

THE POETRY OF IAN WEDDE

1967 - 1978

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts in English
in the
University of Canterbury

by

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1978

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the first decade of Ian Wedde's poetry, 1967-1978. It focuses on the three main collections of his verse published in these years, *Made Over* (1974), *Earthly: Sonnets For Carlos* (1975) and *Spells For Coming Out* (1977), after which discussion moves to the as-yet uncollected poems dating from about 1974.

My concern with *Made Over* was to establish the mechanics of Wedde's poetic voice by scrutinising what I consider to be the seminal poems of that collection. Their thematic connectedness is the most important feature to emerge from the investigation; Wedde's most distinctive trait is discovered here.

Attention then turned to the period Wedde spent in the south, 1972-1974, out of which came *Earthly*, Dick Seddon's *Great Dive* (novel) and later *Spells*; all three display a common core of imagery which I have called the 'Otago vision'. *Dick Seddon* is considered insofar as it has bearings on the poetry Wedde was writing at the same time as the novel. *Earthly* is made the occasion of a detailed exploration of the Otago-inspired iconography and the massive reticulation of time, place, and energy which this vision gives rise to. *Spells* takes up the problems of this multi-connectiveness and my intention was to bring out the play of the personal co-ordinate against the deeply serious explorative one.

As for the uncollected work, it seemed to me necessary to bring Wedde's poetry as far up to date as possible. To

have left off at *Spells* would have meant leaving the thesis poetically in 1974, which is a long way back in terms of a poet as prolific and technically innovative as Wedde. For one thing, his most exciting long poems were written in this later period. I felt that nothing barred an interpretative study from at least attempting to understand where Wedde is now, 1978.

INTRODUCTION

Some account is required of the reasons for wanting to work on a New Zealand poet who is not only very much alive, prolific and versatile, but also under thirty-five and writing often experimental poetry which has connections with recent American developments. There is an implication that these factors are somehow detrimental to the production of worthwhile criticism; I would contend that they inject much-needed life into the concept of thesis-writing.

That Ian Wedde is a New Zealand poet is not the cause for scholarly deprecation it once was; an exposition of his work is simply a mark of continued confidence in the temper of local poetry. But if New Zealandness is not a potential objection to the nature of a study such as this, immediate contemporaneity and the issue of experimentality are more likely to draw fire.

Wedde's relative youth (in 1978 he is thirty-two) raises academic problems about poetic maturity, together with the suspicion that 'experimental' poetry may mean self-conscious modishness which ages badly. The greater part of both reservations may be dispelled by actually reading Wedde's poems and it is my concern to underwrite that initial impression of quality.

Objections like these are rooted in the formalities of a system with which Wedde's light-touched, individualistic workings are at odds. The maxim that literature comes into its own only when its authors are dead endures in a discipline

which places exceptional importance on the judicial function of criticism. Writing about living authors such as Wedde perturbs a certain brand of academic who fears being 'wrong'; he cries that insufficient criticism exists from which to draw a received opinion that may act as some sort of starting point. This contention does not hold up, for although there is little critical material dealing explicitly with Wedde, adequate contextual reading exists to supply a secure matrix.

Another objection to studying the poetry of a man who is constantly publishing new work is that one is laid open to being proven 'wrong' (humiliated) in the light of future directions the poet takes (a favourite premise may be undercut here, a prediction there). The fallacy of the omniscient authorial presence in critical composition dies hard, but it is precisely by learning how to deal with contemporaneity that critical relativity is brought into existence. Questions of 'right' and 'wrong' are irrelevant to a criticism in which the work itself includes the sum of all responses to it.(1)

This kind of approach puts the reader/critic in a central position, and may occasion what detractors of it call 'affectivist' responses and 'creative criticism'. [The ideal is to be aware of one's innate partisanship (without letting the realisation paralyze the critical faculty) and to avoid the temptation of making opinions into absolutist pronouncements.] This kind of criticism sets about doing what Wedde himself invites readers to do with his poems:

At the same time I think I seldom tell; I enquire. So people reading my poems are questing *with* me not being told *by* me (...) I believe that a good poem is not a product but a process or a tool (...) Poems should not be mirrors but creations; ways out of solipsis. (2)

The receiving end of the poem is important and that reception is specifically designated as an independent activity.

Wedde allows for a diversity of responses, in view of which fears of making a 'wrong' judgement appear slightly absurd.

Contemporaneity, then, need not be the obstacle to critical appraisal it is sometimes made out to be; we turn to the matter of 'experimentality'.

In Wedde's case, the term must be allowed its full positive connotations because his poetry is in fact traditional in its affiliations with slightly earlier sources, if we take 'tradition' in Eliot's sense as the thematic and stylistic reservoir which is continually renewed by the most avant-garde contemporary work. Wedde is an experimentalist in the post-Modern tradition; having once begun to appreciate what he is doing with the techniques of those poets which impress him, it becomes difficult to think of his work as 'experimental' in any derogatory sense.

The real innovative influences operative in Wedde are North American, or rather, a number of distinct poetic voices which come out of the States (it is hardly possible to blanket-label so huge a patrimony). There will inevitably be gaps in my coverage of this aspect of Wedde's poems, but the point is that those poems are redirecting energy back through themselves

because of a liveliness made up of familiarity balanced provocatively against a certain alienness. I quest *with* them for their own sake, but I am also invited to quest *for* the source of their vitality, and in my experience, activities which force a new line of enquiry into poetry are only to be welcomed.

I have considered some criticisms which could be made of a thesis on Wedde's poetry; one area not yet touched on is the matter of 'biography' as opposed to 'poetry'.

A biographically underpinned study is one impossible extreme; total divorce of Ian Wedde from his poems (which then glimmer autonomously in the void of art) is an equally undesirable alternative. The latter approach ignores the very real presence which informs the poems (Wedde does not subscribe to impersonal theories of poetry; the voice-in-the-poem is idiosyncratic and remarkably consistent in tone). The former approach, should the necessary information become available, is a delicate business and more appropriate to pure biography.

The Wedde of this thesis is the poet as projected by his writing (not to be confused with the first-person singular of much of the fiction in which use is certainly made of 'masks'). Taking the poet at the face value of his work infers a trust that he is abiding by what Jonathan Culler (*Structuralist Poetics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976)) calls the 'rule of significance', one of those tacit bases of literary communication 'which requires the poem to be read as expressing a 'significant' attitude to some large problem'. (3)

My study is intended to trace the path of Wedde's (on-going) attitudes; it is expository rather than judicial, for reasons outlined earlier and also because the exploration has not been made before. It is a long trip.

NOTES AND REFERENCES TO INTRODUCTION

1. Roman Jakobson demonstrated that meaning is acutely context-sensitive ('Closing Statement; linguistics and Poetics'; *Style in Language* (1960) ed. Thomas A. Seboek). Roland Barthes linked this to theories that literature is wholly culture-specific, and a rationale for critical relativity was brought into being. The importance of accreted interpretations derives from structuralist preoccupations with synchronic modes of investigation. Oddly enough, in this case at least, the synchronic thought echoes Eliot's definition of the roles of past and present in literature:

But the difference between the past and the present is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show.

(T.S. Eliot; 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' 1919)

2. Wedde, authorial statement in *The Young New Zealand Poets*, ed. Arthur Baysting (Auckland: Heinemanns, 1973) pp. 185-186.
3. Terence Hawkes, speaking of Jonathan Culler's *Structuralist Poetics; Structuralism and Semiotics* (London: Methuen, 1977) p.159.

CHAPTER 1

MADE OVER (1974)

Made Over, Ian Wedde's first major collection was not published until 1974 (Auckland: Stephen Chan). By the time it appeared, Wedde was established as a significant poet and was producing work far in advance, technically and thematically, of the poems (1967-72) which constitute *Made Over*. This is not to say that the 1974 collection is apprentice work, nor that it is of lesser interest than *Earthly: Sonnets for Carlos* (1975) or *Spells for Coming Out* (1977). As this initial chapter (and those which follow) will make clear, Wedde's poetry is a highly cumulative phenomenon, and the accretive process begins virtually with the publication, late in 1967, of the first Wedde poems to appear in *Landfall*.

I want to discuss *Made Over* in terms of five of its most obviously important poems, picking up connective elements from one to the next. The poems are 'Homage to Matisse', 'King Solomon Vistas', 'Gulf Letters', 'Poems About Snow' and 'Postcards: London/Jamaica/New York/London'. This selection spans the book's four sections more or less evenly, which is an indication of the care with which Wedde structures the chief movements of his poetry collections.

I: 'Homage to Matisse'

'Homage to Matisse', which appears as the first of *Made Over's* four sections, is a good poem with which to begin consideration of Wedde's earlier work. Originally published

separately (London: Amphedasma, 1971), it is a long poem, or rather, a conglomerate of eleven closely related poems.

Wedde explains the format, which remains constant with his work, thus:

My own instinct is to write longer poems. I tend to quest about like a dog backtracking & crisscrossing terrain in search of an odour's source. (1)

He is adept at the theme-weaving and word-modulations which this gives rise to and which transform a commonplace idea of the short making up the long (the parts making an 'odour-rich' whole) into structures vibrant with connective movement.

The technique is a distinctive feature of 'Homage'.

Wedde aims unerringly in his choice of mentors and correlatives from arts contiguous with his own. He had already exhibited sensitivity to (and recognition of a certain allegiance with) modern painting in 'The Arrangement' (1969)

(2) and in the superb lines from 'Pukeko':

The mind
can fly like
a cool blue

Braque bird
straight
to the heart of

a storm.

(1969 *NZUSA Arts Festival Yearbook* p.11)

At the same time Wedde enjoys the prospect of 'high' art making out in 'the/ol' quotidian':

here
 where some close clatter of
 dishes overlays *Pierrot*
Lunaire on the gramophone

('A Word in Your Ear, William', 1969 *NZU Arts*
Festival Yearbook p.13)

Braque, Cézanne, and Schoenberg were brother Moderns to the exponents of the new poetry, an inter-relationship which is ceaselessly pointed out. Art critic Hilton Kramer:

It is actually among [the champions of harmony and tradition] that we are likely to find the most solid and enduring achievements of the modern era - among these tradition-haunted artists (Matisse and Picasso, Eliot and Yeats, Schoenberg and Stravinsky) who are mindful, above all, of the continuity of culture and thus committed to the creative renewal of its deepest impulses. (3)

In choosing Matisse, presiding genius of the Fauves, as his 'instructor' in the lessons which visual composition has for verbal arrangement, Wedde set himself squarely in a mainstream (contemporary Western European) with an explicitness he has not yet repeated. His tastes in *hommage* usually run to the unsuspected and curious (at least to the off-centre and American), and are often half-submerged. The significance of a passing reference may be easily overlooked until its reappearance in another poem or commentary makes obvious the talismanic value it has for the poet. (4)

In 'Homage', however, Matisse himself is the *leitmotif* with which Wedde articulates the path of his thought. 'Pieces' of Matisse thus recur throughout; the poem's epigraph is his statement, several of his paintings are quoted,

and his age relation to the poet is brought up often. Wedde never loses his perspective in playing with these correspondences and is amused at his own preciosity on occasion. Making love 'among Motueka tobacco plants' he admits:

I wasn't much concerned about you
though I'd quoted you to the girl

('Homage', 2 '*fait du premier coup*', *Made Over* p.10)

He is at ease in the game and any influence the Master may have will be the more potent because the tutelage is voluntary. With regard to this, Hilton Kramer speaks of the characteristic manner in which Modernists work as a healthy mixture of new starts from old bases:

It was precisely through such zig-zag methods, audacity alternating with acts of *hommage*, that Matisse and Picasso created a body of work that changed the face of modern art... (5)

Wedde has plenty of both audacity and *hommage*, but this poem is at first glance weighted towards the acknowledgements end of the balance. Rather as Matisse's seminal work '*Luxe, calme, et volupté*' (1904-05) is indebted in its various stages to the whole gamut of post-Impressionist developments (art nouveau through cloisonism to pointillism), so the generative impulse of Wedde's poems is likely to rise from sources as diverse (and heavyweight) as Pound, Yeats, Williams, Ammons, and Neruda.

Turning to look at the poem in detail, we find that 'Homage to Matisse' is strung out along an axis which runs

basically from France to England (the painter to the poet), although it is initiated in Switzerland (where poet and painter first collide), and memories of New Zealand experiences impinge (a sense of the path along which poet has travelled to 'meet' painter). The distances involved are alluded to in the fifth section, where the parabolic flights of aircraft relate to the sun's trajectory, and the two then combine to bring an image of the falling Icarus to Wedde's mind:

Beyond them was the sea moving/
the clonic hips of a loving woman
& a feathered man falling into
her. She blinked

like a deep blue eye. His image
disappeared in its frank distances.

('Homage', 5 'une harmonie d'ensemble', *Made Over* p.13)

An ominous note is thus introduced. (6)

There is a sense of chronological movement in 'Homage' too, induced by the concern with journeying evidenced in titles like 'Paris' and 'London' which seem to map successive touch-down points in a traversal of Europe. The poem itself is a progress towards some destination of undisclosed importance, and the movement must be followed through its various stages.

Wedde begins with a salutation and a plea for instruction which is actually a plea for graduation, because it concerns his desire to appropriately transfigure:

those endless articulations walking
eating talking to friends (silence
& listening) & lying
rocking & hunched with women / any-
where when mind spreads to clutch
body when body eats mind

('Homage', 4 'The Lever', *Made Over* p.12)

The poet recognises that such articulations possess raw energy and the potential for rhythm; he wants to retain the vital quality but have it flowing out of *his* fingers, 'conceived', the rhythm harnessed. (7) The desire is identical and its attainment outlined in another of *Made Over's* major poems:

Distance floated all ways,
 my head bobbed at the bay's centre,
 at the far cusp the blue
 foothills dancing with heat.
 No more sound than water
 at my limbs, kissing.
 Then I saw dark fins about
 the set-line buoy. That space
 to the bay's head sang
 taut, the soft hills snapped
 into focus.

I tell you
 Mark we need such tight
 distances, to move with the
 deathless articulation of gods

(*Gulf Letters' Number Six 3, Made Over p. 45*)

The movement then, is from 'endless' to 'deathless' articulation, vitality intact, and courting the correct form in each instance. Considering this, it is not surprising that dance should figure in 'Homage' - the dance that at once celebrates energy and in the same act channels it. *Joie-de-vivre* first flares at the end of the poem's opening section, as Wedde cuts through layers of museum petrification and received attitudes ('Others came & sighed round the walls/ searching for deep truffles') to the moving spirit of his first 'real' Matisse:

Come away Master.
 At our place we can still snap life
 open like oysters.
 You were one instructor.
Matisse. Matisse.

('Homage', l'Nature Morte: The Room,' *Made Over* p.9)

How closely this small snap is associated with the dance itself becomes clear retrospectively in a poem where one feels the same jolt to the verse which signals the preliminaries of dance:

Dov snapped his fingers, clapped his hands, jumped to his feet, began prancing with arms outstretched.
Hut! Huthut!

('The Dance', *Made Over* p.21)

Wedde's ability to make word rhythm credible as body rhythm is demonstrated by such lines; but in the Matisse sequence description stands in for exposition of dance movement. For example, the line 'a long split-/legged slow-motion dancer's leap' belongs to a different scale of motion, celebrating not energia but the curve that is 'inherent in the arrested moment in space', as Wedde elsewhere puts it.(8) Similarly, the section entitled ''The Dance'/Music': 1910' is curiously devoid of the joyous abandon which could be expected in a poem inspired by Matisse's huge murals.(9) Indeed, the function of the dance throughout 'Homage' remains largely potential; the invitation to the Master is not without its complications, and the poet eventually leaves the scene of the encounter to 'dance northward lugubriously', hoping that 'the cold will sort out our heads' ('Homage'

7 'Paris', *Made Over* p.14). One does not automatically dance like Nijinsky simply as a result of being confronted by Matisse.

The darker side of Wedde's vision finds parallel expression in the first of David Armitage's illustrations for *Made Over*, and the motifs of this drawing may usefully serve as lead-ins to a discussion of several clusters of imagery in the poem. In the drawing, a figure occupies an armchair in a bare room; the chair is in the back left corner, and at right front appear the head and shoulders of another figure, mouth agape. This last refers us to the beginning of 'Homage's' second section:

When I first gaped my gums to receive the world
you were seventy-seven years old.

(*'Homage'*, 2 *'fait du premier coup'*, *Made Over* p.10)

The gaping mouth seems to be a plea for nourishment, but nourishment itself can turn into a matter of complacency if over-indulged: 'My visions clock themselves in on schedule. /I gap my mouth./I'm lazy & well looked out for' (*'Homage'*, 9, *Made Over* p.15). A further aspect of this open mouth is discovered in the figures of Matisse's painting:

musicians gape mouths

from which only groans can issue
deep in the throat/
 rictus
of simple pleasures

(*'Homage'*, *'The Dance'*/'*Music*':1910', *Made Over* p.13)

Bacchanalian gaping is transmuted into real pain, along with which appear other motifs of the Armitage drawing:

Perhaps I'll write a song about it all/
 imagining the dark mouths of musicians
 open inward upon rooms
 of wit & melancholy.

('Homage', 7 'Paris', *Made Over* p.14)

Just as the gaping mouth undergoes changes of significance, so the figure in the chair and the empty room reappear in varying contexts. In contrast to the dark 'room' of the head in 'Paris', the poem actually begins with an optimistic showing of the image:

I dreamed there was a bright room
 in my head somewhere
 which you were making real stroke

by counterpointed stroke
 & where I would some day retire
 to an armchair in the corner:

the final element of a composition
 that perfectly described itself.

('Homage', 1 'Nature Morte: The Room', *Made Over* p.9) (10)

But dream is not easily to be equated with reality, as the different instances of stasis in the fourth section demonstrate. Motionlessness in a Matisse means equipoise ('all rhythm contained there'); motionlessness for the poet means paralysis ('rooted in my armchair'). From the discovery of this crucial discrepancy springs hope of a passage to 'deathless articulation'. The road is not without obstacles; the poet's depressed state is continued over to London environs,

but at last with some hope of knowing more about 'the fact of that first right stroke falling/like a chopper on the block' (11). That Wedde does not seriously want to be 'good at figures', at the expense of dreaming less and leaving his room more, is made clear by a comparison of the ninth and tenth sections. In the latter, the figure in the chair is recognisably an artist, and Wedde recovered:

New place new view
 & Rose in the kitchen cooking stew.
 Traffic dances past moon comes out.
 It's cold. Like you
 I sit in a long overcoat
 looking at what I must do
 & glad to be about to do it.

(*'Homage'*, 10, *Made Over* p.15)

The jauntiness is new, as it is the elliptic syntax, and if correlations were to be made at this stage, one of Matisse's sure-touched economical drawings should be the poem's pictorial complement.

The visual/verbal aspects of 'Homage to Matisse' merit attention in view of the poem's emphasis on the places of contact between the two arts. However, Wedde is no less fascinated by the artefact than by the artist, and where the poem touches on Matisse himself, we are brought close to the concerns which weigh down the end of *Homage*'. Perhaps the direct person-to-person address sparks off in Wedde consideration of private problems which shadow more heavily the difficulties to be contended with as a poet.

'The Rules' reads as Wedde's despair. The lessons of Matisse have been museum-incarcerated along with the Master's

paintings (cutting of the layers by an enthusiastic Wedde has had only a momentary effect), and the visions of dance and music are superseded by the dead certainties of (non-creative) violence and petrification. The half-buried ruined 'marbles' are a logical extension of the 'Segal plaster people' (animated dead), and this terminal stage of their condition excludes all possibility of movement.

Against this pessimism is the satisfaction of small rebellion and some fragments for shoring up the ruins:

Rather
 thank god for friends Henri
 for the woman who takes you in,
 for the good quality of apples,
 for untidy neighbourhoods where
 these cataleptic protocols get no grip.
 I kick up autumn leaves and spend my money.

('Homage', 8 'London', *Made Over* p.14)

Success and destruction are different sides of the same knife of social orthodoxy, in cities that are 'chipped stacks of dominoes', inhabited by stone people whose articulation is automaton-perfect. (12) The poet's encounters with them are characterised by falling movements which are antithetical to the hoped-for dance leaps inspired by Matisse. Nor yet do these falls equate with the violent precision of 'that first right stroke', though they are graceful with at least some of the articulation for which Wedde is asking: 'When we fail or fall/we can get stoned/go fishing' ('Homage', 3 'Falling', *Made Over* p.11).

'Failing' occurs in the public arena whereas 'falling' seems to imply a matter closer to the real heart, something

which really does affect '*une harmonie d'ensemble*', The lines are worth repeating in this context:

Beyond them was the sea moving/
 the clonic hips of a loving woman
 a feathered man falling into
 her. She blinked

like a deep blue eye. His image
 disappeared in its frank distances.

('Homage', 5 '*une harmonie d'ensemble*', *Made Over* p.15)

A personal co-ordinate is purely conjectural, but after this section the authorial 'I' is often plural (with heads to 'sort out' too), and Rose is a named presence when the sedentary poet is no longer a idle paralytic. Some resolution is arrived at by Wedde, artistically and maybe personally; but the poem concludes with the clanging of feet in and out of museums, and although Matisse haunted the academics and museums, on the lookout for instruction from the Old Masters, it is the negative, stultifying side of those institutions which prevails in 'Homage'.

II: 'King Solomon Vistas'

"King Solomon Vistas' is a beautiful poem, pure exposition of the *danse* which was glimpsed, descriptively, in 'Homage to Matisse'. More than ever Wedde evokes dance *form*, disciplined grace of the instinct to movement. The wild dionysiac element is not ignored (form *informs* some rite in the second section), but exuberance is not central to the

poem as it is in 'The Dance' or 'Gulf Letters'. Perhaps 'grace' best describes 'King Solomon Vistas'; the component parts of its phrases co-ordinate and then redistribute themselves about the three sections rather in the way that endless combinations of ritual movements make up the sequences of formal dance. The point in both cases is the beauty of a controlled repeat.

'Vistas' is also an enigma. It is vaguely eastern, palpably exotic (implicitly erotic), with a cryptic final section which is presumably the cargo of a skilful piece of lyric imagism. (Pound's *Cathay* poems come to mind). One could leave matters there, were it not that this poem is unusually well supplied with contexts from other areas of Wedde's writing; it becomes evident that the initial incident - the dancing of the girl - is some kind of talisman to the poet. The co-texts (there are three of them) thicken the openwork lyricism of the poem by providing explanation and adding details to the scene, some lyric, some prosaic. Each recounting of the episode is autonomous, but in conjunction with the others, the total effect is one of layered transparencies. It is then difficult to distinguish a particular version without details from the composite picture intruding gratuitously.

The first account occurs in the lyric prose of 'Made Over', an essay dealing with Wedde's 1969-1970 North African and Middle Eastern experiences, which begins:

The ancient pocked battlements of Hassan are full of swallows and pigeons. At dusk when we come in, the birds were wheeling in huge rapid formations back and forth across the town. Later a tall Sudanese girl with magic joints danced on a rooftop. Kief passed from hand to hand. The winding voice

of Oum Kalsoum: *God God prevent the sun from rising....*I imagined Ovid prancing in a white robe and with arms outstretched, on the flat roofs of Fez, jasmin in his fingers. (13)

Here the dancer is simply one figure in an evening of calm and well-being which was metamorphosed retrospectively for Wedde by news of the destruction of a mosque in Jerusalem that same day:

Why should things be made over like this? *You tell me.* One night you are a magician dancing with weightless arms upon the flat white roofs of Fez; the next day you hear Al Aksa has burned. (14)

The Sudanese girl dances on rooftop but the vertiginous 'scenery' of the poem appears elsewhere in the essay:

He was head and shoulders above the others, a man in their world, a child in ours. The city of Constantine is set on a mountain-top, a vast plain spread out all around. Inadvertently heroic, he stood against this outer expanse of darkness...
... The boy followed [the army of children],
dancing from foot to foot at the edge of the mountain.

(15) (my italics)

Fez and Istanbul do not quite get us to King Solomon's cities but the Arab milieu is unmistakable, and if the poem's central figure is a blending of actualities (Sudanese girl and Near Eastern boy) its scenario may well be composed from different parts of Wedde's memory.

The second and most important instance of the episode appears in 'Belladonna' (1970) and is a virtually identical prose setting of 'King Solomon Vistas', this time with the

message explicit:

It goes without saying that I am not suspended in these phrases like an embryo in formalin. All that finished long ago, with the droplet, cataracts, and the rest of it. No, if it's a metaphor you want, consider Solomon's eyes fastened like last hopes upon the leaping breasts of a girl like a gazelle, dancing at the brink of the mountain, clashing the loose stones together as they were ankle-cymbals. Will he lift himself to Paradise on her? Or will his mind crack like a whip, like the long flung-back hair of a dancer, like a quartz boulder striking halfway down the mountainside, and sailing outward? None of these, friend. He will put words in her mouth. As though gripped by the clonus, she will groan them, dancing: Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.... (16)

This passage links the Moroccan scene with the world of King Solomon. It is the agelessness as well as the age of the dance which leads Wedde's mind from an instance to an archetype, meanwhile recognizing that the two are indistinguishable (this is signified in the poem by the play of motifs, 'ankle cymbals' particularly, from one section to the next). Implicit in a Sudanese girl's movements is the opening line of the Song of Songs; a prose poem harbours a *rubaiyat*: part iv of 'Belladonna' is 'King Solomon's Vistas'.

Ascertaining the Middle Eastern locus of the poem accounts for several of its formal characteristics. To begin with, it is curiously similar in imagery and in its running pattern of phrase repeats to the Song of Solomon itself. (17)

Wedde is knowledgeable about Arabic verse tradition as a consequence of his translation work and from personal contact with it. In his Introduction to Darwish's *Selected Poems* (1973),

he speaks of the currency of tradition for the Arab reader ("We will extract an echo of the old blind Syrian poet Abu'l-'Alá al-M'arrí, who died nine hundred years ago."), which is precisely the principle at work in 'King Solomon Vistas'. Many 'classic' images appear in Darwish's poetry, Wedde explains, and what may sound exotic or romantic to Western ears is commonplace to the Middle East and likely to derive from some traditional Islamic schematic symbolism. Wedde does not naturalise his own poem by taking on this cultural shorthand, but 'Vistas' is written as a *rubaiyat* in its first two sections, and the 'gazelle-girl' metaphor takes us into Darwish territory - which is also the world of M'arrí and of Solomon:

I shall present her with a soft gazelle
 soft as the wing of a song.
 It has the nose of our Carmel
 & feet like the wind's breath
 like the footsteps of liberty
 & a neck standing like our wheat
 in the valley aiming at the peaks of heaven! (18)

It is perhaps Arabic tradition too which ameliorates the unlikely juxtaposition of images in:

Gazelle-girl / gazelle
 your small breasts leap to your dancing
 (King Solomon Vistas' 1, *Made Over* p.29)

A taste for Chinoiserie led Yeats to write: 'Two girls in silk kimonos, both/Beautiful one a gazelle' ('In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz'; *Collected Poems* p.262), and

gazelle *is* girl and girl a gazelle with breasts in a poetry which does not hesitate to see the beauty of one in the other:

Thy two breasts are like two fawns that are twins of a roe
Which feed among the lilies.

(Song of Solomon) (19)

The 'Belladonna' extract opens up the King Solomon aspect of the 'Vistas'. Wedde seems fascinated, as was Yeats, by the figure of Solomon who proverbially embodies great wisdom and phenomenal amorousness, attributes usually so antithetical that their concurrence obviously intrigues both poets. There is an early poem of Wedde's, 'Solomon to Friend' (*NZU Arts Festival Yearbook* 1969, p.14), which in its title and its delineation of the king as a lover in whom the sage is immanent, is related to Yeats' 'Solomon to Sheba' and to 'Solomon and the Witch' (*Collected Poems* pp. 155 and 199). Added to this duality of character are other legendary traits; Solomon is the poet-king, the visionary dreamer, and also traditionally possessed of 'power over all creatures, natural and supernatural' (20). All of these (but particularly the last) are evident in the second section of 'Vistas', in which Solomon is a silent spectator-presence for whom the dance and its associated trance are being performed. Whereas the first section was purely a matter of focus - girl, breasts, dancing feet - the second is informed by a disenchanting mood; the three-times-repeated 'you' of its first stanza is a deliberate tread after the quick, leaping rhythms of section one. Solomon

appears to be a puppetmaster who suddenly desires that limbs should move of their own volition. His mood is confirmed to be one of desperation when we check back to the 'Belladonna' passage:

consider Solomon's eyes fastened like last hopes
upon the leaping breasts of a girl like a gazelle
... (16)

Close reading of 'Belladonna' and the third section of 'King Solomon Vistas' reveals what it is the Solomon is 'hoping' for; the girl is to be catalyst for a lift into Paradise ('Call me a yellow butterfly, I'll loft myself over' (21)), or for the dynamic crack of the mind-whip. Solomon in 'Belladonna' does not achieve either transcendence, only continues to put words into the mouths of others. That this ensures his membership among the preterite is clear from part vii of 'Belladonna':

Let us consider all the chaste, all those who put
words in the mouths of others, all those who bear
no cataracts, who are not suspended in their own
phrases, who feature in the general course of
events, who hold out certain hopes, whose receptions
are not what they expected, who fall apart, are
exposed, perhaps had little to lose, are already
lost. (22)

How analogous the respective situations of Solomon and the poet/writer are is not as obvious in 'Vistas' as it is in the corresponding passage of 'Belladonna', which is designed as a 'metaphor' for the authorial state of mind. In the poem, this identification is difficult to make until one reaches the third and crucial section, the layout of which is

distinctively Wedde-like, in contrast to the neat stanzas of the preceding sections which represent (at least in this case) a nod to the classical forms of Arabic poetry. The dropped part-line, which spaces out the verse, features in much of Wedde's post-1970 work (reaching an extreme in 'Those Others', *Spells* p.43). In the third section of 'Vistas', Solomon disappears, or rather, Wedde joins him to speak about the 'last hope' in his own rhythms.

The third section articulates the wish to leap up or out into another plane; a progression is made from the dancer's movement ('ankle cymbals at the rim of space...') to its effect on the watching mind and the consequent movement there:

At the rim of space
 mind's
 archimedian point

 on which it tosses
 itself up & over
 like the long
 flung back hair of a dancer whose

 spine cracks like a whip or
 a quartz boulder striking half
 way down the mountainside
 & sailing outward.

(*'King Solomon Vistas' 3, Made Over p. 30*)

The way in which the movement of these lines captures the seemingly endless arc of a free-falling boulder is remarkable. Of critical significance however, is the 'archimedian point' which precipitates the breath-taking moment. Archimedian references return us to 'Homage to Matisse' in which levers, especially the fulcrum of the life-giving

shaduf in 'The Lever' (*Made Over* p.12), are an important side aspect of the main image of calculated impetus - the chopping, cleaving blade of the '*premier coup*'. Both poems are asking for the right instrument to make an attack on either the processes of writing or those pertaining to clear thinking:

But I believe a good poem is not a product
but a process or a tool, especially a tool: it is
a whole extension of us: physical/spiritual/emotional

(23)

A cutting edge or a lever long and strong enough to move the world; these motifs preoccupy Wedde, and the application of the tool is as often turned towards personal matters ('Chizel'; Sonnets 17 and 18 of *Earthly*) as it is to the business of poetic composition or systematic thought.

The third, last-written, and most prosaic of the contexts has yet to be considered. It too is openly didactic, but it is interesting to note that the 'lesson' is different:

...the whole process reminded me of an occasion in Morocco, our initiation to the gulf that was there to be crossed. The battlements of the old town of Fes were full of swallows and pigeons. At dusk when we came in on the bus the birds were wheeling across the town. Later a tall Sudanese girl danced on a rooftop. Her limbs moved like the birds, swooping and circling... Then the Sudanese girl pulled Rose up to dance. I think she is beautiful. I think she can dance. But not there and then. Watching her, a Moroccan used a French word: *frigide*. It was not said with derision, it was a statement of fact. *Frigide*, that was us.

(24)

Wedde wants to talk about gulfs in this article, therefore the

Rose interlude with its haunting '*frigide*' is made the pivot of the incident. By contrast, in 'King Solomon Vistas' his aim is to express the *unfrigide* which represents some kind of universal objective; the girl has it in her dancing (which is thus a constant in the poem), Solomon wants a transfusion of that grace for reasons of his own, and Wedde too wants to make it to the other side by means of a metaphorical leap up or out.

A most significant theme is discovered here.

III: 'Gulf Letters'

'King Solomon Vistas' evidences the continual play of prose and poem in Wedde's work. 'Gulf Letters', a sequence of six poems addressed to the poet's friend Mark, is another such instance. It too dates from Wedde's sojourn in the Middle East, and it comes as little surprise that 'Belladonna' is its chief co-text. Again, parts of the prose-poem are verbatim versions of the poem, although no one section of 'Belladonna' encapsulates 'Gulf Letters' in the way 'King Solomon Vistas' was explicated by part iv of the prose account.

It is legitimate (as well as useful) to correlate prose and poem because they are so obviously parts of one picture; for the same reason questions about which form Wedde used first to write about his experience become irrelevant, along with speculation as to which version is 'definitive' and/or artistically consummate. Wedde regards himself as a *writer*, and though this study concentrates on the poetry, sight should

not be lost of the fact that his fiction, commentaries, and critical articles are as seriously undertaken (and prolific) as his poems. No hierarchy exists; the form of a work is determined according to its conceived function, and as we saw with the texts surrounding 'King Solomon Vistas', each version has a slightly different objective, however closely language from one may be echoed in another.

This is true of 'Gulf Letters' too. Phrases in 'Belladonna' which are also components of 'Gulf Letters' are very much intrinsic to the former work's surrealist nature. 'Belladonna', Wedde indicates, belongs among:

those compositions whose first article of faith is, that the question of work being done should not be considered a proper question i.e. those compositions which aim to perform a lobotomy on that section of our brains which in the past has asked this question. (25)

'Vistas' was imagist to the point of enigma, so that the sheer length of the 'Belladonna' co-text could not help but illuminate it. Conversely, the loosely epistolary style of 'Gulf Letters' throws light onto the complex juxtapositions of imagery in 'Belladonna'. Thus a passage such as:

Hauraki, and the swell coming in from the Pacific.
I take off like a deep sea filigreed acalepht
drifting upon currents where the will gets no
purchase. (26)

is more accessible in its expanded form in the second of the 'Gulf Letters':

The Hauraki seems
 a mesh of transparent distances. Beyond Rangitoto
 by either of those flanking channels rose the
 swell from the Pacific. The islands out in
 the Gulf were last beautiful posting stations before
 a horizon deep & broad to defy concept

so that even peering from a crowded mainland
 beach beyond them to where I knew the swell
 came I felt my mind

 snap gently free &
 float like a deep-sea filigreed acaleph
 upon currents where the will desires
 no purchase

whose destinations are irrelevant.

(Gulf Letters' Number Two, *Made Over* p.39)

The image is made vivid in the poem because its antithesis
 is also present and is the curx of the section; a gulf-sea:

where vision does not pass beyond the shadow
 of death

& where the will must scrabble for
 footholds against facts resembling those scorched
 crumbling mountains along the Gulf.

('Gulf Letters' Number Two, *Made Over* p.40)

Apart from the issue of co-texts, 'Gulf Letters' is notable
 for its correlations with other material from *Made Over*.
 Preoccupations discerned in 'Homage to Matisse' and then again
 in 'King Solomon Vistas' now become apparent in 'Gulf Letters',
 and it is obvious to any reader of the collection, long before
 this, that Wedde is setting up poem-to-poem linkages as a kind
 of macro-structure of the internal weavings which characterise
 each single poem. A definite thematic construct is in the
 making.

Generalising, we can say that 'Homage' embodied the expression of a desire, that the way to attain it was indicated, and that this direction had everything to do with competence and control on one side and dynamic energy on the other. There were obstacles, shadowy but persistent, which dimmed the paradisaical vision. With 'Vistas', the poet appears to have experienced a living instance of 'deathless articulation'; the goal is clearly envisioned but the difficulty of achieving it may be gauged by the brooding inertia of Solomon, who traditionally incorporates both control and dynamism. Moving on to 'Gulf Letters', the nature of the desire and how to attain it are still very much to the fore, but they are explored almost conversationally as Wedde 'talks' across several thousand miles to 'Mark', and in the process consolidates values which have been emergent in his poetry from its inception. Informality breeds a confidence that the desirable is also the attainable; 'Gulf Letters' is Wedde's manifesto of cool.

From the outset, directions are important - and familiar:

Listen Mark
 the "answers" are out there
 somewhere
 along a thin
 taut line crossing the Pacific
 the Atlantic.

(*'Gulf Letters' Number One, Made Over p.39*)

Movement 'out' is of supreme significance to Wedde because of the pathway implied in getting anywhere new, a series of points which connect 'here' with 'there', or as he quite explicitly puts it: 'It's not what you are/but where/that counts. I

find such comfort/in this thought my love, my love' ('Chizel',
Made Over p.65) The 'out there' is always linked in some
 manner with the known. Often the bond is symbolically
 umbilical:

...dynamo of silence hums in his ear/
space "out there":
 swaying amniotic dark
 of insomnia which he must work
 to push against & still feel himself there
 gladly held by as though embraced.
 (...)
 & then floats away
 from her on a golden cord to the deep
 inward hum of the stars...looks back amazed!

(Sonnet 13 *Earthly*)

The golden cord appears in differing guises, all to do with
 its connective function. When faith in its actuality collapses,
 despair prevails:

Ah
 Angel
 listening to Mozart
 you imagine a single note stitched through everything
 a golden
 filament in the cosmic fabric un-
 ravelling a string looping out of the
 dark heart of the Abbatoir you can't
 find it. Angel
 stop fighting it.
 Priest Amadeus will thread you.
 Hang you
 like a star
 about the throat of Lady Zodiac.

('Angel', *Islands* 20 Winter 1977, pp.131-2)

On other occasions there is bittersweetness in its function
 as a pathway for the memory. Kate of *Dick Seddon's Great Dive*
 (1976) is 'tracking some bright filament. She follows herself

and Chink into an old grove of pohutukawas.' (*Dick Seddon* p. 203). As she tries to reconstruct the distinctive character of her relationship to Chink, the narrative moves southward to the Kaikoura highpoint of their first trip together, a point after which the downhill slope began. The third-person narrator, watching her sitting writing, cuts in to observe:

She stops. Opposite her the Wedding Guest's mouth is open. She's got this far. She's followed that movement out. She's remembered how space opened up in front of them.

(*Dick Seddon* p.191)

The journey out to a place on the horizon ('the "answers" are out there/somewhere/along a thin/taut line crossing the Pacific') is also present in 'Belladonna', where a desert horizon 'leads you out forever, into endless detail' (part xiii). The movement out also has its vertical dimension, a fact stressed in 'Gulf Letters':

This too is a process
the aircraft tossing itself
up into the blue

('Gulf Letters' Number one, *Made Over* p.39)

The leaps in 'Homage to Matisse' and 'King Solomon Vistas' continue to exercise energetic influence on the mood of the poetry. 'Take-off' is a word of which Wedde is fond, (c.f. 'Postcards', *Made Over* p.75; or 'Bullet McHale', *Islands* 23 p.59), and the take-offs of jet aircraft are part of the lift-loft-leap movement group. What fascinates the poet is that a plane tosses *itself* into the sky. The last sentence of

Dick Seddon's Great Dive uses the motif as a deliberate parallel to Kate's new decisiveness: 'Her aircraft tosses itself into the blue' (*Dick Seddon* p.212).

Outward and upward motions concur in the sixth Gulf Letter. 'The violence in men's minds' is to be sent *out* to contend with 'the tart savour of extremes', and straight after these lines Wedde quotes Manhire's poem 'The Importance of Personal Relationships' (*Landfall* 92 December 1969, p.313), the imagery of which is blood-related to his own:

Dancing
on God's
veiny wrist, for instance, leaping
the veins

('Gulf Letters' Number Six 1, *Made Over* p.43)

The upward/outward movement is finally realised for the poet out of an aspect of his Arabic experiences appropriately less ethereal and/or mystic than the perfection he had glimpsed in the dancing of the Sudanese girl. We are back to the snap of life opening like oysters (27), or Dov snapping his fingers to start the dance:

Yallah! they
 say here/ meaning *let's go/ leave*
 me/ COME ON!

anything! only
 let it happen. *Yallah!* & you
 must smack the heels of your palms
 together & taste the air...

('Gulf Letters' Number Six 1, *Made Over* p.46)

Energia wins out over everything here, is the "answer" to the inertia of indecision, to tension and frustration; movement is the single most important imperative, whether the action is autonomous or the result of being acted upon:

Hingehn will ich

To be gone is my wish
Friedrich Hölderlin

to be led out
to leap to sail
to have the poem carry me

"away": no
part ruling whole
nor moment, time:

no talk about the weather
while the earth shakes
to be quit

of the will to this
solipsoid optics! our
age's illness...

('Child Sleeping', *The Literary Half-Yearly*
XVIII(1) January 1977, p.98)

In no other poem does Wedde so categorically enumerate those movements which catch at his imagination as metaphors for the positive direction human enterprise should take. There will be cause to refer again to 'Child Sleeping'.

The directive motion in 'Gulf Letters' is an absorbing subject which rapidly acquires ramifications the more we look at those movements. This is also the case with the other major component of the poem, the 'gulf' first encountered in the title.

There are two gulfs - Hauraki and Aqaba - under discussion, along with a third (implicit) one, the distance between good

friends. This last gives rise in the poet's mind to considerations about the alien culture which surrounds him, and about its distance, physically and metaphysically, from the culture native to himself and Mark.

Looking firstly at the friend/friend gulf, we find that it is a bridged gap. The ideogrammic is also the essential:

We are so far apart you have become for
me almost a handful of ideograms a
whispering of choice phrases against
my distant tympanum.

('Gulf Letters' Number Three, *Made Over* p.40) (28)

and the faintest of contacts may trigger memories which are the articles of faith on which a good friendship is based:

...talking of Greek wine
jars there is another ideogram
belongs here:

 in a high
 wind at first grey dawn
 300 feet above White's Beach
 on the very brink of the precipice/

 with a hard-
on like a *mere*
 your nose thrust
at the cold horizon

('Gulf Letters' Number Four, *Made Over* p.41)

The value of this friendship to Wedde is suggested by the terms in which Mark is described. That the poet flies (this time without fear of falling) up and out in no way belittles the earthbound strength of his friend:

The sun strikes past my wings
 onto blinding clouds/
 above blue gulls like
 mica glints.

 The roots
 of trees grip down at
 the cliff / holding loose rocks.

(*'Gulf Letters' Number One, Made Over p.38*)

Most telling is the remark 'You are not a casual man' which occurs in the fifth Letter. As always, it is the mixture of sweetness and toughness that Wedde admires:

You have wit & malice enough
 also a sweet nature & a laugh like a jackass
 or braying gut music of a mad orchestra
 sawing away beneath your heart/ not without
 discord/ some pain.

(*'Gulf Letters' Number Five, Made Over p.42*)

'A good heart' and 'a cool good head' (*'Mash for Isaac', Made Over p.31*) are the two things which Wedde finds most attractive in human make-up.

When attention is turned to the other gulf, the picture is not so pleasant. Once, speaking of the mutual difficulty which Arabs and Westerners experience in trying to get through to each other, Wedde observed:

I have said there is a gulf to be crossed. It does little good to risk one's life jumping over, since it's then just as difficult and dangerous to get back. What is needed is a bridge, and traffic on it. If I return to the Middle East it will be to join those who are equipping themselves to build a bridge. (29)

Elsewhere he distinguishes between making the crossing to another culture and making the crossing to another *order* of culture (30), and in 'Culture Gulf; some comments on the Arab-Israeli conflict' *Landfall* 94 (June 1970), he clearly outlines the nature of this breakdown in communications. The traditions of Arab rhetoric and the suavity of Israeli western-style propaganda, it is argued, are totally incomprehensible to one another and bound to occasion head-on collisions.

As to his own position in the Arab milieu, Wedde is cautious. On one hand he numbers himself among the *frigide* Europeans who never really establish an easy commerce with Islamic culture. Literarily, this was made apparent during the translation sessions with Fawwaz Tuqan on Darwish's poetry, when he reports feeling helpless cramp in the face of 'the beautiful formal tongue-twisting manner reserved for poetry, public speeches and so forth.' (31) On the other hand he acknowledges confederacy with the Jordanian Arabs he came to know well, relationships which meant much to him:

I am writing this in September 1970: Jordan has all the prime space in newspapers. Reading them, I want to ask 'But what about Fawwaz? or Karimeh? or Aroub? or Mahmoud?' The reports seem incomplete, there are no *people* in them. (32)

People and personal contact would seem to be the bridge across the culture gulf; the exemplar is that bridge between friend and friend which was shown to hold over a spatial gulf. The latter is easier to build than the former, as the contents of a nightmare experienced in a dawn far removed from the one at White's beach show:

Guernica. The
 cacophany of terror frozen into the painting of
 it, its icy grey of false
 dawn. Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Deir Yassin,
 My Lai. Stumps, void
 sockets. That

that that that.& the
 cat screaming *in coitu...*

('Gulf Letters' Number Six 2, *Made Over* p.44) (33)

The intrusion of these atrocities into a poet's nightmare demonstrates a link from the international and political (cultural) to the particular and personal, which indicates that the "answers" to even huge problems may be inaugurated at the lower end of the scale and be ultimately effective. They will involve self-reliance tempered with compassion.

'The violence in men's minds' is not evil in itself, being often the product of frustrated energy (Chink's torment was 'the cramped bile of energy which so occupied his time', *Dick Seddon* p.118). If correctly angled, this tension can hone the blades of the mind on hard surfaces that will otherwise blunt or smash them. Thus dangerous situations engender 'tight distances' and the tautness is somehow equated with fitness, an ability to prevail and to do so with 'deathless articulation'. The role of friend or lover in this process is to act as the far bridgehead, keeping lines of communication open (and taut) from his/her end. (34) Later (1975) Wedde wrote:

- ah how you value
 the tough lover who
 keeps you up
 to the mark, whose head
 eyes language hands
 loins *en-*

gage you, give you
 elevation, a prospect, with whom you ride
 up the up &
 up like birds beating on in
 the mutual updraughts of
 each other's wings...

(*Pathway to the Sea* p.3)

The close of the sixth Gulf Letter expresses similar jubilation at the prospect of a friend's comprehension of this sweet toughness (tough sweetness). The most significant 'ideograms' of the sequence are gathered together:

What are we to do before the violence
 in men's minds / dance ahead of the wide
 white sickle jaws & smack the heels
 of our palms together/ *Yallah!* Let's
 go!

& play upon those taut spaces
 like Eric Clapton/ brave words eh Mark?

('Gulf Letters' Number Six 4, *Made Over* p.46)

IV: 'Poems About Snow' and 'Postcards: London/Jamaica/
New York/London'

I have considered three major poems in the order in which they appear in *Made Over*. Consequently the interpretation has tended to sound overly developmental at times, as if dependent on the secret chronology of some 'search' undertaken by Wedde. There is no such simplistic model, but it so happens that many of the smaller poems not mentioned here are branchings of concerns evident in 'Homage', 'Vistas' or 'Gulf Letters' (35). These three poems, dating from the same period of Wedde's

writing, explore serious matters which continued to intrigue him. There is in them a definite feeling of direction, of learning how to get 'out there', and the workings of this movement do tend to develop through the poems as they are positioned in *Made Over*.

This being so, my analysis has so far ignored a sizeable portion of the collection, those poems which fall into the fourth section of the book and have yet another emphasis - the personal.

Two poems stand out in this group. The first, 'Poems About Snow', comes closest to whatever it is that is turning a relationship into a mess of cross-purposes. Compare the tone of 'Chisel' (1968) which belongs to an earlier phase of the personal dialogue (*Landfall* 88, December 1968):

but we, my love, in our poise
enjoy
 gentle abrasions
they make warmth.

 Only keep your
grain counter to my cutting
edge

 ('Chisel', *Made Over* p.65)

with the pain in the first poem about snow:

I cannot sleep at night.
My eyes use your body hard
your pale bones exhaust me.
Your hands curl to the children
you don't have. I don't have you.
Towards dawn you fall into yourself
away from your children away from me
towards that collapsed landscape
where under moonlight the white curved ranges
lie rigidly against each other.

 ('Poems About Snow' 1, *Made Over* p.73)

The rigid repose of the moonlit hills has its human counterpart. All the 'black' motifs are present; insomnia, frustrated energy, a fall which is also a withdrawal, icebound ranges which are curved like the blades which inflict sickle-shaped wounds ('Gulf Letters' Number Six 1). These blades are sometimes explicitly a metaphor for love, as in 'Chizel'. The duality of the image of the cutting blade is appropriate to the ecstatic/destructive nature of love itself: 'love is a fine white/blade, a sickle moon.' ('Gulf letters Number six 2 *Made Over* p.44).

'Postcards: London/ Jamaica/ New York/ London' is the other focus point of the fourth section. Its optimism (the suturing of the love-wound is without doubt underway) and its journeying motifs make it perhaps the logical choice to round off *Made Over*, especially as the journeying is now noticeably a homing movement, suggesting that the "answers" neglect the personal claim at the risk of being inadequate without it.

The inward curving path is picked up (after the aching sense of loss in 'Ruth') by 'The Arrival', 'Returning to the Cool Lakes' and 'The Homecoming', consecutive poems which cover the Weddes' progress back to England after their removal from Jordan in mid-1970. 'Poems About Snow' then demonstrates that separation is not necessarily a matter of physical distance; this winter is the same as the one in 'Homage', the cold of which was going to 'sort out our heads'. 'Postcards' then comes as a tentative *rapprochement* in which the poet discovers that the golden cord connecting 'here' with 'there' does permit two-way traffic, on occasion pulling the heart back to where the journey began.

However, the snow poems stick in the mind as most truly representative of the closing mood of *Made Over*. 'Postcards' is essentially a travelogue, concerned to sketch places as much as states of mind. The log of the Vargo's Circus tour (1976) (36) is written in the same vein, prose this time, but anecdotally racy in the light-touched style which characterises 'Postcards'. The relatively circumscribed movements of 'Homage', 'Vistas' or 'Gulf Letters' cover wider thematic ground, and it is because 'Poems About Snow' opens up a new, troubled dimension (the paradisaical vision was never without its shadow) that I would place it as the logical successor of the other three. In a sense, 'Postcards' is a premature move if it is to be regarded as a resolution of problems. Rather, it is a hope for those solutions, not the record of a *fait accompli*; a fact which should be kept in mind when the enthusiasm for neat roundings-off strikes hard.

There is a note of exhaustion in the closing section of 'Postcards'; whether it is the result of the 'right' kind of struggle (whether 'the tart savour of extremes' will be brought to love) remains an open question:

There is nothing in the lining but the
lavender you put there before I left.
Soiled beneath my blue coat
my body is laid up in love and ambergris,
sweetened mostly by your thoughts.
I take off this last time like a
travelling salesman returning to depot
fingered samples he has grown too fond of.

('Postcards', *Made Over* p.79)

CHAPTER 2

THE OTAGO VISION(1) : *DICK SEDDON'S GREAT DIVE* (1975)
: *EARTHLY: SONNETS FOR CARLOS* (1975)

I: The 'poetics' of Dick Seddon's Great Dive

In 1972 Wedde was working on the Darwish drafts which he and Tuqan had produced between them in Amman; he was also writing a novel, Rose was pregnant, and the Weddes had settled in Port Chalmers:

Cloud pours over the purple top of the mountain
 beneath which I begin to lead a quiet
 industrious life These phenomena
 amaze me! 'cloud pours'/'quiet life'
 Nonetheless my heart warms to its new adoption

(*'Old Man of the Mountain'*, *Spells* pp.23-4)

The final stages of the translation work affected Wedde's own poetry in a desultory manner, an image transferring from one to the other (e.g. 'star-harbour')(1), an echo from Darwish determining something for Wedde (the refrain of 'A Certain Anthem' provides the title for 'Those Others')(2). By and large however, what the Middle East meant for Wedde poetically speaking had been treated in the material which was to constitute *Made Over*. The return to New Zealand saw the emergence of a distinct vision which had much to do with Wedde's new locale and the forthcoming birth of his child. These coordinates of place and time became inextricably connected for Wedde, and the exhilaration which each afforded him reflects most strongly in *Earthly: Sonnets for Carlos* (1975) and more obliquely in *Dick Seddon's Great Dive* (Auckland: *Islands* 16, November 1976)

The novel is a manifesto of what may be called Wedde's Otago vision. Perhaps because the writing of it was in progress for the better part of his year as Burns Fellow, the poems which he habitually produces gained entry into the novel, or perhaps the novel spawned separate poems. Whatever the case, the dates of composition are as obviously related as the subjects each form describes. *Dick Seddon* is Wedde's richest co-text, which makes it an ideal vehicle for a blueprint account of what was most affecting him 1972-74.

Firstly there is the landscape, which is the hills and sea of Otago harbour, big smoothly rolling hills, '...these hillsides march into the sea' writes Kate (*Dick Seddon* p.172). The peninsula is composed entirely of its hills and their distinctive configurations give the harbour a sculpted, finite appearance, making the surrounding sea look planar and boundless by comparison. The Otago hills are essentially similar to those around Wellington, Lyttelton, and even the Waitemata; Wedde is intrigued by the harbour-city likenesses (and differences) between north and south, as the double focus-points of *Dick Seddon* demonstrate. However, it is the southern hills which truly dominate his imagination at this stage, as a poem like 'Old Man of the Mountain' makes clear: '-To be the poet of a place plumber of a place/The Old Man of the Mountain' (*Spells* p.24).

Responses to landscape form are commonly anthropomorphising, and Wedde's sensibility definitely leans this way. He could be describing himself in at least one comment about the chief protagonist of his novel:

The showground was in a bowl cradled by hills. Chink found it hard to separate land shapes from the shapes of women and horses: the way sleek light struck the blond hillsides...

(*Dick Seddon* p.190) (3)

The tendency is by no means confined to Ian Wedde:

'Because I am mad about women
I am mad about the hills,'
Said that wild old wicked man
Who travels where God wills.

(Yeats, 'The Wild Old Wicked Man') (4)

Perhaps the single most concentrate example of Wedde's feelings about the hills occurs in Sonnet 48 of *Earthly*, which brings together the real landscape and the poet's often symbolic vision of it. This is Otago harbour and the background of a Botticelli:

In this magic landscape the lovers are real
as unicorns!
 the harbour ferryman
rakish dredge the yellow veils of Hymen
ocean's secret visage cunty shallows
& corkscrewing through huge bullkelp the seals
their mystical Romanesque eyes the lean
tilting hips of the hilltops/ one of them
like a breast "Teraweka" & the hill
"Sleeping Indian"
 her downy belly

"These hills turn me on"
 (They turn me on too)
Carlos the girl who said that's your mother
She-who-once-carried-you-in-her-belly...

(Sonnet 48, *Earthly*)

The other component of Wedde's landscape vision is the sea and its horizon point. We observed the use he made of physical horizons as correlations for mental destinations in *Made Over*; in *Dick Seddon*, movement out is thematically crucial because it implies the moving out of oneself (ultimately death) which the novel is concerned to explore. This moving, pouring out phenomenon has its ambrosial aspect:

It was Chink who showed me the horizon out from Seacliff or Karitane, in the south. I'd looked at it before, often enough. But never *seen* it. When the day was hot with haze gathering in the distance, the line between sea and sky disappeared, so that the planes of the horizontal perspective curved upward into the vertical, into the milky blue dome of the sky, and back to horizontal, and over your head: a glaring wave of space and distance, within which you felt exhilarated, robbed of the simplest certainties; what was up and what was down, how to balance, how to *keep on* in a straight line...

(*Dick Seddon* p.161)

A small poem from 'Spring Bouquet' echoes this exactly:

I can really dig distance the way
it pours away at the horizon
on a day like today
& the feeling of it folding back up
behind me: through 360° or whichever
way I turn it's happening so that
the firmament's getting pushed up all around
like the corolla of the blue flower in spring.

('corolla', *Islands* 13 Spring 1975 p.275)

This schema (Kate later calls it 'blue distance' thinking) implies a vanishing point at the back of the neck which Chink demonstrates thus:

a swooping motion of his arms in front of himself and upward, plunging them finally over his head, and down to cradle it and clasp the back of his neck, his forearms and elbows pressed to the sides of his skull and sticking up like wings.

(*Dick Seddon* p. 161)

It is a dangerous discovery to make in some respects. One may sail or ride out of oneself (Chink, *Dick Seddon* p.132 and 136; 'Child Sleeping', Sonnet 50 of *Earthly*), but the vanishing point at the back of his neck is also a wave that drowns Chink, and the space he eventually gets to pass through is taking him out on Te Aukumea, 'the dragging current at the beginning of Te Potekitea, the hidden night.' (*Dick Seddon* p.164-5). At this point in the book Chink thus (unknowingly?) articulates his own fate in terms which obviously matter to him.

Horizon points are still important, but the sea itself is the predominant presence in *Dick Seddon*. Always the north/south comparison is made, part of Wedde's own 'elaborate mesh of checks and balances' (*Dick Seddon* p.121). Bethell's in an Auckland summer works against a winter sea below the Port Chalmers bluff and the frozen brightness ('A glare that is blindness in the early afternoon'; Eliot) of Purakanui. The minds of Chink and Kate (and presumably Wedde) keep returning to memories of these shoreline places, acknowledged as special by their recurrence in the novel even before we are told that they constitute a tacitly iconic class of their own. (*Dick Seddon* p.181-2).

All three places appear in Wedde's poetry as well, the northern beaches chiefly in 'Gulf Letters', the Port Chalmers shoreline in *Earthly*, where Rose:

walked in clean
 sea winds, below the clay bluff, below lean
 tattered eucalypts, so heavy, a sack

of a slow lovely girl following her
 fault line south to Carlito

(Sonnet 6, *Earthly*)

and 'Near Purakanui' (*Spells*, p.35), which is an elegy for Ezra Pound, indicates an intensity of feeling for this place equal and appropriate to Wedde's admiration for the poet.

Such correlations point to the fact that the places which Wedde writes about are not only actual, but highly significant to him in various ways. A similar impact is made on his imagination by the succession of seasons. The time co-ordinate of his thinking has already been mentioned in connection with the term of Rose's pregnancy; characteristically, his time-scale is seasonal in this respect too:

jade lodes press up
 & veins to the surface

sweet sap rising through
 280 days
 It sounds like more than a season.

('Losing the Straight Way' 1, *Spells* p.12)

The seasons are most important in *Dick Seddon*. The events of the novel are set against the cool southern summer of Port Chalmers, from where, it emerges, Kate's retrospective is proceeding. The indifferent weather is a neutral foil for brilliant and wide-ranging memories of northern summers and spectacular southern winters; the corresponding human point of relative stasis is Kate, seated opposite her reflection in a window that looks out on a world-section in which changes are small and slow.

The house is Curtis's, and Curtis is a young poet; Wedde's second name is Curtis, and 31 Currie St Port Chalmers has two front rooms, each with 'an old-fashioned sash window' which looks out on a 'scruffy clay bank' over the street.(5) That Wedde is describing his own writing conditions is clear:

At night, now, she can hear Curtis and Ingrid making love... and just at the moment she can hear them all living, *con moto*, there at the other end of the house, and the radio on, as though the sounds of their life have been set to tawdry music, for her benefit....

(*Dick Seddon*, p.152)

Later

it gets dark
in here

while on the other side of the house
I can hear them
all, living, *con moto*.

('It Gets Dark', *Spells*, p.52)

Wedde inserts himself into his writing (particularly his fiction) with some kind of ironic twist, usually designed to belittle the function of 'poet' or 'author'(6). Curtis, an exceptionally unattractive poet-type, is typical of this strategy of *diminutio*. His presence in the novel as a potential (but impotent) point of narrative view, together with the presence of a definite alter-ego of Wedde's (the writing Kate), arouses speculation as to what relation Chink's actions and consciousness bear to Wedde's own processes. Just one point of correspondence is Wedde's preoccupation with drowning, the Freudian undertones of which he is perfectly aware. Thus Beck:

'....Listen, all supercocks are really at an infantile stage of development, they wanna get back into the amniotic fluids, they wanna drown in their own come, they wanna be absorbed back into the process they can only guess at when they're fucking.'

(Dick Seddon p.201)

The one suicide attempt Wedde has recorded of himself (Sonnet 30 *Earthly*) was going to involve jumping into 'the famous canal of da Vinci', and is treated with a wryness something like the account of Chink's last thoughts:

Moments before the wave had taken him it had occurred to him that he was in the wrong ocean! The fucking Tasman! The backyard ocean! A Badedas Bath! He'd opened his mouth to laugh...

(Dick Seddon p.212)

These directions open out from a consideration of the Otago summer's function as a moderate, slow-burning ground for high-powered emotions. The apex of these memories is the first (northern) summer which Chink and Kate spent together, the warmth of which held good as far as Kaikoura and 'Dick Seddon's' second 'great dive'. The nadir, at least for Kate, occurs on an Otago winter day, ironically of dazzling (but sickening) brightness, in the same region where Chink once demonstrated to her the principles of 'blue distance'. Other north/south, summer/winter tensions operate in the Purakanui episode. 'Faith's gorgeous frail galleon', a talismanic phrase for Kate, formulated in the north by Beck and adopted by her in a mood of cautious optimism at having made the decision to go south with Chink, shows her its negative side in the wreck

of the relationship as symbolised by the day at Purakanui. Fishing boats which dance on the dazzling horizon off Warrington enter Kate's conscious vision as she steps onto the beach, but their symbolic function does not become apparent until she realizes that Chink is planning a final desertion. The presence (and distance) of the boats mock at her initial gesture of faith.

Balancing opposing symbols like this is strong in Kate's thinking, though at the outset of the novel she derides Chink's habitual schematising: 'It was typical of him to bulwark a cheap idea with this kind of data. He collected it'. (*Dick Seddon* p.120) Her own writing-out process is directed towards the construction of a symbolically accurate and appropriate explanation of what happened; the put-down is another of Wedde's tongue-in-cheek *diminutio* comments - he too is fascinated by the symbolic in the real.

The brilliant day at Purakanui is an aberration of the winter norm, however. It was the comparative harshness and stasis of the southern winter which most impressed Wedde. Wherever winter touches the poems (Sonnets 22-25, 'Sleeping Indian') there is a sense of drama below a surface which is being held still. As the slowness of winter approaches its antithesis, outright expectation takes over. The primal feelings of great joy which arrive with spring are autobiographically explained:

the yellow flowers mass upon the hills

something I'd not seen before
having not lived this far south before

('Who Cares', *Spells* p.37)

but Wedde acknowledges that the feelings run deeper than individual vision (are in fact the basis of all vegetation rites) in all of his 'spring' poems, particularly in Sonnets 26-30 of *Earthly*. Here the mood and images are Poundian, and derive from that poet's interpretation of the nekuia myth as evidenced in the *Cantos*.

In *Dick Seddon* the aim appears to be a specific localisation, in the person of Chink, of this cultural *gestalt* and its accompanying imagery. For Chink, the Purakanui day works differently; The fishing boats which are Kate's galleons of faith remind him only of the nets which they drag; nets remind him of 'killing the fish' (his own talismanic phrase) and of the lethal nature of reticulations in general and his own situation in particular: 'In the net, strangling. Dynamite, dynamite!' (*Dick Seddon* p.209) Chink knows he must break out of this part of the pattern (dynamite it) while his own scale of things is still intact; for him it is still a 'blue distance' day, though he has to block out considerable interference from Kate to maintain it as such:

'Listen,' he said, 'it's gonna be okay so don't *you* worry.
 What a day! We're almost past the solstice. It's almost
 spring! Look at the horizon, all the way to South America,
 the Pacific, Kate, the Pacific...'
 'Can I come?'

(*Dick Seddon* pp.209-10)

She cannot come, and Chink insists on making his 'escape', a sort of death-marked flight north, infected by Kate's influence (her 'yellowness' has affected his 'blue distance').

This is the closest Wedde comes to identifying Chink with the figure of Adonis; the iconography and colour symbolism are distinctively the novel's own, but they work in with a larger pattern common to myths of regeneration. Certainly the arrival of spring has a markedly expansive effect in Chink's mind:

He took a swallow of Dimple, dropped a dexie down after it. Yes, it *was* spring, getting into it. Something inside him was pushing like a green spear of narcissus or common daffodil under the cold clod of his confusion. He could feel a gap opening up, and a perfume rising through him and passing from his nostrils to envelop him: clarity, softness....
Happiness?

(*Dick Seddon* p.210)

His sadness wasn't painful. He'd have said that he was happy. The green flower had broken through his heart. But still he said to himself, 'I'm sorry Kate.'

(*Dick Seddon* p. 211)

These passages form an interesting co-text to a poem from the same period:

To be open

like the first day of spring
which I know
 every year
 though there may be a relapse

not just by a beginning yeasty rise
in temperature & not just
by the way the air
snaps its fingers & opens its eyes
wide towards South America

but by something which has been pushing
like a green spear under my heart
& which now
 cracks the cold clod
 & dances in its own perfume
like a narcissus!

('Narcissus', *Spells* p.49)

The pause after 'cold clod' in the poem seems highly significant once the equivalent phrase from *Dick Seddon* ('the cold clod of his confusion') has been absorbed. The texts are so close that one is tempted to identify Wedde with Chink, remembering both Chink's own reference to 'some heavy shit' which Curtis (Ian Curtis?) has been through, and the hints of private troubles thrown out by Wedde in *Earthly* and in *Spells*. The correspondence is not perfect, of course, and its application purely a matter of speculation; but it is a speculation which we are invited to make. Wedde enjoys the play between his real and fictive selves, just as he enjoys the play between real events and places and their transmutations in fiction and poetry.

II: *Earthly* - some formal considerations

Earthly: Sonnets for Carlos (Akaroa: Amphedesma, 1975) is Wedde's poetic exposition of concerns which appear in *Dick Seddon*. The circumstances of its genesis are best explained by Wedde himself:

When my son was born in 1972 I found I wanted to write poems spanning the first year of his life. I wanted these poems to have the idea of birth as their focus, and I wanted to address them to my son, not as objects but as responses.

I find the idea of birth overwhelmingly important: we are born *out of* in order to be *born into*. It's a continuous process. At every moment of response to the world we are born, or reborn, into it. Conversely the veteran solipsist will have been dead for half a lifetime before he stops breathing. Goethe wrote somewhere that each new object, truly recognized, opens up a new organ within ourselves. This seems to me a profound and subversive truth which blesses appetite and which militates against orthodoxies,

and which can launch us constantly beyond the limits of self-regard into the impure paradise we share with our children, and with their children, and with theirs...a function also, as I like to believe, of poetry.

Back then, looking again at some lines I'd discarded, I was struck by a pattern and found I'd unwittingly written a sonnet. At the time I was also fascinated by Rawleigh's sonnet 'to his sonne'. All right, I thought, let's write sonnets for a year. I enjoyed the whole process more than any writing I'd done before, although at times it was certainly more difficult and painful, and the whole conception seemed at times impossibly over-ambitious. But the composition was always more like listening than talking, that was the wonderful thing about doing it. If I've managed in these sonnets to set up a traffic in this absorption and pleasure, then I've succeeded in the terms that matter to me: a reticulation of the worn and the marvellous...new organs of perception waking to the familiar music of the heart.(7)

This personal rationale is full of references to the articulating themes of the sequence. Some are already familiar ('a profound and subversive truth which blesses appetite and which militates against orthodoxies, and which can launch us constantly beyond the limits of self-regard...'), others will be picked up as the discussion progresses; all belong within the thematic territory implied by *Made Over* and *Dick Seddon's Great Dive*.

Peter Crisp, in his overview of Wedde's work 1971-5, remarks on the form of *Earthly*:

Sixty sonnets...surely *the* longest sonnet sequence by a New Zealand poet! An outwardly strange choice, too, for a poet so markedly influenced by Pound, and having shown no signs before this of ringing the changes on conventional forms - but Wedde is, thankfully, apt to surprise. The sonnet has had a strange recent history in New Zealand poetry, with Baxter shaking its fourteen lines into rumpled, relaxed rhythmic shape for his communings with God, and C.K. Stead trying out his brisker juxtapositions of statement to lay that 'dour ghost'. Now, with something (surely) of a spirit of come-uppance, appears Wedde's sonnet sequence of 840 lines, all scrupulously of ten syllables, though this is the only formal concession to the traditional genre. (8)

Crisp's placing of the sequence in context of a recent pattern in local poetry is instructive, though Wedde's own account does not figure any conscious acknowledgement of the Baxter/Stead proto-types. It is odd, however, that the critic should be surprised by Wedde's use of the sonnet, given that the form is traditionally 'difficult' to write, and therefore something of a challenge. ('the toughness of the/medium may have taught him/that ease is no grateful/index to dispensability/or availability'; *Pathway to the Sea*, p.3). It is also a form which tends to sequences, thus accommodating Wedde's long-standing predilection for lengthy poems and series of poems.

There are even better reasons for Wedde's choice if we shift the question of mentors back as far as the most famous sonneteer of English poetry. I would suggest that Wedde's real debt, where the form of *Earthly* is concerned, is to William Shakespeare. Again, no acknowledgement of such an influence is made in Wedde's statement quoted above, but his thoughts at the time of composition were at least partially involved with the sixteenth century, as the Rawleigh sonnets (56,58) show. More than this, there is an unmistakable formal correlation between *Earthly* and Shakespeare's Sonnets.

An early poem, 'A Word In Your Ear, William', is evidence that Wedde was conversant with the Sonnets, if not entirely impressed by an English Department's treatment of them:

... I poke with my eyes
among the interesting
debris of notes taken part-
ly from plain boredom at a
lecture on Shakespeare's sonnets

Ah! to throw a bomb into
 it all
 duck, wince, & run out
 to read the very poems them-
 selves under a tree on a
 hill.

('A Word In Your Ear, William', *1969 Arts Festival
 Yearbook*, p.13) (9)

We can assume a fair knowledgeability on Wedde's part of both the sonnet form and the most well known of sonnet sequences. In that sequence there is an interweaving process at work - phrases, motifs, (themes of course) - which Wedde, brought up on the significance of repeats in modern poetry, (and being a pattern-maker himself) would certainly discern, and perhaps recognize as a predecessor of his own technique.

There is an uncanny resemblance between the internal patterns of Sonnets 1-17 (commonly held to be the first 'unit' of the Shakespeare sequence) and the patterns which determine the groupings of *Earthly*. Wedde's habit of building an aggregate final verse from various preceding components of a poem has already been noticed ('Gulf Letters' Number Six 4, for example); and this becomes a major feature of *Earthly* in which every twentieth sonnet (and some from the final decad as well) is a composite structure. Shakespeare's sixth sonnet, 'Then let not winter's ragged hand deface', is an aggregate of the preceding five, and the next eleven sonnets tend to extend these components into separate, fully worked out conceits.(10)

What links the two poets is definite groupings with strong internal patterns which build upon themselves to produce a point of climax composed entirely of familiar echoes. Peter Crisp comments:

The interweaving is in places a virtuoso feat, sometimes a little too calculated, but an impressive demonstration overall of how far Wedde's skill has developed from the earlier, shorter poems. (11)

I would contend that this skill has been operative all along in Wedde (the shortness of a poem like 'King Solomon Vistas' should not blind us to its sophisticated workings), and as for the reservation about over-calculation, it can be argued that reiterativeness and intricacy are necessary elements wherever contemporary poetry aims for the through-and-through intensity of *Earthly*.

The composite sonnets are somehow ambiguous in their unifying effect on the sequence however. Each is an aggregate, but at the same time a seminal structure; by Sonnet 60 it is never quite possible to tell whether the short makes up the long or whether a vast whole has been broken down for minute inspection. The single sure thing is familiarity with the sequence *in toto*; 'a reticulation of the worn and the marvellous'.

III: The basic iconographic shapes of *Earthly*

Turning to the iconography of *Earthly*, we discover that it too is very much a matter of 'mosaic of echo and cross-reference' (Crisp). Phrase repeats are designed to enforce formally a growing realisation as the sequence progresses that the reticulative principle is all-embracing. This is why Carlos, having once lost his innocent/omniscient vision, ('His new blue eyes/see everything. Soon he'll learn to see/less'; Sonnet 9) has to learn about the 'black shit of eternity' (Sonnets 36 and 51), 'how things were before/fire entered his garden and banished you' (Sonnet 51), and about

'dawn friday 17 august 1973/American bombing halt in Cambodia' (the title of Sonnet 32). All three experiences are aspects of one expansive, continuing movement of perception which Wedde talked of in the *Earthly* statement. (Charles Olson: 'One perception must immediately and directly lead to further perception') (12)

The point of departure is nominally the birth of Carlos in November 1972, but even this date is not to be arbitrarily separated from the flux (Wedde calls it 'the womb of the continuous' in Sonnets 19 and 59), as the first group of sonnets makes clear. Sonnets 1-10 keep close to the central protagonists, but the angle of focus moves about; a prelude, then a post-birth reverie (hymn of joy?), and on to living with the new baby. All of these are balanced against Ezra Pound's recent death: 'The gifts of the dead/ crown the heads of the newborn' (Sonnet 2). Particular circumstances in 1972 actualised for Wedde the poetic commonplace about life springing from death, except that in *Earthly* the emphasis falls on passing from one world (or dream) to another, rather than on ritual extinction. Continuance and assimilation (one perception leading immediately and directly to a further perception) continue to dominate Wedde's scale of value.

After Sonnet 5, the focus swings back in time to the previous months, and then back again to 'where/it began, a thousand miles off' (Sonnet 6). One thing to notice here is how closely at times Rose resembles Kate in *Dick Seddon*; watching his wife walking on a shoreline which also haunts

Kate, Wedde uses a simile which brings fiction and reality to practically identical terms:

a slow lovely girl following her
 fault line south to Carlito in his blue
 jersey, *as though you'd hiked it all*, now shrunk
 back flat & fit having laboured from where
 it began, a thousand miles off, we two
 tired after a nostalgic all-night drunk

(Sonnet 6, *Earthly*) (my italics)

Kate's description of her own pregnancy (*Dick Seddon* pp.176-7) comes to mind, along with Julian's poem 'A pregnant woman discovers the meaning of fiction', which Kate acknowledges to have had a considerable effect on her: '*...that shot straight through the filter and lodged like some shrill implant just by my ear*' (*Dick Seddon* p.199). It becomes almost legitimate to guess that here Kate is speaking for Wedde, who seems to be complementing Rose's real-life pregnancy by creating counterparts of it (often at several removes) in his writing. (13)

Sonnets 6-10 are a candid account of Carlos' conception, including allusions to some less-than rapturous circumstances which attended it. The line '2. a young *distrain* drifting childless couple' refers us back to the troubled 'Poems About Snow' (*Made Over* p.73). There, and here, the birth of a child represents hope for patching together a deteriorating relationship. Even the images which stick in the poet's drunken vision point towards this: '3. Ronda has gone upstairs with baby Joss' (Sonnet 7), and the Armitage environment is definitely an exemplar:

. . . dear friends thank you for
 that quiet time that island in a far-
 reaching forward & backward tempest fraught
 ocean of days & days...& us in sight

then of the Pacific on a calm shore
 in a familiar Pacific city

(Sonnet 8, *Earthly*).

This passage is related to Chink's 'blue distance' thinking, which is also bound up with consciousness of the Pacific as the peaceful ocean. Wedde is not so naive as to suppose (or even wish) that resuming New Zealand life by patterning it with Pacific cities is going to solve everything; the '2 for for Rose' (Sonnets 9 and 10) are adequate warning against this: 'Oh you can get no/peace, will get none from me'. However, the upswing in tone and the juxtaposition of this threat of disturbance with increasingly exuberant images make it clear that the mood is rueful, even capricious:

Oh you can get no
 peace, will get none from me. The flower smells so
 sweet who needs the beans? We should move house there
 into the middle of the bean-patch: a
 green & fragrant mansion, why not! let's do
 it all this summer & eat next year. O

Let's tear off a piece.

(Sonnet 10, *Earthly*) (14)

'No peace' here means 'no complacency'. The lines from *Pathway to the Sea* inhabit the same world:

:like
 who wants a companion for
 life or whatever span
 you fancy (they're all "for life") who can't

put some juice
 back in your
 systems? - ah how you value
 the tough lover who
 keeps you up
 to the mark

(*Pathway*, p.3)

Sonnet 10 contains the first detailed explanation of where the disparate occasions of significance picked out in each poem are headed. i.e. towards the building of a construct which Wedde calls the 'earthly paradise':

It's too hard & far
 to any other dreamt-of paradise
 & paradise is earthly anyway
 earthly & difficult & full of doubt.

(Sonnet 10, *Earthly*)

Echoes from Dante, Blake, and Matisse are set up by Wedde's version of the paradisial vision. We remember back to his statement about 'the impure paradise we share with our children, and with their children, and with theirs...' (7) in which emphasis on the conglomerate rather than the flawless tallies with patterns emerging in the sonnets:

 Their faces are
 imprecise with the imprecision of
 their perfect intentions, all that loving
 menagerie which the old man's left for
 good & which the newborn entered in a
 rage & through which he now sleeps

(Sonnet 3 '*paradiso terrestre*', *Earthly*)

The 'old man' is Ezra Pound. Aptly enough, the other major

'in memoriam' figure of *Earthly* is also noted for his correlation of beauty with heterogeneity. Neruda's essay 'Towards An Impure Poetry' (15) is perhaps being alluded to in the lines:

ah Neruda

now you have become a lamp in that deep
 sepulchre where the unending sleep
 of generation dreams its beautiful
 impure products

(Sonnet 35 'in memoriam Paldo Neruda', *Earthly*)

'[E]arthly & difficult & full of doubt'; the word 'doubt' recurs often in the sequence as exuberance and assurance alternate with their obverse emotions. The message is, of course, that the product is the more endurable for its motley (laminated) composition:

I'm not good I'm not peaceful I'm not wise
 but I love you. What more is there to say.
 My fumbling voices clap their hands & shout

(Sonnet 10, *Earthly*) (16)

Following through the circumstances which led up to the feeling that 1972 was a *paradiso*, we find that the darker elements of the past tend to fade out after the second decade of sonnets (appropriately entitled 'Leaning Into the Breeze') as new life asserts itself over debts to the past. The second decade itself, however, is very much concerned with tensions between the two, and the sense of having been 'saved' by the events of the immediate present is reiterated:

which is where I'm at now
 these few months later: wakeful & somewhat
 absurd...not peaceful not wise...I gambled
 to much at times & almost went down so

here I sign in case' again things get hot...

(Sonnet 12, *Earthly*)

The signature '*here*' on the covenant is an important act,
 as we will discover later.

There is one other allusion to private troubles of
 the past in 'three remembrances', in the two sonnets entitled
 'for a child who turned back', which clarifies at least part
 of the hinted-at tempest. Given that 'Postcards: London/
 Jamaica/New York/London' (*Made Over* p.75) contains references
 to a baby Rose was carrying before the Weddes left Britain
 at the end of 1971, the miscarriage (which must have occurred
 between then and their 'all-night nostalgic drunk' in Auckland
 early in 1972) would have been a traumatic experience for the
 couple, who believed the forth-coming child to be something
 of a symbol of their retrieved love. That the 'one who
 turned back' did in fact amend the situation is pointed out
 in terms which set familiar imagery to a new situation:

Or should I say I'll always love you
 & grieve for you as we do for a friend
 good enough to thank in time for the same
 savage blow that sets the tilting heart true
 again on its fulcrum, so that we send

18
 in time a meassage back, like this, to say
 "I love you. You are present, a known weight
 upon the tender lever of the heart
 to move the world or prise open a way
 out of the dream world..."

(Sonnets 17-18 'for a child who turned back', *Earthly*)

These remembrances make up a history which, Wedde concludes (Sonnet 15), can safely be shelved once its lessons have been assimilated. However, there remains the bad dream of solipsis, a legacy of the past to be dealt with; a man's nightmare labour in dream-darkness which is also amniotic darkness constitutes some sort of sympathetic relation to his woman's actual condition. This is the dream:

(in which a solitary man's gone on
groaning, heaving some deadweight, some humped stone
away from himself, & he's never seen

that the weight's part of him, so that each
time he struggles the weight jerks him with it
& he falls with it again & again...

Sonnet 14 'the dream', *Earthly* (17)

The matter of solipsis continues to drag at the poet's attention. The other uneasy issue, for all that Wedde has apparently resolved its claims on him, is the status of the past and its relationship to the present. Sonnets 10-20 worry unremittingly at the problem, and an episode in *Dick Seddon* dramatizes the conflict of attitudes which is besetting Wedde. Once, arguing with the slightly disagreeable Curtis, Chink had said that:

you leaned nothing from the past, because there was no
such thing, because any decision you made had never been
made before.

(*Dick Seddon*, p.141) (18)

Chink was irritated by Curtis' quotation of a passage from (Wedde's) 'Four Vectors' 3 (*Spells* p. 40), which supports

'Oh, no doubt he's waded through as much shit as the rest of us. But look how clean he is at the end of it! Doesn't look as though he's been through a single change... doesn't look as though he's had to change his mind *once* since he was on the tit!'

(*Dick Seddon* p.142)

This passage comes across as a calculated piece of literary masochism on Wedde's part. Connecting it to *Earthly* brings us up hard against the suspicion that Wedde had very real doubts about the justice of his own winning through to a form of 'paradise' against justly deserved bad odds. A gesture like: 'Fuck the past: a form/you filled in then, hoping to score off soon...' (Sonnet 15) is a Curtis-type aberration which does not sit comfortably, or for any length of time, on Wedde.

Kate provides the third model of attitudes to the past. She is another believer in shovelling away a disagreeable history entirely, and wants to shout against Chink "'...it's possible to be born again.'" (*Dick Seddon* p.142). She wonders why a carefully rehearsed anecdote ("I really felt as though I *had* been born again."; *Dick Seddon* p.158) fails to impress Chink.

Of these three attitudes, Chink's alone is proven viable in *Dick Seddon*. Curtis is demolished by Chink's arguments, and Kate tangles with her own past in the process of sorting out the time she and Chink spent together. (She is eventually brought to face the fact that Chink possibly did not love her when he killed himself, though she envelops the realisation in symbolic schemata which lessen its shock-effect on her). Similarly, in *Earthly*, when Wedde turns from 'the' past to

three specific remembrances the result is an acknowledgement ('in time'; Sonnet 18) of the effectiveness of the 'grab-bag' theory. Parts of the past are indeed present and exert due influence:

& I regret
no single part of all this, but only

that you will not claim your live place with us
among the unruly facts & fragments
which now crowd in daily through the space
you helped to clear, on your brother Carlos,
on all here who balance with such moments
thoughts of turning back, present embraces.

(Sonnet 18, *Earthly*)

The present, by and large a series of occasions for joy in *Earthly*, anchors critical points of this second decade which is so preoccupied by the past. Sonnet 11, starting off a group called '*dasein*: 5 sonnets', is a *mis-en-scène* designed to show what constitutes 'where it is' for Wedde. The insistent repetition ('in the harbour', 'in the water') gives the impression that each line of the octet records a kind of vignette-flash, each image contributing to a basic scheme. The first eight lines are also a time-montage and the composition of the emerging picture moves from uniformly neutral elements to the implicit magnificence of 'stars & galaxies in the harbour'. The idea is to pin down an explanative point of stasis, aware that in all truthfulness this cannot be done. The irony of a perfect (and perfectly transient) reflection appeals to Wedde as an illustration of this:

& when the southerly has whipped & rent
 those facts, well there it all is, where it is.

(Sonnet 11 'where it is', *Earthly*)

'Where it is' is a loose translation of *Dasein*, a Heideggerian principle meaning 'being there' or 'being-in-the-world', the adoption of which admirably suited Wedde's purposes in *Earthly*. Its finer points back up this correlation:

The two basic possibilities of man's existing (from the Latin *ex* and *sistere* ("standing out from")) are those in which *Dasein* either comes to itself (called authenticity) or loses itself (called inauthenticity); *Dasein* is inauthentic, for example, when it lets the possibilities of the choice for its own "ek-sisting" be given to it by others instead of deciding for itself. (19)

This description of *Dasein* comes close to the terms in which Chink (Wedde) delivers his version of the relationship of past to present as being very much a matter of individual decision. (*Dick Seddon* pp.141-2)

As we have already discovered, the sonnets after 'where it is' (number 11) are the exploration in miniature of a conflict much akin to the *Dasein* dilemma. If *Earthly* comes out as the positive, authentic side of *Dasein*, then *Spells* represents the details of a long and often painful process which preceded the eventual (and highly conditional) victory.

Meanwhile, Sonnet 20, the other major point of balance against considerations about the past, draws to a close this first encounter with *Dasein* decidedly in favour of the

concept's positive aspects. However, the twentieth sonnet is one of the aggregate poems, which means that 'pieces' of the past cannot help but reappear. The single line which is not a repeat from any of the preceding sonnets may therefore be the crux of the poem: 'to live/with the dream & have the world come on in!'

This assimilation of 'dream' and 'world', two previously antithetical terms in the sequence, is important to the direction the sonnets now take. The dream was bad, familiar, a dread from the past; its hold on the mind may be assumed to have been diminished because 'the world' of present circumstances does not attempt to block it out: 'to live/with the dream' is the ideal. As well as this, the dream is extending its own positive meanings and ultimately 'dream' and 'world' will become interchangeable in *Earthly*: 'Worlds within worlds' is explained as being:

born out

of that dream into this one: here you are
where you are: waking wherever you are.

(Sonnet 43; *Earthly*) (20)

Section III, 'Winter & Spring', reinforces awareness of the cyclical nature of the sonnet sequence. References to passing time have been picked up before this ('A beautiful evening, early summer', 'The leaves are almost all gone from the trees'), but Sonnets 20-30 deal with two spectacular seasons to the exclusion of most other things. This makes us realise that what sounds like a casual idea ('All right,

I thought, let's write sonnets for a year') is in fact a fully-worked-out spanning of the rhythms of Carlos' first twelve months. This is 1973, winter, and Wedde is working for the Post Office ('I bring bills like little reliquaries, / it's my job, I have nothing to prove'; Sonnet 21).

The hold which the Otago winter established on Wedde's imagination has been discussed and, as in *Dick Seddon*, thoughts about winter act as touchpaper for analogies. A simple simile ('White hoarfrost like an old man's stubble'; Sonnet 22) leads on to 'very stupid thoughts' about getting old, which by the time they have ranged the length of another poem have identified winter with mutability in the best of traditions: 'while hours and years/leave grizzles of frost on our fathers' bones.' (Sonnet 23).

This harsh, violent world is diametrically opposed to that of the beanflower:

"O let it happen let
it happen..." & it does & also rape
& other horrors. Power growing out of
the barrels of guns? Ah yes & flowers
out of the vacant pipes of marrow bones.

(Sonnet 23, *Earthly*)

The sovereignty of the summer beanpatch was inspired by the smell of its flowers. The heap-of-bones winter world which 'we march up & down on' (Sonnet 23) is arrived at by listening to footsteps on frost:

If you feel the subtle
resilience of real bone splintering
under your boots it's because you willed it.

(Sonnet 22, *Earthly*)

Sonnets 22 and 23 are violent in imagery and a similar sympathy for the temper of the winter season (physical and emotional) marks the final stages of the Chink/Kate affair:

Another time he bent her hand back and butted her in the face with his forehead. He wanted to hear something resist and break. Everything was so fucking passive! It was like being smothered.

(*Dick Seddon* p.208) (21)

In the winter sonnets occurs one of the few mentions Wedde makes of his family, a deadly accurate summing of how far away one grows from a mother and a father:

They came
on with their smiles while in my ear a quiet
voice whispered *nessun maggior dolore...*

(Sonnet 24 'airport', *Earthly*) (22)

'Who has greater pain...'; ('trembling I ached to hold them both again') the phrase from Dante is the epigraph of an earlier poem, also about coldness, age, a burnt-out symbol of human love, and the polluted world, all of which characterise Sonnets 21-25:

The evangelist sucks down the
poisonous night air of London, of the world.
His absolute wails cut thinly into me,
chills of nostalgia or death, seeking love.

('Evangelist', *Made Over* p.32)

This section of *Earthly* is Wedde's 'leaden echo'. The twenty-fifth sonnet is a grim little exercise in listening to one's own thoughts; the poet gives up, paralysis sets in. Endeavour is dismissed as useless ('O the whole great foundation is sand'; Sonnet 9) and the 'voice' peters out, buried beneath pessimism and sand. Hopkins' lines are moving under it all:

So be beginning, be beginning to despair.
 O there's none; no no no there's none:
 Be beginning to despair, to despair,
 Despair, despair, despair, despair. (23)

A decisive black line marks the transition between the leaden and the golden echoes; 'power transformer' could not be a more appropriate title to start off the spring sonnets. If winter encouraged distancing effects, spring is all for proximities. Carlos, his father tells him, was born first in the mind (very much a 'power transformer' itself):

& there you live now in faith & in hope
 before a horizon that could skate right
 up to you! (closer than *this*, than these lines,
 & closer than the thought of love, the "shape
 of things to come")

(Sonnet 26 'power transformer', *Earthly*)

The skating/skidding movement 'right up to you' is new in Wedde's iconography of horizons (it begins in Sonnet 15 and develops from bird-flight to horizon motion in Sonnet 21). Usually the horizon spaces 'pour', or you are 'poured out'

by them (*Dick Seddon* pp.187, 205; Sonnet 36; 'corolla'; 'Those Others') and stress is on the leading (opening) out into distance which was strong in *Made Over*. Now the direction is reversed, thanks to the generosity of the season. The pouring image is transfigured when it reappears in 'Summer Sonnets For La Primavera':

the horizon the blue sky
the air *pour towards you* the bean-flower's sweet
again

(Sonnet 44, *Earthly*) (my italics)

Wedde chooses his spring flowers with as much care for their connotations as he showed in assigning summer the bean-flower. The traditional symbolism of yellow flowers ('births & marriages') he acknowledges as derived from Pound's interpretation of that tradition. ('*Io Hymen!*'; the cry is taken from the locale of Cantos IV and XLVII). However this in no way diminishes the effect of the flowers themselves as potent forces on the mind and eye. As Kate explains:

Yesterday I was happy. I painted the shed doors yellow: a homage to the hills, their gorse, then barberry, then kowhai, and broom, and now delicate lupin flowers around the sea's edge, and the ragwort just starting: that yellow, yellow! the colour of Hymen, of marriages (I was taught) but I think a sacred colour: spring, piss, and sulphur... exorcism of winter.

(*Dick Seddon* p.172)

The imperative of the yellow flowers which cover the Otago hills is overwhelming. They form themselves into symbolic patterns by sheer actuality; Wedde's exultant list in Sonnet 27

is a chronology of the 'tough surviving "noxious weeds"' in the order they begin flowering, spring through summer. Kate keeps this order intact, and 'Those Others' includes the same list:

these hills are dark,
wooded, sometimes alight
with yellow flowers,
a dogged clasping
of gorse, barberry, kowhai, broom, lupin, ragwort.
The road follows their perfumes.

('Those Others' 4, *Spells* p.45)

The corollary of Sonnet 27 must surely be 'Who Cares':

I mean the clash
those flowers against the drab
fustian of the frosty slopes
the gulf seen to have been there &
seen to be leapt

Evidence!
Something new! something made possible
by the width of the gulf.

I mean there
can be no mistaking the achievement
since the flowers
hang brilliant in the middle of the woe
ful air/ neither here nor there

leaping! leaping!

storming the frozen barricades!

(Who Cares', *Spells* p.37)

The 'stunning' scent of wintersweet and the 'caustic fragrance,/savage & sweet' of pinewood are picked out by Wedde as olfactory correlatives of his rapturous yellows. Perfumes (and odours) figure consistently in his work,

probably because he is aware that mention of a certain smell produces a simulacrum of it in the reader's consciousness (one more way of reifying words): "I am quite sure that smells are direct keys to deep memories." (24) This explains why each occurrence of a scent in the poems has such an air of significance, sometimes explained and often tacit, surrounding it:

The towel is damp. The corners of the
 suitcase are battered & suspicious.
 The official snaps the locks triumphantly.
 There is nothing in the lining but the
 lavender you put there before I left.

(*'Postcards: London/Jamaica/New York/London', Made Over p.79*)

She remembers that she took her sandals off and dipped
 her feet in the cool fountain, shuffling them dry on the
 grass, before going on down through the dim verbena and
 rosemary scented paths under the trees, towards Khartoum
 Place.

(*Dick Seddon p.145*)

Because you're
 coming I've
 cleaned the place
 got a few things in
 changed the sheets & put some
 lemon thyme
 in the pillowslips
 which you'll crush
 with your
 small head

(*'The Party', Hasard 1 August 1977*)

The bitter waters you
 rode in on ah they
 filled your nostrils then Angel like an offshore breeze
 in spring yes
 gorse-flower & jasmin, something
 rare like that.

(*'Angel', Islands 20 Winter 1977, p.130*)

but *these* are yours
as her
 voice gratuitous a pure gift is yours
 something you recognise because it comes
 also from you See how she stoops & turns
 her ear in silence to listen to your

voice her own voice in your mouth her own truth:
 systaltic, not a dead echo but live
 response! as these are responses also
 to your voice & to my voice in your birth
 breathed into, inspired.

(Sonnet 57, *Earthly*) (25)

'Summer Sonnets For La Primavera' concentrate on the relationship between the real landscape and its symbolic possibilities. For example, it becomes gradually clear that the Primavera ('"Angel" "Blondie" '; Sonnet 43) at times metamorphoses into Rose ('bare-/headed, hazel-eyed, doubtful, laughing, blond'; Sonnet 7)

I wanted to write poems about
 spring, about you "Primavera", about
 the nagging dream of solitude
 into which you break like a beanshoot curled
 upon itself. But the shoot's put out

its sexy flower, you've got up, I'm late
 again, Carlos is almost a year old...

(Sonnet 45, *Earthly*)

Similarly, the ferryman of Sonnets 41, 44 and 48 is any one of a number of famous conductors from one symbolic shore to another, and the very beautiful images from the height of an Okains Bay hill at dawn (Sonnet 49) transfigure themselves into symbols whose ancestry is pre-Hellenic in the two sonnets which make up 'Time's halo'. This duality is deliberately juxtaposed in passages such as:

Time's halo at fifteen hundred feet breath
of young bulls sea-vapour "the good earth" yawns
cocksfoot & ryegrass rose-dawn the musk-rose at dawn
gasping sea-vapour young bulls wearing wreaths
of breath

(Sonnet 51, *Earthly*)

The last ten sonnets fly high on the accumulated impetus of "all this" ('the many has the power to make us fly'; Sonnet 56) and draw together the already convergent threads of the sequence. The poem which at least partially inspired *Earthly*, Rawleigh's sonnet, has been saved up for this moment. How snugly its 'lesson' fits *Earthly's* preoccupations may be seen in Sonnet 56, as metaphysical conceit and paradox blend inconspicuously with imagery distinctively Wedde's:

There are three things Carlos that break into
our world & flourish while they are apart
but sometimes they join forces in the heart
& this dull axis brings us wrack & rue.
The three are these: love, the one, the many.
Love, love it is that lends the beacon light,
our feet grip earth because of solitude,
the many has the power to make us fly.
Ah Carlos, while this tension lasts you'll see
how love burns, earth breathes, sails of heaven soar.
But when that pitch is slack then love will flee,
the earth be clay, & Carlos fly no more.

(Sonnet 56 'after "Sir Walter Rawleigh to his sonne"', *Earthly*)

IV: Reticulation and movement within reticulation

There are two remaining areas of *Earthly* which require detailed explication. They come to a head late in the sequence, but their presence has been emergent in the sonnets (and in other parts of Wedde's poetry) all along, which is why a separate account of each is probably the least confusing

means of dealing with them. The first could be called 'the blood net', the second 'dreams as worlds', and connections are to be expected.

The 'blood net' metaphor signifies extensive reticulation. It is at once the intricate mechanism of living organisms and the web of relation which binds such organisms to one another. We take up the concern at its most expansive in Sonnet 34:

O the firmament *does* stream
with blood hills cringe into their own shadows
& darkness seems to suck like a huge boot
free of the harbour...no simulacrum

but a truthful vision of continents
sluiced together on the slaughterhouse floor.

(Sonnet 34 'more', *Earthly*) (26)

The point is that the scope of the net precludes any but the 'truthful vision'; as surely as the sun rises *here*, it means that it shines also *there* (where atrocities are known to be being committed). 'The firmament' is, after all, an inclusive image and not used lightly by Wedde. Its positive face appears momentarily in 'in memoriam Pablo Neruda', a sonnet counteractive to the grimness which precedes it (27), and again in Sonnet 43. This aspect of the image has been implicit from the beginning of *Earthly*:

A beautiful evening, early summer.
I'm walking home from the hospital. His head
was a bright nebula

a firmament
swimming in the vulva's lens...*the colour
of stars*/"Terraces the colour of stars..."

(Sonnet 2 'it's time', *Earthly*) (28)

The identification of terrestrial circuitries with celestial ones is most important. Wedde makes it possible to see that most systems refer back to the microcosmic/macrocosmic scope of the 'blood net'. Thus:

You exterminate caterpillars / yet
 you like them really since you have your
 own which work away gently within you
 fashioning organic spaces.
 You are a filigree.
 You scarcely burden the air.
 One scarcely burdens the air.
 I scarcely burden the air.

(*'The Gardener's Messages' 5, Made Over p.27*)

The road which wound through the park was filled with traffic travelling in both directions. It was impossible to imagine where it might all be going, or coming from. It was like blood, a small section of a kind of endless reticulation, a maze, a mystery, within which there was an endless motion, utterly inscrutable...

(*Dick Seadon p.144*)

By the end of *Earthly*, the largest of all these analogies ('the firmament') has regained its status as representative of the affirmative aspects of the entire celestial/terrestrial biosphere. Sonnet 60 throws back at us lines which make this clear:

O the firmament *does* stream with blood high
 familiar stars still bright in heaven's hearth
 "It's time!" a *paradiso*, well...but earth-
 ly anyway
 spreading blue sails of sky

(Sonnet 60, *Earthly*)

More often than not, however, the 'endless reticulation' does not occasion such responses, and getting from the thirty-fourth sonnet to the sixtieth means dealing with the sluices on the 'slaughterhouse floor'. The 'hot convection' sonnets return us to Wedde's Middle Eastern experiences (a logical extension of reflections about the South-East Asian war). Against the 'atavistic stump' which is the landmine casualty are balanced the soaring kites of his children; a vision of past into future, flint scars versus hot convections, the healing of wounds without forgetting what they stand for:

: Vision as touching, looking through the web
of blood, touching the scars that make us single,
by which we are recognised/

(Sonnet 38 'donation', *Earthly*; also c.f. 'Red', *Spells* p.55)

Sonnet 38 is a measure of how powerful a phenomenon Wedde considers the 'blood net' to be. His experience of being a blood donor in Amman during the fighting of 1970 generated two closely related poems; one is a translation into personal terms of the significance of the act:

The blood rose out of me
for some who had not died
in makeshift ambulances along the
pitted Damascus road. I remembered

an evening in that white city
when my body rose towards
you. Kites hung in the summer convections.
Your pale body on the white bed, long

scars across it, green jalousie shadows.
My life crowds up in me.
My thoughts tug like
kites above the dry upward currents.

('Ruth' 2, *Made Over*) (29)

The other, Sonnet 38, moves the experience into high gear. It is one of Earthly's sacraments, and generates the title of Wedde's next collection of poetry:

blood rises out of me/ hot convections
 thrust at kites/ blood flowers in breasts in bellies
 blood crowds in the groin

These are spells

These are spells for coming out by day
 These are pages torn from the book
 of the dead

This is the blood that rises
 This is the hot convection that lifts it

This is what it rises towards
 This is
 what it rises from

This is the battered
 fragment this the triumphant glider

(Sonnet 38 'donation', *Earthly*)

The glider's grace in the airflow, its silence and toughness, provide yet another potent image grown out of the 'blood net'; firstly, there is the spectacle of the landmined man, then focus shifts to the 'hot convections' which symbolise a putting to rights of the damage, and finally a third motif arrives, that of the 'blood bomb', an elm-seed-silent process of '*right now*':

This sound people don't hear, is it voices,
 or bodies touching, falling or is it

like the forgotten subversive whisper
 of blood slipping through the guarded spaces
 of hearts set to a time to detonate?

(Sonnet 39, *Earthly*)

There is more to the make-up of the 'blood net' than this outline would suggest, and it should therefore be considered as an introduction to further dealings with the image. At times the web becomes a metaphor for 'reality' (the spaces and the mesh which describes them then assume complex relations). On other occasions, breakings and mendings in the 'blood net' connect directly to the processes of wounding and healing which are significant in *Spells For Coming Out*.

If leaping-lifting-lofting movements were the *leitmotif* of *Made Over*, the reticulative principle dominates *Earthly*. The energy which informs both concepts makes it possible to link them, producing a vision of dynamic movements (leaps, lifts, lofts) which connect to form a giant web. Kate's view of the city traffic leads on to reflections about the web:

...yes, and if you tried to make sense of it, you'd go crazy. The lines of traffic were so unbroken that after a while their motion seemed almost to cease: she was looking at a snake-like scintillation, a flicker of stasis. She had the sense of occupying some kind of pivot or fulcrum. The city sounds which reached her seemed to tip past the point of perception where she could hear them. They became a kind of silence. She felt herself poised above a mystery, in a precarious balance.

(*Dick Seddon* p.144)

The quality and direction of movement becomes an overriding matter in *Earthly*. The sequence's reticulative, cumulative structure is designed to provoke questions about the where, why, and how of its bewilderingly complex movements (the correlatives with life itself are obvious). One strategy for coping with this unending motion is Wedde's merging of dreams and dream-worlds with actual terrestrial processes

('that deep/sepulchre where the unending sleep/of generation dreams its beautiful/impure products'; Sonnet 35 'in memoriam Pablo Neruda'). We will return to this in due course.

Meanwhile, there is the option of scepticism as to the very existence of motion to be considered, given the extraordinary propensity of individual movements to connect themselves to multiple points within the network. The linkage is sometimes mundane, as in Sonnet 24 'airport' ('Arriving & departing seem the same'); or it may span the life/death gap, as in 'Near Purakanui' ('It is motion that puzzles me. I cannot tell/an end from a beginning'; *Spells* p.36); or the connections may be so dense as to obscure all sense of movement; as in *Dick Seddon* ('You never arrive. You never leave. There's no centre.' p.171).

The concern with movement which is *Earthly's* preoccupation is *Dick Seddon's* obsession. Rather as Chink's ideas about past and present illuminated the treatment of those matters in the sonnets, so there is a parallel interchange on the subject of motion. Kate saw a 'flicker of stasis' in the reticulation of lane-traffic (*Dick Seddon* p.144); the corresponding vision for Chink, and a rare explanation of one of his personal talismanic phrases, is the section entitled 'Killing the Fish':

Chink snaps his fingers, his eyes shut.

That's how it is. You kill the fish every time. You kill a bit of yourself too. Like Einstein sitting in his chair, and then: 'Hey, everything's powerful!' Oh ho. Yes, right. But he killed the fish...he *had* to (...) You can say the truth's *in* this thing...in its flaw...but the thing itself's a dead fish. Soon it will stink. Because you've stopped the motion. If it was right, then you'd never know...you'd never see it...because it's continuous. So you kill the fish every time. You never know...you never *will* know...

But listen, what matters is being in the place, the fish rising, sunset, and your own head like a deep pool. Then standing up and casting like you didn't even think about it. You gotta take these risks, otherwise where are you? It's a price you pay.

(*Dick Seddon* p.170) (30)

Consciously stopping the flux destroys its peculiar beauty; living up to its mandate thoroughly is a tough business, which Chink is willing (or driven) to take on.

Kate:

Yet I suppose I had some kind of intuition early on of what his wandering up and down the country meant, and saw that those barely perceived migrations of mind and spirit which were the real, the massive correlative of the main trunk road - saw that those almost invisible migrations were substituting for something.

(*Dick Seddon* p.161)

Chink subscribes to (perhaps invented?) the schema of dream-world travelling which is also present in *Earthly*; Lake Chad, the Atlas mountains, ultimately other universes ('There's plenty of time...'). The important feeling is that 'you're getting somewhere. Like right now, ah...I'm in Marrakesh! I'm in Xanadhu!'. He explains: 'I'm talking about dreams, Kate. That's a habit of mine. Didn't you say Sweet dreams just now? I even met you in one, right? Here we are. It's Xanadhu, it's amazing...' (*Dick Seddon* pp.158-9). Movement or no movement?

Chink was a dreamer. Do we call him a visionary? Here we are, surrounded by the sea. The horizons are so endless we can almost meet ourselves setting out: endless possibility...

(*Dick Seddon* p.161)

And what is it that moves? Night-vision complicates the possibilities:

...The universe is tipped up. You grind stars under your feet. Space is solid, it shifts and sucks just enough to slow you down. Running into distance (chasing a frisbee), your feet bog, you expect to smash your face into rock, to be crushed.

Lifting your eyes to the horizon, you experience salvation. You are poured out. You sense how that 'barrier' recedes forever.

You're not moving. But *it* is.

(*Dick Seddon* p. 205)

Dick Seddon sets out the whole dilemma of 'progress' and 'direction'; returning to the sonnets, their dream-travelling and world-travelling falls readily into context. The ambivalence of movement is re-explored in familiar *Earthly* imagery in, for example, Sonnet 47:

Beyond that on the far headland a flood
of yellow flowers gushes up to strike
the sky: *there*, there's the place, the way back,
in that every-receding space the loud
dynamo of the traveller's body crowds
up its powers, burning yellow to black.

Coming out he enters. Entering he
goes back, the traveller, seeming to wake at
the bosky mouth, at the marge of the wood

(Sonnet 47, *Earthly*)

That the traveller is strung out between lives and deaths here is compositely clear; the horizon space is beautiful yet deadly in the best Wedde tradition, the traveller's power burns out but remembering back to the 'black' Sonnet 36, we cannot regard this as anything more perilous than metamorphosis. (31) The full implications of this journeying come out in a later reiteration of the lines from Sonnet 47:

spaces we return to, worlds within worlds,
 where we come out to enter, enter to
 go back: the world the bosky mouth
 the dark wood the deep cunt

(Sonnet 58, *Earthly*)

It is thus shown to be quite possible that 'one who turned back' should 'move the world or prise open a way/out of the dream-world' (Sonnet 18). The journey may be astral, Styxian, or terrestrial; the traveller can be a sleeping child (Carlos under the plum tree, 'small & mysterious'), or an unborn child:

I imagine the womb as a universe
 & the child as an asteroid
 travelling so swiftly it is motionless
 across distances so vast it stops forever

('Losing the Straight Way' 3, *Spells* p.14) (32)

He may also be a man dreaming of his son's birth, and 'remembering' his own (Sonnets 13 and 14), or simply a man alive:

& I

couldn't ever have enough of all that

& you again & again & again:
 waking, quickening, travelling through one
 world after another through all the weird
 stations of the earthly paradise named
 for one impossible diamond-backed dream
 or another, as though no one else cared

45
 or could care
 in all the wide
 world or worlds...!

(Sonnets 44-45, *Earthly*)

The principle of interpenetration develops its own phrase, first encountered in 'wintersweet': 'like occluded memories breaking through/into the world/the scent breaks into me!' (Sonnet 28). In the sonnet dedicated to Neruda's memory, the importance of the movement is augmented because 'breaking through' functions as a weapon against solipsism:

ah Neruda

you have no further use for your poems
but we need them we need them: let them be

green lamps that break

into our solitude

(Sonnet 35, 'in memoriam Pablo Neruda', *Earthly*)

These 'green lamps' soon amalgamate with the beanflower's benevolent influence. The Primavera breaks into 'the nagging dream of solitude/...like a beanshoot curled/upon itself' (Sonnet 45) and then the Eurydice story is neatly combined with a motif wholly Wedde's own:

can I ever catch up? do I want to?
turning for one last look back: that beacon,
that weird station, the lovely confusion
of the trip, your memory breaking through
to bless the present summer sojourn,
to soothe love's forever healing burn.

(Sonnet 45, *Earthly*) (my italics)

The life-out-of-death concern is rediscovered in these sonnets of the last decade, a not-unexpected situation when their subject is trans-existential journeying. Thus La Primavera in summer is a once-pregnant Rose and also the female principle

of the Proserpina/Persephone myth and of the Orpheus and Eurydice story:

but travellers through the earthly paradise
 feel passion's taproot twisting in the bone
 the flower that splits the clod the leaf unfurled.
 Like Proserpina out of solipsis
 they tread, as season gives way to season,
 the sappy pathway of the underworld."

(Sonnet 46 'pugfoot', *Earthly*)

Pound's cry in the *Cantos*, 'ply over ply', begins to fit *Earthly* increasingly well. How near their two worlds are drawing is demonstrated by the equivalence of seminal phrases from each: 'phallic ambrosial' is a term Pound uses to celebrate the vigorous beauty of his Ovidian episodes; 'passion's taproot' has a parallel facility for penetrating filters and 'lodging like some shrill implant' just by the ear. Its power derives from a sense that each of its terms sums up huge, complementary areas of *Earthly*. The 'passion' co-ordinate has been thoroughly explored from the outset, and although its connection with 'taproot' is new, this has been prepared for in the images of growth, of putting down roots, which are common in the sequence. Wedde enlarged the significance of these co-ordinates before actually using them in combination, so that, unforgettably tied to Sonnet 46, are these lines:

...the the high
 dome of the dark firmament looked to me
 like a vault pierced from above by tendrils
 & taproots where glow-worms lived giving out
 some tremulous light...

worlds within worlds...

(Sonnet 43, *Earthly*)

'Breaking through' imagery eventually gives way to the ultimate vision of breaking *out* into the earthly paradise for good (or as long as 'for good' means in a moving world). Just as Kate leaves her behind-glass existence, so Wedde is to be heard crying ('howling'; Sonnet 53) for 'yet more, & still more':

I wanted to follow through these gifts from
me to you Carlos, you to me, & then

out! out into the sunlight & the rain,
the old diamond-backed carapace of dreams,

out into all the wide worlds!

(Sonnet 59, *Earthly*) (33)

Of *Earthly's* multiple movements, this seems to emerge as the most affirmative of all.

CHAPTER 3

THE ŌTAGO VISION (2): *SPELLS FOR COMING OUT* (1977)

In a tightly-written review of *Spells For Coming Out* (Auckland: A.U.P./O.U.P., 1977) Lawrence Jones starts off by noting the extraordinary coherence of the collection: 'more than a miscellany - recurrent themes, even an implicit 'plot'' (1). None of these things should surprise a reader of Wedde, used to the submerged narrative in *Earthly's* year-long 'conversation' with Carlos, and before that the highly connective development of *Made Over*. Once the 'plot' delivers up its templates, this time

concerning going 'through some heavy shit',
and being 'born again' while carrying into the 'next dream'
the painful memory of 'last year's emotions'. (1)

then the pattern becomes largely a matter of tessellation in fields with which we are already cognizant.

However, it is not that simple. We have to remember, from an *a posteriori* situation, how difficult some of the poems were on first reading. At that stage only the most obvious of connections were visible to let one know that there might be others which, once worked out, would illuminate an entire sequence. I will work systematically through the three sections of *Spells*, drawing into the discussion pertinent references from all parts of the collection as they seem appropriate.

I: 'Sans Souci'

'The Programme', the collection's opening piece (*Spells* p.9; first published in *Edge* 4 August 1972), epitomises the problem of initial difficulty. Placed as an obstacle to comprehension between the reader and the more explicable poems which follow, its significance cannot be ignored. Lawrence Jones rightly calls it 'a surrealistic statement', which takes us back to works like 'Belladonna' (1970), 'The Presence of an Obstacle' (1969-73), some of the *Made Over* poems, and pieces which Wedde contributed to the later issues of *Freed*. These last, 'Because Of Its Marked' and 'In Index', operate on principles of fragmentation akin to those in 'The Programme, which makes them valuable as possible models for Wedde's later surrealism. The *Freed* poems seem to be dream-derived, and 'In Index' particularly is pervaded by dream fragments of a bizarre, often violent nature:

13

Mask of pitch
 May-beetle dream
 Meeting Dr K in the Karntnerstrasse
 Menstruation
 Milk stains on vest
 Summer holidays at Montbrison

14

Nansen's sciatica
 Napoleon & the wine merchant
 Napoleon's dream

15

Disguised Oedipus dream
 Operation on penis
 Orthopaedic institute

('In Index', *Freed* 4, June 1971, p.9)

The question here (and in 'The Programme') is what to do about this surrealistic data which hardly amounts to a normal aggregate but may very well possess a logic of its own. An 'answer' is implied by the lines which close 'Because Of Its Marked' on an abruptly lucid note:

Transformed.
A silence
of waking at night into speech.

('Because Of Its Marked', *Freed* 3 mid-1970, n.p.)

i.e. these fragments are the one-liners you wake up with; off-beat, dream-connected, sometimes brilliant, mostly not ('the rubbish of the ego', Wedde calls them; Sonnet 29, *Earthly*). Because it is Wedde's poem, each fragment has some context for him; however, as a public construct the poem works differently. The lines to be taken up by the reader are those which shoot through the filters to lodge just by his own ear; the rest are some-one else's point of departure, and not to be unduly worried over. To take an obvious example: 'Animals moving out' from 'In Index' is a line familiar to any reader of *Made Over* (p.23) and would possibly be a lead-in to other components of the 'index'. Or again, a reader conversant with the poetry of Creeley might work into 'Because Of Its Marked' from the lines: 'If you were going to get a pet/what kind of animal would you get.' (Robert Creeley; 'If You' *For Love: Poems* 1950-1960). The point is that any known factor will spark an interpretative process, and that there is no harm in diverse, even converse, interpretations.

Turning back to 'The Programme', we try this tactic, with spectacular results. Scrutiny of the poem ascertains two things; firstly, that some kind of public opening is about to get underway, and secondly, that it is likely to be a painful, perhaps violent, affair. From these premises emerges the logic of 'The Programme', and the poem turns out to be aptly positioned. It is worth detailing the ramifications of the 'opening' in 'The Programme' because the metaphor is central to *Spells for Coming Out*.

The natural assumption to make is that some spectacle is to be revealed to watching eyes; what leads us to suspect that the 'opening' is touching a raw nerve in the poet is the sardonic, aggressive tone of the piece in conjunction with its violent images:

O throats like massed trombones, knuckles like admired
 flights of steps to the cathedrals of Europe,
 skulls resonant as the blasting lids
 in your bird sanctuary,
 eyes which have become accustomed
 to their skilfully lacerated blinkers, etc.

('The Programme', *Spells* p.9)

This is perhaps explicable as protest against the encirclement.

The 'opening' appears to be unavoidable and the ^{Defiance} truculence of the 'invitation' something of a last defence on the part of the speaker. We must conclude that 'what is going to be revealed' is of a highly personal nature ('love'), but must nevertheless be brought into the open.

It is a small step from here to speculate that the 'opening' process may well be figurative, and the analogy which comes

readily to mind, knowing Wedde's poetry, is that of the wound which has to be opened and cleaned, despite, pain, in order to heal cleanly.

It can safely be assumed at this point that the key-word of 'The Programme' is 'opening' (the operation itself) rather than 'programme' (what will come out of it, i.e. the poems which follow). That the 'opening' is figuratively surgical becomes clear in the course of *Spells*; it is a metaphor which Wedde has used elsewhere. He is well aware of the paradoxical aspects of health (the 'hot convection' sonnets are one example of this), and especially interesting is his explanation of Darwish's treatment of the subject:

There are two related groups of imagery, that of wounds and that of martyrdom and death, which, with their ramifications, shape the matrix of most of these poems. These images lead us to a persistent inversion of expected values and responses associated with what the images stand for. (...) The wound is the occasion of renascence. This is its most consistent meaning, conveyed through a variety of symbolic functions. (2)

Wedde takes up where Darwish left off in this respect; a number of symbolic 'openings' came to light in *Spells*:

'If you don't
look after a bed the sleep
goes out of it' like a moth
like the glisten of real vision

out of the eye/

('Opening the Bed', *Spells* p.51)

Things are somehow cleaned up by an opening:

Men & women step
 into each other fling open the shutters &
 air their place.

(*'Losing the Straight Way' 1, Spells p.12*)

As for Darwish's inversion effect as mentioned by Wedde, the opening (or re-opening) is associated with pain but always initiates a healing process.

In Wedde's own poetry the sun often functions as healer, though its efficiency is in the balance at every sunrise. We remember back to other dawns, looking out across Otago harbour: 'The sky bellies//in the east//mouths of hills/spill thin milk, the Pleiades depart leading/their bull by the snout...' (Sonnet 32, *Earthly*) and '/that eastern light leaking from umber hills//"pitiless"//no the war has not yet ceased' (Sonnet 34, *Earthly*). *Spells* elaborates on these sunrises which are narrow victories over the preceding darkness:

As the skyline gapes in the east
 above the peninsula above Teraweka
 thin mouth blue lips parting by reflex
 drooling light sideways upon Bellevue

- know friends fugitives lovers that I
 am dreaming of you at this hour
 & wondering where you are waking
 under the same cold dawn

which you may see as I do
 opening finally its healing eye

(*'Four Vectors' 1, Spells p.38*) (3)

There is an intricate link between the sun as healer and the sun as 'eye of heaven' (Shakespeare); Wedde contrives to merge the two functions.

Healing is a delicate operation, the eye a delicate mechanism, which is perhaps the point of several references Wedde makes to its protective covering. Lines from Sonnet 23 ('In hope/the mind blinks & closes like the eyelids/of a lover') which also occurred in *Dick Seddon* were on both occasions designed to show how vulnerable the eye (the mind) is to injury. The same feeling is to be had from 'The Programme':

skulls resonant as the blasting lids
in your bird sanctuary,
eyes which have become accustomed
to their skilfully lacerated blinkers, etc.

('The Programme', *Spells* p.9)

and the care which should be exercised with all delicate things is elsewhere expressed in terms derived from the same group of images:

when he drew the covers down &
back as though to examine
the pink undertissues of a lower
eyelid...

('Opening the Bed', *Spells* p.50)

Thus, when Wedde can conclude that a healing process as intricately sensitive as the workings of an eye is actually effective:

& after all I say: The eye heals.

Today at Aramoana where I lay washed up in spring
light blinked through a great pupil in the rock
& I thought of you seen by the same light
friends fugitives lovers.

('Four Vectors' 4, *Spells* p.41)

the statement is crucial, and its duality (is the eye itself recovering? is it healing other things? both?) only increases this importance.

The curative offices of the sun, of the eye, and of the sun-as-eye, are a marked feature of *Spells*, but often the 'opening up' movement involves more direct contact with wounds, incisions and blood. The anticipated violence of 'The Programme' ('All you need is/...your due portion of hate.') is played out in the poems which follow. Wedde speaks of 'gorging the violence' from shared 'feasts' of passion ('Four Vectors' 2, *Spells* p.39), and then calls the whole affair a 'lupercalia' which has left 'a rawhide welt' on the mind ('Four Vectors 4. *Spells* p.41). Earlier in the collection, imagery of injury and healing is prevalent:

Their lips crept together for silence

The mouths of their wounds
crept together for concealment.

Beneath white lips of scars
their blood ran on in silence.

('Losing the Straight Way' 4, *Spells* p.15)

This is aftermath. The exhilarating danger of 'Dancing// on God's veiny wrist' ('they/lean upon blades the flesh closing white-/lipped over curved wounds'; 'Gulf Letters Number Six 1, *Made Over* p.43) is absent; its effects (the wounds) are what concern us here. The significance of scars was noticed in *Earthly*, in the cicatrices of the landmine casualty, the 'scarface' earth (Sonnet 36), the 'always healing' scar on the ferryman's shoulder (Sonnet 41). All of these were explicated by a superb passage:

: Vision as touching, looking through the web
of blood, touching the scars that make us single,
by which we are recognised/

(Sonnet 38, *Earthly*)

the importance of which is emphasised by its exact re-iteration
in a key passage of *Spells*:

well the people of this place
have nothing much wrong with them
but for a lack of eyes to see
with, no, eyes to look *through*
at the delicate
blood-filled mesh binding us all
by which we are all embraced wherever
there are eyes for us to see each other
as the blind do,
vision as touching,
looking through the web of blood,
touching the scars
that make us single
by which we are recognised.

('Red' 3, *Spells* p.55) (4)

The metaphor of the 'blood net' is thus carried over from the
earlier collection, now with emphasis on the dramatics (breaking
and mending) of the reticulation. Scars are never disfiguring
in Wedde's poetry; as records of occasions when the web of
relation was torn, they are proof of an effectual regenerative
principle.

We turn now to the submerged narrative of *Spells* which
is the ultimate source of the metaphors of opening and healing
of wounds just described. A couple of lines from *Earthly* point
us into the continuing account of Wedde's past (re-opening
the wound) in *Spells*; the young ferryman's injury has already
been mentioned ('his oars are worn//on his shoulder a scar
always healing'; Sonnet 41), and the ambiguity of this wound

is given some context by the revelation that La Primavera's summer sojourn helps 'to soothe love's forever healing burn' (Sonnet 45). That 'love' is to be prime mover of the patterning of pain in *Spells* was promised from the outset:

What about later for that/
love is what is going to be revealed
if only we can get together some good teams.

(*'The Programme'*, *Spells* p.9)

It should be noted that the poems which make up the collection of 1977 were actually written much earlier and are virtually the negative field of *Dick Seddon* and *Earthly*. At times there are overlaps, but *Spells* is specifically concerned with Wedde's private struggle to assimilate past and present. Most of the poems were published separately over the period 1972-74 (c.f. pp.222-3), but only when they appeared together and in sequence three years later did a reasonably obvious picture emerge of the shadowy crises hinted at in *Made Over* and *Earthly* (and even, fictionalised, in *Dick Seddon*). *Earthly* dealt with part of the personal anguish; *Spells* begins by elucidating the earlier world of 'Poems About Snow'.

'August, the Paired Butterflies' (*Spells* p.10) is the first opening up of the memory-wound. Its locus is English, and 'the foreign strange/& sometimes so silent young man' is the same Wedde 'Heading back to London &/deep trouble & damage' ('Old Man of the Mountain', *Spells* p.26) whom his friends have 'had tales to tell of through this troubled summer'. That the tales concern pain and separation is clear from the poem itself, and backed up by the origin of its title. Pound (Rihaku):

The paired butterflies are already yellow with August
 Over the grass in the West Garden;
 They hurt me. I grow older. (5)

Who Wedde's poem is addressed to is an open question. The fourth part of 'The Presence of an Obstacle' (*Mate* 20, p.56) is actually the account of 'that park I wrote you about (Blake's/ headstone, 'De Foe's' memorial)', but the zany events of the prose work do not connect directly with the poem, and the fairhaired girl in the park is not necessarily the 'you' who left for Italy.

Italy, however, is the scene of past trouble for Wedde, unspecified but serious:

In Milano very late one wet night
 I went looking for Leonardo
 da Vinci's canal: I was going to
turn back I was going to jump in right
 over my head.

(Sonnet 30 'Leonardo da Vinci', *Earthly*)

and some link between this occasion and the poems of the '*Sans Souci*' section is suggested by mention of the Pinelli case in both. A certain 'Giuliana Mieli' is brought into focus:

who sleeps in that part of me
 which I think resembles *una selva oscura*
 a wood dark with growth

('Losing the Straight Way' 1, *Spells* p.12)

Against very beautiful images of an Umbrian autumn, Wedde

touches on the outlines of an involvement which meant too much to be arbitrarily forgotten about (Chink: 'Anything that happened once that mattered remains present, right?'). The compulsive nature of the 'opening' process, guessed at in 'The Programme', is confirmed by the last poem of *Sans Souci*:

This will be the second poem I've written for you
 Giuliana Mieli the second at any rate
 which I recognised thinking 'yes, for her'
 because it seemed necessary because I had
 no choice because the voice that was speaking
 was speaking to you was looking to you
 to receive the words with that grave hot
 attention in your eyes as though I really
 had something to say. I have little to say.

(*'At Dante's Tomb', Spells p.16*)

Before this comes 'Losing the Straight Way', three sections of which celebrate the projected birth of a child to the Weddes. The first section is an announcement of the good news addressed to Giuliana. It has a bittersweet tone to it ('This, Giuliana Mieli :/which I want you to be among the first to know'), clearly because the 'wood dark with growth' is associated with circumstances removed from 'that new green' which is the world of the present:

Thus it all comes round
 again, light green & love,
 & now blossom & shattered sunlight
 among the buildings:
 these very rich hours

for which almost everything must change/

(*'Losing the Straight Way' 1, Spells p.12*)

What Giuliana represents to Wedde is indicated by the context from which he took this poem's title, the famous

opening of the *Inferno*:

Midway in the journey of our life I found myself in a dark wood, for the straight way was lost. Ah, how hard it is to tell what that wood was, wild, rugged, harsh; the very thought of it renews the fear! It is so bitter that death is hardly more so. But to treat of the good that I found in it, I will tell you of the other things that I saw there. (6)

The dark wood of confusion is quietly alluded to in *Earthly*; a sonnet playing on the semantic variations and implications of the word 'hello' produces:

Do not halloo until you're out
of the wood
 oscura
 ché la dirita
via era...

(Sonnet 53 'hello', *Earthly*)

The original Italian of the *Inferno* (meaning 'dark' 'for the straight way...') inserts itself into a casual reference to woods, indicating the compulsiveness of the hold this phrase has on Wedde's mind.

It is to be noted that Wedde's 'translation' of *una selva oscura* emphasises the living, branching potential of the image rather than its hasardous darkness. Similarly, 'midway in the journey of our life' is altered to become a centristic co-ordinate rather than a chronological one:

I lie down & take off my body/
I lie down letting my head drop sideways
losing my way.
Somehow at the centre of my life
& the seasons come into me

(*'Losing the Straight Way' 1, Spells p.11*)

Wedde is here restructuring the beginning of Canto 1 of the *Inferno* to suit his purposes. Dante's account of the moment of entry into the confusion of the *selva oscura* ('I cannot rightly say how I entered it, I was so full of sleep at the moment I left the true way' (6)) has been closely paralleled.

The poem then moves on to the subject of the pregnancy, and its third section is a fantasia on the generative processes and their affiliations to diverse parts of the all-embracing 'blood net'; the womb as honeycomb, lung, bare tree branches, city streets, a universe, a deep river pool. All are images of reticulation and patterned flow. The gourd and the bursting pod are more literally related to the shapes of pregnancy, while imagining the womb 'as the blank centre of a girl's eye/which the world/penetrates with its images' (Losing the Straight Way 3, *Spells* p.13) is another allusion to the delicacy of mechanisms (eye and womb) intended for tough experiences.

The fourth section of 'Losing the Straight Way' presents a startling change of mood. The elaborative verse patterns of elation have disappeared, to be replaced by a brief, low-key account of the effects of some personal catastrophe. The poem started out as a celebration of the news that a child was expected, and knowing that *Earthly* contains two sonnets 'for a child who turned back', we may infer that the end of 'Losing the Straight Way' is about the miscarriage of that pregnancy ('The mouths of their wounds/crept together for concealment'). The possibility had been foreseen, but the likelihood of actual disaster dismissed as over-anxiety in the second section of the poem. Losing the baby must have

severely shaken the Wedde who refused to listen to that 'vestigial part' of himself which insisted that present happiness must have its price. The conflict of attitudes to the past has appeared again. 'Losing the Straight Way' was first published March 1972 (*Meanjin* 31 No. 1 1972, pp. 34-7), well before Wedde came to deal with the pasts and presents of *Dick Seddon* or *Earthly*. This means that the fear in the earlier poem that some terrible price will be extorted for the privilege of being 'born again' (redeemed from the past) is an embryonic form of the dissension between Chink and Kate on this matter.

'At Dante's Tomb', the second of the Giuliana poems, does not dwell on the subject of the 'child who turned back':

This will be the second poem I've written for you.
The first got added to things happened.

('At Dante's Tomb', *Spells* p.16)

Instead, it is the poet's own turnings, 'believing that *this time*/I knew something about grief about compassion/about love', that occupy his thoughts. The poem is valedictory ('for 'these very rich hours'/have nothing to say to you but *corragio!*') but haunted; we can only conclude that Giuliana is perhaps another 'forever healing burn' on Wedde's mind:

I've turned
& turned faster & faster. Then I stopped:
there you were a bright
beech-tree in the clear high air.
This is the second poem I've written for you
Giuliana because the season is burning
because in Assisi I saw San Francesco
diving joyfully skywards over the cold dome/
because in the end I am speechless.

(At Dante's Tomb', *Spells* p.17)

The Dantean motifs of 'Losing the Straight Way' and 'At Dante's Tomb' ensure that '*Sans Souci*' is firmly associated with a European world; these motifs have a strong positive force, no doubt the result of Wedde's obvious admiration for Dante the man in Dante the poet:

Nothing sadder or more painful
than recalling the happy past - it was
Black & White who fought in Florence then,
young Dante being full of hot blood,

whose desire & will were later moved equally,
as a Wheel, by Love that moves the sun
& other stars...

exiled also
from ideals.

('The Evangelist', *Made Over* p.32)

It is the suggestion of underlying grief which truly attracts Wedde's imagination to Dante. The opening of the *Inferno* hints at sadness inextricable from great joy, much in the way that '*Sans Souci*' does. The key idea in both works is '*Nessun maggior dolore...*'.

The motif of exile, arising from the introduction of Dante into the poems, is of signal importance. Giuliana is 'exiled' from the kind of people she most feels need of; Wedde is 'exiled' from that part of his past which she inhabits; Dante's historical exile blends these states of removal with their Italian locus. Yet another type of 'exile' inherent in Wedde's situation is made apparent by the transition from '*Sans Souci*' to 'Old Man of the Mountain', the second of the three sections of *Spells*. 'At Dante's Tomb' is a cut-off point; we 'wake up' back in New Zealand, to begin the job of

specific situations. (With systems, everything *has* happened before and thus all decisions, actions events, etc. theoretically have precedent). Charles Olson objected to this aspect of logical systems:

What I am kicking around is this notion: that KNOWLEDGE either goes for the CENTRE or it's inevitably a State Whore - which American and Western education generally is, has been, since its beginning. (I am flatly taking Socrates as progenitor, his methodology still the RULE: "I'll stick my logic up, and classify, boy, classify you right out of existence.") (7)

and a similar distaste for received theorising characterises Wedde. His personal creed is an adaptation of Heidegger's in the poem '*Philosophenweg*': 'Belief is action. Try it.', and lines from the same poem spell out this message:

Beneath cool beeches at
the edge of the forest
the *Philosophenweg*, the
Philosopher's Path, & resting benches
inscribed with names: Fichte,
Hegel. etc. Martin Heidegger
ain't there.

(...)

He didn't follow this track

but led a girl among the
trees & fucked her in deep leaves
& moss, saw reflected in
her eyes as they closed a lean

tall figure with tangled hair
& a smile like the flash of
sunlight among beech tops.

Philosophenweg, *Lipsync* 1 August 1972) (8)

Heidegger is a figure of great significance to Wedde; he is chief advocate of the one branch of conventional philosophy

which attracts anti-systematisers, Phenomenology. Wedde's love of 'the world's greed anarchy' (*Earthly*) and life's 'crazy outhouses, /the corners of happiness that don't/square' (*Pathway*) is evidence of a sensibility which enjoys ranging the entire phenomenal field; right down to:

watching Carlos talking to twine, a mess
of paper & wool. Against all the harsh
established orthodoxies I set this
sentimental disorder...

(Sonnet 8, *Earthly*)

As we discovered in looking at the *Dasein* concept, what matters to Heidegger (and to Wedde) are the specifics of perception: 'His manner of questioning can be defined as hermeneutical in that it proceeds from the interpretation of man's situation. (...) By conceiving of *Dasein* as being-in-the-world, Heidegger made the ancient problem concerning the relationship between subject and object superfluous.' (9) An actual reaching-out, man to situation, is a major component of Phenomenological vision:

In the twentieth century, Phenomenology is mainly used as the name for a philosophical movement the primary objective of which is the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced, without theories about their casual explanation and as free as possible from unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions. (10)

Highly developed sensory perception is therefore the greatest of assets to a poet of Wedde's disposition. His admiration for the modern Americans has much to do with their

sure, economical powers of sensory description. One thinks of Williams particularly, and Olson at times could almost be paraphrasing Heidegger:

By making the threshold of reception so important(...) you have gone so far as to imply that the skin itself, the meeting edge of man and external reality, is where all that matters does happen, that man and external reality are so involved with one another that, for man's purposes, they had better be taken as one. (11)

Subject and object are co-equal then, and man's ideal profile in the landscape is low. We have been shown time and again by Wedde that the points of contact between man and external reality can be painful experiences, but always educative ones ('The meeting edge of of man and the world is also his cutting edge,' as Olson observes (12)):

- they
lean upon blades the flesh closing white-
lipped over curved wounds.

(*'Gulf Letters' Number Six 1, Made Over p.43*)

...I like the way you
have to compromise with brittle
demolition timber : what gets
built has bent the
builder as well as his

nails & nerves : he's
learnt something about
service

(*Pathway to the Sea p.3*)

"You must place
obstacles right there in his path not push
aside stones, cutting edges..."

(*Sonnet 33, Earthly*)

Phenomenology's insistence on explanation of the ectypal, the particular, is in keeping with the prevalent anti-generalising mood of twentieth-century minds. We want skin-contact rather than vast exclamation:

Before dawn the comet veers
through the sky & we decide we should see
this. But we haven't. We want a reprieve
from grand themes: Kohoutek, an immense sperm
aswim in the indigo. The old place
cracks with sun, wind, flies rage over the dead
body of a possum, all that...

(Sonnet 49 'parekawakawa', *Earthly*)

This is not to say that universals are to be discarded, or that Wedde, Olson et al. believe that sense data are the sole objects of knowledge (this is a phenomenalist position). However, moving 'from the particular/to the general' ('Teraweka', *Spells* p.22) is the only means whereby a universal can be intuited; it is, in the words of 'Teraweka', 'that leap/beloved of suicides & lovers'; a dangerous process.

Heidegger's watchword is '*Zu den Sachen selbst*' ('to the things themselves'); Olson wants to 'fight for particularism anew' in order to offset centuries of Greek-inspired generalising tendencies; the opening of Wedde's review of *Trees, Effigies & Moving Objects* brings us uncannily close to this same drive in the poems of 'Old Man of the Mountain'. Wedde is talking about a memorable image from Wystan Curnow's 'The Bombing of Auckland':

If you can imagine a bomb falling on 'a hill', then you must imagine it falling on 'the hill'. i.e. one you know, and then you must imagine it falling on (for example) your pregnant wife. After this you are likely to imagine your own death, by whatever means, natural or otherwise. When this context is complete, your vision becomes truly responsible. That is, there is no gap between particular and universal, between 'here' and 'there'. (13)

It seems necessary at this stage to clarify the multiple meanings of Wedde's 'here' and 'there' construct. In *Earthly*, it occurs mostly in the Primavera sonnets, and in accordance with the life-out-of-death theme of those poems, *here* is life and *there* is its obverse truth, a transportation over some kind of Lethe. In the passage from the Curnow review quoted above, it signifies the particular as opposed to the universal, and this becomes a frequent meaning. The structure of *Spells* however, makes it obvious that *here* is also intended to mean 'Port Chalmers, New Zealand' as opposed to 'Europe'; 'now, my present' in contrast to 'then, my past'.

From this last springs a fourth meaning which has its origins in Wedde's notions of time. The *here* meaning 'now, my present' is at the same time an opposite of *there* meaning 'then, my future', i.e. something *to be reached out for*. At this point we begin to appreciate the complex interrelations of these structures, because the *there* of universality is also something to be reached out for in Wedde's thinking ('Phenomenology does not reject universals' (14)).

It is as well to be able to distinguish which set of meanings Wedde is operating with when he uses *here* and *there*, though he often uses them in combination, for example, in 'Teraweka'.

Responsibility of vision is the goal. To attain it, normal habits of generalised thinking must be reversed. Living in the world must become a matter of 'I-thou' rather than 'I-it', and living in Port Chalmers becomes a matter of living alongside *the* hills, 'Teraweka, Sleeping Indian, Signal/Flagstaff, Cargill, Saddle' ('Those Others', *Spells* p.44). And as Wedde says elsewhere (*Pathway to the Sea* pp. 7-8): 'it's here the/story really/starts : not//that what's been said so far's/irrelevant...'

(ii) the 'hill poems' and a 'curve of emotion'

I want to cover the middle section of *Spells* by looking in some detail at 'Teraweka', 'Old Man of the Mountain', 'Sleeping Indian' & 'Those Others', which seem to follow sequentially in articulating what Lawrence Jones calls '(t)he curve of emotion - passion, pain, withdrawal, healing, rebirth' (17), bringing it to a state of at least temporary resolution. 'Four Vectors', which is a condensed account of this emotional parabola, draws its components from all parts of Wedde's writing but from *Spells* in particular. A separate discussion of it would be thus somewhat redundant, but its contributions to the larger explication will be duly noted.

Wedde's Otago hills are a private pantheon; at least two of them are named by himself (or by local consensus), and each of them has distinct significance for him. The first three

together, then two stanzas of three lines) in tribute to the sun's appearance over the peninsula hills; the 'parabola' of light (of faith) which is the rim of the orb steadily ascends into the fully rounded certainty of another day. As we have already observed in *Earthly* (Sonnet 34), in 'Homage to Matisse' ('*une harmonie d'ensemble*'), and in 'Four Vectors', the sun is perhaps the most obvious common denominator of 'here' and 'there' in the dimensional aspect of those terms. (Dante records of the dark, wooded valley at dawn: 'I looked up and saw its shoulders already clad in the rays of the planet that leads men aright by every path.' (6))

The irony of 'Teraweka' is that in taking nothing for granted 'except that the hill Teraweka is there when/I am looking at it', the poet has in fact laid hold of the Heideggerian key to everything else - as the parodic 'syllogisms' which follow indicate. Perception is the primary means of 'keeping the faith/somehow//'here'', the first vital step.

Elsewhere, Wedde details the projected expansion of this faith, using terms identical to those of 'Teraweka' to explain how a certain type of poem works on the mind of its reader:

The 'solution' is faith (yeah!) : the poems depend on a kind of induction, from the particular to the general, a leap beloved of suicides and lovers, and some poets, a parabola of faith. (...) But because it's a leap, because the curve is inherent in the arrested movement of the poem, because it bridges the surreal and the narrative, you are left on *that* side wanting to contact Russell Haley and ask: "Who is....?" etc. (18)

In the Curnow review (1973) Wedde stated that the ideal was to actualise *all* contexts, thus achieving the simultaneous

co-existence of 'here' and 'there' which is truly responsible vision. With Haley's poems, we have an example of the bridging process being deliberately made difficult; in 'Teraweka' the leap of faith is only a frozen hope; and in a later commentary (1977) Wedde acknowledges again the problematic nature of trying to actualise all contexts from the standpoint of a particularist:

I am beginning to get the hang of the idea that reality is divided 'against' itself. Appearances imply dis-appearances. A commitment *here* is likely to result in a denial *there*. It seems to be a natural law... (19)

It is all very well to *envisage* a leap from 'here' to 'there', but the actual 'how' of the movement is the problem (shades of Wedde's anxiety over '*le premier coup*'; the puzzle recurs in endless manifestations). With 'Teraweka', however, a place from which to work outward has arguably been established. 'Old Man of the Mountain' (*Spells* p.23) now takes over.

Lawrence Jones astutely observes that this poem 'is a kind of 'cunning box-kite', a patently home-made structure, but ingeniously put together, with a reference to Mount Cargill somehow smuggled into every section, 'Easy as whistling a mountain to heel''. (20) 'The mountain' is for Wedde a kind of mantric phrase, a way of touching its constant presence above Port Chalmers. (21) The physical aspects of Mount Cargill complement the new reality of Wedde's 'here':

Cloud pours over the purple top of the mountain
 beneath which I begin to live a quiet
 industrious life These phenomena
 amaze me! 'cloud pours' / 'quiet life'

('Old Man of the Mountain', *Spells* p.23)

and from them the poet makes excursions of reflection, beginning in a small way the reach for the 'there' of all contexts. The elaborate caution of this renascent movement was misunderstood by Trevor Reeves, who summarily dismissed the poem in a review of *Islands 2* (Summer 1972): 'The poetry; a rather big-headed piece called 'Old Man of the Mountain' by Ian Wedde. Port Chalmers must be a boring place...' (22) Far from it, and Reeves should have known better:

it seems a gentle & toylike place though of much
 contrast stagnant inlet & fishing harbour & port &
 the stormy channel & bald sunny Quarantine Island
 & all its boundaries & perspectives circumspect enough
 for the imagination to contain.

('Old Man of the Mountain', *Spells* p.25)

The poem ranges widely. There are the positives of 'working well' at chopping wood, baking bread, or writing ('these//here perplexed hopeful prospectings'), all of which actively contribute to the consolidation of 'here' ('as if I meant to be self-sufficient & one day strike!/clean through to the stone cold heart of the mountain.') The poet can afford to look back into parts of his past, remembering:

a lonely & lovely man
 toymaker gardener sailor kite-flyer poet
 Ian Hamilton Finlay on the moors below a mountain
 like a great blunt bannock.

('Old Man of the Mountain', *Spells* p.26)

The abilities of the Scottish poet match Wedde's favourite metaphors for good poet-craft. That the man is also 'lonely' as well as 'lovely' introduces us to the chief theme of the poem, what to do about the solipsis attendant on removal from one world to another:

Am I exiled then from you
 my friends my distant comrades my lovers?
 You are closer to me than the mountain
 I shall have to get to know its ducts
 & fountains to be its plumber
 Yours I know already in my lonely body

(*'Old Man of the Mountain'*, *Spells* p.24)

By envisaging himself as an Old Man of the Mountain, Wedde is beginning an affiliation with Cargill aimed at tuning in perfectly to the mountain's phenomenological existence. Wedde has written of Neruda's voice, observing it to have been 'truly 'other'; it could almost have been the voice of a rock or tree' (23), and by the fourteenth of 'Old Man's' sixteen stanzas, Wedde himself appears close to achieving a similar state of inter-existential harmony:

Plant groves of trees on graves!
 Someone once nourished this fine mountain on ours

(*'Old Man of the Mountain'*, *Spells* p.29)

However the learning process is hard. Fears and dreams often prevail: '-I don't believe you/I don't believe *in* you/ Old Man of the Mountain', and whenever the presence of the mountain is negated like this, or else forgotten about, then the hold on certainties is seriously weakened.

The dream does have its brighter side though:

I don't believe in myself but I keep dreaming
 & dream when awake
 that I'll wake to find myself here where I find myself
 for which I'm grateful

('Old Man of the Mountain', *Spells* p.25)

This hope for the waking dream of 'here' is familiar from *Earthly*, where 'here' meant the *paradiso terrestre*; in 'Old Man of the Mountain' we see far more of the 'difficult & full of doubt' features of the same period. Other concerns cross from *Earthly*. The space co-ordinate of the 'blood net' ('everything is touched/& moved by the least movement of each lonely one of us') has close parallels with the 'hot convection' sonnets. The time co-ordinate too is instantly recognizable:

There are live human beings whom I admire
 & dead yes whom I admire & love
 & they are equally present in time &
 if invoked present 'in fact'

('Old Man of the Mountain', *Spells* p.29)

That 'history is myth not fact' follows on from this, and the mountain's significance may be gauged by the fact that it is a 'cloudy myth-maker', with patent powers of invocation and procreation. Invoking 'there' in its aspect as your own past by means of the phenomenological present fits in well with Wedde's scheme of things. Similarly, the mountain's presence can somehow engender your own future; a factor of immense

mantra), 'Sleeping Indian' begins with the hill-as-girl. A poem about the dead of winter opens with 'something beautiful', belonging to the impossibility of summer,

as though he stepped back
& closed the dream door
quietly & left
the dark scene & lived his life

in the imagined night-
movements of the lovely Sleeping Indian
('Sleeping Indian' 1, *Spells* p.32)

However, even in *Earthly* the hill/woman is enigmatic. 'She' is the first of Wedde's 'three remembrances', and 'one eaten by the elements' - a title which conveys a sense of grief above and beyond any literal application of the phrase to a weathered landmark. The poet's awareness of 'her' as a presence excluded from warmth and firelight indicates how finely Wedde is attuned to the phenomenological principle of living in the closest possible accord with one's perceived surroundings.

A similar feeling of submerged grief surrounds the image of the hill when 'she' reappears in *Spells*. The prospect of staying with 'the lovely Sleeping Indian' is only an imagined alternative to the pragmatism of earning a living as instanced by the winter fishermen; the contact between her world and theirs at the winter solstice is a brutal affair, a time 'when it blows ice on to the/belly of Sleeping Indian Hill'.

However, it is the fishermen who truly inhabit the middle section of the poem as practitioners of an exacting craft,

in marked contrast to their 'toy town' associations in 'Old Man of the Mountain'. Not since the sureness of Matisse's '*premier coup*' first made its impression on Wedde. has a movement of 'deathless articulation' meant so much to him as 'manoeuvring to get the right bearing'. In '*Sleeping Indian*' the matter of bearings is treated homiletically ('Bah!/ young lovers...'); but in 'Four Vectors' there is a more personal manifestation of it: 'Taking bearings off each other/ we found each other.' (*Spells* p.41). Uncertainty as to the exact workings of 'the dream door' complicates the process of location for the lovers:

What happened? you cry like a survivor. What
happened?
What happened was a dream
which is why it was that real
 & because we are still
asleep in the dream's belly it is still
real as the feasts we shared

gorging the violence from which we take
our bearings on love

('Four Vectors' 2, *Spells* p.39)

Manoeuvring for the correct bearing can be very much a violent affair, as 'Four Vectors' makes clear, and the 'rawhide welt' on the mind which is the price of that bearing reminds us that, initially, the whole process of crisis & recovery was imaged as a wound which needed to be re-opened and cleaned before a real healing-over could start. Similarly, the birth cry of the dreamer ('Four Vectors' 2, *Spells* p.39) reiterates the violence and pain of being 'born again'.

The patience of the explanatory voice in 'Vectors' is to be noted. Violence played its part in the actual taking of bearings, but has no validity on its own in the post-lupercalian world. Patience and violence are the twinned and paradoxical moving forces of *Spells*; it is a matter of not mistaking the former for paralysis and of recognising the latter's salutary effects for what they are.

On the side of patience as a means to 'deathless articulation', we must count the circumscribed steps of 'Teraweka' and the small excursions of 'Old Man of the Mountain' (the Old Man sat fishing 'patient & lonely' in the 'bitter waters' of the harbour). Thus in 'Sleeping Indian', it is the practised patience of the fishermen which draws Wedde's attention.

The sudden introduction of 'young lovers' into a section about 'bearings' leads to the realisation that the objective of the winter trawl as described by Wedde is symbolic rather than actual:

Bah! young lovers your world is
 a lattice you whisper through
 or a net &
 what matters are the spaces
 not the 'reality' you grip &
 think to embrace or break with your shaking
 fingers

(*'Sleeping Indian' 2, Spells p.33*)

Once before Wedde used the reticulative image in conjunction with a love affair. 'Ruth'/Rose was at a distance:

This vacant image

is with me, the
 knowledge of your absence,
 a space you turn towards
 doubtfully, having no choice.
 The rest I
 grope my hands through
 like latticework, the negative

light in which my eyes
 blaze, pearly cataracts.

('Ruth' 1, *Made Over* p.55)

The same image of external circumstances barring the dreamed-
 of assimilation of lover into lover is at work in 'Sleeping
 Indian':

spaces you also dream of
 : that you might pass through them
 & into each other as though in
 waking from the dream of nets
 (the dream of life) she becomes
 your astral body which returns
 to you / or you

hers returning to her

('Sleeping Indian' 2, *Spells* p.33)

The make-up of the lattice, especially its ambiguous
 relation to 'reality' ('what matters are the spaces/ not
 the 'reality' you grip &/think to embrace or break...') reminds
 us of a 'message' of Olson's which much affected Wedde. It
 concerned the 'discrete or contiguous sequence of measurable
 events distributed in time' which:

is change, presents
 no more than itself

And the too strong grasping of it,
 when it is pressed together and condensed
 loses it

This very thing you are (24)

This brings us near to Chink's 'killing the fish' thinking, as we noted once before (c.f. pp.222-3), another occasion where the reticulation of the 'blood net' is suddenly revealed as being less than innocuous. The 'dream of life' is a 'dream of nets', and the wonderful craft of the net (the multi-connectiveness of life) contributes also to its functional efficiency:

Further offshore a few fishing boats were spaced haphazardly between sea and sky. Killing the fish. He imagined fish crowding into the nets, the soundless panic and agony, the net filled with scales resembling a dragon. Reality is a lattice, a net. It's the spaces the count. It's the spaces that trap you. There's no escape.

(Dick Seddon, p.209) (25)

The 'spaces' of 'Sleeping Indian' have a confusing duality which requires categoric explanation if the play of simultaneous meanings is to be appreciated. On one hand, spaces are the dreamed-about routes to the true ('real') condition of love which is the two-way drift of astral bodies ('you might pass through them/& into each other'). By passing between the strands of the 'net' of mundane reality, you bypass received (and superfluous) codes. This is why 'what matters are the spaces' - negative field of good design is always as important as the design itself, and often more so.

On the other hand the spaces 'can strangle you'. The danger in trying to pass through the spaces of a net is that the precise function of that net has to do with its reticulativeness. To net-makers, actual and societal, the mesh is more important than the spaces which are created incidentally as the net is woven. The idea is to prevent passage; the

mesh is an irreducible presence, and you (the young lover) are in it, or it is between you and the 'there' of your mate. You try and break the mesh or pass through its impossibly small spaces, when what you should be doing is aspiring to the condition of the fisherman - who is not enmeshed, who in fact *casts* the net (and in the right place), avoiding all threats to his efficiency because he has learnt 'the indignity of patience'.

The message is 'impossibility'; the two states are mutually exclusive (when will young lovers ever be patient, or be released from their latticework preoccupation with each other? when do fish ever conceive of being fishermen?). As we have already noted, the actual catalyst in 'taking bearings off each other' is to be violence ('Four Vectors') and not patience at all. What we get in 'Sleeping Indian's' middle section is absolute crisis: on the one hand there is being-in-the-world, so close to it all that you are virtually caught by it all; on the other hand there is the desired state of control, of being able to stand back ('If you knew how far & no further/to move away ...'), of having the correct bearings by dint of patience, and knowing what to do with them. The winter solstice, itself a nowhere point of between-ness, is the perfect correlative for this crisis.

The last section of 'Sleeping Indian' represents the far side of this 'crisis', seasonal and personal. When 'the sun has his hand on Sleeping/Indian's lovely belly' the gesture

the world beyond my window
glitters in its frame. I see what I can.
Like anyone else I've learned to see less than
there is, less than I see, less than I know:

(Sonnet 58, *Earthly*)

i.e. between known points of reference, and surrounding them,
is the beyond-frame hinterland of un-named hills (and boundless
possibility) through which we move, ' a hinterland/that
we know/but pass through always/going *to* somewhere'. The
bittersweetness this gives rise to is crucial to the poem;
one side of it is the sadness of losing 'friends fugitives
lovers' to the flux ('we cannot stop, because the space goes
on forever'):

How can I speak of the
sadness of this? The infinite
regression of love? The weariness
of that distance?

('Those Others' 4, *Spells* p.45) (28)

Conversely, it is just because the space is infinite and
on-going that we can imagine a point *somewhere* where sea
kisses sky:

because the space
goes on forever
the embrace goes on
forever, as the horizon
which eye & mind
unroll a highway
leading
forever to where *you* are

('Those Others' 3, *Spells* p.45)

made in the poems of 'Old Man of the Mountain'. I want to discuss firstly 'Red' as a poem in direct line of descent from the four big 'explorative' poems, then move on to balance 'Carousel' against 'Fever' as dual endpoints of the 'rumours of biography' which occasioned much that is in the poems of *Spells*.

'Red' is perhaps the ultimate multi-contextual exercise. Not only does it span obvious spatial and cultural distances, but each verse is a personal 'bearing' for Wedde himself, and some part of each is incorporated from other contexts of his work. Thus, quoting a Maori legend is a gesture validated by actual contact with its locus:

*Tues 20: Wake clear in high air above Bay of Plenty:
remember Te Arawa story: to kura pae a Mahina: finders
keepers losers weepers, pohutukawa blossom like a million
gaudy parrots. (29)*

Similarly, the Adonis reference grows out of an actual memory ('at Byblos in Lebanon') of red flowers. The life-blood metaphor of this second verse is transferred into the third ('the delicate/blood-filled mesh binding us all') to bring the poem home to Port Chalmers ('everywhere the same'). Note that the 'net' here has returned to its relatively simple status as the 'web of blood', the most positive of Wedde's reticulative structures. It then becomes commingled with the other theme of 'Red', the relationship of 'finding' to 'keeping':

vision as touching,
 looking through the web of blood,
touching the scars
 that make us single
 by which we are recognized.

('Red' 3, *Spells* p.55)

The delicate matter of real contact is a longstanding preoccupation of Wedde's, and one more aspect of his anti-solipsistic drive. The cry 'Warm me/warm me!/The story of my life' ('The Gardener's Messages' 6, *Made Over* p.27) is transmuted in 'Poems About Snow':

she held his head with white
 fingers. *Warm*
me! he screamed.
 Snow flayed him, she could not
 prevent it

the way
 his flesh came off beneath
 her fluttering hands

('Poems About Snow' 2, *Made Over* p.73)

Wistfulness replaces desperation when the motif reappears in the 'hello' sonnet of *Earthly*:

halgian? to hallow
halowen? holler, howl.
or just "Hello"
 meaning, "I recognize you oh please don't
 lower your eyes"

(Sonnet 53 'hello' , *Earthly*)

That this passage should appear, largely intact, in the last verse of 'Red' is perhaps another acknowledgement by Wedde that

contexts come down to the personal, the particular:

'I only want to find you, not keep you
 o come closer,
 I recognize you, why
 do you lower your eyes, why do I
 lower mine?'
 ('Red' 4, *Spells* p.55)

Eye contact is significant ('and now I am learning again how to avoid having to avoid people's eyes on London tubes' (30)) because it is the eye that has the potential to look *through* at 'the delicate blood-filled mesh binding us all'; a miniature and working model of the lover's attempts to pass through the spaces of the reality-net and into each other ('Sleeping Indian'). It is also, and most significantly, an absorption into the space 'beyond' ('Those Others').

'Carousel' and 'Fever' represent, respectively, the female and male principles (and principals) working throughout *Spells*. Alongside the 'explorative' poems have grown lyrics which tune us in again to the private threads that were abruptly cut after 'At Dante's Tomb'. Whereas *Earthly* is a celebration of the birth of Carlos and the restorative effect of the pregnancy itself, the *Spells* poems on this subject (while they have everything to do with the prevailing theme of healing) are differently angled.

The contemplative self-containment of the pregnant woman is foremost. It was glimpsed at in 'madonna', the very first sonnet:

...you no she stretches
till your joints crack. You I do not know you.
She watches little fists & knees in your
belly, I watch her watching your famous
blue tits. She yawns with your mouth,

(...)

I think that in the end she will whelp you
biche, it will be so good to have you back.

(Sonnet 1 'madonna', *Earthly*)

and the same sense of the man as excluded (a tolerated observer)
is equally strong in Julian's 'A pregnant woman discovers the
meaning of fiction', in 'Drought', and in 'Carousel'. The
first of these latter poems is the female equivalent of concerns
Wedde has been working out for himself in the big poems of
Spells. There are strikingly parallel motifs, for example:

the world presses in on her,
at night in the room where she lies
the planets enter!

('Drought', *Spells* p.42)

I lie down & take off my body/
I lie down letting my head drop sideways
losing my way
Somehow at the centre of my life
& the seasons come into me

('Losing the Straight Way' 1, *Spells* p.11)

Also, the ambiguous closeness/distance of 'it all' and the
inability to decide between many entrances into the 'web' is
reminiscent of Wedde's reflections on death-as-hiatus; 'It is
motion which puzzles me. I cannot tell/an end from a beginning.'
(*'Near Purakanui:an elegy for Ezra Pound'* *Spells*, p.36). Kate's
self-analysis is pertinent here too:

I'm a young woman, Kate, not yet thirty. It's as though
I could start any time. I've got enough energy for most of

my friends put together. But I carry on in the same old way. The voice which you can't hear but which I hear calling and calling to the world, or announcing *I'm in Xanadhu!* saying *I'm going!* shouting *Let's get it on!* shouting *Kate Kate Kate!* -- I fob it off with temporizing promises.

And he's dead.

And yet I do feel as though I could begin now!

(*Dick Seddon* p.173)

The pregnant woman is at some indefinable distance, however. The 'Drought' felt by the poet is one of love; the woman is 'abstracted' (absorbed) by the child. There is no jealousy in the father's observation that cannot easily be forgiven the child ('Oh/she was your first lover//Love her, love her!' Sonnet 48, *Earthly*) but just the same, the madonna figure must be allowed her peculiar status - which is the point of 'Carousel's' position opposite (and equalling) the male conclusion of the collection, 'Fever'.

Both 'Carousel' and 'Fever' are enervated highpoints. The woman has spent so long with the alternatives of laughing and crying for joy or crying and laughing for fear that they will be predominant in her memories of the period. We are left to intuit the outcome; perhaps it was as Kate's:

In October when I sat my exams I was nine months pregnant. It suited me. I wore hot yellow, my favourite colour. I wore extravagant trinkets and 'gauds' (a word I favoured then). I enjoyed dressing up in this way. During exams, when I felt lousy and uncomfortable, I had to be escorted out frequently to pee. My picture even appeared in the paper: large Byzantine eyes, the blue of them darkened. I was riding really high. The climax was the birth of Jane: like bursting with joy.

(*Dick Seddon* p.177)

For the man who has been tensed, waiting, newly placed faith

in the embrace of the imagination has paid off. The voices of the letters he receives are:

beaten 'to ayery thinnesse' by distance

 which they survive
 (*what* distance?)
 to return
(*what* distance?)
 to this embrace
 ('Fever' 1, *Spells* p.57)

The man too has been at some remove, involved in his own problems 'in another room' where the birth of the baby is not the centre of the universe:

The starlings nest in the eaves.
The baby crooks his finger at a sky-chink in the cloud.
Their worlds have limits. In another room
I dance with letters in my hands:

 my feverish friends!
Rain cannot cool them.
 ('Fever' 2, *Spells* p.57)

'Carousel' and 'Fever' depict a woman and a man (rather than wife and husband or mother and father) as autonomous and abstracted entities. Wedde picks up elements of this image of the private self from William Carlos Williams:

Danse Russe

If when my wife is sleeping
and the baby and Kathleen
are sleeping
and the sun is a flame-white disc
in silken mists
above shining trees, -
if I in my north room
dance naked, grotesquely
before my mirror

waving my shirt around my head
 and singing softly to myself:
 "I am lonely, lonely,
 I was born to be lonely,
 I am best so!"
 If I admire my arms, my face,
 my shoulders, flanks, buttocks
 against the yellow drawn shades, -

Who shall say I am not
 the happy genius of my household? (31)

'Fever' is an endpoint which takes in hand the problems of the 'here' and 'there' dialectic by presenting one moment of collision (rather than resolution) between the two. Against the sheer jubilation of receiving letters which nullify the threat of distances (spatial and metaphysical) is balanced the exclusion from this joy of the worlds of starlings and babies. Wedde is indeed the happy genius of his household by the end of *Spells*; wry-faced at his own grotesqueries of self-absorption in the midst of that close-living household, while appreciating that they are a necessary part of the other (larger?) process of contacting 'friends fugitives lovers'.

It seems, as Wedde himself once remarked, 'to be a natural law' that the simultaneity of all contexts is an impossible goal (even the working solution of 'Those Others' left us looking at sea and sky 'in hope and in faith', to use a phrase from *Earthly*). Whereas Wedde could confidently assert 'O the firmament *does* stream with blood' at the close of *Earthly* (and it was with the half-rueful admission 'we're too much in love with beauty...'), the conclusion of *Spells* is a more sobering affair, not unlike the implications of its ^{final} poem.

Burning, wasting, and surviving are three on-going conditions which best describe the construct which is *Spells For Coming Out*.

CHAPTER 4

WELLINGTON AND THE UNCOLLECTED POEMS

There are at least two distinct tendencies in Wedde's post-1974 work as evidenced in those poems separately published (*Pathway to the Sea* (1975), *Don't Listen* (1977)) or appearing in literary magazines. As of late 1978, these poems divide more or less equally; half of them are what I will call 'striking poems' (topical, 'committed' - often politically so) and the rest, more personal and increasingly oblique, reveal a change in temper which only publication of the next collection will really clarify (provided that Wedde continues to put out collections of closely connected poems).

I want to discuss *Pathway to the Sea* as a probable link between the 'Otago vision' and the kind of poems Wedde was writing by the time *Pathway* was actually published, then move onto the other 'striking poems', 'Castaly', '*Don't Listen*' and 'Series Animation at 24 Frames'. I then want to talk about the complexities of the mood that was growing alongside these poems and which manifests itself chiefly in 'Angel', 'The 1976 Bullet McHale Winter Lectures', 'Chophouse Log' and in smaller related poems.

These 'divisions' are not to be assumed definitive nor restrictive. Kate observed: 'The patterns that matter are the ones we're given, not the ones we impose. They emerge, the patterns, that's all' (*Dick Seddon* p.175) - but the line between imposition and recognition is a fine one.

I: Pathway to the Sea

Pathway to the Sea (Akaroa: Hawk Press, 1975) represents a number of poetic highpoints on Wedde's part. It is an ultimate celebration of the vision, biospheric and at the same time highly personal, which was inaugurated in *Dick Seddon*, explored at length in *Earthly* ('passion's taproot') and more warily acknowledged in *Spells* ('everywhere the same'). The locus of this vision is Otago, the one certainty of 'here'. *Pathway* is also formally a work of consummate skill; the easy colloquiality of the sonnets, with their enjambements and word-play, have prepared the ground for the light, continuous rhythms (witticisms effortlessly inserted) of the big poem. These rhythms wind themes in a pattern of repeat-and-variation which is as well-constructed as the measure of the lines themselves. Finally, *Pathway* is a self-explanatory poem, not complacently or stultifyingly so (the ambiguity-rife machinations of word and line layout see to that); it simply has the sort of self-sufficient communicative power which renders attempts at literary analysis redundant.

Michael Harlow believes that this extraordinary effectiveness is the result of blending approachability and commitment:

Ian Wedde has written a long poem that is not only witty but a very 'funny' read indeed. It is a poem displaying that kind of wit (not fancy) that is characterised by 'nimbleness of thought and good judgement'. It is, I suggest, this flex of wit and sureness of voice that sustains the interest of the poem and its themes, and which enables the poet to weave in, at various angles, those serious concerns that allow a poem to speak to another level of meaning. (1)

This is sound judgement, given that in performance the poem holds its listeners completely, and no-one laughs in the wrong places.

The homogeneity of *Pathway* is obvious; we notice it first in the unhurried, unlaboured assurance of the lines. The mind-flow is as on-going as the energy flow it is describing, and there will be no fumbling from a poet who writes:

-things

do

follow let me assure you, they
 proceed, citizen, they practically hunt
 you down, & me, who've

just been enjoying the way
 these lines unfold, much
 more easily than how the pug
 and clodded
 marl left that
 drain

(*Pathway to the Sea* p.8)

The delicate balance between the natural, the spontaneous, and how you treat that spontaneity ('listen, effort's got to be right/directed, that's/all, the catering's amazing'; *Pathway* p.11) is the theme of *Pathway*, and as these lines show, that balance is also a guiding principle of the poem's formal construction. That the poet has been entirely successful in preserving intact the dynamism of the 'amazing catering' is in all probability attributable to the fact that *Pathway* was written, according to Wedde, in a single sitting, the product of an afternoon spent confined to bed with 'flu and a raging head.(2) Seen in this light, the air of homogeneity (ruminative, endo-genetic) about *Pathway* can only be construed as an all-

in-one transferral from head to page, incorporating the best elements of spontaneity and articulative skill.

The poem is dedicated to A.R. Ammons, a poet notable for this blend of consummate craft and operative spontaneity (one underwrites the quality of the other). More specifically still, *Pathway* is next of kin to Ammons' long polemic on ecological balance, 'Extremes and Moderations', which closes with the line: 'in an enclosure like earth's there's no place to dump stuff off'. (3) Thematically the two poems are very close; Ammons ranges over a variety of 'extremes' and 'moderations', speculating as to their probable functionality within the figure of natural balance. At the same time we are given day-to-day progress reports on the state of his garden, the breaking of a drought, and the war against the weeds in his lawn in the course of which he is upsetting a few small balances of his own ('I put havoc into those/progressions, believe me', *Collected Poems* p.336).

Ammons' vision of biospheric disaster is Blakian in character ('we have scalded and oiled the seas and/scabbed the land and smoked the mirror of heaven', *Collected Poems* p.337) and Ammons and Wedde are one in their condemnation of the origins of this desctructive drive:

rampaging industrialists, the chemical devisers and manipulators
are forging tanks, filling vats of smoky horrors because of
dollar lust, so as to live in long white houses on the summits
of lengthy slopes

(Ammons, *Collected Poems* p.340)

this poem is dedicated by
 all concerned with the present
 production of it to the belief that
 Aramoana should be left to the birds
 fish sand-hoppers & other denizens
 who at present possess it only so
 long as their ambiguous productivity
 is tolerated by men ambitious for
 quick solutions & profits

(*Pathway to the Sea*, dedication)

Ammons' positive vision also has affinities with Wedde's
 ('the gift though,/the abundance!', *Collected Poems* p.330)
 and the concept of the earthly paradise is another point of
 mutual contact:

: paradise lies ahead, where it's always lain:
 but we may reach it, before hell overtakes us:

(*Collected Poems* p.331)

Formally, several features are common to *Pathway* and
 'Extremes and Moderations'. We recognise the candid voice-
 in-the-poem; changes of direction are simply announced
 ('The first subject I wanted to introduce...'; 'well, I just,
 for poetic purposes, wanted to point out the parallel...';
Collected Poems pp. 331, 334) and Ammons too comments on the
 mechanics of this sort of poetic composition:

constructing the stanza is not in my case exceedingly
 difficult, variably invariable, permitting maximum change
 within maximum stability, the flow-breaking four-liner, lattice

of the satisfactory fall, grid seepage, currents distracted
 to side flow, multiple laterals that at some extreme spill
 a shelf, ease back, hit the jolt of the central impulse:

(*Collected Poems*, p.329)

Wedde's stanzaic patterns in *Pathway* are more elaborate than Ammons' 'flow-breaking four-liner' (three groups of three successively indented lines to each stanza), which allows him greater scope for rhythmic variation. Other mannerisms carry over from 'Extremes and Moderations' to *Pathway* however, a frequent one being the juxtaposition of identical words and phrases which act inadvertently as points of emphasis.

Thus Ammons: 'I don't know how it works: it works;' (*Collected Poems* p.334) and Wedde: 'it ran away/the way//we wanted' (*Pathway* p.9).

Even the vocabulary is similar in places. For readers of *Pathway*, there is an unmistakable familiarity to terms such as 'grid seepage', 'cold clod', 'leaching'; and a phrase like 'the ground is nice and sweet' must surely have been the original impulse of Wedde's lovely lines:

& one small
 pear tree, un-
 pruned, went

crazy! was a mares-nest
 of wild growth, capillary
 maze of shoots & tangled
 twigs gobbling the provisions
 of root & leaf, starch
 & water, sweet open
 sandwiches of rotted
 stackbottom & whatnot

(*Pathway* p.9)

The influence of the Ammons poem on *Pathway* is considerable but in no way diminishes the integrity of the latter. The relationship may best be described as a perfect example of *hommage*; Wedde is enough of an individualist to be able to take

up Ammons and still retain the distinctive voice which marks *Pathway* as his own rather than pastiche.

The mechanics of *Pathway* gear it for performance. It has all the best features of a narrative poem; it is fast-paced, ostensibly discursive, and marked strongly by 'yarn' techniques. There is vivid exaggeration for effect ('ordure getting/spread around &/putting its soft mouths in/deep cloacal/kisses to our/livers'); there are mock-heroic passages ('I/plied my lone shovel, bucket,/grout, mattock, axe & spade,/baling out the boggy trench'). Underkill plays its part (council inspectors on substandard 'other aspects', 'which might strike them as/unorthodox or even//illegal') and there are magnificent opportunities for hamming ('chickens with dry/feet lay more eggs//because they're happy' or '& when the rain fell it ran away/the way//we wanted').

The wry-faced narrator guards a soft underbelly by means of self-mockery ('& we had a drain! Yeah!'), a device which Wedde uses increasingly, and for similar reasons in the (self?) admonitive parts of 'Angel', 'Bullet McHale' and 'Chophouse Log'. Such derision betrays an acute sense of self-consciousness, a dread of misreading contexts. 'Get your *tone* right' ('Chophouse Log') is Wedde's most important imperative throughout these later poems.

In *Pathway* the tone *is* right. It may best be described as variations on the theme 'keep cool, but care', the philosophy of one McClintic Sphere (Bullet McHale?), who is in turn the product of Thomas Pynchon's fertile imagination and something of a possible cypher for that enigmatic writer's own attitudes. (4)

Wedde's love of sweet toughness/tough sweetness accords with 'caring cool', as does the ideology of Charles Olson, whose idiosyncratic mode of address ('citizen') contributes heavily to the level directness of *Pathway*.

The responsibility of the jaunty narrative presence in *Pathway* is thus seen to be considerable. It is not merely an easy way into the poem (sugar on the pill); the very sureness of tone gives us the assurance that the 'caring' co-ordinate is also in good hands. (This is what Michael Harlow means when he says that *Pathway* is qualified 'to speak to another level of meaning').

The 'care' component of McClintic Sphere's attitudinal gem is inextricable from its 'cool', and much of the 'cool' in *Pathway* is centred on the subject of shit. Scatological vision (touched with appropriate amounts of insouciance and obvious fascination) is probably the best-ever test of literary finesse, viz. Swift, Pound, Pynchon, Baxter. To treat a relatively proscribed subject straightforwardly, with wit and grace, as Wedde does ('soft mouths in/deep cloacal kisses...'), is to ensure direct entry to the levels of thought which demand an explanation of that proscription. Laughter triggers a reflective process.

Digging a drain because of 'breakdown in the system for/disposal of this shit//(*ours* in fact)' is a matter of taking responsibility for that system; you direct some energy into getting it functional again. Wedde is concerned to show that this situation has inverse parallels with the projected siting of an aluminium smelter at Aramoana, where energy is being

directed irresponsibly and with a total lack of concern for other parts of the delicately balanced eco-system. The poem demonstrates the linkage between the two apparently disparate situations by setting up a series of analogies, all based on the question of how energy is to be directed. You serve a term of hard labour for long term good (you cut back your pear tree, you rethink your siting of the aluminium smelter), or else you retreat into the short-term satisfaction of petty warfare with bureaucracy, refusing to act before your drainage problem reaches endemic proportions (you get 'cranky benison' (Sonnet 46, *Earthly*) instead of well-grown fruit, you go ahead and build your vastly profitable smelter, petulantly ignoring protests and knowing it will rapidly destroy a unique bird colony just over the channel). The fear in *Pathway* is that the other half of the bargain ('some kind of//*mutual* understanding of what/service is') will not be honoured, that collectivity will not keep *its* shit out of the individual's water supply. Olson:

(Man) is part of a herd which wants to do the very thing which nature disallows - that energy can be lost.(...)
 ...I see man's greatest achievement in this childish accomplishment - that he damn well can, and does, destroy destroy destroy energy everyday. It is too much. It is too much to waste time on, this idiot who spills his fluids like some truculent and fingerless chamaco hereabouts who wastes water at the pump when birds are dying all over the country in this hottest of the months... (5)

Which of the two energy problems, Ian Wedde's drainage or the projected smelter at Aramoana, is finally the 'subject' of *Pathway to the Sea*, is (rightly) impossible to decide. The

poem is a triumph in actualising apparently disparate contexts ('here' momentarily and memorably melds with 'there'), which is as good a definition as any of 'committed' art.

II: The 'striking poems'

Pathway is the first sustained example of Wedde's 'striking poems', i.e. works designed for a specific, catalytic effect upon those who read them. The 'strike' metaphor originates in *Earthly*:

These poems were true
let them strike
 as straight now!
 (Sonnet 52, *Earthly*)

and it has an impeccable Modernist pedigree:

Come, my songs,
 Let us take arms against this sea of stupidities-
 (Ezra Pound) (6)

I want
 the pen to be on a par
with the bayonet;
 and Stalin
 to deliver his Politburo
 reports
 about verse in the making
 as he would about pig iron
and the smelting of steel.
 (Vladimir Mayakovsky) (7)

Some measure of social consciousness is virtually an obligatory quality in contemporary literature. Wedde's treatment of it in his poetry has been habitually oblique, e.g. poems from *Made Over* such as 'Boss Godfrey & the Doctor of Acupuncture', 'The Bridge', 'The Vanishing Point'. He appears to reserve full-scale criticism to forms in which the case may be argued point by point ('Culture Gulf: some comments on the Arab-Israeli conflict' (*Landfall* 94, June 1970); 'Living Abroad-IV' (*London Magazine*, December 1970)) or to use inference-laden prose for the purpose ('Made Over' (*Landfall* 93, March 1970)). Sometimes this takes the form of short story ('General Amnesty' (*Landfall* 97, March 1971)). Perhaps Wedde was consciously avoiding the label of 'protest poetry'; at any rate, signs that poetry could no longer be kept outside of a life full of politics and ideology began to appear in *Earthly*, in accordance with that collection's vast reticulative principle. The section 'For An Old Bitch Gone In The Teeth' (Sonnets 30-40) deals with the Vietnam War, and the title is an acknowledgement of Pound's head-on poetic grappling with society-as-politics. The rationale of that grappling is, as Baxter once put it (in context of the poet's obligation to a New Zealand audience), a matter of blood-relation:

But if your grandmother, besides being an old lady of offensive personal habits, and her ideas drawn from *Truth* and *The Readers' Digest*, is suffering from, say, pernicious anaemia, do you leave her to rot - or do you come forward as a blood donor? (8)

In Wedde's own terms, the societal relation runs thus:

you want

to live the way
 you want
 to, you want to keep

your structures up, you
 want elevation,
 you're ready to do
 your share, you'll dig your field-
 drain & you'll
 keep your shit out
 of the water supply:
 you want to
 serve & to be left alone
 (*Pathway to the Sea* p.11)

The point is 'responsibility', on the individual's part and on the part of an often geriatrically cumbersome collectivity. The two-way flow of this obligation must be continually kept apparent, which is one reason why most of Wedde's 'striking poems' are written for a specific time and place. Named particularities bring the lesson home. We begin with the first-published long poem after *Pathway*, 'Castaly' (*Islands* 15 pp.2-8, Autumn 1976).

"Castaly" has a 'caring' co-ordinate similar to the one operative in *Pathway*. It is an elegy for the passing of the whales, full of implied anger at the circumstances of that extinction. As in *Pathway*, money-greed is the root of the problem; the 1975 poem is a protest against the machinations of 'men ambitious for quick solutions & profits' (9), and 'Castaly' is a type of lament for what actually happens when shortsightedness is allowed its head. The current 'save the whales' campaign is a reality solely because that initial slaughter has been continued into the present day, and if

'Castaly' is concerned with the old whaling days of the Straits and Sounds, it also has an Otago locus which takes in the present, and perhaps even the future, of the 'fishing' industry ('...putting out upon the fat water/the Carey's Bay boat *l'Avenir*'). The poem is by no means a quaint 'historical' piece; in fact it is a pointer to the fact that sensitivity to your ecological surroundings is not only a matter of space ('living in the/universe doesn't/leave you/any place to chuck/stuff off/of', *Pathway* p.12), but also a matter of equally reticulated time.

The temper of 'Castaly' differs from that of *Pathway*. Conversational fluidity is replaced by a collage effect, and discerning the links between fragments is very much the reader's onus; 'you decide. Right now.' as Wedde puts it in 'Chophouse Log', another poem in which a good deal must be intuited. The process is not always easy.

To take the most obvious thematic drift first, 'Castaly,' is a commentary on the proto-European history of this country. 1827, when 'John Guard/blew into the Straits', is far removed in character as well as chronologically from the received starting point of 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi:

By the time the surly chiefs came up from the south
to sign the treaty in Port Underwood
the 'fish' were scarce...

('Castaly' 10, *Islands* 15 p.7)

Allen Curnow covers the same historical ground with a similarly disenchanted eye in 'The Unhistoric Story', which opens 'Whaling for continents coveted deep in the south' and

then elaborates on this initial image of rapaciousness:

The roving tentacles touched, rested, clutched
 Substantial earth, that is, accustomed haven
 For the hungry whaler. Some inland, some hatched
 Rudely in bays, the shaggy foreshore shaven,
 Lusted, preached as they knew;
 But as the children grew
 It was something different, something
 Nobody counted on. (10)

Curnow is acutely aware of 'the stain of blood that writes an island story' ('Landfall in Unknown Seas') and for Wedde too, the making of a nation is incidental to the larger process of destruction precipitated by intruders: 'Miners, not husbandmen, who piercing the side/Let the land's life' (10). Bloody rearrangement of the given is the point of 'Castaly' and the 'rearranging' takes place before our eyes:

...*mis-en-scène*:
 body of water
 body of mammal
 body of death
 ('Castaly' 6, *Islands* 15 p.5)

The importance of this three-fold identification is unmistakable in repetition, linked as it is with the *Castaly* motif itself:

body of water
 body of mammal
 body of death

 no *Castaly* spouts in the Straits
 a songfest heard from Santiago to Antarctica
 the whole Pacific their playground
 ('Castaly' 14, *Islands* 15 p.8)

Still looking at the historical perspectives of the poem, we find that 'Castaly' appears to divide more or less evenly into two worlds. The early sections seem to be Otago-based and contemporary, though they are not without their temporal ambiguities ('It was like when she disembarking/wore the pearl-grey travelling costume...') or elements of mystery ('Now hear the generous spirits murmur...'). With the introduction of John Guard, the poem moves northward to the Sounds and into a straightforward account of the country's first whaling enterprise, with heavy emphasis on the exploitative aspects of the venture. Only the whalers themselves, who get '40/240' share of the profit between them, show up favourably in a hard, heroic cast which matches that of the tribal civilisation they are encountering:

...Jacky Love
 ('Haki Rau'): when he died
 the people gave him a chieftain's burial
 canoe dug in beside him.

('Castaly' 9, *Islands* 15 p.6)

Subsequent events directed attention away from this hard-living stratum of New Zealand history. The whalers were overlaid by the Victorian sanctimonies of the 'forties (Wakefield, Dieffenbach, Marsden) which then determined the nature of 'progress' as continued pursuit of wealth under cover of well-bred pretensions, and turned the earlier days into 'forbidden history'.

This is the historical trajectory of 'Castaly'; but also pervading the poem is an immense groundswell of unexplained warnings, of returning spirits which make retributive demands,

of repeated allusions to 'Castaly: the fount of poesy'.
Aptly enough, this 'swell' seems to be concentrated in imagery
of tidal pull. It is mysterious:

...the old wood fever hospital weathers pearl-grey
like a wraith

 what? slipping
like a wraith
 on its own tides

('Castaly' 4, *Islands* 15 p.4)

The Pacific glides in here
like a ghost ship: ruffled
moonlit sails, bow-wash on the beach.
Now hear the generous spirits murmur:

('Castaly' 5, *Islands* 15 p.4)

and it is the moving force of all orders:

the envelope of atmosphere drawn out in tides
meniscus of ocean drawn out in tides
water of body
drawn out in tides...

('Castaly' 6, *Islands* 15 p.5)

In the concluding section of the poem, single images are
juxtaposed as space-surrounded fragments, each obviously of
integral importance, homing back to the notion of the 'fount
of poesy'. The silent, insidious character of the tidal pull
is brought out here, and is perhaps a metaphor for the way
in which 'Castaly' itself is operating on the mind:

newly painted...
bright blue...

the tides plucking
at your mind

the dark spout
the fount

('Castaly' 14, *Islands* 15 p.8)

Exactly what 'the fount of poesy' means to Wedde is the unexplained crux of the poem. The motive beauty of the whale spout is linked to one of his favourite affirmative metaphors:

How the heart leaps
at each new departure!

The dark spout
lifts it from beneath
lofts it high into the blue.

Castaly: 'the fount of poesy'
('Castaly'3, *Islands* 15 p.3)

and the near-obliteration of the whale-spout 'Castaly' may have serious repercussions for the Parnassus-derived 'Castaly' which is Ian Wedde's poetry. Given that a forth-coming collection is actually to be called *Castaly*, the enigmas of this poem may well be resolved only in context of what is eventually found surrounding it. 'Castaly' (the poem) could well be a central metaphor for *Castaly* (the book).

The remaining two 'striking poems' which I want to discuss are both manifestations of direct response to a particular time, place, and individual; or, as Wedde whimsically phrases it:

'Would

you hear my voice
 come through the music' comes
 through with the music

(*Don't Listen 2*)

In the final section of the poem, each 'random' particular has been assimilated as a vital image into what Wedde has to say (this is one of the composite finales for which he has a fondness):

Oh Grant Batty you have a big heart
 summer's coming
 you can see her breath
 through the music
 the white yacht waltzes
 to. Muldoon's franchise
 doesn't feed those kids. You *ding* and I'll *sich*. Fuck him. Who
 needs the little prick.

(*Don't Listen 5*)

The seeming transparency of *Don't Listen* actually works hard for the poem as a structural device, and the jauntiness of tone which is another of its immediately noticeable features is also functional. As in *Pathway*, capricious syntax and hyper-alertness to word-sense create an assurance that the finer points of the poem's thematic content are being handled as deftly. There is the pointing up of prepositional absurdity ('we're all being fucked/'around''; 'things/ that are 'on' my mind') and the continual mock-uncertainty of which conjunction is appropriate ('Should that be but'). Both devices are designed to trigger a double-take; we are to think twice about 'normal orderings - which is of course one of the objects of a poem like *Don't Listen*.

Alongside this word play operates Wedde's usual sensitivity to the ironic potential of what is being said. Inverted commas are warnings against cheap literalness:

optimistic

as I am, full of 'promise' young and in
good shape

(...)

Ah

why talk about the weather
when the world shakes
to be changed. The ice of 'the times'
is not in the air.

(Don't Listen 2)

Even a moment of apparent approbation is deliberately toppled over into the cliché it undoubtedly is:

The game is on

and boy! the crowd loves Grant Batty

his

intelligence his heart that makes up for the size
of his body

as the commentator says

and we are winning!

(Don't Listen 2)

despite the fact that Batty's 'amazing heart' is one of the images to be set up against the winter coldness of Muldoon.

Indeed, the Muldoon climate has produced a parallel bitterness in the poet of *Don't Listen*; the poem contains elements of a derision that borders on self-disgust at the prospect of everything (even poetics) being taken cheaply and used unthinkingly:

Some rimes sound just like
 double column accounting and mean about
 as much. Next time you lean close citizen,
 he may rub you out because he likes the view
 a whole lot better than he likes you

(Don't Listen 2)

The irony, which Wedde is well aware of, is that despised 'rimes' such as these are what make the poem memorable, even quotable. The poet is caught in the pain/pleasure of knowing he cannot avoid clichés and other people's postures and at the same time experiencing a savage satisfaction in his ability to wield these patterns with practised skill. Thus *Don't Listen* opens jauntily (with memories of La Primavera's dream-world travelling (Sonnet 43 *Earthly*) and reminders of the prolonged phenomenological movements in *Spells*):

Well here we are where we are and what are we going to do
 to make a living
 out of life?

(Don't Listen 1)

and this jauntiness is in marked contrast to the close of the poem, where underlying bitterness suddenly surfaces in a gesture which seems to rip away the word-games which precede it: 'You *ding* and I'll *sich*. Fuck him. Who/needs the little prick.' (*Don't Listen 5*). Is this conclusion a jubilant brushing aside of the threat presented by the current style of government (because 'we are winning!')? Or is it some kind of shrug, dispirited and morose, the lunge of a chained animal (because the cold is unremovable 'inside, where the wind with its rumour of summer/can't reach')? Both options have been

equally contributed to throughout *Don't Listen*, even the title of which is a truculent invitation to disaster.

Moving on from the implications of the poem's tone to look at its actual politicality, we find that this centres on the question of world-changing. From one point of view, there is the lyrical optimism which assures us that the west wind will eventually dissolve midwinter frigidity (and that, meanwhile, Batty's warmth and vigour will sustain us in the prevailing cold). The wryness of:

Ah
 why talk about the weather
 when the world shakes
 to be changed.

(*Don't Listen 2*)

resides in the fact that it is precisely 'the weather', bringing advance news of seasonal turn, on which we may pin our own hopes for a change in the status quo. (11) All avenues of effort are wide open if societal rhythms can be seen to match natural ones ('the lesson/is, effort's got to be directed ...', *Pathway* p.10); both worlds shake to be changed (but not ravaged, 'Castaly'), and no-one has a franchise on the 'small blessings' of living.

From a second viewpoint, however, there is the fear that the world is impervious to change, that collectivity produces a monster so unwieldy and 'unnatural' as to be totally divorced from its constituent parts. If this is the case, then no-one can win:

He is not going to change the world
 for the better
 any more than Batty
 or me
 and he is not going to listen to you
 (*Don't Listen 2*)

and the lovely fragments of the poem (Saturday music/football/
 west wind/white yacht/scent of honey) therefore point to
 nothing more than delusion. The possibility that they have
 no reference to a schema for change must be allowed for:

and the west wind sails a white yacht past the prison
 on the promise that she's coming back some day
 'would you hear my voice'
 Batty is setting them up
 again, does that make you feel better
 and warmer inside?
 (*Don't Listen 2*)

If it *is* true that the world cannot be changed for the
 better (that writing poems is therefore as much a waste of
 time as every other effort directed against entropic systems),
 then the ending of *Don't Listen* arguably represents an individual's
 abdication from the initial terms of a social contract he may
 have once entered into. At the end of *Pathway*, officialdom
 was to be tolerated (if not warmly advocated) for the mutual
 benefit of all users of the water supply. In *Don't Listen*,
 published two years later, the last move is a closing of ranks
 against a civic figurehead who has, in Wedde's eyes, assumed
 a power quite out of proportion with his own responsibility to
 the common water supply:

lonely child/you can't feel sorry for either'), 'Series Animation' is a 'verbal missile', wishfully designed to exterminate 'the rude thug':

a villian fit
to set beside Bat Bandit: an evil greedy racist
bully who in 'real life' was a caricature and in
the unreal life of his brand of politics was
a character perfectly suited for tamping into the mould
of retarded subtlety created by the "series animation"
method.

('Series Animation', *Pilgrims* 5 & 6 p.148)

The rhetoric of this poem is dense, rabid, elaborately explanatory - and apparently deadly serious. Once set in motion, it does not let up for a moment (rather like the series animation method itself), and goes racketing towards a logical conclusion - the surrealistic decapitation of the villain - then ends abruptly, object achieved.

The film analogy is intriguing for other reasons. For one thing, the medium customarily allows an arbitrary division of characters into 'goodies' and 'baddies' which is most convenient in a political poem. Then there is the surmise that New Zealand politics bears certain resemblances (at least in Wedde's mind) to cartoonery and high-speed comedy ('the hysterical/disorder that was his version of Westminster/Parliamentary Democracy'; the prime minister's head as a bag of stale bread). The film analogy is not entirely whimsical, however; the uproar over the Hanna Barbara cartoons which were used as part of the National Party's election campaign in 1975 was obviously to the forefront of Wedde's mind early in 1976.

Put together, these considerations relieve us of a suspicion that Wedde's habitually exact balance of 'cool' and 'caring' has been upset in 'Series Animation' (the poem is indisputably comical in places, but turgid in as many others). We now perceive that while Wedde *is* in earnest about the evils of the Muldoon regime, the style of 'Series Animation' is deliberately exaggerative - the nearest Wedde has yet come to producing a cartoon poem. Is this totally committed poetry? Is it propaganda? Is it bad art? I would suggest that it is the articulating metaphor of 'Series Animation at 24 Frames' which effectively removes the possibility of an immediate decision as to the 'quality' of the poem.

III: 'Angel' and others

The 'striking poems' are directed outwards and they are written with the conviction of one sure of his ability to distinguish 'right' from 'wrong', affirmative from negative, change from regress. However, alongside these poems (and on occasion very much part of them) extends the other Wedde of 'I'm not good I'm not peaceful I'm not wise' (Sonnet 10 *Earthly*) who is doubt-filled and self-deprecatory. It is essential to realise that this mood is not without antecedents (the blacker moments of 'Homage to Matisse'; the insomniac visions of *Made Over* and *Earthly*; the near-despair in parts of *Spells*) when we come to look at 'Angel', 'The 1976 Bullet McHale Winter Lectures' and 'Chophouse Log'. At the same time, the dominance of this vision over the celebrative one indicates that any joy

arrived at will be heavily marked by its passage through filters of parody and distrust.

These three large poems were written after the Weddes' removal to Wellington in early 1975, and consciousness of city environs would seem to have something to do with the sourness coming through, though the capital cannot be attributed sole responsibility for a change in the temper of Wedde's poetry. Just as the ambrosial 'Otago vision' of *Earthly* grew out of elements in the earlier poems of *Made Over*, so no convenient cut-off point can be discerned in the Otago-Wellington transition. This is demonstrated particularly well by 'Grit', a poem which incorporates both moods and thus merits attention as part of the bridge between a prevalently optimistic outlook and one filled with reservations.

'Grit', published in Frank McKay's *Poetry New Zealand* Vol III (Christchurch: Pegasus, 1976), has a superbly evocatory opening:

The sun's arc curtailed daily
its drift veering north:
mountain, valley, plantation, outcrop,
wintering interstices sodden
with light, shadows foundering
in amber afternoon:

('Grit', *Poetry New Zealand* Vol III p.109)

and the 'as ifs' of the second verse are projections in the mind of the poet of this vibrant scene. If this was an *Earthly* sonnet, the waves would be 'staking out claims', the 'decayed wrack' would be adventure, and the child *would* fly; the perception of beauty following straight through into lyric

representation of it. But here something is interfering with the simplicity of the process:

the young man thinks:
 I've no ambition
 these pure gifts erode me, each day
 bright as water in a brass bowl
 refractions whose edges cut me back

till I drift across the interstices of seasons,
 mountain, valley, plantation, outcrop,
 no longer fixed but fluid
 as light is, no longer
 an eye but a gaze,
 no longer searching, but sought through...

('Grit', *Poetry New Zealand* Vol III p.109)

The anxiety that beauty and easy perception of beauty are not enough is manifested in the most beautiful of images. Dazzling refractions (interstices) of water in a brass bowl belong to the same order of hurtful brightness as the Purakanui day in *Dick Seddon* (13). These same refractions have some sort of diminishing effect. We remember from 'Sleeping Indian' that the ideal of perception is 'eyes to look *through*' rather than with, so the realisation that you yourself are being 'sought through' is disturbing, implying as it does that you are an instrument (a lens), having unwittingly lost the faculty of true perception. (Blake: 'I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would Question a Window Concerning a Sight I look thro it not with it.' (14)) The directive, possessive power is most important to this notion; to Blake, the eye is 'I'.

Linguistically, this falling away is made apparent by two distinct sets of terms working within the poem. There are the

vital, precise, directional words and images; a curtailed arc, 'veering', 'punctilious' waves which look to be 'staking out claims', 'refractions' with edges that cut back, interstices. a weight which presses. Opposed to these are the 'acted-upon' terms, built up subtly out of the landscape itself ('wintering interstices *sodden*/with light, shadows *foundering*/in amber afternoon') and flowing into the man who begins to perceive himself as an eroded, drifting presence.

These are the 'young man's' thoughts and they are shown to be a kind of vanity by the small fact of 'grit', which seems to demonstrate to him that seeing and being are inextricable, whatever the operative ambiguities of perception:

he stands in the back yard in darkness
feeling the grit's weight
press him against against
what, being sought, exists.

(*'Grit'*, *Poetry New Zealand* Vol III p.109)

The relation is 'something like an embrace' which is the section title of a much earlier poem to do with situational *angst*:

I prefer to think of something like
an embrace, a vortex, a
wall of death. I am pressed by the phenomenon
they misname gravity
which thing I hold to be a present burden
rolled up perhaps in a bright Moroccan blanket
which my shoulders & the soles

of my feet know since it presses
down through them &

the earth presses up, else
how could I live, how could I

do that?

(*'Mash for Isaac'* 1, *Made Over* p.31)

This holding in place ('It's not what you are/but where/that counts'; 'Chizel', *Made Over* p.65) is a most important concept. Looking back at *Spells*, we recall that determining a place 'here' was largely a matter of being finely attuned to the phenomena surrounding you, so that 'subject' and 'object' ceased to hold their usual connotations of 'active' and 'passive'.

True Phenomenological vision would decry Blakian optics as inordinately anthropocentric; the eye need not denote 'I'. To Phenomenologists, 'being-in-the-world' (*Dasein*) is the basis of perception but external reality nonetheless retains its ontological integrity.

The ideal is to strike a balance, to *hold* in equivalence to how much you are *being held*. This notion has always been to the fore of Wedde's thinking in metaphors of balance (levers, dance) and invigorating opposition (tough sweetness/sweet toughness, blades and what they cut). In *Pathway* it had an ecological emphasis, and the holding and being held were demonstrated to have vast implications. As Ammons puts it:

: go to look for the ocean currents and
though they are always flowing there they are, right in place, if
with seasonal leans and sways: the human body
staying in change, time rushing through, ingestion,

elimination: if change stopped, the mechanisms of
holding would lose their tune: current informs us,
is the means of our temporary stay: (15)

The metaphor of flow which Ammons uses here informs Wedde's own poems. It is inherent in the reticulative metaphor (is in fact the movement co-ordinate of the web; c.f. Kate's vision

of the city traffic, *Dick Seddon* p.144) rather as the web itself is arrived at by connecting the individual leaps of energy which were among Wedde's first images of situational movement.

Flow, or flux, is even more difficult to comprehend than the ambiguities of reticulation. At ~~the~~ one level it represents the harmony of natural rhythms, and 'Grit' records an occasion when confidence in these rhythms momentarily fails. The 'young man' is aware of the flow around him, but distrusts its very pervasiveness. Once again, being in the middle of a large structure is not conducive to perceiving overall harmony; flow is an exceptionally formless phenomenon, often directionally ambiguous, and without demarcations. Flow (particularly as flux) may appear to be simply violent unpredictability ('Extremes of Moderations' makes this point several times in 'examining' the nature of each of the terms of its title). In this ambivalent aspect, the metaphor of flow complements exactly the agony of *not knowing* which prevails in Wedde's latest poems (not knowing whether your context is right; whether you have gauged your hold correctly; whether 'context' or 'hold' are even possible).

The 'young man' of 'Grit' is reinstated by a revelation ('what being sought, exists'); but ~~it~~ is the initial loss of situational faith - in the face of the flow all around - which links 'Grit' to 'Angel' and the poems which follow.

'Angel' (*Islands* 20 pp.129-33, Winter 1977) is another endo-genetic excursion in direct line of descent from *Pathway*

and *Don't Listen*. It has more performative scope than either, probably attributable to the fact that it was written with an eye to cinematic potential. Richard Turner's *Souvenirs of Cairo*, a 'quixotic venture featuring poets Alan Brunton, Russell Haley and Ian Wedde' (16), was not a critical success. However, the film's interest to us lies in its date (1975) which indicates that 'Angel', Wedde's contribution, must be among the earliest of his Wellington poems.

'Angel' is a monologue. The speaker addresses 'Angel Child' with an incremental bitterness (pretended solicitude) which could only be auto-referential:

& this is where
 you get
 off, Angel
 (...)
 & this is where you get off, Angel.
 (...)
 That's
 where you get off
 Angel. That's where your
 sentence comes back
 at you. You
 cheap bastard. This is where
 you never listen.
 (...)
 This is where you get off
 oh Angel Child here's
 where your miraculous glass foot
 slashes the beach. Down to
 the bone
 where it hurts.

('Angel', *Islands* 20 pp. 129-30)

'Angel' is an exercise in mind-excursion; monologic reflections range over and are informed by matters currently engaging Wedde's attention. Pieces from various parts of his

general poetic consciousness are discernible in 'Angel', some of them embryonic, others retrospective. Mount Crawford will figure in *Don't Listen*, the moonlit vista be central to 'Bullet McHale'; Dicky Barrett's rum and the 'fount of poesy' come in from 'Castaly', the vision of 'amoebic sepia' is vaguely Pynchonesque in tone ('Look out there, what's that, could be/ some kinda/precipitate...') and somehow affiliated to *Pathway*, as is the liberating spectacle of the gulls:

in the brilliant morning
 where Pacific blackbacks fight &
 crash the tarnished silver
 screaming *More!*
More! More!

('Angel', *Islands* 20 p.133)

One of the most striking things to be 'made over' in 'Angel' is a metaphor from *Dick Seddon*, the power grid. The old problem of what exactly constitutes movement in a vast reticulation is resolved if the web can once be envisaged as a giant series of electrical circuits through which power flows. We have already remarked that flow is Wedde's dominant metaphor in 'Angel' and 'Bullet McHale':

Look Angel
 it's all flowing quietly one
 way: the waves the tide
 the currents the wind
 & that moonlight flowing with it
 silk on
 a woman's thigh
 & you want to flow with it
 too
 dontcha

('Angel', *Islands* 20 pp.130-1)

The leaves they
all fly
down, the clouds

blow one way, & the sea!
did you
ever

pick up on such
concord...

('Bullet McHale' 3. 'The Poet', *Islands* 23 p.60)

In *Dick Seddon* the image of the power grid is constructed right in front of us, a logical extension of Wedde's conception of flux and kinetics. The grid is an analogy for memory:

Easy to imagine that, as time passes, so do the connexions that memories hang on. But it's the memories that atrophy, shrink to fine points of focus, while the connexions, the bonds, get tougher, and longer, and lit by a concentrated dreamlike glare, a scrutinizing light whose purpose seems to be the destruction or at least the weakening of those surreal embraces, but whose actual effect is to temper and reinforce clutchings, spans, couplings, hair-fine parabolic filaments of 'meaning', until the whole intricate structure locks into some kind of equilibrium, and hardens there, until it resembles a gorgeous electronic circuit, in which links matter more than points of stasis, because its important for the power to *continue*, no matter how it may be modified en route...and what you want to be reassured about, is that the juice goes in one end, and comes out at the other...

(*Dick Seddon* p.184)

However, the grid metaphor outlined here has a wider application, concerned with personal 'powerhouses'. Beck, telling Kate about Chink, observes: 'His old man's just died, something shitty was going on there, cut off his power for a while, Chink's I mean.'
(*Dick Seddon* p.137) A little further on, the figures of Chink and Angel coalesce when Beck continues: '...one of these days he's gonna throw the switch, I wouldn't like to be the one he

takes along...' (*Dick Seddon* p.138):

Why throw the switch, Angel, why try
to walk on
moonlit water, why each
time you touch a moonlit woman
do your fingers have to
screech like
teacher's chalk?

(*'Angel'*, *Islands* 20 p.131)

The 'switch-thrower' elements in Chink and Angel remind us of the 'young man' in 'Grit' who also felt intensely uneasy about the beauteousness of the flow. The full implications of 'throwing the switch' are provided in the same passage in *Dick Seddon* which details the make-up of the power-grid. It may be exhilarating 'cutting across the stream/ on that weird diagonal/through the flow' (*'Angel'*), but it is also potentially lethal:

So that the memory becomes a power-grid: power-links between points of meaninglessness. So long as you don't get in there with a bomb, don't shoot your way to the Master Switch and throw it to 'off', so long as you keep that whole circuit bathed in that hardening inward glare, then your power's always going to be *present*. Throw the switch, and you're left with an exquisite map of microscopic dots of rubbish: resting places but no travellers...towns but no roads...

(*Dick Seddon* pp.184-5)

The dilemma is whether or not to commit yourself to the prevailing order. The model of the power-grid incorporates a warning of the consequences of attempting to thwart or outwit the circuitries of flow, but it does not make the processes of decision any less problematic for a Chink, an Angel, or a 'young man'.

Rather as Chink's solution to 'the cramped bile of energy which so occupied his time' (*Dick Seddon* p.118) is to make correlative mind-journeys out of his compulsive tripping of the country, so one direction pointed out in 'Angel' involves the 'out there' co-ordinate. The tick-tocking starry dynamo, for all its speciousness, is an extension of the urgent request to fit into an existent order (hang in the swell, find the grain, follow the steps, *listen*). Similarly, the passage about 'Priest Amadeus' seems to imply that a moment of astrality may be achieved by giving in to the flow ('Angel/stop fighting it'), by allowing yourself to be held by it ('feeling the grit's weight/press him again against/what, being sought, exists'; 'Grit').(17)

However, in 'Angel' astrality is not 'the' answer; we keep being heavily grounded (Mozart to 'grit in your grundies') and there is an underlying ominousness about the very injunction to give up:

Angel
 stop fighting it.
 Priest Amadeus will thread you.
 Hang you
 like a star
 about the throat of Lady Zodiac.

('Angel', *Islands* 20 pp.131-2)

Perceiving cosmic harmony and wanting to be part of it is again opposed to perceiving a huge, flowing movement and suspecting that going along with it could have unforeseen risks of its own. A 'Priest Amadeus'-like ambivalence also attends the figure of Chink's 'Stranger' in *Dick Seddon*.

Which angel is speaking (with 'a patient lop-sided salesman's smile') when an escape route is indicated?

Reality is a lattice, a net. It's the spaces that count. It's the spaces that trap you. There's no escape. Or...

'That's right, brother,' said the Stranger. 'That would be the natural way. How you envied the seals! You could get back there. Just think of it: in your element at last! And the Pacific: peace, brother, peace...'

(*Dick Seddon* p.209)

There is no answer to the problems of flow forthcoming in 'Angel', except that the poem circles downwards (even to sub-aqueous depths), and that the descent will be somehow beneficial, if the articulating voice is to be trusted: 'Stop/dreaming Angel...'; 'Get it straight'; 'Angel the only one you're fooling is yourself'. Throughout the poem, the command has been to *look* (at what is in front of you and recognise it), and to *listen* (to existing rhythms, to the hectoring voice) so that a stop can be put to things going 'in one ear &/out the other'. The ozone flow may conceivably have some point; the implication is that Angel does not. It is significant that the Tin Cup Dream (alternative life-style?), despite its beauty and thought-lofting effects means 'you wouldn't hear a thing'. One surety in 'Angel' is that the place to listen is still 'here':

Down here
the cries of mariners
come through the window-
cracks. Stuff the cracks
they still get in
sunken bells
knocking at the brink of the land-shelf.
Listen to them, Angel.

('Angel', *Islands* 20 p.133)

What the bells and the mariners are saying and what they signify is not revealed. The image has the same haunted quality as parts of 'Castaly' ('it's time to *feed* us...'); the point perhaps lies in not entirely comprehending the nature of the demand being made.

'The 1976 Bullet McHale Winter Lectures' (*Islands* 23 pp.59-63, Autumn 1978) has marked affiliations to 'Angel'. It has its own enigmas, but in parts illumines those of the earlier poem. The most obvious of these conjunctive motifs, and one which carries over into 'Chophouse Log', is the harbour-city locale. Aspects of this vista, moonlit or sunlit, provoke the oldest, most clichéd and longest unanswered question:

Take a look, look
there
Angel: what's
coming at you? what does it all mean?

'I, uh...'

('Angel', *Islands* 20 p.132)

Which is Angel's one response to the torrent of abuse being directed at him. However, the matter is taken up again in 'Bullet McHale', significantly enough in the section entitled 'The Poet'. Firstly we are given the familiar vision of harmonious flow ('did you/ever//pick up on such/*concord*...'), against which is set the jammed jukebox effect of the city and the voice of - a woman? - deathmarked by the city. Then follows a satiric passage about poetic sensibility which begins:

Your delicate heart
quivers in the tide

of your body
it points up-current
the very universe

pours past its gills.
It is a view
you are looking at

a vista of the harbour
you applaud, its
surface is surely

flowing. What does
this mean?

(*'Bullet McHale' 3. 'The Poet', Islands 23 p.61*)

Having led us out, at some typographical length, on this exposition, Wedde proceeds to slam down the answer with 'unpoetic' categoricalness:

You are going
to praise the vista

in a poem. She will step out
upon its surface
& drown. That is what

the song is about.
That is your banal destiny.
That is

what it all
'means'
my friend.

(*'Bullet McHale' 3. 'The Poet', Islands 23 p.61*)

One other instance of iterated imagery is the moonlight, which in 'Angel' is part of the flowing surface of the vista but also 'silk on/a woman's thigh/& you want to flow with it/too/dontcha'. Moonlit beauty is forbidden Angel (perhaps for

The same reason he finds it hard to give in to 'Priest Amadeus' even after having imagined harmony stitched through the universe). In 'Bullet', we get an explanation of this moonlight, encased in a bitter 'lecturing' exercise along lines similar to 'The Poet':

Here is moonlight on the sea
 'like' yellow tallow
 on a mirror. Here is
 a dressing-room for Stars
 a *fin-de-siècle* Funambules.
 Here is Pierrot.
 Here is the moon
 again. Here is the romantic
 idiocy of the word
 'like':

('Bullet McHale' l. 'The Style', *Islands* 23 p.59)

It seems to be another case of anxiety about the legitimacy of responding to beauty ('These pure gifts erode me'), particularly so hackneyed a beauty as moonlight on the sea. The decadence of the image, itself a 'romantic idiocy', is skilfully evoked as the whole vista becomes a Lautrec-like spectacle, complete with vaudeville figures, and set to the macabre sawings of *Pierrot Lunaire*. (18). This is 'The Style' with a vengeance.

Its antithesis occurs at the end of the 'lectures'; somewhere in between, confidence in the validity of beauty has asserted itself because elaborate sarcasm abruptly gives way to an imagined moment of escape into the 'outside' world:

I don't want to end
 on such a down note, it goes against
 my nature, but

there doesn't seem to be a key in here
 to unlock the electric light room door
 out to where the birds are that
 you can hear drinking the yellow kowhai, singing
 & singing in the real world.

('Bullet McHale' 5. 'The Singular Definite Article',
Islands 23 p.61)

The forbear of this is surely the sonnet from *Earthly* which
 begins 'How it glitters! & how simple it seems!':

- a song

I wanted to follow through these gifts from
 me to you Carlos, you to me, & then

out! out into the sunlight & the rain
 the old diamond-backed carapace of dreams,

out into all the wide worlds!

(Sonnet 59 *Earthly*)

The end of 'Bullet McHale' is one of the very few
 occasions in the latest-published of Wedde's poems which
 allows us to realise that the old combination of beauty and
 certitude is still an ultimate objective. The poem as a whole
 defies full exposition (though co-texts and other affiliated
 poems may yet appear), rather as they key 'to unlock the
 electric light room door' cannot be found. We are still *inside*
 (the lecture theatre, the problem, ourselves) rather than *out*
there in the real world.

'Chophouse Log' (*Pilgrims* 5 & 6 pp. 149-51, Spring 1978)
 is as enigmatic a poem as 'Bullet McHale'. Again, the
 ambiguities of holding and being held articulate the work,
 and the insecurity of contexts is more marked than ever:

It's hard being on a diet when you're hungry
 & thin. On the 7th floor of a building
 you talk to an expert. You want to do your best
 by your friends and he
 has your future in his hands
 which don't even tremble.

('Chophouse Log' 1, *Pilgrims* 5 & 6 p.149)

The first three of the poem's six sections each contain a rhetorical interrogative, and ('Angel'-style) the 'answers' come straight back. The passage above continues:

How are you going to make yourself feel worth it?
 Get your *tone* right.

('Chophouse Log' 1, *Pilgrims* 5 & 6 p.149)

This first question is mocking; the myth of the top-floor expert has been exploded in 'Bullet McHale' (4. 'The Rhythm') and dealing with 'experts' comes down to trying to strike an appropriate (awe-struck) tone, having correctly judged the context i.e. how the expert envisages himself.

The second interrogative also takes us back to 'Bullet McHale' territory, to 'The Singular Definite Article', in which the consequences of wrong decisions left the failed one(s) 'tap-dancing' on a 'modest accomplishment'. As much may depend on the answer to this question:

What do you think you have built on
 stone light music sky ocean
you decide. Right now.

('Chophouse Log' 2, *Pilgrims* 5 & 6 p.149)

The third question brings us to the crux of the matter:

How
do you expect to get
your responsibilities together
when you haven't got your dream straight?
Brother
if they don't arrest you for taking off
the shelf, they'll despise you
for picking up from the floor.

(Chophouse Log' 3, *Pilgrims* 5 & 6 p.150)

'In dreams begins responsibility'; Yeats took the line (from an 'Old play') as the epigraph of his 1914 collection, *Responsibilities*. Dreams and responsibilities are perhaps always inextricable to poets who perceive no legitimate difference between waking and dreaming reality: 'responsibilities/ drift through the dream/lattice' ('Kali Yuga', *Hasard* 1, August 1977).

But it is not possible in 'Chophouse Log' even to be certain that your dream is the right one. The poem becomes a log of small, 'unstraight' and slightly despairing dreams; the interrogatory voice disappears and the first person singular takes over as the articulating presence. The source of the despair has to do with existential inertia ('the ordeal is of motion & silence') and the solution extended is deliberately fatuous:

One day
you'll just wake up & start.
"High definition performance"
high octane fuel!

Chicken Man blowing hope out his arse
lavender vapourtrail in the stratosphere.

('Chophouse Log' 4, *Pilgrims* 5 & 6 p.150) (19)

Social claustrophobia compounds the problem, a continuation of the all-versus-one situation in the fourth part of 'Bullet McHale' where The Pride savage the ex-carnivore who 'isn't making it'. Here the tormented one actually has a voice ('leave me alone'; 'I'm practising for a trip away') and the defensive strategy of 'melancholy somnambulism'.

The other components of 'Chophouse Log' not immediately relevant to the question-answer-problem construct so far discussed concern the city itself, which is 'peopled' by personifications (Beauty, Hope, a 'prince', maybe even Chicken Man) and operates on principles of 'filth tilth wealth' in a locale which is a mixture of night-club, restaurant kitchen and cat-house. 'What it all means', to borrow a phrase from 'Bullet McHale', is difficult to intuit, but there is at least one other piece of writing by Wedde which throws light onto these aspects of 'Chophouse Log', a short text in *Spleen* 4 (July 1976) called 'The Beacon'. It is full of the sort of figures which inhabit 'Chophouse Log', and they appear to need no introduction here either:

Everybody loves a parade. He joined the queue at the ticket window. Pick up on the tawdry bangle brigade. Hey, Alaska, whydja need the charms? the little elephants and roosters? Look into the liquorice eyes, lay your fingers on the pale skin. This lady's had a big one right to the heart, she's laughing, she's having fun and trouble strightening the words out.

Here's Mandy Dandy with cigarette burns on his jacket. Here's wisdom. Here's knowledge. Lights at the end of a long funnel.

(...)

Who's here?

Ah, everybody's here. Youth Hope and Beauty are here. And Time, crushing the flowers against his mouth...delirious "Smell these!"... laughing and laughing... (21)

the personifications move in a parade; this is theatre, the whole thing could be script for a Red Mole-type cabaret. The scriptwriter, it emerges, is an insomniac 'watching the parade of the day's events pass before his mind's eye' (20), and the parade is nothing less than a log: 'With himself he began to enter into some sort of account of the day's events.' (20) The enervated tension which powers insomnia (and probably 'melancholy somnanbulism') links 'The Beacon' and 'Chophouse Log'. However, logging excerpts from daily existence, dream and real, personalised or personified, is efficacious in 'The Beacon' in a way which nothing in 'Chophouse Log' even remotely points to:

The beacon was like a mnemonic. He watched an event as it approached a threshold of pain or ugliness. Then the tension broke, the scene became comical, he shook with silent laughter.

Flash, and the next. And the next. Flash. Flash. He lay laughing at the show while sleep began to lift him high above the scent of flowers, the sound of waves down there in the bay. (21)

This ending parallels the vision of the singing, kowhai-drinking birds which closes 'Bullet McHale'; 'Chophouse Log' leaves us downtown and in recurring desolation:

Beauty lies down
among the kitchen slops
& hates him in her heart
who needs her dreams
to decorate the house he leaves
to come "out" to eat
each nite among the protein glamour & the presentation
the strangers who also pick her from between their teeth.

('Chophouse Log' 6, *Pilgrims* 5 & 6 p.151)

'Chophouse Log' is the latest of Wedde's poems to be published (*Pilgrims* 5 & 6 appeared November 26 1978) and it 'ends' us on a very 'down note' indeed. Through all the mysteries and half-intuited resonances of the latest poems, this agonised negativity is what communicates itself most forcibly. It should be born in mind though that these poems themselves are as yet out of context; the publication of a collection gathering them together will doubtless present a much modified picture.

CONCLUSION

Wedde opened his authorial statement in Baysting's anthology, *The Young New Zealand Poets* (p.185) thus:

The desire is always to be as clear & simple as possible which means that poems are often going to be obscure. This is not a contradiction. The reduction of quests & discoveries to their essentials makes them more charismatic, more dependent upon the mysterious triggers which we all share to greater or lesser extents, which can propel us violently or as though in a dream into previously unknown or unimagined or misunderstood territories & times.

(...)

As for writing them: I began with that, the desire to be simple.

That was 1973; in 1978 as increasingly 'oblique' poems come to hand, this statement has more relevance than ever to Wedde's work.

It is difficult to say where Wedde is headed. There is perhaps only one thing of which we can be reasonably sure, that he continues to be absorbed by 'some bright filament' (*Dick Seddon*) of significant thought, tracking it through its positive and negative manifestations.

Critical 'conclusions' seem absurd when the emphasis of this study (an emphasis endorsed by the poems themselves) is on an exploration which involves making constant working judgements ('you decide. Right now') rather than definitive pronouncements intended to hold against all comers. The assurance that there is no 'conclusion' to the poetry of Ian Wedde (that its entire nature is contained in on-going seamlessness) is its finest characteristic.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER I: MADE OVER

1. Wedde, statement in *The Young New Zealand Poets*, ed. Arthur Baysting (Auckland: Heinemann (NZ), 1973) p.185.
2. First published *Poetry Australia*, No. 30, p.24. October 1969 (also *Made Over* (1974) p.67). Whenever attention is to be drawn to an original date of publication rather than the version appearing in one of the three major collections, the bracketed date will be accompanied by an explanatory note.
3. Hilton Kramer, *The Age of the Avant-Garde: an art chronicle of 1956-1972* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1974) p.7.
4. Checking on these reappearing references often discloses links with other matters in the same field e.g. finding out who Reb Bunam was ('What I give to all I withhold from each'; quoted *Dick Seddon* p.198 and Sonnet 41, *Earthly*) threw into relief other Jewish references. Wedde's interest in Jewish literature dates from his university years at Auckland, where he specialised in American-Jewish novelists. (*Marlborough Express* article 26/7/78)
5. Kramer, *ibid.*, p.12. On the subject of influence and masters, there are interesting comments made by Wedde in talking to painter Jeffrey Harris, *Spleen* 8, June 1977. ('The Splinterview 8: Jeffrey Harris') They discuss the effect which McCahon has had on Harris' work:

(H) It's not a hang-up, but it's...it's something I've had to deal with. (...) ...you've got to kill these, not *kill* these guys, but... anyway, it's taken a long time to sort out the McCahon thing.

(W) You have to kill off your masters. It's a sign of respect.

(H) Yeah, kill'em off...

Later Wedde actually brings Matisse into the conversation:

(W) Do you like painters like Matisse?

(H) Yeah, I love Matisse, but I think his are spiritual paintings not...I know he said this thing about armchairs...

(W) Oh no, that's difficult, that's complicated.

(H) Yeah, that's complicated.

6. The visual origin of this passage is surely Bruegel's famous painting, which also caught at Curnow's imagination sufficiently to engender a sonnet, 'The Fall of Icarus':

The glistening coast, field-labour and sea-faring,
 Stood like a crystal brimming with fine weather;
 When he went down in flames all held together,
 True to earth's ancient compact against caring:

The sun that flayed him warmed the ploughman's back,
 The wind that stunned him swept the carrack on
 Through the gay archipelago where none
 Pitied or even noticed his bad luck.

Among the headlong pilots no revenge
 Was wild enough for that indifference:
 Wings flogged the fairway, made the seascape wince;
 But when the flames that flagged each prouder plunge

Gutted, a mere breeze whisked off the stain.
 At once the scenery was itself again.

(*Collected Poems 1933-1971* (Wellington: Reed, 1974) p.125)

7. Charles Olson's feelings on the subject concur with Wedde's:

There is only one thing you can do about
 kinetic, re-enact it. Which is why the man said
 he who possess rhythm possesses the universe.
 And why art is the only twin life has - its
 only valid metaphysic. Art does not seek to
 describe but to enact. And if man is once more
 to possess intent in his life, and to take up
 the responsibility implicit in his life, he has
 to comprehend his own process as intact, from
 outside, by way of his skin, in, and by his
 own powers of conversion, out again.

('Human Universe', *Human Universe and Other Essays*
 (New York; Grove Press, 1967) p.10)

8. Wedde, 'A Leap Beloved of Suicides and Lovers', *Islands*
 1, p.79. Spring 1972. (review of Haley's *The Walled Garden*)
9. Though it should be noted that the section title does include both paintings, the second of which is designed to counter the centrifugal whirl of 'The Dance'. The line:-

I whip my head from side to side

cleverly acknowledges the relatedness of the paintings which are customarily reproduced side by side and invite the sort of to-and-fro comparison one sees in the heads of a tennis crowd. At the same time, the watcher's head-whipping movement is another of those rhythmic jolts which prefigure the dance tempo.

10. Matisse: 'The work of art should be for the tired businessman no less than for the literary dilettante, a cerebral sedative, rather like a comfortable armchair. (quoted in Maurice Raynal, *Modern Painting* rev. ed.) (Geneva: Skira, 1960) p.66.)

That Wedde appreciates that Matisse is not talking about putting people to sleep with painting comes out in the Harris interview quoted above (Note 5).

11. Matisse was always most concerned that his paintings should have immediate impact:

The work of art has its own absolute significance implicit within itself and should convey this directly to the beholder before he stops to wonder what the picture represents.

(quoted in *Modern Painting*, *ibid.*, p.274)

Achieving this quality was very much a matter of planning ('organising my brain', Matisse called it), a matter of transferring those 'initial shocks' of visual intuition (which characterise Wedde's vision as well as Matisse's) to canvas. 'the fact of that first right stroke' was something Matisse worked at too.

12. The section title 'London' connects this vision of the city to comments made by the poet in 'Living Abroad - IV':

and now I am learning again how to avoid having to avoid people's eyes on London tubes.

(*London Magazine*, Vol 10, No. 9, p.40. December 1970)

13. Ian Wedde, 'Made Over', *Landfall* 93, p.62. March 1970. Written October 1969; Amman, Jordan.

14. Ian Wedde, 'Made Over', *ibid.*, p.66. The burning of Al Aksa, 21 August 1969, and its effect on the Arab mind is described in the documentary prose of 'Culture Gulf' (*Landfall* 94, June 1970). One Moroccan's comment which stuck in Wedde's mind and was possibly the initial reason for linking the evening of dance with the King Solomon motif, was a bitter statement to the effect that if Al Aksa could be burned then the Temple of Solomon could yet be rebuilt by the Jews.

15. Ian Wedde, 'Made Over', *ibid.*, p.64.
16. Wedde, 'Belladonna', part iv, *New Zealand Universities Arts Festival Literary Yearbook 1970*, ed. Arthur Bates (N.Z.U. Arts Festival Committee, Victoria University) p.30. Not only is 'King Solomon Vistas' contained in this extract, but the gist of 'So Much' (*Made Over* p.66) appears in its closing lines.
17. One part of the biblical poem seems particularly close to 'Vistas':

THE SHULAMITE

Why will ye look upon the Shulamite
As upon the dance of Mahanaim?

KING SOLOMON

How beautiful are thy feet in sandals,
O prince's daughter!
The joints of thy thighs are like jewels,
The work of the hands of a cunning workman
Thy navel is like a round goblet,
Wherein no mingled wine is wanting:
Thy belly is like a heap of wheat
Set about with lilies.

Thy two breasts are like two fawns
That are twins of a roe...

(*The Bible Designed To Be Read As Literature*, ed. and arranged, Ernest Sutherland (London: Heinemann, 1937) p.782)

18. Mahmoud Darwish, 'I present her with a gazelle' *Selected Poems*, introduction and translation Ian Wedde and Fawwas Tuqan (Cheshire, Cheshire: Carcanet, 1973), p.69. Just how the classic/current phenomenon operates is demonstrated by noting that 'Carmel', referred to in the Darwish poem, occurs also in the Song of Solomon a few lines after those quoted in the preceding Note. A motif denoting a place of sylvan beauty and fruitfulness thus endures from post-biblical times to appear in the work of a radical twentieth-century Palestinian poet.
19. Song of Solomon, *ibid.*, p.777.
20. 'Solomon', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15th ed.) Vol. 16, p.1045.
21. Wedde, 'The Gardener's Messages' 2 ii, *Made Over* p.25. The lift-loft-leap movement, with its associations of energy, positive direction and grace, is a favourite of Wedde's. Its importance will be duly considered.
22. Wedde, 'Belladonna', *ibid.*, part vii, p.31.

23. Wedde, statement in *The Young New Zealand Poets* (1973), *ibid.*, pp. 185-186. In view of Wedde's statements about this, it is appropriate that Baysting's selection of his work features a sizeable portion of 'Homage to Matisse', '*fait du premier coup*' being among the chosen sections.
24. Wedde, 'Living Abroad - IV', *London Magazine*, Vol 10, No. 9, pp.38-39. December 1970. Written September 1970, London.
25. Wedde, statement in *N.Z.U. Arts Festival Literary Yearbook* 1970, *ibid.*, p.28.
26. Wedde, 'Belladonna', part xiv, *ibid.*, p.34.
27. The context is mock-serious, the image genuine, in a passage from 'The Presence of an Obstacle' (*Mate* 22, p.67. December 1973) which makes play of the same 'snap':
- She deserved a man who could snap down upon life
with all his body and soul the way young teeth
will snap off a raw carrot. She needed appetites,
wit, energy.
- (III: 'The Goddess')
28. The term 'tympanum' occurs also in 'Belladonna' (part iii), but there is an instance in 'The Presence of an Obstacle' (*Mate* 22 p.65. December 1973) which is strikingly similar to the poem's use of the word:
- Agh! Word games! Your choice phrases rustle
against my matted tympani like the leaves
which are now rotting upon the pavements of
the city. (II: The Genius)
- A good friend (with inimitable style) is the
subject; his name is 'Max'.
29. Wedde, 'Living Abroad - IV', *ibid.*, p.41.
30. Wedde, introduction to *Selected Poems of Mahmoud Darwish* (1973) p.8.
31. Wedde, 'Living Abroad - IV', *ibid.*, p.38.
32. Wedde, 'Living Abroad - IV', *ibid.*, p.40.
33. When the poem was first published (as excerpts from 'Gulf Letters to Mark', *Landfall* 96, pp.348-353. December 1970) another disaster area of modern civilisation, Kafr Quasim, was included in the list in Number Six 2. It was interpolated before 'My Lai'. It should be noted that 'Gulf Letters to Mark' consists of five, not six poems. The first poem of the *Made Over* version does not appear.

CHAPTER II: THE OTAGO VISION (1)

1. Mahmoud Darwish, 'Cuban Songs' 2, *Selected Poems* (1973)
p.44:

& the moon of Cuba is an unsleeping god
who leaves no lover without affection
& the shore is a star-harbour
not a dive for privateers

- Wedde, Sonnet 50 *Earthly: Sonnets For Carlos* (1975):

Cast off earth-ferry! forever into
your own presence
 under the shining sails
of your firmament
 among galaxies
archipelagos the colour of stars
endless oceans continents star-harbours...

2. Mahmoud Darwish, 'A Certain Anthem', *Selected Poems* (1973)
p.45. The context of the three-times repeated 'those
others' in this poem has no bearing on Wedde's
use of the same phrase, but it could reasonably be
assumed that he had not forgotten the effect of that
refrain when he wrote 'Those Others' (*Islands* 8,
p.159. Winter 1974; *Spells* p.43).
3. Working back from the identification of hill forms with
female contours to the description of the peninsula
hills as being 'sculpted', an earlier poem comes to
mind:

She said once
look at me.
I looked. Her bones
rose, settled beneath skin,
sculptural. The light aslant,
her eyes slid back into dark funnels.
On each breast a shadow.
Hips like a cup's rim, clean
edged. She said
 look
at me. I looked.
She rose into detail forever.

(*'So Much', Made Over* p.66)

4. William Butler Yeats, 'The Wild Old Wicked Man', *Collected
Poems* (2nd ed.) (London: Macmillan, 1950) p.356.
From *Last Poems* (1936-39)
5. Wedde, *Dick Seddon* p.119. The same components are
mentioned in *Earthly*:

The sun

through broadleaf strikes into the green shadow
of its womb, the world beyond my window
glitters in its frame. I see what I can.

(...)

& a gay bird

singing suddenly in clear sunlight through
broadleaf: quick anarchic voice

6. A good instance of this habit occurs in 'The Presence of an Obstacle' (prose), where the authorial 'I' bears little outward resemblance to actuality:

And what did she get. Me: five foot seven, flatulent, corpulent, a long sleeper, brain loaded with heavy tissues, hairy, with disagreeable teeth. I gained the infinite, and the infinite was wasted.

(III: 'The Goddess' *Mate* 22, p.67. December 1973)

7. Wedde, advertisement for *Earthly, Islands* 13, p.350. Spring 1975.
8. Peter Crisp, 'Ian Wedde's Poetry: 1971-5' *Islands* 17, pp. 298-9, Spring 1976.
9. Wedde's sophistication of form is evident both in this poem and in the earlier 'Sonnet' in *Kiwi 66* (A.U.S.A. publication, 1966). The latter has eight-syllable lines, while 'A Word in Your Ear, William' has seven-syllable lines and is possibly two sonnets juxtaposed.

However, to make up fourteen lines for each of these 'sonnets' in 'A Word In Your Ear, William', it is necessary to count part-lines as being autonomous in the first verse ('Music of quotidian...'), and to reverse the process for the second verse ('Ah! to throw a bomb into...!'). In both cases though, the syllable count proceeds as if the two part-lines constitute one seven-syllable line.

An excellent case of having one's cake AND eating it. ('Shakespearebaby!')

10. I am aware that these statements represent a simplistic view of the first part of Shakespeare's sequence, and that there is more to Sonnets 1-17 than my cursory observation of their phrase concatenations suggests. However, it is this aspect which strikes most forcibly on the modern sensibility coming to Shakespeare straight from reading Wedde.

The patterns that matter are the ones we're given, not the ones we impose. They emerge, the patterns emerge, that's all.

(Dick Seddon, p.175)

11. Peter Crisp, *ibid.*, p.299.
12. The *Freed* Poets adopted this as their maxim; it occurs *per se* on the back cover of *Freed* 1. July 1969, and is something of a guiding principle in the poems of Brunton, Edmond, Haley, Mitchell, and Wedde dating from this period.
13. Wedde writes particularly authentic female consciousness, as his short stories show (for example, 'Fat Woman', *Landfall* 93 March 1970). *Dick Seddon* is perhaps the consummate example of this skill; the sections where Chink's mind is controlling the narrative are quite distinct, tonally and syntactically, from the parts which Kate articulates.
14. The bean-flower motif is an image of high hope; it occurs again in Sonnet 44:

spring's ripe the horizon the blue sky
the air pour towards you the bean-flower's sweet
again

and the wish to move house into the bean-patch is purely an extension of a similar whim in *Dick Seddon* (p.203):

...they like to think that if blue is distance and
yellow is where they're drunk with being, then they
might live in a green space....

The thought seems to be part of Wedde's paradisiacal vision, its literary predecessor probably Yeats' famous poem;

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the
honey-bee
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes
dropping slow...

('The Lake Isle of Innisfree', *Collected Poems* (1950)
p.44. From *The Rose* 1893))

15. Wedde is obviously familiar with this essay; he mentions it in 'Pablo Neruda, 1904-73', *Islands* 6, pp.445-448. Summer 1973.
16. The line 'My fumbling voices clap their hands & shout' not only derives from the dance movements in *Made Over* ('The Dance'; 'Gulf Letters') but is also reminiscent of a similar gesture of joy in one of Yeats' poems:
- An aged man is but a paltry thing
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress...
- ('Sailing to Byzantium' II, *Collected Poems* (1950)
p.217. From *The Tower* 1928))

17. This 'dream', which sounds very like an adaptation of the myth of Sisyphus, is described in terms even more suggestive of childbirth in an earlier version of Sonnets 1-20 which was published in *Poetry Australia* (No.48, 1973, pp.54-64):

(in which a solitary man has thrown
-contorting - groaning - some deadweight, some stone
away from himself, having never seen

that the weight is part of him, so that each
time he struggles the weight jerks him with it
& he falls with it, again & again...

(Sonnet 14, 'Earthly: 20 Sonnets')

This is one of the more extensive changes Wedde made from earlier to later versions of the first twenty sonnets. Generally, the emendations are minimal, and their drift uniform (towards a loosening of syntax and grammatical propriety which gives *Earthly* its easy colloquiality of tone).

18. This is a markedly American concept of the past (Ginsberg: 'History is bullshit') and its ramifications are explored by Olson, notably in a poem like 'The Kingfishers', which begins 'what does not change is the will to change':

Not one death but many,
not accumulation but change, the feed-back proves, the
feed-back is
the law

Into the same river no man steps twice
When fire dies air dies
No one remains, nor is, one

Around an appearance, one common model, we grow up
many. Else how is it,
if we remain the same,
we take pleasure now
in what we did not take pleasure before? love
contrary objects? admire and/or find fault? use
other words, feel other passions, have
no figure, appearance, disposition, tissue
the same?

To be in different states without a change
is not a possibility

('The Kingfishers' I 4, *The Distances*
(New York: Grove Press, 1950/1960) p.8)

19. 'Phenomenology', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15th ed.),
Vol 14, p.213.
20. Note the familiarity of these lines. The 'here', 'there',
and 'where' co-ordinates become increasingly important
as we move towards a discussion of *Spells*. Their

my windpipe: it was a rich amalgam of odours mixed in the heat of noon: dust, flowers, cooking, dried cow-dung. smoke. I remembered in detail things which had happened fifteen or more years earlier. An through all these memories, some of which have not sunk back again, are stitched stories from the *The Jungle Book*: a scatter of bright details.

Something similar happened when I began to read the stories to my son: among the memories that came back to me as I read were certain smells, "real" enough to make my nostrils tighten.

25. To this same attitude belongs Wedde's explanation of the effect which *The Jungle Book* had on his early consciousness?

...my twin brother and I were read this before our language was within cooe of Kipling's imperial English. I suspect it was my mother's intuition of the extent to which a child's understanding outpaces its facility with "adult" communication that led her to persist, and in the face of scoffers who thought she was mad.

('Early Reading: Ian Wedde on *The Jungle Book*'.
c.f. Note 25; *ibid.*, p.26)

26. This passage is peculiarly Yeatsian. Its magnificent final sweep dumps a heap of cosmic images unceremoniously onto the floor, which is somehow a most symbolic ground for inspection. Similarly, 'The Magi' of Yeats (*Collected Poems* (1950) p.141) are:

hoping to find once more,
Being by Calvary's turbulence unsatisfied
The uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor.

And in the final verse of 'Byzantium' (*Collected Poems* p.281) the same swirling (turbulent) gesture is made:

Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood,
Spirit after spirit! The smithies break the flood.
The golden smithies of the Emperor!
Marbles of the dancing floor
Break bitter furies of complexity,
Those images that yet
Fresh images beget,
That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.

27. The line 'where no flag snaps/ at the icy firmament' is an allusion (and homage) to Neruda's 'The Flag', a poem which epitomises the tough, life-affirmative vision common to Wedde and Neruda:

My flag is blue and sports a fish rampant, locked in
and let loose by two bracelets. In winter, when the
wind blows hard and there's no-one about in these out-
of-theway places, I like to hear the flag crack like
a whip with the fish swimming in the sky as if it were
alive.

And why this fish, I'm asked. Is it mystical? Yes, I say, it is the ichthyous symbol, the prehistoric, the luminocratic, the friddled, the true, the fried, the fried fish.

- And nothing else?

- Nothing else.

But in high winter, the flag thrashes up there with its fish in the air, trembling with cold, wind and sky.

(*Selected Poems*, ed. Nathaniel Tarn (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1975) p.229)

28. "Terraces the colour of stars" is a line derived from *Canto LXXIV*, the first of Pound's *Pisan Cantos* (LXXIV-LXXXIV), first published 1948 .
29. 'Ruth' and the poems associated with it have a co-text in 'Living Abroad - IV':

During the fighting I had given blood in Amman. There had been a chronic shortage continuing deaths from heavy bleeding but not otherwise bad wounds, and serious cases (stomach wounds even) bouncing at speed in commandeered cars over this road to Damascus. Most died on the way. I was thinking of this as I lay and watched my own blood sluggishly mount its tube and fill the bag. And I thought of another occasion in Damascus when my blood had risen for Rose. She was miserable with some sharp yen which was no business of mine, lying naked at dusk on the bed, crying, the light through the green balcony jalousies seeming to raise long welts on her white body. We made love, the misery passed in due course. It was a kind of transfusion.

(*London Magazine*, Vol 10, No. 9, p.36. December 1970)

Note that section 2 of 'Ruth' is a *rubaiyat*, an acknowledgement by the poet of the poem's locale.

30. This is an adaptation of the Heraclitean principle of flux; Eliot is fascinated by it (*Four Quartets*) and Olson's 'The Kingfishers' has already been cited (Note 17 of this chapter). The line 'Into the same river no man steps twice' quotes Cratylus, a follower of Heraclitus, and it could well be the touchstone of the 'killing the fish' episode in *Dick Seddon*.

Other passages from the same poem are pertinent too. 'The message,' says Olson,

is change, presents
no more than itself

and the too strong grasping of it,
when it is pressed together and condensed
loses it

This very thing you are

('The Kingfishers' I 4; *The Distances* (New York: Grove Press, 1950/1960) p.9)

31. That Wedde is not unaware nor unimpressed by the attendant dangers of metamorphic processes is evidenced by the last lines of 'Child Sleeping' (*The Literary Half-Yearly*, XVIII(1), guest-edited Peter Alcock, p.99. January 1977) where the desire 'to be gone' suddenly connects with the vision of a child actually "away" out there:

...how terrible
the child sleeping: to be
so small

and asleep, sailing
back into the dark:
to be

left
for so long
alone...

32. The paradoxical terms describing movement are familiar, and the identification of amniotic darkness with astral spaces has been made before by Wedde (Sonnet 13). Neruda's 'To E.S.S.', a poem about the growth of a child against the spaces of Isla Negra is full of the same implication that the child is some sort of visitation:

And now with nine years
of Enrique
here in the wasteland of the coast,
oh, little astronaut,
I ask you and I ask
will you fly in your spaceship
sometime,
swifter than anything, between the eyes
of Orion which wink
invitingly at you?
Will your fiery coach flash
through the streets of the constellations;
will you bring us seaweed from the moon,
mysterious stones from Aldebran,
guitars from the Great Bear?

(Neruda; *Fully Empowered*, ed, Alistair Reid
(London: Souvenir Press (Educational & Academic),
p.109.)

33. The direction of escape has been a constant in Wedde's poetry from its earliest stages, when it was even then connected with the idea of 'deaths and entrances':

Recluse

Much as I would like
to I cannot feel
that much good will come
out of sitting cooped

up in here. When I
stand and lift my shirt
I find my belly
& chest crossed with red

lines where I have been
folded over my-
self & tottering
outside thus wrinkled

and red I cry out
thinly at the strange
sudden buffeting
of wind & light...

(Landfall 88, p.310. December 1968)

CHAPTER III: *THE OTAGO VISION (2)*

1. Lawrence Jones, 'Spells For Coming Out, by Ian Wedde' *Pilgrims* 5 & 6 ('The Double') Vol III, Issue 1 & 2, p.133. Spring 1978.
2. Wedde, introduction to *Selected Poems of Mahmoud Darwish* (1973) p.8. This is also of course the rationale behind ritual sacrifice in many cultures, and one of the guiding principles of Christianity. Thus Eliot:

The wounded surgeon plies the steel
That questions the distempered part;
Beneath the bleeding hands we feel
The sharp compassion of the healer's art
Resolving the enigma of the fever chart

('East Coker' IV, *Collected Poems 1909-1962*
(London: Faber & Faber, 1963) p.201)
3. The impression that this sunrise is an immense effort is unmistakable; the sun appears to be crippled, its light thinly sterile (contrast this with the exuberant vision of dawn from the Okains Bay hills in the later sonnets of *Earthly*). The inversion of a normally fecund image is common to a number of symbol-conscious writers, for example Strindberg (vampiric mothers who skim off the cream for themselves leaving 'thin blue milk' for their stunted children - *The Pelican*). Nearer to home there is Janet Frame, in whose novels the obverse of milk 'flowing rich and yellow, crusted with love' is a recipe for 'cheese blisters':

mixed with cheese that is old, soured milk, skim milk,
blue and deprived, the dregs of love...

(*Owls Do Cry* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1966) p.133)
4. That true vision should be a matter of eyes looking *through* rather than *with* is a Blakian notion:

What it will be Questioned When the Sun rises do you
not see a round Disk of fire somewhat like a guinea O
no no I see an Innumerable Company of the Heavenly Host
crying Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God Almighty I question
not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would
Question a Window Concerning a Sight I look thro it not
with it.

('A Vision of the Last Judgement'; *The Poetry and
Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (New
York: Doubleday, (1965) 1970) p.555)

The concern with true sight comes across in *Earthly* too; the line 'O let them see who have sight' appears twice, once in Sonnet 26 ('power transformer') and again in the composite Sonnet 40 ('right now').

5. Ezra Pound, 'The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter', *Selected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, (1928)1959) p.130.
The poem was first published in *Cathay* (1915).
6. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy; 1. Inferno*, Canto 1. Charles S. Singleton (translation and commentary), (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971) p.3. Bollingen Series lxxx.
7. Charles Olson, 'The Gate and the Centre', *Human Universe and Other Essays* (New York: Grove Press, 1967) p.17.
8. Heidegger's philosophy is also connected with another of Wedde's enthusiasms, Hölderlin, the nineteenth-century German visionary poet who is important in 'Child Sleeping'. *Existence and Being* (1949) includes a section called 'Hölderlin and the essence of poetry' in which Heidegger calls attention to Hölderlin's concept of the poet/hero who inhabits 'the realm of Between' and undertakes the dangerous task of 'naming the gods' (or rather, 'the No-more of the gods that have fled and the Not-yet of the god that is coming'). The poet's apparently innocuous medium is found to be his greatest asset in this fifth-column activity. (quotations from 'Hölderlin and the essence of poetry', reprinted in *European Literary Theory and Practice*, ed. Vernon W. Gras (New York: Dell, 1971) pp.27-41)
Such ideas are common enough now and in other poetic contexts besides the Germanic one. However Heidegger's contribution to Hölderlin's reputation was considerable:

The hermeneutic character of Heidegger's thought manifested itself also in his interpretation of poetry in which he discovered a congenial spirit in Friedrich Hölderlin, one of Germany's greater poets, of whose poetry he inaugurated a completely new interpretation.

('Phenomenology', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15th ed.) Vol 14, p.213)
9. 'Phenomenology', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15th ed.) Vol 14, p.213.
10. 'Phenomenology', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *ibid.*, p.210.
11. Charles Olson, 'Human Universe', *Human Universe and Other Essays* (1967) p.9.
12. Charles Olson, 'Human Universe', *ibid.*, p.11.
13. Wedde, 'Look Back Harder', *Islands* 4, p.204. Winter 1973 (review of Allen Curnow's *Trees, Effigies and Moving Objects* (1972)).

14. 'Phenomenology', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *ibid.*, p.211.
15. This line is from the deleted fifth stanza of 'Those Others' which appears in *Islands* 8, p.161. Winter 1974.
16. The same technique is used by Eliot in 'Ash Wednesday' (*Collected Poems* (1963) p.93) where ragged repeats and variations on the opening line 'Because I do not hope to turn again' produce a marked impression of numbed despair. 'Teraweka' too is a poem about proto-regeneration.
17. Lawrence Jones, *ibid*, p.135.
18. Wedde, 'A Leap Beloved of Suicides and Lovers', *Islands* 1, p.79. Spring 1972. The leaps of *Made Over* appear here explained in their metaphysical aspects and with added emphasis on their take-off and landing points. This passage is another of Wedde's co-texts.
19. Wedde, 'Shared Illumination', *Islands* 21, p.281. Spring 1977. (Commentary on Sargeson's *Once is Enough* (1973)).
20. Lawrence Jones, *ibid.*, p.134.
21. A.R. Ammons, for whom Wedde has great admiration, has written a number of poems in which mountains (or 'the mountain') converse with him in an entertainingly personable fashion: 'Mountain Liar'; 'Close-Up'; 'Mountain Talk'. One imagines that this unself-conscious commerce across the anthropomorphic gulf is Wedde's objective, and at times the poets cover identical thematic ground:

Classic

I sat by a stream in a
perfect - except for the willows -
emptiness
and the mountain that
was around

scraggly with brush &
rock
said
I see you're scribbling again:

accustomed to mountains,
their cumbersome intrusions,
I said

well yes, but in a fashion very
like the water here
uncapturable and vanishing

but that
said the mountain does not
excuse the stance
or diction

and next if you're not careful
 you'll be
 arriving at ways
 water survives its motions.

(Ammons; *Collected Poems 1951-1971* (New York:
 Norton, 1972) pp. 273-274)

22. Trevor Reeves, *Cave 3*, p.3. February 1973.
23. Wedde, 'Pablo Neruda, 1904-73', *Islands 6*, p.448. Summer 1973.
24. Charles Olson, 'The Kingfishers' I, *The Distances* (New York:
 Grove Press, 1950/1960) p.9.
25. 'Sleeping Indian' and *Dick Seddon* are extremely close at
 this point. The Purakanui day falls almost on the
 winter solstice, Chink's desperation originates in
 the prospect of feeling himself trapped (when he
 thought he could get through the spaces in the
 'reality'-net), and the whole of the subsequent drive
 north is an exercise in taking new bearings:
- In any case, Waikuku, a name, a bearing, evidence that
 he was moving. The sense of motion. It had become rare.
 He began to prepare his brief.
- (*Dick Seddon*, p.210)
26. Peter Bland, 'Poets Aloud', *Islands 11*, p.99. Autumn 1975.
27. 'Phenomenology', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *ibid.*, pp.210-211.
28. In his review of Haley's *The Walled Garden* (1972), a
 commentary which is full of 'leap' and 'web' philosophy,
 Wedde links the infinitely receding horizon with his
 notions of (real) reality: '...reality is the spaces,
 the infinite regression' (*Islands 1*, p.81. Spring 1972).
29. Wedde, '"Smokestack Lightning": Rolling Thunder with Vargo's
 Circus!', *Spleen 2*. n.d. (early 1976) n.p.
30. Wedde, 'Living Abroad - IV', *London Magazine*, Vol 10,
 No.9, p.40. December 1970.
31. William Carlos Williams, 'Danse Russe', *Collected Earlier
 Poems* (New York: New Directions, 1951) p.148. Wedde's
 sensitivity to this particular poem is evidenced by
 the Haley review (*Islands 1*, p.84. Spring 1972)
 where part of it is quoted as a final touch to the
 commentary.

CHAPTER IV: WELLINGTON AND THE UNCOLLECTED POEMS

1. Michael Harlow, review of *Pathway to the Sea, Landfall* 119, p.231. September 1976.
2. Wedde related this before reading *Pathway* on two occasions at the University of Canterbury, July 1978.
3. A.R. Ammons, 'Extremes and Moderations', *Collected Poems 1951-1971* (New York: Norton, 1972) pp.328-341. Further page references of passages from this poem will be given in the text with the signification *Collected Poems*.
4. Wedde is an ardent Pynchon fan so it is perhaps not surprising that a Pynchon creation should inadvertently strike a definitive tone in Wedde. McClintic Sphere appears in both *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973).
5. Charles Olson, 'Human Universe', *Human Universe and Other Essays* (New York: Grove Press, 1967) p.12.
6. Ezra Pound, 'Salvationists', *Selected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, (1928) 1959) p.104. First published in *Lustra* (1916).
7. Vladimir Mayakovsky, 'Back Home!', *The Penguin Book of Socialist Verse*, ed. Alan Bold (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1970) pp.186-7.
8. James K. Baxter, 'On the side of life'. Statement in *New Zealand Poetry Yearbook 1954*, ed. Louis Johnson (Christchurch: Pegasus, November 1954) p.24.
9. Wedde, *Pathway to the Sea*, part of the dedication.
10. Allen Curnow, 'The Unhistoric Story', *Collected Poems 1933-1973* (Wellington: Reed, 1974) pp.79-80. First published in *Island and Time* (1944). 'Landfall in Unknown Seas' (*Collected Poems* p.139) first published in *Sailing or Drowning* (1943).
11. In 'Child Sleeping' these lines also appear, but are fully serious in context of Hölderlin's High Romanticism:

to have the poem carry me

"away": no
part ruling whole
nor moment, time:

no talking about the weather
while the earth shakes

('Child Sleeping', *The Literary Half-Yearly* XVIII(1), guest-edited Peter Alcock, p.98. January 1977)

12. Wedde, '"Smokestack Lightning": Rolling Thunder with Vargo's Circus!', *Spleen* 2 n.d. (early 1976) n.p.

13. At first the Purakanui colours are blue and silver; the sea is 'brilliantly faceted' (*Dick Seddon* p.194) and is a 'tinsel and azure meniscus' (p.195) - the same motif appears in 'Castaly'.

However, the glitter becomes concentrate glare and the fishing boats off Warrington are 'being offered on their burnished tray' (p.197). Later they are referred to as 'frail gorgeous galleons of faith' on a 'sea of brass' (p.198)

14. William Blake, 'A Vision of the last Judgement'. c.f. the discussion in Chapter III (p.102) on this subject. Reference given in Note 4 of that chapter.

15. A.R. Ammons, 'Extremes and Moderations', *ibid.*, pp.334-5.

16. 'Parish Spleen', *Spleen* 8, June 1977, n.p. Mention of the film's making appeared in 'Parish Spleen' of *Spleen* 1, n.d. (late 1975), and the paragraph in *Spleen* 8 noted that Japanese television had just bought *Souvenirs of Cairo*.

The venture ran into financial troubles even before shooting started, and a severely limited budget then meant that the poets got closer to the technical production side of things than had been intended.

17. Among the active verbs of affirmative movement in 'Child Sleeping'; Wedde groups some passive ones:

to be led out
to leap to sail
to have the poem carry me

"away"

(c.f. Note 12 of this chapter for reference)

The point is that 'active' and 'passive' get you to the same place.

18. *Pierrot Lunaire*, Schoenberg, (1912) is a cycle of twenty-one short pieces for *Sprechstimme* ('singing narrator') and chamber orchestra, based on the poems of the Belgian Albert Giraud which Schoenberg used in translation. Although *Pierrot* is among the first of Schoenberg's atonal experiments (its reception was the occasion of a major scandal in the music world), the piece, according to Philippe Jullian, 'remains a Decadent oddity, out of place in modern music' (*Dreamers of Decadence* p.124).

Wedde referred to the work in 'A Word In Your Ear, William' (1969 *N.Z.U. Arts Festival Yearbook* p.13), and the hold which the *Pierrot* figure exerts on the modern imagination is explained by Jullian as being:

...no longer the one of the *fetes galantes*[^]
 but rather the Pierrot Paul Verlaine wrote of later,
 in 1883, a Pierrot who looks like a ghost. His
 poem shows that a wave of pessimism had swept
 away the gaiety of the Second Empire. All these
fin-de-siecle Pierrots were to influence the
 melancholy acrobats of Picasso's Blue Period,
 and they can be compared with the Pulcinella
 who appears so often in Tiepolo's macabre caprices.

(*Dreamers of Decadence: symbolist painters of
 the 1890s*, (2nd ed.) (London: Phaidon, 1974) p.125)

19. Wedde's contempt for Kenneth Tynan's aphorism is amply
 illustrated by the lengthy preamble to 'New Zealand
 Writers (And Their Work)', *Spleen* 6, December 1976,
 n.p., in which the case for 'high definition' middle
 culture' is seriously argued. Wedde observes:

Great Art doesn't have to have damp patches in its
 armpits or nutcracker sphincters or a mandrax glaze.
 The artists can if they want to, that's their business.
 What we want is a sense of the effort being just right.
 Blake has it, dream-wheels for his visions; Bob Dylan
 has it in a song like 'Sarah'; Stravinsky has it to
 the point where it gets almost to be a bore. I know
 this is moving into Kenneth Tynan territory with
 'high definition' performance and all the elitist
 overtones he brings to bear on cabaret and cricket,
 but then the sense of strain he doesn't like is
 a fairly Modern Phenomenon...

20. Ian Wedde (text) and Bill Mackay (graphics), 'The Beacon',
Spleen 4 July 1976, n.p.

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It should be noted that this bibliography is not intended as a full record of material concerning or published by Ian Wedde. It consists of those works, primary and secondary, which are quoted or alluded to at some stage in the text or references.

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1970

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1971

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1972

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1974

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APPENDIX

PUBLISHING DETAILS OF THE POEMS WHICH APPEAR IN *MADE OVER* (1974),
EARTHLY: SONNETS FOR CARLOS (1975) AND *SPELLS FOR COMING OUT*
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I: MADE OVER (1974)

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'Demonstration':

- (3) 'Gulf Letters': (prose version) 'Belladonna', *N.Z.U. Arts Festival Literary Yearbook* 1970. pp.29-34.

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'Returning to the Cool Lakes': *Cave* 2, p.8. August 1972.

'Homecoming'

'Montacute Park':

'Poems About Snow': (in part) *Mate* 19, p.21. March 1971.

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'Postcards: London/Jamaica/New York/London': (in part)

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II: EARTHLY: SONNETS FOR CARLOS (1975)

(arranged chronologically)

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