of eros as leading toward fulfillment of the self.

In "A Savagery of Love," the opening image is an index to the crucifixion: "Spring, and the paired year: / Summer and winter clasp at the equinox."³⁷ It is spring--the time of fertility; but it is not a peaceful time, for summer and winter clasp at the equinox. Similarly, the crucifixion is described as: "The crux, twain-joined, / Two polarities athwart, / Fused at the center."³⁸ Christ on the cross synthesizes "Body and soul; male and female; active and passive," all of which bear relation to the conscious and the unconscious, and the integration of the two demands the anguished immolation of Christ's ego.

The racial significance of this immolation is expressed through the implied geneological connection between the tree of life from which Adam sinned, and the tree of death on which Christ died, effecting a way of redemption for original sin. The affinity related between the source of man's fall and the makings of his redemption is directly related, according to Jung, to the incest taboo. The tree is essentially a maternal symbol, and the crucified god, who appears in many myths, represents at once the subjugation of animal instincts and the sacrifice of the incest tendency. Jung states:

Even the manner of death reveals the symbolic content of this act: the hero suspends himself in the branches of the maternal tree by allowing his arms to be nailed to the cross. We can say that he unites himself with the mother in death and at the same time negates the act of union, paying for his guilt with deadly torment. This act of supreme courage and supreme renunciation is a crushing defeat for man's animal nature . . . The sacrifice is the very reverse of regression--it is a successful canalization of libido into the symbolic equivalent of the mother, and hence a spiritualization of it.³⁹

We may recall that the canalization of the incest tendency consists in projecting the mother image onto an external object and finding meaning in union with that object--for

example, city, nature, one's wife, etc. Christ, in being crucified, at one and the same time finds meaning in union with the mother and transcendence above her, as she exists in the image of the cross, which is also the geneological tree of created being which Adam broke from. Thus, Christ both unites with creation, the mother earth, and transcends her, in one act.

In a letter Everson commented:

. . . Don't forget the key in this crucifixion poem is Magdalene.--I wrote a note to Campo once relating the "maidenly veils of flesh" to the hymen, and this to the rending of the veil of the Temple, and leaving a hole in the sky.--In his great book Yoga Mircea Eliade notes . . . at some point in the process of integration, the union between the spiritual man and the carnal woman must be made--the whore, and comments that Indian thinkers complain that Christianity does not provide for this. I think Magdalene provides the archetype for this, and that unconsciously I was responding to this archetype when I wrote this poem. Not long ago I saw . . . a statue of Rodin, Christ agonized on the cross and a naked Magdalene embracing him in pure (purified) sexual embrace. Another bit of evidence that Christianity does accomodate this archetype and is complete. As I think my poem also proves, written unconsciously as it was.⁴⁰

However, though his poem is evidence that he personally responded to the archetype, one can, I believe, point not only to it, but to works such as D. H. Lawrence's The Man Who Died, and Nikos Kazantzakis' The Last Temptation of Christ, as evidence that the Scriptural account is not enough, and that artists have and will constantly regard the themes and truths of Scripture as not sufficient in themselves, but as needing constant reinterpretation and elaboration, and, perhaps, revision. Thus the view in The Last Temptation of Christ that Scripture has seven levels; thus, Chardin's view that dogma must be regarded not as a static thing, fixed forever by some Latin Father's mind, but as something organic, a merely human view of divine truth, and because divine, ultimately mysterious. And thus, if art reveals another dimension of Scriptural themes, if it illuminates what was dark in Scripture, then we have implicitly the notion of continuing revelation. The very fact, therefore, that a sexual Christ does not appear in Scripture, except perhaps through dim symbols, is probably one of the significant stimuli (for an artist who is Christian) to portray, as Kazantzakis has done, the sexual and passionate elements in a Christ that the Scripture writers, because of their own psychological attitudes, described, I think, much too severely.

This canalization of the incest tendency is also obliquely expressed in "The Making of the Cross." The

. . . the rattler
 Filmed his glinty eye, and found his
 hole.⁴¹

. . . the lancer lifts the imperious
lance;
And the point,
Placed to the rib,
Is pressed.

The point tries;
 Pressed harder,
 Tries.

And in the moment's pause,
 The troubled lancer,
 Lifting his sight,
 Looks sheer in the depths of the dead
 eyes;

And the gaze given back
 Is a gaze to the depths of his own
 dead soul;
 And in the sudden clench of a heart
 convulsed,

Riven by grace,
 The arm lifts;
 And the lance,
 Beautiful,
 Clean,
 A movement matchless and sublime
 As the glide of a dancer,
 Homes to its perfect place.⁴²

Antoninus leaves no doubt that Christ contains within himself feminine elements. Note his description of the lance and the wound:

The lance lives for the wound.
 The wound lives for the lance:

They are made for each other.

This is the passion engendered
together.

This is the pain the Groom brings
to the Bride.

This is the peace

The Bride fulfills in the Groom . . .⁴³

Moreover, this is a wilfull consummation; Christ himself negates himself by bringing the lance to himself, an affirmation of death which brings with it a higher completion.

. . . the Source-Bringer, pinned by
those benedictive hands,

Reaches, in the great outreach of
heart,

Making the shaft to rise, upstabbed,
Hugged in by that huge ingesting power,
Bursting through his corporeal

resistances,

Skin and muscle, gristle and bone,

To the final unquenchable center,

To the ravished hole,

To the heart!⁴⁴

Also note the description of the crucifixion: the nails are "driven into the exquisite wrists;" the lance plunges "through the maidenly veils of flesh."

Thus, unifying opposites within himself Christ

archetypally images the Perfect Self, who is complete in himself, and who, as Antoninus states in "Dionysus and the Beat Generation," guided by the Spirit above, achieves the anguished integration of his rational consciousness and his irrational archaic bestiality.⁴⁵

Having discussed the mandala, the hermaphroditic union, the incest tendency, and their relation to Christ, we will now proceed to discuss more fully the libido's relationship to selfhood. Moreover, in the following discussion, the term eros is to be equated with libido--following Jung's acceptance of Socrates' broad definition.

In "A Savagery of Love," Magdalene as eros (a projection perhaps of Antoninus' anima) likewise achieves inner completion from the crucified logos; she becomes "Bride of the very Christ." Her very eroticism is described in terms of likeness to Christ's love:

A love savage as sin.

What has such love to do with such

sin?

Save that both are total, both

terrible?

.

What is this readiment for love

But a shuddering nakedness,

The seamless robe divested,

Torn violently off,

Where the soul gazes out of its deep
tranquility

And waits for the wound?⁴⁶

Eros is thus viewed as leading to perfection of the self.

That Antoninus regards the aspiration of Eros as rooted in the teleological libidinal hunger of man⁴⁷ is a marked quality of his poetry which finds concrete expression in "A Jubilee for St. Peter Martyr:"

All things--Instinct and Idea,
The fleshseed and the soul,
Nature and Supernature in the
single grasp,
Oned in the mighty impulse--
all things

Seek source.⁴⁸

Eros as a libidinal manifestation is related by Antoninus with the Christian perspective in "Dionysus and the Beat Generation"; Christ is the "symbol of the perfect synthesis between body and soul, instinct and intelligence, Eros and Agape."⁴⁹

Eros' lunge toward Agape in "A Savagery of Love" is observable also in the hermaphroditic image of the mating eagles. In The Integration of the Personality Jung states that the philosopher's stone--that which had the power of transmuting base metals to royal and prolonging life--"was thought of as a living, winged, and hermaphroditic being

of ethereal and luminous nature.⁵⁰ Moreover, the eagle itself symbolizes that which is between earth and heaven, that which is above the physical, stretching for the spiritual.⁵¹ In general, says Jung, the appearance of birds in myth is symbolic of intuitive flights of the mind.⁵² These patterns of symbolism fuse in "A Savagery of Love," and we see in mandala form the mating in the sun of the eagles and the cross, Eros and Agape:

High overhead the eagles, mating,
 Circle into the sun and join there:
 Four wings, one cross.⁵³

The movement of the imagery in "A Savagery of Love" is from the darkness of the "unimaginable continents" which are "Remote, primordial, sunken in the jungle of their superstition" to the cross tearing a "hole in the sky"; that is, there exists a movement from darkness to light, a light discoverable when one has probed to the spiritual base of Eros. This light, this consciousness, states Jung, is integral to the desire for selfhood.

The process of striving for selfhood, Jung states, demands a recognition of the shadow, the content of evil in one's self. It is by the scrutiny of personal evil that one realizes the influence of other archetypes in the self. For example, Antoninus in the introduction to "In The Fictive Wish" and in "A Tribute to Robinson Jeffers" implies that by facing his own imperfections he

came gradually to realize the effect which the mother image, dwelling in the unconscious, had had on his previous life. Not only the archetype of the mother, however, but also the paternal archetype can hinder the drive to selfhood. For example, the child raised by an overly strict father might retain his intense fear of authority and remain weakly docile for the rest of his life. It is necessary, therefore, to unloose oneself also from the harmful effects of the father archetype in order to achieve selfhood.

However, in order for the entire process of facing one's evil and assimilating its attendant revelations to be successful, there must be some purpose or sense of finality set before the self. Regarding this sense of finality, Jung states that the striver toward selfhood will experience a feeling of meaning which reconciles the events of life. This feeling of meaning, which is not necessarily directly apprehendable by consciousness, will manifest itself in dreams and myths as a unifying symbol of some sort. Jung calls the feeling precipitating the image an experience of pure psychic energy, which is the archetype of God. The archetypal image may appear in the form of a union of opposites or a mandala, but it is in fact the God-image pictorially disguised. The most obvious example of the God-image as a reconciling symbol is that of Christ, the incarnated God, joining heaven and

earth. An example of the workings of the unifying symbol is found in Antoninus' "Jacob and the Angel," a poem not included in *The Crooked Lines of God*.

The story of Jacob and Esau is itself archetypal and found in the myths of various countries.⁵⁴ Stripped of various local or national ornaments, the substance of the story is contained in the self's encounter of consciousness with its dark half, symbolized by the twin brother. In "Jacob and the Angel," which deals with this theme, there is also Antoninus' most explicit poetic use of the Oedipal tension, and his most explicit use of the Jungian scheme leading to selfhood. In this scheme, we recall, man matures by facing and assimilating the contents of his unconscious, the archetypes.

The first stanza of "Jacob and the Angel" relates the mother's love for Jacob, Isaac's jealousy, and the mother's guilt causing Jacob to be "hounded out of home."

The mother's fondness wrought the
father's frown.
Supplanter from the beginning,
struggler in the womb,
Heel-holder, the over-reaching scion.
she egged him on.
For her offence she saw him hounded
out of home
Nor lived to look again, ever, on
the longed face.⁵⁵

Jacob encounters the maternal archetype, and the vision of angels becomes for Jacob the symbol which will reconcile his mother's goading him into appropriating the birthright of Esau. "In their intercourse with earth," the laddered angels are "His first liberating sign," and Jacob is "freed from the mother's death-hug."⁵⁶ But the guilt accruing from his incestual desire still remains, and Jacob projects the image of the offended father onto Laban, his mother's brother. Again he encounters the paternal image, suffers serfdom, but assimilates the contents of the father-archetype. Note that there are numerous images of assimilation in the poem; for example: the swallowing of gall, suffering of serfdom, the gathering of the measure of his mind, the extracting of the blessing, and the seizing of the angel of intellection.

. . . he swallowed gall

And suffered the serfdom of those
sweat compounded years.

Suffered and loved and prospered.

Even in bondage

His talents stood him well: the
slat-eyed ewes

Bred neatly, flocks flourished,

his wealth was won.

Seizing his sunk soul-force he
broke for the border;

Faced out the father on the slope
of Galaad.

Faced, forced the offender, and
sudden victor, saw
The signifying angels at the
Camps of God,
Mark of the second liberation.

Father-freed
He gathered up the measure of his
mind, turned home
To offer restitution, expunge the
ancient debt.

Having battled the parental archetypes and emerged victorious,
the battle with Esau remains. "Tall by the boulder,
athwart the torrential flow," the life force of the libido,
"Spied but one shadow menacing that ford. / Esau?" The
rock and water imagery objectify the situation into one
of Everyman desiring the waters of redemption.

Stalking perhaps the hazardous
creek-cross,
To where assail the pilgrim in
his pass,
Bash out his brains, usurp his
anguish-garnered hoard?

Jacob faces the forces of his unconscious:

About his loins the death-dragged
 water seethes,
 Creeling his doom . . .

There is the encounter between intelligence and instinct:

. . . Brother to brother,
 Shadow to lifeless shadow, the twin
 identities

Confront. Deep down his spirit gropes.
 Guided by the angel, the wrestle with his twin becomes
 one generic, of tensions existent within the race.

What conflicts down the long genetic
 line

Suffer their extirpation in the
 wrestler's stance:

The battle explicitly becomes one of encountering the
 archetypes:

How many mockeries of the inscrutable
 archetypes

Must we endure to meet our integration?

Jacob is again able to assimilate the evil within himself;
 he "extracts the specific blessing that he needs," and
 emerges victorious. In the process of union and severance
 from mother, father, and brother archetypes, having been
 guided by the God-archetype manifesting itself in the
 vision of angels, Jacob has evolved to a more integrated
 state of selfhood.

Hurt but truly healed he sways, who

seized

In the heart's black hole the angel of

intellection,

And rose renewed, in the soul's great

upsurge shaped.

His painful deprivations all converge

To make the anguished synthesis of

his perfection.

The man and his instincts in harmony, Jacob faces Esau
in terms of a peaceful polarity. He "meets / The long-
feared brother; who beholds a saint / Measured in the
furious seige of grace, and seeing / Weeps on that placid
neck, kisses the God-calmed face."

Thus, by facing the archetypes of mother, father, and brother, Jacob has been able to determine more clearly his own nature; he assimilated the fact that he desired union with his mother; that because of this desire he felt guilt against the father; and that he himself desired to allow his instincts have their way. By thus experiencing and incorporating the contents of these painful encounters, Jacob has become more conscious of basic facts of his nature--"seized in the heart's black hole the angel of intellection"--and thereby has been able to rise to his own selfhood, "To make the anguished synthesis of his perfection."

Racial Consciousness and Christ

The delineation of archetypal images involved in the process of achieving individual selfhood is relevant also for the race. Just as the individual striving toward selfhood grows in consciousness, so too has the human race itself, from the beginnings to the present, been evolving in consciousness. In his The Origins and History of Consciousness, Erich Neumann states: ". . . the individual ego consciousness has to pass through the same archetypal stages which determined the evolution of consciousness in the life of humanity."⁵⁷ Moreover, this is a creative evolution; that is, over thousands of years the conscious system has absorbed more and more unconscious contents, and progressively enlarged the boundaries of consciousness.

Several aspects of Neumann's theory will be discussed: first, the fact that man is a creature of creative evolution: secondly, that during early stages of civilization man is sometimes seen in myth as being protected by a great mother goddess, which expresses an early blissful relationship with the instincts; thirdly, that when desiring to become independent from his instinctual past, man was often tragically drawn back into it; fourthly, certain characteristics of man when he first began to reflect, to realize that he was not at one with nature--the birth of self consciousness; fifth, matriarchal symbolism; and sixth,

Christ's relationship to the maternal image. Many ramifications, of course, accrue from these general topics; those which are relevant will be discussed at the proper time. While discussing these topics, we will observe that in the poetry of Antoninus, the conception of an evolving consciousness is seen as inherent in Christianity, and that Christ represents the apex of this process.

The creative aspect of evolution, says Neumann, is evident from the differences in the imagery of myths expressed during various stages of civilization. For example, a universal occurrence is that myths written during the beginnings of a civilization symbolically show a primary stage of consciousness in which the self is in the womb. This may be seen in the image of a man floating in a sea, enclosed within a flower, drinking from a fountain in a grove. Here consciousness swims and is fed in the paradisaical sea of instincts, so to speak, and does not differentiate itself from the womb. The "womb" is here meant symbolically, and indicates the place of original bliss to which the individual unconsciously wishes to return. This desire is projected into the imagery of the myth.

Succeeding stages in civilization, however, witness man attempting to achieve individuality, and move away from the sea of instincts toward self-consciousness. The

pull of the womb is strong, however, and sometimes disastrous to the ego; in this stage we see pessimistic images of man drowning in a stormy sea, chased by sea monsters, or being eaten by beasts. For now, states Neumann, the maternal image "overshadows it (the ego consciousness) like a dark and tragic fate."⁵⁸ Transitoriness, mortality, impotence and isolation now color the ego's view of the maternal image. Motifs of fatalism logically accompany the themes in these myths; for example, the world wheel, the humming loom of time, the Three Fates, and the wheel of birth and death.⁵⁹ All of these motifs reflect a pessimistic realization that all man's efforts end in death. Whereas in the earlier stage of consciousness the ego blissfully swam in the ocean of the unborn, now ego consciousness sadly and tragically strains away from the pull of the mother towards selfhood.

Both of these early archetypal stages--the blissful and the tragic--are present in the poem, "The Flight In The Desert," in The Crooked Lines of God. The family in its flight from Herod sees evidence of primitive man striving and failing to achieve independence from the deadly maternal desert.

. . . the desert

Raw, unslakable, its perjured dominion

wholly contained

In the sun's remorseless mandate.

And there the failures: skull of the ox,
Where the animal terror trembled on in
the hollowed eyes;
The catastrophic wheel, split, sandbedded;
And the sad jawbones of a horse. These the
denials
Of the retributive tribes, fiercer than
pestilence
Whose scrupulous realm this was.⁶⁰

Antoninus commented that the image of the "catastrophic wheel, split, sandbedded," symbolized "the abortive sons who have been shrivelled up by premature approximation to father, Phaeton."⁶¹ Phaeton is connected with the image of the sun as patriarchal with its "remorseless mandate." Antoninus' comments in a letter are enlightening, again not only because they are helpful in explaining the meaning of his poetry, but also because they suggest his open attitude at this time, an attitude drastically different from that he expressed in *Prodigious Thrust*.

Barbed wire fence: limits of collective unconscious
scraggled at--those limits exhausted--need for rebirth.
I see the two skulls and the wheel as more failures of
previous attempts--phallic egoism, etc. My own frontiers-
man phantasies. Wheel: primitive mechanization.
Jawbone of a horse--spent libido symbol. My God! The
horse in the conversion of St. Paul.

Antoninus' Eureka! here suggests his affinities with exigetes looking for literary genres in Scripture in order to render the intended meaning of the Scripture writer with greater clarity. In the letter Antoninus continues:

Skull of ox . . . Animal patience? Failure of mere animal endurance and stoicism? I think so . . . That would make three symbols: 1. The perdurable flesh (ox), 2. Collective mechanization effort (wheel), 3. Libido (horse). Samson killed Phillistines with jawbone of an ass . . . Child archetype as symbol of rebirth. Rare in my poems. Here it saves. "What they carried / Carries them."

Important in connection with Everson's mention of the child archetype in this poem is his comment that the manger in "The Wise" is "a mandala and that the Child must be the key. As I had denied progeny through sterilization, and hoped for children in the new marriage--it was the Child that provided the archetype vehicle of faith."⁶²

In contrast to the fate of primitive man, Christ in "The Flight in the Desert" is portrayed in the archetypal image of the mother goddess with the divine child.⁶³

This image, as has been implied earlier, is related to the earlier stage when the child receives all the necessities and is completely dependent on the mother.

The woman lifts up her heart; the

Infant

Knuckles the generous breast, and
feeds.⁶⁴

Moreover, the child itself is an image conveying the idea of possibility of change, future maturation, or renewal.

The birth of self-consciousness (of reflection, when one ceases to live unconsciously, and realizes the "I" that is distinct from the rest of the world) is part of the theme of "The Screech Of The Flesh," a poem in which the self-discovery is related to the birth of racial consciousness. The imagery of this poem is relevant to Neumann's description of primitive man as being especially conscious of his animality and bodily functions, an awareness which is carried over into his myths. Eating and excreting, for example, symbolized to the primitive psyche assimilation and expression of what was formerly unknown. They learned or "devoured," so to speak, what was previously dark or unconscious; then they were able to express or produce (excrete) from this knowledge. Says Neumann: "When we talk of the conscious mind 'assimilating' an unconscious content, we are not saying much more than is implicit in the symbol of eating and digesting."⁶⁵ In "The Screech Of The Flesh" this imagery is present in the poet's recollection of his emergence from the darkness of the instinctual life.

I darkled the fields of my childhood,
The country roads of my young manhood,

And in the streets, the streets of my
full maturity.

All these, the darkling days of my
ignorance.

And did run, and reveled in the run.

And knew not where I ran, nor why,

I ran, but I had not understanding.⁶⁶

The poet recalls his former mystical participation in nature:

I lay on the hill as a beast of the hill
which I knew as the hill beast knows.

I sang as the linnet, that sings from a
throbbing pride of self

Just to be singing. I sang as a bird, that
bursts with a bigness of heart,

And makes it to sing, nor ever asks of the
source of its song,

But sings for the singing. I sang on the
steepness of the hill

Nor knew why I sang.⁶⁷

The primitive food-dung images are connected with the poet questioning his participation in nature:

For how shall the eater who eats but
the passable thing of the earth

Be filled with his act of eating?

Belly will fill; blood will fill of the
eaten thing; body will fill.

Bowels will fill of the eaten thing; dung
 be given back to the earth . . .⁶⁸

The break from the participation mystique occurs when it is discovered that the soul's dissolution in its former womb-bliss is impossible. This personal revelation is coupled thematically with the race emerging from the maternal matrix, which "casts," (forms) the soul onto shore and "laps" (lavishes) it.

I sank my soul in the salt of the sea, and
 the very sea disclaimed it.

And gave it back,

Casting it.

As at the recession

Of the waters

The live thing

Lay on the edge of the sea.

And the sea lapped it,

And it lifted,

It put up its head;

As the worm,

Knocked out of the apple,

Lifts up its head.

So did it lift.⁶⁹

The untreed apple and the worm here symbolize the self distinguishing itself from its unconscious, bestial beginnings. This alludes also to the fall--man is cut off from the geneological tree of life, on which he existed unconsciously,

and has fallen into consciousness.

So did it lift up its own limp head

And open its own blear eye.

The soul that was given back from

the sea

Looked up, to know itself not of

the dead.⁷⁰

Released from nature's annihilating cycle, he--the poet--is given to know that God is the fulfillment of the soul's surge.

For I never had been of His knowledge, nor

was I yet of His way.

Nor knew His way was the way of man, and His

way the way of the soul.⁷¹

Stages of consciousness are also part of the thematic content of "The Uncouth." As is evident from the discussion of the symbolism of the emerging consciousness, the primitive unconsciously expresses his myth with a marked concentration on matriarchal imagery. Regarding the womb-image, Neumann states: "Anything deep--abyss, valley, ground, also the sea and the bottom of the sea, fountains, lakes and pools, the earth, the underworld, the cave, the house and the city--all are part of this archetype."⁷² In "The Uncouth" the shepherds are representative of primitive man, drawn to maternal comfort, as symbolized by the images of enclosure:

. . . the valley, warm;
 . . . the sheltered fields, the snug
 Sequestered folds . . .⁷³

To further emphasize their primitiveness, the shepherds are described as similar to animals:

. . . their ways were of sheep;
 They wore rough skins of sheep;
 And the stink of sheep hung everywhere
 about them.⁷⁴

At "the wilderness edge" they are "a humanity / That had demonstrated only the crude capacity to survive; / The brows hardly clefted by thought." Yet it is to these, with their "prime, animal aptitude for life" that the angel will come with the good tidings, and not to the "hard-bitten settlers" and merchants with their perversely contrived mentality.

And the world, of whom these the uncouth
 were most despised,
 Mocked off the streets to keep the cold
 nightwatches there
 Over the wilderness-hearted earth,
 Dreamed blindly on of the transforming
 grace

These were now to receive.⁷⁵

The symbolism of enclosure as it appears in "Gethsemani" also reflects a clinging to the mother image.

In this case, the mother image is the city. However, even though the inhabitants of city exist on a higher stage of consciousness than do the shepherds, they yet, in their refusal to go beyond the city, exhibit a regressive tendency; in other words, they are complacent in their comfort, instead of desiring to transcend their human condition--they are blind to further possibilities of a selfhood lived with divinity as its aim. Here Antoninus stated:

Rather they expect the charisma from above whereas it actually comes from below. Because the shepherds give themselves to the sheep they see the angel.

Because the settlers cannot acknowledge the shepherders, they cannot see the angel.

Earlier in his annotations on this poem Antoninus stated: "Strange how what would become a basic theological formula for me--"The incarnational movement is always down"--is established symbolically and aesthetically--though in my first Christian work." While Christ struggles with "The great ominous Flogger," in order to emerge purified and achieve the diamond ray shining from God to man, the city sleeps on unconsciously, incestuously curled in wombs civil and human.

The City simmers its fires
Stains the sky.

What hope from it,
 Sunk in its purblind role?
 What hope for it
 Drunken in slumber?
 The sleep-filled faces,
 The thousand-thickened dreams?
 Slack mouths slobber the pillow,
 The tilting heads
 Nod together;
 Light hands that loosely curl
 Light arms that cross.⁷⁶

Christ's relationship with the continuum of consciousness is further amplified in "The Wise," a poem following "The Coming," which is about the birth of Christ. In "The Wise" is a passage portraying Christ as completing both the individual and racial development, ontogeny and phylogeny. The Magi hurry to the scene of birth, for

Once, as it may, in the life of man'
 Once, as it was in the life of mankind,
 All is corrected.⁷⁷

In his annotations Antoninus commented that a stages-of-consciousness sequence existed in "Triptych": "The Uncouth" deals with primitive consciousness; "The Coming" with the breakthrough; and "The Wise" with enlightenment.

Thus, Antoninus' description in "Dionysus and the Beat Generation" of Christ as the supreme Archetype is

here poetically articulated. He is the exemplification of selfhood, and at the same time comprehends the experiences of the race. This comprehension of racial experience is expressed more fully in "Gethsemani." Christ's confrontation of his instinctuality is an encounter with all historical experiences of sin:

The city stains.
 Jerusalem.
 Rome, half dead,
 Stinks with its crime.
 Athens lips its dust.
 The luminous face of Paris
 And London's puckered brow
 Match looks in time;
 While brash New York
 Fingers its blithe heart.
 Stains . . .⁷⁸

And through Christ's real and archetypal conquest of evil, man is opened: "Good Friday / Draws like a scalpel / On the mordant / Soul of man,"⁷⁹ and "Mankind broke out of History"⁸⁰ into the consciousness of the eternal.

Breaking into eternal consciousness is more vividly portrayed in "A Jubilee For St. Peter Martyr," a poem in which St. Peter is described as living "the long gestation of the Word."

That was the birth that drove him.

His death approaching out of his
earliest years
Grew in him toward an ultimate emergence
His every act must verify, his whole
speech affirm:
City to city the stamp of recognition
Struck on the consciousness of men.
Everywhere the luminous delineation
of the Real
Swept him in the seizure of its power.

St. Peter is slain and entered into paradise. The distinction between the earthly and the heavenly is seen in terms of consciousness.

. . . And there his stunned sight,
That stared about him as he weakly
 roused,
perceived old friendships in the hosted
 dead
Wreathed round in welcome; as mothers
 might
Back from their birth-death darkness,
Open their eyes into the floating faces
 of their kin . . .

Sight, consciousness, is also the attribute most stressed of God:

God, who tempers all the angels in His
gaze,

Has swept him there. The great Eye,
radiant,
From out whose scopeless orb all being
pours,
Prints now his final impress on his
Saint.
. . . his new eyes, opened unto Life,
look only in.

The theme of consciousness as present in "A Savagery of Love" has already been discussed in part. However, the figure of Christ and the cross tearing a hole in the sky also bears relation to what Neumann describes as the final archetypal stage of consciousness. In this stage, says Neumann, the hero has conquered the sea, has killed the maternal dragon and now stands victoriously above it, independent of the womb and complete in his individuality. Neumann states:

We began with the ego in the womb of the parental . . . dragon, curled up like an embryo in the sheltering fusion of inside and outside and the world and unconscious. We end, as in an alchemical picture, with the hermaphrodite standing upon this dragon: by virtue of its own synthetic being it has overcome the primal situation, above it hangs the crown of self, and in its heart glows the diamond.⁸¹

Thus, Christ's hermaphroditic nature not only

Although Antoninus has been influenced by the discoveries of depth-psychology, his view of God is significantly different from that expounded by Jung and Neumann, for example. Whereas Jung and Neumann speak--and rightly so, as psychologists--of the God-image solely as it exists in the human person, Antoninus sees a transcendent reality as the source of the human imprint. Antoninus sees and reveals his view of God as both transcendent and immanent in part two of The Crooked Lines of God. In "Canticle to the Waterbirds," for example, Antoninus views the bird's unconscious participation in divine teleology--"Wholly in Providence you spring"--as a lesson to man. Both bird and man share in the hierarchy of God's immanence;

For God has given you the imponderable grace
to be His verification,
Outside the mulled incertitude of our
forensic choices;
That you, our lessers in the rich hegemony
of Being

May serve as testament to what a creature is,
And what creation owes.⁸²

The poet's mystical consciousness here expresses a Franciscan view of creation's affinity with a God who is immanent in nature--"calligraphed unendingly on trees, peaks, rivers, oceans, lakes . . ." as Antoninus states in his foreword to The Crooked Lines of God.⁸³

God is immanent, however, not only in external creation, but also in the human person. In "Hospice of the Word," a poem written while Everson worked in the Oakland slums, the test of faith is to see divinity behind the "sin-deformed face."

For in the crucible of revulsion
Love is made whole. St. Francis
Ran on gooseflesh toward the leper's
sore:

He saw His God. Improbable and rare,
Most priceless ingredient,
It lurks behind the stubble beards.⁸⁴

Whereas the two poems above deal with the immanence of God, "A Penitential Psalm" expresses his transcendence. Prefixed by a quotation from The Dark Night of the Soul by St. John of the Cross, the psalm describes the soul as appearing impure and hateful when divine light shines upon it, because then the disparity between God and man is seen. Antoninus views himself:

To the very soul, steeped; in stealth
stained;

With sweat, by the body's saltiness,
streaked.

0 coarse-grained soul! 0 crudity! 0 thing
of trash!

When will the all-comprehending God,
offended,

Make it right?⁸⁵

Mysticism and Selfhood

The very titles of the three parts of The Crooked Lines of God, "Out of the Depths," "In The Crucible," and "Out of the Ash," suggest that it is a treatment at once mystical, alchemical, and psychological--all three of which are able to be placed beneath an integral theme: the transformation of the soul. That the volume, though unconsciously incorporating various psychological concepts, still remains within the tradition of mystical literature is further evidenced by its purgation-illumination-union structure. Part one deals with beginnings, the soul purging itself from its past; the poem giving the best example of this is "The Screed of the Flesh." Part two deals with vision of God; the soul is illuminated with sight of God--this is most explicitly manifested in "Canticle to the Waterbirds," "A Penitential Psalm," and "Hospice of the Word." Part three deals chiefly with union with God,

witnessed in its most intense form in "A Savagery of Love," and "A Jubilee for St. Peter Martyr."

Inherent in this mystical orientation, however, is the movement toward selfhood. We recall that Jung states that in the process of striving for selfhood the individual is guided by a reconciling symbol, which symbol is an expression of the archetype of God in the collective unconscious. This process is seen in "Jacob and the Angel," a poem in which Jacob, guided by the vision of angels, is able to assimilate the influence of parental archetypes and achieve selfhood, which implies a growth in consciousness. The chief points in Jung's diagram are comprehended in what Evelyn Underhill states are the main components of the full mystical experience. These are: first, that there be a vision or consciousness of absolute perfection; secondly, that the mystic is compelled by this vision to effect an inner transformation.⁸⁶ Thus, mysticism, in moving toward fuller participation in the All, is at the same time a movement toward greater consciousness, and inherently contains within it the psychological process leading to selfhood.

Thus, we have seen that in The Crooked Lines of God Antoninus has unconsciously synthesized various discoveries of depth psychology into the Christian perspective. However, the word synthesis, because it implies a previous war of thesis and antithesis, is perhaps an incorrect

term. Instead, it would be more appropriate to state that Antoninus sees Christianity as inherently comprehending what depth psychology has made explicit--the fact of man, grounded in the human condition, moving toward transcendence both individually and racially. Christ is viewed as one whose vision is the culmination of both individual and racial consciousness. And the person of Christ, by his "descent from divinity" into an instinctually based humanity, both images and makes possible the way of man's evolution from creaturehood to a consciousness in divinity.

NOTES

¹64, M. A. thesis. Of course, if one defines an anarchist not as one who desires the abolition of law, but as one who demands great changes in the present status of things, perhaps one could accept Everson's view of himself as an anarchist. Or, if a Catholic anarchist is one who sees all systems of thought outside of Catholicism as needing change, then also one could see how Everson's comment is valid.

²64, M. A. thesis.

³The Residual Years, 95-96.

⁴M. A. thesis, 64.

⁵Ibid., 66.

⁶Brother Antoninus, "Dionysus and the Beat Generation," Fresco, IX (Summer, 1959), 5.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., 4.

¹⁰Brother Antoninus, "The Artist and Religious Life," The American Benedictine Review, II (Spring, 1960), 225.

¹¹Ibid., 235. On his statement that art since the Renaissance has lacked a collective appeal, Antoninus commented: "too simplistic a rendition of my thought." 69, M. A. thesis.

¹²The Crooked Lines of God, 23..

¹³Antoninus refers specifically to the chapter "Revelation and the Unconscious," in God and the Unconscious, by Victor White, O. P. (Chicago, 1952). The work is prefaced by Jung.

¹⁴A copy of the introduction to this unpublished work was sent me by Allan Campo, who has completed a thesis on Brother Antoninus at Loyola University in Los Angeles. The copy Allan Campo sent me has no pagination.

¹⁵Brother Antoninus, "A Tribute to Robinson Jeffers," The Critic, xx (June-July, 1962), 15.

¹⁶Everson commented: "In Socrates' sense that everything demonic is the intermediary between God and man." 71, M. A. thesis. See pages 110-11 of this dissertation.

¹⁷Carl Gustave Jung, Psyche and Symbol, Edited by Violet S. de Loslo, Translated by Cary Boynes and F. C. R.

Hull (New York: Doubleday, 1958), xv, xvi.

¹⁸Carl Gustave Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, Edited by Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, and Gerhard Adler, Translated by R. F. C. Hull (Ballingen Series xx; N. Y.: Pantheon Books, 1953), 120. The work referred to is Conrad Khunrath's "Confession."

¹⁹M. A. thesis, 75.

²⁰The Crooked Lines of God, 25.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., 26.

²³Ibid., 26-27.

²⁴The Residual Years, 104.

²⁵Carl Gustave Jung, Symbols of Transformation, Translated by R. F. C. Hull (3 vol: Bollingen Series xx; New York: Harper Brothers, 1962) I, 222. This volume was printed in one volume by Pantheon Books for the Ballingen Foundation in 1956. The original English Translation is Psychology and the Unconscious, published in America in 1916.

²⁶Ibid., 166.

²⁷Everson commented: "The symbol does not fail; we fail to symbol." 81, M. A. thesis.

²⁸To Fred Rizzo, dated January 28, 1964.

²⁹The Crooked Lines of God, 28.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., 38.

³²Ibid., 27-36.

³³In the same letter mentioned above (footnote 28) Antoninus commented: "I see the Mount of Olives as the symbol of the Neglected Garden after the Fall, with the City the symbol of man's effort to create an edifice built on ego-sufficiency: The Whore of Babylon. (These intuitions just came today.) The poem is stretched between these two polarities. (See the image of the City in the first part of Thrust in Ramparts.) But after the incest problem has been met the city can emerge as beneficial in 'Canticle to the Great Mother of God.'"

The incest problem Antoninus refers to above was his own problem, for incest is what he was committing with the Catholic Church during the phase of his life in which he wrote Prodigious Thrust (The sensuality in the work gives evidence to this.). And Prodigious Thrust, of course, falls between The Crooked Lines of God and Hazards of Holiness, which contains "Canticle to the Great Mother of God." If we can regard an Essentialist as one who commits incest with a system of some sort, then Antoninus by his own admission

(in a letter to be quoted in the next chapter) is guilty of such.

³⁴The Crooked Lines of God, 82-83.

³⁵Everson comment: "Purely unconscious. But how apt!" 85, M. A. thesis.

³⁶Again Everson mentions that this was purely unconscious. What is interesting is the fact that The Crooked Lines of God is filled with seemingly conscious Jungian maneuvers of thought, in terms of the use of particular symbols and images, etc.; and that Hazards of Holiness seems fraught with Chardinian maneuvers. However, it was not until after The Crooked Lines of God that Everson states that he came into contact with Jung; and it was not until after Hazards of Holiness that he came into contact with the writings of Chardin, with which, though he sharply disagrees on several issues, he none the less has much in common in his ideas in Hazards.

³⁷The Crooked Lines of God, 72.

³⁸Ibid., 73.

³⁹Symbols of Transfiguration, II, 263.

⁴⁰To Fred Rizzo, Jan. 28, 1964.

⁴¹The Crooked Lines of God, 22.

⁴²Ibid., 77-78.

⁴³Ibid., 75.

⁴⁴Ibid., 79.

⁴⁵Everson commented: "But not Christ. He was born perfect and complete. It was the total sacrifice of that perfection that redeemed the race." 89. M. A. thesis. However, I think Everson is here ignoring the human nature of Christ, which could, according to even orthodox theologians, grow.

⁴⁶The Crooked Lines of God, 74-75.

⁴⁷Regarding this libidinal drive--both Antoninus and Jung would reject a one to one correspondence of libido and sexual desire. For both, libido, or eros, is that will to life underlying all appetites. Commenting on the canalization of the libidinal urge in literature, Jung states of the Hymn of Job: "The primitive power which Job's Hymn of Creation vindicates, absolute and inexorable, unjust and superhuman, is a genuine and authentic attribute of the natural instinct and fate which "leads us to life," and which makes "all the world guilty before God, (Romans 3:19) and against which all struggle is vain. Nothing remains for mankind but to work in harmony with this will." (page 47, Symbols of Transformation, Vol. I.) To work in harmony with this will, Jung states further, it is the

task of the self (which bears relation to Antoninus' idea of the Intuition) to harmonize both the conscious and the unconscious.

⁴⁸The Crooked Lines of God, 70.

⁴⁹"Dionysus and the Beat Generation," Fresco, 5.

⁵⁰Carl Gustave Jung, The Integration of the Personality, Translated by Stanley M. Dell (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1950), 47.

⁵¹Psyche and Symbol, 54.

⁵²The Integration of the Personality, 180.

⁵³The Crooked Lines of God, 73.

⁵⁴Erich Neumann, The Origins and History of Consciousness, Translated by R. F. C. Hull (Bollingen Series xlii; New York: Pantheon Brooks, 1954), 97AA.

⁵⁵Brother Antoninus, "Jacob and the Angel," Jubilee (August, 1959). All subsequent quotations of "Jacob and the Angel" are taken from this.

⁵⁶Everson commented: "And over the well-dark water gazed on the sudden bride" transfers the imago from the elementary (maternal) to the transfiguring (bride) symbol. What I did not understand when I wrote the poem is that the split in the anima (Rachel-Leah) is the clue to the

homosexuality--Leah, the erotic attraction to the father--only overcome after he had faced out Esau. Or more probably, Leah is Esau's anima. This would explain how Jacob could bed Leah before his true love." 95, M. A. thesis. Here we see an example of the way in which Everson attempts to illuminate what is obscure in Scripture, and how his art is therefore an instance of that type of art which "continues revelation." The notion of "continuing revelation" is of course implicit in the Romantic Movement with its emphasis on plumbing the unconscious and making the inner outer. Everson, therefore, in spite of what he says discursively in Prodigious Thrust, in his poetry is a Christian Romantic. He, like T. S. Eliot, has, for the most part, the attitude of the classicist in his prose; but unlike Eliot, Everson in his poetry--in spite of dogmatic sections--departs from a static view of dogma, that view so often held by Christian poets. For example, in the poetry of the English religious Metaphysical poets, and in the work of the American Edward Taylor, we do not see, for the most part, scripture reinterpreted; rather, dogmas act as absolutes.

⁵⁷The Origins and History of Consciousness, xvi.

⁵⁸Ibid., 45.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰The Crooked Lines of God, 19.

⁶¹101, M. A. thesis.

⁶²Allan Campo's M. A. thesis, page 82. The fact that Everson states in Prodigious Thrust that his breakthrough to faith occurred during a Christmas mass in a Catholic Church decorated with the manger scene is, I think, psychologically relevant, in that he saw in Christianity what he had not seen before, and what he was badly in need of at the time, and that is the possibility of rebirth of some kind.

⁶³See page 43ff in The Origins and History of Consciousness.

⁶⁴The Crooked Lines of God, 20.

⁶⁵The Origins and History of Consciousness, 30.

⁶⁶The Crooked Lines of God, 43.

⁶⁷Ibid., 46.

⁶⁸Ibid., 44.

⁶⁹Ibid., 48.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid., 49.

⁷²The Origins and History of Consciousness, 14.

⁷³The Crooked Lines of God, 13.

⁷⁴Ibid., 14.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid., 30.

⁷⁷Ibid., 17.

⁷⁸Ibid., 33.

⁷⁹Ibid., 40.

⁸⁰Ibid., 39.

⁸¹The Origins and History of Consciousness, 418.

⁸²The Crooked Lines of God, 59.

⁸³Ibid., 7.

⁸⁴Ibid., 65.

⁸⁵Ibid., 62.

⁸⁶Evelyn Underbill, Mysticism (Twelfth Edition; New York: Menden Brooks, 1958), 90.

CHAPTER IV

PRODIGIOUS THRUST: THE ESSENTIALISTIC PHASE

Generalizations

Prodigious Thrust is a strange book, powerful and compelling at times, but often tyrannical and repulsive. It is a combination of comments on the neuroses of the time, of poetry sometimes beautiful and achieved, and at other times arrogantly propagandistic, of prose that moves from passages with a Faulknerian intensity to sections of loud and hollow rhetoric, of aesthetic theories, and, for the most part, of unabashedly dogmatic apologetics. It is also a book which in the life of William Everson marks a phase which he himself has termed Essentialistic, as opposed to Existentialistic. The reader of Prodigious Thrust looks, as it were, into a mind in some ways like Pascal's in that Everson feels and sees everywhere the push and pull of being and non-being, of God and the powers of darkness. And though he is not always logical in his arguments, his character emerges as one in many ways compelling because of the range and depth of his experiences.

In that he discusses his personal agonies and accomplishments with no lack of emotion Everson is more like Augustine. It is in fact Augustine with whom Everson feels a definite affinity, as is evidenced by direct allusions to him, and sometimes by passages which are perhaps unconscious rephrasings of Augustine's rhetorically expressed theology. For example, a parallel of Augustine's view of the Felix Culpa can be seen in Antoninus' "O terrible paradox! It is in sin that he will learn!" Like Augustine, throughout Prodigious Thrust Antoninus feels himself to be the sinner who--having found meaning in Christianity--feels compelled to confess his past sins and to mark severely the boundaries between the sacred and profane. He is the one time enemy of the Church who sees with eyes now chastened by experience. For mainly Prodigious Thrust is the story of Everson's conversion. Throughout the book he is compulsively occupied with explaining how the Catholic Church fulfilled his quest for meaning, a quest observable in the whole of his canon. Significantly, "centrality" is a frequent word in Prodigious Thrust, reflecting as it does Everson's belief that his past wanderings, which he now sees as peripheral, had found a home in a system of belief.

This chapter will be concerned with a study of the manner in which Antoninus affirmed the Church after his conversion; with the fact that after his conversion he denounced his past life in which Eros had played so great

a part; and with the nature of his essentialistic attachment to the fixed order within the church. We shall see, I believe, how his severe affirmation of institutional order follows logically from his pre-conversion disillusionment with Eros, with individualism (his pacifism), and with his quest for a natural teleology (the disappointment of which quest is seen in poems such as "Lava Bed" and "Chronicle of Division.")

Looking ahead, one should be aware that later Antoninus revised certain of his views in Prodigious Thrust. Later he attempts to hold the essentialistic and existentialistic in a dynamic equilibrium; he reaffirms Eros, though with various qualifications; he emphasizes the necessity of the charismatic or prophetic vision, that which gives the race new illuminations, as a necessary counterbalance to the institutional vision which asserts the necessity of order. Even more important in terms of the man is the attitude Everson would himself take towards his views in Prodigious Thrust. We will see that his attitude toward his own life bears many resemblances to that of the Romantic Artist: who wishes to utter or make known the truths hidden in his unconscious, so that the lives of other men might in some way be illuminated. The fact that the brunt of Everson's poetry is biographical in itself allies Everson with the Romantic Tradition. One can, I think, with many rewards, see almost all of Everson's writings as contributing to one long Prelude.

Radical Catholicism

Among the attitudes which mark Antoninus' radical Catholicism during this period are his almost unqualified affirmations of the Church as institution, his compulsive desire for order, and his overbearing legalism. All of these, of course, exemplify the fact that Antoninus went through a phase in which he adapted himself to the principles involved with restraint, moderation, dogma, and law within the system of the Church. This type of attitude is an example of what in psychology is termed the Reality Principle. A practical definition of this principle is found in Marcuse's Eros and Civilization:

It (the organized ego) strives for "what is useful" and what can be obtained without damage to itself and to its vital environment. Under the reality principle, the human being develops the function of reason: it learns to "test" the reality, to distinguish good from bad, true and false, useful and harmful. Man acquires the faculties of attention, memory, and judgment. He becomes a conscious thinking subject, geared to a rationality which is imposed upon him from outside.¹

Immediately we can contrast certain of Antoninus' attitudes in Prodigious Thrust with those he had asserted earlier. Instead of being intuitively involved with the universe (or nature at least) in a participation mystique,

as he had been in San Joaquin, Antoninus now rationally splits the universe into the sacred and profane, into Eros and Agape, into nature and supernature, and most of the time his ax falls heavy. He sees his reasoning, his theologizing, of course, as a tool of faith. But his faith is not at this time the faith of a Marcel, an Unamuno, or a Chardin; it is not the faith which unifies, but the faith that divides. His ideas in Prodigious Thrust would, I'm sure, be severely criticized by liberal critics of his own faith, men such as Rahner, Kung, and Goldbrunner. That Antoninus has become an apologist is understandable, but he quite often ignores the individual conscience (thus contradicting traditional Catholic theology), and his arguments for the faith are simplistic. For example, he says "Any system of value other than Catholicism is bound to be deficient regardless how much worth it might have in specific areas². . . ." Having perhaps immersed himself in scholasticism or Thomism in particular, he is bold enough to state "Immortality is a truth of faith, but it is also a truth of reason. Long before Christ the philosophers proved it."³ And discussing the spiritual validity of non-sacramental marriage, Antoninus, perhaps subconsciously countering his previous glorifications of Eros, affirms the necessity of a marriage to be sacramentalized in order to be spiritually complete. "Regardless how fast a race is won, if the meet is not official the winning time is never entered in the records."⁴

The "official" time, or the letter of the law is also emphasized by Everson in his poem "At the Edge"--included in Prodigious Thrust--in which he discusses damnation and the damned in conservative traditional terms. In this poem he sees the damned as freely choosing to reside in a hell which is eternal. This view of a hell which is eternal and of a God who will permit an eternal split between the saved and the damned is in sharp contrast with, for example, Kazantzakis' view of hell in The Last Temptation of Christ. In this book Kazantzakis "continues the revelation" of scripture by writing a revision (re-seeing) of the parable of Lazarus and Dives. In Kazantzakis' version Lazarus not only comes down from heaven to console Dives, but also takes Dives back up into heaven with him. This view--drastically different from that of Antoninus in Prodigious Thrust--is similar to what Chardin implies in The Divine Milieu and Hymn to the Universe, and to Martin Buber's view in "The Two Foci of the Jewish Soul," an essay which affirms that the divine will cannot ultimately be thwarted, that there will be no eternal split (as there is in Iranian myth, which influenced the Christian Scripture writers) between good and evil, light and darkness, sheep and goats, but that eventually all things will be reconciled with divinity. A similar perspective is held by Ingemar Bergman in his film "The Devil's Eye."

The opposite perspective held by Antoninus in his

autobiography, though it can be seen in part as a result of his conversion to Catholicism, can also be seen, I believe, as a logical ramification of his self-righteousness. Those who take an intense pride in their beliefs are most apt to condemn those of others. This attitude of self-righteousness occurs frequently in Prodigious Thrust, as it does, for example, when Antoninus speaks to those who have abused the gift of sex.

Farewell, poor souls. I see you in your inner ruin,
and know the remedy, but you have no need, you will
not be told. Suffer it out, most miserable,
pale wounded warriors of the night, pale fitful
fighters. Time is too much for you yet, life is
too much. Break your pride on your own aggression,
but learn! learn! When grace comes to you, seal up
the crevice of those fractured hearts, and stand
aright. I leave you.⁵

Following such denunciations there is frequently expressed the attitude of "I was like that once. I too was a rebel, and I know how you rebels feel, but now I see the light." Antoninus supports his condemnations with vague affirmations of "Truth as absolute." For example, when Antoninus points to the errors of his liberal friends more is revealed about Antoninus than is revealed about his friends. In the following discursive passage of poetry Antoninus is recalling his liberal past:

For conscience, righteously vested,
 The reason's purest gift,
 Is clearly anterior to truth,
 And must subserve it.
 But this we would not reckon;
 This we refused to see.
 Truth, lost in the speculative
 Errors of the past,
 Had ceased as absolute.⁶

Here is an example of fervor producing myopia. Antoninus implies that truth is clearly evident. He also states that he and his liberal friends were insincere in their search. "But this we would not reckon; / This we refused to see." And if Antoninus at this time identified the absolute truth with the faith he himself adopted, then he is guilty of committing one of the most shallow-minded sins of the "faithful:" he states (in accordance with Catholic theology) that faith is a gift, but none the less feels compelled to condemn those who do not have this gift.

The Reality Principle

Antoninus' view of the sacredness of the Catholic Church and her saints and the non-sacredness of what is not Catholic appear in such statements as ". . . To come to Her (the Church) with anything less than confidence is an act of real irreverence. Why? Because she is of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived."⁷ At times

he views the Church's laws as static. For example, discussing the Church's attitude toward birth control Antoninus says "Those who, in their abysmal incomprehension, can be heard to glower: 'The facts of modern life will compel the Church to reverse her stand on contraception' simply have no grasp of her supernatural position."⁸ Though birth control is even now not sanctioned officially by the Church, none the less absolution is being granted by liberal priests having received permission from Rome to those who use it "in good conscience." Antoninus' tyrannical affirmations of what the Church calls sacred over what the Church calls profane can also be seen in the sad section in which he states that he prefers Mother Cabrini over Eugene Debs, and in which he conjectures whether anyone has prayed to Debs for intercession.

Concomitant with these attitudes is Antoninus' misunderstanding of the Protestant spirit. Speaking of how the woman he loved helped to show him the strictures of the Protestant view, he says:

All that inherited Protestant rectitude, like a Pharisee convinced of the virtue of his willfulness, proud to stand neck deep in vice and swear to the world I did no wrong, swear to the world that my conscience was my God and my conscience was clear-- neck deep in sin and too proud to know it--for me to see this Catholic woman, in the throes of physical

passion or convulsed with guilt, plead of the immanent God, acknowledge and acknowledge and acknowledge her own corruptness, and break in twain in the corrupted knowledge; this is the evidence. It is in these extremes that the soul comes to its proof.⁹

Perhaps because what he now holds as meaningful is a system of values antithetical to those he had held in his pre-conversion days, Antoninus feels a compulsion--as did Augustine--to condemn his own past, to visualize his past searchings as ego-centered and animalistic--"I, a pagan, lay like a ravenous animal mauling its prey" He does not see, as undoubtedly his critics will, the validity of his pre-conversion quests for meaning. For the most part, he has at this time substituted the super-ego of the Church for his own, as is suggested to the reader encountering Antoninus' discussions of damnation and hell.

That he does attach himself to the order of the Church Antoninus admits readily in Prodigious Thrust. He confesses himself to be a rigorist, one who would obey the Church's every letter of the law.

As far as its earthly existence is concerned, the soul in this extremity seeks one thing only, to quench the darkness that rages within it, and that has no end To quench it by a more perfect conforming to the divine exemplar, which it cannot see, but the forces of whose demand it feels

everywhere upon it, a magnetism of such intensity as to leave it agonized in the glare of its limitations. Its deficiencies are its torture. The least freedom fills it with apprehension that it may capitulate. It hates its free will because that exercise may tempt it to deflect. It seeks a context which will never let it deviate from the invisible force that has filled its being.¹⁰

This desire for fixity epitomizes the Reality principle, or Thanatos, the death instinct, the desire for the peace, the "order," the unchanging state of death, the desire for a reorganization in a womb-like situation in which consciousness of pain is annihilated. Norman Brown's statement in Life Against Death that "There is an intrinsic connection between social organization and neurosis,"¹¹ and the existential view of the organization man as fixated and deadened, are both relevant here. Because in his own mind Antoninus has made this order sacred, he finds it necessary to destroy any threat to it such as doubt. Describing the pull of doubt upon him, Antoninus says

But then I would shake myself free, and tear myself loose from the bite of that devil, whose realm is the imagination, where he lords it over the images of the deep unconscious, and plays upon the antipathies of the heart like seductive magic.¹²

Needless to say, this somewhat counters Blake's view of

the imagination as the divine in man, and with its "Watch out!" parallels the rationalistic view of men such as Samuel Johnson, who titled one of the chapters in Rasselas "On the Dangerous Prevalence of the Imagination."

That Antoninus would see doubt as diabolic rather than natural, and to be condemned rather than to be understood is not only sad but illustrates the fact that he, like many another Christian rigorist, at this time remembers too much the resurrection, and has forgotten the "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" of Christ. It is, however, consistent with his self-righteousness and with his at this time radical acceptance of Catholicism. Antoninus' enthusiasm in Prodigious Thrust can be better understood, I think, in light of one of the statements made by Tillich in his excellent discussion of the relationship between faith and doubt in Dynamics of Faith: "In those who rest on their unshakable faith, pharisaism and fanaticism are the unmistakable symptoms of doubt which has been repressed." And the fact that at this time he also feels a compulsion to attack those "pagan" attitudes he had adopted in the past can perhaps be somewhat better understood in terms of what Sullivan says in Concepts of Modern Psychiatry:

The person who believes that he voluntarily cut loose from his earlier moorings and by choice accepted new dogmata, in which he has diligently indoctrinated

himself, is quite certain to be a person who has suffered great insecurity. He is often a person whose self-organization is derogatory and hateful. The new movement has given him group support for the expression of ancient personal hostilities that are now directed against the group from which he has come . . . The new ideology is especially palliative of conflict in its promise of a better world that is to rise from the debris to which the present order must first be reduced.¹³

The Romantic Artist, The "Rebel"

But there is another Antoninus in Prodigious Thrust, too seldom seen, but none the less existing, and this is the Antoninus who is critical of the system with which he is involved, the poet dedicated to his art, and the humble artist who admits that he discovered a natural mysticism in the works of D. H. Lawrence. Both his affirmation of a natural mysticism and his criticism of Catholicism reveal the remnants of the earlier Everson. That these attitudes may seem to contradict other attitudes expressed in Prodigious Thrust is, of course, provocative, but this fact should not dissuade a further examination of the man, for Prodigious Thrust is first and foremost the story of a man of intense emotions whose entire life has been spent searching for meaning. It is only secondarily a book on apologetics, Eros, and aesthetics. At certain points in

the book it appears that his searching has ceased and come to rest in what he regards as the dynamic equilibrium of the Church. However, even while this book was being written his critical views were not entirely suppressed. For example, at one point in Prodigious Thrust Antoninus felt that he was slighted by a monk on the monastery grounds. He comments,

How, I wonder, does one defend oneself against an epithet? Are these "born Catholics" so omniscient that their most complacent opinion approximates the authority of an infallible definition? This Irish American clerical mentality, stabilized in a convenient modus vivendi with middle-class respectability, does it, perchance, constitute the august magisterium of the Church? I spit upon the ground, disgusted, and turn aside.¹⁴

Everson's drive for selfhood evidenced in his earlier works was not--though it often appears so in Prodigious Thrust--fixated or frozen by his conversion. He later affirmed depth-therapy, became involved with Jung, shook from himself the judicial robes he wore in Prodigious Thrust, and emerged a freer soul in Hazards of Holiness, able to affirm the formless religion of the Beats, and the charismatic vision as a necessary corrective to the rigidity of the institutional vision. Whatever ways in which Antoninus' later life may seem a compromise with the institutionalism of Catholicism, he is none the less a powerful example of

the Romantic Artist with his stress on the self, his scrutiny of his past, his desire to exorcise the demon of the past by plunging into the unconscious and making the inner outer. Note that the following letter, dated 1963, unlike the compulsive utterings in much of Prodigious Thrust, records a mind which has "recollected in tranquillity" and analyzed itself anew, no longer with the proud egoism which pervaded his biography. His reactions to rereading the manuscript of Prodigious Thrust I will quote at length:

I must confess I was stunned. I had not looked at it for years, and suddenly to find myself immersed in this outgrown child of my brain was an astonishing experience. Episode after episode which I had forgotten rose before my eyes. Everywhere unqualified assertions confronted me, rebuking me with a self-righteousness which I remembered only too well, but which, encountered in the flesh, embarrassed me more painfully than I ever expected. The strait-laced rectitude coupled with the towering sensuality staggered me, and the astounding, unreflecting tendentiousness exasperated me no end. As you know, it is not that my faith has in any way lessened, but that my attitude toward its tenets has tempered and gained breadth.

But the style! Lord, how that book ploughs on through! It is fantastic--surely one of the strangest creations in the Church's long line

of eccentricities. As I began to read I thanked my stars I had not been able to publish it at the time; but now that I have finished it, I really regret that it is not in print. A great many things about my development would be made clear. It has a strength, an incredible strength, that overcomes all its deficiencies

It seems to me that the book stands chiefly as a witness to the religious attitude at one level of its development, and does this with astonishing power, with great transforming beauty And I say such things well aware that, coming from me, they may well nullify the judgment. Chronologically it stands between The Crooked Lines of God and The Hazards of Holiness. In The Hazards of Holiness we see burned away the tendentiousness and self-righteousness that was the chief determining element in Prodigious Thrust. The final poem in Hazards, "In Savage Wastes," stands at the opposite polarity from Thrust. It is my own answer to myself, my own rebuke to the aggressive righteousness that strapped my mind, and of which Dickey got the final rumblings in that ludicrous exchange in Sewanee Review. Good riddance. Let it go. But is it not strange that a spiritual defect of that kind can be the chief element in what is, surely, an astonishing literary creation?

Tendentiousness is perhaps the most condemned feature in the critical program of our time. Our age seeks the pure esthetic; it is anti-polemical, anti-programatic, almost anti-subject matter. For us, propagation is propaganda, and we loath it. But yet there is a certain genre, actually a very powerful genre, which is the direct product of tendentiousness. A certain compelling torsion is inconceivable without it, and we see it at its greatest in Claudel. He never passed beyond it, so that in the end his tendentiousness achieved a maturity and seasoned efficacy which Thrust never touches. But Thrust has something Claudel himself could never approximate either, and that is its American spirit. It seems to me a product of American puritanism, in the same sense (that) Lord Weary's Castle is. And the tendentiousness of the early Lowell, made possible by his puritan past and his dogmatic Catholic adhesion--a struggling rhetorical wrestling, achieving out of its anguish and labor a consummate expression he could never touch again--finds a kind of prose counterpart in Thrust. Lowell solved the problem of his puritanism by renouncing the Church and writing Life Studies. I solved it by the depth-probe via Jung and writing Hazards of Holiness. Lowell lost his puritanism all right, but he lost everything else with it. He

certainly lost his stature as an artist, for when he chose one polarity to the exclusion of the other he erased the field of tension within him upon which the drama of an art is enacted, and no matter how much his friends praise his later work, it has lost its life. But what I really want to say is that regardless of our solution these early works are something neither he nor I could ever recreate, not even if we wanted to, which is out of the question. And I look on Thrust and smile with wonder, but the wonder is all the same one of gratitude, as Lowell must look back on Lord Weary's Castle, embarrassed by its strictures, but awed by its undeniable power.¹⁵

This letter, I think, beautifully illustrates an Everson who has matured beyond an unqualified affirmation of the Church's order, who has seen its order as ambiguous, as he in Hazards sees the Thanatos within himself as an order which can be either a productive equilibrium or a repressive cage. He sees Prodigious Thrust as marking a phase in his drive toward selfhood, not as a biography of a mature mentality. His admission that it is a "struggling rhetorical wrestling" reveals the fact that he sees himself as having been battling the demons within himself, a battle he would elaborate into an archetypal battle in "Jacob and the Angel" in Hazards of Holiness.

In this letter and in a later Antoninus reveals that he

wishes to let Prodigious Thrust stand as it is, without change, as the record, among other things, of a struggling soul. And here, of course, is one of Antoninus' most compelling characteristics, his concern for personal meaning, and his refusal to distort his quest. That the theme of the quest pervades his canon to such an extent as to make a number of his poems insignificant except in such terms is evident in Hazards of Holiness, a work in which Antoninus integrates psychological, religious, and evolutionary ideas into his poetry in an attempt to show his personal soul's quest for selfhood.

NOTES

¹Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 13.

²Prodigious Thrust. 252-53.

³Ibid., 265.

⁴Ibid., 311.

⁵Ibid., 374.

⁶Ibid., 100.

⁷Ibid., 282.

⁸Ibid., 284.

⁹Ibid., 259-60.

¹⁰Ibid., 508.

¹¹Norman Brown, Life Against Death (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), 10.

¹²Prodigious Thrust, 440.

¹³This quotation was taken from Marcuse's Eros and

Civilization (p. 233). I strongly disagree with Sullivan if his implication is that no choice is involved in this type of conversion, because deterministic therapy is involved with the same dilemma, the same logical contradiction--namely, that you cannot ask unfree people to change--that confronted naturalistic reformers such as Zola, Norris and Dreiser. However, the complex of reactions he has described so closely parallels that of Antoninus that it is, I think, readily apparent that his analysis offers at least some insight into the inclinations of Antoninus at this time.

¹⁴Prodigious Thrust, 63.

¹⁵Letter to Allan Campo, 1963.

CHAPTER V

HAZARDS OF HOLINESS: THE PHENOMENON OF MAN

Introduction

The first poem in Hazards of Holiness, "Jacob and the Angel," expresses a major theme to be worked out in the rest of the volume: "How many mockeries of the inscrutable archetypes / Must we endure to meet our integration." Thus the book is to an extent concerned with wholeness, and the process by which it is achieved. In the mind of Antoninus, however, wholeness is not the ultimate state attainable by the person. In a letter he states:

In regard to wholeness, or integration. For me it is a means, rather than an end. For me the only end is beatitude, union with God the demand of beatitude will not let me rest, and I know that beatitude demands wholeness, but not wholeness for itself, the Aristotelian ideal, it is not worth it, the agony is too great, unless God calls it is unendurable.¹

Employing a perspective of wholeness approximating that of Jung, Antoninus in Hazards of Holiness works out his

constant encounters with the shadow and anima: facing the contents of the archetypes, assimilating them, and thus integrated, moving further toward wholeness and into sanctity. This process--which has been variously termed as individuation, integration, wholeness, selfhood--can be regarded as a drama of the soul in which there is a three-fold movement similar to the tragic rhythm: conflict, in which the ego-consciousness faces the dark, instinctual forces of the unconscious--the shadow; the catastrophe, in which the fixed rational vision of the ego is shattered by these unconscious forces; and enlightenment--after facing these dark forces consciousness finally confronts and is able to assimilate the contents of the anima, the vitalizing principle of the person, the soul. The relationship of individuation with the mystical movement has been mentioned in the chapter dealing with The Crooked Lines of God; and as in that volume the movement in Hazards of Holiness is at once psychological, mystical, and evolutionary. The study of The Crooked Lines of God was primarily a psychological one; the study of Hazards of Holiness will for the most part be involved with Antoninus' ideas on evolution. However, one should mention immediately the fact that the movement itself from conflict to catastrophe to enlightenment presupposes an Antoninus significantly different from the rigorous and rationalistic apologist in Prodigious Thrust. In his study Allan Campo notes of Antoninus: "It was in

1956, after having been introduced to Jungian psychology through Victor White, O. P., who resided at St. Alberts as a lecturer during the academic year of 1955-56, that Antoninus was plunged into the individuation process as a result of his work on the autobiographical Prodigious Thrust.² Because the individuation process involves a kind of self-therapy, and because therapy is aimed at liberating one from the hitherto unseen chains of the unconscious, we can see that Antoninus' desire to undergo the individuation process is in itself a meaningful antithesis to the rigid thesis of his mind expressed in Prodigious Thrust. The self-criticism of Hazards of Holiness counters the self-righteousness of Prodigious Thrust, and we see in the final poem in Hazards a kind of synthesis: "Let me forgive myself / That thought to be a saint / And am proved a monster." However, in his synthesizing Antoninus does not go as far in discursively discussing dogma as does, for example, the more liberal Chardin. When asked in a letter whether or not he believed that man would eventually evolve out of hell, that even the most evil man would eventually be reconciled with God, a belief which Martin Buber asserts directly, and which Chardin affirms by implication, Antoninus replied in orthodox fashion:

I find Buber's prophetic-apocalyptic equation interesting.
Your intuition that I favor the prophetic is correct,

but I do not hold with Chardin's solution as you indicate it. It is rather that I see Hell as ingrediential in the great travail and benignity of creative evolution. Hell and heaven are human terms, seen from the perspective of the world, and cannot contain the whole dimension. You have to see the so-called damned as choosing and eminently preferring their state, and their rage and travail as the tremendously affirmative salute to Being that it is. I treat this in Thrust, but that book was written in my Essentialist phase and does not wholly present my present attitude.³

Brief mention should be made concerning the volume's movement in thought and style. After the introductory and thematic poem, "Jacob and the Angel," there is stylistically as well as thematically a cumulative build-up toward wholeness. There is an intentional gauntness, a haltingness, an imprecation of the poet's need for substance, in most of the poems in parts one and two. However, in part three, which may be called poetry of the anima, Antoninus breaks out with some of his most significant and achieved poetry. "In All These Acts," "A Canticle to the Great Mother of God," "The Song the Body Dreamed in the Spirit's Mad Behest"--these as well as several others in the section are not only among Antoninus' best, but form part of the foundation of what one critic, referring to

The Crooked Lines of God, has called "a landmark in modern Christian poetry."

T. S. Eliot has stated that the quality of significant literary works is determined by non-literary standards. It is notable that aside from elaborating on influences which Antoninus himself prefaces in The Crooked Lines of God, few critics have gone into the extra-religious content of his poetry. It is the purpose of this chapter to extract and deliniate the evolutionary aspects from the metaphysic underlying Antoninus' poetry. Moreover, it will attempt to show that the poet's view of reality involves not a closed system but a metaphysic of evolution which is propelled by his particular vision of reality--which will be termed "inverted vision." However, this approach does not intend to give a complete or comprehensive evaluation of his poetry, but merely to present a meaningful perspective that will illuminate one particular facet of his work.

In order to provide a frame of reference with which to compare the evolutionary ideas of Antoninus, a brief outline of the content of The Phenomenon of Man by Teilhard de Chardin will be given, along with the quotation of a letter by Antoninus, and reference to an article published by him. However, it is not to be implied that Antoninus has consciously assimilated the views of Chardin. In fact, Antoninus has made it known that until 1963 he had had no direct contact with the thought of the French Jesuit.

The syntheses inherent in Antoninus' poetry become even more relevant when we consider that various figures in this century state that the convergence of existentialism, depth psychology, and evolutionary thought, all of which focus in one way or another on the human person, is setting the stage for a new human era. Certain of the Christian intelligentsia, who link this confluence with the fact that Christian theology in the twentieth century is experiencing a maturation by virtue of a more knowledgeable exegesis, the basic overthrow of fundamentalistic orthodoxy, and a stress on universal union instead of intolerant parochialisms, are likewise proclaiming the beginning of a more vital Christian era. While it is dangerous for one lacking historical distance to judge the accomplishment of a contemporary--especially one still alive--it is nevertheless this writer's contention that, if this new Christian era does arrive, Antoninus will be seen as one of its significant representatives. His significance will be even greater, I believe, if he lets the liberal lines of thought evident in Hazards of Holiness deepen and expand, and if he combats the self-defeating type of guilt he is obsessed with throughout Prodigious Thrust.

In the preceding chapters dealing with the psychological aspects of Antoninus' poetry, various ideas concerning evolution were mentioned. However, the scope of the earlier chapters focused on the ontogenetic development of man, the

encounters involved in his individuation, and little attempt was made to describe Antoninus' view of the evolving human phenomenon in the larger cosmos. By focusing on Hazards of Holiness with a Chardinian lens, this part of Antoninus' thought will be somewhat elucidated. And as we outline and examine the lines of force in the Chardinian universe, let us keep in mind certain ideas in The Crooked Lines of God: the movement of man from the dead to the living in the "recession of the waters" imagery in "Screed of the Flesh," Christ breaking mankind off from history in "Gethsemani," and Christ tearing a hole in the sky in "A Savagery of Love."

In his The Phenomenon of Man Chardin considers the whole of knowable reality under the aspect of evolution. He perceives a continuity between the first inert and inorganic matter (or whatever substance underlies it), organic matter, and cerebral organisms. Man is the present but unfinished apex of the process underlying this continuum. He has not only come from a bestial heritage, but the evolutionary principle of which he is a result is present even in inorganic matter. As Chardin states, from pre-life has come life; from life has come thought. And man--the thinker--is moving toward a higher stage of thought, which Chardin calls the omega point of consciousness.

In the pre-life stage of inorganic matter, Chardin observes a principle of involution, of matter closing in upon itself, becoming more complex, and thus evolving toward

higher stages. In biological creatures this is called orthogenesis, which Chardin terms "controlled complexification." The higher the biological specimen, the more complex the brain, which organ is responsible for consciousness. Man possesses not only the highest form of consciousness, but that which none of his bestial predecessors have--the ability to reflect, to be aware of his thinking processes. However, to repeat, man is not complete; latent in his brain are powers not yet actualized. Moreover, the zenith of consciousness, the Omega point, attracts man irreversibly towards actualization, which will consist in a new state of consciousness. Chardin states: "The history of the living world can be summarized as the elaboration of ever more perfect eyes within a cosmos in which there is always something more to be seen."⁴

The ascent of consciousness, as Chardin states in his non-technical The Divine Milieu, moves toward the Second Coming, the Parousia. But rather than being cataclysmic or catastrophic, the Parousia is instead the point at which human consciousness has fulfilled its potentialities, and exists in the person of God-Omega. In The Phenomenon of Man Chardin states: "The end of the world: the overthrow of equilibrium, detaching the mind, fulfilled at last, from its maternal matrix, so that it will henceforth rest with all its weight on God-Omega."⁵ This point of view is explicitly affirmed by Martin Buber and is, I believe,

implicit in Kazantzakis' The Last Temptation of Christ, and implicit also in Miguel Unamuno's The Tragic Sense of Life. Chardin further affirms that research, the scientific consideration of man as a phenomenon, the mergence of science and religion in the common milieu of knowledge, and the intense friction created by idea meeting idea propel man's ascent toward a new state of consciousness. His notion of great minds aiding in a "levelling upward" (the term is mine) process is parallel in certain ways to Shaw's view that supermen could improve the lot of men socially.

Chardin names that force within--the stimulus of the emergence--radial energy; it is this energy which moves toward further complexity. In The Crooked Lines of God we see a convergence of radial energy in Christ occurring in "The Making of the Cross." In Hazards of Holiness this "Christic Energy"--to use Chardin's term--is observable as the natural-supernatural force in "God Germed in Raw Granite," "In All These Acts," and, to an extent, in "A Canticle To The Great Mother Of God." These will be dealt with accordingly.

Man, the sole creature capable of reflection, is the only one aware of operative radial energy. In him it assumes the nature of a universal will to live, and as such bears resemblance to Jung's concept of the libido and Bergson's elan vital. Moreover, this life force is

viewed optimistically by Chardin.

The zoological group of mankind--far from drifting biologically, under the influence of exaggerated individualism, towards a state of growing granulation; far from turning (through space-travel) to an escape from death by sidereal expansion; or yet again far from simply declining towards a catastrophe or senility--the human group is in fact turning by arrangement and planetary convergence of all elemental terrestrial reflections, towards a point beyond which (precisely because it is critical) we can see nothing directly, but a point through which we can nevertheless prognosticate the contact between thought, born of involution upon itself of the stuff of the universe, and the transcendent focus we call Omega, the principle which at one and the same time makes this involution irreversible and moves and collects it.⁶

Chardin's view of the place of Christ within the evolutionary scheme stresses seldom-emphasized aspects of the Incarnation. Christ is the center of a world of converging energies; He is both the All and the Person; as such, the emergence of his being on earth will find its consummation in the Second Coming, which will be brought about not by the intrusion of the divine spirit from without, but by the intense efforts of men employing the divine will which exists within them. Needless to say, one can understand

why Chardin's work was impeded by the conservative powers in Catholicism, for these powers, so evident in most of the Curia--Ottaviani is a conspicuous example--thrive on emotionalism and piety instead of intellectual curiosity, and on a laity which is obedient and docile rather than free. The conservatives in the Church, because they see man as a depraved animal who would probably damn himself if freedom were emphasized as a virtue, preach the necessity of the flock to adhere unquestioningly to the system of order which they (who are a kind of aristoi), the voices of God (which none the less contradict one another), represent. Against such legalistic views Chardin states:

For reasons of practical convenience and perhaps also of intellectual timidity, the City of God is too often described in pious works in conventional and purely moral terms. God and the world he governs are seen as a vast association, essentially legalistic in its nature, conceived in terms of a family or government . . . The fundamental root from which the sap of Christianity has risen from the beginning and is nourished, is quite otherwise . . . Is the Kingdom of God a big family? Yes, in a sense it is. But in another sense it is a prodigious biological operation--that of the redeeming Incarnation.⁷

By cooperating, so to speak, with the bent of radial energy within us, which is Omega operative in creation, we

hasten toward a fully efficient and intense relationship with Omega. Chardin states:

In a pluralistic and static Nature, the universal domination of Christ could, strictly speaking, still be regarded as an extrinsic and superimposed power. In a spiritually converging world this 'Christic energy' acquires an urgency and intensity of another order altogether. If the world is convergent and if Christ occupies its center, then the Christogenesis of St. Paul and St. John is nothing else and nothing less than the extension, both awaited and hoped for, of that noogenesis in which cosmogenesis--as regards our experience--culminates. Christ invests himself organically with the very majesty of his creation. And it is in no way metaphorical to say that man finds himself capable of experiencing and discovering his God in the whole length, breadth and depth of the world in movement.⁸

This has been but a selective and sketchy statement of certain summarical points in Chardin's thought which were chosen because they are relevant to Antoninus' poetry.

Before approaching his poetry, however, we will glean what we can from the poet himself concerning his ideas on evolution. We recall from the discussion of The Crooked Lines of God that the concepts of ontogeny and phylogeny are implicit in his work--that the history of the individual

does to a certain extent repeat the history of the race: that the race evolves through archetypal phases towards both an independence from and an affirmation of the matriarchal earth; that the Divine Christ is also the perfectly individuated person and representative of the possible perfection of the race. Moreover, since publication of The Crooked Lines of God Antoninus has made further statements concerning his metaphysic. Asked in a letter about his opinions concerning the devil and hell, here was part of his reply:

By introducing the drama (of conscious choice between being and nothingness) into man, creature of matter and time, God was enabled to seize the supreme recourse, Incarnation, the most extreme "stoop" of his Almightyness, to project His essence into inferior essences down the whole range of reality, and hence "really" activate all his divine potentiality in a true, actual and concrete bodying forth of Himself.⁹

Chardin and Antoninus both see certain tensions existing in the universe. The scientist Chardin sees the most basic tension as existing between the within and the without of things, between radial and tangential energy; by means of this tension there will arrive the individuation of the race as a whole. The poet Antoninus emphasizes this tension as it exists in the individual will confronted with being and nothingness. In common with traditional thought

both see grades of being in the universe, but both deviate from tradition in their emphasis on the dynamic and organic nature of the universe itself. Antoninus' view of the Incarnation is virtually the same as Chardin's; both see Christ as organically one with the cosmos, not as having resurrected himself away from the earth into a heaven entirely separate.

Moreover, Antoninus also sees involution in the evolutionary process as producing further and further complexity. This he reveals explicitly in his article "Our Modern Sensibility." Against Tate's theory that there is a disintegration in the image of the modern poet because he tries immediately to seize the anagogical meaning, without first going through Dante's three prior stages, letter, allegory, and trope; against this theory Antoninus states that Hart Crane's poetry does not bear out this thesis of "disintegration" which Tate claims. Quoting a line from Crane, Antoninus states:

The reason it satisfies cannot be because it succeeded in directly seizing the anagogical meaning of the image, because that is not possible to the human mind. On the contrary, it satisfies because the complexity of experience in modern life constellates upon the image more than the simple statement of images can realize, so that the poet, imaginatively registering their effect upon him, establishes not the simple

image but the image plus its historic accumulation of associations.¹⁰

Thus, according to Antoninus, the race emerges into further realms of complexity; and it is the responsibility and necessity of the poet to recognize this fact and to employ it.

The evolution of human consciousness decrees that the increase of knowledge be assimilated into the imaginative structure, and made useful as a memory quotient in his problem of facing life. To do less than this falsifies the character of reality.¹¹

As an instance of the growing intensity of the image, Antoninus compares Dante's women with the present image.

He states:

No modern poet, after Baudelaire can bring to the image of a woman the same quality of response that Dante brought to Beatrice. In fact, for the modern poet, the total fact of Woman is far greater than Dante could have experienced it. For in his imagination it is augmented by the insight of Baudelaire, and his complex of reference will inevitable include among many other things a Dante-Baudelaire equation, and by virtue of its complexity "open up," make available to the mind, the greater reality of the superior synthesis as the modern poet perceives that synthesis in the deeps of the creative intuition.¹²

Thus, the modern poet has a "complex of reference" by virtue of which he can accomplish a "superior synthesis"; these ideas are equivalent, in critical terms, to Chardin's conception of "complexification." Both men see evolutionary progress which is teleological and which is centered in Christ and the Incarnation. Moreover, Christ is not a static center, but a magnet and the lines of force focusing toward him are called Christic energy or radial energy by Chardin. Using these ideas as a frame of reference, let us approach the poetry.

Radial energy is observable in "The Making of the Cross" and "A Canticle to The Great Mother of God." In the first, Christ is the apex point of convergence of the earth's energy; in Him, the core of the tree of being, the "possibles of evil," the privations of the universe, exhaust themselves. He vicariously for man pulls away from the suck of nothingness towards the pull of Perfect Being. He is the tree's peak and total--Perfect Being, having digested all absences of good.

And when the Cross was joined, quartered,
 As is the earth; spoked, as is the Universal Wheel--
 Those radials that led all unregenerate act
 Inward to innocence--it met the thorn-wove Crown;
 It found the Scourges and the Dice;
 The nail was given and the reed-lifted Sponge;
 The Curse caught forward out of the heart corrupt;

The excoriate Foul, stoned with the thunder and the
hail--

All these made up that miscellaneous wrath
And were assumed.

The evil and the wastage and the woe,
As if the earth's old cyst, back down the slough
To Adam's sin-burnt calcinated bones
Rushed out of time and clotted on the Cross.¹³

In "A Canticle to the Great Mother of God," Mary is also a type of focal point of creation. As mother of the human nature of God, she is the exemplification of fertility. The city in her image becomes a womb of creativity, whereas in "Gethsemani" in The Crooked Lines of God, the city is imaged as a womb of death-like regression: "The city stains." In the poem the lines of force converge into her creativity.

Sometimes I dream you measured of bright walls,
stepped on a hill and diademed with rose,
Sea-cinctured, the black wave haunted wharves
radialled round your hems,
And the nuzzling tugs shunted like suckling
spaniels at your piers.

All the resplendent bridges of your bays converge
upon your heart to their deploy,
Dilated into streets, fanned to the outmost sectors,

Bloodlines of pulsant use that throbbing flow,
 serving the induct of all crafts and
 skills.¹⁴

The fact that radial energy operates in and through matter, has various philosophical and theological ramifications. Working in matter, though it itself is spiritual, radial energy is the medium of that force leading to the Omega point; matter, therefore, is not opposed to spirit. It is, rather, the matrix impregnated by spirit, both of which are necessary for fulfillment. Chardin's anti-dualistic view of matter is evident in a selection taken from his The Divine Milieu. He states: "A certain pessimism . . . encouraged by an exaggerated conception of the original fall, has led us to regard the world as decidedly and incorrigibly wicked."¹⁵ He speaks against this attitude, implying that it lends support to the position of human inertia. He asks: "How many of us are genuinely moved in the depths of their heart by the wild hope that OUR earth will be recast?"¹⁶ Of the relation between matter and spirit he adds, "We are constantly forgetting that the supernatural is a ferment, a soul, and not a complete and finished organism. Its role is to transform 'nature,' but it cannot do so apart from the matter which nature provides it with."¹⁷

Antoninus' poem, "The Song the Body Dreamed In the Spirit's Mad Behest," will scarcely be considered a poem

which preaches any scientific line. It will be censured by critics whose taste excludes bold erotic imagery. These critics are in many cases not quite removed from obscurantism and Manichaenism. In any case, Antoninus' poem presupposes the above view, that matter and spirit, flesh and soul, both actively participate in the creative processes of earth. This poem, in fact, may be seen as one of the few significant non-Manichaean body-soul poems, for within it there is no debate which expresses the flesh's iniquity, as have the traditional body-soul poems--Anne Bradstreet's, for example:

Be still, thou unregenerate part;
 Disturb no more my settled heart,
 For I have vowed (and so will do)
 Thee as a foe still to pursue,
 And combat with thee will and must
 Until I see thee laid in th' dust.

Sisters we are, yea, twins we be,
 Yet deadly feud 'twixt thee and me'
 For from one father are we not;
 Thou by old Adam wast begot,
 But my arise is from above . . .

Her poem, in a sense typical of most of these debate poems, is more than a little tinged with Manichaenism. Antoninus' poem becomes a meaningful and corrective commentary on the whole tradition. Instead of adamant opposites, the body and

soul in his poem are mutually complementary. Although the germ of this conception has long existed in Christianity, the Augustinian-Calvinistic-Puritanical debasement of the flesh has prevented its fruition. Opposed to the soiled perspective of the great Augustine is, for example, the dictum of Aquinas that the body is not a prison house to the soul, but its necessary and perfecting complement; the soul without the body is less perfect, because it was intended to inform the body; and thus from the Christian point of view the logic of the resurrection, and, by extension, of heaven consisting not in some vague non-dimensional state, but in the avaternity--to use Antoninus' choice of terms--of an earth transformed into the Mystical Christ. Antoninus prefaces his Song with a quotation from The Song of Songs, then with a statement which conveys the psychological truth of the quotation. The quotation is: "I am black but beautiful, O ye daughters of Jerusalem. Look not upon me." His statement:

The Imagination, unable to grasp the reality of pure Spirit, conceives of their union under the modality of her own nature. Longing to respond totally to the divine summons, and convinced in faith that the Redemption has rendered this possible, she struggles to cast off all the inhibitions of original sin, and evokes the deepest resources of her sensuality, in order to achieve in shamelessness the wholeness of being

an age of shame has rendered incomplete.¹⁸

It should be added that while Antoninus avoids Manes, he does not thereby affirm Pelagius. He states in the poem:

He is the Spirit but I am the Flesh.

Out of my body must He be reborn,

Soul from the sundered soul, Creation's gout

In the world's bourn.¹⁹

The word born conveys the notion of birth in limitation, and a destination or goal for creation; there is in effect a kind of synthesis of finalism and determinism, which fusion is likewise affirmed by Chardin, who sees teleology in the direction of the within of things, and limitation caused by the empirical "without" of things. It is this counter-impulse in the one organism which necessitates a violence similar in some respects to Nietzsche's Dionysian rhythm breaking through Apollonian form:

Born and reborn we will be groped, be clenched

On ecstasies that shudder toward crude birth,

When His great Godhead peels its stripping strength

In my red earth.

The movement of Christic energy in and through matter takes on thought-provoking dimensions in the poems "In All These Acts," and "God Germed in Raw Granite." Again let us employ Chardinian tools in order to appreciate the poems more fully. Chardin states that at the end of the world there will exist a higher pantheism, and God-Omega

will be personally diffusive in the universe. The Christian idea of the Mystical Body, purged of certain theologians' parochial restrictions, is close to this conception, although approaching it from the standpoint of theology. Involved in this conception is the idea that Omega, or Christic energy, is operative in the universe and can be approached and "seen" through the medium of one's soul; for this soul or anima, using Jung's term, is that which goads man. However, let us recall that the larger force underlying the anima exists throughout the universe, including its inorganic constituents.

The opening scene of the poem "In All These Acts" describes the destruction and violence of an avalanche. The first two lines of the poem, "Dawn cried out: the brutal voice of a bird / Flattened the seaglaize." imply a higher purpose, direction, and birth, in the violence to follow--the image of the dawn and bird symbolizing birth and intuition. In the second stanza the larger movement in nature becomes more evident in the image of the mountain torrent carrying the "avalanchial wrack" into the sea.

The river, spent at last, beating driftwood

up and down

In a frenzy of capitulation, pumped out its

life,

Destroying itself in the mother sea,

There where the mammoth sea-grown salmon

Lurk immemorial, roe in their hills, about
to begin.
They will beat that barbarous beauty out
On those high-stacked shallows, those
headwater claims,
Back where they were born. Along that
upward-racing trek
Time springs through all its loops and
flanges,
The many-faced splendor and the music of
the leaf.
The copulation of beasts and the watery
laughter of drakes,
Too few the grave witnesses, the wakeful,
vengeful beauty,
Devolving itself of its whole constraint,
Erupting as it goes.²⁰

This pregnant passage, with its condensed directional images, expresses a kind of "natural crucifixion"--the notion that death fertilizes its species. Moreover, it is the divine who breaks and bears, who is the transcendent vortex of the birth-death cycles:

In all these acts
Christ crouches and seethes, pitched forward
On the crucifying stroke, juvescent, that
will spring Him

Out of the germ, out of the belly of the
dying buck,
Out of the father-phallus and the torn-up
root.

These are the modes of his forth-showing,
His serene agonization. In the clicking
teeth of otters

Over and over He dies and is born,
Shaping the weasel's jaw in His leap
And the staggering rush of the bass.²¹

In the passage "Over and over He dies and is born" there exists a kind of Christian integration of Nietzschean recurrence. Moreover, this poem expresses a pantheism rather than a pantheism; that is, all things are not God, but in God. Antoninus' comprehension of the natural universe is related to his emphasis on action as the embodiment and completion of contemplation; that is, the purpose of the forty days in the desert is to prepare for the efficacy of the public life, and not an end in itself.

In "God Germed in Raw Granite" the anima of creation, its vitalizing principle, is observable not only in animate nature, but "source-glimpsed in stone." From the picture of granite (which we might image as first matter), we move through images of lava, wold, logs, and tree-trunks to the poet's anima itself (his soul). He sees his spirit and that of nature as being the same divinity--Omega in all

creation. Uniting with his anima, the poet and his soul form a union of mutually completing parts, a syzygy in Jung's terms--an image of perfection. This image of perfection, states Jung, is comprised of three principles: a femininity, a masculinity, and the archetypal image of the two. Note in the first stanza the insurgence of God--Omega--in creation:

God germed in raw granite, source--glimpsed
in stone?

Or imaged out in the black-flamed
Onyx-open line? Smouldered in the tortured
Free-flow of lava? The igneous
Instant of conception? As maiden-form
Swells in the heaviness of wold, sleeps
Rumped and wonton-bulged in the boulder's
Bulk, is shaped in tree-forms everywhere
As any may see: dropped logs, say, or
those crotched
Trunks pronged like a reckless nymphs
Head plunged into the earth--so Godhood
Wakes under water, shape-lurked, or grave
and somber,
Where sea falls, mocks through flung foam
Ghost!

In the next stanza the poet mates this ghost, which is in him his anima. In the third stanza he portrays the

union in terms of a trinity. Then he asks whether the spirit to which he has united himself is actually God. As stated, the last stanza is a question; and the Christian might ask himself whether or not traditional "mysteries" assume different dimensions considered in the perspective of depth psychology--that mysteries such as the Trinity convey an essential psychological truth concerning the relationship between man and God which we have perhaps distorted by considering it almost entirely impregnable to the probes of human consciousness, and by magnifying the theistic rather than human aspects of the mystery. Antoninus, it seems to this reader, definitely implies the possibility of further human insights into the trinity.

Is this she? Woman within!
 Can this be? Do we, His images, float
 Time-spun on the vaster drag
 His timelessness evokes?
 In the blind heart's core, when we,
 Well-wedded merge, by Him
 Twained into one and solved there,
 Are these three? Are three
 So oned, in the full-forthing
 (Heart's reft, the spirit's great
 Unreckonable grope, and God's
 Devouring splendor in the stroke) are we--
 This all, this utterness, this terrible
 Total truth--indubitably He?

In his comments on "God Germed in Raw Granite" Antoninus states that the poem can perhaps be seen as a counter-reply to what might be regarded as "the intolerable tension between matter and form in an anti-incarnational direction" in the poem which precedes it, "In All These Acts." He says that "God Germed in Raw Granite" checks this tendency. After the quotation from the Gnostic Gospel of St. Thomas, "Life the rock and I am there," the poem goes on to affirm the anima in creation. In a letter in which he discusses the pun in the poem, "Ghost!" Antoninus states that "It is the choked recognition of the same anima-spirit" as concluded an earlier group of poems. He states that the word emphasizes the "insubstantiality" of what he perceives, because the anima-spirit is not a fit substitute for a flesh and blood woman. In the last stanza of the poem he asks "Are three / So oned, in the full forthing?" In the letter he states that the final stanza was an intuition, suddenly received, "of the sacrament of Marriage, two carnalities sacramentally joined to create a single divinized mystical "personality."²² Antoninus commented on my earlier analyses of the poem: "This recall of the anima telescopes in the last part of the poem into the Holy Ghost, an idea or couplet of concepts which literally explodes the poet's mind and the poem itself beyond any statement but the gigantic question of an explicable mystery."²³

Implicit in "God Germed in Raw Granite" and in Antoninus' interpretation of it is the view that though the ultimate source of dogma may remain mysterious, none the less one can interpret through the surface of dogma to meanings inherent in it. And this view corresponds in part to the notion of continuing revelation, the perspective that holds our present explanations of dogma to be simply provisional, and not the final word.

Connected with his attitude toward revelation in his poetry is Antoninus' affirmation of a Midrash-view of certain parts of Scripture. Currently theologians are still discovering literary types and themes employed by the Hebrew writers in the Old Testament, and noting certain occurrences of them in the New Testament. While still treating the Scriptures as divine revelation, biblical scholars note that often the biblical writer was inspired to yield not history, science, or a literal message, but to convey his revelation by means of the symbolic and other language familiar to the people of the time. It would seem that in The Crooked Lines of God, "Triptych of the Living," poems dealing with the shepherds, with the Magi, and with the flight in the desert; the quotation from the Song of Songs prefacing "The Song the Body Dreamed" in Hazards of Holiness; and "Jacob and Esau," all have to do with stressing the psychological or other truth beneath the literal level of the language, language understood by the people of the

time, but obscured to us who have through the centuries lost, for the most part, the primitive ability to experience, rather than reflect upon, the word as a living vessel of reality.²⁴ While the primitive was non-discursive in his total intuition, we employ our rationality and dissect into categories such as the sensory, intellectual, and intuitive. Thus, attempting to judge the primitive's intuitive accuracy by our empirical standards, we are prone to disregard the more basic verities of his vision. There is throughout Antoninus' poetry the attempt to return to the original registration of divine revelation. And this is related to the second part of the chapter, which will deal with Antoninus' inverted vision.

Inverted Vision

We may observe the connection between Antoninus' inverted vision and his ideas on emerging man by means of an extended syllogism. Evolution denotes change. Change demands a consideration of reality as flux. Man also is in flux, in that he increases in complexity. Therefore, every system or perspective which does not accommodate the measures or mandates accruing from man's growing vision must be modified. This is related to the general idea underlying the prophetic vision; it is a vision responsive and reflective. That is, it is open to new and necessary illuminations for the race. Thus much of the fiction of Flannery O'Connor, Miguel Unamuno, Graham Greene, and

Nikos Kazantzakis, to name a few writers who dwell on religious themes. They offer what they consider are new illuminations in an attempt to subvert the inert mentality of the present. Thus also the cinema of Federico Fellini and Ingemar Bergman. Fellini, though seen as a heathen by many of his "religious" contemporaries, considers himself to have a profound religious vision. That he does have such a vision is evidenced by a scrutiny of "La Dolce Vita," "8½," and "Julietta of the Spirits," in which Fellini attacks not only conservative Catholicism, but various sorts of absolutistic mentalities. In order to have a true vision Flannery O'Connor in a number of essays mentions the necessity of the religious artist to see through his own eyes, and not through the eyes of the Church. She says: "When the Catholic novelist closes his own eyes and tries to see with the eyes of the Church, the result is another addition to that large body of pious trash for which we have so long been famous."²⁵ In the mind of Flannery O'Connor, if the artist sees with his own eyes he can possibly attain a "prophetic vision," one which sees not in linear and temporal terms, but in vertical and eternal terms, which sees not the future but "extensions of near meanings." Whether the prophet be Blake or Rousseau, Thoreau or Isaiah, that which they have in common is their ability--though perhaps consequently self-disastrous--to break through the conventional stultification of their time.

When considered in the "framework" of orthodox and traditional religions, the prophetic vision has certain peculiar ramifications. These ramifications will be briefly discussed in conjunction with traditional Christian vision, and this discussion will eventually lead to a consideration of Antoninus' perspective. What is, I believe, distorted in Christian orthodoxy is not its acute consciousness of evil--this is a positive virtue--but what it construes to be the source and the nature of the evil. That religious viewpoint which literally interprets the devil as existing outside of the soul of man, for example, is apt, not to make the flock more aware of evil, but to give them an excuse for their own sins, especially those of omission. And the dualism in an Augustine-Calvin-Puritan view is apt to support man's inclination to stereotype the universe in terms of good and evil. Historically, up through the eighteenth century there still existed in England the identification of the elect with the prosperous, and the damned with the poor. Nevertheless, there have arisen throughout history men who have attempted to shatter this rigid perspective. William Blake, for example, reverses traditional values in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. It is the voice of the Devil which speaks truths--truths remarkable similar to present psychological theories of man. Blake's "Proverbs of Hell" contain a never-to-be-stultified wisdom; for example: "Eternity is in love with

the productions of time . . . Prisons are built with stones of Law, brothels with bricks of Religion . . . The pride of the peacock is the glory of God." The lust of the goat, the wrath of the lion, the nakedness of woman--Blake cites all these as the bounty, wisdom, and work of divinity. These are not mere pithy witticisms which are delightful because of their inner discordance or paradox, but insights which thrust through man's conventional and convenient categorizations of reality.

Because of the eschatological scope of the prophetic vision, the mystery of evil and its intimate polarity with the good are of prime importance to the prophet. The conclusion of Thoreau's Walden suggests this intimacy: "The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us. Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star." The morning star is unmistakably intended to refer to Lucifer, Bearer of Light, whom Antoninus refers to in his foreword to Hazards of Holiness. Antoninus holds that it is by gripping Satan that one encounters Christ. Psychologically extending this view, we may say that it is by confronting the shadow that we reach the anima. Whether clothed in Blakean paradox or Jungian archetypes the conclusion is the same--good is found by piercing through the depths of evil.

Antoninus states in his foreword: "If Lucifer hides

behind man, does God, then, hide behind Lucifer? Many a mystic, many a saint, has mistaken the Devil for Christ, Christ for the devil." Earlier in the foreword he states: "The underblows of the mind have their own laws, the reverse of all the pilgrim has been taught to expect." And it is with this reversal of vision that much of the poetry in Hazards of Holiness is concerned. Antoninus continues:

. . . for though in the first part of his journey the direction ran straight enough, from bad to good, from dark to light--in the extremity of the outward search and the exhaustion of its intense luminary symbolism, the other side of the personality, darkly inscrutable, rises into consciousness, like a kind of nightfall that overtakes the traveler before his time, and imposes upon him the threatening figures of its antithetical disproportion.²⁶

It is by meeting this "antithetical disproportion," the shadow which is opposed to conscious norms, and which appears to be overwhelmingly powerful, that the race through its individuals struggles up the steps toward completion. Antoninus quotes from Yeat's The Trembling of the Veil a passage dealing with the personal dynamics of the struggle in the artist's mind:

We gaze at such men in awe, because we gaze not at a work of art, but at the re-creation of the man through that art, the birth of a new species of man, and, it may

seem that the hairs of our head stand up, because that birth, that re-creation is from terror . . .²⁷

However, Antoninus' focus is not on the art itself, but on the person who effects the recreation. And in his mind it is Christ who "stirs and straightens, steeling the soul to achieve a victory no poem can celebrate, no demon deny." The confrontation of the shadow, the demon, the death, and the insight accrued from this encounter, stimulate Antoninus to look toward the future with a kind of terrible optimism--one which sees progress achieved only through an integral anguish.

. . . out in the darkness men more sensitive and complex than any now living will be wrestling the demons of their own deliverance, draining their heart's blood to their knees, and the zone of that Death on their faces.²⁸

It is by confronting the demon-shadow that one "sees" to the roots of man's nature--and "seeing" is of major importance in Antoninus' poetry. In this manner his poetry is similar to that of prophetic literature in general. Seeing, a concern with good and evil, the nature of man--these, states F. O. Matthiesson, are characteristic of much of the significant literature of the American Renaissance, literature which assumed a prophetic quality. The image of seas, mirrors, ponds, eyeballs--reflectors of all kinds--mark an attempt by such people as Melville, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Emerson, and Whitman to break

through conventional lenses into the deeper strata of reality.

We may note how seeing is related to evolutionary progress. Chardin in his foreword to The Phenomenon of Man has a section called "Seeing," in which he states:

. . . the history of the living world can be summarized as the elaboration of ever more perfect eyes within a cosmos in which there is always something more to be seen . . . I doubt whether there is a more decisive moment for a thinking being than when the scales fall from his eyes and he discovers that he is not an isolated unit in the cosmic solitudes, and realizes that a universal will to live converges and is hominized in him.²⁹

Moreover, Chardin coordinates this vision--which, extended, is prophetic--with a racial responsibility and nourishment:

In such a vision man is seen not as a static centre of the world--as he for long believed himself to be--but as the axis and leading shoot of evolution, which is something much finer.³⁰

Chardin's view of the seeing man observing himself as the "axis and leading shoot of evolution" is similar (according to Evelyn Underhill) to certain basic characteristics of mystics. The mystic is compelled by his vision to effect a transformation of his inner self. Moreover, the mystic

does not become a spiritual individualist; instead, he is a center with radials of nourishment, an organ in the Mystical Body, an ambassador of grace. Also, the mystic in his experience often feels himself to be between man and God in the continuum of being.

In "The Conversion of St. Paul" we see the shattering violence of conversion that blasts through the ego to reach the soul. Here the hardened ego is pierced by divine light which, once impregnating the anima, compels its bearer--now effecting a creative polarity between ego-consciousness and the unconscious--to spread what he sees.

Before he dies this lapsing
 Shut-tongued wretch
 Will spend that vision on the world's width,
 Spell utterly out the supreme implication
 Divest his soul of all that was dealt him,
 There in the dust, when he lay listening,
 His stupified mind expanding about that central
core,
 Grasping its depth of total containment,
 Its limitless scope. Blind in his bed,
 The stony visage, glacial as the implacable
rockfaces
 That stare east up to Everest,
 Thaws in the flow of an understanding.
 Peaceful, touched and atoned,

He sinks into sleep. And the scale
Flakes from his eyes.

A recurrent image in Antoninus' poetry, the "new mode of seeing" is also expressed in "The Song the Body Dreamed in the Spirit's Mad Behest," a poem in which divinity again violently destroys man's present vision: "The fierce mouth has beaked out both my eyes." And the possibility of further vision is expressed in "A Canticle to the Great Mother of God:" ". . . a plainness drowns in everything you are, the presence you proclaim, / The mystery in which achieves all you are meant. / Squinting our eyes we cannot comprehend."

The way of apprehension in Antoninus' poetry is similar to the way attributed to the existentialists: the knower is open and responsive to whatever are the facts of existence; he does not approach reality with pre-conceived forms. Moreover, in Antoninus' poetry--unlike most religious poetry--this existential responsiveness does not exclude from one's sight that which is supposedly blasphemous and sacrilegious. In Antoninus' mind the great poet is one who can descend to the lowest depths of the infrarational and lift it to the highest reaches of the suprarational.³⁰ Both are necessary. Hence, in the preface to "In Savage Wastes" the monk achieves self-knowledge through a dream in which suppressed sensual desires are revealed. In the dream the monk is visited by two succubi disguised as nuns. "They cast a spell over him, and seduce him, and there is not a

shred of sensory excitation which they do not stimulate in him and gratify." The next day he leaves his cell and meets a familiar faced young monk who questions him:

'Tell me, Father, what is the greatest blessing and the greatest curse of the spiritual life?' The monk replies: 'Sleep. In sleep we dream. In dreams we betray ourselves. In betrayal we discover ourselves. In self-discovery we lose our innocence. In loss of innocence we gain knowledge. In knowledge we gain wisdom. In wisdom we recover innocence. God be with you.' With these words the monk leaves the young man, whom he now recognizes as himself, and reenters the world.

Self-knowledge then becomes both the fall and redemption of man. We should note that the oblique method by which the monk teaches in this parable is a method more akin, for the most part, to the Zen Scriptures than it is to the Christian Scriptures. It aims at a satori, an illumination of the total consciousness, not simply of the discursive faculty. In The Way of Zen, when Watts states that there is an impossibility of "grasping the actual world in the mind's net of words and concepts," he affirms--as do Ernst Cassirer and Suzanne Langer--the possibility of the entire psyche awakening, and not simply the mind. In Antoninus' poetry knowledge of one's inner evil leads to good, evil bearing good.³¹

In sleep, in deep slumber,
In the raw desert night,
Thou didst send thy holy devils
There to accost me.
As thy terrible henchmen
They did show me me.

The idea that the sinner is closer to God, because he is the object of God's attention ("I have come to save not the just but the sinner."), is here poetically rendered.

I will go back to the city of man,
Will abase myself before the sinner
For he is cleaner than I.

God is seen in evil.

In the body's corruptness will He be
 revealed to me,
In the postures of defloration,
In the deeds of wrath.

Where the murderer strangles his hope,
Where the thief plunders his heart,
Where the ogler gloats and gloats on
his own self
And gloating profanes.

Out of these, out of these, will thy
peace shine forth,
If I show pity.

The psychological perspective maintained throughout Hazards of Holiness is amplified in this final poem--a poem in which we see partially into the meaning of becoming again as little children in order to enter heaven.

I will return to my mother,
To the breasts of her that nursed me,
To the lap of her that bore me.

And I will find my father,
He will bless my head,
He will forgive me.

Therefore will I be whole again,
And be made new again.

Thus, as in The Crooked Lines of God, by confronting the various components within the shadow: the regressive and creative possibilities in the maternal archetype; the patriarchal archetype; wholeness and redemption (to be born again) are achieved. As mentioned in the introduction to the chapter, however, wholeness and redemption are not synonymous; the former is a means to the latter. In "Jacob and the Angel," discussed in Chapter Three, the shadow-confrontation, the discovery of the anima, and the synthesis of unconscious and conscious are also involved. What will interest us here, however, is Antoninus' attitude toward the dark powers of the human psyche, and how his attitude is similar to that of the mystics and that of the depth-

psychologists. The embodiment of his thought, though complexly incorporated in the image of Esau as the dark side of Jacob, is nevertheless in line with traditional mystical thinking. Let us examine samplings of his light-darkness imagery.

He waded the freshet last in the apophatic night,

.

If this be Esau, then Jacob meets his star.

.

. . . we learn too late to face the angel, / engage
the hidden God

.

High overhead the great globed constellations

Hover like circling birds above the struggled

heads.³²

Much of Antoninus' imagery is explicable when considered in the light of Maritain's study of mystical knowledge in The Degrees of Knowledge. As Maritain states, it is the hiddenness of God which the mystic-lover probes into. He is confronted with the dark night of anguish and struggle; he proceeds to move through the night to the light. The night itself, however, can be apophatic, containing negative knowledge of God, non-conceptual, knowledge in ignorance; this is opposed to cataphatic knowledge, which is positive, conceptual, theological knowledge.

Finding by inverted vision light in night, the anima

in the shadow, is a theme occurring also in "All the Way to Heaven," "Black Christ," and "Sleep-tossed I Lie." The title of the first poem is taken from a saying by St. Catherine of Sienna, "All the way to heaven is heaven." Antoninus' first line in the poem reverses this vision: "All the way to heaven is Hell." The devil, as in "Jacob and the Angel," is an irremovable constant in earthly man: "brother-devil . . . shadow and adversary . . . My keeper! Double of the heart's imago." Antoninus' description of the manipulator-devil in this poem is similar to his view of Christ in "Sleep-tossed I Lie." In the latter he invokes Christ:

Grant thy surcease.
 Toy me no more, Lord.
 Lord of the midnight wrestlings
 Keep the peace.³³

In the former it is the devil who dangles the poet like a toy. Man is "Dust of the earth / Stacked to the mortal frame . . . and the dust is his, Given him, his private use, / His plaything, his horrible / Doll."³⁴

In "Black Christ" the shadow-anima relationship is expressed in terms of the "spiritual birth-physical death" paradox. However, it should be stressed that in Antoninus' poetry the duration of time involved in passing through the shadow to the anima is not emphasized. While his poetical-mystical endeavors have perhaps brought him to the state of

at least a partially peaceful union, it is not a painless peace that his poetry celebrates. As he himself states, these are poems of the Dark Night. Moreover, it is only in part three of Hazards of Holiness that we see thematically the flowering of his powers.

The shadow-anima tension is evident in the title itself of "Black Christ," and the light-darkness inversion is explicit in the preface-quotation taken from the Book of Amos:

The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him, or went into his house, and leaned his hand on a wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it?³⁵

In this poem the anima of the poet is projected into the image of the dead mother at the funeral. Her death to him symbolizes his soul's supreme fulfillment. He has broken from the mother, from the domination of his unconscious, and has assimilated the maternal archetype into his unconscious, all of which contribute to his individuation.

I can see the newly dug grave in the cemetery, out beyond the city limits. The earth is black, very rich, potent, supremely fertile. It possesses a subsumed, immaterial reality, like a vital presence. I lie in a state of expectation. It is as if my psychic life has

the power to persist in time after the body's death, the pseudo-death. But that grave and that earth are Death itself, the real death, creative death.³⁶

His ambivalent reaction to the life-death paradox, reminiscent of T. S. Eliot's "Journey of the Magi," is further extended in the poem in such phrases as "Holy unspeakable horror . . . Beautiful annihilating pain . . . Splendid anguishes . . . sublime hurts."

However, a more significant type of inversion in this poem is that of seeing night in light; that is, regarding the ego-rationality as itself restricted and blinded when it denies the possibilities of supra-rational vision. Instead of the conventional God-light-life, Lucifer-darkness-death symbolism, we have a reversal:

God, who can neither
Deceive nor be deceived
Is darkness,
My death.
Lucifer, who forever
Deceives and is deceived
Is light
My life.³⁷

In "Zone of Death," "What Birds Were There," "Saints" and "You, God," this reversal is correlated with the attitude of existential responsiveness to the unknown depths of being. The deficiency of rationality as a sole criterion of reality,

the unknown latencies of man, and openness to being--these topics will be discussed in conjunction with the four above poems, and in the discussion we will observe part of Antoninus' idea regarding the relationship between the human and divine will.

In "Zone of Death" the Dark Night as an affective (physically rooted) state is experienced in the form of rationality rendered sterile, non-illuminating--night in light. The instinctual surge of the poet cannot break through the mind's rigidity and the deathly inertia of pure rationalism.

Hot light blares.
Stars, outblistered now,
Mark time, extinct.

Night might bring
The seasonal constellations
In its sphere,
But night is nowhere.³⁸

Rational light has intruded and usurped the poet's psyche, fixing what would be a creative surge, permitting no baptism by the senses: "Dawn sneaked in unsmelt. No wine, no water here."

This rational fixity--impervious to suprarational influx or pridefully ignorant of any intuitive method of breaking through ego-determinism--is the mark of the executioners in the preface to "What Birds Were There."

The executioners are "without personality" because personality demands recognition of the fact that identity's roots are not visible; the executioners, however, are "utterly inflexible in their particular constellations of consciousness." Here the moon--the lesser light--with "the face of a diseased woman" sinks into the sea, a regressive womb of death for deterministic rationality. Because of its locked-in ego, its solipsism, the self cannot assimilate the contents of the unconscious, symbolized by the moon, the light-in-night. At the end of the poem, rather than illuminating a path in the night for the self, the moon itself dies, "Her face demented, her jaw half gone." In the last three lines of the poem we have--though Antoninus in his annotations said he was unconscious of this meaning--the ambiguous symbol of the morning star, the "fierce star of morning," which suggests an identification of God and Lucifer similar to that experienced by Christ in the desert in Kazantzakis' The Last Temptation of Christ. To Kazantzakis' Christ, God and Satan are projections of man's ambivalence when confronted with the face of Absolute Reality. That Antoninus might deny in discourse what he suggests in art would merely, I believe, give evidence to what is now a critical truism, that artists are not necessarily the best judges of their own art. In Antoninus' "What Birds Were There" the image of the morning star in the last three lines reflects on one level a

Christ-anima light and on another level the Lucifer-shadow darkness.

Till the fierce star of morning
Pierced like the inner eye of God that scorning
cloud,

Birthmarked that dawn.

Implicit in these lines is the attitude also implicit in the process of individuation, that the beneficent light (the anima) of the morning star is attainable only because it exists in polarity with the malefic vision (the shadow). What is quite important here is what Antoninus has in common with the most significant writers, a view that man transcends by means of an inverted anagoge, an anagoge which asserts that meaning is found by encountering evil, the dragon and devil in the self, and not by staying aloof from such. We rise as we descend. We attain heights of supra-rationality as we probe into the depths of the infrarational. T. S. Eliot in his "Journey of the Magi" likewise presents the Magi as encountering the child and his birth-death in a valley of earth, "wet, below the snow line."

The deficiency of ego-rationalism is juxtaposed to the unknown pregnant depths of man's unconscious in "Saints." Urgency, the desire for transformation, vision of the self's bestial depths, an acceptance of these depths are ideas that permeate the poem.

Man's heart!

What improbable depths are delivered up
When the seizure of faith grips the soul-
string,

Bitted, heels it head over,
The long light thrown where darkness has dreamed
On untouchable snakes in their birth-nests,
Fosters the work that gnaws on ever,
The unkillable core . . .

Man's heart!

To have known it indeed:
Confused, sensitive, cunning, depraved--
Most glorious!³⁹

The last line contains as irony beyond the obvious one; this is elucidated in the next stanza which asserts that evil is the very milieu out of which can come good, a view which is similar to Chardin's, save that it's expressed in different terms.

God made it,

Man ruins it.

God-in-man wright in purity and defilement
What neither alone could ever make be;⁴⁰

Further in the poem there occurs a Lawrencian "scream of violence," erupting from man's dual desires for both union and independence--a theme most explicit in "The Song the Body Dreamed in the Spirit's Mad Behest." Moreover,

an impasse has been reached in his soul's struggle. He like the saints has groveled into the shadow, and now is confronted with aridity, non-vitality. Here no image suffices, here is the pure nothingness which Antoninus spoke of in his letter, the ultimate confrontation with evil, the total absence which sucks into itself away from total Being.

. . . now ahead

No cactus there nor any beasts,

No toads, no snakes,

No devils and no ghosts.

Nothing.

No thing. Not anything.

Not to be named, even,

Cursed at, gunned back against,

Invoked, knelt to,

Adored, denied, befouled or hated.

And nothing to love!

A blankness

Like neither night nor day

Confronts: the flat void

Of Unrealization.⁴¹

It is this polarity between Being and the power of the vacuum that instigates man's efforts toward completion,

the "drama of the soul." Antoninus visualizes unseen depths in the soul, depths to be plumbed by man's facing anguish

O soul

O vast potentiality unprobed!

Be touched! Be opened!

Be moved! Be crushed!⁴²

This dark night, this confrontation with nothingness, is also felt in terms of an inertia.

God, withholding being

Just out of grasp,

Do something!

Kiss or kill

But move me!⁴³

And the encounter, because it is an encounter, a conflict, is intrinsically violent:

You lived it through!

Fought up-ramp to the battlement,

Grasped the fell fiend on the pike-sill,

Rattled him till his teeth broke,

Flung him down all yowling into the dark

descent,

Smashed all bloody damn him on the rocks

below!

Antoninus' confrontation with being and nothingness and his inverted vision bear explicit resemblance to certain ideas of the existentialists. In the works of Sartre,

for example, atheism is postulated, yet Sartre is nevertheless in part of his world-view one step--however crucial--from traditional mystical thinking. Generally speaking, Sartre sees man as distinct from the rest of phenomenal reality, for everything which exists external to the being named man exists in itself; the phenomenon of man, on the other hand, exists peculiarly for itself. Man is conscious of striving to fill a lack within himself, and the condition man strives to achieve, in the mind of Sartre, is that state of being of trees, rocks, etc., each of which exists in itself and has no conscious process attempting self-satisfaction. But Sartre maintains that beyond the concrete existent, there is no being--and here arises the distinction between his thought and that of the mystics. The mystic, Maritain states, sees all objects in creation as partaking of a being which is underlied and rooted in Being. The mystic, therefore, will attempt to break through the self's conceptual barriers to achieve this ground of being. Philosophically, in Aquinas' Third Way and in his "On Existence and Essence," we see God as the necessary being who makes contingent being possible, and the Being whose essence is to be--although in a non-concrete mode. Theologically, this concept is seen in the "I AM WHO AM" of Exodus, and the "Before Abraham came to be, I Am" of the Gospel of John.

While Sartre and Antoninus differ in their concepts

of the ultimate term, they both dwell in the common milieu of existential anguish, and both affirm the powers of the human will. From this point on, however, Sartre states that man is--ultimately speaking--a useless passion, though his statement is in itself implicitly a meaningful act.⁴⁴ Antoninus, however, explicitly views man's desires for totality as transcendently rooted.

God of death
 Great God of no-life,
 Existence is mine
 But you broach a nothingness
 Breached out of nowhere.

Always you are not yet.

Deep in my gut,
 Choked on oblivion,
 Split, hearted on annihilation
 Caught through,
 Smothered out,
 A terror of emptiness,
 Spat.⁴⁵

Comparing Antoninus with the general run of religious poets, we may note that his spiritual life is more than acquainted with sharp and sided hail; but he yet remains an affirmer of the basic goodness of creation and has not retreated into the religious' convenient escapism into Manichaenism disguised as Christianity.

The dynamics in the relationship of God and the universe and God's need of man are part of the theme of "A Frost Lay White on California," a poem in which there is a dialogue between the spiritually arid poet and a God who speaks of himself as a woman-lover and a dog-slave to man. In the poem this God thrives in places of revulsion. The voice of divinity is heard:

No pride . . . kick me I come back!
 Spit on me I eat your spittle!
 I crawl on my belly!
 What is revulsion to me?
 As free of disgust as of shame and pride.
 As much your dog as I am your God,
 Whatever you need,
 When you have gutted this madness
 Drop down on the ground,
 I will lick your hand.⁴⁶

Moreover, the poem is a commentary on its preface-quotation from Deuteronomy:

Thou shalt not offer the hire of a strumpet, nor the price of a dog, in the house of the Lord thy God, whatsoever it be that thou hast vowed: because both these are an abomination to the Lord thy God.

Thus, while the primitive's simple dualism of good and evil would regard evil as distant from God, contemporary man, girded with psychology, would be inclined to interpret

this dualism as affective truth; that is, as a personal and impressionistic rendering of the distance between man and God.

This point of view would assert, moreover, that if the world is evolving toward a higher state of perfection, and if this is Providence inherent in evolution, then the Divine Intention must be actualized. The divine need, or man's necessity to God has been expressed in a poem by Rilke which is similar in some respects to certain ideas of Antoninus.

What will you do God, when I die?

I am your vessel--

When I in pieces lie.

I am your drink--

When I go stale and dry.

I am your garb and the trade you ply;

Losing me you lose your meaning.

While from a Christian point of view this may smack of pride and presumption, it nevertheless conveys a truth which is inherent in the theology of the Mystical Body--a theology stressing the interdependency of vine and branch, head and members. In Antoninus' poetry the transcendent deity manifests himself in the earthly man and mysteriously participates in his psychic life. Says God to the hungry man:

You do not know how much I am you:
 The other side of your face,
 The back side of your body.
 I stand between your shoulders.
 I am that void between your eyes
 When you can't think.⁴⁶

Emphasizing the need to break through ego-rationality, God incidentally smashes the Manichaen world-flesh-devil equation.

"You are of flesh," cried God, "that is
 your light!"

The shimmering sensitivity of the nerve.
 Not I.

No brain to think with!
 No nerve to think through!
 I am dog in that I follow,
 Woman in that I love . . .
 Flee that Luciferian
 Light of the brain . . .

.

I, woman, moan against the bars
 I, dog, bay against the dawn.⁴⁷

The rain-grace comes and states the poet. It blesses and breaks into the different levels of creation, which Divinity in a sense needs to inhabit.

. . . I heard the rain begin.

.

It was falling, I knew, out of the
 terrifying helplessness of God.

Into the frost,
 Into the frozen crotches of the bush,
 Into the feather of the singing bird.

Across the stuttering mouths of those
 seeds.⁴⁸

Regarding the dynamics of the relationship between the divine will and the human action and the fact that man may unconsciously actualize the divine will, Gabriel Marcel, the French existentialist, perhaps gives us a relevant perspective into Antoninus:

. . . it is not certain that there is any real opposition between the personal and the suprapersonal. I should be much more inclined to admit that the personal is authentically itself only by reason of whatever is in it which smashes the frame in which it is always in danger of allowing itself to be imprisoned as ego pure and simple.⁴⁹

In the section of the volume from which the title is taken, "Hazards of Holiness," the interrelationships of the animus and anima are worked out in terms of racial regression and progression, and the relationship between human wholeness and sanctity. Before approaching this section, let us recall certain ideas of Jung and Neumann discussed in conjunction with the content of The Crooked Lines of God . The maternal matrix can be a womb of creativity if the mother image is transferred outward onto the wife, the city,

man in general; and if once transposed, there is a creative intercourse with the image--hence the canalization of the tabooed desire for incest into a productive process. However, the maternal image can assume stultifying proportions, not permitting the symbolic projection of itself outward, but remaining in the unconscious of the person, wreaking its revenge. In order that the process of individuation proceed successfully, one must synthesize the unconscious with the conscious and thereby maintain a balance of the two (which can be correlated to a certain extent with the instinct and rationality). In Jungian terms, the Self must mediate between the Ego and the Unconscious, allowing neither to tyrannize.

Approaching the poems with these psychological tools we may observe that the ego of Salome is animus-dominant as Holofernes' is anima-dominant, and that neither has achieved a balance between the conscious and unconscious. Salome's masculine and assertive ego-rational demands bring death to John, while Holoferne's sexual desires bring about his own downfall. While in John, his conscious assertion constantly meets the demands of the unconscious. In simple terms, the saint is passive to divine influx in order that he might be effective in his active mission; returning to the quotation from St. Theresa of Avila in The Crooked Lines of God--"The soul is feminine to God." Like John the Baptist, Judith likewise coordinates her femininity and her divinely-oriented

animus. It is this wholeness and sanctity which bring about Holofernes' destruction. However, one should see in these poems not only a celebration of John and Judith but in the presentation of Salome and Holofernes an aesthetic catharsis of the perverted animus and anima in the self. Commenting on Salome Antoninus said

. . . I sensed an incest-attraction to her stepfather as paternal archetype. This led her to dare to demand a horrendous thing--as if the repressed violation (incest) could only be met in a willed act that was both symbol and atrocity. Because (of John's) protest of Herod's and Herodias' incestuous relation he (John) symbolized the moral force that kept Salome and Herod (father and daughter) apart. Thus when in the dance she had sexually excited Herod and the whole male company to the point that she was offered the possibility of a reward-beyond-reason (incest) she symbolically accepted. But like all Electras whose real problem underlying the incestual pull to the father is a more homosexual pull back toward the mother, she instantly conferred with the mother for direction. Herodias' and her own unconscious need coincided: to the revenge on John, the symbol of rational morality, and he had to go. The king and all the company grieved because they knew that all men fell when John fell, but the Electra complex between father and daughter

accomplished what the more stratified hatred of Herodias could not, I suppose because that particular incest-attraction was already slaked, whereas the Electra thing, nascent and eruptive, and reinforced by the flagrant masculine attestation of the collective in the hall, triumphed.

My poem obviously celebrates both Salome and John
reconciling two opposites in the aesthetic dimension.⁵⁰

This is not the interpolation that corrupts, as was Bruce Barton's, but the interpolation that attempts to add a meaningful dimension; Antoninus has seen and expressed something in revelation in the manner of an exigete, and thus is himself among those artists who attempts to continue revelation.

In "The Beheading of John the Baptist" the character of Salome expresses a perversion of the animus; she is the corrupt libido untempered by intuition.

. . . a virgin gambling away her maidenhood
In the crouched animality of arrested stupration,
The thrust of blood in the heart's valves
 when treasure is spewed,
The toothed heels stuttering out a mirthless
 crescendo,
Rapacity unflexed, the impossible strut of
 childish excess,

Astute circlings of consanguinity, most
ancient of inversions,

Blood calling to the blood.⁵¹

After the beheading the poet states: "The mother has won"; Salome's feminine consciousness being distorted by her mother's usurping the father's place in the individuation of the child, the suppressed animus now cries out for vengeful recognition.

John, on the contrary, has successfully emerged from his encounters with the parental archetypes, and his individuation likewise has racial ramifications:

Many years back, in the womb, when the weak limbs,
Sphered in those lapsing waters of life, that

fertile

Plangent sea, sprang the upsurgent body against

those walls

As the truth shocked through, sharp in that

trance

As a sent sign, as stones, struck under water,

Pierce to the swooning drowner's ear, rouse

him urgently up . . .⁵²

We may recall that Erich Neumann describes the period of the Terrible Mother as one in which the image of drowning in the maternal sea is frequent. But while Salome is arrested in her animality, John, "In his wild womb-dance / . . . broke the stupor that obsessed the race. And again

Antoninus interprets Scripture unconventionally. He commented:

I sensed in John a repressed homosexual attraction to Christ which he projected onto Herod under the incest symbol (John and Christ were cousins (brothers)). I have seen paintings of John baptizing Christ wherein John's phallic staff and libation were plainly accomodated to the homosexual impulse in the artist. All through this book Hazards of Holiness the poems were litmus paper attempts to bring to light these ambiguities in myself--fear of woman, attraction toward the hero, identification with the anima, etc

In this quotation we see a trait Antoninus has in common with Graham Greene; the strength of their work is not derived by means of dogma or doctrine, but by means of their personal encounters with evil and with the "mysteries" of the Church, and by their refusal to accept traditional simplifications of the problems involved in such encounters.

While the animus of Salome goads her to have the Baptist beheaded, it is the animus-consciousness synthesis in Judith which responds to her existential situation, and which brings about the death of Holofernes and consequently, the welfare of Juda. Hence we have here again the passive-active relationship; the soul is feminine to God but then aggressively radiates the divine influx it has received. Therefore the feminine responsiveness to being is coupled

with masculine reaction, and consequently there is a creative polarity between opposites. In "Judith and Holofernes" we see a feminine Judith in the midst of a superficial masculinity, embodied not only in Holofernes and his warriors, but also in the fathers of her religion.

Grieve you warriors!

Mourn your loss you great men of battle,
Blood-drunk dukes of carnivorous life,
Out there on the mesa, asleep on your spears,
Bedeviled by dreams of women and gods!
The moon steals over the stupefied camp, crisply,
And blesses at last the besieged city,
Softening the contours of warfare and weather,
Erasing the scars of violence, hate, the perverse
tribulation

Of energetic despair, atoning at last
In its delicate presence the harsh male madness
And the spoilage of man. The strange woman
Glides through the camp like a young goddess
Bearing her gifts, back through the thorn
And the desert gravel, over the flints,
Picking her way through camel dung and the urine
of mules,
Drifting back to the beleaguered city that gave
her birth,
Where the greybeard fathers, impotent,

Sit on their mats, invoking the inscrutable God,
 Of whom in fact they have quite despaired,
 To make in this hour some bland interpolation,
 Discover within their obscure hearts,
 Blind with the anxiousness of earth
 And the libidinous rage that terrors their days,
 The germ of rebirth . . .⁵³

Antoninus either implies or states directly in his annotations that the four main characters in these two poems, Salome and John, and Judith and Holofernes, were all more or less projections of contents in his own unconscious which his conscious mind attempted to assimilate; his art, therefore, in these two poems intended to exorcise these contents, which, if left in the unconscious, might act as demons of compulsion. For example Antoninus stated:

I identify with Holofernes--the shadow, because of my unassimilated erotic and libidinous unconscious complex, the heritage of incest attraction residual in the maternal imago Judith is the "sister" of Salome in the sense that both are Electras who understand the uses of eroticism. In Salome the incest impulse regresses into violation and atrocity. In Judith it is transmuted into service of the heavenly Father. Magdalene accomodates both into her life-span. As male I stand threatened by all three, my animus threatened by Salome and my shadow threatened by

Judith. In the futurehood of Christ (the Divine Milieu!) I aspire to embrace Magdalene, the fallen and redeemed anima, my instincts brightened and stimulated by her physical presence and my spirit contemplating her divine beauty, the earth sexual agon transmuted into the rapture of supreme transcendence.⁵⁴

One of the compelling traits of Antoninus' vision is that he intends to extrovert these insights gleaned from his conscious, and that he implicitly condemns that vision which desires solely to dwell in the realms of the contemplative, and not in the society of men. Instead, there is that rhythm in his life which Arnold Toynbee in his A Study of History states is characteristic of creative personalities: there is a "withdrawal" into the worlds of contemplation, but this is a mere prelude to his final purpose, and that is to "return" to the social milieu to offer them his vision of the divine truths he has seen. We see this in the final poem in Hazards of Holiness, "In Savage Wastes." After his contemplations he shows no desire to escape into a distant City of God, but instead affirms: "I will go back once more to the city of man."

Conclusion

The poetry in Hazards of Holiness differs from that in The Crooked Lines of God in certain respects, one of the most important of which is its even greater emphasis on

SEEING--through the ego to the unconscious, through the mind to the soul, through the shadow to the anima, through Satan to Christ, through the letter to the spirit, through the infra-rational to the supra-rational, through the accidents of convention to substantial truth. Antoninus speaks in various of his writings of the charismatic who breaks through institutional norms in order to bring a new illumination, and his poetry itself partakes of this character.

Not only is Hazards of Holiness a book about individuation as its introductory and thematic poem "Jacob and the Angel" indicates, but it is also concerned with the emergence of the race, as is evident by Antoninus' references to man's unknown depths and a new species of man. Because fulfillment depends on a previous privation, both individuation and phylogenetic progress are dependent on evil; however, this evil, nothingness, is neither merely nominal nor static, but a reality having the "power of the vacuum." It is the polarity between Being and Nothingness which catalyzes progress in the individual, and by extension, the race. This progress is further stimulated, Antoninus believes, by clarification and assimilation of the contents of the unconscious. His view of progress is not a resurrection-without-crucifixion position, however, but an optimism through anguish, rooted in earth and flesh, and necessarily

repeating the "folly of the cross" in order to achieve that which will, as Thoreau stated, bring "more day to dawn."

The fact that Hazards of Holiness is also, as Antoninus states, a record of his Dark Night of the Soul perhaps elucidates the reason for his statement poetry. Much of the volume is composed of discursive poetry wrestling with the problem of evil, with man's instinctual depths. Thus, we have the rationality of statement poetry contending with the problem of the infra-rational. And it is through this conflict of opposites that there occurs the powerful suprarational vision in part three of Hazards of Holiness; for the contending opposites of shadow-anima, Satan-Christ, fixity-flux, evil-good, institutional-charismatic, death-birth, find a kind of reconciliation in this section. We move, for example, from the painful discursiveness of "A Frost Lay White on California" to the exaltation and intuitive unity of the "Canticle," "In All These Acts," and "The Song the Body Dreamed" in the last part of the book. In "A Frost Lay White," an earlier poem--

What desolation, that depth!
 Who says so!
 What secret, that scrivening!
 My own business, you.
 Leave me alone.³⁷

In, for instance, the "Canticle," the terms of this polarity between the ego and the unconscious, the rationality and

infra-rationality, have fused into a supra-rational vision, one which, like the mystical vision, is in union with the hidden substance of reality:

Hidden within the furlongs of those deeps,
 your fiery virtue impregnates the
 sky, irradiant with wisdom.

You are Byzantium, domed awesomeness, the
 golden-ruddy richness of rare climes,
 great masterwork of God.

Kneeling within thy mosque naves, seized in
 the luminous indult of those dusks,
 We hold the modal increase, subsumed in chant
 ransomed of the balsam and the myrrh.

Keeping an inmost essence, an invitational
 letting that never wholly spends, but
 solemnly recedes,

You pause, you hover, virtue indemnable, at
 last make still, a synthesis unprobed.

Checked there, we tremble on the brink, we
 dream the venue of those everlasting
 deeps.³⁸

What is noteworthy and important is the study of Antoninus is the movement of his metaphysic. From a poet mystically participating in nature, Everson moved through stages focusing on pacifism, eroticism and anarchism to a singularly masculine and independent position. This

movement which is paralleled by his growing concern with evil, is observable in the three parts of The Residual Years, Antoninus' major pre-conversion work. His first post-conversion work, The Crooked Lines of God deals with the intensity of his conversion experience and with certain illuminations which were the consequences of his new vision. In Prodigious Thrust, his autobiography, Antoninus reveals, among many other things, a compulsive concern for a rigid order, an order--psychological and ecclesiastical--which he himself would scrutinize, and in great part criticize, in his next volume of poetry. In Hazards of Holiness his vision blossomed forth in different and more crucial directions than had his previous post-conversion volumes. However, at no time during these movements does Everson or Antoninus completely reject his former metaphysical affiliations. Instead of rejection, there is encounter and assimilation. There is, in fact, a continuity observable from and including The Residual Years through Hazards of Holiness. And this fact emphasizes a certain inherent quality of his vision--it is not only toughly wrought in his poetry, but metaphysically comprehensive.

NOTES

¹Letter to Allan Campo, dated September 11, 1959.

²Allan Campo, M. A. thesis, 138.

³Letter to Fred Rizzo, Jan. 21, 1964.

⁴Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, The Phenomenon of Man (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), 31.

⁵Ibid., 287.

⁶Ibid., 306.

⁷Ibid., 193.

⁸Ibid., 296-97. Cosmogenesis is a larger term under which comes noogenesis. Geogenesis evolved into biogenesis, and this to psychogenesis; this finally evolves into noogenesis, which is and creates the layer of concentrated human thought on the surface of the earth. This "layer" is termed the noosphere.

⁹Letter to Fred Rizzo, July 2, 1962. The "of conscious choice between being and nothingness" is my inclusion. It should also be mentioned that in his

annotations Antoninus stated that his ideas expressed in the letter were provisional and should not be seen as perfectly expressing his present view. I had quoted the letter in its entirety earlier, but above only that part of it I thought most significant in regard to his ideas on evolution. The above quotation is, if I interpret correctly, in substantial agreement with the notions expressed in Hazards of Holiness.

¹⁰Brother Antoninus, "Our Modern Sensibility," Commonweal, LXXVII, 5(October 26, 1962), 111-12.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., 112.

¹³The Crooked Lines of God, 22.

¹⁴Hazards of Holiness, 59-60.

¹⁵Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: The Divine Milieu (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), 135.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Hazards of Holiness, 68.

¹⁹Ibid., 69.

²⁰Ibid., 65.

²¹Ibid.

²²Letter, February 4, 1964.

²³Verse of page 170, M. A. thesis.

²⁴Ernst Cassirer in his Language and Myth and other works discusses this distinction.

²⁵Flannery O'Connor, "The Role of the Catholic Novelist," Greyfriar: Sienna Studies in Literature, Vol VII, 1964, p. 9.

²⁶Hazards of Holiness, 5-6.

²⁷Ibid., 5.

²⁸Ibid., 8.

²⁹The Phenomenon of Man, 31.

³⁰Antoninus here commented: "More a letting go than an effortful project." p. 180, M. A. thesis. Thus, we are reminded of Antoninus' earlier comment, "The incarnational movement is always down." Moreover, this attitude of descending in order to ascend is similar to Stein's view in Conrad's Lord Jim that in order to survive one must "in the destructive element immerse"; and also to D. H. Lawrence's implicit criticism of the monks when he said that life at its most intense existed in the valley of Mount Cassino, and not upon the mountain top. For these men, as well

as for Antoninus, the Celestial City must be seen in the valley of the senses.

³¹Hence, we see a process similar to that described before. One might mention that assimilation seems a more proper term than purgation, if we liken individuation to the mystical process. Assimilation implies addition, growth, development; purgation implies subtraction, a lessening, and, if I may pun meaningfully, deprivation.

³²Hazards of Holiness. 15-16.

³³Ibid., 48.

³⁴Ibid., 51.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., 22.

³⁹Ibid., 29-30.

⁴⁰Ibid., 30.

⁴¹Ibid., 32-33.

⁴²Ibid., 33.

⁴³Ibid., 34.

⁴⁴Sartre's purpose in much of his art, is, I take it, similar to the rationale behind much of Mark Twain's later writings. That is, both seem acutely aware of the subversive possibilities of art. If art says convincingly "There is no meaning--there is only freedom" as does the art of the late Twain and of Sartre, then it can goad man to search for truth, and there are few more meaningful acts than this. What lies behind the aesthetic I've briefly elaborated is the obvious fact that art is a communicating, and a communicating denotes a rapport. Whether the gift the artist gives to the audience be a blessing or a curse or a dabbling in wit, it nevertheless presupposes a relationship--however limited, imperfect, and obscure--of meaning of some sort. And hence, even art which we interpret to be nihilistic is, because of the very fact that it is art, anti-nihilistic. It is significant that in the best art we see explicitly an immersion into the depths of nihilism, and the possibilities of annihilation; probably one of the greatest reasons for our attraction to works such as King Lear, Moby Dick, The Mysterious Stranger, and "Sunday Morning" is the fact that the non-being asserted in the work is a counter field of force to the being of the art work itself.

⁴⁵Hazards of Holiness, 35.

⁴⁶Ibid., 40.

⁴⁷Ibid., 41.

⁴⁸Ibid., 42. Antoninus commented on the idea "of the terrifying helplessness of God" as follows: "because of man's free will God is powerless to save man from ego-centricity unless man is persuaded to abandon his ego-centricity." M. A. thesis, page 194. Notice that Antoninus' emphases here are different than they were in those passages in Prodigious Thrust in which he feared his freedom to deviate from the law of God.

⁴⁹Gabriel Marcel, The Mystery of Being, II (Harvill Press Gateway Edition, 1960), pp. 88-89.

⁵⁰Verse of 195, M. A. thesis.

⁵¹Hazards of Holiness, 72.

⁵²Ibid., 74. Antoninus saw in this poem an expression of his own earlier repressed hatred of his brother; he comments: "When my little brother would dive in the pool at Selma I would strike stones under water (the water carries sound better than the air) to signal him when to come up--to "save" him from "suicide." Thus the womb symbol--Jacob and Esau--strugglers in the womb." 198, M A. thesis.

⁵³Ibid., 78-79.

⁵⁴Verso of 198, M. A. thesis.

⁵⁵Ibid., 39.

⁵⁶Ibid., 60-61.

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