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"The Haunted Inkbottle:
Problems of Artistic Communication in Modernism"

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A study of the literature and literary figures of the modern period throughout their respective careers led to a goal of understanding the breakdown in artistic communication that is unique to the modern world.

It was determined early in the course of study that a simple overview of the modern period was unacceptable due to its inherent subjectivity. Therefore three artists were specifically chosen for their contributions to the art of the period and their universal acceptance as the major figures in their respective genres. All three major genres of literature: poetry, prose, and drama were included, as were all three major English-speaking countries: England, Ireland, and the United States. T. S. Eliot, James Joyce and Tennessee Williams were the artists so chosen, and a complete reading of their most important works coupled with a detailed biographical study of each of the authors was undertaken. Peripheral readings in criticism and psychology led to the establishing of a model which characterizes the conclusions of the study. The central problem of artistic communication in Modernism is the problem of the modern artist. Whether an artist relates his consciousness to his world--and ultimately to his audience--through physical, intellectual, or spiritual means is the crucial factor determining the success or failure of the artist in reaching the audience with his art.

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"The Haunted Inkbottle:

Problems of Artistic Communication in Modernism"

A Trident Scholar Project Report

by

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Title: The Haunted Inkbottle: Problems of Artistic Communication in Modernism.

Investigator: Daniel David Catlin, Midshipman First Class, United States Naval Academy, Department of English.

Background: Be it in music, visual arts, or in literature, the modern world has seen a tremendous change in the relationship between the artist and his audience. Certainly the twentieth century has wrought considerable changes in the audience, but it is the artist who is the mystery of the modern phenomenon: that modern artists have been rendered incapable of communicating their art to a general audience.

Objectives: A study of the literature and literary figures of the modern period throughout their respective careers led to a goal of understanding the breakdown in artistic communication that is unique to the modern world.

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Chapter One: Introduction--The Problem

The twentieth century has been witness to an incredible change in its art. In music, the visual arts, and in literature, the modern artist has almost universally broken with the traditions of his genre and created completely new combinations of sound, color, or words to convey his artistic vision. As early as the 1920's, "the term Modernism began to move from a general sense of sympathy with the modern to a more specific association with experimentation in the arts."¹ But this experimentation is not universally seen as a positive move. Obviously, twentieth century audiences are much altered from those who first viewed Shakespeare's plays or first worshipped in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel; the world itself has undergone considerable change. But the changes in modern art do not seem commensurate with the evolutionary changes that simply must occur in both artist and audience over time. There has been in the twentieth century a change in the relationship of the artist to his audience, a change that has greatly hampered the direct communication of ideas through art itself, without the aid of interpretation. This change--the breakdown in successful communication between artist and audience--as it applies to literature especially, is the focus of this study.

With an image of the problem to be studied clearly in mind, a course of study must next be defined. Two possible methods are apparent: limiting the study to a single genre of literature, and studying major works of the period therein; or selecting a small number of key figures of the period, and mapping their individual careers as representative of the movement as a whole. The former method is at once appealing as it offers the student a large amount of freedom and personal taste. This is also precisely the reason why it must be discarded, as any study so performed would be immediately vulnerable to criticism based simply on reference selections. The latter method then, would be preferable if representative figures could be chosen with limited controversy. Also as there are three major English-speaking nations which produce a large amount of art: England, Ireland, and the United States, and as there are three major literary genres: drama, poetry and fiction, it would be preferable if all these variables could be included in the study while yet limiting its scope to a manageable level.

Probably the most obvious choice for any study of Modernism is T. S. Eliot. His poem The Waste Land when published in 1922 revolutionized the attitudes of a whole generation, and the fact of his Nobel Prize, which he won twenty-six years later, proves that his talent is lasting. Eliot was born in St. Louis, but spent the last fifty years

of his life in England, and died an English citizen. So, though both the United States and England claim him, he claimed the latter, so we must be satisfied to call him English. The next obvious selection for a study in modern literature is James Joyce, whose Ulysses, which was published the same year as Eliot's Waste Land helped to define the era, and specifically 1922, as a central date in Modernism. Having found an English poet and an Irish novelist, an American playwright would now complete the picture, creating a trio of figures from each of the three genres and countries that we desired. Although somewhat younger than Eliot or Joyce, Tennessee Williams is a likely candidate for study for several reasons. First, his vision of the world was distinctly modern, and further, his experimentation on the stage was brilliant. Finally, Williams exemplifies a life which began with great success early in the career followed by a change in which communication became increasingly difficult if not impossible.

As it is often the case that an artist's life and work are nearly inseparable, this study will analyze the life and works of each of these three figures in succession, paying specific attention to the relationship of the artist to his audience throughout the career. Further, any larger issues that are discovered to have had extraordinary effects upon an artist, for example: war, God, mortality,

or politics, will be extracted and compared to the other artists to see if any trends can be found. Finally, the three artists will be compared as a whole, and relevant conclusions will be discussed that might hint at what ghosts may have haunted the pens of these great artists, and challenged their attempts to share their vision of the modern world.

Chapter 2: Tennessee Williams

The first decade of the twentieth century was crucial in the life of Tennessee Williams. Although he was not himself yet alive, his father, Cornelius Coffin Williams and mother, Miss Edwina Estelle Dakin very much were. Edwina was from 1905 living in Columbus, Mississippi, where her father pastored St. Paul's Episcopal church. Always a bit of an actress, Miss Edwina immediately adopted the culture of her new home, quickly acquiring the character "of the archetypal 'Southern Belle,' a role the Ohio-born Edwina played so well that it finally became her life; with a convert's fervor, she more than adapted to her Southern homes and habits--she virtually erased from her speech and manner anything that was not appropriate to the Southern Victorian maiden."¹ During this time, Cornelius "C.C." Williams was working for a telephone company out of Memphis, Tennessee "in what might later be termed a paralegal capacity."² Williams had studied law at the University of Tennessee for one year, but had left to serve in the Spanish-American War. Edwina and Cornelius met in early 1906, and an eighteen month courtship ensued, culminating in a wedding ceremony performed by Reverend Dakin on June 2, 1907.

A quite respectable family themselves, the Dakins

looked hard at the credentials of a suitor such as Cornelius Williams. In the end, however, the "first rate pedigree" bestowed on their son by Thomas Lanier Williams and Isabel Coffin, whose "husband's family listed Tennessee senators, [while] hers boasted at least three governors," sufficed.³ The young Williams couple spent an if not uneventful, at least undocumented first two years together. But in 1909, while pregnant with their first child, Edwina returned to her parents' home in the Columbus rectory, where a daughter, Rose Isabel, named after both of her grandmothers, was born on November 17, 1909. During the next year, Cornelius changed jobs to that of a shoe salesman, and his "visits to Columbus became markedly less pleasant, for he returned to the rectory several evenings drunk and incoherent, and there was talk of card games in bawdy houses at the edge of town."⁴ Into the midst of this turbulent relationship entered the additional concern of another pregnancy, which on March 26, 1911, Palm Sunday that year, occasioned the not so triumphal entry of Thomas Lanier Williams (named after his paternal grandfather who had died three years earlier) into that "terrifyingly complex mystery of human life."⁵ Concerning his humble beginnings, Tennessee Williams himself much later offered these thoughts:

My first eight years of childhood in Mississippi were the most joyfully innocent of my life, due to the beneficent homelife provided by my beloved Dakin grandparents, with whom we lived. And to the wild and sweet half-imaginary world in which my sister and our beautiful black nurse Ozzie existed, separate, almost invisible to anyone but our little cabalistic circle of three.⁶

Out of this benevolent world, young Tom was abruptly taken in July 1918, as Cornelius moved his family to St. Louis, where he had accepted a managerial position in the International Shoe Company. Tom was at this time recovering from a long series of illnesses that had lasted nearly a year, and his mother was again pregnant. Walter Dakin Williams, named after Edwina's father, was born on February 21, 1919, completing the Williams family. An unfortunate miscarriage two years later further darkened the elder Williams' troubled relationship until Dakin would later remark that "life at home was terrible, just terrible. By the late 1920's mother and father were in open warfare."⁷

Tom Williams, severely weakened by his several health problems felt he was much changed by his illness. "Prior to it, I had been a little boy with a robust, aggressive,

almost bullying nature. During the illness, I learned to play, alone, games of my own invention."⁸ His mother nursed him back to health with extreme fervency, such that, Williams claimed, "her overly solicitous attention planted in me the makings of a sissy, much to my father's discontent."⁹ Possibly due at least in part to the physical limitations of his unreliable health, Tom's interest in writing began when he was still very young. At age thirteen, he had seen two poems and one story published in his school newspaper, and by the time he was seventeen, in 1928, he had seen his first story published in a national magazine, Weird Tales.

In the autumn of 1929, Tom entered the University of Missouri at Columbia with considerable monetary assistance from his beloved Dakin grandparents. Tom spent three years at Columbia, but was unable to finish his degree (in Journalism), because after failing out of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) his Junior year and receiving "poor grades in other courses. . .Dad announced that he could no longer afford to keep me in college and that he was getting me a job in the International Shoe Company."¹⁰ Tom then returned to St. Louis, and claims in his Memoirs to have labored nearly three years there, to the point of physical collapse. Donald Spoto, however, in his biography of the playwright, remarks that company "employment records show that he did not actually begin work there until June

24, 1934, and left on April 30, 1935. . .The remainder of the time, he read, wrote poetry, and endured the insufferably confining atmosphere of family life."¹¹ Tom did not seem to hold his father's withdrawal of support too seriously against him. The two were never close, but much later in his life, Tennessee Williams would hint at his own values through comment about his father. "A catalogue of the unattractive aspects of his personality would be fairly extensive, but towering above them were, I think, two great virtues which I hope are hereditary: total honesty and total truth, as he saw it, in his dealings with others."¹²

In spite of his later nostalgic feelings toward his father, life at home during the early 1930's was increasingly difficult to bear. Tom's sister "Rose's phobias and obsessions multiplied throughout late 1934 and early 1935. . .Rose became increasingly unhappy and threatened and depressed. . .Tom and Rose became terribly fragile at the same time."¹³ Finally, in late March of 1935, Tom suffered a collapse which he later claimed caused him to be hospitalized for something over a week with "high blood pressure and a heart defect of unspecified nature."¹⁴ Again his biographer's account is somewhat less dramatic: "He was taken at once to a hospital, where tests determined that there was no cardiac incident, no sign of dangerous hypertension--in fact, nothing remarkable beyond evident exhaustion and underweight."¹⁵

Tom spent the next several months with his Dakin grandparents at their new home in Memphis, Tennessee while convalescing from his collapse. That summer the first play by Thomas Lanier Williams graced the "stage" of a Garden theatre group in Memphis with some success. The play was Cairo, Shanghai, Bombay!, and remembering that summer Williams was later to comment that "the laughter, genuine and loud, at the comedy I had written enchanted me. Then and there the theatre and I found each other for better and for worse. I know it's the only thing that's saved my life."¹⁶

Returning to St. Louis, Tom spent a year at Washington University, continued his writing and received several small prizes for his work. The failure of Tom's submission that year to secure a school dramatic prize is the reason Williams always gave for his withdrawal from Washington University, but as Donald Spoto points out, "there was another reason: he had failed Greek that year, and so he was denied the right to graduate."¹⁷ This disappointment must be considered minor, however, in light of the continuing deterioration of Rose's mental health which caused her intermittent stays at the state asylum at Farmington. So again with the aid of his always faithful grandparents, Tom entered the State University of Iowa where he could at least to some degree escape the unbearable existence he endured at home. Tragically, that

very fall of 1937, due to intense pressure from Rose's doctors, her parents assented to the performance of a new neurosurgical procedure called a prefrontal lobotomy which the doctors had claimed was the only cure. Tom, who was not told of the operation until he returned home for a weekend in November, furiously blamed his mother. "She gave permission to have it done while I was away. . . She is the one who approved of the lobotomy. . . My sister was such a vital person. She could have become quite well by now if they hadn't performed the goddam operation on her; she would have come back up to the surface."¹⁸

Regardless of his claims that Edwina was to blame for Rose's operation, Tom never quite forgave himself for failing her. In his Memoirs, Tennessee remembers an event from about a year before the operation. It seems his parents had taken a vacation and during that time, Tom had hosted quite a wild party. Rose told her parents of the party, and Tom remembers:

We passed each other on the landing and I turned upon her like a wildcat and I hissed at her:

'I hate the sight of your ugly old face!'

Wordless, stricken, and crouching, she stood there motionless in a corner of the landing as I rushed on out of the house.

This is the cruelest thing I have done in my life, I suspect, and one for which I can never properly atone.¹⁹

Tom did return to Iowa, and though he had to extend through the summer term, he did finally graduate with a Bachelor's degree in English on August 5, 1938. This commencement, however, was concurrent with another that would greatly influence the rest of his life and career. An abortive first and only consummated love with a woman terminated in early 1938, leading Tennessee to confirm suspicions that he had first recognized that summer of his first play in Memphis, when he "began to realize more fully an attraction, also suspected for some time, to young men." By the first of the new year 1938, then living in New Orleans, Tom, now officially Tennessee Williams, had shared "his first homosexual experience. . .with a stranger for whom he at once developed a tender affection."²⁰

The next six years for Tom, now often called Tenn, were a roller coaster ride of triumph and travesty as he would alternately wait tables, wander across the country, receive grants, live extravagantly in Mexico and Acapulco, return to New York, slink home to St. Louis destitute, spend night and days in an alcoholic sexual haze, write scripts for MGM, live in flophouses and bars, and always, always write, for "I already knew that writing was my life,

and its failure would be my death."²¹

There were during these years three events that bear separate address. First in 1939, he was "discovered" and introduced to Audrey Wood, who would at intervals be agent, manager and surrogate mother for Tenn for the next thirty years. The second experience that became crucial in Tennessee's life was the summer of 1940, spent in Provincetown, where he met "another pivotal love in my life. . .the first great male one."²² Williams never forgot that summer, and the last play he wrote more than forty years later, Something Cloudy, Something Clear, tells the story of just how deeply those weeks touched him.

Finally, the third event of those wandering years of the early 1940's, was the event that drew them to a close. On January 6, 1944, "the woman he loved more than anyone in the world after his sister,"²³ his grandmother Dakin, died. He could not bear even to attend her funeral, scheduling the third in a long series of eye operations to correct his cataract on the very day of the service. But he could not escape Grand's death; his family was again the source of unavoidable and incurable pain.

At last one night in late January, alone in his room, he allowed a beginning of the healing process. For all of them--for Grand;...for his forlorn grandfather and confused mother; for his

father, drunk and isolated; for his brother, who was now somewhere in the war; for Rose, who knew nothing of any of them; and for himself in his last six years of wandering--he wept.²⁴

That summer Williams returned to Provincetown to complete a work he had begun a year earlier. It was to be a "personal history of his family. The play would be a tribute to Rose, and a cry from his heart about the serenity they had all gradually lost over the years and were never able to regain."²⁵ The play was called The Glass Menagerie, and it premiered in Chicago on December 26th. Surprising everyone, actors and author alike, the play caught on and by the middle of January was a sellout. But the writer's impulse in him did not rest in the Chicago winter. Before the snow had melted Tennessee Williams had already conceived the outline for another play which would eventually become A Streetcar Named Desire. Menagerie moved to New York in March and a week later it was voted by the New York Drama Critics Circle the best play of the year. Receptions, interviews and awards followed in rapid succession, and by June Williams had retreated to Mexico where he remained throughout the summer.

By August of 1945, Tenn had returned to Boston to work on a play he was collaborating with his close friend Donald Windham. Although not nearly as successful as Menagerie,

which was still on Broadway, You Touched Me! planted ideas which would later be developed into another great success, Summer and Smoke. The year 1946 saw Williams wandering all over the country, from New Orleans to St. Louis, to Key West, New York and all between. Another close friend, Paul Bowles commented that it was as if Williams "was more eager to get away from where he was than he was to get to another place. . .he [was] suddenly fed up with a place and the people in it and [felt] that somehow any other place, or nearly any other place, [was] more acceptable at that moment than the place he [was] in."²⁶ His travels were interrupted in May by another medical problem similar to an appendicitis which required surgery. Williams was convinced, as with all his maladies, that death was imminent. The playwright survived, however, spent the summer in Nantucket with his friend Carson McCullers, and proceeded to New Orleans, where he lived with his grandfather, then ninety, and completed revisions on what he called "Blanche's play."

The summer of 1947 then, was another major turning point in Tennessee's life. Finally satisfied with his revisions of A Streetcar Named Desire, and with Summer and Smoke scheduled to open in Dallas on July 8, he travelled to Provincetown where he met the one true love of his life, Frank Merlo, "a youth who was to become my closest, most long-lasting companion."²⁷ Also while there, he completed

the casting of Streetcar which was to open in New York on December 3. The New York opening was a smash, in both critics' eyes and audience sales. But where he was still somewhat able to hide behind his first success with Menagerie, with Summer and Smoke already preparing for its Broadway run, and with Streetcar earning for Williams his second Drama Critics Circle award for best play on March 31, 1948, and adding on May 3 the coveted Pulitzer Prize, there was now no chance of retreating into the shadows that had so often been his hiding place. In his essay "On a Streetcar Named Success," Williams himself called that winter "an event which terminated one part of my life and began another about as different in all external circumstances as could well be imagined."²⁸ But far more tragic to the life of an artist, especially one whose art had been called "compassionate, heartwrenchingly human"²⁹ and whose "knowledge of people is honest and thorough and [whose] sympathy is profoundly human,"³⁰ was that Williams himself said, "I soon found myself becoming indifferent to people."³¹

The next several years of Williams' life were spent quite busily, with almost every summer in Europe with Frank, Christmases with Grandfather and Frank in Key West, and constant writing. Both Menagerie and Streetcar were made into films, Williams' first novel, The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone was published, two collections of short plays, and

one collection of short stories were published, and The Rose Tattoo was produced on Broadway. Williams suffered his first Broadway failure with Camino Real in 1953, and his own depressions that resulted and lasted through his extremely protracted European visit the following year led to the point where "he was prodding himself with morning liquor, but he found that the writing was so forced and artificial he ended even more depressed than the previous unproductive day."³² Tenn and Frank returned to America in late October of 1953, quickly collected Grandfather, and proceeded to New Orleans, where they stayed until mid-January, and finally returned to Key West. There he found he was able to work again, and countered the failure of Camino with what would become his own favorite play, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. The play adheres to the Aristotelean unities of time, place, and magnitude of theme, Williams remarks in his Memoirs, and

That play comes closest to being both a work of art and a work of craft. It is really very well put together, in my opinion, and all its characters are amusing and credible and touching. . . However my reasons for liking Cat best are deeper than that. I believe that in Cat I reached beyond myself, in the second act to a kind of crude eloquence of expression in

Big Daddy that I have managed to give to no other character of my creation.³³

After significant revision of the third act with director Eli Kazan, rehearsals for Cat began in early February of 1955 and were interrupted for Williams with the death of his beloved grandfather who was ninety-seven. Williams offers no comment on his grandfather's death in his Memoirs, nor does he discuss the run of Cat. Actually, he was not even there. He had returned to Key West for several weeks, declined to accept his second Pulitzer prize and third Drama Critic's award in person, and in June left for his perennial European holiday--alone. Frank Merlo commented to Audrey Wood that he and Tennessee had decided that "a summer's separation would improve the relationship."³⁴ Williams called that summer "the disaster that followed upon [Cat's] enormous success," when for "the second time of prolonged duration, I was unable to write."³⁵ It was "a period nearly blacked out by drugs and drink,"³⁶ and Williams later admitted that "for several weeks I endured this creative sterility, then I started to wash down a Seconal [a barbituate] with a martini. And then I was 'hooked' on that practice."³⁷

Although he did return to writing when he returned to America that fall, continuing to revise the script of his screenplay Baby Doll, working on Sweet Bird of Youth, and

still revising Battle of Angels, one of his first plays, until it would eventually become Orpheus Descending, Williams was still unable to emerge from the cloud of depression that always seemed on the verge of enveloping him. "Since that summer of 1955," he later remarked, "I have written usually under artificial stimulants, aside from the true stimulant of my deep-rooted need to continue to write."³⁸ The relationship with Merlo had not improved significantly, now both of his grandparents were dead, and his "reliance on alcohol and pills only exacerbated his paranoia, which was centered in the conviction that no one cared for him, that everyone wanted him dead, and that everyone else was addicted to drugs."³⁹ Throughout the following two years, there were no significant improvements in either his writing or his mental state. Neither Sweet Bird nor Orpheus was well received, and the reaction to the film Baby Doll was fervent disapproval from nearly all sides, especially the Church. The sudden death of his seventy-seven year old father in March of 1957 and the ensuing reevaluation of the old man's character led to further guilt and depression. Finally, in June of that year he entered intense psychotherapy which lasted over a year.

Although he used several therapists, he rarely took their advice, and was unable to stop his use of alcohol and drugs. There was a sense in the three or four years

including and after his treatment in which Williams' career was rejuvenated. 1958 opened with the production of a short but bravely confessional play called Suddenly Last Summer, which paired with an older one-act was favorably accepted by critics and audience alike. But confidence was not quickly returning to the still desperately paranoid playwright. Even after the successful run of his Sweet Bird of Youth in 1959, "he felt he and the play were a failure, and so he went into hiding--he didn't want any social intercourse."⁴⁰ But his creative energies continued to flow, and again living with Frank Merlo, "there was a sudden resurgence of purpose and energy. . .With an acute sense of self criticism and an attitude that can reasonably be called valorous, he devoted himself to an expansion of what would, in the opinion of many, be his last great play--The Night of the Iguana."⁴¹ The play continued to evolve throughout 1960 and 1961 with an inspiration until "for perhaps the first time since Streetcar, the lineaments of his inner life were transcended into something universal, and an overt concern for spiritual health gives this play at once a human warmth and a tragic serenity absent from his work in the previous several years."⁴² The play premiered in New York, December 28, 1961, and was successful enough that Time magazine put Tennessee on the cover of their March 9, 1962 issue calling Iguana a "box-office sellout and much the best new American play of the

season."⁴³ The New York Drama Critics Circle concurred, and awarded him his fourth and final award for best play of the year.

Unfortunately, the happiness that ensued was brief, for in autumn of 1962, Tennessee received news that Frank Merlo was seriously ill. Throughout the next year, Tennessee spent as much time as possible with Frank, pausing only to be present for the rehearsal and subsequent failure of his latest work, The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore which ran on Broadway from January to March of 1963. During the run, Frank was diagnosed as having inoperable lung cancer, from which there was little or no chance of recovery. Several therapies were attempted, but Frank had to be hospitalized in early August. Williams visited him every day in the hospital, but finally, in late September, Frank Merlo died. Tennessee was ravaged with guilt and anguish, later commenting that, "Frankie had an honest dignity. He gave his life to me, arranged everything and never lost a fraction of his pride in the face of the most awful death a person can have."⁴⁴

Again, tragedy had struck at the most inopportune time. Grand had died before he could produce his first major success with Menagerie in 1944; success with Cat had been darkened with the death of grandfather in 1955; the death of his father had cast a shadow over the opening of Suddenly Last Summer in 1957-58; and if Night of the

Iguana had been a success throughout 1962, the death of Frank and failure of Milk Train were such that to hope seemed irresponsible, almost vain. "By this time, Tennessee had come to believe in his failures even more than his successes. The failures, after all, were tangible and provable, and the successes he tended to think of as unreal or accidents that could never be repeated."⁴⁵ The resiliency of Tennessee Williams in the face of all that had gone before was often not far short of miraculous. "But with the death of Frank there was a wound in his life that never healed, and whose pain was comparable to what he felt about Rose."⁴⁶ And Williams himself wrote in his Memoirs: "I was on the threshold of an awful part of my life. . .As long as Frank was well I was happy. He had a gift for creating a life and, when he ceased to be alive, I couldn't create a life for myself. So I went into a seven-year depression."⁴⁷ "I had lost what had sustained my life."⁴⁸ The revisions Williams worked on Milk Train, further transformed it into "a long poem of regret, of tribute, of gratitude and of guilt, for fifteen years with Frank Philip Merlo."⁴⁹ Those revisions gained the play another Broadway run. It opened January 1, 1964 and closed three nights later.

The years remaining in the 1960's receive little comment from Williams in his Memoirs, which he wrote in 1975. "It is difficult to write about a period of

profound, virtually clinical depression," he writes, "because when you are in that state, everything is observed through a dark glass which not only shadows, but distorts all that is seen."⁵⁰ Williams a few pages later gives this period a bit more reflection:

The direction of my life was away from both social and sexual contacts, not by conscious choice but through deeper and deeper retreat into the broken world of my self.

I arrived at the nadir of this long period of depression when I began living totally alone. . . .Despite my efforts to go on, I think I was aware of death's attraction. The most painful aspect of the depression was always the inability to talk to people.⁵¹

Obviously, one would expect that an artist who cannot communicate personally with people might have difficulty in producing art that did. To wit, Slapstick Tragedy, a combination of two one-act plays which premiered in New York in February, 1966, closed after four days. Additionally by this time in 1966, Williams' once casual use of sedatives and alcohol had grown into a truly incredible spectacle. A "patient" of the then well known Dr. Max Jacobsen (Dr. Feel Good), Williams was self

injecting amphetamines several times daily, and to counter the effects of these, was taking a hypnotic sedative drug called Doriden in doses literally eight to ten times that recommended for medical users, who even then were only allowed to use the drug under close medical supervision. The effects of such massive quantities of chemicals created a personality similar to that of an alternately paranoid or intoxicated manic.⁵² Even Audrey Wood reported that when her husband literally pleaded with him to break with Dr. Jacobsen, Williams replied, "No, Bill. He is a lovely man . . . a lovely man," and Wood further commented that this "was all he would say, over and over again, until the repetition made it obvious that he was far from rational."⁵³

Yet somehow, he continued to survive, and to write The Two Character Play, which Williams said was written "from the state of lunacy. . . seven years of the 1960s. The play is about disorientation--these people are as lost as I am."⁵⁴ The play opened in London in 1967, but was shattered by the critics and closed quickly. Williams followed by attempting to expand an earlier one-act play to full length. The resulting Kingdom of Earth, whose title was changed to The Seven Descents of Myrtle shortly before opening, opened in New York on March 27, 1968, and closed within a month.

A near complete collapse brought Tenn's brother Dakin

to Key West with the New Year, 1969. His brother nearly incoherent with chemicals, Dakin, a Roman Catholic convert, quickly fetched a priest, Father Joseph LeRoy, who spent several days with the Williamses. Unfortunately, Tennessee was later to remark that "My conversion was rather a joke. I couldn't learn anything. . . .I loved the beauty of the ritual, but the tenets of the Church are ridiculous."⁵⁵ Actually, the 're-baptism' of Williams became something of a scandal, which resulted in his meeting with a superior general head of the Society of Jesus in Rome, but Williams even then did not understand the significance of what he was supposedly doing, already calling the time his "religious period," which incidentally does not even get mentioned in the Memoirs.

Williams continued to labor through the year 1969, now working on the production of his latest play, In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel. During April, he walked daily to the theatre in the company of a friend who later commented, "if he could barely walk on the way, something happened when he arrived. . .he was so sensitive and encouraging with [the actors]. We were all amazed at how he could do this."⁵⁶ The play opened off-Broadway on May 11, to "angry and disappointed" audiences, the play being "almost too personal, and as a result too painful."⁵⁷ The play was doomed to failure, and Williams' wandering continued until mid-September when the inevitable collapse finally occurred.

He was in Key West making a pot of coffee when he fell, mildly burning his shoulder, but with characteristic hypochondria, he was convinced that death was imminent. Dakin was again called, and he took advantage of the situation, convincing his brother to return to St. Louis and enter Barnes Hospital. Although he changed his mind, preferring to recuperate at home, he said, he was not, as he often later claimed, forced to enter the hospital--he was voluntarily admitted. He was quickly diagnosed as violent and possibly suicidal, so he was confined to the Psychiatric Division and placed on total substance withdrawal. Three days later, "He had three *grand mal* seizures in one morning, suffered a violent upset of normal body chemistries, and had two heart attacks within the next two days. . . .As of October 1, no one was quite certain he would survive."⁵⁸ No one, except possibly Williams himself:

I dutifully came to their atrocious meals and the rest of the time I crouched like a defenseless animal in a corner while the awful pageantry of the days and the nights went on, a continual performance of horror shows, inside and outside of my skull.

I intended to survive.⁵⁹

And survive he did, although he blamed the horrors he had suffered in withdrawal at the hospital on Dakin, and never forgave him, for the rest of his life denying the fact that what Dakin had done had undoubtedly saved the playwright's life.

Once immediate danger was over, Williams' recovery was remarkably short. After only three months, he had been released from the hospital, and by early December, he had returned to Key West and was, according to Father LeRoy, "limiting himself to one drink a day, and only limited pills."⁶⁰

The remaining years of Tennessee Williams' life are a rather pitiable story to tell. He emerged from his drug treatment with a new confidence, telling the New York Times, "I hope I can escape. I think I can. I've been through a great catharsis. . .I've been abusing myself for at least seven years. Although I continued to work, God knows I didn't work well."⁶¹ However, he did not escape; revisions of The Two Character Play, which he was now calling Out Cry, were brought back to the stage in Chicago in 1971 and failed miserably, catalyzing a reaction in Williams that was nothing less than tragic. Needing someone to blame for the failure, he lashed out at probably the one complete ally he had--Audrey Wood. The severing of their thirty-year partnership as agent/playwright, mother/erring son, or as friends, was

devastating to them both, but the wall erected between them was never to be breached. And again Tennessee Williams returned to a steady-stream of stimulants and sedatives to progress from sleep to waking and back again.

In 1972, Small Craft Warnings, an expansion of an earlier play, Confessional, which had done well in small production, brought hope again to the scene. The play had a respectable run, but its "success" was eclipsed by the fact that "Williams himself was turning into the attraction,"⁶² by acting a part in the play. Finally, desperately wanting to keep the run alive, he cut short a trip to Italy to try to revive the show by returning to the cast. Along similar lines, still hoping that Out Cry could succeed on Broadway, he submitted a third version, which opened on March 1, 1973, only to close after twelve disappointing performances.

Almost as if the world were asking him to quietly retire, the 1970s brought a deluge of awards to the aging and fading dramatist. Purdue University conferred an honorary doctorate in 1972, as did Harvard in 1982; he received in 1975 the National Arts Club gold medal for literature, was honored in 1979 at the Kennedy Center in Washington received the Commonwealth Award in 1982 and the Medal of Freedom from President Carter in 1980. But his success in these matters was far greater than that he could master with his typewriter.

The Red Devil Battery Sign played ten days in Boston in June, 1975, and though that same year saw the publication of both his Memoirs and his second novel, Moise and the World of Reason, neither was a critical or public success. Though Memoirs was seemingly quite open and frank, "such frankness must not be confused with real psychological intimacy or spiritual self disclosure, and in fact Memoirs conceals more than it shares. . . . The book that resulted was often spicy, sometimes witty, never self-approving and always maddeningly disorganized."⁶³ The novel, "a lightly veiled counterpart to Memoirs. . . turned into a major disaster, readers agreed with critics that the incoherence and lack of sustained theme destroyed the work."⁶⁴

It seemed that even in the most direct genre, Williams could not effectively communicate his autobiography. At the same time, Williams' personal life was even more a public phenomenon: "Perhaps because his plays were no longer shocking people," one biographer hypothesized, "he was trying to do just that with his life."⁶⁵ Regardless of the truth or falsity of this claim, the highly autobiographical Vieux Carré, which was the next new play Williams took to the stage, collapsed and closed after only five performances in May of 1977. In the midst of this, two revisions of Red Devil had failed, one in Vienna in 1976, and another in London in July of 1977. A rewriting

of Summer and Smoke called The Eccentricities of a Nightingale lasted less than a month in late 1976 to complete the sad story.

Finally, in 1978, a one act play called Crève Coeur received good notices at a theatre festival in Charleston, South Carolina, and was lengthened and brought to New York, now entitled A Lovely Sunday for Crève Coeur. The play opened in January, 1979, and weathered thirty-six performances, but closed essentially a failure. Meanwhile, Williams hung on to hope for his other current project, a play about the life of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald called Clothes for a Summer Hotel, closely paralleling his own relationship with his sister, Rose, under the ominous and ever-present shadow of the asylum. The play finally reached New York on Williams' sixty-ninth birthday, March 26, 1980, and it closed on April 16th. With that failure, "Tennessee Williams never returned to the Broadway theatre."⁶⁶ As if this final disappointment were not enough, Miss Edwina Dakin Williams, the mother to whom he had never been able to truly relate, died on June 1st at the age of ninety-five. "I was spending as much time with Tennessee as anyone," said Mitch Douglas, who had replaced Audrey Wood as Williams' agent, "and I can say that he was very upset about his mother's death--more deeply than he wanted people to know."⁶⁷

Although nothing at all when compared with the

brilliant successes of thirty years before, the last two years of Williams' life brought two minor successes to the stage. The first of these was called A House Not Meant to Stand, which failed in Chicago in 1981, but was revised there in April of 1982 and ran with quite respectable success through May. In fact, Time magazine quoted in June that the play was the best he had written in a decade, "a work inhabited by a rich collection of scarred characters."⁶⁸ The other play, called Something Cloudy, Something Clear was a memory play based mostly in the summer of 1940 in Provincetown. In the play he "meets Kip, Frank Merlo, and Tallulah Bankhead--to sift and sort the memories, the long buried feelings of friendship, and to say farewell. . . .More than any other play in his life, it was a simple, tender elegy to three he had loved and lost. . . .Most of all, however, the play is an acceptance of the death which had already embraced them all, and that he knew must soon come to him."⁶⁹ Although attacked by the critics, this last play drew the crowds, selling out performances in September of 1981, and again in February and March of 1982.

By 1982, in spite of the positive impression these two moderate successes made on Williams, "the life of travel that had been both diversion and search took him nowhere but to a deeper point of loneliness," and yet he had no real home to turn to. He was in Key West for several

weeks, then in New York, or New Orleans, and back to Key West. Finally, in February of 1983, he returned to Sicily, to the one place he had always dreamed of retiring and resting. There, "he went alone and for the last time to the piazza where he and Frank Merlo had so often sipped wine or coffee, had dined together. . . But there was no one in the empty piazza that February."⁷⁰ After five days he returned to New York and on the evening of February 24, 1983 he returned to his hotel room with a bottle of wine, his pharmacy of pills and paraphernalia, and there suffocated on a bottle cap he had apparently used as a spoon to swallow his sleeping pills. "He had been, it seemed, unable or unwilling to summon help."⁷¹ Homeless and alone, the man who had given us Blanche, always depending on the kindness of strangers, and who had so loved his flower sister, like his own Laura Wingfield, had finally blown his candle out.

Equipped with an understanding of the life of Tennessee Williams, and with an image of the shape of his career, from the early successes through the 1940's and 50's, to the devastating failures of the latter years of the playwright's life, I have selected two early plays and two later pieces to compare the change in the art itself. The creative voice changes as does the effect of that voice on the audiences to which it spoke.

The first pair of plays I would like to discuss are

the first major success of Williams' career, The Glass Menagerie, and a later play called Vieux Carré which closed after only five performances some thirty years later. Each of these plays is a memory play, in that not only the characters, but the events themselves stem from actual experiences in the author's life. Although all of Williams' work is highly personal, these two plays, along with Something Cloudy, Something Clear at the end of his life, are the only true memory plays Williams wrote.

Even in a first reading of the plays, there are two considerable contrasts which are immediately obvious to the attentive reader. The first is the sense in Menagerie that the narrator character with Williams' own first name, Tom, gives some sense of a memory which is controlled, or at least understood through the character of Tom. In Vieux Carré, the Writer, unnamed, though clearly holding the position in the play that Williams held in his life, lacks this essential presence. His is a world that he cannot understand, and there is no one character relationship as that of Tom and Laura in Menagerie that gives stability, in a social, but more, in a human sense, to the play. For the world of Vieux Carré is a world without a home, a family, or even a lover, to lend that essential human quality of relationship which banishes the desperation of loneliness and sets a reference point from which the world can be seen objectively. Menagerie is "a tribute to Rose, and a cry

from his heart about the serenity they had all gradually lost over the years and were never able to regain."⁷² Even if the home-life of the Wingfields is less than harmonious, there is serenity in the relationship between Tom and Rose Williams, or their artistic constructs Tom and Laura Wingfield. During rehearsals for Menagerie in Chicago in 1944, Williams said to director Eddie Dowling, "Art is experience remembered in tranquility."⁷³ And The Glass Menagerie has tranquility, if only in the commitment of Tom and Laura. Vieux Carré completely lacks this kind of tranquility, and further lacks the truly single perspective from which this tranquility can be remembered.

The story of Vieux Carré is the story of the summer of 1938, when Williams rented a room in a run-down boarding house in the New Orleans Vieux Carré. The play tells the story of a slightly crazy landlady; a well bred New York woman, Jane, who is down on her luck and lives with the rough and tough Tye, who works in a local strip joint; two poor and starving old women; a dying painter named Nightingale, and the writer, who observes and learns.

"This is a play about the education of an artist, an education in loneliness, despair, giving and not giving, but most of all in seeing, hearing, feeling and learning that 'writers are shameless spies,' who pay dearly for their knowledge and cannot forget."⁷⁴ In Menagerie, Tom Wingfield is clearly the author himself; in Vieux Carré

Williams has obviously cast himself in the role of the writer, but, not exclusively. Williams is also present within the character of Nightingale, another artist, aging, and ill with tuberculosis. As Dante is led into his Inferno by the older artist Vergil, so the Writer is led into another kind of hell by Nightingale. Early in the play, the Writer is alone in his room from which, as Williams' stage directions require, "another sound commences--a sound of dry and desperate sobbing which sounds as though nothing in the world could ever appease the wound from which it comes: loneliness, inborn and inbred to the bone."⁷⁵ Nightingale enters and sits at the edge of the Writer's cot. "I know the sound of loneliness: heard it through the partition,"⁷⁶ he offers. They speak for awhile, and with each sentence Nightingale works through the Writer's sadness and vulnerability to gain his own end. Nightingale slides his hand down the sheet, "How about this?" and in reply to the Writer's hesitancy, "This would help you. . . . You are alone in the world, and I am, too."⁷⁷ Finally, Nightingale wins the battle: "'Look. I'll give you two things for sleep. First this,' drawing back the sheet. 'And then one of these pills I call my sandman special.'"⁷⁸ So in direct opposition to Vergil, who led Dante through Hell and always toward eternal paradise with Beatrice, Nightingale leads the Writer into only a temporary paradise of homosexuality and drugs, which is always only a step

away from the inferno of drug rehabilitation and lost love.

Interestingly, Tennessee Williams is himself the model for both the Writer and Nightingale. He is the young writer struggling to succeed in the Garden District of New Orleans, and he is also the aging artist who has lost his ability to create serious art. "I could do it, in fact I've done good painting, serious work," remarks Nightingale, "But I got to live. . . So I make it, temporarily, as a quick sketch artist."⁷⁹ And Williams further reveals his estrangement from the world when the Writer refuses to return for Nightingale, his homosexual "services."

Too tired to return my visits? Not very appreciative of you, but lack of appreciation is something I've come to expect and accept as if God-the alleged-had stamped on me a sign at birth--"This man will offer himself and not be accepted, not by anyone ever."⁸⁰

In this division of self in Vieux Carré, we begin to understand Williams' comment that "I draw every character out of my very multiple split personality." And further, "My heroines always express the climate of my interior world at the time in which those characters were created."⁸¹ So we can then fairly attribute the words of

Jane, for if there is a heroine in Vieux Carré, it is Jane, to Williams. She speaks to her lover, Ty,

I've been betrayed by a-sensual streak in my nature. Susceptibility to touch. And you have skin like a child. I'd gladly support you if I believed you'd--if I had the means to and the time to. Time. Means. Luck. Things that expire, run out. And all at once you're stranded.⁸²

In 1944, the voices of characters were voices of memory, remembered through the character Tom. In 1977, characters are for Williams all voices of self. He is an artist who feels his only serious work is far past, and who longs to regain the magic. He is an aging man who feels he is no longer appealing and his efforts are not only never returned, but are not even received with gratitude. Finally, he is a man who feels time has or is running out. And he feels stranded, and alone.

Let us try to add color to the developing image of the art of Tennessee Williams by focusing on two other plays, again with a similar view to comparison and contrast. Tennessee Williams' second great success came with A Streetcar Named Desire in 1947. Again more than thirty years later, in 1980, a somewhat similar play, Clothes for

a Summer Hotel survived only three weeks on Broadway. What happened? Let us look at the same areas that we did with the other pair of plays: author presence, and setting, in the personal, human sense.

Clearly in Streetcar Tennessee Williams is Blanche. She is just beginning to feel the cold touch of age; she is guilty of immoral sexual conduct; and maybe most importantly, she finds happiness within her own mind. "I don't want realism," she says, "I'll tell you what I want. Magic! Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that to people. I misrepresent things to them. I don't tell the truth, I tell what ought to be the truth."⁸³ And Tennessee Williams shared his own perspective similarly, "I create imaginary worlds into which I can retreat from the real world because I've never made any kind of adjustment to the real world."⁸⁴ And in his Memoirs, "There are worse things than a fantasy world to live in. I wonder, indeed, if a fantasy world is not the only world inhabitable by artists."⁸⁵ So Blanche is the character through which the audience is able to access the author, but Blanche is not the only character who contains elements of Tennessee Williams. The central conflict of the play, the battle between Blanche and her brother-in-law, Stanley Kowalski, is truly a struggle that rages within the heart of Tennessee Williams himself.

It is only in his work that an artist can find reality and satisfaction, for the actual world is less intense than the world and his invention, and consequently his life, without recourse to violent disorder, does not seem very substantial.⁸⁶

The raw sexual power and dynamic vitality evident in Stanley is certainly a side of Williams, and this is contrasted by the refined, fantastic world of Blanche. Of course the potential for beauty and art rests within the character of Blanche, but the conclusion of the play sees Blanche carried off to an asylum and Stanley "creating" through his pregnant wife Stella, and cementing his triumph in the sexual image at the end of the play. Thus in Streetcar, sexual power seems to triumph, leaving Blanche to be interned. The struggle in Williams' own heart has been presented outwardly in two coherent, independent characters.

In Clothes for a Summer Hotel there is no single character who can be seen clearly to exemplify Tennessee Williams. As in Menagerie, Streetcar operates essentially within the framework of near-conventional lower-middle to middle class family life, and as in Vieux Carré, the later play, Clothes for a Summer Hotel, operates completely outside the societal norm, this time in an asylum. So we

see that in two critical areas, setting and author-narration, Clothes has followed the same pattern as Vieux Carré in stepping away from its predecessor.

But upon what basis are the two plays then compared? Essentially, it is in the similarity of the central conflict of the play. As in A Streetcar Named Desire, where there was a male figure representing brute sensuous reality contrasting a female figure who prefers a fantastic world "as it ought to be", there is a similar conflicting pair in Clothes for a Summer Hotel. The play centers on Frank and Zelda Fitzgerald, and is set in the asylum where Zelda lives and is visited by her husband. Zelda is, like Blanche, a character who lives in a world of fantasy, insanity, and dream; Scott, an alcoholic whose artistic talent is fading, still lives in the outside, "real" world. But the characters are not at all what they seem at first to be. "The visits by Scott to Zelda Fitzgerald in the mental asylum are representations of the visits by Tom to Rose Williams."⁸⁷ Immediately, we notice that Tom Williams is supposed to be Scott, but we see very clearly that Tennessee Williams is Zelda, much more than he is her husband. Again the self is shattered, fragmented. There is no perspective from which to view the play. It is not the character to character conflict of A Streetcar Named Desire, it is conflict completely within the author's mind finding expression in characters, a subtle but crucial

difference. In Clothes for a Summer Hotel, familiar issues are addressed, but only in a context that is at best ethereal. Williams subtitled this play, "A Ghost Play" to indicate the haunting images of "the past that's always present,"⁸⁸ as Scott remarks to Zelda in the first scene. But the person who is most haunted here is Williams himself, who cannot escape his own memories of the "roller coaster ride which collapsed at its peak,"⁸⁹ and who has come to believe that "between the first wail of an infant and the last gasp of the dying--it's all an arranged pattern of--submission to what's been prescribed for us unless we escape into madness or into acts of creation."⁹⁰ It is Zelda who brings to the audience the essence of Tennessee Williams, in spite of the fact that Scott is supposed to represent him.

Finally, at the conclusion of Clothes for a Summer Hotel, there is a very interesting transaction. The opening scene of the play has seen Scott attempting to give Zelda a ring to replace the wedding ring she has lost or thrown away. This ring is most certainly the same "small jade ring that had belonged to Tennessee's sister Rose"⁹¹ which he gave to Carson McCullers in 1950, further raising the significance to the author of what could easily be seen as simply a small prop. But the final scene of Williams' play brings his audience back full circle to that early image as Scott again attempts to give Zelda the ring.

SCOTT [reaching desperately through the bars]:
 The ring, please take it, the covenant with the
 past-[she disappears.]--still always present,
 Zelda!

[A wind seems to sweep him back as the
 stage dims slowly. Mist drifts in. Scott turns
 downstage; his haunted eyes ask a silent
 question which he must know cannot be answered.]

THE END⁹²

So we arrive at the beginning, which, always present,
 is now the end. But now again Tennessee Williams embodies
 his character, Scott Fitzgerald. It is he who asks the
 same silent question of his audience, "Why do you no longer
 hear me?" that Scott has asked his wife. So finally, the
 great difference between A Streetcar Named Desire and
Clothes for a Summer Hotel is that Blanche keeps her
 illusions and the sexual nature of man is allowed to
 create, first one child, and the potential for more. Zelda
 has had her illusions ripped away, and now destroys
 Scott's, while all the time the sterile environment of the
 asylum prevents any procreation at all. In Clothes for a
 Summer Hotel, the audience is privy to Tennessee Williams'
 admission that the inkbottle into which he dipped to burst
 out of the bonds of Zelda's "arranged pattern of
 submission" in the brilliant acts of creation of his early

plays--that very same inkbottle--now haunts him with ghosts of a past he cannot escape. Williams then faces the choice between breaking the bonds through madness and accepting the pattern that "has been prescribed" but numbing its effects through prescriptions of another kind, namely drugs, sex and alcohol.

Tennessee Williams' perceptions of the world, time, God and art all have drastically affected his work, that much is obvious. But now the whole picture must be viewed at once. Tennessee Williams was timid in the face of the world. In 1955, then forty-five years old, Williams refused to go to Mississippi to work with Elia Kazan on location for his film Baby Doll. Why? "Those people chased me out of there," he said, "They don't approve of homosexuals, and I don't want to be insulted. I don't want my feelings hurt."⁹³ Childish and timid, but central to an understanding of the artist's concept of the world in which he lives. Tennessee Williams could often hear only "what he wanted to hear--perhaps because of paranoia, but also to support his belief that he was an artistic and social outcast. He wrote of marginal people, after all--those with whom he could emotionally identify, whose pain and loneliness and spiritual isolation he had first known himself."⁹⁴ Tennessee believed he was an exile, and this belief grew throughout his career, ever turning the focus of his drama away from the universal audience, whose 'pain

and loneliness and spiritual isolation' he could no longer understand, away from the crisis of a girl forever awaiting her gentleman caller, be he Laura's Jim O'Connor or Blanche's Shep Huntleigh, and towards those such as Nightingale and Zelda, whose pain, loneliness, and isolation he knew well. And as Williams turned away from the universal audience, his audience turned away from him.

Williams' changing concept of time also greatly affected his work. Starting as early as Blanche in Streetcar, the fear of passing beauty, the fear that nothing really endures is evident. In an essay he wrote about the time of that play's opening, Williams quoted William Saroyan "In the time of your life--live!" and commented "That time is short and it doesn't return again. It is slipping away while I write this and while you read it, and the monosyllable of the clock is Loss, loss, loss, unless you devote your heart to its opposition."⁹⁵ Williams certainly did devote himself to opposing the advance of the clock, but he did so often by making himself indifferent to it--for a moment. "For a while," he wrote, "is the stuff that dreams are made of."⁹⁶ And yet "for a while" is never really long enough. When first introduced to the "feel good" injections of Dr. Feel Good in the 1960's he later wrote, "I kept saying 'My God, I feel so wonderful.' Then I asked him, 'How long will

it last?' He smiled rather sadly and said, 'Tennessee, don't think about that.'"97 As Williams aged, his fears about time increased. In Sweet Bird of Youth (1959) Chance Wayne remarks and through him Williams addresses his audience: "I don't ask for your pity, but just for your understanding--not even that, no. Just for your recognition of me in you, and the enemy, time, in us all."98 Finally, by the later plays, there is the desperate fight with time. There is *Nightingale*, *Scott and Zelda*. . .There is a sense that "the past, always present" is the only future, the sense that "Time. Means. Luck." are all "Things that expire, run out."99

Similarly, a view that time simply runs out, implies that there is little or no hope for life beyond death, that God is less than real. Curiously, Williams himself claimed that he did believe in God. In his Memoirs Williams relates two early mystical experiences he had with what he believed to be God. The first was "the touch of the mystic hand upon the solitary anguished head, and then the gentle lesson or demonstration that the head, despite the climactic crisis which it contained, was still a single head on a street thronged with many."100 He continued to write that "I have never doubted the existence of God nor have I neglected to kneel in prayer when a situation in which I found myself (and there have been many) seemed critical enough in my opinion to merit the Lord's attention

and, I trust, intervention."¹⁰¹ However, the God in which Williams believed was not the conventional God of the Christian faith because of, as he put it, "my faith in God and in prayer, but my paradoxical disbelief in after-existence."¹⁰² He also claimed that he "believed in angels more than [he] did in God and the reason was that [he] had never known God. . . but that [he] had known several angels in [his] life."¹⁰³ This epistemology would make some sense; however, he later contradicted himself. "Even angels are subject to the weaknesses and defections of humanity which invented their existence."¹⁰⁴ Obviously, if Williams believed in God less than he did angels, and if he believed that angels were invented by humanity, then one would certainly call into question the sincerity of the faith in God. In Clothes for a Summer Hotel, Williams, through Zelda, speaks these words: "The Everlasting ticket that doesn't exist. The lies of Christ were such beautiful lies, especially on the night before crucifixion on The Place of the Skull."¹⁰⁵

One must wonder in the face of this twisted and confused faith what hope for redemption Williams carried in his heart. Donald Spoto comments:

There is a brutal paradox that must be faced in coming to terms with the life and work of Tennessee Williams. On the one hand, of all

American dramatists he is the one most deeply sensitive to the iniquities, illusions and potential exploitations in intimate relationships. In his plays he went deeply to the truth of love and its absence. Yet from his late twenties to the end of his life he pursued sex--for its own sake as a quick, anonymous diversion.¹⁰⁶

But Williams does not find salvation in sex. Elia Kazan remarked that "Everything in his life is in his plays, and everything in his plays is in his life."¹⁰⁷ And Donald Spoto commented that "The only way he could maintain some affirmation of value, the only route he knew to attempt meaning in his life was to write. It was his way of healing, of thanking, of forgiving, of making a final attempt at inner order out of the external muddle that he knew had marked so much of his life."¹⁰⁸ Tennessee Williams found salvation in his art; however he followed his Vergil Nightingale into hell by choosing the immediate sexual or chemical release and allowing that momentary epiphany to eclipse the potential for eternal joy in creation. His homosexuality was a further example of this, because it was sex with no chance of creation. Tennessee Williams failed to find salvation because he was his own God. He could not accept that he might have to wait for reward. He demanded

now the pleasures of heaven, which he felt were imitated in orgasm and intoxication.

Finally, the ultimate effects of the life-philosophy of Tennessee Williams on his audience were considerable. Williams said that "all true work of an artist must be personal, whether directly or obliquely, it must and it does reflect the emotional climates of its creator."¹⁰⁹ The career of Tennessee Williams, then, changing so greatly must affect his true work as an artist. "The direction of my life," Williams wrote, "was away from both social and sexual contacts, not by conscious choice but through the deeper and deeper retreat into the broken world of my self."¹¹⁰ The broken world of Tennessee Williams was increasingly extra-social, outside the bounds of "normal society." Spoto remarked that Williams "was one of the few people. . . who felt he had no basis for making judgements in human affairs. . . . There is no character anywhere for which he expressed contempt. It's the breadth of his compassion and his understanding that gives his plays such power."¹¹¹ Unfortunately, Williams' characters were drawn increasingly from the extra-social inner world of Tennessee Williams, and became largely inaccessible to the conventional audience which paid admission to the plays.

Tennessee Williams was above all things an artist. He made several choices during his career in favor of

momentary pleasures over transcendent, eternal values. "As an artist of the first rank, Tennessee Williams felt the tragedy of the modern world--of its alienation, of its loneliness, of its loss of a sense of the transcendent. He heard its echoes of pain and despair earlier and louder, within himself, and in his great plays he told us what was wrong. But at the same time, he lived--by his own ready admission--on an alarmingly grim course of self destruction."¹¹² If Williams heard the voices of the despair of the modern world earlier than most, and I believe he did, his tragedy is that he accepted their verdict without resistance. He accepted the demands of a miniaturized and light-speed world that all be NOW! He refused to wait, for God, for love, for pleasure of any kind, and he traded in his hope of future glory (à la Paul in Phillipians) for the sexual and inebriate pleasures of Dionysus who would deliver them on command.

Chapter Three: James Joyce

"We are still learning to be James Joyce's contemporaries, to understand our interpreter."¹ These words open Richard Ellman's gargantuan biographical study, itself a work of art, which earned the National Book Award for non-fiction in 1959, of "the major figure of the modernist period in literary history,"² James Joyce. Born in Dublin, Ireland on February 2, 1882, Joyce's chief contributions to the literary world were a book of short stories entitled Dubliners, which was published in 1914, and three novels: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, published in 1916, Ulysses, published in 1922, and Finnegans Wake, published in 1939. He also wrote Stephen Hero, a long autobiographical novel that he never finished, and which became the basis for A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, one play called Exiles, and two small volumes of poetry. Certainly the genre for which Joyce is best known, and arguably dominates, is that of modern prose. However, recall the words of Richard Ellman, "We are still learning to be James Joyce's contemporaries, to understand our interpreter." Certainly Professor Ellman is eminently qualified to make such an appraisal, and this scholar's tribute may give a clue to what some consider to be Joyce's fatal deficiency. From the carefully crafted vignettes of Dubliners, which are accessible to even the layman

literate, to the extraordinary innovation that makes Finnegans Wake "the single most difficult text of the modernist period. . .in a sense readable, although eminently suited for analysis,"³ there is a drastic change in the ability of James Joyce to communicate to his audience through his art.

For example, in the short story "The Dead," which closes Dubliners, Joyce writes in a clear, easily comprehensible, prose style:

Gabriel could not listen while Mary Jane was playing her Academy piece, full of runs and difficult passages, to the hushed drawing room. He liked music but the piece she was playing had no melody for him and he doubted whether it had any melody for the other listeners, though they had begged Mary Jane to play something. Four young men, who had come from the refreshment-room to stand in the doorway at the sound of the piano, had gone away quietly in couples after a few minutes. The only persons who seemed to follow the music were Mary Jane herself, her hands racing along the key-board or lifted from it at the pauses like those of a priestess in momentary imprecation, and Aunt Kate standing at her elbow to turn the page.⁴

Compare this paragraph to a single sentence from
Finnegans Wake:

The house O'Shea or O'Shame, Quivapieno, known
 as the Haunted Inkbottle, no number Brimstone
 Walk, Asia in Ireland, as it was infested with
 the raps, with his penname SHUT sepiascraped on
 the doorplate and a blind of black sailcloth
 over its wan phwinshogue, in which the
 soulcontracted son of the secret cell groped
 through life at the expense of the taxpayers,
 dejected into day and night with jesuit bark and
 bitter bite, calicohydrants of zolfor and
 scoppialamina by full and forty Queasisanos,
 every day in everyone's way more exceeding in
 violent abuse of self and others, was the worst,
 it is hoped, even in our western playboyish
 world for pure mousefarm filth.⁵

It is immediately obvious that if James Joyce is
 trying to communicate, through this passage, he is using a
 remarkably different approach. Clearly the twenty-five
 years between the publishing of Dubliners and Finnegans
 Wake wrought considerable change in the art of James Joyce.
 Again Ellman comments in his introduction, "The life of an
 artist, but particularly that of Joyce, differs from the

lives of other persons in that its events are becoming artistic sources even as they command his present attention."⁶ Again it seems that the work of an artist cannot be easily divorced from the artist's life, but whereas study of the life of Tennessee Williams explained much in the dramatist's plays, with Joyce, the works themselves, specifically A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and the abandoned Stephen Hero, explain in minute detail the early life of James Joyce.

Although not published until three years after Joyce's death, Stephen Hero, existing as nearly a thousand pages of manuscript, was completed by the time Joyce left Ireland in 1904. Since Joyce had abandoned Stephen Hero, preferring instead to drastically revise the work, which was published as Portrait in 1916, it cannot be considered authoritative. However, comparing the original and final drafts of his work, however different they may be, is certainly beneficial. Stephen Hero had been written in the style of a nineteenth-century novel, looking "inward into a life, charting it meticulously and completely."⁷ Portrait on the other hand, "with jumps in chronology and tightly constructed vignettes, points toward the modernist narration of the twentieth [century]."⁸ Even the titles of the two versions of the novel show how great is the change that Joyce brings in his revision. Stephen Hero, with its personal reference to Stephen Dedalus, the protagonist of

the novel, and the very word "hero," with all that it connotes, stands in stark contrast to A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. This final title, devoid of personal reference, and with the curious use of "the artist" as opposed to "an artist as a young man," suggests a distant, archetypal figure. Coupled with the "portrait" image, this title brings to mind a picture of an earthbound photographer cloaked behind his camera curtain, viewing the archetypal artist at a great distance, presumably residing in the realm of the stars and the heavens.

The final version of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and each of the stories of Dubliners are constructed upon particularly significant moments or strings of moments which Joyce called "epiphanies." In Stephen Hero the term is defined as one of Stephen's developing theories: "By epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation. . . the most delicate and evanescent of moments."⁹ This theory of epiphanies is based essentially on three principles of true beauty, found in the philosophical writings of St. Thomas Aquinas: *integritas, consonantia, and claritas*.

Integritas Stephen explains in pseudoscholastic language as "wholeness"--the perception of an esthetic image as one thing. . . *Consonantia*, similarly, is symmetry and rhythm of structure,

the esthetic image conceived as "complex, multiple, divisible, separable, made up of its parts and their sum, harmonious." The third principle, *claritas*, is given as the approximate meaning of "radiance" and equated with another Thomistic term, *quidditas*, or the "whatness" of a thing.¹⁰

By far the most important in the theory of epiphanies is the last one, *claritas*. Turning again to Stephen Dedalus himself,

First we recognize that the object is one integral thing, then we recognize that it is an organized composite structure, a thing in fact: finally, when the relation of the parts is exquisite. . . we recognize that it is that thing which it is. Its soul, its whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance. The soul of the commonest object, the structure of which is so adjusted, seems to us radiant. The object achieves its epiphany.¹¹

In Dubliners, each story is essentially centered around and extended from an epiphany experienced by one of Dublin's many "middle-class Catholics known to [Joyce] and

his family."¹² In Stephen Hero, Stephen (the young Joyce) was "to be viewed by a literary process that moved from the first-person singular to the third-person, subjective to objective."¹³ In Portrait, Joyce moved to an even more distanced objectivity, "trying to place his center of action as much as possible inside the consciousness of his hero."¹⁴ Joyce worked simultaneously on the revisions of Portrait and on Dubliners, working out his epiphanies and self-consciousness through them both so that Bernard Benstock in the Dictionary of Literary Biography would recommend that "Dubliners and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man are best read as superimposed on each other, as facing narratives of the two facets of the artist's consciousness of self and others."¹⁵

Dubliners developed originally as a series of twelve short stories, with three based on childhood, three on adolescence, three on mature adults, and finally three on social or public life. Due to considerable problems in publishing, the pattern was expanded to allow one additional story in each of the middle categories, and the story "The Dead," really a novella, was added at the end "as a cumulative coda story."¹⁶ The first three stories are each narrated in the first person by an anonymous young boy, and in each story the boy goes through a series of rather traumatic, though childlike experiences, always increasing his "awareness and articulative powers"¹⁷ as

the stories progress. The remaining dozen stories in Dubliners are told in the third person and each possesses a unique protagonist. However, there is an easily discernable pattern still present,

as the focus changes from childhood to the adult world, a loss of the honest immediacy of the immature perceiver and a shift to the calculated responses of the adult. . . .They are each trapped in the paralytic condition of the lives they have fashioned around them, despite the numerous differences in their individual situations.¹⁸

The trio of stories in the social or public life section which precedes "The Dead" shifts from a single protagonist to a more communal protagonist, again expanding the perspective of the work and further depersonalizing the world which is, in the final analysis, "a world of absence and loss, smaller portions and smaller dividends, of interposing shadows and hollow substances, constricted by paralysis, shot through with simoniac practices, and gutted by gnomonic removals."¹⁹ If this is the vision James Joyce was developing of his consciousness of others, Portrait even more carefully describes Joyce's growing consciousness of self during the same period.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man consists of five rather lengthy chapters each of which contains a separate crescendo towards a final triumph that will be erased in the beginning of the succeeding chapter. The central focus throughout Portrait is on Stephen Dedalus, so much so that all other characters exist only temporarily and then are represented only as they stand in relation to him. As the novel opens Stephen is almost an infant child, his five senses just awakening to the aesthetic world around him. He is, as was Joyce, interned at Clongowes College. Stephen is a small child, the youngest in the school, and he carries a genuine innocence that immediately endears him to the audience. Stephen counts the days until the Christmas vacation, and he misses his home. "He thought that he was sick in his heart if you could be sick in that place. . . .He wanted to cry."²⁰ Alone in his room at the college Stephen considers the infinite, wondering about the bounds of the universe and God.

What was after the universe? Nothing. But was there anything around the universe to show where it stopped before the nothing place began? It could not be a wall but there could be a thin thin line there all around everything. It was very big to think about everything and everywhere. Only God could do that. He tried

to think what a big thought that must be but he could think only of God.²¹

And as the lights were being turned out, Stephen "had to undress and then kneel and say his own prayers and be in bed before the gas was lowered so that he might not go to hell when he died."²² The opening picture of Stephen painted by all of these touching and arguably universal childhood experiences is one of marked smallness. The world to which Stephen is just awakening is large, very very large, and Stephen is acutely aware of his own diminutive scope in relation to it.

Finally home for Christmas, Stephen suffers the first of two misfortunes that will bring him swiftly into the more painful world of the adult. During the dinner, an argument over religion and politics breaks out among the members of the family. His father defends his position and tries to maintain some order while Stephen remains mute. Finally Stephen's aunt, Dante, bursts out of the room and Stephen, "raising his terrorstricken face, saw that his father's eyes were full of tears."²³ Suddenly Stephen has become aware that politics and religion can and will cause disruption in his previously ordered universe. The second traumatic instance Stephen suffers after the Christmas break while back at college. Stephen is punished by the Jesuit prefect of studies as an idler because he has broken

his glasses. He receives two blows with the pandybat, one on each hand, and is forced to kneel for the duration of the class. The punishment is cruel, unjust, and Stephen knows it, but he accepts the punishment, hoping for a later reconciliation. Later that day, Stephen walks the long terrifying hall to the rector's office and makes his complaint. The rector hears him out and promises that he will not again be pandied, and Stephen becomes an instant playground hero. Thus the first chapter ends in triumph, and the audience is again touched by Stephen's graciousness in his vow that, "He would be very quiet and obedient: and he wished that he could do something kind for him [the priest] to show him that he was not proud."²⁴ In spite of this there is yet a shadow cast by the experiences of this first chapter. It has been a song of innocence, yet Stephen has tasted injustice, and has begun to see that religion and politics are capable of causing pain, and that even priests are capable of cruelty.

The second chapter of Portrait establishes firmly the pattern hinted at in the first. Coming off a triumphal concluding moment in the chapter before, Stephen begins the next chapter being forced to face a difficult reality which he must again overcome to gain a chapter-ending exultation. In the interim between Chapters One and Two approximately five years have passed. Joyce had actually experienced the protest to the rector at Conglows in the early months

of 1889; he had remained there until June of 1891 when he was withdrawn due to his father's financial troubles. He did attend Christian Brothers school in Dublin for two years, but that period receives no mention in Joyce's writing. Chapter Two of Portrait opens as Stephen prepares to enter his second Jesuit school, Belvedere College at the age of eleven. Already the humility of the child at Clongowes who wanted to "do something kind" so that he would not appear proud is fading. "The hour when he too would take part in the life of that world seemed drawing near and in secret he began to make ready for the great part which he felt awaited him the nature of which he only dimly apprehended."²⁵ The essential importance of this chapter is the developing vision of the "great part" which Stephen felt he would someday play in the world. He steadily moves away from his childhood in this chapter, becoming annoyed with qualities in children that protect them from the "real world," and envisioning for himself a new epiphany, when "weakness and timidity and inexperience would fall from him in that magic moment."²⁶ As Stephen cultivates his vision of epiphany, the parallel homelife of Joyce continued to decline.

The sense of home life as a continual crisis,
averted from disaster by pawnbroker, obliging
friend, a sudden job, became fixed in James

Joyce's mind. He was warily cultivating indifference to such matters, and already, at the age of twelve, was learning to pick his way among the family ruins as nimbly as an archaeologist.²⁷

Paralleling the deepening chasm that separated Joyce from his family, is a similar new embitterment in Stephen. "He was angry with himself for being young and the prey of restless foolish impulses, angry also with the change of fortune which was reshaping the world about him into a vision of squalor and insecurity. Yet his anger lent nothing to the vision. He chronicled with patience what he saw, detaching himself from it and testing its mortifying flavour in secret."²⁸ Chapter Two continues to chronicle two years at Belvedere and Stephen's popularity continues to grow. An incident with a rival concerning a young girl causes a further withdrawal from society, family and the Church. "The question of honour here raised was, like all such questions, trivial to him. . . he had heard about him the constant voices of his father and of his masters, urging him to be a gentleman above all things and urging him to be a catholic above all things. These voices had now come to be hollow sounding in his ears."²⁹ As the demands placed upon him by his family and social convictions, and certainly by the church, continue to be

revealed to Stephen as demands--limitations on his freedoms--he becomes even more angered. "Nothing moved him or spoke to him from the real world unless he heard in it an echo of the infuriated cries within him."³⁰ And as the world becomes such that it can speak to Stephen only in terms of his own anger, he becomes even more determined to break the ties that bind him to that world. His overwhelming need for freedom, coupled with his adolescence, coalesce to form within him a new desire for expression. "Nothing stirred within his soul but a cold and cruel and loveless lust. His childhood was dead or lost and with it his soul capable of simple joys."³¹ Having lost the mental innocence of the child he had been, he now seeks the physical epiphany that will surrender another innocence but express a new freedom in the bargain. "He had tried to build a breakwater of order and elegance against the sordid tide of life without him and to dam up by rules of conduct and active interests and new filial relations, the powerful recurrence of the tides within him. Useless."³² Finally the chapter ends with the predictable triumph of freedom over innocence as he surrenders himself to a prostitute's "softly parting lips. They pressed upon his brain as upon his lips as though they were the vehicle of a vague speech; and between them he felt an unknown and timid pressure, darker than the swoon of sin, softer than sound or odor."³³ This last epiphany, involving all five

of his senses, is a rushing flow of the recurring tide that he now finds it useless to resist. But as Joyce will always believe, every flowing tide must ebb, in all things as in life, and the third chapter will begin with another fall, this the inevitable fall from grace and the consequences of sin.

In Chapter Two, Joyce introduces his thematic obsession with a cyclical, tidal image of time and of life, and has further developed his epiphanic theme. Chapter Three develops another theme that is essential to understanding or at least interpreting Joyce. This is a theme of separateness, linked closely with the *consonantia* of the epiphany, in which all things, all events, and moments can be divorced from themselves and be seen purely alone, separately. Although this idea is not actually consummated until Ulysses, it begins here, as Stephen feels separated from his body and its constituent parts. Hunger comes when "his belly counselled him;" he walks as "his feet led him;" and his soul is divorced from his flesh, even in his repentance from his sexual sin that consummates the chapter before. It is also interesting that the divorcing of body and soul, the disattachment of identity pulls away from the transcendence of God so that the whole universe becomes a vast gyre which denies eternity and infinity itself.

The vast cycle of starry live bore his weary mind outward to its verge and inward to its centre, a distant music accompanying him outward and inward. . . . It was his own soul going forth to experience, unfolding itself sin by sin, spreading abroad the balefire of its burning stars and folding back upon itself, fading, slowly, quenching its own lights and fires. . . . A cold indifference reigned in his souls.³⁴

Now there is no pleasure in sin for Stephen, but his indifference bars the way to repentance, as does "His pride in his own sin, his loveless awe of God, [which] told him that his offense was too grievous to be forgiven."³⁵

Yet all is not lost for Stephen, because now at the age of sixteen he has not yet developed his aesthetic mind to the point where it can truly replace God for Stephen, who, as all of us do, requires something transcendent in his world. So through several long sermons at a weekend retreat Stephen is brought back, appropriately by his old priest from Clongowers, to the point where "his soul, as these memories came back to him, became again a child's soul." A large part of this chapter is devoted to the sermons themselves, especially to the sin of the devils and the sinner's pain of Hell. Stephen is particularly struck

with Lucifer, who "was a son of the morning, a radiant and mighty angel," and his sin was pride: "*non serviam; I will not serve.*"³⁶ And immediately the word radiant, *claritas*, stands out as the essential epiphanic requirement, foreshadowing the fascination that Stephen will retain for the fallen Angel of Light. Also echoing through the sermons is the phrase, "Time is, time was, but time shall be no more!"³⁷ Finally Stephen realizes that he must confess his sins and yet his pride denies that it be "there among his school companions."³⁸ After another sermon and vision of Hell, Stephen does perform the unison act of contrition, and later in his room he prays for forgiveness. "His eyes were dimmed with tears and, looking humbly up to heaven, he wept for the innocence he had lost."³⁹ Stephen still must go into town to make his confession, still wrestling with the pride of his soul which would declare even his confession profane in the sight of God, and he desires deeply to avoid the shame. But he does not; he confesses all, and climbs to another peak of peace and elation as the chapter comes to a close. "In spite of all he had done it. He had confessed and God had pardoned him. His soul was made fair and holy once more, holy and happy."⁴⁰ Stephen then falls into a dream of the morning communion where he will kneel sinless and accept "the host and God would enter his body."⁴¹ And in this moment he experiences eucharistic joy in true

epiphany. "Another life! A life of grace and virtue and happiness! It was true. It was not a dream from which he would wake. The past was past."⁴²

In a rare aberration of his pattern, Joyce allows the joy that concludes Chapter Three, however short lived, to survive for the chapter break. As Chapter Four begins, the seemingly inevitable loss of enthusiasm shows through Stephen's mechanical prayer-life, but it remains zealous, and constant. He continues to enjoy spiritual epiphany in the early pages of this chapter, gradually coming to see "the whole world forming one vast symmetrical expression of God's power and love. Life became a divine gift for every moment and sensation of which, were it even the sight of a single leaf hanging on the twig of a tree, his soul should praise and thank the Giver."⁴³ Stephen proceeds to mortify and discipline each of his five senses so that he will not be tempted to commit mortal sin. However, the blessed virtues of tolerance and compassion continue to elude him. "To merge his life in the common tide of other lives was harder for him than any fasting or prayer, and it was his constant failure to do this to his own satisfaction which caused in his soul at last a sensation of spiritual dryness together with a growth of doubts and scruples."⁴⁴ As this first grain of pride works its way back into Stephen's mind, he begins to covet even more his moments of isolation, where his reverie cannot be distracted, and to

treasure a fear that such great work as he has done can be defeated in a single act of a moment. Finally Stephen begins to doubt even the power of what has been done in his life and to question the wisdom of the priests and the validity of the sacraments.

Among these temptations, Stephen is sent for by a priest and questioned if he has ever felt that he might have a vocation to the priesthood. "A strong note of pride reinforcing the gravity of the priest's voice made Stephen's heart quicken in response."⁴⁵ The priest eventually promises to pray at the next morning's mass that the Lord might reveal Himself to Stephen and show him His will. But alone in his thoughts, Stephen sees a vision of himself as a member of the order. "The face was eyeless and sourfavoured and devout, shot with pink dinges of suffocated anger. . . . Then he wondered. . . at the remoteness of his soul from what he had hitherto imagined her sanctuary, at the frail hold which so many years of order and obedience had of him when once a definite and irrevocable act of his threatened to end forever, in time and in eternity, his freedom."⁴⁶ And in this vision Stephen now undergoes another conversion, even a transfiguration.

He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart
from others or to learn the wisdom of others

himself wandering among the snares of the world.
. . .He would fall. He had not yet fallen but
he would fall silently, in an instant. Not to
fall was too hard, too hard: and he felt the
silent lapse of his soul, as it would be at some
instant to come, falling, falling but not yet
fallen, still unfallen but about to fall.⁴⁷

Having abandoned forever the Catholic church, Stephen Dedalus contemplates his own name. Dedalus: creator of the labyrinth, and "hawklike man flying sunward above the sea, a prophecy of the end he had been born to serve and had been following through the mists of childhood and boyhood, a symbol of the artists forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being."⁴⁸ Allying himself with Lucifer, Stephen cries out "his deliverance to the winds. This was the call of life to his soul not the dull gross voice of the world of duties and despair, not the inhuman voice that had called him to the pale service of the altar."⁴⁹ Stephen had conceived the words "*non serviam. I will not serve,*" and now goes out to find a new destiny.

His soul had arisen from the grave of boyhood,
spurning her graveclothes. Yes! Yes! Yes! He

would create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul, as the great artificer whose name he bore, a living thing, new and soaring and beautiful, impalpable, imperishable.⁵⁰

Thus Stephen Dedalus, resurrected from his self-mortification in the church of Jesus Christ has arisen as the messiah of art and beauty to build now his own church--the church of James Joyce.

"To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life! A wild angel had appeared to him, the angel of mortal youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts of life, to throw open before him in an instant of ecstasy the gates of all the ways of error and glory."⁵¹ So commissioned, the new messiah looks to the sky above him in a consummation that combines and excludes the sexual swoon that concludes Chapter Two and the spiritual confession that concludes Chapter Three.

He felt above him the vast indifferent dome and the calm processes of the heavenly bodies; and the earth beneath him, the earth that had borne him, had taken him to her breast.

He closed his eyes in the languor of sleep. His eyelids trembled as they felt the vast cyclic movement of the earth and her

watchers, trembled as if they felt the strange
 light of some new world. His soul was swooning
 into some new world, fantastic, dim, uncertain
 as under sea, traversed by cloudy shapes and
 beings. A world, aglimmer, or a flower?
 Glimmering and trembling, trembling and
 unfolding, a breaking light, an opening flower,
 it spread in endless succession to itself.⁵²

As Chapter Four concludes, so does Joyce's chronicle
 of his years at Belvedere College. Richard Ellman comments
 that Belvedere "had supplied him [Joyce] with a decorous
 backdrop for his turbulent uprisings and downgoings, a
 standard against which he would set his own standard. He
 knew he could disregard its religious teachings and
 indifference to the Catholic belief attracted him now,
 except for sporadic angers, more than impiety. The image
 of what he must leave behind was almost complete."⁵³
 Chapter Five, standing in relation to the rest of Portrait
 in much the same way as "The Dead" stands to Dubliners,
 offers an extended narrative which completes the picture of
 what Stephen must leave behind and forges completely the
 gospel he must preach.

The setting for the last chapter of A Portrait of the
 Artist as a Young Man is University College, Dublin, where

Joyce took his bachelor's degree in 1902, in the concluding months of Stephen's tenure there. The chapter opens in a vivid contrast to the angelic image of Stephen that closes the preceding chapter. Stephen is at home, eating a common breakfast, and suffering his mother to wash his dirty neck, ears and face. His family seems to him only "so many voices offending and threatening to humble the pride of his youth."⁵⁴ Yet, escaping the house allows him to think on the likes of Aquinas and Aristotle, finding in "this brief pride of silence,"⁵⁵ a new strength to face his day. And yet Stephen does struggle with worries greater than the mundane mutterings of his immediate family; "it wounded him to think that he would never be but a shy guest at the feast of the world's culture and that the monkish learning, in terms of which he was striving to forge out an esthetic philosophy, was held no higher by the age he lived in than the subtle and curious jargons of heraldry and falconry."⁵⁶ So must be the concerns of a prophet when faced with the possibility of a world unready for the gospel he must preach.

Throughout the rest of the book, Stephen travels what are essentially two paths. The first is the path that continues from the gestation and birth of the soul, which, says Stephen, "has a dark birth, more mysterious than the birth of the body. When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets fleeing at it to hold it

back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets."⁵⁷ The second path that Stephen walks in this chapter is that of defining his concept of art, which he already knows will be the means by which he will try to communicate his message to the world.

Speaking to the dean of University College, Stephen had been given this gem to ponder: "The object of the artist is the creation of the beautiful. What the beautiful is is another question."⁵⁸ Stephen later further defines art in terms of its propriety: "The feelings excited by improper art are kinetic, desire or loathing. Desire urges us to possess, to go on to something; loathing urges us to abandon, to go from something. These are kinetic emotions. . . .The esthetic emotion is therefore static. The mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing."⁵⁹ And further, Stephen presses forward the uniquely modern notion that art is art, independent of subject--that regardless of the subject, the task of the artist is to take any subjects, "try to understand their nature and, having understood it, to try slowly and humbly and constantly to express, to press out again, from the gross earth or what it brings forth, from sound and shape and colour which are the prison gates of our soul, an image of the beauty we have come to understand--that is art."⁶⁰ Finally, Stephen puts his growing concept of art

into a single sentence: "Art is the human disposition of sensible or intelligible matter for an esthetic end."⁶¹ Now Stephen explains to a young friend the three components of beauty as described by Aquinas, which of course describes Stephen's own epiphanic notion as well. Ultimately, it is fair to deduce that Stephen defines art as that which would produce an epiphany for its audience. There is, however, a further development of Stephen's concept of art, which deals with his notion that there are three forms of art: the lyrical, epical, and dramatic. In the lyrical form, "the artist presents his image in immediate relation to himself;" in the epical form, the artist "presents his image in mediate relation to himself and to others;" and in the dramatic form, the artist "presents his image in immediate relation to others."⁶² Further, the dramatic form is reached when "the personality of the artist. . .finally refines itself out of existence, impersonalizes itself. . . .The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails."⁶³

Thus now armed with an understanding of James Joyce's vision of the artist and his art as spoken in the voice of Stephen Dedalus, the truth of some of his prophecy comes clear. At the beginning of Chapter Four Stephen feels exultation in the appropriateness of his name. Already

"there was a lust of wandering in his feet that burned to set out for the ends of the earth."⁶⁴ Of course this quotation looks forward to the self-imposed exile in which Joyce would live most of his life, but in light of the clearly lyrical form of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and Dubliners, the wandering feet for which Odysseus was so famed and which Joyce feels in himself, form a perfect epic source for Joyce's next work, Ulysses. Also, Stephen's revelling in his namesake who built the labyrinth certainly can, in hindsight, point to the dramatic labyrinth that is Finnegans Wake, which fully flies the nets of language, but remains caught in the web of Irish nationality and Catholic ritual.

Tracing the path of Joyce's esthetic philosophy and looking forward to its logical end is comparatively easy; tracing his quest to abandon the nets of "nationality, language and religion" is much more difficult, for though he abandoned the Church and his home in Ireland, the echoes of church ritual and Irish custom never leave Joyce's heart or his work. Yet his quest to be free continues through Stephen Dedalus in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. The net of nationality which Joyce never truly discarded brings forth a challenge to Stephen in Chapter Five as several of his friends are circulating a petition *per pax universalis*⁶⁵ Stephen refuses to sign, and one of his friends offers this justification: "Minor poets, I suppose

are above such trivial questions as the question of world peace."⁶⁶ Stephen angrily removes himself from the conflict, adding, "My signature is of no account. . . . You are right to go your own way. Leave me to go mine."⁶⁷

The demands of Stephen's social group are heavy: nonetheless Stephen's greatest demands yet lie in the expectations of family and church. Speaking with his closest friend, Cranly, Stephen reveals his mother's desire that he make his Easter duty, and Cranly asks him if he will.

--I will not, Stephen said.

--Why not? Cranly said.

--I will not serve, answered Stephen.

--That remark was made before, Cranly said calmly.⁶⁸

Thus the thoughts conceived earlier when Stephen recognized that he would fall are now given utterance. The words of Lucifer, "*non serviam*" have now been said. Though Cranly continues to question Stephen about his convictions and his doubts, trying to recall to him the belief he once possessed, Stephen only answers, "I was someone else then. . . . I mean that I was not myself as I am now, as I had to become."⁶⁹ Though the debate does continue, Stephen ends it with a final prophesy:

I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use--silence, exile, and cunning.

. . . .

You made me confess the fears I have. But I will tell you what I do not fear. I do not fear to be alone or to be spurned for another or to leave whatever I have to leave. And I am not afraid to make a mistake, even a great mistake, a lifelong mistake and perhaps as long as eternity too.⁷⁰

Stephen has made his confession of faith, abandoning the virtues of faith, hope and love, and embracing the apostasy of silence, exile, and cunning. The remaining six pages of Joyce's novel are a series of entries from Stephen's journal. He has decided that he must leave Ireland to complete his abandonment of the nets that had entrapped him. Stephen's second to last entry that Joyce records comes on the eve of his departure and Stephen writes these words. "Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to

forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race."⁷¹ And finally, on the morning of his leave-taking Stephen invokes his namesake and muse: "Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead."⁷²

Thus concludes A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man; the innocent child has gone to become the Artist, deific bearer of the word: "O! In the virgin womb of the imagination the word was made flesh."⁷³ And the messiah to bring this word is James Joyce, the "priest of eternal imagination, transmitting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life."⁷⁴ The eucharist that Joyce will give to his disciples, however, is not himself; it is the epiphany, possibly best described by William Wordsworth one hundred years before him:

There are in our existence spots of time,
Which with distinct preeminence retain
A renovating virtue. . .
. . . .
Imagination! Lifting up itself
Before the eye and progress of my song
Like an unfathered vapour, here that power,
In all the might of its endowments, came
Athwart me.⁷⁵

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is much, much more than simply a Growth of a Poet's mind as was Wordsworth's work. Joyce had written his Gospel, complete with a transfiguration, and a resurrection as he is taken out of this mundane world of childhood into the heavenly realm of art. Although the messianic Stephen Dedalus will appear again in Ulysses, he will no longer be the central figure. There will be a new figure--an Apostle as was St. Paul--a converted Jew who will live his epistles and pen the doctrine that will govern the lives of future disciples of James Joyce. And finally, shortly before his death, Joyce will give to the world his Revelation, bespeaking the destiny of all creation, in the words and images of a dream, Finnegans Wake.

The second great work of James Joyce, Ulysses, was published in 1922. In the years leading up to the publishing of Dubliners, Joyce had lived in Trieste, Italy, with Nora Barnacle, a woman with whom he lived for the rest of his life, though he refused to honor the sacrament of marriage, and their union was not legalized until a civil ceremony was held in 1931. Nora bore Joyce two children while in Trieste, Giorgio in 1905, and Lucia in 1907. The outbreak of World War I caused the Joyces to move to neutral Switzerland, where they settled in Zurich in 1915. They remained there until 1920, when Ezra Pound urged Joyce to visit Paris. But as Richard Ellman remarks, "He came to

Paris to stay a week and remained for twenty years."⁷⁶

Ulysses retains the character of Stephen Dedalus, especially in the first three chapters, which center on him, extending the lyrical art form of Portrait, and leading into the epical story of Leopold Bloom, which signals "the return to the larger universe, setting up the arena of interaction between the artist and the mundane world."⁷⁷ Bloom is the archetypal Joycean hero, and Ulysses chronicles the events of his life on June 16, 1904, "a quite nonheroic day in an equally non-heroic world."⁷⁸ But Bloom is far more than a simple protagonist. Descended from a Jewish father who renounced his faith, Bloom is born a protestant, but has converted to Catholicism in order to marry his wife, Molly. As the apostle Paul owned a Jewish heritage yet enjoined the privilege of Roman citizenship, Bloom is a citizen of the modern world, and it is through his life, his epistle, that the gospel of James Joyce will reach the world. But an epistle must embrace both the new gospel and the old, reinterpreting that which has gone before to bring in a new age. Thus Ulysses begins by embracing the old as a ritual mass is performed by Stephen's roommate, Malachi (Buck) Mulligan, in his morning toilette. Robert Boyle, S.J. interprets this in his study entitled James Joyce's Pauline Vision: A Catholic Exposition:

The prophet Malachi, scriptural forerunner of Buck, brought to a close the Old Testament, and in so doing expressed, in a passage Catholics take to be prophetic of the universal daily celebration of the mass--'For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering' (Mal. 1:11)--the image which Stephen and Joyce adopt as expressive of the artist's proper activity, the offering of pure musical words in praise of eternal Imagination.⁷⁹

Certainly throughout Ulysses Joyce uses musical words, but in flying the net of language, he no longer feels it necessary that the words be joined in accordance with familiar grammatical rules, or with clearly defined reference to time or place. The only requirement is that the words be bound by thought--James Joyce's thought. This is not to say that Ulysses is without structure. On the contrary, its structure is elaborate, being built largely on the foundation of the episodic structure used by Homer in the Odyssey. However, "the flow of time, like the firm situation in space, is subject to variations, disruptions, and faulty transitions."⁸⁰ Luckily, time in Ulysses is essentially bounded by the day in which it occurs, and

place by the city of Dublin and its environs.

The book itself is built upon eighteen episodes divided into three parts. The first three chapters tell of Stephen Dedalus and the events of his morning from approximately eight a.m. until noon. The next twelve chapters concern the events of Leopold Bloom's day, from before his breakfast, on into the evening. In the last three episodes, which belong to Bloom's wife, Molly, Bloom returns home and as he lies asleep beside his wife, we hear her long dreamy monologue which ends the book. Each episode of Ulysses is linked roughly with one of the twenty-four episodes of Homer's book, though the degree of connection varies from one episode to another.

Although the narrative of Ulysses was not nearly as important to James Joyce as the individual epiphanic moments--"All facts of any kind, mental or material, sublime or ludicrous, have an equivalence of value for the artist"⁸¹--yet it is still useful for the layman or first-time reader to have a basic understanding of the plot. Stephen Dedalus has returned from abroad at his mother's beckoning, for she is on her deathbed, and previous to the beginning of the book, he has apparently watched her die, refusing to pray at her bedside as she had requested. Stephen shares residence in a coastal tower with the wild medical student, Buck Mulligan, whose friendship he intends to soon abandon. Although presently employed as a teacher--

a position which he clearly dislikes--Stephen is largely free this day because his school lasts only half the day on Thursdays. The events of Stephen's afternoon are unclear, although we do know that he spends some time at a library and even more time drinking. We leave him at noon walking along the Dublin strand, and Bloom finds him at about ten o'clock in the evening half drunk and carousing with some medical students in the Lying-in Hospital.

Leopold Bloom begins his day at about the same time Stephen does, preparing Molly's morning tea. He steps out to purchase a kidney for his own meal and returns with the day's mail. There is in it a letter for Molly from Blazes Boylan, whom Bloom knows will be visiting Molly late in the afternoon for a sexual interlude. It is this knowledge that leads Bloom, whose job as an advertising canvasser allows him to spend most of his days travelling the streets of Dublin, to remain away from home until after midnight. But his unwillingness to challenge his wife's inevitable infidelity should not be seen as condoning as the matter troubles him all day long. Bloom is ready to leave home by about ten o'clock, but first he must make his daily pilgrimage to the outhouse, a visit which is described in intimate detail. During what remains of the morning Bloom runs several errands, first stopping at a post office to pick up a letter from his own clandestine love--however his infidelity is committed with pen and paper rather than with

his body. Next Bloom pauses in a church where he hopes to hear some good music, and continues on to a chemist's to order a face lotion for Molly. Finally, he stops to enjoy a bath where he remembers the eucharist mass he heard earlier as he looks down at his own nakedness: "This is my body. . . .the dark tangled curls of his bush floating, floating hair of the stream around the limp father of thousands, a languid floating flower."⁸²

After the bath Bloom attends a funeral of a friend and makes a generous memorial gift, then stops in at a newspaper to arrange an advertisement. Bloom lunches on a sandwich, stops in at a library where he just misses Stephen, and continues to thread his way through Dublin until four o'clock, the appointed time of Molly's affair, when he stops again to eat, this time a full meal. To his surprise, he sees Blazes Boylan, and watches him until he leaves to meet Molly. After his dinner, Bloom goes to a tavern to meet an insurance man and helps clear things up for the widow of his recently deceased friend. While there he is drawn into an argument and vigorously defends himself and his heritage: "Mendelssohn was a jew and Karl Marx and Mercadante and Spinoza. . . .Your God was a jew. Christ was a jew like me."⁸³ His opponent, furious, throws a biscuitbox at him but misses and Bloom makes a hasty retreat. It is now eight o'clock, and Bloom spends the next two hours relaxing on the Sandymount shore where he

suffers an intense if brief infatuation for the young Gerty MacDowell, but she leaves with her companions and he is left with his thoughts.

Bloom next visits the Lying-in Hospital to check on a friend who has been in labor for three days. While there he finally meets Stephen, and follows him to the brothel district of Dublin. "Stephen, under the influence of drink, and Mr. Bloom, exhausted by his daylong Odyssey, are sensitive to the hallucinating *ambience* and see their most secret desires, their fears, their memories, take form and live and move before their eyes."⁸⁴ Stephen, seeing a drunken vision of his dead mother, breaks a chandelier and runs out into the street where he is struck down by a soldier. Bloom pays for the chandelier then rushes to Stephen's aid, buys him a cup of coffee and takes him home. They talk in the kitchen for some time, Bloom offers Stephen the opportunity to remain with the Blooms for the night and even to come to live with them, but Stephen refuses the invitation. Stephen goes out, and Bloom is off to bed where he relates his day's adventures to Molly, and surprisingly tells her that the next day she should bring breakfast up to him. The rest of the book is taken up with Molly's half waking thoughts as she considers her husband's surprising behavior, her own affair, Stephen, and the future.

What will happen on the morrow is not directly

expressed: Molly has decided that "I'll just give him one more chance I'll get up early in the morning. . ."⁸⁵ Bloom has gained enough confidence to take some kind of stand, although it is unclear if any real change will occur; but "it is certain that Stephen. . ." writes Edmund Wilson, "will go away and write Ulysses. Buck Mulligan has told us that the young poet says he is going 'to write something in ten years': that was in 1904--Ulysses is dated at the end as having begun in 1914."⁸⁶ Actually the events that follow "Bloom's Day" are rather insignificant, just as Bloom himself is only an insignificant member of a huge society. The mission of Ulysses is not to tell the heroic tale of Leopold Bloom, but to "capture the modern world,"⁸⁷ and to declare James Joyce's vision beyond himself. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man tells of Joyce's vision as it applies to himself; Ulysses tells how that vision applies to the world at large. Thus traditionally sacred institutions as the Roman church and Irish customs are repeatedly mocked, as is the epical model of the Odyssey itself, and what is left is a fragmented world where value and meaning are found in the moment only, whether that moment be spent on the toilet, partaking of the eucharist, or having sex.

But this was a vision for which the world was not prepared; in the United States, for instance, Ulysses was declared obscene, and was not allowed to be published until

1933. Further, the utter complexity of structure and syntax and the remoteness of Joyce's vision from the common experience of the larger audience, require a reader to devote deep study to the text in order to glean even a basic understanding of its meaning, a prospect open only to an enlightened few. Mort Levitt of Temple University recently remarked after a Ulysses symposium, "We are treating it [Ulysses] with the seriousness reserved for biblical scholarship."⁸⁸ That is so, but clearly, if the Gospel according to James Joyce is to be preached, its scriptures must be written such that the doctrinal books need be interpreted with the aid of his appointed priests--in Joyce's case, the academicians who have completed the rigorous seminary of Joyce's work--and so it is with Ulysses. The audience has changed. It is no longer expected that all will completely understand or even enjoy the novel; people are instead expected to study the text, to carefully search within its pages some deep eternal truth. If the Artist was detached and distant in Ulysses, in Joyce's final book, Finnegans Wake, for which he labored seventeen years, the mystery of the Artist is made complete. Finnegans Wake is a revelation, a prophecy not only for mankind, but for all the universe and all time. It is written in a language Joyce created himself, based fundamentally on English, but laced with a multitude of colloquialisms with Latin, German, French, and Spanish, as

well as a veritable mosaic of manufactured verbage used for sound, for similarity to other words, or possibly for no reason at all. As Bernard Benstock writes: "Serious critical attention has been focused on the assumption that nothing in Finnegans Wake is nonsense, yet it may be equally true that it is all pure nonsense, subsuming and perpetually violating the limitation of prosaic 'sense.'"⁸⁹

Finnegans Wake is structured into four parts, which reveal its central message. Each part parallels one of the four cycles of history, a concept Joyce developed from the writings of Giambattista Vico. The first part, "The Book of Parents," is parallel to Vico's theocratic age; the second, "The Book of the Sons," parallels an heroic age; the third book, "The Book of the People," tells of a democratic age, and Book Four is the "Recourso," where all turns back upon itself and begins again. Thus the book runs through its stages and ends in an incomplete sentence, turning back upon itself to the first page where without a capital letter, the line is continued and the cycle begins again.

In order to sift through "the cultural flotsam and jetsam of human civilization"⁹⁰ which is Finnegans Wake and travel to the root meaning of the book, a guide is absolutely necessary. If an attempt is going to be made on the book as a whole, A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake, by Joseph Campbell and H. M. Robinson, is an invaluable and

arguably necessary tool.

Finnegans Wake is the story out of an old Irish folksong, where Tim Finnegan, the hero of the song, gets drunk, climbs a ladder and falls to his death. His friends hold the traditional Irish wake, and in the midst of the general raucity, someone spills some whiskey on poor old Tim who promptly wakes up and joins in the festivities. Thus Finnegans Wake is both the deathwatch and the awakening, the death and rebirth, and it is plural, not possessive, because its vast cycle is true not only of Tim Finnegan, but of all the whole universe as well. But Finnegans Wake is much more as well, it echoes the fall of Adam, of Julius Caesar, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and much, much more. It is the rising and falling and rising again of the universe itself, of which human consciousness is only a part. A few lines from the Skeleton Key may suffice to explain:

The book is a kind of terminal moraine in which lie buried all the myths, programs, slogans, hopes, prayers, tools, educational theories, and theological bric-a-brac of the past millenium. . . . From its [the Wake's] perspective, the hopeful or fearful may learn to behold with a vast sympathy the prodigious upsurging and dissolution of forms, the continual

transvaluation of values, the inevitable ambiguities, which are the stuff of life and history. . . . Meanwhile, we offer the aid and comfort of its [the Key's] pages to those who are preparing themselves for the trial-and-error ordeal of understanding the secret that James Joyce wishes--oh, so desperately--to disclose.⁹¹

Clearly, it would be fair of any audience to ask of an artist that if he does possess a great secret and wishes it disclosed, might he not consider telling it in a language and form that the audience would understand?

The house O'Shea or O'Shame, *Quivapieno*, known as the Haunted Inkbottle, no number Brimstone Walk, Asia in Ireland, as it was infested with the raps, with his penname SHUT sepiascraped on the doorplate and a blind of black sailcloth over its wan phwinshogue, in which the soulcontracted son of the secret cell groped through life at the expense of the taxpayers, dejected into day and night with jesuit bark and bitter bite, calicohydrants of zolfor and scoppialamina by full and forty Queasisanos, every day in everyone's way more exceeding in violent abuse of self and others, was the worst,

it is hoped, even in our western playboyish world for pure mousefarm filth.⁹²

This is not the writing of a man who wishes desperately to share a secret. There is at least some evidence that Joyce did expect more people to study and understand his book, however. In 1939, just as his book was being published, and as the world was entering another war, Joyce is said to have jumped to a piano and sung for half an hour, 'What is the use of this war?' "Joyce was convinced it had none. What was worse, it was distracting the world from reading Finnegans Wake, in which the unimportance of wars in the total cycle of human activity was made perfectly clear."⁹³ What Joyce failed to realize was that nothing in Finnegans Wake is made perfectly clear, even after great study.

Joyce died on January 13, 1941, less than two years after Finnegans Wake was published, so later reactions to the very limited success of his book do not exist. What his true intentions were, we can only surmise, but a short post script on a letter Joyce wrote to his grandson in 1936 allows for an interesting hypothesis.

P.S. The devil mostly speaks a language of his own called Ballysbabble which he makes up himself as he goes along but when he is very

angry he can speak quite bad French very well
though some who have heard him say that he has a
strong Dublin accent.⁹⁴

Perhaps it is too much to suspect that Joyce was a modern-day Faust, but it may not be too much to wonder that he might have attempted to deify himself in his art. It is a quite simple analogy to view the Joyce canon as a kind of New Testament. There is a gospel in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, a set of doctrines in Ulysses, and even a revelation in Finnegans Wake. Joyce's audience today is a very small group of academics who act as priests, distributing the gospel in their classrooms, and spreading the myth of their archangel to all who would listen. As Tennessee Williams had made his body his God, forsaking all to satisfy its need for pleasure, James Joyce bowed to none but his own mind, uttering again and again the fateful "*non serviam*," and in both cases the audience was left behind to abandon, or--for a limited few with Joyce--to worship both the artist and his art.

Chapter Four: T. S. Eliot

Perhaps the most influential literary figure of this century was Thomas Stearns Eliot. His literary career spanned fifty years, in which he produced such modern poetic masterpieces as "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," The Waste Land, "Ash Wednesday," and Four Quartets. Eliot was more than a poet, however, for his criticism is regarded as some of the most important of the twentieth century, and his five plays have also garnered much acclaim, most notably The Cocktail Party, which received the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for best play in 1950.

Although T. S. Eliot published nothing formally prior to "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" in 1915, much of the history that influenced his work is rooted in years far before he ever put pen to page. Eliot was descended from an English family who emigrated from East Coker, Somersetshire, in the seventeenth century, and settled in Massachusetts, eventually becoming quite prosperous; one Eliot, Charles William, became a president of Harvard University, which T. S. Eliot would later attend.

The Eliot family remained in and around Boston until T. S. Eliot's grandfather, a Unitarian Minister and educator named William Greenleaf Eliot transplanted the family to St. Louis, Missouri, where he quickly established

that city's first Unitarian church, and proceeded to found both Smith Academy and Washington University.

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born September 26, 1888, in St. Louis, to Charlotte Stearns and Henry Ware Eliot. Tom grew up in urban St. Louis, gaining an image of "the city" which he would use to great effect in his poetry. He attended Smith Academy, graduating in 1905, then moved to Boston where he studied at Milton Academy for a year in preparation to attend Harvard. He was no stranger to the Northeast, as his family had often vacationed for whole summers at nearby Cape Ann, Massachusetts. In fact, Eliot would later comment that his "family guarded jealously its connections with New England; but it was not until years of maturity that I perceived that I myself had always been a New Englander in the South West, and a South Westerner in New England."¹ This feeling of isolation, that even at home he was somewhat of a stranger or an exile, would develop throughout his college years until it would become a central theme in most of his work, especially the early poetry.

Eliot completed his bachelor's degree at Harvard in 1909, with emphasis in Latin, Greek, German and French. For his graduate education, Eliot turned to philosophy, receiving his master's degree in 1910, then spending a year at the Sorbonne, University of Paris, reading philosophy and literature. Although Eliot returned to Harvard and

spent three more years in graduate courses, spent a year at Oxford, then spent another year preparing his dissertation which was accepted by Harvard in 1916, it was the year in Paris that gave birth to Eliot's first serious poetry. Four poems of that year, "Portrait of a Lady," "Preludes," "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," have received much critical study, but by far the most famous of these is the last, "Prufrock." All four poems deal with themes that are "related in one way or another to the problem of isolation, and to the causes and the consequences in the contemporary world of isolation," but in Prufrock the isolation is "absolute. . . indeed the whole universe exists as an abstraction."² Some years after "Prufrock," in a 1924 essay entitled "Four Elizabethan Dramatists," Eliot explained that

Great art always consists of a relationship between actual life, which is its material, and an abstraction, which is its basis of form. And because great art is always a collaboration between an artist and his audience, this abstraction must be common: that is, it must exist (or be capable of existing) not only in his mind, but in his reader's.³

Unfortunately, with a theme of total isolation so delicately woven into the fabric of "Prufrock", in which life itself is considered an abstraction, the common ground that is needed to break through the isolation of reader from poet--audience from artist--is indeed shaky ground. Essentially, Prufrock himself is an abstraction: "J. Alfred Prufrock is a name plus a Voice. He isn't a 'character' cut out of the rest of the universe and equipped with a history and a little necessary context. . . . We have no information about him whatever."⁴ Thus the relationship with audience that is essential for the poem to be great art, can only be gained through the paradoxical failure of Prufrock himself to reach his audience. The common ground of Prufrock's "Love Song" is achieved through his own isolation and through the poet's use of a form that is difficult enough that the reader must "do his part of art's labor,"⁵ and enter the poem. Prufrock fails to break out of his own isolation from the modern world, and his diminution in the face of it as he ages, "With a bald spot in the middle of my hair. . . .I grow old. . . .I grow old,"⁶ and fears that he will be nothing, not even worthy of gossip at tea, "In the room the women come and go/Talking of Michelangelo,"⁷ the women who can reduce the master into prattle and banter. Prufrock wonders, "Do I dare/disturb the universe?"⁸ and his audience, drawn into the isolation wonder themselves.

The problem of isolation that ends with such despair in "Prufrock" is taken up again in The Waste Land, but this later poem was influenced greatly by interim events. First of all, much of the study Eliot did for his doctorate was in the area of Eastern philosophy, and Sanskrit. Further, Eliot, having decided that philosophical answers to "the cultural and spiritual crisis of his time were finally inadequate," decided "not to return to America and settle down as a professor of philosophy, but to remain in England and follow a literary career."⁹ Also, a friend from Harvard and fellow poet, Conrad Aiken, showed a manuscript of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" to Ezra Pound, who met Eliot in September of 1914. Pound immediately took the younger Eliot under his wing and it was he who arranged for "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" to appear in a Chicago magazine called Poetry in 1915, telling its editor that Eliot "has sent in the best poem I have yet had or seen from an American."¹⁰ Pound also arranged for the publication of Eliot's first book, Prufrock and Other Observations to be published two years later, and when Eliot wrote The Waste Land, Pound's brilliant editing as well as his friendship led Eliot to dedicate the poem to him.

An even greater impact on Eliot than Pound, however, was a young woman he met in early 1915. Her name was Vivien (Vivienne) Haigh-Wood, and after a very brief

courtship, they were married on June 26. Unfortunately, their marital bliss was at best short lived, for

In September 1915, Vivienne Eliot became ill and, in January, nearly died. This remained the pattern of the rest of her life: a pattern of illness, crisis, convalescence, and relapse. . . . Vivienne's parents were not very helpful, and it was left almost entirely to Eliot to care for her, which he did with devotion, year after year.¹¹

The illness haunted Eliot much as Tennessee Williams had been haunted by the ghost that was his sister Rose; however, Vivien's madness was something "for which Eliot felt partially responsible and for which he forgave himself only in old age, if at all."¹²

Another difficulty which Eliot suffered during this period was financial distress, so severe that he took a job teaching at a grammar school in the fall of 1915. He was unhappy teaching, and gave the job up at the end of 1916; in March of 1917, he accepted a position at Lloyd's Bank, which he held for nine years. Unfortunately, the banking job still did not bring an income sufficient to handle living expenses as well as Vivien's mounting medical bills, so in order to supplement his income he accepted various

work as a reviewer, lecturer and essayist. Prufrock and Other Observations, which was published in 1917, and The Sacred Wood, a collection of Eliot's essays that were published in 1920 also aided the struggling poet. Finally though, "The struggle to cope emotionally and financially with Vivien's illness almost, in truth, did Eliot in, leading him first to exhaustion, and then, in 1921, to collapse."¹³ In addition to these considerable difficulties, in this period Eliot also suffered the deaths of two important men in his life. First, Jean Verdenal, a close friend that Eliot had met in Paris while studying at the Sorbonne, joined the army medical corps and was assigned to an "infantry regiment in February 1915 and then three months later was killed in the Dardanelles: the first, but not the only, friend of Eliot to be lost in the war."¹⁴ Then in January 1919 Henry Ware Eliot died, still suspecting that his son had "squandered his life and talents,"¹⁵ which left Eliot nursing a bitter wound.

The culmination of these sad events occurred in the last several months of 1921, when he began "experiencing severe headaches. . . and a constant if undirected feeling of anxiety and dread."¹⁶ He was finally convinced to see a doctor, and was urged to take at least a three month leave of absence from the bank, which he began on October 12, 1921. He used much of his time away from Lloyd's Bank working on a new poem, finally entitled The Waste Land, and

undergoing various forms of therapeutic treatment. Eliot wrote to his brother that he was trying "to learn to use all my energy without waste, to be calm when there is nothing to be gained by worry, and to concentrate without effort."¹⁷ He did stay with the Pounds for several days, and by January the poem was largely finished and his health was much improved.

Ezra Pound from the first loved the poem, writing to Eliot of January 24, "Complimenté, you bitch. I am wracked by the seven jealousies."¹⁸ Pound gave Eliot considerable advice, editing huge sections, and encouraging him all the way. "Where Eliot was distrustful or uncertain of what he had done, wishing to clarify it with other material, Pound found its very resistance to interpretation--the cold, hard images and rhythmic passages which he had first espoused in the principles of Imagism--to be the key to its power."¹⁹ In the meantime, Eliot had negotiated with Lady Rothermere to edit and publish a quarterly magazine which she would finance and administer. The journal would be called The Criterion, and in its first issue, in October 1922, The Waste Land was first published in England; it appeared in America in the Dial three weeks later, and won the \$2000 Dial award.

The Waste Land is a very long poem in five parts. Still dealing with the theme of isolation, Eliot had by this time determined that "Isolation is produced, first, by

the collapse of common ground in culture, the loss of that mythic substructure which enables man to understand his relatedness to anyone or anything, to place himself in his world."²⁰ Still feeling that as an artist he was trapped within the isolation himself, in The Waste Land Eliot "experimented with a new method which he hoped was 'a step toward making the modern world possible for art.'"²¹ Jewel Spears Brooker explains Eliot's new method as:

The manipulation of a continuous parallel between an ordered world of myth (an abstraction) and a chaotic world of history, contemporary or otherwise. In keeping the chaos of his own time on the surface, the artist is being true to history; in referring this chaos to a timeless order, he is being true to art. And in forcing the reader to know (or to learn) the myth, to hold it in his mind as a reference point, and to manipulate the parallel between the world of myth and the world of time, the modern artist is forcing the reader into a collaborative role.²²

Certainly this is an attempt to draw the audience into the creative relationship that transforms mere words into art; however, the obvious danger that a writer faces in

employing this method, (remember that James Joyce's Ulysses was published the same year and used a similar pattern) is that if the myth is inaccessible, too buried, or simply too difficult, a large part of the audience can be lost. Eliot clearly was in the advantage over Joyce in that the twenty or so pages of his poem do not require the commitment to read as do Joyce's seven hundred, but the issue is the same. The author must tread a fine line between intertwining history and myth into a fine weave or letting them simply tangle; he must use language that is, if difficult, decipherable, and he must have a common ground in the myth from which comprehension can spring. In Eliot's later life a picture of his own opinion on how well he succeeded in balancing the many weights that are lifted in The Waste Land suggests that he thought the poem rather a mess. "I wasn't even bothering whether I knew what I was saying,"²³ he told the Paris Review in 1959, and on one other occasion he remarked, "To me it was only the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmical grumbling."²⁴

Probably the most important segment of The Waste Land is the last, "What the Thunder Said", because in it Eliot offers at least a slim hope of restoration, triumphing over the death, frustrated sexuality, and decay of civilization that had thematically permeated the preceding sections. The title of this section comes from "an Indian legend in

which men, gods, and devils listen to the thunder and then construct from that sound the positive message which can restore the waste land and make its inhabitants fruitful again."²⁵ F. R. Leavis explains that "in 'What the Thunder Said' the drought becomes (among other things) a thirst for the waters of faith and healing, and the specifically religious enters the poem. But the thunder is 'dry sterile thunder without rain;' there is no resurrection or renewal."²⁶ So the poem closes with fragments. "Two are questions indicating a desire for purification and rebirth; they are answered, unfortunately with a fragment indicating the persistence of violence, madness, and death."²⁷ And finally, that last fragment,

"Shantih, shantih, shantih."²⁸

which is described in Eliot's notes as a benediction, "a formal ending to an Upanishad. 'The Peace which passeth understanding' is our equivalent to this word,"²⁹ reminds us of the first lines of the poem,

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.³⁰

because there is no real peace in the dead waste land, and April, like the thunder in the myth and poem "awakens

expectations it does not satisfy."³¹ Jewel Spears Brooker again offers an excellent summation:

In conclusion, restoration remains only as a possibility; it all hinges, finally, on man's willingness to take the given--thunder, for example--and to construct something which will enable him to reclaim structure and meaning. The waste land is not a result of a lack of water, but of the lack of belief. The waste land is filled with water, but it is demythologized water, water that drowns. . . . What is needed to restore the waste land is a remythologizing of the events of everyday life, a resacramentalization which will reinvest life with structure and meaning.³²

The decade following Eliot's completion of The Waste Land was the critical turning point in all areas of his life: vocation, religion, and family. In 1925, after continuing to struggle financially and in his marriage, T. S. Eliot left Lloyd's Bank and accepted a position in the Faber and Gwyer (later to be Faber and Faber) publishing house. Also that year Eliot wrote "The Hollow Men," a beautiful poem in which Eliot, while "trying to articulate his own inarticulate emptiness. . .numbers himself among

the living dead."³³ But the religious motifs in "The Hollow Men" are more blatant than ever before, especially in the fifth and final section where The Lord's Prayer and the Gloria Patri blend with the confusion of a man who does not yet believe in a "world without end, Amen," but fears still the isolation that is strangling, starving and drowning the human race.

For Thine is the Kingdom

For thine is
Life is
For thine is the

*This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.*³⁴

"The Hollow Men" had been published by Eliot in a book entitled Poems 1909-1925, and one of the reviews, by John Middleton Murray looked prophetically ahead to the further changes that Eliot was yet to undergo. "Murray described Eliot as a nihilist who espoused classical principles because they represented a certainty 'he longs for and cannot embrace. The intellectual part of him desiderates

an ordered universe. . .the living emotional, creative part of him goes its own distorted way.' One means of resolving that conflict, Murray suggested, 'is that he should make a blind act of faith and join the Catholic church: there he will find an authority and a tradition.'"35 Almost as if he had heard Murray's voice, Eliot did begin to search the Christian religion for a tradition and for truth. The following year, while visiting Rome, Eliot "suddenly fell on his knees before Michelangelo's Pietà, to the surprise of his brother and sister-in-law who were with him,"36 but it is less surprising when we learn that at that time "already, before his formal conversion, he was undergoing regular training and attending early morning services in the Church of England."37

Eliot continued his training in the church for another year before making any public or official moves, but finally he felt ready. "He became attached to the Anglo-Catholic movement within the Church of England, precisely because he saw in it the continuation of such a [broadly European] tradition. Its emphasis upon the apostolic mission of the Church, and upon the importance of sacramental worship, afforded the kind of historical and ritualistic community which were for Eliot the essential elements of faith."38 So, on June 29, 1927, in a very small and very private ceremony, T. S. Eliot was baptized

into the Communion of the Church of England, and on the next day he was driven to the Bishop of Oxford and was there confirmed in the Bishop's private chapel.³⁹

Having made a change of career, and having converted to the Christian faith, it is not surprising that in these years of such drastic change, Eliot would also further his attachment to England by becoming a British citizen, which he did in 1927. These conversions, especially the embracing of Christianity, coming from the man who had penned The Waste Land, were disturbing for some, especially those of his contemporaries who had adopted him as their spokesman, of sorts, and felt he had abandoned them. "He gently explained that he had never intended to be the spokesman for a generation; that he had been trying all along to work out his own salvation."⁴⁰ Much later, T. S. Eliot would echo these words in his most successful play, The Cocktail Party, when the leading guardian, Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly says to his charges, "Go in peace. And work out your salvation with diligence."⁴¹ And of course these words are also echoes of St. Paul who urged the beloved at Phillippi to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."⁴²

From this point in Eliot's career forward, religious imagery would never be far from the poet's mind or pen. His next great poem, Ash Wednesday, was completed in 1930 but had grown from smaller poems he had written in the two

or three preceding years. This poem is titled after the day on which Christians acknowledge their sin before the Lord, and begin the Lenten season in which they will spend forty-days in prayer and fasting awaiting the return of the Risen Christ at Easter. As Ash Wednesday is the Christian's confession and renewal of their hope in Christ, Ash Wednesday is T. S. Eliot's confessional poem, in which he will exchange forever the plurality of pagan mythology of The Waste Land for the single reference point which is the Incarnation of Christ.

The Incarnation represents a unique intersection of the human and the divine, of time and the timeless, of movement and stillness. Eliot's earlier schemes had been a means of making art possible in the chaos of human history; his new scheme, however, is a means of making life, of which art is only a part, possible.⁴³

The poem's structural motif centers on the unified "still point" which is God, which reconciles and brings the "Shantih shantih shantih" of the waste land to life, surrounded by the world of man, which whirls about the stillness, fragmented, broken with ambition and isolation. The first stanza of Part V bears this out beautifully in

echoes of the opening verses of the Gospel of St. John.

If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is
spent

If the unheard, unspoken

Word is unspoken, unheard;

Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,

The Word without a word, the Word within

The world and for the world;

And the light shone in darkness and

Against the Word the unstilled world still

whirled

About the centre of the silent Word.⁴⁴

Eliot's poem speaks a beautiful sermon and yet, unlike
myriads of others who have less to say and boldly speak it,
Ash Wednesday humbly whispers:

Lord, I am not worthy

Lord, I am not worthy

but speak the word only.⁴⁵

Recognizing his own human tendency to claim humility in the
face of God, Eliot chastens himself, and in Part VI comes
full circle, still in the tempestuous world of man, but now
placing his faith in a stillness inside and outside
himself:

Although I do not hope to turn again

Although I do not hope

Although I do not hope to turn

. . . .

Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood

Teach us to care and not to care

Teach us to sit still

Even among these rocks,

Our peace in His will

And even among these rocks

Sister, mother

And spirit of the river, spirit of the sea,

Suffer me not to be separated

And let my cry come unto Thee.⁴⁶

In spite of the brilliant hope resounding through the lines of Ash Wednesday, it is yet a poem of transition--it is certainly the turning point in Eliot's career--a poem of "the time between sleep and waking,"⁴⁷ and of "the time of tension between dying and birth."⁴⁸ It is the story of a convert who has seen the light but must live out his days here on earth before he can enter into the true Light at the still point. But Eliot's vision is by no means complete with Ash Wednesday, for his faith and his love of life will continue to grow until his dying day. Already in

late 1930, not long after finishing Ash Wednesday, the last of Eliot's "Ariel Poems," entitled "Marina" showed the further development of his poetic vision, building on the wonderful recognition scene in Shakespears's Pericles, where the Prince of Tyre finally meets his lost daughter, Marina. The image of the sea that had ended Ash Wednesday is of course prevalent in "Marina," as well, but the sea is now much more a home, and its beauty far surpasses even the bleakness that was once for him a waste land:

This form, this face, this life
 Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let
 me
 Resign my life for this life, my speech for that
 unspoken,
 The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new
 ships.

What seas what shores what granite islands
 towards my timbers
 And woodthrush calling through the fog
 My daughter.⁴⁹

Even the fog that had once been a yellow poison that in "Prufrock" had rubbed "its back upon the windowpane. . . its muzzle upon the window panes,"⁵⁰ is now a benevolent

cloud containing dangers, yes, but also singing birds and beloved Marina.

Unfortunately, the changes in religion and vocation which had so improved Eliot's life were not to be coupled with a Pericles-like reunion with Vivien. Living in and out of sanatoriums and becoming increasingly difficult to live with, Vivien left her husband to face a very difficult decision:

If he continued to live with his wife, there would be no end to her sufferings and no end to his own. But if he left her, he would be abandoning the one human being who relied upon and needed him. He could not evade the unhappy consequences of either choice. And Eliot was a Christian with a profound sense of sin: it is not too much to say that his own soul was in peril.⁵¹

But after long deliberation, consulting Vivien's brother, Maurice, his spiritual counselor, Father Underhill, and others, he made a decision: he would leave Vivien. But how and when to do so posed a difficult question for a man whose resolution was constantly challenged by feelings of devotion and responsibility to his wife. A perfect opportunity afforded itself when Eliot

was invited to return to his alma mater, Harvard University as the Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry for the academic year 1932-1933. The position carried with it a salary of ten thousand dollars which Eliot badly needed, and would provide a separation which "would give him the opportunity both to accustom Vivien to his absence and cleanly to break his marital ties with her."⁵²

So the early months of 1932 were spent in preparation for his absence: the next three issues of Criterion were outlined, travel and living arrangements were made, and in addition Eliot gave a series of radio talks entitled "The Modern Dilemma" which "were concerned with the place and importance of Christianity in the modern world, in which he emphasized the need for 'holy living and holy dying. . . sanctity, chastity, humility, austerity.'"⁵³ Eliot finally sailed from England on September 17, 1932, leaving Vivien forever. "It was a decisive moment in Eliot's life, and one which would continue to torment him."⁵⁴ Eight months later he wrote "'There is no way out. There never is.' He described the solitude of the poet, and how as the years passed it was something that became more and more difficult to bear; he ended with a quotation, 'Sleep, and if life was bitter to thee, pardon.'"⁵⁵

Although he was certainly affected throughout his stay in America by the looming shadow of his inevitable return to England and the possibility of again facing Vivien, who

had written to ask Eliot if she could join him in the States, Eliot's own letters "give the impression of a man who was, for once, reasonably happy."⁵⁶ So before he left America he again sought counsel from many trusted friends, and finally decided to have his solicitors prepare a Deed of Separation and deliver it personally with a letter from Eliot himself, to Vivien. In a graduation address at Milton Academy just before he sailed for home, he explained to the students that there were "occasions in life when an irrevocable choice had to be made, and the consequences of that choice had to be faced. That was what he was now steeling himself to do."⁵⁷ The legal separation was very difficult for Eliot to acquire, as Vivien adamantly refused to agree to "relinquish her rights to her husband,"⁵⁸ but outside of a brief meeting with their solicitors in 1932, and another encounter which Vivien instigated in 1935, the two never saw each other again. Vivien was committed to a mental asylum in August 1938, and there remained until her death.

It is unclear how the continued coldness that Eliot had to show to Vivien in this period affected him, but it is definite that Eliot immersed himself in his work with incredible vigor, publishing two more collections of essays, and redoubling his editing labors. In September 1933, Eliot was commissioned to write the Choruses for a religious pageant, which would require him to write in a

completely different manner than he had done before. "He was wading in what for him was an unfamiliar medium, explicitly for a popular audience, and he had to learn the skills as he went along."⁵⁹ The Rock, as the work was finally called, was performed by an amateur cast in May 1934, and although it certainly carries moments of beauty, and was quite well received by its admittedly parochial audience, it was severely criticized by many of Eliot's artistic friends. Neither Pound nor Wyndham Lewis had anything good to say of it, and Virginia Woolf thought it particularly horrid. Truly The Rock was most important not for its own sake, but because it caused Eliot to consider seriously, and finally decide to move out of "pure poetry" and into verse drama, an idea with which he had been toying for a number of years. "He had seen a popular audience moved by something he had written,"⁶⁰ and he cheerfully accepted a second commission, this time to write a play for the following year's Canterbury Festival.

The importance of Eliot's decision, in the middle of his career, to move into the genre of drama, thus opening his art to even larger audiences than those who read his poetry, is even more remarkable when compared to the other artists in this study. Tennessee Williams, at the midpoint of his career, was already beginning to taste the failures that would plague him to the end of his life as he moved farther and farther away from his audience. James

Joyce produced Ulysses at the mid-point of his career, again a turn away from the audience, which is the exact opposite of what Eliot was trying to do.

The year 1935 marked the beginning of Eliot's most creative period, which commenced with the writing of the play for Bishop Bell, whose only stipulation was that it somehow related to Canterbury. For that Eliot chose the story of Archbishop Thomas Becket's return from exile in the twelfth century and subsequent martyrdom at the hands of the knights of King Henry II. The play, Murder in the Cathedral, was first performed on June 19, 1935 to a full house and favorable reviews. "It seemed that Eliot had at last found his great theme, by discovering a way in which to combine his poetry and his faith in a satisfying formal unity."⁶¹

The play centers, of course, on Thomas Becket, as he faces four tempters who try to lure him away from the road to martyrdom and to join with them. Solitary and specially enlightened to the significance of his choice, Becket draws the audience into his decision through his own anguished deliberation and through the troubled voice of the chorus who grieve their lost innocence and youth:

We have seen the young man mutilated,
The town girl trembling by the mill stream.
And meanwhile we have gone on living,

Living and partly living,
 Picking together the pieces. . .⁶²

As Becket's decision has been made in the first part of the play, Part II, which follows an interlude in which Becket offers a Christmas sermon, centers on the murder of the Archbishop and the apologies to the audience of the four knights who committed the deed. The part opens with the prophetic voice of the chorus: "The peace of this world is always uncertain, unless men keep the peace of God,"⁶³ and ends in the prayer of the Priests and Chorus, who recognize that "the darkness declares the glory of the light,"⁶⁴ and the Church is edified by the making of a Saint. "Therefore, O God, we thank Thee/Who hast given such a blessing to Canterbury."⁶⁵

Canterbury's blessing continued as the play it had spawned moved to London after the festival, opening on November first, and running there to sell-out audiences through 225 performances before its provincial run.⁶⁶ The play was even broadcast by the BBC in January 1936, and its success brought in several offers for further commissions of religious or historical dramas. Eliot refused them all, however, preferring instead to follow his own design in his writing.

First on the agenda was a new poem which had grown in his mind out of some lines he had written for Murder in the

Cathedral but had cut. They dealt with the temptation to try to return to the past "and take a different road, to cancel history and create an alternative present, [which] constitutes an intersection where the lives of Becket, of Christ, and of Eliot come together."⁶⁷ These lines only slightly modified, would come to open "Burnt Norton," the first of four poems which, when completed as Four Quartets in 1942, would become his poetic masterpiece.

Time present and time past
 Are both perhaps present in time future,
 And time future contained in time past.
 If all time is eternally present
 All time is unredeemable.
 What might have been is an abstraction
 Remaining a perpetual possibility
 Only in a world of speculation.
 What might have been and what has been
 Point to one end, which is always present.⁶⁸

Although Quartets must be taken as a whole, "Burnt Norton" already shows some of the poetic devices that will find their consummation in the complete Four Quartets. Eliot first uses in "Burnt Norton," the "emphases and cadences of speech. It was part of his growing preoccupation with what he called the 'social usefulness'

of a poet that he should adopt the tone of someone addressing an audience, speaking out loud rather than to himself."⁶⁹ Again T.S. Eliot is seen to be concerned with the expression of his art outward, as opposed to the increasingly internalized consciousness of both Tennessee Williams and James Joyce as their careers progressed. Thus Eliot brought in to his art a voice that his audience could clearly understand, that his message might as well, be easily understood. The rhythmic rise and fall of the poet's voice that echoes throughout the poem parallels the rush of time with its bright moments, eddies and swirls which come together in the Eternal Presence "At the still point of the turning world."⁷⁰

After "Burnt Norton," Eliot divided his energies over the next four years among several projects apart from his continuing labor at Faber and Faber's. The first of these projects was the two summations of his work, Essays Ancient and Modern and Collected Poems 1909-1935, which were both published in early 1938, and the latter of which contained the first publication of "Burnt Norton." Both books were respectfully received by the critics and sold well: Eliot's authority and success were now no longer in debate. But in marked contrast to Tennessee Williams, whose whole life was changed into a wild fantastic dream with his success, Eliot wrote in a 1937 essay that an artist "must lead a commonplace life, if he is to properly

do his work."⁷¹ And that is precisely what Eliot did in the years before World War II, except for the fact that T. S. Eliot's life was destined to be shared, if not directly through a wife or a large number of truly intimate friends, then vicariously through his art.

The several creative projects that Eliot had begun in the years after Murder in the Cathedral all came to their fruition in 1939, each in different genre, but together showing an incredible range of feeling. The first of these was Eliot's second complete play, The Family Reunion.

Professor William Tydeman comments:

It was following the unlooked-for success of his Canterbury play that Eliot resolved to carry his campaign for a revitalized verse drama into the far more treacherous territory of Shaftesbury Avenue, [Comparable to New York's Broadway] and allow it, in his own phrase, to 'enter into overt competition with prose drama.' He therefore decided to steer clear of a historical theme which had facilitated his use of verse in Murder in the Cathedral, and to dispense with the explicit presence of a chorus as employed in all his dramatic work up to that point, and set his next experiment in the present, using a contemporary setting and characters from

everyday life.⁷²

The Family Reunion opened in London on March 21, 1939, to a mixed critical reaction. It seemed that "in spite, or perhaps because, of Eliot's labours the meaning of the play remained elusive and its symbolism jarred with the realism of its setting."⁷³ In any event, the play only lasted five weeks on the stage. It has, however, been revived several times, and more recent productions have garnered more popular appeal, and, "for all its deficiencies," Eliot biographer Peter Ackroyd contends, "The Family Reunion remains his most powerful play."⁷⁴

Eliot was severely disappointed by the failure of The Family Reunion, but a much more pervasive issue led to the second Eliot publication of 1939. "The pact between Hitler and Chamberlain at Munich in September 1938 had confirmed Eliot's sense that the civilization of which he was a part was a worthless and immoral one."⁷⁵ Eliot developed his ideas on the type of society which he thought could endure and even regenerate the decaying culture of the twentieth century at a series of lectures he gave at Cambridge in March 1939. These became the basis for The Idea of a Christian Society, which Eliot published later that year. If there is error in this essay, it is that of being too "tentative and hypothetical" in postulating the actual potential for achieving such a society. "He did not

concern himself with the business of creating such a society, only with the descriptions of what it ought to be like."⁷⁶

The last of Eliot's work to be published in 1939 is probably the most important, in that it demonstrated the extreme versatility of which Eliot was capable. From the playwright of the melancholy Family Reunion, whose chorus closes with the haunting words: "We have suffered far more than a personal loss--/We have lost our way in the dark,"⁷⁷ to the disenchanted thinker who proposed The Idea of a Christian Society, Eliot finally gives us Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats. This delightful collection of poems, many of which were originally written for the children of his friends, expanded his audience even to children, and clearly shows another side of the often saddened, academic publisher and poet--a side with a child's capacity for love and laughter, and animal companions. Elizabeth Sewall compares these poems to Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, and comments that, "in this so-called minor work can be found all the love and charity which cause Mr. Eliot. . . so much trouble in the rest of his poetry, but released and reconciled."⁷⁸

The beginning of World War II in 1939 pulled Eliot quickly from the attitude of an 'Old Possum' into a restless frustration which forced him to seek new ways to fight the war. "In these uncertain and troubled

circumstances he was called back to the one thing outside his faith in which he could place his trust."⁷⁹ He began working almost immediately then on a new poem, structured very closely on the model of "Burnt Norton." The poem was to be called "East Coker," after the village from which Andrew Eliot had journeyed to the New World more than two hundred years before, and to which Eliot's ashes would be returned. Appropriately, the larger question of the meaning of time is enclosed in the first and last lines of the poem by the framework of Eliot's personal history

In my beginning is my end. . .

. . . .

In my end is my beginning⁸⁰

The poem was published in the Easter 1940 issue of the New English Weekly, and became so popular that it was reprinted in May and June, and nearly twelve thousand copies of the pamphlet were sold when they became available in September. In the midst of a world echoing the cry of The Waste Land, "I will show you fear in a handful of dust,"⁸¹ Eliot had offered a new hope of regeneration. "Just as The Waste Land had once been taken as the expression of a 'disillusioned' generation, in spite of Eliot's disavowals of any such intention, so 'East Coker' seemed to be an expression of historical continuity at a time when it was most threatened."⁸²

Although he suffered from a severe case of influenza

which kept him bedridden for most of the first three months of 1941, Eliot had conceived by this time a vision of a quartet of poems, each pointing to a specific place, each with its associated season and primal element, and all with musical rhythm and diction, and transitions arranged in a manner "comparable to the different movements of a symphony or quartet."⁸³ Eliot had begun the third poem in his quartet, "The Dry Salvages" in the closing months of 1940, and kept up revisions through the early weeks of his illness in order that it be published in February's issue of the New English Weekly.

The "place" of "The Dry Salvages" is a treacherous group of rocks off Cape Ann, Massachusetts which Eliot used as a seamark when sailing out of the harbor during summer vacations as a boy. A central image of the poem is of the small craft drifting dangerously close to the deadly rocks, a society cast adrift and drowning, as time continues its never ending forward march.

There is no end, but addition: the trailing
 Consequence of further days and hours,
 While emotion takes to itself the emotionless
 Years of living among the breakage
 Of what was believed in as the most reliable--
 And therefore the fittest for renunciation⁸⁴

Eliot began immediately to work on his last quartet, entitled "Little Gidding," named after the place where Nicholas Ferrar had established a small Anglican community devoted to "familial life led in poverty, discipline and prayer which was extirpated by Parliamentary troops in 1646."⁸⁵ Eliot knew that this poem had to be not only a final poem in sequence but a true culmination of all that had gone in the poems before. Unsatisfied with his first draft and distracted by a series of demanding lectures and other community services, Eliot was forced to delay serious work on "Little Gidding " for almost a year, until August 1942. Going through five separate drafts and countless minor revisions over the next two months, Eliot was ready by the end of September, and the poem was published in the New English Weekly the following month.

"Little Gidding," Eliot's own favorite poem⁸⁶, completes vision, begun seven years earlier in "Burnt Norton" of the dynamic fragmented world of man and his search for the complete stillness of God. The echoes of "Burnt Norton" are remembered and true, "Only through time time is conquered,"⁸⁷ and thus through a fragmented moving moment in time is the Stillness:

. . . You are here to kneel

Where prayer has been valid. . .

. . . .

Here, the intersection of the timeless moment
Is England and nowhere. Never and always.⁸⁸

Finally, time is redeemed in the recognition that all
is not what it now seems, and that each moment is an
essential part of the picture that is eternity and
stillness.

A people without history
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern
Of timeless moments. So, while the light fails
On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel
History is now and England.⁸⁹

"Little Gidding"'s element is fire, her season spring,
and the images that conclude the poem are the picture of
time conquered in a beautiful vision of the purifying fire
of Pentecost, the rose which is both a symbol of the new
life of spring, and of the rose that was heaven in Dante's
Paradiso, but yet possess the thorns that were once woven
into a crown for Jesus' head:

With the drawing of this Love and the voice of
this Calling

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

. . . .

Quick now, here, now, always--
 A condition of complete simplicity
 (Costing not less than everything)
 And all shall be well and
 All manner of thing shall be well
 When the tongues of flame are infolded
 Into the crowned knot of fire
 And the fire and the rose are one.⁹⁰

These were the last lines of pure poetry that Eliot wrote, concentrating for the rest of his life on three more plays and his criticism. But in this, his masterpiece, Eliot has truly transcended the isolation that had prevailed in the early poems. The audience, by these poems, is lifted to an epiphany beyond anything James Joyce could ever hope to communicate. "This moment of sudden illumination, in and out of time, Eliot associates with the Word-made-flesh, the Incarnation; and also with the word-made-art, poetry."⁹¹ And Eliot has accomplished in a manner as opposite to that of Joyce as could be imagined. While Joyce's language became increasingly difficult and

unique to Joyce himself and his own self-made lexicon, Eliot continued to "demand that contemporary poetry should have such a strong relationship to current speech that 'the listener or reader can say "that is how I should talk if I could talk poetry."'"⁹² And with Eliot's verse, people did just that: they recited, they read, they purchased, but most of all they listened; and they would continue to listen as long as Eliot would speak to them.

For the next several years, most of Eliot's time was spent doing exactly that. His lectures were packed with eager listeners at every step, and his essays were read in droves with studious reverence. The untimely death of Vivien in January 1947 sent Eliot reeling, but after the funeral Eliot told one of the few friends "who had known them both from their earliest days together, death could only have been a deliverance for her."⁹³

The following year Eliot was greatly honored, receiving in January England's most prestigious civilian prize, the Order of Merit; in December he received the Nobel Prize for Literature and also that year received honorary doctorates from both Oxford and Cambridge, who followed the lead of Harvard, Princeton and Yale who had so honored him the year before. During this time Eliot finally began work on his third play, The Cocktail Party, which he had ready for rehearsal in May 1949. The play was performed at the Edinburgh festival the the last week in

August to an enthusiastic reception, then moved to New York, opening on Broadway January 21, 1950. To Eliot's surprise, Cocktail was such a success that Eliot was featured on the cover of Time magazine on March 6, and later won the New York Drama Critic's Circle award for best play of the year.

Though ostensibly billed as a social comedy, "The Cocktail Party can still be recognised as a thinly veiled doctrinal parable illustrating the Christian faith's perennial concern with sin and forgiveness, with personal conduct and redemption, but with its incidents and figures drawn from contemporary life."⁹⁴ The structure of The Cocktail Party is rather simple: A couple, Edward and Lavinia Chamberlayne, have scheduled a cocktail party, but Lavinia has left him, and Edward has been able to call only the people he could remember having invited. Five people still arrive, three of whom are later discovered to be "the guardians," and two young friends of the Chamberlaynes, Celia Coplestone and Peter Quilpe. The most mysterious guest remains unidentified, but in the second act he merges the vocation of psychiatrist Dr. Henry Harcourt-Reilly with the language of a priest, seeing Edward, "a man who finds himself incapable of loving," and Lavinia, "a woman who finds that no man can love her"⁹⁵, and then seeing Celia Coplestone. Arguably the conclusion of the play is reached in the latter interview when Celia

is asked to choose between two lives. The first is the life that Edward and Lavinia finally choose, and

They do not repine;
 Are contented with the morning that separates
 And with the evening that brings together
 For casual talk before the fire
 Two people who know they do not understand each
 other,
 Breeding children whom they do not understand
 And who will never understand them.

. . . .

It is good life. Though you will not know how
 good
 Till you come to the end. But you will want
 nothing else,
 And the other life will be only like a book
 You have read once, and lost. In a world of
 lunacy,
 Violence, stupidity, greed. . . it is a good
 life.⁹⁶

But this "other life," the second life that Henry Harcourt-Reilly offers to Celia is a much different life.

The second is unknown, and so requires faith--

The kind of faith that issues from despair.

The destination cannot be described;

You will know very little until you get there;

You will journey blind. But the way leads

towards possession

Of what you had sought for in the wrong place.

. . . .

No lonelier than the other. But those who take

the other

Can forget their loneliness. You will not forget yours.

Each way means loneliness--and communion.

Both ways avoid the final desolation

Of solitude in the phantasmal world

Of imagination, shuffling memories and

desires.⁹⁷

Celia chooses the second way, and it leads to her martyrdom. But the Third Act, which takes place at the beginning of a new cocktail party two years later, is filled with hope that overcomes the shadow of Celia's death. Peter has been left in the hands of another guardian angel somewhere else, and his journey is just begun. And Edward and Lavinia have come to understand that "Only by acceptance/ Of the past will you alter its meaning,"⁹⁸ and that "every moment is a fresh beginning. . . that life is

only keeping on;/And somehow, the two ideas fit together."⁹⁹

The Cocktail Party, in bringing to the stage many of the ideas which had reached the reading audience of Four Quartets, greatly expanded Eliot's congregation of listeners to the vast public as a whole. But more than that, for Eliot himself, The Cocktail Party became a prophecy. Having lived an austere life of sacrifice, honoring the disastrous marriage to Vivien ever after their separation, Eliot had resigned himself to the second unknown road of solitude, which Celia had chosen in his play. But all of that changed in 1957. On January 18 of that year, at sixty-eight years of age, Eliot married thirty year-old Valerie Fletcher who had been his secretary for the past eight years, and truly found love.

There is no way in which words can aptly express the changes that occurred in Eliot through his relationship with Valerie. "At a party on Eliot's return from honeymoon, appeared knit together with his wife, arms and hands enfolded. He looked as if a lifetime's barriers to emotion had been removed," and a friend commented, "You look as if, like Dante, you'd passed into paradise."¹⁰⁰ The image of hands enfolded and of Dante and the rose which was his paradise, is reminiscent of the final lines of Four Quartets:

And all shall be well and
 All manner of things shall be well
 When the tongues of flame are in-folded
 Into the crowned knot of fire
 And the fire and the rose are one.¹⁰¹

These lines are a poignant reminder that the mystery of love is best dealt with by the poet himself, and probably the clearest picture of Eliot's love for Valerie is captured in his final play and its dedication. The Elder Statesman relates the tale of a prominent citizen, Lord Claverton, who having lived a selfish and ambitious life, rests in anguished solitude at the end of his life. He has committed no real crimes, but carries with him a sense of guilt and sin. Through encounters with two figures from his past, Claverton reexamines his life and "his artificial, public self collapses and the real man, the ordinary human being, emerges."¹⁰² Confessing all, and finally reassured of the all-important love of his daughter, Monica, the elder statesman takes his leave and dies under a beech tree. Monica and her fiancé Charles are left on the stage, now conscious, Charles says, "of a new person/Who is you and me together,"¹⁰³ and free now to love each other. But in her final line, Monica speaks to Charles and is both the voice of Valerie, loving her older husband and Eliot himself finally truly comfortable, even

in the face of death.

Age and decrepitude can have no terrors for me,
 Loss and vicissitude cannot appal me,
 Not even death can dismay or amaze me
 Fixed in the certainty of love unchanging.

I feel utterly secure
 In you; I am a part of you. Now take me to my
 father.¹⁰⁴

These words were to end Eliot's dramatic career, and the following year his poetic career would end as well, with an eleven line poem of dedication "To My Wife." Personal and touching, these lines are an appropriate end to an artistic career that continued to touch audiences in new and different ways even after the poet's death.

After a long illness, T. S. Eliot's heart failed on January 4, 1965, and his ashes were taken in April "to the little church of St. Michael's in East Coker, the village from which his ancestors had come."¹⁰⁵ His tomb is marked with a small plaque which reads:

Remember Thomas Stearns Eliot, poet

In my beginning is my end

In my end is my beginning.¹⁰⁶

More than fifteen years later, T. S. Eliot's poetry returned to the stage in the musical adaptation of Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats by Andrew Lloyd Webber entitled, simply, Cats. Eliot won two Antoinette Perry (Toni) Awards for the play, one for best lyrics for a musical and the other for best book for a musical. Valerie Eliot accepted the awards saying that her husband would have been delighted with the play's success. Thus even after his death, T.S. Eliot's audience was still expanding, still growing, to include all types of people, everywhere. Act II of Cats opens with four lines from "The Dry Salvages:"

We had the experience but missed the meaning,
And approach to the meaning restores the
experience

In a different form, beyond any meaning
We can assign to happiness.¹⁰⁷

T. S. Eliot spent his life telling audiences that they could find meaning in experience, and pointing them toward it. It is a message that can be heard as often as Cats is staged, "now and forever."

Chapter 5: Conclusion--The Solution

"Paradoxically, the attachment to something outside oneself can create a sense of the self as whole again, united in the act of worship."¹ This remark, made by T. S. Eliot's biographer, can be seen as a touchstone by which to judge all three of the figures who have been studied in this project, for it is the relationship to self--of the artist to his own consciousness--which ultimately expresses itself in the relationship of artist and audience; therefore, as the artist directs his attention increasingly inward, he becomes less capable of projecting outward in the creation of art. However, if an artist focuses his attention outward, to something higher than himself, the result is that the focus of the artist's attention becomes the common ground on which the artist and audience can relate.

For example, James Joyce as his career progressed moved further and further into his own mind: his art finally was created wholly in his own thought language, requiring essentially that it be translated by the serious student for the layman reader. As a result, the serious student makes up the vast majority of his potential audience. He has lost the much larger audience to be found in the layman readers. Thus, Joyce's inward concentration definitely produced art that was unique, but it lacked the

necessary reference point from which his audience could be brought into his world.

Tennessee Williams also had a similar tendency to turn his attention inward; however, as long as there was the common reference point of the society with which both Williams and his audience were so familiar, the messages of Williams' art could cross the bridge of shared experience or sentiment to give birth to successful art. But as Williams' fame and wealth increased, his own lifestyle became more and more divorced from that of his larger audience; thus the audience that he was able to reach decreased further. Beyond even this, Williams' incessant concentration upon his own bodily pleasures, which caused him to immerse himself in the homosexual and drug subcultures of society, brought about a further alienation from the more traditionally oriented majority.

Comparing the careers of Joyce and Williams to that of T. S. Eliot, especially in regard to the concept of internalized consciousness and its effect on art, gives a drastically changed picture. Eliot early in his career was intimately concerned with his own consciousness in the face of the modern dilemma, and consequently his greatest work of that period, The Waste Land, is one which requires considerable interpretation to be fully understood. The turning-point of Eliot's career, which is exemplified by Ash Wednesday, shows an artist looking outward towards God,

but the heavy dependence upon ritual language of the Church makes the poem accessible to only the relatively small audience who have an understanding of the religious references. In marked contrast to Williams and Joyce, however, T. S. Eliot moves toward his audience in the later years of his career. Murder in the Cathedral is still steeped in the Church, but by placing the play in an historical context, a larger audience of those less familiar with the finer doctrinal and ritualistic points of the Church is addressed. Finally, in Four Quartets and the later plays anyone with even a rudimentary understanding of the English language, an imagination that is at least operable, and the fancy to pick up a poem or attend a play is welcomed to come ponder Eliot's vision of the world. The very fact of Eliot's decision to move from poetry to verse drama expresses the desire to meet even larger audiences. But probably the greatest example of Eliot's desire to embrace absolutely all who would listen is Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats, which reaches out even to children, who, after all, are tomorrow's adults.

To put the concept of the self-consciousness of the artist into a slightly different light, let me invoke Dr. Sigmund Freud, who divided human consciousness into three component parts: the *id*, the *ego*, and the *super-ego*. The *id* is governed by the pleasure principle, and "contains the passions," while the *ego* is governed by the reality

principle, and "represents what may be called reason and common sense."² The third division of human consciousness is called by Freud the super-ego, or ego ideal. This relates to the human conscience, a sense of a higher moral ideal which must be lived up to. As Freud comments, "the self-judgement which declares that the ego falls short of its ideal produces the religious sense of humility to which the believer appeals in his longing."³ I make no attempt to explain the artists in this study or their works by psychological analysis; however, Freud's model produces a helpful analogy in studying the way each of these figures approached the world.

Using this model, Tennessee Williams can clearly be seen to be an "id-figure." Returning to Sigmund Freud, "It would be possible to picture the id as under the domination of the mute but powerful death instincts, which desire to be at peace."⁴ Williams, first of all dominated by his physical passions, tried constantly through various sexual and chemical means to find peace, and the lengths to which he went would certainly make the charge that he had a death wish at least plausible. James Joyce, similarly, can be viewed as the ego, narcissistically working to bring his world under the control of his own mind. Eliot, finally, can be seen as a super-ego figure, trying to create in a spiritual dimension, and refining his own consciousness out of his art, pointing toward something higher: God.

Thus the picture is complete: Tennessee Williams became a slave to his own body, embracing sexual and drug-induced epiphany and abandoning all of his audience except for the lunatic fringe who could identify with his lifestyle; James Joyce became a slave to his own mind--his vision of himself as "The Artist"--embracing "silence, exile, and cunning" and abandoning all but the academic elite who would become his priests; T. S. Eliot, however, became free in his worship, abandoning his own consciousness of "self" to embrace a higher, spiritual aesthetic based on "faith, hope, and love."

The problem of the artist and the audience is ultimately the problem of the artist himself; and the solution is a look back to medieval art, which was viewed in the act of its creation to be an act of worship of the Creator. The medieval artist allowed his own self-consciousness to be sublimated in the act of creating his art. T. S. Eliot, looking back upon the tradition of the medieval artist, created art that opens outward to the world as a budding rose, and in the process--unlike James Joyce, Tennessee Williams, and many other modernists--Eliot, embracing his faith and looking upon his audience with the love that desires communion, gives to them through his art, the gift of hope, even in the modern world.

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