



1973

T.S. Eliot and the Netherlands: The Critical Reception, a Dutch Parallel, and the Translations

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Recommended Citation

Boonstra, Harry, "T.S. Eliot and the Netherlands: The Critical Reception, a Dutch Parallel, and the Translations" (1973). *Dissertations*. Paper 1386.
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T. S. ELIOT AND THE NETHERLANDS
THE CRITICAL RECEPTION, A DUTCH PARALLEL,
AND THE TRANSLATIONS

by

Harry Boonstra

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

June

1973

PREFACE

I am grateful to Loyola University for a University Fellowship which made the first year of research possible.

Most of the research was conducted at The Royal Library of The Hague. I thank the staff for its assistance.

Helpful suggestions for the dissertation were given by Professor James Holmes and Drs. J. Kuin of the University of Amsterdam, and Mr. Michel van der Plas, editor of the standard Dutch translations of Eliot.

Dr. Joseph Wolff and Dr. Catherine Jarrott served on the advisory board; Dr. Jarrott kindly read an early version of the translation chapter. Dr. Agnes Donohue served as adviser. Her advice at the various stages of the research and writing was invariably helpful. I am very much indebted to Dr. Donohue for her encouragement and guidance--especially since most of our communication had to be conducted trans-Atlantically.

The translations from the Dutch are my own, with a few exceptions which are acknowledged in the footnotes.

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INTRODUCTION

Studies which relate the work of an author to another country are important in helping to establish the stature of an author abroad, to determine his place in world literature, and to throw light on his work. The author's impact abroad is reflected in the criticism on his work, and in the number and quality of the translations; these can be surveyed and analyzed to chart an author's literary "profile." Through a study of the various relationships the writings themselves are also highlighted. Thus the foreign criticism can accentuate certain aspects of the author's work and yield new insights; the study of literary parallels and the consequent juxtaposition of the writings will show different nuances; and the analysis of foreign translations necessitates a reading of the author's work from the perspective of its "translatability."

Eliot's relations with some other countries have been examined; there are book-length studies, for example, on Eliot and Germany, France, and Italy.¹ However, there has been no comparable investigation of Eliot's relationship to The Netherlands.

One reason for the absence is, no doubt, the fact that few English and American scholars have command of Dutch. Also, the periodical-

¹See Ernst Ottokar Fink, "Die übersetzerische Rezeption des lyrischen Werkes von T. S. Eliot im deutschsprachigen Raum" (Ph. D. dissertation, Universität Hamburg, 1971); Edward J. H. Greene, T. S. Eliot et la France (Paris: Editions Contemporaines, 1951); Laura Caretti, T. S. Eliot in Italia (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1968).

cal literature in The Netherlands is often fugitive. The periodical scene is vigorous, but many periodicals, especially literary journals, are often short-lived. Moreover, although there is a general Dutch periodical index, many literary and critical journals are not indexed. Another aspect of the study is rendered difficult by the nature of the investigation; the comparison, in Chapter III, of two poets from different languages is problematic because the language vehicles are not the same. The analysis of the translation is hampered by the absence of a generally accepted translation theory.

Nevertheless, the study deserves to be conducted, because in The Netherlands Eliot has received careful scrutiny, and the Dutch evaluation is a well-formed one. Peter Oppewall, who made a survey of the reception of American fiction in The Netherlands, assesses the significance of Dutch reaction to Anglo-American literature both in terms of their thorough knowledge of other literatures, and of their own cultural achievements.¹

The Dutch acquaintance with other literatures, cited by Oppewall, and the conditions which account for this cosmopolitan literary interest, are discussed in Chapter I. Among these conditions is the lingual ability of the Dutch, since an important consideration for an author's reception abroad is the readers' ability to read the original. Further, if translations are used, how available are these and how well done? Also to be investigated is the reading range of the Dutch which involves the general availability of books and the nature of the reading. Beside this general survey of reading patterns I shall briefly appraise

¹Peter Oppewall, "The Critical Reception of American Fiction in The Netherlands," (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Eng. Dept., University of Michigan, 1961), pp. 2-3.

the periodical press, especially the reviewing and critical journals.

The first chapter, in its charting of reading conditions in The Netherlands, establishes the contours for Chapter II. Here the Dutch critical reception of Eliot is examined in detail. The survey covers close to fifty years of Eliot criticism. The analysis of the criticism will investigate both the range and the quality; that is, what kind of criticism has been published and how substantial is it? The criticism must be judged especially in terms of its intent, which is primarily the introduction of a foreign author to Dutch readers. Much of the criticism is thematic in approach, and a considerable part of Chapter II will deal with the themes discussed by the Dutch critics. Both the criticism on the poetry and the plays will be surveyed. The latter was written largely in the form of theatre reviews of the Dutch productions of Eliot's plays.

Chapter III, "A Sketch of Modern Dutch Poetry," moves from critical to literary relations, and involves the question of a European literary tradition. Eliot himself frequently stressed the interrelatedness of literatures. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," for example, he several times brackets English with European literature.¹ The wider European tradition includes Dutch literature. The very brief overview of the poetry will seek to show the main twentieth-century developments and to place the poetry in a broader context, including the relation to English literature.

Chapter IV will further analyze the literary interrelations by studying a principal figure in Dutch poetry, and placing his work in

¹Selected Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1950, 1960), pp. 4, 6.

juxtaposition with Eliot's. Martinus Nijhoff is a major Dutch poet whose poetic career and work show many resemblances to Eliot; Dutch critics have therefore frequently called Nijhoff Eliot's counterpart in The Netherlands. A few studies have begun to explore this comparison, but there has been no thorough analysis of all their works to discover the full extent of the similarities, or to chart the divergencies.

Since mutual influences on two authors often produce parallels in their work, the influences on Eliot and Nijhoff will be compared. More important is the study of their poetic techniques. This analysis is especially complex, because the oeuvres are written in different languages; the comparison is easily skewed, (for example, the differences might appear very great), because one may be comparing the languages instead of the poems. However, analysis of the constituents of the poetry of each poet, and subsequent juxtaposition can yield meaningful comparison, in which both similarities and differences will emerge. The thematic analysis will follow a similar procedure. An examination of the major themes in each poet can again produce the requisite comparison. In Eliot and Nijhoff one encounters permanence of technique and theme as well as development. Both the constant elements and the changes will be included in the discussion.

A third way of interacting with a foreign poet is via the translations of his work. Even though many Dutch readers know Eliot in the original, the translation can still serve them as an interpretive aid. Moreover, many others have to rely largely on the translation for their reading of Eliot's work.

Part of the evaluation is an "external" one which registers

the number of works translated and the number of multiple translations. More significant is the analysis of the translations themselves. Since translation theories are very much in flux (especially as they keep pace with new developments in linguistics), and the terms often not fixed, I shall devote some attention to the theoretical structure of the analysis. Here I shall discuss the possibilities and the limits of poetic translation, the kind of problems encountered, and the framework for analysis and evaluation of literary translation. In the analysis proper there are three areas of investigation: the linguistic, the poetic, and the socio-cultural. In the linguistic comparison of the translated poem with the original, one is concerned especially with diction, idiom and syntax. The analysis of the poetic elements involves both the literary tradition and the constituents of the verse. Rhythm, rhyme, and figures of speech are among the elements to be investigated. The third factor concerns the social and cultural milieu of the work. Since literature is created in a certain cultural context, and is a reflection of that context, the translator is faced with the difficulty of how much of the socio-cultural context can or should be "transferred" to the translated poem.

In all three of these areas the approach will involve a comparison of the original with the translated version. The changes which are produced in the translation will be evaluated to determine if they are "tolerable" deviations in terms of the original poem. At the same time one has to judge if the translation is a good Dutch rendition in terms of Dutch linguistic structure, poetic conventions, and cultural context.

The study of Eliot's relation to The Netherlands is a contribution to Eliot scholarship, because the investigation of the relationship will yield information on Eliot and his work. The main lines of investigation are the survey and evaluation of the Dutch criticism, the comparison with a Dutch parallel, and the analysis of the Dutch translations. These approaches can highlight certain aspects of Eliot's work, because the work is scrutinized from new perspectives.

CHAPTER I

READING CONDITIONS FOR FOREIGN LITERATURES

IN THE NETHERLANDS

Before examining the critical reception of Eliot in The Netherlands, it will be helpful to consider briefly Dutch "reading conditions," and the reception generally of English and American literature. Education, availability of books, reading habits, reviewing, literary scholarship--all of these play a role in the reception climate for an author.

The Dutch educational system is currently undergoing rather drastic reorganization, and it is therefore somewhat difficult to describe the education in The Netherlands. However, there are a number of aspects which remain constant, and in other cases the new trends are becoming sufficiently clear. The schooling through the sixth grade is universal and uniform, with an emphasis on basic education. Foreign language study is usually limited to voluntary classes after school. The "middelbare" schools consist of a wide choice of schools with specialized aims, from the trade schools to the university preparatory schools. Foreign language training in the vocational schools is rather limited (usually English for one or two years), but in the academic programs there always have been requirements of four to six years of German, English, and French. This six-year requirement is still in force for those in the university preparatory schools. However, some of the other schools, for example, those preparing students for entrance into

the teacher academies, are now changing to an elective system for the last years. In the foreign language elective (that is, after two or three years of German, English and French), the choice has been overwhelmingly for English for the last years.¹ At the university level there is no foreign language study, but an astounding amount of the student's reading is in German, English and French; in some areas, the social sciences, for example, the readings are primarily in English. Scholarly publications, including dissertations, are also frequently published in foreign languages, with English again predominant.²

Beside the emphasis on foreign languages in the educational system, there are other factors which contribute to the Dutch facility in languages. Foreign films and T.V. (always with the original sound track, with the Dutch supplied in subtitles), tourism, trade, international diplomacy, conventions, popsongs--all of these help to account for the lingual adeptness of the Dutch. Certainly most people with university education and those in the social professions can read English with ease; many others can also, although there continues to be a large part of the population which does not read a foreign language.

In the spectrum of foreign languages English has certainly assumed a position of prime importance since World War II. The status of English as unofficial world language partly accounts for this prominence.

¹See e.g. "Vakkenkeuze bij voortgezet onderwijs," Levende Talen (Feb., 1972), pp. 117-118.

²A spotcheck of 1967 dissertations showed that about one half of the dissertations in the exact sciences were written in Dutch, and one half in English, but none in French and German. In other fields Dutch was used much more frequently, with French, English and German represented in about equal degree. See Catalogus van academische geschriften in Nederland verschenen (Utrecht: Bibliotheek der Rijks-universiteit, 1967).

Also, the American influence has been very strong, and even though the interest in American affairs has of late been tinged with very vocal political criticism, the lingual infiltration remains strong. Indeed there are some scholars and educators in The Netherlands who are uneasy about the impact of English. One concern centers in the relative devaluation of French and German as English assumes more importance. Both educational trends and social pressures may create a situation in which the educated Dutch will know only one, instead of the traditional three foreign languages. Others fear a linguistic imperialism which will "pollute" the Dutch language. Advertising language, for example, is loaded very heavily with English. I cannot here discuss these potential "disadvantages" which seem to accompany the increased use of English. The appreciation for English and American letters may indeed increase, but it certainly would be regrettable if this would be paired with a loss of contact with German and French culture.

Another factor which contributes to the reading climate of a country is the availability of books. The Netherlands has a very stimulating book trade and library system with high reading averages for the total population. A recent survey indicates that Holland charts very high, for example, in the number of publishers, the number of new titles published, and the number of books bought and borrowed (in comparison with the United States, France, Germany, Belgium, and England).¹ The editor of the survey sums up the favorable reading conditions as follows:

¹R. E. M. van den Brink, Book Reading, Borrowing and Buying Habits. Report of the Eighteenth Congress of the International Publishers Association. (Amsterdam, 1968), pp. 17-27.

. . . it can be seen that of all the countries surveyed, in The Netherlands the amount spent on books is, in relation to the total quantity of goods and services, relatively the highest. Without doubt, the climate, the population density, the relatively large number of publishing houses, the high production of new titles and the active book trade have contributed greatly to this result. It should further be mentioned that the excellent knowledge of foreign languages also plays a role. No less than 45% of the Dutch literate population can read a foreign language [this figure seems too high to me. H. B.], while for Belgium (excluding the bilingual Dutch/French) the figure is 16%, for France 21%, for West Germany 22% and for the U.K. 15%. Almost 11% of the book consumption in The Netherlands relates to books in foreign languages.

Even though many books in foreign languages are read in the original, the production of books in translation also runs very high. Both older and contemporary belles-lettres from English are readily available. Shakespeare, for example, is available in a number of translations, and, among difficult contemporary works, Ulysses, The Waste Land, and Pound's Cantos have been translated. Of the 1428 novels published in 1970, 908 were translations from other languages, of which 653 were from English.² (In the light of such competition Adriaan van der Veen cites the complaint of Dutch authors that the high sales of foreign authors is due partly to the snobbishness of many Dutch readers who keep up-to-date on the latest English and American authors, but who do not deign to read Dutch novels).³

The Netherlands has always had a very vigorous and competitive periodical press, which is characterized by great variety and, fre-

¹Ibid., p. 22.

²"Boekenproductie, 1970," Nieuwsblad voor de Boekhandel, CXXXVIII (Jan. 28, 1971), p. 166.

³Adriaan van der Veen, "A Secret Language," Atlantic Monthly, CXCI (April, 1954), p. 130.

quently, short life spans. Peter Oppewall, surveying Dutch periodicals in 1961, laments the fact that there is no comprehensive guide to the periodicals, suggesting the field is too complex even for the native Dutch scholar;¹ there still is no such guide in 1972.² I shall make no attempt to list the many magazines and journals with literary intent; I shall merely characterize some of the different kinds of periodicals which are significant for English and other foreign works.

Nearly all big city and national newspapers have a "cultural" section in the Saturday-Sunday edition which contains reviews of belles-lettres. The Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant/Handelsblad, for example, regularly reviews Dutch and foreign novels. A different review paper is the bi-weekly Elseviers Literair Supplement which reviews 15-20 titles, many of them foreign. A recent issue (August 19, 1972) had a lead article on "American Paperbacks in The Netherlands"; another (September 2, 1972) a fine essay on Oscar Wilde. A unique review periodical is Litterair Paspoort. It specializes in the announcing and reviewing of foreign titles, mostly belles-lettres. Appearing ten times a year it reviews about fifty books per issue, and regular readers of the Litterair Paspoort will be very well informed on English and American publications. There are a number of quality "cultural" magazines which publish Dutch poetry and stories, and contain reviews or essays on Dutch and other literatures. The most venerable of these is De Gids, begun in 1837, which has had an illustrious list of contributors and

¹Oppewall, p. 15.

²There is a review of some literary journals in Roeping, XXXVIII (1962-3), pp. 577-578.

editors (Martinus Nijhoff was editor for twelve years). A Flemish counterpart is De Vlaamse Gids, which dates from 1905. Some of these periodicals have a religious orientation, although the religious direction is often minimized of late. Kultuurleven and Dietsche Warande en Belfort (Flemish) are two examples of Roman Catholic journals; Wending is a Protestant one, with an article on Blake in the June, 1972 issue. Periodicals which confine themselves to the publishing of belles-lettres and literary criticism are often of short duration in The Netherlands. Merlyn, which heralded a criticism of "close reading," published some very fine essays, but lasted only from 1962 to 1966; Raster, another significant journal of criticism will cease publication at the end of 1972. Raam (begun as Roeping in 1922 as a vigorously Roman Catholic literary journal) continues with broadly Christian literary criticism. Podium was the voice of the experimental poets of the fifties; it still contains mostly original work, but also includes criticism, some of it of foreign works. More academically oriented is Forum der Letteren, a "journal of language, literature, and history," which frequently discusses foreign authors. The journal of foreign language teachers, Levende Talen, once contained many excellent articles on English, French and German literature; the June/July, 1970 issue, for example, was completely devoted to James Joyce. Today Levende Talen is largely a professional and pedagogical journal, but for English literature the void has been filled by the Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters, also sponsored by the organization of foreign language teachers.

Foreign language and literature studies are well represented in the Dutch universities. After the first two or three years the student usually chooses between language and literature studies. A consider-

able amount of time is spent on older periods, including the study of Gothic, Old and Middle English. All the lecturing in the department is conducted in English; nearly all dissertations are written in English. In the field of English literary scholarship the University of Groningen has of course become well-known through Professor Zandvoort's editing of English Studies. The Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters, just mentioned, was begun in 1971 and contains articles in English, written largely by scholars of English and American literature at the Dutch universities.

It is obvious from the foregoing sketch that The Netherlands provides a good climate for English and American literature, and that the reception via general readership, reviews, and scholarship can contribute to the critical assessment of an author. However, studies on the reception of English and American authors have been relatively few. Among recent works is a Dutch dissertation on Dryden and Holland,¹ which discusses Dutch allusions in Dryden's writings, the translations into Dutch, and the influence of Dutch philologists on Dryden. In American literature there is the study by Peter Oppewall on the reception of a number of American novelists.² Oppewall surveys and analyzes the reception largely in terms of the reviews in the weekly magazines and the criticism in the literary journals. Further efforts to study the reception of American literature in The Netherlands have been begun at the University of Groningen. Here a bibliographic and study center has been established which will concentrate on the Dutch reaction to American letters.

¹J. A. van der Welle, Dryden and Holland, (Groningen, J. B. Wolters, 1962).

²"The Critical Reception of American Fiction in The Netherlands."

CHAPTER II

THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF ELIOT IN THE NETHERLANDS

Literary criticism has as its principal function the elucidation of an author's text, and the merit of a critical work must be judged by the question: Does it help the reader to come to grips with the text? However, the total critical output about an author also takes on significance of its own, and can be studied as an entity. Thus the criticism about Eliot's The Waste Land, for example, can be studied as a phenomenon which helps to shape our understanding of Eliot.¹ When analyzing the critical reception in a foreign country, one seeks to define the stature and impact of an author abroad. Studies of critical reception, says Peter Oppewall, who surveyed the Dutch critical reception of recent American fiction, are a "subdivision of comparative literature, which seek to follow the growth and development of a literature beyond language boundaries. They are . . . preliminary steps to influence studies."²

Oppewall's own approach is the study of several authors in one country. One can also change the perspective and survey the reception of one author in different countries; such a study was performed, for

¹See e.g. Armour H. Nelson, "The Critics and The Waste Land, 1922-1949," English Studies, XXXVI (1955), pp. 1-15.

²Peter Oppewall, "The Critical Reception of American Fiction in The Netherlands," (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Eng. Dept., University of Michigan, 1961), p. 1.

Hemingway.¹ The reception of Eliot's work abroad has been studied for several countries. Curtius, the pioneering German scholar of Eliot, recalls the excitement with which he discovered Eliot in the 1920's, and tried to introduce him to German literary circles, only to discover that after the war Eliot had to be completely rediscovered.² In T. S. Eliot in Italia Laura Caretti deals with the Italian critical reception in the form of a chronologically arranged annotated bibliography.³

A survey of Eliot criticism in The Netherlands can contribute to measuring his impact and stature abroad, and can help to define Eliot and his work. Oppewall, in establishing the value of Dutch criticism for American literature, cites the cosmopolitan nature of the Dutch people, their cultural achievements, the strong periodical press, and their wide acquaintance with foreign literatures.⁴ In the previous chapter I have elaborated on some of the conditions which make Holland hospitable to other literatures, and which can produce perceptive comparative critics.

This overview of the Dutch critical reception of Eliot's work will be an interpretive survey which will attempt to discern the emphases (and deficiencies) of the reception, and at times will relate the Dutch to English and American criticism. The first part of the survey will explore the general, introductory material, followed by the more thematic approaches, where a philosophic or prosodic motif is explored,

¹Roger Assilineau (ed.), The Literary Reputation of Hemingway in Europe (New York: New York University Press, 1965).

²Ernst Robert Curtius, "T. S. Eliot und Deutschland," Der Monat, I (1948), pp. 72-75.

³Laura Caretti, T. S. Eliot in Italia (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1968).

⁴Oppewall, pp. 2-3.

to be concluded by the criticism which focuses on single works. Since Eliot's work does not permit a rigid poetry-drama distinction, the criticism often deals with both, but a number of the essays deal with the drama exclusively, and these will be considered separately.

General Studies

Since the Dutch criticism of Eliot is often written for an audience not acquainted with his poetry nor with English poetry generally, the authors frequently have to sketch in the main outlines of Eliot's life and work. These essays often do not break any new critical ground, but they are certainly essential in introducing a poet to a foreign country. And it will be seen that some authors can generalize with considerably more perception than others.

The shorter general articles can be most profitably summarized chronologically. Before 1940 Eliot was signaled by two critics and two academicians. A. den Doolard reviews Poems 1909-1925. He writes with rather heavy metaphorical flourish, but exhibits good insight when discussing the fluidity of time and space in Eliot's early poetry:

Time and distance are not only relative concepts, but Eliot simply breaks them down as if they were rickety fences which separate a complex of run-down houses. . . . Everything flows, not with the copious triumph of life-giving water, but with the dry, gritty rasping of sand against the sides of the hour-glass.

As organizational principle den Doolard discerns a threefold fabric which unites the poetry: vertically the allusions, horizontally the associations, and diagonally the recurrence of motifs.

In 1933 Jos Panhuysen sympathetically surveys and "explains" the

¹A. den Doolard, "Poems 1909-1925 by T. S. Eliot," Den Gulden Winckel, XXV (November, 1926), p. 253.

poems through Ash Wednesday. At times the reading is too biographical. Thus Panhuysen posits that "a whole youth, shy but knowing, reveals itself in Prufrock and Other Observations."¹ Elsewhere he forces a Christian reading too readily (or perhaps--too early), when he suggests that in The Waste Land Eliot saw "the loss of faith in Christ as the cause for the barrenness of this age."²

Two early essays in English Studies are more critical of Eliot. Willem van Doorn characterizes Eliot as a capable impressionist, citing examples from the Preludes, and he compares Eliot's use of juxtapositions to that of Heinrich Heine. He somewhat unfairly finds the genesis of Sweeney in Eliot's mien: "Apeneck Sweeney, who represents all that is lowdown and bestial in modern humanity, and all that is most likely to offend a fastidious man." Even though van Doorn sees merit in Eliot's work, he concludes in final disappointment:

Yet I cannot help thinking of him as a fine fellow wasted. He ought to have been born in another time and to have imbued enthusiasm as he has now imbued pessimism and boredom, which really spoil the great artist in him. A poem cannot paint disintegration by being itself disintegrated any more than an author can successfully describe boredom simply by being himself a bore.³

A more thorough study is that of D. G. van der Vat, who successfully highlights some of the characteristics of the early poetry. After commenting on the (puritanical) "hardness" of the verse, he aptly characterizes:

¹Jos Panhuysen, "Thomas Stearns Eliot," Boekenschouw, XXVI (1933), p. 444.

²Ibid., p. 447.

³Willem van Doorn, "T. S. Eliot," English Studies, VIII (1926), p. 142.

It is not the succession of stresses within a given prosodical limit that produces the rhythmical effect, nor is it the variation on a basic metrical theme. It is the shocks with which the poetical ideas meet their adequate poetical expression that create the¹ subtle and haunting rhythmical perfection of this poetry.

But van der Vat also becomes disillusioned with Eliot, especially with the work after Eliot's espousal of the Christian faith, when one sees the demise of the poet in the ascetic: ". . . the puritan has to pay his own price. The hardness of his religious asceticism abhors the allurements of beauty which is closely allied to sin."² Moreover, Eliot ". . . often falls into prose, unable to rise into poetry now that he is expressing his religious exaltation."³

Critical writing in The Netherlands was scant during the war years, and no articles on Eliot appeared. Later essays of a general nature appear mostly at significant points in Eliot's career. In 1948, the year of Eliot's sixtieth birthday and of the Nobel prize, there are some essays in recognition of these events, but the number is actually small. Two poet-critics (also translators of Eliot), comment on the meager Dutch attention. Voeten remarks that Eliot's birthday "passed practically unnoticed by the press in our country";⁴ Smit finds the reason for the scant response in the nature of Eliot's poetry, which ". . . is so far removed from what is normally considered poetry here, that many will shrug their shoulders at it."⁵ Also writing at the

¹D. G. van der Vat, "The Poetry of T. S. Eliot," English Studies, XX (1938), p. 110.

²Ibid., p. 116. ³Ibid., p. 117.

⁴Bert Voeten, "Engelands grootste dichter; T. S. Eliot 60 jaar," Vrij Nederland, October 2, 1948, p. 7.

⁵Gabriel Smit, "Nobelprijs voor een Christelijke mystiek dichter," Nieuwe Eeuw, November 13, 1948, p. 9.

occasion of the Nobel prize, Michel van der Plas sets forth the general tenor of Eliot's work. In distinguishing between early and later Eliot, van der Plas enlarges on a comment of Cyril Connolly who called Eliot "the philosopher on the dark mountain":

He climbed a mountain, as it were, from where he could survey the world while thinking of eternity. He did not forget things or people,¹ but he looked over them, to what lay behind and above

A longer essay by Simons appeared at Eliot's seventieth birthday.² Here an attempt is made to sum up Eliot's life, his criticism, poetry, and drama. The comments on Eliot's critical writing are rather good, but overall the compass of twelve pages appears too small to deal in more than vague generalities.

At Eliot's death there again are a number of essays which survey his career. Two rather unusual comparisons are touched on here. C. Ouboter compares Eliot to Winston Churchill, and with allusion to East Coker sees two eminent men of letters (the one also a statesman and ruler) go into the dark.³ Tindemans links Harold Pinter to Eliot. Pinter's success is partly to be explained by the work of Eliot and other verse dramatists " . . . who made the British public receptive to speech rhythm, repetition or variation, flowing speech or staccato, which, as a totality, convey more than just the semantic content of the words which make up the poem."⁴

¹ Michel van der Plas, "Filosoof op de donkere berg; een der belangrijkste dichters dezer eeuw," Elsevier, November 13, 1948, p. 15.

² Jos Simons, "T. S. Eliot 70 jaar," Streven, XI (August-September, 1958), pp. 1001-1013.

³ C. Ouboter, "T. S. Eliot, begraven in East Coker," Wending, XX (March, 1965), p. 16.

⁴ C. Tindemans, "T. S. Eliot, 1888-1965," Streven, XVIII (February, 1965), p. 500.

Although very few lengthy studies of Eliot have appeared in The Netherlands, a few essays give rather thorough introductions. In the standard Dutch translation of Eliot's work (part of the Pantheon series of the translations of Nobel prize authors), editor van der Plas contributes a very fine introduction. Eliot's life receives a scant one page survey, but the works are treated responsibly. A rather lengthy quotation from the opening discussion of "Prufrock" will demonstrate van der Plas' ability to delineate economically yet perceptively:

If one understands this poem well, then one has the best imaginable introduction to all of Eliot's work, including the plays. The whole further development follows logically and gradually from this frustrated "lovesong." The givens are all present: an exemplary figure, which moves as a shadow in a thronging, pushing urban society, without purpose, surrounded by deterioration, incapable of the highest form of human contact, love, obsessed by death, skeptical about satisfying partners; the cool tone of the observer--much more that of the cool reporter than of a possessed, passionate sufferer and sympathizer; the language of the well-read man; also, however, the irony and the humor which contain the promise of escape; the natural rhythm of daily language--a nervous rhythm.

When describing Eliot's conversion, van der Plas alludes to the "iron consequences" which Eliot saw emanating from an acceptance of the Christian faith. Thus it is surprising that van der Plas does not sufficiently recognize the iron, the tension and the struggle, of the Ariel Poems. To say that here ". . . the sound of penitence and acceptance has been replaced by that of grace and salvation,"² is to miss the harshness of the comfort in "Journey of the Magi," or the life ennuï of "Animula," or the weariness of Simeon.

¹Michel van der Plas, "Thomas Stearns Eliot," in Eliot, Gedichten, toneel, en essays (Hasselt, Belgium: HeideLand, 1962), p. 9.

²Ibid., p. 16.

In the Four Quartets the author does discern that "one could even say that the weakness of man is emphasized more often than the peace of the soul which belongs to God."¹ He further comments at some length on the "core-line" of the Quartets, "At the still point of the turning world."

Eliot's essays are touched on briefly, with special commendation for those in which Eliot deals with his own poetic problematics, but with deprecation for the "sociological" essays. Van der Plas sums up Eliot's modus operandi with an onion-peeling metaphor. The reader needs

. . . something of Eliot's patience and deliberation. In arriving at an answer to a certain question, Eliot, so to speak, peels an enormous fruit. Peeling after peeling, skin after skin, detail after detail is removed, slowly but surely, until the core becomes visible. Afterward one sometimes has the uneasy feeling that the peeler first covered the pit in great detail, so that he could make a brilliant impression on his audience with his peeling operation. Perhaps one thus learns more about the peeler than₂ about the pits--the theories--which are eventually displayed.²

Eliot's drama is discussed knowledgeably in the context of British verse drama. Each of the plays is touched on in some detail. Van der Plas finds Eliot at his dramatic best in The Cocktail Party and is disappointed in The Confidential Clerk and The Elder Statesman, which become "flat" both in incident and language. In summarizing Eliot's later work van der Plas finds a strange dialectic whereby the poetry exhibits "mystic" tendencies, while the plays become "worldly" without being at home in the world:

The poet, beginning with portraits of spiritually sterile people, slowly found his way to God, portraying the con-

¹Ibid., p. 17. ²Ibid., p. 23.

version with poems of contrition and humble acceptance of supernatural power, as he climbed the mystical mountaintops of the Four Quartets; but, since 1935, the year of Murder in the Cathedral, the playwright has slowly descended to the salon world of his society plays in an evermore consistent process of humanizing. The Four Quartets showed us a man high on the mountaintops, as it were, disappearing in the clouds; after this it seems that Eliot, in a forced, deliberate attempt, wishing to continue to portray the world, has descended to his original milieu, where he no longer seems to feel at home.

Herman Servotte, in "T. S. Eliot, an Introduction," does not attempt to survey all the works, but delineates certain motifs in Eliot. When discussing the sense of fatigue, emptiness, and pessimism portrayed in the early poetry, Servotte discounts a strong influence from the war, and instead seeks the cause in Eliot's life (noting the unhappy marriage), and in his emotional constitution, both of which accentuate the estrangement between people. Thus all of Eliot's poetry is rooted in the awareness that through original sin there is now "a separation between man and the world and between man and his fellowman."²

In Eliot's use of citations Servotte discerns a twofold process. On the one hand the widely varied sources exhibit the ideological divisions of the modern world, but at the same time the citations weld a unity in and through the poems. The fragments "are brought together in the poems in such a way that they form a certain--be it still chaotic--unity. Poetry becomes a seeking for lost harmony, the ordering of the unordered, the poet building the wholeness of his being."³ Neither must the citations be interpreted merely as Eliot's reactionary juxtapo-

¹Ibid., p. 50.

²Herman Servotte, "T. S. Eliot--een inleiding," in Literatuur als levenskunst, (Antwerpen: Nederlandse Boekhandel, 1966), p. 119.

³Ibid., p. 122.

sition of an ideal past with a vulgar, demoralized present. Rather, past and present, beauty and vulgarness, dream and sadness are placed beside each other because they exist side by side in the consciousness of the poet. What counts, poetically speaking, is the reconciliation of both aspects of reality, so that they are no longer placed over against each other, but are woven into each other.

The unity of Eliot's oeuvre, especially as evidenced in the repetition of motifs, is illustrated with the example of the "mysterious-luring birds" which appear at crucial points in the poetry. The motifs can be traced in two ways: "One can trace how a certain motif develops through the years, or one can trace how certain motifs are combined in an ever more inclusive synthesis. Whichever track one chooses, in both cases one will emerge in the Four Quartets, and especially in the last lines of Little Gidding."²

Even though Servotte's essay is called an "introduction," it wisely does not attempt to include every title of Eliot's work. By delimiting the scope to certain works and motifs the author succeeds in giving a more lucid presentation than if he had taken in all of Eliot.

The other general introduction fails to impose that kind of limitation; Fernand Etienne's booklet indeed tries to be comprehensive in a forty page compass.³ The result is not so much inaccuracy as superficiality. The essays, the poetry, the plays are surveyed, often title by title, in such a perfunctory manner that one loses the sense of intricacy and complexity which always characterizes Eliot's work. A summary-analysis of one and a half (small) pages of The Waste Land is per-

¹Ibid., p. 123. ²Ibid., p. 130.

³Fernand Etienne, T. S. Eliot (Brugge: Desclée De Brouwer, 1961).

haps better than none, but the danger of either vague generality or distortion is certainly invited.

I stated earlier that the introduction of a foreign poet often has to deal with elementary material. The words "introduce" and "in-leiding" both mean a "leading into." Van der Plas and Servotte demonstrate that they can lead their readers into a new poet, while providing sophisticated analysis at the same time. Such is no mean achievement when presenting an author from a foreign literature.

Thematic Studies

A number of studies can be best characterized as "thematic." These essays do not cover all of Eliot's work, nor do they concentrate on one title; rather, certain facets of the poetry or the drama are singled out and discussed in the context of selected titles.

Several essays deal with literary influence and relations. One of the relatively few "academic" essays is by W. H. Toppen who presented his lecture on Babbitt's and Hulme's ideas in Eliot at the occasion of his appointment as Lector in English literature at the Free University in Amsterdam. Toppen analyzes Babbitt and Hulme and then discusses similar strands in Eliot's thought. The questions of influence or parallelism and of similarities with differences are raised at several points. Eliot of course shares many of Babbitt's estimates. Their evaluation of Shelley, for instance, is expressed in nearly identical terms. Moreover, ". . ." as Eliot moves into the direction of orthodox Christianity, his attitude to much of modern literature becomes more like Babbitt's, while at the religious level he further separates himself

from Babbitt."¹ But Eliot is less consequent. He continues to value such artists as Joyce, Baudelaire, and Wyndham Lewis: "Eliot, the artist, remains more receptive to various forms of modern art than Babbitt, the scholar."²

With Hulme the influence is less direct. Eliot did not know Hulme personally, and The Sacred Wood essays, which partly share Hulme's views, were published before Hulme's Speculations. Apparently Eliot absorbed Hulme's views partly through Pound. Hulme's and Eliot's views especially coincide in their disparagement of the idea of human perfection and the idolizing of "personality." And here, Toppen sums up,

. . . here the neo-humanist Irving Babbitt and the Catholic anti-humanist Hulme meet. And Eliot stands next to them at this point. When Eliot in the essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," voices his objections against the poetic spirit of the age, he directs himself especially against the romantic overevaluation of human personality as bearer of individual talent, as viewed against the background of a host of witnesses who form the tradition. And in the same context Eliot directs himself against the inflation of the human ego in the poetic expression of individual emotion.³

The lecture is not extensive enough for a full appraisal of all the interrelations, but Toppen's observations are sound.

Professor Bachrach's leisurely essay "Baudelaire en T. S. Eliot" touches on Eliot's relation to Isherwood, Symons, and Joyce as well. Even though Symons and Swinburne proclaimed themselves strongly influenced by Baudelaire, the true heirs were Eliot, Joyce, and to some extent, Isherwood. The relation Baudelaire-Eliot is approached carefully, in the recognition that "what a great and original artist learns from

¹W. Toppen, Enkele achtergronden van het werk van T. S. Eliot, vooral in verband met de ideeën van I. Babbitt en T. E. Hulme, (Groningen: Wolters, 1964), p. 13.

²Ibid. ³Ibid., p. 21.

another, whose talents and problems are necessarily completely different, is one of the most difficult issues to define."¹ There are many echoes of Baudelaire in Eliot, both philosophic and verbal, of which the line "You! Hypocrite lecteur! -- mon semblable, -- mon frère!" is probably the most familiar. One of the principal debts to Baudelaire is Eliot's conception of twofold life and death.

. . . Eliot works nearly always with one central contrast, that is, the contrast between two kinds of life and two kinds of death, between true life and life which has no purpose, and is therefore death; between true death and the death which brings life, which is an awakening to newness. This contrast he relates to Baudelaire's special morality, or rather, what Eliot sees in Baudelaire's conception of Good and Evil.²

Bachrach's essay is largely correct in its cautious charting of parallels. However, the essay lacks sufficient depth; a more thorough scrutiny of Eliot and Baudelaire would have demonstrated more similarities. The essay is now certainly superseded by more extensive studies.

The relation between Eliot and the Dutch poet Martinus Nijhoff will be studied in more detail in another chapter. The three studies which specifically discuss Eliot-Nijhoff parallels will be examined there; here I shall merely summarize the essays very briefly.

Van der Plas begins with a rather detailed analysis of Nijhoff's early poetry and then uncovers correspondences in Eliot.³ Among the parallels are: the "old age" tone, loneliness in the city, the demanding woman with the idealized counterpart, spiritual sterility, the in-

¹G. H. Bachrach, "Baudelaire en T. S. Eliot," Maatstaf, V (June-July, 1957), p. 309.

²Ibid., p. 312.

³Michel van der Plas, "De onmachtige wandelaar; rond Nijhoff's twee eerste gedichtenbundels," Roeping, XXVIII (July, 1952), pp. 341-355.

fluence of Baudelaire, the attempt to penetrate spiritual darkness.

In Dirk W. Dijkhuis' essay the two poets receive equal attention.¹ In sketching the milieu in which they wrote, Dijkhuis sees reactions against a similar tradition of romanticism, sentimentalism, and shallowness. Eliot and Nijhoff often employ verse techniques and symbols of the previous poetic generation, but with an ironic purpose. In Eliot a walk on the beach and the singing of mermaids are in juxtaposition with Prufrock's concern about hair style and trousers, and in Nijhoff's "Strijkje" the moon is invoked, but it is a leering moon. Similarly, alliteration, assonance, and rhyme are often used with ironic intent.

Both poets evidence a strong historical sense in their work.

The Waste Land and De Wandelaar have an I-figure who moves through history, frequently merging past and present by historical shifts and overlaps. Dijkhuis suggests further parallels in the use of specific names which begin to reverberate with symbolic intent; the use of puppet-like characters; the stylistic devices of enumeration and parallelism; and the development of an impersonal poetry (for which Dijkhuis would prefer the terms "superpersonal" and "bovenpersoonlijk").

While both van der Plas and Dijkhuis limit their studies to a direct Eliot-Nijhoff comparison, Luc. Wenseleers' scope is much wider.² He seeks to place Nijhoff in the context of modern Western (that is, English, French, German) philosophy and poetry. Thus Nietzsche and Teilhard de Chardin, Jaspers, Rilke, Rimbaud and Eliot are only a few of the dozens of names which come into purview. But Eliot certainly looms

¹Dirk W. Dijkhuis, "Nijhoff en Eliot / Eliot en Nijhoff," Merlyn, II (September, 1964), pp. 1-24.

²Luc. Wenseleers, Het wonderbaarlijk lichaam. Martinus Nijhoff en de westerse poëzie. (Den Haag: Bert Bakker, 1966).

large. He impinges on Nijhoff's work at more points than any of the other literary figures. As with van der Plas and Dijkhuis I shall withhold detailed analysis and evaluation at this point. Suffice it to say that Wenseleers posits many similarities of both thought and style between the two poets. By beginning his book with an analysis of The Waste Land, he seeks to demonstrate Eliot's exposure of the modern mind--an exposure which was shared by Nijhoff. Similarly, the concern with language and the use of specific poetic techniques are compared at length.

Even without taking an exact tally, it is obvious that many of the periodicals which carry the Eliot articles are journals of religious and theological persuasion. Thus, for example, Streven is a "monthly for spiritual and cultural life," and Wending a periodical "for gospel and culture." Also, many of the writers exhibit pronounced theological bent, with apparently the majority of Roman Catholic background. As with other poets whose works move in the Christian pale (especially if they be converts), so readers are often attracted to Eliot as much by religious as literary reasons. This motivation need not work adversely on the literary-critical process, although the danger of special pleading is always present. Here again, some writers use a theological approach effectively, while others do not. The potential weakness lies not in the practice, but in the incompetence of the practitioner.

A very sensitive study of the "Christianness" of Eliot's work is an article by W. Barnard, himself a preacher-poet. The title already suggests something of the complexity of the subject: "T. S. Eliot as the Poet of the Meaning of Man's life; the Christian Meaning of Eliot's Unchristian Poetry." Barnard succeeds especially well in the blending

of the poetic and theological aspects. Discussions of Eliot's religion frequently neglect the stylistic factors. Barnard, however, carefully explores the relationship between the verse and its "content."

In Poems 1909-1925 Barnard sees Eliot as the poet-prophet who exposes the social and spiritual bankruptcy of modern life. The dissolution of man and the dissolution of societal fibres work into each other in erosive disintegration. Men exist as loose sand. And certainly, "loose sand can and does lump into a mass. But lumping together is different from the original rock, and mass is different from the original, functional cohesion [oer-verband]." ¹

"Singing" about the modern world can not be done in traditional tones. Thus in "Prufrock" there is always "the beginning of a hymn, but instead of singing with full breath, one hears breathy, nervous, ironic talk The ode becomes par-odic." ² Instead of bucolic inspiration one senses urban craftsmanship. Once, perhaps, poetry was "water struck from the rock, but now it must be gotten from the concrete." ³

However, even though Eliot portrays contemporary man and world in such a grim, uncompromising manner, he does not succumb to nihilistic despair. There is an alternative. Not the alternative of a facile, conventional Christianity, but an answer founded on a Biblical conception of history which recognizes direction and crisis. History is neither cyclical nor meaningless, but has divine direction, and man is confronted with crisis, that is, judgment, which calls him to responsibility.

¹W. Barnard, "T. S. Eliot als de dichter van de zin des menselijke levens," Wending, V (1950), p. 177.

²Ibid., p. 175. ³Ibid.

This conception that there is purpose in the universe is present even in the early poetry--perhaps absurdly present. "But how could it be portrayed other than absurd in this kind of world, in this exposed age of the last days--unless it be in the liturgy of the church or in the action of Christ?"¹ After The Hollow Men the Christian strain becomes more pronounced, although still not programmatically Christian or churchy; Eliot remains the "irregular liturgist." But liturgist he is, and as such he serves "the people." It is not correct, says Barnard, to regard the later poetry as primarily mystical contemplation. Even though there is a certain kind of withdrawal from the world, "the hermit . . . does not spend himself on himself and on self purification. His poetry wants to serve" Thus Ash Wednesday continually circles around "my people!", and the people now have changed from "corpus delicti to corpus Christi."²

A different kind of "theological" criticism is offered by J. Sperna Weiland.³ The motif of the stranger is traced in several titles and is then compared to the New Testament. The stranger in The Cocktail Party is of course the "Unidentified Guest" of Act I. Even though he is later identified, there remains an atmosphere of mystery about Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly. Does he solve or make problems? Does he offer life or death? Is there a divine aura about him?

In The Rock a stranger appears only three times, but his presence is pervasive throughout the play, as he points up the desolation of a world without Christ. Here again, the identity of the stranger is never

¹Ibid., p. 181. ²Ibid., p. 183.

³J. Sperna Weiland, "De vreemdeling bij T. S. Eliot," Wending, XIX (July-August, 1964), pp. 306-317.

made explicit, although many signs suggest a Christ figure. But in the lines, "Life you evade, but Death you shall not. You shall not deny the stranger," one again faces the question: Does the Stranger bring life or death?

From this ambivalence about the Stranger's identity and purpose Sperna-Weiland further explores the paradox often associated with Christ. Thus, for example, "Christ the tiger" from "Gerontion" and the "Birth-Death" motif of "Journey of the Magi" present the same tension about Christ. Is his coming beneficial or threatening? To be welcomed or feared? The author then proceeds to demonstrate the presence of this paradox in the New Testament. There too Christ is often a blend of promise and threat, of mercy and judgment. Sperna-Weiland's contribution is especially valuable for its inclusion of The Rock. Usually neglected in the criticism, the author demonstrates that The Rock is not outside of the mainstream of Eliot's development.

L. W. Nauta's dissertation, which deals with the figure of the stranger in modern literature, focuses on The Cocktail Party for his example of the stranger from English literature. Before discussing Sir Harcourt-Reilly, Eliot's stranger, Nauta analyzes the structure of the play and discerns three perspectives: the social, the anthropological/human, the mythical/religious. There is a lack of integration between the three levels in the character of Celia, whose martyrdom is not sufficiently motivated. "In Celia a third perspective, the religious, becomes visible. But this perspective does not develop dramatically from the first two; the social and anthropological perspectives are not integrated into a new unity. The third perspective is tacked on as a kind

of religious commentary."¹ However, in Reilly there is a successful joining of the three elements. Socially he expresses his ambiguity in his role switching, while in his role as the stranger he is able to take away people's masks. Moreover, "in his action at the anthropological level the stranger can also reveal a mythical perspective by pointing to another ideal or another person."² Nauta's strictures on the characterization of Celia are valid, I believe. The religious dimension of her decision is indeed not sufficiently motivated, nor fully integrated into the fabric of the play.

In The Art of T. S. Eliot Helen Gardner warns that ". . . the connection between Eliot's acceptance of the Christian Faith, and entry into the communion of the Church, and this change in the context and style of his poetry is a very complex one."³ This complexity is often ignored, of course. Both non-Christian detractors and Christian admirers have too easily equated Eliot's conversion with changes in his poetry, and have been content to read the poetry as spiritual odyssey only. This is not to say that the change in Eliot's life is not reflected in the poetry; Gardner also proceeds to spell out the impact of Eliot's conversion--but she does so very carefully and in the context of the total poetic process.

To take account of the total poetic process--there lies the failure of the essay by B. J. van Tent. The title reads, "Thomas Stearns Eliot as Mediator"--our mediator, our fellow pilgrim in the

¹L. W. Nauta, De mens als vreemdeling (Amsterdam: van Oorschot, 1960), p. 156.

²Ibid., p. 160.

³Helen Gardner, The Art of T. S. Eliot (New York: Dutton, 1950, 1959), p. 103.

Christian life. Van Tent traces Eliot's early disillusionment and bitterness through The Hollow Men, after which the Weltschmerz is eclipsed by the acknowledgement of suffering, conversion, and reconciliation.

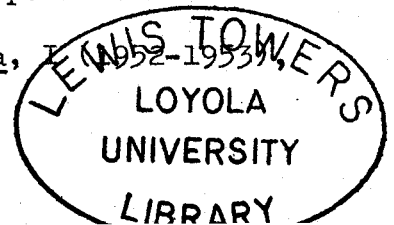
Van Tent often analyzes acutely, and the essay is indeed helpful in discerning some aspects of Eliot's poetry. The difficulty lies in the too-narrow focus: the poetry is read nearly exclusively as a biographical-spiritual summation. The early poems "show us a man, pitying his own unbearable lot of a life in a world which does not know true life" ¹ The Ariel Poems and Ash Wednesday are "mileposts along the way of faith," ² and in The Rock "we discover the confirmation of the faith-decision of Ash Wednesday and the Ariel Poems." ³ Or again, the Four Quartets "are of interest to those who wish to hear the continuation of Ash Wednesday, of personal faith in the service of intercession." ⁴

In another essay van Tent continues in a similar vein, now joining Eliot as a "pilgrim." He proposes (without any proof) that Eliot selected the Collected Poems 1909-1935 to furnish a record of his spiritual biography. More positively, van Tent does suggest an apt parallel for Gerontion who ". . . reminds me of the unbelieving Job, sitting on the dungheap of the world. He has no friends and does not know God. His dispute is addressed to no one, his questions are answered only by an echo." ⁵

¹B. J. van Tent, "Thomas Stearns Eliot als bemiddelaar," Vox theologica, XXIII (1953), p. 177.

²Ibid., p. 179. ³Ibid., p. 180. ⁴Ibid., p. 181.

⁵"Thomas Stearns Eliot als pelgrim," Minerva, I (1952-1953), p. 178.



There are many essays, of course, which do not limit themselves to a theological approach to Eliot, but which recognize the wider import of his poetry. Two examples are the essays by Gomperts and Söte-mann, which are written in the context of the limited acceptance of Eliot in The Netherlands. Both attempt to discover the causes of frequent Dutch hesitancy toward Eliot, and to foster greater understanding and appreciation.

In "The Open World" Gomperts contends that pre-1940 Dutch poetry generally did not experience the renewal which characterized English poetry--largely as inaugurated by Eliot. Rather, insofar as Dutch poetry was influenced by English, it continued in the romantic-aestheticist tradition with a strong emphasis on poésie pure. Gomperts then sketches Eliot's return to the English literary tradition which has a more comprehensive view of what constitutes poetic "material." Through Eliot's efforts, "daily life, irony, philosophy, politics, humor, morality--all these lost regions--were brought back under the poetic banner."¹ Dutch readers, however, attuned to a less cerebral poetry, would not generally value such non-poetic materials.

Another difficulty arises out of Eliot's allusiveness. Since his poetry is strongly infused with English historical and literary allusions, the foreign reader is naturally at a disadvantage. Further, the modern increase of the store of knowledge, which militates against a commonly shared culture, often accentuates national differences. If Eliot's cultural experience is not shared by all his English readers, it will be even less so by non-English.

¹H. A. Gomperts, "De open wereld," in Jagen om te leven (Amsterdam: van Oorschot, 1949), p. 17.

A final barrier is the prose-like quality of much of Eliot's verse. "Because the English also have a great prose tradition, they fear much less that their poems tend toward prose than do Dutch poets who usually do not know what prose is."¹ Thus there is a much stronger inclination to distinguish prose and poetry rigidly, and a distrust of poetry which possesses a strong prose base.

Gomperts closes with a defense of "colloquial poetry" as a fit poetic vehicle. The freedom of its form is usually fused with the freedom of its content: ". . . muse poetry is usually poetry of the enclosed area of consciousness, it is the poetry of the closed world. Colloquial poetry, as written by Eliot, covers all areas which compose the garden of human consciousness--it does not single out certain ones as non-poetical; this is the poetry of the open world."²

Gomperts overstresses the difference between English and Dutch poetry, although for the late thirties the comparison largely holds true. His characterization of the constituents and the donnée of the poetry is helpful.

G. Sötemann focuses more exclusively on Eliot's verse form in distinguishing his poetry from most Dutch poetry. Since Eliot lacks many of the devices traditionally associated with verse, what is substituted to give unity to the poems? Working out of selections from the poetry, Sötemann enumerates and discusses the by-now-familiar characteristics: strong rhythms, juxtaposition of opposites, repetition, homonyms, assonance, allusions. The concentrated use of these devices, rather than regular meter, schematic rhyme, and regular stanzas place the poetry at a remove from the Dutch tradition: "from the character-

¹Ibid., p. 24. ²Ibid., p. 26.

istics mentioned, it appears how far removed it is from our Dutch verse tradition. It has removed itself from all that is familiar to us in a much more absolute manner than is the case with Marsman's and Nijhoff's poetry, and it is necessary to perform a sort of spiritual salto mortale to read these poems without prejudice and in their own right."¹

There are many strictures and disapprobations of Eliot scattered throughout the Dutch criticism. However, most of these strictures are written in the context of sympathetic, favorable evaluations. Since many of the writers are not "professional" students of English literature, they write about Eliot not because he is a literary phenomenon, but because they are attracted to him. There are some exceptions, however. A few authors concentrate on what they consider the "decline" of Eliot.

One slight essay, with the telling title "Deep But Dumb" ends with a clever parody of an Eliot paragraph from the "Baudelaire" essay. Walschap ridicules and chides Eliot as follows:

So far as we are essayists we must abide by the simple truth. Insofar we abide by the simple truth we are essayists. And it is better not to write at all than to write nonsense. It is true to say that the glory of the essayist is to avoid all charlatanism. The worst that can be said² of an essayist is that he dishes up nonsense as profundity.

E. Straat and Halbo C. Kool both write out of the disillusionment common to many Eliot admirers of the twenties. The skeptical, at times cynical, exposure of the sham conventions, and of the dreariness and shabbiness of the modern era filled students with uncritical admi-

¹G. Sötemann, "Enkele characteristic van Eliot's poëzie," Nieuwe Stem, IV (1949), p. 585.

²G. Walschap, "Diep maar dom," Nieuw Vlaamse Tijdschrift, VI (1952), p. 1109.

ration. But, says Straat, from a 1948 retrospect even the original enthusiasm seems to have been unwarranted, and certainly Eliot's later development proved thoroughly disappointing. The Waste Land now seems "threadbare" and "a curiosity." And why was Burnt Norton not written in prose, since it appeals only "to our intellect, our interpreting, calculating rationality."¹

Kool recalls Eliot as the incisive poet of the city whose images of "the damp souls of housemaids" and "brown waves of fog" portrayed physical and spiritual "clamminess." Eliot, however, proved stagnant: "His scepticism appeared to be not only his greatest, but also his only quality . . . ; there was never a smile, only a sneer-- and a sneer which was permanent."² To compound the mischief, Eliot announced his tripartite loyalty to the establishment in 1927, received prizes and honorary doctorates, and seemed to suggest the desirability of a class structure. He had become "a part of the established power, a toothless lion, the opposite of our earlier admiration."³ Kool alludes again to the fog-city metaphors--but now with a vengeance: "The later work of Eliot becomes thin, less poetic, neatly formulated, but arid, ever more impersonal, colorless, unartistic. The poet who went to the city stayed too long--he lost his life in the smog."⁴

Criticism of Individual Poems

Many of the articles surveyed so far contain comments and analyses of individual poems; in some other instances whole essays are de-

¹E. Straat, "Weerzien en afscheid," Groene Amsterdammer, November 13, 1948, p. 8.

²Halbo C. Kool, "Dichter in de stad," Kroniek van Kunst en Cultuur, X (1949), p. 46.

³Ibid. ⁴Ibid.

noted to single poems. A number of these essays cover rather familiar ground of Eliot scholarship and criticism, while others provide fresh insights. I shall give a brief sampling of some critiques on separate poems.

1 Van der Plas' comments on "Prufrock" as the "seed" of most of the later poetry were cited earlier. A less appreciative note is sounded by van Doorn who often finds the imagery too extreme. He especially takes exception to the simile of "a patient etherized upon a table." Even for 1926 van Doorn's objection appears rather farfetched, but he holds that the image is not universally recognizable since ". . . only medical men and nurses are familiar with the operating table So the comparison is something extraneous; the author put it only as proof of his own originality and cleverness."¹

As in English and American criticism The Waste Land is probably cited and commented on most frequently. Early commentators include den Doolard who, in a happy phrase, characterizes the sense of aridity and sterility of The Waste Land. The human race still multiplies, but one can hardly imagine a generative propagation; "the propagation in the poem is no longer sexual, but more like the spreading of sand dunes, a sort of molecular drifting."²

Panhuyzen again emphasizes the biographical elements, since he finds the genesis of The Waste Land exclusively in the life experience of the poet. In "The Fire Sermon" Panhuyzen correctly discerns that sexual relations have gone awry, but he is probably partly off the mark

¹ van Doorn, English Studies, VIII, p. 139.

² den Doolard, Den Gulden Winckel, XXV, p. 254.

when he sees "the pernicious influence of the heartless woman" as the principal motif.¹

In examining Eliot's use of history Dijkhuis analyzes the "To Carthage then I came" lines. The precise historical moment is often left fluid in Eliot. The scene may suggest a coming to Carthage when it was literally burning, or perhaps afterward when the burning "I" encounters the burnt-out city: "the perishing moving to the perished."² Since the fire calls forth a radical change, there also may be overtones of Pentecost. Scenes such as these are probably read best when one simultaneously recognizes several historical possibilities.

Dijkhuis recognizes that Eliot's citations from widely different sources often help to create this historical simultaneity. However, the practice invites the danger of disunity, if the citation is not sufficiently integrated into the poem. As example Dijkhuis analyzes the "Frisch weht der Wind" fragment from "The Burial of the Dead." The use of a foreign language here presents no problem, since a previous line (12) had also been in German and the reader is thus subconsciously prepared. The real difficulty lies in the word Irish. Although the quotation is appropriate insofar as it calls up a story of great, tragic love, nothing in the context of The Waste Land justifies the introduction of Irish. One might well charge Eliot with arbitrariness here, in his choice of quotation.

Wenseleers' brief chapter on The Waste Land is generally a good introduction.³ He properly emphasizes, for example, the importance of

¹ Panhuyzen, Boekenschouw, XXVI, p. 501.

² Dijkhuis, Merlyn, II, p. 7.

³ Wenseleers, pp. 10-17.

the "O City, city . . ." section of "The Fire Sermon" as one of the few pictures of genuine wholeness and peace--fleeting though it be. Wenseleers claims some original insights in supplying two sources and, therefore, improved readings. The reference to the dog digging up the corpse in "The Burial of the Dead" is traced to Ovid's tale about Thebes arising from a dragon's tooth. The dog is granted greater inclination to mercy than man in wishing to avoid another calamitous birth from dead bones. The thunder in the final stanzas of the poem refers not only to the Upanishad, but has a Western source in the earlier used Women Beware Women in which Bianca links the thunder with her conscience. The irony and tragedy lie in the fact that both Bianca and the modern man of The Waste Land fail to respond to the voice of the thunder. A misreading of Wenseleers might be noted in his notation on the lines "I could not speak, and my eyes failed . . ." The quotation marks in the poem clearly indicate that the "I" here is not the hyacinth girl, as Wenseleers believes.

A helpful service is provided for Dutch readers by H. van der Heuvel. His essay (partly based on Eliot's own "Notes"), elucidates many of the allusions and quotations which often constitute the symbolic content of The Waste Land. Thus the Tarot cards and the Grail legend, as well as the borrowings from Baudelaire and Joyce are identified for fuller comprehension. Van den Heuvel also analyzes the fleeting characters of the poem, nearly all of which can be regarded as pseudo-saviors. "The pseudo-savior has only two characteristics: the pursuit of gain (for example, Mr. Eugenides, as seen by Madame Sosotris in her cards--he has an eye only for profit), and a sensuality which is not able to

make the Fisher-King potent again."¹

A knowledgeable review of the manuscript of The Waste Land (published in 1971) is written by J. Kuin.² He sketches the background of the poem's composition, expresses dismay about the New York Public Library for withholding the manuscript for ten years, and comments appreciatively on the changes which Eliot, cum sui, made in the poem.

I earlier quoted W. Barnard's characterization of the sand-like existence of modern man. In his commentary on The Hollow Men he continues his description of a disintegrating man and universe:

An irrevocable movement was begun when man began to tamper with the firm wholeness in which he had been dreaming. The awakening becomes ever clearer, and the more consciousness, the more loneliness. There is no full man in an empty universe Man does not enter space, but space enters man.³

Only at the end of the poem is there a slight intimation of escape. The echoes from the Lord's Prayer are introduced partly to accentuate the sense of hopeless absurdity. But there might be more. Perhaps there is " . . . a recognition of the Great Stranger who is addressed as Our Father in Jesus' prayer. There is recognition of his disturbing strangeness. But no, still not the recognition of the liberating strangeness of the gospel."⁴

Kuin analyzes the presence and function of the women figures in Ash Wednesday. Kuin notes that the first edition of the poem (1913)

¹H. van der Heuvel, "De symboliek in The Waste Land," Minerva, II (1953-54), p. 39.

²J. Kuin, "Sensatie rond een verdwenen en teruggevonden manuscript van . . . T. S. Eliot," Volkskrant, November 14, 1971, p. 7.

³Barnard, Wending, V, p. 178.

⁴Ibid., p. 181.

was dedicated to Eliot's first wife, and that the unhappy marriage strongly colors Ash Wednesday. The description of the women is admittedly very difficult, since they appear fleetingly, are barely identified, and often shade into each other. The litany to the Lady of silences (II) is apparently addressed to Mary, who represents one pole; at the other extreme is the innocent, careless girl of Part IV. The other figures float between these two poles, but without clear distinctions.

The figures have certain characteristics in common: they all have some aura of loftiness, and are associated with a "world of rest, happiness, and light"; they are silent figures, except for the girl "talking of trivial things"; they live in gardens and play with flowers, thus suggesting a paradisiacal setting; they are associated with sadness and suffering, but are at the same time aloof from the suffering; they are relatively powerless.¹

However, "in spite of her lack of power, the woman is nevertheless a sign of joy and salvation She is not herself salvation, but she is the symbol, the sacrament of salvation."² Then, borrowing from scholastic thought, Kuin links Eliot to a Christian humanism which holds that "earthly values lead to God":

The erotic experiences from youth, the loveliness of the girl, walking through the flowers, these are the starting point for the journey to God The deeply felt emotion about the beauty of her body was no illusion, not even now when he lies crushed in the wilderness; it was not a delusion of the senses, but a hint of absolute beauty.³

¹J. Kuin, "De Engelse Beatrice op de aswoensdag van het christelijke leven--in memoriam T. S. Eliot," Raam, XV, (1965), pp. 51-52.

²Ibid., p. 55. ³Ibid.

A commentary on "Journey of the Magi" mainly stresses the Biblical elements of the poem. Thus Fens explores the exodus motif in which there is a physical journey as well as spiritual progression from captivity to a promised land. This is not to say that the arrival in the poem is synonymous with peace and rest, since the speaker evidences unease at the conclusion. The discomfort of the journey is in some ways carried over into a continuous uneasiness: "As they were strangers on the journey, so they remain strangers afterward--because they had become different persons."¹

One critical faux pas is partly attributable to Nijhoff's Dutch translation of the poem. His version of lines 26 and 27 reads:

Zes handwerkslieden dobbelden bij de open deur om zilverlingen
en zes voetknechten schopten lege wijnzakken over de vloer.

The translation of "hands" and "feet" into artisans and footservants is curious at best, and Nijhoff's translation demands twelve people in the scene, whereas the original strongly intimates six. Fens embarks from this dubious translation and confidently asserts that "the twelve men could be no other than the twelve tribes of Israel," and then continues to embroider on the theme of Israel's rejection of Christ.² (Of course, the error could have been avoided by reference to Eliot's own remark about recurring images, giving as example "six ruffians seen through an open window playing cards at night"³ A similar essay by F. Berkelmans further enlarges on the twelve tribes theme and

¹Kees Fens, "Bij het gedicht van T. S. Eliot," De Tijd, December 24, 1965, p. 11.

²Ibid.

³The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), p. 148.

suggests other Biblical motifs in the poem.¹

The only essay which deals exclusively with the Four Quartets is, strangely, written in Frisian, thus limiting the access even for most Dutch readers.² This fact is rather regrettable, since Pietersma's introduction is a helpful one. As a professional philosopher he naturally concentrates on the philosophical import of the poems, with knowledgeable references to Herakleitos, Anaximander, and other philosophers. However, Pietersma recognizes that philosophic exposition does not exhaust the poem, and thus he is also alert, for example, to the unities in the poem, as in the relation between the rose garden scene and the still point of the turning wheel. Much of the further exposition is linked to the imagery of the still point.

C. Ouboter in "T. S. Eliot, Buried in East Coker," pays tribute to Eliot and his work, several times calling attention to Eliot's "nuchterheid" about poetry--that is, his sober, matter-of-fact, sometimes laconic attitude. Ouboter focuses more narrowly on the Four Quartets and within a brief compass highlights some facets of East Coker. Perhaps East Coker is in some ways the most accessible of the poems because it is "of the earth" and thus close to us. "Eliot's contemplative mind remains close to home here, close to the history of his own ancestors, even close to his own experiences. The circle is smaller here--so small that in the last part of East Coker the light of the

¹F. Berkelmans, "Geboorte of dood? Kommentaar op den dichtelijke kerstpreek," Jeugd en Kultuur, XV, (January, 1970), pp. 49-58.

²H. Pietersma, "Tijd en invichheid," Tsjerne, XX, (September, 1965), pp. 348-361.

lamp falls on the open family album on the table."¹

East Coker is generally dark and heavy (as in the "lifting heavy feet" of the country dance), but there is life nevertheless. Life in Eliot's work usually has a somber, sober tone. Ouboter finds Eliot's attitude like that described in the stern confession of the old Reformed baptism form: ". . . our life, which is nothing but a constant death."²

Drama Criticism

The criticism of the drama falls into two readily definable segments. First, there are several essays which deal with Eliot's drama as a whole; the other articles are reviews of the individual plays, nearly all written at the occasion of the Dutch performances.

English and American critics writing about Eliot's drama in the early fifties often saw a steady improvement in Eliot's dramaturgy. Sweeney Agonistes and The Rock were the preparatory, experimental pieces, with a flowering of at least the poetry in The Murder in the Cathedral. Eliot's intention to write in a less obviously poetic style, for a more general audience, found mixed success in The Family Reunion and attained a peak in The Cocktail Party. In 1950 it was a moot question what Eliot's direction would be in succeeding plays. It is probably a safe generalization to assert that most critics who saw this ascending curve in Eliot's development were disappointed in The Confidential Clerk and The Elder Statesman.

Michel van der Plas can be placed among these critics. Although the essay on Eliot's development as a poetic dramatist does not include

¹C. Ouboter, "T. S. Eliot, begravet in East Coker," Wending, XX, (March, 1965), p. 13.

²Ibid.

the last two plays, he later registers his disappointment when writing the "Introduction" for the translations. Van der Plas opens the discussion with a brief review of twentieth century verse drama, comparing Eliot to, among others, Yeats and Fry. In sketching the different techniques of Eliot and Fry, van der Plas sums up, "Eliot comes as a poet to the masses, attempting to write verse which finds a response in the ear of the prose-man; Fry, however, seeks to make such a fantastic flight with his language that he immediately snatches his audience from their everyday concerns."¹

Sweeney Agonistes is accorded more attention than it ordinarily receives. Van der Plas discusses the rhythm of the verse and the frequent use of repetition in some detail. In analyzing the "do" lines, he merges a consideration of verse and meaning: the chatter of Doris and her friends "is supported by the rhymes which continually reflect back upon it, suggesting strikingly 'that something must be done,' or 'could something only be done'; thus a feeling of emptiness, of indecision which becomes reprehensible."² The comparison of Sweeney to later characters is carried far. Beckett, Harry, and Celia all had to learn the maxim of St. John of the Cross that union with God is possible only if one separates himself from the love of fellowmen. This realization finds an early (if ethically perverted) expression in Sweeney: he attempts to escape from his environment and his fellows by contemplating the murder of Doris.

Murder in the Cathedral is cited as a great poetic achievement,

¹Michel van der Plas, "De ontwikkeling van T. S. Eliot als toneelschrijver," Streven, V, (1952), p. 316.

²Ibid., p. 319.

But lacking in dramatic finesse. Van der Plas signals the (by now) familiar weaknesses of inadequate characterization and the lack of discernible dramatic change in Thomas. The Family Reunion receives extravagant praise as "an achievement in verse drama which has not been matched in all of English literature since Milton, not even by William Butler Yeats."¹ Among the characters Agatha is well realized in her spiritual separation, but is less convincing as the head-mistress of a college. Amy, on the other hand, has dramatic unity and achieves true stature in her tragic loneliness. Both verse and dramaturgy of The Cocktail Party are very successful, but, van der Plas sums up, one continues to wonder if the success is realized only in terms of Eliot's own aims: whether Eliot ". . . has succeeded in writing great plays an sich remains open to a negative judgment. However, that he has been able to realize his own ideals is beyond dispute."²

In an enlightening comparative study J. Dierick relates Eliot to Ibsen and the Greek dramatists. Dierick disparages attempts which seek to demonstrate Eliot's borrowing from Greek drama; he emphasizes Eliot's manipulation of the material:

. . . from his Greek sources Eliot retained only what he could use; and these elements he has placed into a personal context--so that the whole is finally rather different The true merit of Eliot lies in the treatment much more than in the choice of his material He does not place present and past in juxtaposition, but joins them through the uniting power of myths. He does not use the plays of Sophocles and Euripedes as constraining models, but as possible forms which ancient truths can assume, which are not particularly Greek, but rather part of the heritage of mankind.³

¹Ibid., VI, (1952), p. 26. ²Ibid., p. 35.

³J. Dierick, "Eliot, de Griekse toneelschrijvers en Ibsen," Tijdschrift van de Vrije Universiteit van Brussel, V, (1963), p. 153.

Dierick then demonstrates from the individual plays both Eliot's indebtedness to and departures from the Greek plays. For example, both Euripides' Alcestes and The Cocktail Party contain a woman's return from "death." Here Lavina is a parallel to Alcestes. At another level, however, Celia can be related to Alcestes--be it in an inverse way: "A woman is not saved from the hands of Death, but is deliberately sent into death. And death, which begins the intrigue of the Greek writer, is the end and the climax for Eliot; the emphasis is again on sacrifice and redemption."¹

Eliot's relation to Ibsen is not only one of polarity. Much as Eliot decried the development of Naturalistic prose drama which arose after Ibsen, he nevertheless shared in that tradition. His development of a dramatic language was not unlike that of Ibsen, ". . . from a 'poetic style' to a manner which gives the impression of easy conversation, from a richness of rhythm and images to a deliberate and surprising sobriety of language and tone."² Moreover, Eliot's donnée is often akin to that of the naturalist, as he uses the family drama and exposes the bankruptcy of social relations. Whatever difference there is, is largely ethical. Unlike the naturalist dramatist, Eliot does not call for the liberation of the individual from his mediocre environment, but he usually stresses humility and acquiescence.

In summing up the tripartite relation of his title, Dierick concludes that Ibsen and the Greek dramatists can be linked in distinction from Eliot:

If all is taken into account, then Ibsen is found to be as tragic as the Greeks--but not Eliot, in spite of the martyr

¹Ibid., p. 149. ²Ibid., pp. 155-156.

death of Beckett and Celia, in spite of the description of the modern hell of loneliness and estrangement of the individual. And here again, one can find a religious explanation for Eliot's stance: in his faith, fear is inseparably bound to hope, and the fall to redemption.

As in the English-speaking world, Murder in the Cathedral became the introduction to Eliot for many in The Netherlands. Often the play was the avenue into the poetry. The 1949 Dutch performance of Murder in the Cathedral in Amsterdam was partly overshadowed by the occasion; the play was directed by Albert van Dalsum, who also played the part of Thomas, at the celebration of his fortieth year on the Dutch stage. Van Dalsum (who died in December, 1971) was one of the all-time greats of the Dutch theater, and his jubileum was therefore a significant occasion. Thus some of the reviews devote more attention to van Dalsum's career and the festivities of the evening than to Eliot's play.

Although the performance is generally praised, there is frequent mention of the difficulties facing the cast in working with an intractable translation. Apparently Eliot had granted the Dutch translation rights to the Belgian priest, Father Boone, "the well-known mass-producer of plays for the masses" who had in turn farmed out the translation to a Father Kern, who rendered the play in abominable Dutch, "a monument of awkwardness and lack of feeling for style."²

Some critics highlight the church-state conflict; others discern that Beckett's struggle is a more internal one. However, A. Kolhaas adds, this internalization also becomes one of the major weaknesses of

¹Ibid., p. 156.

²C. de Groot, "Albert van Dalsum jubileert als Thomas Beckett in Eliot's Moord in de kathedraal," De Nieuwe Eeuw, November 5, 1949, p. 8. The play was later translated by Michel van der Plas.

the play. Eliot somehow should have "externalized" the two kinds of martyrdom facing Thomas, and thus would have made Thomas' choice dramatically stronger. Now a very dramatic incident (the murder of an archbishop at the altar) is treated very undramatically. Even Becket's struggle of conscience is not capitalized on; at the crucial fourth temptation "Becket has already become so smilingly serene," that there is no question of real struggle.¹ Kolhaas finds a cause for Eliot's dramatic failure in his religious stance. As with many other religious writers, the faith is taken for granted, so that a defense of the faith via a dramatic confrontation is neglected.

Van der Plas' commentary on Murder in the Cathedral is a deft one in which he sketches both the weaknesses and the strengths of the play. The characterization of Thomas is seen as a principal shortcoming. "Thomas is . . . for the unbeliever not a very acceptable character. Whoever is not familiar with supernatural ideas, will find in Thomas' attitude motives which he cannot understand and therefore not accept."² The dramatic and spiritual life of the play is realized best in the women of Canterbury. Initially they are like "the lukewarm Christians of our age whose middle-class faith cannot bear any great shock of reality," but they undergo genuine change, and end on a note of jubilant (though fearful) praise.³

The relation between Murder in the Cathedral and Everyman is explored by G. de Groote. Beside the echo of "Death, God's silent servant" (cited by Grover Smith), de Groote finds a similarity in the ap-

¹A. Kolhaas, "Moord in de kathedraal," De Groene Amsterdammer, November 5, 1949, p. 9.

²van der Plas, in Eliot, Gedichten, toneel en essays, p. 32.

³Ibid., p. 35.

pearance of Eliot's messenger and Everyman's "messenger; Dethe," both of whom come "in grete haste." There also is a reverse parallel in Thomas' "papers which are in order, and the documents signed," which are in contrast to Everyman's "boke of counte" which is not in order and the "wrytinge full unredy."¹ De Groote then examines the verse form, and sees Eliot's debt primarily in the knittelverzen--"verse with rhymed couplets, usually with four stresses and a changing number of unaccented syllables, which Eliot found in the old morality play."² These lines are found especially in the Tempters-Thomas and the Knights-Thomas exchanges.

The Family Reunion was never performed in The Netherlands and thus there is scant commentary on the play. I already quoted van der Plas' extravagant praise. Jos Panhuyzen also speaks appreciatively of the verse and the religious intent of the play. However, he adds, the total impact would have been stronger if the abstractions and the symbols had been beter integrated, and if some of the characters (especially the uncles and aunts) had been more individualized.³

The performance of The Cocktail Party by the Nederlandse Comedie of The Hague was generally well received. Ammy van Lonkhorst finds: "Depth and character . . . ; the society tone struck excellently . . . ; Julia a superb character . . . ; the whole play carried by the fasci-

¹G. de Groote, "Everyman en Murder in the Cathedral," Handelingen van de Kon. Zuidned. Maatsch. voor Taalen Letterkunde en Geschiedenis, XXIII, (1969), p. 43.

²Ibid.

³Jos Panhuyzen, "Toneel van T. S. Eliot," Boekenschouw, XXXIII, (1940), p. 457.

nating performance of Tom Lutz as Sir Henry" ¹ Other critics, although not as effusive, generally concur. One dissenting voice in De Groene Amsterdammer demurs, however. A. Kolhaas finds the actors' valiant attempts frustrated by the playwright's ineptness. The play is a talking piece and does not lend itself to dramatic vitality: "As soon as one attempts to make the talk dramatic or visionary, the candles begin to smoke and demand to be snuffed. That is not done and thus we get an alternation between talk and smoke, without style." ²

As in English and American criticism, the most frequent charge against The Cocktail Party concerns the weak dramaturgy; there is too much talk and not sufficient action. Indeed, the excessive talk keeps the play from evoking emotion in the audience: "We are not . . . moved by the play. The spoken word demands too much of our attention." ³ Hunningher finds the weakness of the play most obvious in the final scenes:

. . . the sudden account of Celia's death, especially the casual manner in which it is related, is just as abrupt and forced as the preaching at the restored couple to walk their little road happily. Eliot has portrayed their lives too seriously and too really, so that he cannot just break his characters into pieces to serve his purpose. It points to an essential weakness of the play that the stage serves not as a mirror of people, but as a pulpit for people.

The talk-message excess is also reflected in the characterization. Because the characters are not sufficiently dramatized, they often move

¹ Emmy van Lonkhorst, "Toneelkroniek," De Gids, CXV, (1952), p. 144.

² A. Kolhaas, "De cocktailparty van T. S. Eliot," De Groene Amsterdammer, January 26, 1952, p. 10.

³ Cor van der Lugt Melsert, "Een cocktail party voor de mensenziel," Elseviers, January 26, 1952, p. 15.

⁴ B. Hunningher, "Broadway en Eliot," Wending, V, (1950), p. 189.

on an allegorical plane; and in so far as they do exhibit "social" characteristics, there is frequently a lack of integration between the social and the allegorical aspects.¹

Kolhaas' caustic evaluation was already alluded to. His verdict on all aspects of the play is indeed damning. In summary of the total import he fulminates:

The play is inhuman, it is not honest, it is not believing; it is mean, it is cant, it hides behind snobbishness and juggling with faddish ideas. It is therefore a dreary as well as a dangerous play. If anyone should object to the play, it should be the Christian who sees the heavenly psychiatrist barter away the well-springs of life for quasi faith and quasi mysticism.²

Other critics are more moderate--and more discerning. M. Gasser delineates a parallel with Kafka, partly in ideological resemblance, but also in the manner of presentation. Momentous and frightening issues of life and the search for profound meaning are couched in the superficial language of a party, and part of the plot could serve as well in a vaudeville production. Gasser adds a rather scant consolation for that large segment of the public whose lives are like the Chamberlayne's. There is comfort in the fact that a great poet saw fit to use this dull existence for his play. "And the pettiness, the absurdity of our lives is not passed over, or presented merely as object of mockery, but is illumined and drawn with an unequalled power of observation, acuteness, and judiciousness."³ Scant comfort indeed.

¹C. de Groot, "De cocktailparty van T. S. Eliot," De Nieuwe Eeuw, February 9, 1952, p. 8.

²Kolhaas, De Groene Amsterdammer, January 26, 1952, p. 10.

³M. Gasser, "T. S. Eliots Cocktail Party; Puriteins verslag van een helletocht," Elsevier, May 27, 1950, p. 35.

The principal focus of C. de Groot's review is also on "the two ways." The way of the average man and woman is often lacklustre and sometimes mean, but there is a legitimate place for the common life, because it also can be redeemed in a spirit of acquiescence and humility. Of course, Celia's way of complete giving is a higher life, for it "suddenly breaks through with a vision of the eternal."¹

Nevertheless, some of Reilly's remarks suggest that indeed the way of the Chamberlaynes is worse than mediocre, that it is more demeaning than "making the best of a bad job." Reilly has sent them back

To the stale food mouldering in the larder,
The stale thoughts mouldering in their minds.
Each unable to disguise his own meanness
From himself, because it is known to the other.²

J. Wytzes, apparently taking these lines as the main thrust of Reilly's intent, remonstrates that the Chamberlayne's option is debasing. Admittedly, not all people live on the same emotional and spiritual niveau, but Reilly should have shown that even in lives of smaller scope there can be genuine service of God and man. "Now it seems as if a spiritual compromise at a low plateau is the highest wisdom for some people."³

W. Barnard seeks to deliver Reilly (and Eliot) from the charge of spiritual condescension and snobbery. Barnard stresses that in the Christian life, as well as in the play, both the ways of Celia and of Edward and Lavinia fit into God's economy. "There is the way of the common life which is possible in forgiveness, and the way of the special

¹ de Groot, De Nieuwe Eeuw, February 9, 1952, p. 8.

² The Complete Poems and Plays (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 420.

³ J. Wytzes, "Noten bij De Cocktailparty," Horizon, XV (1952), p. 115.

sacrifice. A holy allowance or a holy command."¹ The purposefulness of the common life can be witnessed partly in the changed lives of the Chamberlaynes. As they work out their salvation in their ordinary existence, there is now room for mutual love and concern toward each other and, for example, to Peter Quilpe.

A careful study, based on the published play rather than a performance, focuses on the tension, the dialectic, in the play as caused by Eliot's blending of realism and symbolism. As one example van der Hoeven analyzes the Edward-Celia confrontation in Act I.² Psychologically Edward appears very weak here as he succumbs to his middle-aged mediocrity and spurns a true love. However, spiritually this decision is a positive one, since it involves a recognition of his unworthiness and thus opens the way for acceptance of his proper role in life. On the one hand this tension lends dramatic force to the play, but there remains some incongruity between the psychological inadequacy and the spiritual hopefulness. In the last act the strain on the psychological-naturalistic element of the play becomes even greater, as the faith dimension (for example, in Celia's destiny) becomes more prominent. Van der Hoeven holds that this dialectic strengthens the play, even though at the same time it threatens to disturb its unity.

The verdict on The Confidential Clerk is rather mixed. Some continue to see a solidification of Eliot's theatrical powers ("the dra-

¹W. Barnard, "Het blijspel der twee wegen; een beschouwing over The Cocktail Party," in Tussen twee stoelen (Amsterdam: Holland, 1960), p. 144.

²P. van der Hoeven, "Overwonnon dialect," In de Waagschaal, May 16, 1952, p. 6.

matic shapening is more successful here than before"),¹ while other critics have strong reservations. A. Brugmans applies the Dutch proverb about the lid not fitting the pan to the combination of a vaudeville form with Eliot's philosophic intent. "Altogether," he continues, "it was a poor performance of a now and then amusing, but generally distorted, play with much pretension."² In a similar vein another reviewer speaks of ". . . this so-called comedy in which the poet zig-zags over the borderline between dreams and reality (a poet, incidentally, in whom we still cannot discern a stage-poet, as long as the theater remains for him a means and not an end."³

Most critics concentrate on an explication of the intent, the "meaning" of the play, which is usually seen in Eliot's exploration of human loneliness. Elsa den Hertog sketches the loneliness of each character. Colby spurns the help and companionship offered by Sir Claude; Lucasta has always been in a rejected position of illegitimacy; Kaghan hides his loneliness behind a mask of "banal joviality;" and Sir Claude reveals his inadequacy by desperately wanting to hold on to Colby. Relief from the loneliness is very muted. "Only when a man takes the burden of loneliness upon himself and accepts it, is a certain measure of happiness in store for him."⁴

Others see more hope in the play. J. van der Woude suggests

¹Elsa den Hertog, "De particuliere secretaris," Het Toneel, LXXVII (1954), p. 144.

²A. Brugmans, "De particuliere secretaris," Haagse Post, November 13, 1954, p. 19.

³"De particuliere secretaris" (anon, rev.), Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant, November 8, 1954, p. 5.

⁴den Hertog, Het Toneel, LXXVIII, p. 144.

several escapes. One can avoid loneliness if one does not enclose himself in a world of his own (Lucasta), or if one's loneliness can be transmuted by love for someone else (Kaghan and Lucasta), or if one's dream world corresponds to the real world (Eggerston).¹ Van der Plas, writing at the occasion of the London performance, finds the key of The Confidential Clerk in understanding, coupled with love. The coherence of the play lies in "the discovery of the characters that the understanding of self, the understanding of one's potentialities . . . can only be realized through contact with others, through sympathy for others" ² P. van der Hoeven also stresses the role of understanding, the road from misconception to comprehension.³ Sir Claude and Colby achieve clarity about their relationship and about the kind of world they inhabit. In explaining his background and his two-tiered existence to Colby, Sir Claude comes to greater self-understanding; he continues his life, with some regret, but also with greater clarity. Colby, although briefly contemplating a similar pattern, chooses not to live the ambivalent life, and achieves a greater (religious?) unity in his life style.

The Elder Statesman was performed in The Netherlands the same year that it appeared in England. However, both critical and scholarly comment on the play has been meager. A. Kolhaas, who reviewed the

¹Johan van der Woude, "Eliots De particuliere secretaris; thema van mensens eenzaamheid," Vrij Nederland, November 13, 1954, p. 5.

²Michel van der Plas, "De nieuwste Eliot: groot success," Elsevier, September 26, 1953, p. 19.

³P. van der Hoeven, "Feit en lotsbestemming; T. S. Eliot en zijn The Confidential Clerk," In de Waagschaal, July 3, 1954, p. 155.

other Eliot plays with considerable acerbity, is less caustic here, but again finds much to censure. If there is a change in Sir Claverton, the change is hardly noticeable, since he remains above all the correct gentleman. Charles is even less attractive--"such a proper young man, such a typical mealy-mouthed English suitor from a good family" ¹

At the other extreme is an anonymous review in Het Toneel which sees The Elder Statesman as the peak of Eliot's work. The play is "like a quartet from Beethoven's last years. The instrument has been perfected, and it now produces an art so internalized and spiritualized that it hardly seems to be from this life. It sounds forth a message, a last explanation, a conclusion. The message is one of love." ² Eliot certainly deserves better than this!

Another anonymous critic detects the "old leitmotiv of necessary purification." As in The Cocktail Party the emphasis is on guilt and atonement. But there the theme was pursued with "religious fanaticism," while in The Elder Statesman "there is a certain measure of forgivingness and toleration." ³ Van Schaik Willing also stresses the "pervasive sense of sin of the winner of the Nobel prize." ⁴

¹A. Kolhaas, "Een staatsman van verdienste", Vrij Nederland, October 17, 1959, p. 6.

²"Repertoire-inzet" (anon. rev.), Het Toneel, LXXX, (1959), p. 78.

³"Oud Leitmotiv der noodzakelijke loutering," Haagse Post, October 18, 1958, p. 16.

⁴Jeanne van Schaik Willing, "Een staatsman van verdienste," De Groene Amsterdammer, October 10, 1959, p. 10.

Conclusion

When appraising the whole output of Dutch criticism on Eliot, one notices that although it is not voluminous, it does cover a wide range of literary studies. Thus the essays of Toppen and de Groote, for example, explore sources and influences; Dierick's essay is an exercise in literary history; explications and analyses are provided by many, most notably by Barnard and Kuin; interpretations, from an elementary summary of "meaning" to sophisticated insight into Eliot's complex thought, are found in nearly all the articles; reviews of play performances are well represented; judgments on Eliot's merit (or demerit) range from van der Plas' many sympathetic essays to Kolhaas' asperities on the plays.

The most frequently encountered approach is the introduction of a foreign author to Dutch readers. These introductions are usually heavy on summaries of Eliot's life and work. Religious-theological criticism is also well represented. Some of the articles are little more than enlistments of Eliot in a poetic Christian cause, but most of them are discerning efforts to delineate the religious motifs in the work. The prevalence of theological criticism can be attributed to the vigorous religious press--religious, not in an ecclesiastical sense, but in the attempt to approach cultural expression in a theological framework. Both Catholic and Protestant directions are represented in the Eliot criticism.

Although there are essays which deal with individual works, the relatively small number of these constitutes one of the principal weaknesses of the Dutch criticism. The criticism would be enhanced, and Eliot would be better presented, if there were more studies of careful

explication and analysis of individual titles.

This scarcity of in-depth studies is probably related to the dearth of academic writing on Eliot. The contributions of Kuin and some others are encouraging signs, but so far Eliot has not received sufficient attention in the Dutch universities. Most of the writers have been critics and poet-critics.

The multiplicity of approaches and opinions encountered in the criticism renders any kind of generalization very difficult. One cannot, I believe, detect a national consensus, or opinions which could be considered the expression of a Dutch mentality or a Dutch approach to English literature. One assumption which does seem to be shared by all critics is the fact of Eliot's English-ness. His American origin is acknowledged, but potential American influences in his work are not explored. There is also a keen awareness of Eliot's affinity to European, especially French, literature. And, of course, his similarity to the Dutch poet Martinus Nijhoff would be detected most readily by the Dutch critic.

Many of the critics writing on Eliot show acquaintance with the critical and scholarly publications in English. At times there is reliance on or extension from this scholarship. More often, however, the Dutch criticism seems independent (although the areas of investigation and the conclusions are not necessarily different from what one finds in English and American criticism).

I alluded earlier to some unfavorable reviews of Eliot's work. The number of hostile critics, however, is relatively small. The English and American furor which was created by Eliot's poetry in the 1920's has no counterpart in Dutch criticism. This hiatus is probably

best explained by the fact that an author usually has to establish a reputation at home before he is taken notice of abroad. Also, the more massive attacks on Eliot, by, for example, Shapiro,¹ or Robbins,² find no parallel in The Netherlands. The opposition one does encounter is frequently occasioned by disagreement with Eliot's ideological development, or disappointment about specific works. The appreciative essays are at times rather partisan expressions of agreement with Eliot's views, but more commonly they are in recognition of the genius of Eliot's poetry.

At times I have questioned or expressed reservations about some of the interpretations encountered in the criticism, and a detailed critique of all the essays would undoubtedly yield further disagreement. However, taken as a whole, the Dutch criticism is responsible and forms a worthy contribution to the whole of Eliot criticism. Both the novice in English poetry and the well-read student of Eliot can profit from this criticism. One usually finds the critics to be knowledgeable about continental and English literature, and the criticism informed with discerning and judicious appraisal.

¹Karl Shapiro, "T. S. Eliot: The Death of Literary Judgment," in In Defense of Ignorance (New York: Random House, 1960), pp. 35-60.

²Russell Hope Robbins, The Eliot Myth (New York: Henry Schuman, 1951).

CHAPTER III

A SKETCH OF MODERN DUTCH POETRY

One can better understand Eliot's relation to Dutch literature and the parallels in Martinus Nijhoff, in the light of a brief overview of modern Dutch poetry. A few pages of literary history can of course make no pretensions of completeness; I am limiting the sketch to the poetry, and even here I do not discuss individual authors in detail. But by sketching the development of the poetry in broad outline, with the mention of a few pivotal figures, I hope to indicate the place of Dutch poetry in Western literature, and to suggest some parallels to English modern poetry. To examine the influence of Eliot on Dutch poetry would demand a number of comparative studies, and could be a separate study. I believe, however, that Eliot's direct influence on Dutch poets has been rather slight.

Survey of Dutch Poetry, 1880-1960

In capsule treatments of Dutch literary history it is often said that there was no genuinely great Dutch literature between the sixteenth century Vondel and the end of the nineteenth century. Such a statement is much too sweeping, and a careful study of the intervening centuries will discover much that can vie with the literatures of other European countries. It is true, however, that, with a few exceptions, the literature immediately preceding 1880 was at an extremely low ebb. W. van Leeuwen characterizes the writing as ". . . banal patriotic, homey and

pious poetry, and rather insipid 'humorous' prose."¹

The new poetry of 1880 came with great suddenness and force, and both its immediate impact and its lasting effects earn the movement the appellation revolution. In tracing the genesis of the movement Gerard Knuvelde sees a sudden impact of literary forces which had entered other European literatures more gradually; he describes these forces as a "cataclysm" engulfing Dutch poetry.² The most obvious impetus for the new poetry was provided by English Romanticism. The influence of Shelley and Keats had already begun to be felt in the 1870's, and by the eighties it came to full flowering; Willem Kloos' famous credo of "allerindividueelste expressie van de allerindividueelste emotie" (the most individual expression of the most individual emotion) certainly bears the Romantic stamp.

The Tachtigers, as the poets of the 1880's began to be called, were a group of some ten poets, who united in a common program to produce, not only a new poetry, but a new social and ideological climate as well. The principal uniting factor was probably the rebellion against a past of stultifying parochialism and narrow religious and social dogmatism. The other ingredients of the movement are more complex. Since the Romantic impulse was rather delayed, there was a foreshortening of this and several other strains. While the Romantic movement was absorbed, there was a simultaneous interaction of the later neo-romantic

¹W. L. M. E. van Leeuwen, "Van 1880 tot heden," in van Leeuwen, ed., Dichterschap en werkelijkheid: geïllustreerde literatuurgeschiedenis van Noord- en Zuid-Nederland en Zuid-Afrika (Utrecht, W. de Haan, 1951), p. 206.

²Gerard Knuvelde, Handboek tot de geschiedenis der nederlandse letterkunde, IV, ('s Hertogenbosch, Malmberg, 1967), p. 26. In this chapter I am much indebted to Knuvelde's Handboek.

developments of l'art pour l'art and Symbolism. Coupled with these more or less homogeneous impulses was a very different strand: the naturalism of the last part of the nineteenth century, especially as it came to expression in Emile Zola.¹

In 1885 the Tachtigers began to publish a new periodical, De Nieuwe Gids (The New Guide), in which they published their poetry and essays. Here, and in other writings, they inveighed against the rhetoric and "poetic" language of traditional poetry. The new poetry (and all art) was to be independent of religion or ethics, and, as the poet expressed his deepest emotions, he would afford insight into the realm of beauty.

Willem Kloos was the most colorful spokesman for the Tachtigers, but his passionate individualism governed his conduct as well as his writing, and he was unable to keep the movement united. Lodewijk van Deijssel is, as van Leeuwen describes him, perhaps most representative of the spirit of '80: ". . . completely aesthetic and individualistic; a-moral, a-social, a-religious,"² whereas Frederick van Eeden combined his devotion to poetry with a profound social concern, influenced by Thoreau and Tolstoy. In Flanders the renewal in poetry came at about the same time, spearheaded by the poetry of Karel van Woestijne and the periodical Van Nu en Straks (Of Now and Later).

It need cause no surprise that the movement of '80 did not remain united very long. Both the strong personalities of the poets and

¹See J. G. Brandt Cortius, Het poetisch programma van Tachtig (Amsterdam, Athaneum-Polak & van Gennep, 1968), for elaboration of international influences and parallels.

²van Leeuwen, p. 218.

the mixture of elements in the movement contributed to its fragmentation. Editors and contributors withdrew from De Nieuwe Gids, competing periodicals were started in 1894 and 1905, and the leading figures went separate ways.

The significance of the Tachtigers can be measured partly by the divisions of Dutch literary history; both Knувelder and van Leeuwen, who provide overviews of twentieth-century Dutch literature, discuss the 1900-1940 period in terms of poetic generations after 1880. This treatment is not to suggest that there were no developments in that period, or that later poets were mere followers of the Tachtigers. Rather, the movement of the eighties was a dramatic new beginning for Dutch poetry, and it continued to shape much of the poetry of succeeding decades, even when later poets often wrote in conscious defiance of Tachtiger practice and theory.

The dissension among the poets of '80 had begun in the second half of the decade, and further disunity came to expression during the 1890's. Indeed, Knувelder finds the emphases of the nineties sufficiently different to speak of the "first generation after '80." But even though there were personal quarrels and different nuances in the poetry, one can generally say that the poetic ideals were still those which were first propounded by Kloos in 1881. However, around the turn of the century one sees a profound questioning of many of the fundamental tenets of '80. The individualism, aestheticism, neo-paganism, and naturalism which characterized the Tachtigers was questioned or repudiated in various degrees by the poets rising to prominence around 1900.

Instead of the autonomy and glorification of art and the artist, there now was a greater emphasis on the serving function of art. The proud, lonely independence of the artist gave way to a sense of sharing, of communion. Many poets, consequently, of whom Herman Gorter and Henrietta Roland-Host were the most illustrious, joined the socialist movement which was sweeping Europe. There was a similar reaction against both the epicurean delight of the senses and the harsh preoccupation with naturalistic, physical determinism. The life of the spirit again became dominant, and a search for philosophic insight and spiritual serenity were often the hallmark of the new generation of poets. Albert Verwey, who had been closely associated with the Tachtigers, was most instrumental in setting the tone for the new trend, especially through his influential periodical, De Beweging (The Movement). The greater concentration on philosophic motifs can also be seen in P. N. van Eijk, who found his moorings first in Plato, then in Spinoza. At times the reaction against '80 was religiously motivated--partly as a defense of established traditions, partly as a recognition of the egoistic strain often found in (neo-)romanticism. But the religious reaction was not only negative. Both the Roman Catholic and the Calvinistic communities became more self-conscious of their cultural expression, and established their first literary journals.

Although poetic styles varied immensely, there was a general tendency to curb the verbal excesses which had gained vogue in the eighties, and there was a greater emphasis on the poetic sentence than on the word. J. Kamerbeek also shows that a renewed appreciation for the concepts of tradition, rhetoric, and absolute form gained prominence; these nuances are seen as part of the neo-classical anti-sym-

bolist movement in, for example, France and England.¹

The beginning of the period 1920-1940 was characterized by the same ferment which was found in other countries during and after World War I. J. C. Brandt Corstius, who describes this development in considerable detail, uses the broad term "The New Movement" for this period.² The international beginnings of the movement can be traced to the Manifestoes of the Italian and Russian Futurists (1909 and 1912). Other foreign influences or counterparts are found in German expressionism and in the work of Cocteau, Kafka, Pound, and Eliot. In The Netherlands the impetus for renewal in art came especially from (Mondriaan's) Stijlgroep, and from the writings in the literary periodical, Het Getij (1916-1924).

Although there were many heterogenous elements from the various art forms converging in the new movement, there were some features which were dominant, especially in relation to poetry. The boundaries between the different arts were frequently relativized or erased. The Russian Futurists had sought links between cubist art and poetry, and in the same vein the poems of the Dutch poet Marsman were called "cubistic poems." The attraction of the music hall tradition (a famous poem of the Fleming van Ostaijen is titled "Music Hall"), can be explained partly by the fusion of the arts in the music hall shows. The affinity between music and poetry was also explored by many artists. For example, Martinus Nijhoff, although he cannot be completely identified with the

¹Jan Kamerbeek, Albert Verwey en het nieuwe classicisme, with French and English summaries (Groningen, J. B. Wolters, 1966).

²J. C. Brandt Corstius, "De Nieuwe Beweging; haar internationaal karakter en het aandeel van Noord- en Zuid- Nederland," De Gids, CXX, (1957), pp. 363-389.

new movement, strongly exemplifies the union of music and poetry.

Related to the poetry-music affinity is the emphasis on the word in the poem, and on the sound of words. The poetic exploitation of syntax was not neglected by all poets, but the word often predominated. At other times normal syntax was disturbed to further accentuate the importance of the word, including the common, non-poetic word. Once the word is dislocated from its normal syntax, there is a subsequent tendency to reduce the importance of the lexical meaning, and to stress the sound of words. The major Dutch poets of this era usually eschewed the "sound-poem," but Brandt Corstius does call attention to the sound-poems of Antony Kok and Theo van Doesburg.¹ The general tendency to relax traditional verse forms often found extreme expression in poems with typographical eccentricities. Rodenko's Nieuwe griffels, schone leien, a famous anthology of avant-garde poetry, reprints a number of these poems, with different type face, underlinings, vertical and diagonal printing.²

Traditional philosophical ideas were also challenged. The concepts of the fluidity of time and space are perhaps exhibited more frequently in fiction, as in the work of Kafka and Joyce, but it can also be discerned in poetry. An example from Dutch poetry is Nijhoff's Awater, where the Biblical characters and locale merge with a contemporary setting. If traditional, rational categories are undermined, then the role of myth and of the subconscious tend to become dominant.

¹Brandt Corstius, pp. 337 ff. James S. Holmes has translated some of these poems into English in Delta, XIII, (Autumn, 1970), pp. 61-65.

²Paul Rodenko, Nieuwe griffels, schone leien; de poëzie der avant-garde (Den Haag: Daamen, 1954), pp. 44-48.

Brandt Corstius cites van Ostajen as a poet of the subconscious, who "seeks the word which goes beyond the subjective to the region which is shared by all men." Herman van den Bergh also "writes poetry of vitalism and dynamism, poetry of passion, of primitive man, and of universal sexuality."¹

Even though Brandt Corstius demonstrates that there was a conscious attempt around 1920 to establish new forms of literary expression, the New Movement was a restricted one. Even proportionally it did not achieve the prominence of, for example, expressionism in German literature. Moreover, its effect on the next two decades was rather limited, although some elements of the early twenties re-emerge in the experimental poetry of the fifties.²

The Flemish Paul van Ostajen embodies expressionism perhaps most fully, but there are such dramatic changes in both his style and outlook that he escapes categorizing. In Holland, Herman van den Bergh is usually identified with expressionism. Meyer, in his Literature of the Low Countries, stresses that van den Bergh's development was largely independent from German expressionism, but showed many striking parallels with it.³ One other major poet who was influenced by the movement was Hendrik Marsman. In his first collection Marsman was influenced both by the German expressionists, and by his countryman, van den Bergh, but in 1929 he repudiated expressionism. His later poetry has a new simplicity, and becomes an anguished search for philosophic and

¹Brandt Corstius, pp. 380, 384.

²A brief note of James Holmes (Delta, XIII, p. 60), also calls attention to this (often neglected) continuity.

³Reinder P. Meijer, Literature of the Low Countries (Assen: van Gorcum, 1971), pp. 305-306.

moral footing as Facism began to engulf European civilization.

Also writing at this time was Martinus Nijhoff. Nijhoff's poetry is discussed in detail in the next chapter, but a few characteristics should be mentioned here, to help determine Nijhoff's place in Dutch poetry. Nijhoff is frequently characterized as a transitional figure. (Rodenko considers Nijhoff a "genuinely twentieth century poet," but instead of an experimenter, Rodenko counts Nijhoff among "the forces which form the mortar which unites the loose bricks of the new poetry."¹) In terms of literary associations and interests in literary periodicals Nijhoff certainly belongs to the poetic generation which came to prominence between 1900 and 1910. Also, his verse form was largely traditional, with the sonnet or variations on the sonnet used frequently. He called his second collection Vor-men (Forms), partly as protest against the free verse of the younger poets. Thus, when comparing Nijhoff's measured verse with, for example, the typographical idiosyncracies of some of van Ostaïjen's poems, the difference seems considerable. But often the differences are superficial, and in many ways Nijhoff does present a newer form of poetic expression. His exploration of the relationship between poetry and music, cited above, is one characteristic which makes him akin to the "movement" described by Brandt Corstius. Or again, even though Rodenko's anthology of avant-garde poetry excludes Nijhoff, (with Rodenko's somewhat apologetic explanation), Nijhoff does share in many of the criteria laid down by Rodenko, such as the avoidance of a specifically poetic diction, and the emphasis on the sounds of words.

¹Rodenko, p. 8.

The impact of World War I is not obviously present in Nijhoff's poetry, but he does wrestle with the problem of a universe in which traditional values are no longer valid, and Nijhoff's sense of both personal and cosmic despair often erupts in the poems. A poem such as "Pierrot aan de lantaarn" breathes a spirit of absurdity which foreshadows the poetry of the fifties. When determining Nijhoff's importance for Dutch poetic development, Meijer suggests that Nijhoff's poetry was more influential on later Dutch poets than the more flamboyant poetry of van den Bergh.¹

Dutch literary life of the thirties was dominated by the periodical Forum. The magazine arose partly in protest against the poetry of the late twenties, which was often imitative and second rate. The protest developed into an extended debate about the evaluation of poetry: Is poetry to be judged primarily for its artistry or for the vision which it presents? Is the beauty of the poem more important than the insight or personality of the artist? For this debate between art for art's sake and the moral values and insights of poetry, the Dutch coined a phrase, Vorm of Vent (Form or Fellow). Forum staunchly defended the view that the personality and vision of the artist ("creative man") were more important than the form or beauty of the literary work.²

The impact of Forum on Dutch poetry is difficult to gauge,

¹Meijer, p. 304.

²Cf. J. J. Oversteegen, Vorm of vent; opvattingen over de aard van het literaire werk in de Nederlandse kritiek tussen de twee wereldoorlogen (Amsterdam: Atheneum, Polak & van Gennep, 1969). This study is an examination of poetic theories between the wars. The Forum group is discussed on pp. 371-475.

partly because its influence was cut short by the war. No doubt Forum's inveighing against provincialism, sentimentality, and decorativeness was both necessary and salutary. However, a suspicion of art for art's sake may well develop into a lack of interest in artistry and poetic technique; Forum did not always escape this blunting of interest. Moreover, the spirit of intellectualism and rationalism of Forum often made the lyrical seem suspect, and tended to inhibit a fruitful poetic development.

Many poets published in Forum, but a great number of them were not first rank poets, or their poetry was overshadowed by their fiction and critical work. Charles E. du Perron, for example (one of the principal editors), wrote poetry, but both his novels and essays are much more significant. However, one Forum contributor, Jan Slauerhoff, was an extremely gifted poet. Slauerhoff is usually identified with the Forum "movement"; he published extensively in the periodical, and his poetry was championed by du Perron. Nevertheless, Slauerhoff cannot be seen first of all as a protégé of Forum, or as a prime embodiment of its critical principles. His own life has a romantic aura as he traveled all over the world as a ship doctor; his work is often tempestuous and uneven. Perhaps his affinity to Forum can be understood best in terms of the personal cast of his work: Slauerhoff is always very much present in his poetry. The search for peace and beauty, as well as the encroaching bitterness and cynicism were drawn from his own life's struggle.

Three other poets, who began to publish before the war and continued with some of their best work after the war, should at least be mentioned here. Gerrit Achterberg occupies a unique place in Dutch po-

etry. In 1939 he was convicted of the murder of an acquaintance, but he was acquitted because of temporary insanity. Nearly all of his poetry is related to this experience, as he weaves a complex structure around the theme of the loss and return of the dead woman, who, in the poetry, becomes the beloved. Meijer summarizes Achterberg's achievement:

Achterberg's poetry, in fact, is addressed to a complex notion of which the beloved, love, death, God, poetry, Beauty, and the Absolute are all aspects. Sometimes it is a romantically tinted, absolute, unattainable ideal, at other times it takes on an aspect of mysticism through the poet's aspiration to identify himself with it. Only a great poet can pursue the one theme for thirty years and throughout twenty-five volumes without being a bore, and Achterberg must be counted among the great.

Holland's most prolific author is Simon Vestdijk. Poet, novelist, critic, he has published over twenty volumes of poetry, but is known primarily as a novelist. Widely translated, his work is of uniformly high calibre. Leo Vroman also began publication before the war, and, unlike most pre-war poets, is considered one of the experimentalist poets of the fifties. Working as a biologist in the American Museum of Natural History in New York, Vroman has published in English as well as Dutch. His linguistic spectrum is broad, his moods variable, his work a continual search for stability in a chaotic world.

Another strong current in these decades was the further emergence of religious cultural awareness. Calvinists and Catholics sought to define the artistic dimensions of their religious tradition. Cultural societies, author groups, opinion and literary periodicals all sought to focus on literature and criticism from within the church. Often these efforts gave rise to pious, third rate verse and debased critical judgment; however, at its best one finds a genuine literary

¹Meijer, p. 354.

revival of Christian humanism.

The war-occupation years were devastating for all areas of Dutch life, including its artistic expression. Some of the most illustrious literary figures died, while others never recuperated emotionally from the Nazi hell. The Germans instituted the Kultuurkamer, which was intended to turn authors into propagandists; the result was that nearly all writing had to be produced "underground." Much of this underground work consisted of resistance literature which served an admirable purpose in the cause of liberty, but was often negligible for the development of poetry. The immediate post-war years saw a spate of new periodicals and the release of many works which had been kept in publishers' files. But the shape of the principal postwar development did not become fully evident till about 1950.

The poetic revolution of the 1950's can in many ways be compared to that of the 1880's. In both instances there was a violent protest against the established order and its poetry, a strong sense of individualism among the proponents, initial unity followed by independent development, establishment of new periodicals, and vigorous polemics about the new poetry in the press.¹

The earliest indication of things to come surfaced in 1946 and 1947 when Paul Rodenko and Hugo Claus (Flemish) published their first poems, but they received little notice as yet. In 1948 the Experimental

¹A good short guide to the post-war poetry is the "documentary" volume of the Nederlands Letterkundig Museum, De beweging van Vijftig (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 1965). An essay in English is Johan P. Snapper, "Post-War Dutch Poetry: The Word Becoming Flesh," Delta, XIII, (Spring, 1970, pp. 17-31; this is a helpful introduction, although it accepts too uncritically the Vijftigers' verdict of earlier Dutch poetry.

Group of the Plastic Arts was founded, soon to be joined by several poets. The Paris experimental magazine Cobra published an issue of Dutch experimental poetry in 1949, and in the fall of that year a proposed reading of avant-garde poetry at the Municipal Museum of Amsterdam ended in a brawl, which introduced the group to the general public more effectively than the poetry reading would have done. Similar public attention was aroused by the sound poem of Jan Hanlo which begins (and ends):

Oote oote oote
Boe
Oote oote

A member of parliament gave a declamatory rendition of the poem in parliament, and questioned if the periodical in which the poem appeared ought to receive further government subsidy. Two anthologies of experimental poetry were published in 1951 and 1953: Atonaal by Simon Vinkenoog and Nieuwe griffels, schone leien (New Pencils, Clean Slates), by Paul Rodenko. The experimental poets were dubbed "De Vijftigers," and continued as a somewhat homogeneous group during the fifties, as they created various stirs in Dutch public and literary life. By 1960, however, most of the better poets had gone their own way (often with a return to more controlled form), and the sixties saw further divergence along separate paths.

Rodenko's anthology, Nieuwe griffels, schone leien, offers a representative sample of the experimental poetry. A mere glance at the poems reveals that regular stanzaic forms and other conventions are virtually absent. Irregular line lengths, uneven divisions, prose poems, the absence of capital letters and punctuation--these are the characteristics which are obvious even to the casual reader. The more

extreme examples use different kinds of type as well, (a poem by C. Buddingh ranges from barely legible print, through italics and cursive, to half-inch capitals),¹ and others use non-lingual devices such as drawings, or non-print material, such as pieces of wallpaper.

Conventions of meter and rhyme are equally scarce. A poem by Hugo Claus begins,

How do I swell?
 Engendered, altered in the faltering light,
 dislanted from the damp crust,
 some slime and an egg,
 rubbery cartilage
 and the first grin and the guilty cry.²

Here, as elsewhere, the unusual (often grotesque or violent) image governs the poem. The most frequently used rhetorical device is repetition. A (rather random) example is a fragment from Nes Tergast's "Nog is het niet zover terug":

Hoog boven het massief van onze oogopslag
 Hoog boven het bankroet van onze lippen,
 Hoog boven het op alen noodweer der herinnering,
 Hoog boven de stormlopen der vergetelheid.³

The denotative values of language often diminish as obscurities, private interpretations, and nonsense words abound. The fragment of Hanlot's "Oote oote" poem, quoted above, constitutes one of the more extreme instances of a non-denotative sound-poem, but even more "communicating" poems make severe demands on the reader. Rodenko's "Het beeld" intermingles three languages and some nonsense words:

Confecta Sexgiraffe Tafel met Citroenen
 Clown Tederheidsbeginsel Bloedgewricht
 Naakt met Napoleon Een Huis My Country

¹Rodenko, p. 102.

²Translated by James S. Holmes in Delta, XIII, (Spring, 1970), p. 22.

³Rodenko, p. 106.

My Ka My Lah Lullalonsome Baby
 O Schweler Ahnenstern Wir haben's
nicht gewusst
 nimmet gruwuhle
 nit gramah.

The poem ends with four lines of French.

Even in those poems in which one can discern "meaning," one is often confronted with a world of non-meaning. Man, once a rational animal, is now without that rationality, and is seen alternately as a selfish, preying beast, or as a helpless victim. If God is present in the poetry, he is often derided; more often he is not there, and his absence betrays his death. Man's universe, now no longer governed by divine, immutable law, is capricious, and instead of a purposeful, meaningful course of history one encounters cosmic and moral absurdity. One result of the notion of the absurdity of the universe and the absence of transcendental values is the turning to the commonplace in a kind of minimalist verse: Cees Buddingh's "This morning after breakfast" is such a turning to the mundane:

this morning after breakfast
 I discovered in my groping way
 that the lid of the Marmite pot
 (4 oz. net; medium size)
 exactly fitted the small bottle of Heinz sandwich spread

of course I tried at once
 to fit the lid of the sandwich spread
 on the Marmite pot

and did it fit yes it did²

The debate about the new poetry has focused both on its merits and on its claim to novelty. In 1955 Gerrit Kouwenaar, one of the major

¹Ibid., p. 122.

²Translated by Frances Doendels-Wilson in Delta, XIII, p. 26.

new poets, wrote: "In our current poetry, great or small, experimental poetry is the only place which is alive. This is a fact. The rest is dead and nice or dead and ugly, dead and great or dead and small, but it's dead, it's history."¹ This estimation has been strongly contested, of course.² I cannot here discuss the controversy. Suffice it to say that the poetry brought a new immediacy and vibrancy which revitalized Dutch poetry; this gain will certainly remain part of the poetic legacy, even if more traditional forms are again employed. The claim of complete poetic renovation, which rejects nearly everything of earlier poetry as conventionalism and provincialism, is certainly exaggerated. The search for a non-decorative language, the importance of sound, the emphasis on the word, the role of the irrational, the contact with other literatures (to name but a few elements), had certainly been present in many Dutch poets of previous generations. The newness of the Vijftigers probably lies more in the convergence and absolutizing of many pre-war trends into one explosive movement, than in the creation of completely new forms and ideas.

The Relation of English Poetry and Eliot
to Dutch Poetry

Let me touch very briefly on the relation of Dutch literature to that of other countries. One Dutch critic, writing about the Vijftigers, finds most of their ideas current in Europe between the World

¹Gerrit Kouwenaar, "Geheel namens mijzelf," Vrij Nederland, March 26, 1955, p. 35.

²A complete issue of Dietsche Warande en Belfort, CVIII, (1963), pp. 427-536, was devoted to the new poetry in Holland and Flanders; many of the essays are critical.

Wars, only to see them reach Holland "with customary delay" in 1950.¹ This comment about the delayed entry of ideas into Dutch literature is more often made by the Dutch. In some cases the observation is true; Romanticism, for example, did not play a significant role in Dutch literature until 1880.

The matter of literary influence is more complex, however, than one literature borrowing belatedly from another. J. C. Brandt Corstius, in his study of aesthetic developments between 1910 and 1930, asserts that new movements usually do not originate in isolation in one country, to be imported by others:

European culture (also its literature), forms a unity. Its development does not take place only by the manifestation of significant changes in one country, which are then taken over by others. Rather, one sees a common European development, which manifests itself in different places, be it not in exactly the same manner Literary changes are brought about by the changes in the presuppositions about life, and these changes are international.²

The author then shows that several Dutch writers were imbued with the new spirit not just by borrowing from other countries, but by being attuned to fundamental European changes. In a similar study of the Tachtigers he illustrates that the movement represents not merely a case of delayed borrowing from English Romanticism, but also a live involvement with the current ideas of Symbolism.³

There is no comprehensive study which explores the relation between Dutch and English literature of the twentieth century. An older

¹ Albert Westerlinck, "Aantekeningen van een toeschouwer," Dietsche Warande and Belfort, CVIII (1963), p. 527.

² Brandt Corstius, "De nieuwe beweging," p. 382.

³ Brandt Corstius, Het poëtisch programma van Tachtig.

study covers the literature through the nineteenth century,¹ and others treat individual authors. Even though the survey in Chapter I demonstrates that English and American authors have been widely read and reviewed, there is as yet no reliable guide to judge the implications for Dutch literature. Thus, in assessing the influence of Eliot in comparison to, for example, Ezra Pound, one lacks the necessary comparative studies.

There are a number of studies, however, which touch on English-Dutch literary relations, and on Eliot's influence on Dutch poetry, tangentially. Meijer in his history of Dutch literature is very intent on seeing Dutch literature in a wider European context, and he frequently suggests foreign influences and parallels. Eliot, however, is mentioned only once, in the discussion of Nijhoff. Although Meijer does not examine the relationship in detail, he does propose that a case of parallel development is more likely than influence.² (In my comparison of Eliot and Nijhoff in Chapter IV I come to the same conclusion). Meijer further lists Ezra Pound as the American poet invoked by the experimentalists of the fifties, but he makes no such claim for Eliot.³ Rodenko's notation is similar. In tracing the European orientation of Dutch experimental poetry, he mentions Pound and Dylan Thomas, but not Eliot.⁴ Snapper does not discuss influences, but he does refer to Allen Ginsburg as an occasional model; Eliot, however, is not mentioned.⁵ Kees

¹W. de Hoog, Studien over de Nederlands en Engelsche taal-en-letterkunde en haar wederzijdse invloed (Dordrecht: J. P. Revers, 1909).

²Meijer, p. 302.

³Ibid., p. 356.

⁴Rodenko, p. 19.

⁵Snapper, Delta, XIII, p. 20.

Fens, in an overview of contemporary Dutch poetry in the Times Literary Supplement, does address himself to the question of influence. His judgment on Pound is not shared by all other critics, but for Eliot Fens seems to express a critical consensus. The two American poets admired by the experimentalist were William Carlos Williams and Marianne Moore. But, Fens continues,

. . . it will certainly be thought strange that, in contrast to many other literatures, the figures of Eliot and Pound have only in the past few years exercised direct influence on Dutch poetry (though literary-historical causes for this are to be found in the 1930's). Since about 1964, some poets have been at work in the North whose work could scarcely be imagined without Pound's influence¹

(Even here, Pound's influence is apparently more discernible than Eliot's).

For the period before the war Eliot's influence seems no more apparent. H. A. Gomperts prefaces a discussion of Eliot's poetry with a brief review of English influence on Dutch poetry. He finds Dutch poets more aware of and indebted to English poetry for the period 1880-1920 than for 1920-1950. Writing in 1949 Gomperts concludes that the impact of English poetry (including Eliot) is practically non-existent.² With Oversteegen we return full circle to Nijhoff. Oversteegen's study is an exhaustive analysis of the poetic theories current in The Netherlands between the wars. He frequently examines foreign influences, but the only mention accorded to Eliot is in connection with Nijhoff. And here again, Oversteegen can demonstrate, partly on the basis of chronology, that the Eliot-Nijhoff similarities are not due to influence, but are an example,

¹Kees Fens, "The Fifties and their Followers," T. L. S., August 11, 1972, p. 953.

²H. A. Gomperts, "De open wereld," in Jagen om te leven (Amsterdam: van Oorschot, 1949), pp. 15-16.

rather, of parallel development.¹

Of course, a thorough examination of Eliot's possible influence on Dutch poets would demand detailed studies, similar to my comparison of Eliot and Nijhoff. Such comparative studies might reveal that Eliot has affected Dutch poetry more strongly than has been discerned so far. It is significant, however, that up to now Dutch critics concur in establishing a very limited impact. (Even in the case of Nijhoff, who is the acknowledged Dutch counterpart of Eliot, there is a parallel rather than influence).

The adducing of reasons for non-influence is always somewhat speculative, but there are a number of factors which may, I believe, account for Eliot's limited influence. For the period before World War II his appeal is perhaps predictably limited, since an author's acceptance in a foreign country is often delayed. My survey of the critical reception of Eliot in The Netherlands (Chapter II) indicates that Eliot was not widely read in Holland before the war. Of course, a poet may be read by other poets and affect their work before much criticism is published, but there is very little external evidence for such influence. Perhaps the Dutch situation is akin to Germany's. E. R. Curtius writes about his discovery of Eliot in the late twenties, but his enthusiasm was shared by virtually no one ("fünf oder sechs Leser!"), and Eliot had to be rediscovered after the war.²

Another reason for the limited impact lies in the Dutch orien-

¹Oversteegen, pp. 152-153.

²Ernst Robert Curtius, "T. S. Eliot und Deutschland," Der Monat, I, (1948), p. 72.

tation before 1940. Although English and American literature were not unknown, the artistic community was, nevertheless, much more attuned to German and French developments. Paris, especially, was for years the principal source of artistic inspiration.

The two main "schools" of poetry between the wars were the "New Movement" (especially important from 1915 to 1925), and the Forum movement of the thirties. In his discussion of the New Movement Brandt Corstius refers to Eliot and Joyce, but the main impetus for the movement is obviously continental. Oversteegen's study of poetic theories demonstrates even more clearly the continental influence. This geographical orientation does not shift significantly in the thirties. Also, the rationalistic tendencies of the Forum group (discussed above), tended to make them suspicious of both religious and lyrical expression. Just as the Forum mentality discouraged the expression of spirit and emotion in The Netherlands, it may well have inhibited the introduction of such expression from elsewhere, and thus Eliot was not accorded much critical hospitality.

During World War II the contact with England was minimal, and there was a virtual standstill of intellectual and artistic communication. Very little significant poetry was written during the war.

The situation for the experimental poetry of the fifties is more complex. English began to dominate many areas of Dutch life, both English and American authors were widely read, and Anglo-American poetry made an impact on the development of Dutch poetry. Still, there is little evidence to suggest that Eliot, per se, served as a model. One reason for this minor role might be that Eliot himself was somewhat in eclipse in the English-speaking world. Certainly Eliot's influence on

English poetry from 1925 to 1950 was very strong; however, in the 1950's there were some new tendencies (see Chapter IV) which were out of accord with Eliot's theory and practice. This ebb in Eliot's acclaim may have reduced his influence abroad.

Some of Eliot's dicta were perhaps also responsible for the experimentalists' lack of enthusiasm for Eliot. Most of the experimentalists eschewed all ties with tradition; they sought to create a poetic program ex nihilo. (Even though this independence from earlier poetry was partly illusionary, the intent of the experimental poets was, nevertheless, to start anew). Eliot's attitude to tradition is, of course, much more ambivalent. He indeed wished to detach himself from part of his literary tradition, but he was equally insistent on the need for a (proper) tradition and poetic continuity.¹ This "traditionalist" bent in Eliot puts him at a remove from the mentality of many "Vijftigers." The same incompatibility arises with Eliot's religious views. The poets of the fifties were often rabidly anti-religious and anti-Christian. They were therefore not favorably inclined to Eliot's Puritan background or his Anglican allegiance; these traditions were too reminiscent of the Calvinist or Roman Catholic establishments from which many were trying to escape.

Does one conclude from the foregoing that Eliot did not appreciably influence Dutch poetry? It certainly appears that his direct influence was limited. Neither internal nor external evidence discovered so far suggests that Dutch poets from 1920 to 1960 were strongly in-

¹ See e.g. "The Metaphysical Poets," and "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in Selected Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1950, 1964), pp. 3-11, 241-250.

debted to Eliot. However, Dutch post-war poetry has been influenced by English and American poetry. Many of the characteristics of experimental poetry discussed above were partly inspired by Anglo-American poets. And since Eliot's mark on English poetry since 1920 is very strong, that same mark is indirectly transferred to modern Dutch poetry.

CHAPTER IV

T. S. ELIOT AND MARTINUS NIJHOFF

A STUDY IN PARALLELS

Introduction

A comparative study of T. S. Eliot and Martinus Nijhoff is open to several pitfalls. All comparisons of authors easily skew an author in order to accentuate either similarities or differences. Comparisons between poets of different languages and cultures are further handicapped by the dissimilarities in poetic tradition and linguistic characteristics. With Eliot and Nijhoff the difficulty is compounded by the fact that the comparison is between the figures of a major and a minor language. Even though the giants of literature will overcome language boundaries, it remains true that literary stature is closely related to the world stature of a language. Even the best of Hungarian or Dutch writers, for example, would not easily achieve the eminence of a Camus, or Brecht, or Eliot. Still, in spite of the risks, the comparison can be a valid and significant one. It is significant, of course, for the minor literature which is thus drawn into the broad western literary tradition. But it can also be important for the major literature. English literary scholarship can develop its own kind of parochialism by concentrating exclusively on English and American literature. Seeing a parallel development of modern poetry in another language, even a minor language, can contribute to judging, in this case, Eliot, against

a wider European literature " . . . in relation to which individual works of literary art, and the works of individual artists, have their significance."¹

A more immediate aim of the study is the elucidation of both poets. By placing their works in juxtaposition and discovering the parallels, both Eliot and Nijhoff come into sharper focus. In the comparison I shall largely emphasize the similarities between the two, but differences will also come into purview, so that an accurate profile of both poets will emerge.²

By placing the emphasis of the study on the independent parallels, one would not, of course, exclude a consideration of influence, but extra-textual evidence suggests very little, if any, mutual influence. One can, I believe, rule out any direct influence of Nijhoff on Eliot, since the latter read no Dutch and was probably not acquainted with Nijhoff in translation. The possibility of reverse influence is also very small. Michel van der Plas, in his essay on Eliot and Nijhoff, states categorically that "there is no question of mutual influence."³ One indication to the contrary is Nijhoff's own assertion that for his long poem Awater he received some benefit from Eliot.⁴ It is true, however, that when Nijhoff wrote most of his poetry (1916-1934), he was not

¹Eliot, "The Function of Criticism," in Selected Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1960), pp. 12-13.

²The main texts used are: Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), C. P. P.); Nijhoff, Verzamelde werken, 3 vols. (Den Haag: Daamen/Bert Bakker, 1954-1961, V. W.).

³Michel van der Plas, "De onmachtige wandelaar; rond Nijhoff's eerste gedichtenbundels," Roeping, XXVIII, (July, 1952), p. 349.

⁴V. W., p. 1167.

very well read in Eliot. His translation of The Cocktail Party and some of Eliot's poems are all of much later date (1950-1951).

My major concern will be with the poetry of both authors; Eliot's plays will be discussed more frequently than Nijhoff's. There will be occasional reference to their lives and to their critical writings. The quotations from Nijhoff's poetry are given in Dutch, followed by a prose translation. I have (with two exceptions) not made use of the verse translations which are available for some of the poems, partly because I would not have been able to do so consistently, partly because the interest in the passage is often in a verbal or thematic resemblance to Eliot, which may have been sacrificed in translation.

The use made of the critical writings on Eliot and Nijhoff will be acknowledged in the notes, but three titles which will be referred to rather frequently should be mentioned here.¹ Michel van der Plas' essay is primarily a study of Nijhoff's first two collections, but the second part of the essay is devoted to a comparison of Nijhoff's themes with those in Eliot's early poetry. Dirk W. Dijkhuis explores both poetic and thematic parallels, paying special attention to the role of history in Eliot and Nijhoff. Luc. Wenseleers' main subject is Nijhoff, but Eliot is very frequently brought into the discussion for parallels and comparisons. Wenseleers' principal concern is with the philosophical-religious changes in modern western civilization, as reflected in modern literature.

¹ van der Plas, Roeping, XXVIII, pp. 341-355; Dirk W. Dijkhuis, "Nijhoff en Eliot / Eliot en Nijhoff," Merlyn, II, (September, 1964), pp. 1-24; Luc Wenseleers, Het wonderbaarlijk lichaam: Martinus Nijhoff en de westerse poëzie (Den Haag: Bert Bakker, 1966).

Lives and Writings

Although the lives and personalities of literary authors are certainly not the most essential in a comparative study, it may nevertheless be helpful to sketch a few aspects of the public and private lives of Eliot and Nijhoff.¹ There naturally are many differences in their careers; however, the similarities are surprisingly great. The biographical sketches will be very brief, but some of the aspects, especially those which have a bearing on the poetry, will be discussed in greater detail later.²

Eliot's and Nijhoff's dates (1888 - 1965 and 1894 - 1953) point up the milieu of both poets: they grew up in the wake of the nineteenth century, experienced two world wars and aftermaths, and were exposed to the literary and intellectual developments of Germany and, especially, France. Their families were comfortable upper middle class, with the Eliots' fortune coming from the brickmaking firm, the Nijhoffs' from the family publishing house. Nijhoff's mother was the author of short Biblical plays; Eliot's mother wrote religious poetry all her life. Both poets were unhappily married. Eliot's wife was committed to a mental institution for many years, and Nijhoff lived in estrangement from his wife; thus both lived as virtual bachelors for most of their lives.

¹There are no complete biographies for either poet. Biographical material for Eliot is available in Herberth Howarth, Notes on Some Figures behind T. S. Eliot (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1964), and Robert Sencourt, T. S. Eliot; A Memoir (London: Garstone, 1971). Nijhoff biographical material is found in several of the essays in In memoriam M. Nijhoff, ed. by Emmy van Lonkhorst and Bert Voeten (Utrecht: den Haan, 1953).

²In the following section some of the givens on Eliot are presented in less detail than those on Nijhoff.

Eliot remarried a much younger woman after the death of his first wife; Nijhoff married an actress, sixteen years younger than he. To friends Eliot and Nijhoff revealed warm, congenial, often humorous, character traits, although there frequently remained an aura of reserve in both. Eliot had a more severe public image. Both eschewed what used to be called the Bohemian life.

Their education followed somewhat similar lines. Nijhoff was introduced to the classics in his gymnasium training. Eliot began his study of Greek at age thirteen, and chose classical studies for many of his courses as an undergraduate at Harvard. Eliot continued his formal studies in philosophy and philology, while Nijhoff studied law. At age forty, however, he began the study of Dutch language and literature at the University of Utrecht. Thus both poets showed a strong academic interest in language study. Eliot's career as editor for Faber and Faber is not paralleled in Nijhoff, but the latter was associated with publishing interests through his family's control of the well-known Nijhoff publishing firm of The Hague.

Their critical writings were very extensive, and although Nijhoff's critical stature does not approach Eliot's (certainly not on an international scale), his criticism of Dutch as well as French and German literature is significant. Eliot edited The Criterion for seventeen years; Nijhoff the important literary journal, De Gids, from 1926-1933 and from 1941-1946. The extent to which both were influenced by French late nineteenth-century literature can be gauged partly from their writings on French authors. Baudelaire and especially Paul Verlaine figure prominently in Nijhoff's criticism. The non-Dutch poet discussed most extensively by Nijhoff is Dante.

Prufrock and Other Observations was published in 1917, while Nijhoff issued his first collection in 1916 (the first edition of De Wandelaar was privately published on the family press). Neither poet had a large poetic output. Nijhoff's poetry and plays in the Verzamelde Werken cover 532 pages; Eliot's Complete Poems and Plays 608 pages. Another similarity in their writing career is the drift from poetry to drama. After 1943 Eliot published no significant poetry, but wrote three more plays. Nijhoff published Het Uur U and Een Idylle in 1941 and issued no collection of poetry after that date; however, he did write three Biblical plays, which were published together in 1950. Although Nijhoff is frequently considered a transitional figure in Dutch poetry, he was nevertheless influential in inaugurating a new poetic style in The Netherlands, just as Eliot was a pivotal figure in the emergence of "modern" poetry in England and America.

A final parallel in the lives of Eliot and Nijhoff is the significant change which occurred in their outlook. Eliot announced his adherence to the Christian faith and the Church of England in 1927. Nijhoff's new direction was less clearly a religious change, but, as will be seen later, it did involve his view of man and his philosophy of life.

Literary Influences and Relations

The similarities between Eliot and Nijhoff can be approached partly via the influences on their work and their place in the development of twentieth-century poetry. These matters, for example, of Baudelaire's influence on Eliot, or Nijhoff's place in modern Dutch poetry, have often been discussed, and I will not attempt here to retrace these studies in detail; rather, by briefly sketching the sit-

uation it will become evident that in many ways Eliot and Nijhoff were shaped by the same literary forces, and that their roles in their respective literatures were somewhat akin.¹

Eliot's debt to Dante (also by Eliot's own acknowledgement) is greater than Nijhoff's. Mario Praz sums up: "Eliot's indebtedness to Dante ranges from the quotation and the adaptation of single lines or passages to the deeper influences in concrete presentation and symbolism."² One specific similarity mentioned by Praz is Eliot's "visual imagination" which is reminiscent of Dante. Two comments of Eliot are of interest here. In the "Dante" essay he first recalls his early reading of Dante when his very meager knowledge of Italian was no barrier to his enjoyment. In the conclusion Eliot recapitulates the main themes: ". . . the third point is that the Divine Comedy is a complete scale of the depths and heights of human emotion; that the Purgatorio and the Paradiso are to be read as extensions of the ordinarily very limited human range. Every degree of the feeling of humanity, from lowest to highest, has an intimate relation to the next above and below, and all fit together according to the logic of sensibility."³

Neither Nijhoff nor his critics discern as close a link between him and Dante as in the case of Eliot. However, Paul Rodenko, a prominent Dutch poet and critic, has a perceptive comment on Nijhoff and Dante which can be applied to Eliot at surprisingly many points:

¹In the following section some of the givens on Eliot are presented in less detail than those on Nijhoff.

²Mario Praz, "T. S. Eliot and Dante," in Leonard Unger, ed., T. S. Eliot; A Selected Critique (New York: Rinehart, 1948), p. 307.

³"Dante" in Selected Essays, pp. 199-200; 229.

Nijhoff is like Dante because he closed an era and opened a new world. He exorcized the infinity which threatened to dissolve the concrete world . . . , the poetic infinity of the intangible dream; by words and images he forced back the appearances within the boundaries of concreteness. He also was one of the first to write in his mother tongue; he no longer wrote in Latin--that is, no longer in poetic jargon which veils reality behind a mist of traditional formulas, which have long lost all contact with real life. He rediscovered the autochthonic creativity of the word. Nijhoff once wrote, "A poem consists of words, not of thoughts," and thus he gave¹ the motto to the currently rising generation of poets.

Several reviews of Dutch Dante translations and criticism reveal that Nijhoff was intimately acquainted with Dante's work. And often his comments indicate that Nijhoff and Eliot read Dante with the same eye. Nijhoff tells how he also read Dante without much formal knowledge of Italian; (although he had earlier read him in translation: Nijhoff relates that as a child, when at home with a case of the measles, he spent a whole week with a Dutch translation of Dante). In characterizing Dante's poetry, Nijhoff calls it "poetry of the eye" which pictures man's world so that it can be apprehended by the senses. The scope of the Divine Comedy is also defined in terms reminiscent of Eliot: "The Divine Comedy is perhaps the only work in world literature which has conceived of and developed all functions of the human spirit."²

Both English and Dutch poetry in the first quarter of this century were strongly influenced by the French poetry of 1850 and after, and Eliot and Nijhoff were well-read in the French poets. Nijhoff himself

¹Paul Rodenko, "De actualiteit van Nijhoff," in C. Bittremieux, a. o., Martinus Nijhoff (Den Haag: Daamen/van Oorschot, 1954), pp. 83-84.

²V. W., pp. 950, 302, 977, 224.

remarks that he read Verlaine with more appreciation than Baudelaire;¹ however, the Baudelaire influence is present. P. N. van Eyck, in his review of Nijhoff's Vormen, calls Nijhoff, in the desire to stress the "sovereignty" of poetry, a "descendant" of Baudelaire.² The evidence shows that, even though Nijhoff did not seek for complete identification with Baudelaire, or even had full mastery of his work, there is nevertheless a marked resemblance. In the first poem of Nijhoff's collection, De Wandelaar, the persona is called "a poet from Baudelaire's era," and the detached observation of society, the despair of life, the frequent decadent overtones bear the mark of Baudelaire.

Martien de Jong, in a detailed study of Nijhoff, his friend, the poet-critic van Eyck, and their relation to Baudelaire, acknowledges Nijhoff's debt to Baudelaire (as pointed out by van Eyck), but de Jong also demonstrates Nijhoff's divergence from Baudelaire, and his lack of full comprehension of Baudelaire's ideas.³ Unlike Baudelaire, Nijhoff in his first two collections failed to come to an acceptance of the concrete realities of life; instead he sought to escape life in a flight of other-worldliness. De Jong then points out several obscurities in Nijhoff's comments on Baudelaire, and quotes Nijhoff's own admission that he had not fully understood Baudelaire's work. A final Baudelaire link is cited in Nijhoff's translation of three Baudelaire poems on lesbian women, which may illustrate Nijhoff's affinity for "boudoirish decadence"

¹ Ibid., p. 538.

² P. N. van Eyck, De Gids, LXXXIX (1925), p. 126.

³ Martien de Jong, "Baudelaire, van Eyck, en Nijhoff," Verslagen, Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van Taal en Letterkunde, (1965), pp. 31-49.

as evidenced in his early poetry, or perhaps it may be a manifestation of the tensions between this- and other-worldliness.

Eliot's indebtedness to Baudelaire has been studied in detail. Weinberg finds the Baudelaire influence very pervasive in all of Eliot's career.¹ Francis Scarfe seems to echo de Jong's estimate of Nijhoff's knowledge of Baudelaire, by demonstrating that "there are certain flaws in Eliot's understanding of Baudelaire."² Scarfe sees a less pronounced influence of Baudelaire, especially in Eliot's later poetry. It certainly is generally agreed by the critics that Eliot's main debt to Baudelaire was in the portrayal of the modern city, and, as will be seen later in this chapter, Nijhoff's principal poetic locale is also the city--a city usually of Baudelairean vintage.³

Another Eliot-Nijhoff link lies in their mutual indebtedness to James Joyce. Eliot expressed his quasi-grudging admiration for Ulysses by writing Joyce, "I wish, for my own sake that I had not read it."⁴ Monroe Spears sums up the major resemblances (that is, Eliot borrowings) which critics have found between Ulysses and The Waste Land, of which the "mythical method" and the city imagery are the most important.⁵

¹Kerry Weinberg, T. S. Eliot and Charles Baudelaire (The Hague: Mouton, 1969).

²Francis Scarfe, "Eliot and Nineteenth-century French Poetry," in Graham Martin, ed., Eliot in Perspective; a Symposium (London: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 48-49.

³Another shared French influence is Jean Cocteau. Nijhoff himself acknowledged a debt to Cocteau (V. W., pp. 1166-67), and Howarth alludes to Cocteau's influence on Eliot (Notes, pp. 236, 304, 326).

⁴Quoted in Monroe K. Spears, Dionysus and the City: Modernism in Twentieth-Century Poetry (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 78.

⁵Ibid.

An equally strong case of Joyce influence is made by K. Meeuwesse in his study of Nijhoff's major poem, Awater.¹ Meeuwesse suggests that extra-textual evidence shows that Nijhoff was conscious of the relationship to Ulysses. In a speech which dealt largely with the genesis of Awater, Joyce is alluded to several times, once unduly briefly in comparison to Lawrence and Proust. But, according to Meeuwesse, the very brevity is indicative that Nijhoff did not wish to parade his debt to Joyce. Perhaps. Meeuwesse's internal evidence is more convincing. The locale for both works is a city in which two major characters pursue their alter ego. One cannot schematize a Bloom-Awater of Stephen-narrator correspondence, but the characters do have much in common. Thus, for example, both Awater and Bloom have suffered the loss of a close family member, they have visions of their deceased mothers, they feel the attraction of the Orient through an advertisement, and they are closely associated with water. Or again, the drinking cups in the café scenes have strong overtones both of the grail and the eucharist cup. Here Meeuwesse unites Joyce, Nijhoff, and Eliot: "The sacred world of the medieval legend and the age old myth reverberate in the profane world of Ulysses and of Awater (as it does in T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land)."¹ Although the mythic elements in Nijhoff are not as pervasive as in Eliot, the characterization is nevertheless correct. Another observation by Meeuwesse accurately sums up the issue of influences on Eliot and Nijhoff. Although both poets were alive to older and contemporary literatures, they did not follow others in slavish imita-

¹Karel Meeuwesse, "O Awater, ik weet waarvan gij peinst," Raam, XXIV, (April, 1967), pp. 43-65.

tion; rather, they used the materials in "creative imitatio."¹

The study of the relationship of a poet to his contemporaries and to subsequent poets is usually more intricate than the study of sources and influences which shaped the poet. In the latter case the influences converge to a single oeuvre, whereas contemporary relationships and subsequent influence are diffused over a variety of authors. When comparing the influence of two authors, especially if they use different languages, the number of variables becomes very large indeed, and one has to proceed cautiously. Thus, in a comparison of the relations of Eliot and Nijhoff to their poetic contemporaries and heirs, one can only chart some very general outlines.

Spears, in his overview of twentieth-century English and American poetry,² laments the fact that his survey has inescapably suffered simplification and generalization. I shall have to simplify much more drastically in offering a capsule statement of Spears' thesis. When Pound and Eliot began to write their poetry, they conceived of it in terms of modernity which broke sharply with the English poetic tradition of Romanticism, and its aftermath in the Victorian and Georgian poets. Emphasizing, among other things, craftsmanship, hard poetry, irony, inclusion of all subjects, (especially city subjects), use of the full language spectrum, the need for frequent difficulty, and eschewing poetic language, emotional outpourings, the melodic line, they alternately stressed either the newness of their efforts or the con-

¹Ibid., pp. 45, 46.

²Spears, Dionysus and the City.

tinuation of older poetic traditions. This new poetry was at its most vigorous in the first two decades of the century, and was consolidated during the thirties and forties. By the mid-fifties a new change set in which often sought to repudiate the poetry of Eliot's lineage; "the qualities newly emphasized," says Spears, "are openness, simplicity, directness, colloquial language, the accents of psychological truths as the poet reveals (often) the most sordid, humiliating, and intimate details of his life."¹ The chief critical questions in this history of modern poetry center around the issue of continuity. Was the Romantic movement indeed a divergence from "main line" English poetry, as charged by Eliot? Was French Symbolism perhaps Romanticism in disguise? Did Eliot really sever himself from the Romantic tradition? Didn't the post-1950 poetry actually maintain most of the ingredients of the Pound-Eliot era?

The sketch of modern Dutch poetry in my previous chapter suggests that the broad lines are not dissimilar to the developments in English poetry, and that Nijhoff and Eliot had somewhat similar roles. To mention just one parallel here, in the mid-fifties there also was a strong shift in Dutch poetry, with a new emphasis on "confessional," or "naked" poetry, as it was called in The Netherlands as well as in England and America.

When focussing on Nijhoff, one can discern parallels between his poetic climate and Eliot's. The poetry of Nijhoff's immediate predecessors sounds, in Piet Calis' characterization, like that of Georgians writing in England around 1910:

¹Ibid., p. 236.

When in 1916 Nijhoff made his poetic debut with his collection De Wandelaar, the poetic climate in The Netherlands had for years been determined by the generation of 1910-- a number of writers (leaders and followers), who brought their more or less romantic feelings to expression in melodious verses. Driven by the idea of a pure reality, their poetry dissolves in lyric haziness, or they protest passionately against the degeneration of this world; however, this protest is presented in an artistic context which is a static rendering of a vision which has been formed prior to the poem.¹

Calis is not intent on drawing parallels between the Dutch and English situation, but another Dutch critic, Dirk W. Dijkhuis, partly drawing on F. R. Leavis' New Bearings in English Poetry, does find similarities between the Dutch and English literature of 1916-1917:

The parallel A. Roland Holst - W. B. Yeats immediately suggests itself; the poets of the eighties had gone sterile, or were about to do so; Hardy and de la Mare were still writing, but from a typical nineteenth-century mentality, while Leopold and Bouteng were not without Leavis' "certain esoteric languor."²

What was Nijhoff's place in the renewal of Dutch poetry? Dijkhuis suggests that Nijhoff's and Eliot's roles were indeed very much alike in bringing about a renewal. Luc. Wenseleers, who defines modern poetry in terms of Lebens-philosophie rather than poetic structure, constantly links Eliot and Nijhoff as the harbingers of modernity for their respective literatures.³ Ad den Besten names Nijhoff as one of the three Dutch poets who inaugurated modern poetry in The Netherlands.⁴ In the earlier

¹Piet Calis, "M. Nijhoff en de plastiek van het gedicht," Maatstaf, X, (1962-1963), pp. 512-513.

²Dijkhuis, Merlyn, II, p. 2.

³Wenseleers, Het wonderbaarlijk lichaam, passim.

⁴Ad den Besten, "Nijhoff en de na-oorlogse poëzie," in In Memoriam, p. 115.

quotation of Paul Rodenko on Nijhoff and Dante, Rodenko casts Nijhoff in a decisive role as the initiator of a new era; however, in Rodenko's famous anthology of avant-garde Dutch poetry, Nijhoff (with Rodenko's apologies) is omitted. In the introduction to the anthology he characterizes Nijhoff rather as a transitional figure: ". . . he belongs to the conservative-assimilating forces in poetry--the forces which, as it were, form the cement which unites the loose bricks of the new poetry. . . . This filling in of the in-between spaces is characterized by the functional introduction of the new into the corpus of the older poetry."¹

As will be shown later, Nijhoff's poetry has very much in common with Eliot's; it indeed is in dramatic contrast to much Dutch poetry of the preceding decades; and his influence on the further development of Dutch poetry has been great. However, it seems to me that one cannot identify Eliot and Nijhoff as completely as does Wenseleers. In his adherence to traditional verse forms, for example, Nijhoff maintained more continuity with preceding poetry than did Eliot. Also, Nijhoff did not present his work as a conscious, nearly programmatic, departure from the poetry of his contemporaries as Eliot often did.

Stylistic Techniques

Versification

The comparison of versification can be begun best with a summary of the importance of music in the work of both Eliot and Nijhoff. Music is found in the poetry in two principal ways. Music may, first,

¹Paul Rodenko, Nieuwe griffels, schone leien; de poëzie der avant-garde (Den Haag: Daamen, 1954), p. 8.

be present as donnée, as subject matter, as theme--that is, music is actually played or heard, discussed or mentioned. In Eliot's poetry, "Portrait of a Lady" has the most pervasive musical content, from the discussion of Chopin to the ". . . cracked cornets / Inside my brain" to the "dying fall" of the music in the last lines.¹ In the plays music figures prominently in The Confidential Clerk, especially in Colby's decision about the kind of life he wants. Leonard Unger discusses a number of musical references in the context of "images of awareness";² certainly many of the references can be brought under that heading, although the totality of musical allusions and their contexts embrace a wider spectrum of human experience. Suffice it to say here that allusions to music occur frequently in Eliot. Musical titles are also used. Unger mentions "Preludes," "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," "Five-finger exercises," and Four Quartets.³ "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "Song of Simeon" should be added to the list. In three of these ("Prufrock," "Preludes," and "Rhapsody") the musical titles are used ironically.

Music is also present in the poetry in another, more significant and more complex way. Eliot himself has discussed this role of music in "The Music of Poetry" where he espouses a very close relationship between music and poetry, or, put differently, he accentuates the musical element which is (or ought to be) discernible in poetry. Eliot

¹C. P. P., pp. 18-21.

²Leonard Unger, "T. S. Eliot's Images of Awareness," in Allen Tate, ed., T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work (New York: Dell, 1966), pp. 214-222.

³Ibid., p. 214.

deals with the question both in terms of versification ("line by line matter") and structure ("the whole poem"),¹ and so have Eliot critics. I shall attempt to sketch this rather complex issue in a few paragraphs.

Genesisius Jones asserts that "Mr. Eliot, the artist, has fused the two genres of music and poetry successfully," and Jones then analyzes the "verbal music" of words and lines in terms of rhythm, tempo, intonation, and volume of sound. He continues:

In his effort to objectify his Gestalt, the poet works under a rigid control which has three dimensions. It is in one sense metric. In another sense it is "the dictionary meaning of words" before the Symbolist poet has begun to work with them. In a third sense it is the semantic function of assonance, alliteration and rhyme. Within this control he gropes for patterns of connotation which will embody his Gestalt in words; and at the same time he gropes toward the rhythmic patterns of volume which embody the Gestalt musically. When he has found both, words and music fuse.²

Helen Gardner approaches the musical element partly via diction and rhythm.³ She repeatedly emphasizes the variety of Eliot's diction, as well as Eliot's use of contemporary speech (beginning especially with Sweeney Agonistes), coupled in the later poetry with the admission of the "poetic" word. For the poetry through The Waste Land Eliot exploits all the possibilities of the heroic line, and then he shifts to a predominant use of "triple rhythm", usually with four stresses. As with the earlier poetry, Eliot again becomes "the developer, exploiting and

¹"The Music of Poetry," in On Poetry and Poets (New York: Noonday Press, 1961), p. 30.

²Genesisius Jones, Approach to the Purpose: A Study of the Poetry of T. S. Eliot (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964), p. 257.

³Helen Gardner, The Art of T. S. Eliot (New York: Dutton, 1950, 1959), especially Chapter I.

elaborating the musical possibility of his meter."¹ Throughout her discussion Gardner emphasizes not the newness of Eliot's rhythms, but the specific uses to which he puts rhythmic form. Gardner's analysis always turns to specific lines to indicate the "musical" values of contrast and repetition, or "musical" rhythmic qualities.

The musical organization of larger segments can be seen best in terms of repetition and counterpoint. In 1932 Leavis alluded to the organization of The Waste Land " . . . that may, by analogy, be called musical,"² and Wilson discussed the musical structure of Four Quartets in 1948.³ Among subsequent studies of the musical structure of Four Quartets the work of Gardner is best known; she carefully dissects each of the Quartets in terms of its five "movements," and shows the musical interrelatedness both within each Quartet and between the Quartets. Instead of searching too hard for "meaning," one ought to be attentive to the "'music of meaning.'"⁴ Jones, although he warns against an improper emphasis on the musical elements, extends the same kind of analysis himself when he explores the musical structure of "Prufrock," "Preludes," and "Portrait of a Lady." For Four Quartets he suggests a structural source in Bartok's Sixth String Quartet.⁵

Music as subject matter is more prominent in Nijhoff than in

¹Ibid., p. 27.

²F. R. Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1932, 1960), p. 103.

³Frank Wilson, Six Essays on the Development of T. S. Eliot (London: Fortune Press, 1948), pp. 54 ff.

⁴Gardner, pp. 54-55.

⁵Jones, pp. 16-17; 258-261; 263-265.

Eliot: it is probably the most important motif in Nijhoff's work.¹ Some fifteen titles have musical connotation; music, song, and dance occur over and over again; musicians perform frequently; and musical instruments, from the Dutch barrel organ (compare Eliot's "street piano" in "Portrait"), to the harpsichord are played in many of the poems. Although the significance of the presence of music differs, there are a substantial number of instances where one can apply Unger's concept of "moments of awareness." The music often serves to crystalize a feeling, or to accentuate a mood, or to signal a change, or to make the person more aware of self. Thus when the persona in "De eenzame" expresses a sense of futility and absurdity, he is caught up short when he hears a child playing the piano: the music serves as a realization that there are moments of beauty and goodness. In "Sonate," however, the music of the harpsichord carries the theme of life-in-death, and the three-time repetition of "Hoor de sonate der clavicimbale!" punctuates the other images of decay and death in the poem. Even though the music of Het Uur U is not "literal," it is crucial in its significance. As the stranger walks down the street, he awakens the people's suppressed lives with a mysterious music:

hadden ook hartklop, en droom,
 en geeuw, en bloedsomloop,
 en wanhoop, en stille hoop,
 kortom al wat nooit stem werd,
 zich gemengd in het ver concert.

(. . . heartbeat and dream,
 and yawn and the flow of blood,
 and despair and silent hope,
 in short, everything which was never
 given voice, joined in the distant concert).²

¹For a thorough discussion see Karel Meeuwesse, Muziek en taal; over de poëzie en poëtiëk van Martinus Nijhoff en Paul van Oostaijen (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1961).

²V. W., p. 230.

Musical organization of poems is also frequent in Nijhoff. As examples Meeuwesse cites Nijhoff's use of the rondeau (which has strong ties, historically, with music), the rondeau-like sonnet "Sonate" quoted above, and the repetition of words and lines in "Het derde land" and "Het lied der dwaze bijen."¹ "Kleine prélude van Ravel" is patterned after Ravel's own music in the form of mirror-image restatement.² Although the musical elements decline in significance in Nijhoff's later work, one can perhaps see a continuation of his concern with the sounds of words in the form of Awater: here each segment is controlled by the repetition of one (Dutch) vowel sound--the "ee" sound is predominant in the first section, the "a" in the second, and so on.

Meeuwesse finds one reason for the musical tendencies in Nijhoff's poetry in his affinity with and the influence of the French Symbolists³--a link which is also adduced for Eliot by Jones: "There is a great deal in Mr. Eliot's criticism on the three aspects of the musical analogy of which the French Symbolists were so fond."⁴ In summarizing Nijhoff's conception of the musical qualities of poetry, Meeuwesse writes further:

The word is stripped of its musical atmosphere, reduced to its essence [literally: husked to its kernel], and then recreated from the rhythm and placed in a new context. In this way one does not get a flowing melody, but "an unveiling of sound," as Nijhoff said.⁵

¹Meeuwesse, Muziek en taal, pp. 9-10.

²Karel Meeuwesse, "Nijhoff's 'Kleine prélude van Ravel'" Raam, XXVI, (June, 1967), p. 51.

³Meeuwesse, Muziek en taal, p. 10.

⁴Jones, p. 48.

⁵Muziek en taal, p. 9.

These concepts are akin to Eliot's assertion that "it would be a mistake . . . to assume that all poetry ought to be melodious . . . , " and that "the music of a word is, so to speak, at a point of intersection: it arises from its relation first to the words immediately preceding and following it, and indefinitely to the rest of its context" ¹

There are also parallels in the development of Nijhoff and Eliot. When Meeuwesse charts the development of Nijhoff, he discerns a break in Nijhoff's conception of poetry and in his poetic techniques. This break is related to the ideological change in Nijhoff's outlook (discussed below), which is characterized especially by Nijhoff's desire to identify more closely with society, with people, and to use their language. For Nijhoff the concern with the spoken language means a shift away from a concentration on the word and the musical possibilities of words, to a poetical exploitation of syntax: ". . . the word and the musicality of the word are no longer dominant. The sentence and sentence structure now predominate Nijhoff changes from musicologist to linguist." ² In some ways this change is similar to Eliot's change as described by Miss Gardner. She sees Eliot's adaptation of contemporary speech in Sweeney Agonistes as a new development which infuses all his later work. ³ The deliberate exploitation of speech diction and rhythm makes Nijhoff begin a poem with "Ik zou een dag uit vis-sen gaan" (I went out fishing for a day); ⁴ and Eliot writes in a sim-

¹"The Music of Poetry," pp. 24, 25.

²Muziek en taal, pp. 10-11.

³Gardner, pp. 24 ff.

⁴V. W., p. 202.

ilar colloquial vein: "And Easter Day, we didn't get to the country, / So we took young Cyril to church."¹ It is noteworthy, moreover, that both poets wrote a significant body of verse drama in the latter part of their careers--a mode in which they could develop the speech patterns of poetry more fully.

Although there are marked similarities, then, between Eliot and Nijhoff, there is also divergence. Whereas Meeuwesse sees in Nijhoff a reduction of musical qualities, Gardner continues to discuss Eliot's adoption of speech patterns in terms of music: "In The Family Reunion and Four Quartets he is the developer, exploiting and elaborating the musical possibilities of his metre."² Perhaps the difference is more a matter of degree than of nature. Certainly Eliot's diction is more varied, and his use of "poetic" diction is much more pronounced in his later poetry than in Nijhoff's, who shows a more uniform use of poésie parlante. It would seem, however, that Meeuwesse overemphasizes the change from musical to linguistic form. The invocation section of Awater, for example, (a late poem) is more formal, more poetic and musical than one would normally expect in poésie parlante.

A few matters (some already touched on) which arise out of a consideration of the musical elements in the poetry need some further amplification. A mere look at the typography of Nijhoff's poems will reveal that in some ways his form was not revolutionary at all. Nijhoff, partly reacting against the vers libre vogue of the twenties, continues

¹C. P. P., p. 126.

²Gardner, p. 27.

to use traditional verse forms for most of his poetry. In the collected works over one half of the poems are fourteen line poems (usually two quatrains and two tercets). The meter and rhyme of the poems vary, but the sonnet base is unmistakable for the majority of these: two groups of poems are actually presented as sonnet cycles. Of the other poetry, over one fourth are poems of quatrains, with varied rhyme schemes, and with a variation of three, four, or five stresses. Those poems which depart from a strict stanzaic pattern also use more variation of meter (for example, "Zwerver en elven" has two stresses to a line), but most of them still have regular rhyme patterns. Only "Langs een wereld," "Het veer," and Awater are without patterned rhyme. Het Uur U and most of the verse in the Biblical plays are in rhymed couplets. The iambic foot is the most common meter, but it is handled very freely in the later poems; here there often is a shift to accentual verse. Eliot's stanzaic form is regular for most of the Poems--1920, which are largely in quatrains with regular rhyme patterns. The stanzaic form of the other poetry shows great variation. Eliot's predominant meter was summarized above; his use of rhyme is generally much less regular than Nijhoff's.

One can thus register verse techniques, but the relating of verse forms between different languages does not necessarily yield meaningful comparisons, since rhythm and rhyme, for example, are always closely related to the grammatical structures and speech patterns of a language. (Thus Nijhoff's frequent use of feminine rhymes says more about the Dutch language than about Nijhoff's versification: Dutch infinitive and plural forms of the verb nearly always end in -en, as does the plural form of many nouns, thus supplying the poet with a vast num-

ber of feminine rhymes. One can conclude, however, that Nijhoff adheres more closely to traditional forms than Eliot, although Nijhoff also displays flexibility and versatility within the traditional forms. One interesting parallel between Nijhoff and Eliot is their return to earlier verse forms. Nijhoff himself revealed that he consciously modeled the verse of Awater on the Song of Roland, just as Eliot acknowledged his debt to Everyman for Murder. The description of the rhythm of Het Uur U by Cola Debrot, moreover, is akin to Gardner's account of Eliot's later rhythms. Eliot's rhythm after The Hollow Men is governed not by the regularity of the stresses, but by the "accentual line"--that is, the repetition of the same number of beats, but with varying number of unaccented syllables. Gardner relates Eliot's new meter to the "medieval tradition of accentual verse."¹ Debrot speaks of Nijhoff's "floating stresses," and also cites medieval verse as one of the influences.²

Another aspect which can be compared fruitfully is the contribution of Eliot and Nijhoff to the development of poésie parlante. Nijhoff demonstrates that in spite of his traditional form he can achieve an amazing suppleness and flexibility; through the admission of the "non-poetic" word and the exploitation of normal syntax he masterfully captures the rhythm of the spoken word:

The Birds

When the steam whistle in the factory
 across the street has whistled time for lunch,
 the workers start to fight, play soccer, eat
 together in a vacant lot.

¹Gardner, p. 29.

²Cola Debrot, Ars et Vita, (Helmond: Helmond, 1945), p. 16.

Meanwhile the birds collect along the eaves,
The sky is asking bread crumbs from the land.
The gull has dipped already to the hand
stretched out, and sparrows scurry toward the shoe.

It's not the same for all the other birds.
I've often stood and watched them on the bridge,
they fetched bread from the unemployment office.
When those birds ask for bread crumbs from the sky
a bike, a movie, or a radio,
the cavalry comes chasing round the corner.¹

It is significant that the example quoted is from Nijhoff's later poetry, where, as stated above, the rhythm is more flexible and where he is more concerned with the sentence than with the word.

The development of Eliot is somewhat parallel to Nijhoff's. Although the poetry through The Waste Land can perhaps be identified as poésie parlante, it often possesses a cryptic, condensed, charged quality which puts it at a remove from the spoken language. Frazer therefore says that the early poetry "feels like conversation,"² and Kenner speaks of "gestures of real speech, exactly caught."³ In later poems, for example, "Journey of the Magi" and "Song of Simeon," the rhythm is more relaxed and it comes closer to speech. Ash Wednesday is different again; it is, as Kenner observes, very "mellifluous" and therefore "at a remove from speech."⁴ The verse of Four Quartets is immensely varied, of course. Although most passages are reflections of speech, they are

¹V. W., p. 210. Translation by James S. Holmes, De Kim, no. 5 (1956). The original has a rhyme scheme: a b b a b a a b c d c d c d. The translation sacrifices too much in the elimination of the rhyme, but the colloquial language is maintained well.

²G. S. Fraser, "A Language by Itself," in Richard March and Tambimuttu, T. S. Eliot: A Symposium (London: P. L. Edition Poetry, 1948), p. 174.

³Hugh Kenner, The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1959), p. 262. Underlining added.

⁴Ibid., p. 268.

so very differently. In East Coker I, for example, the musical quality of the opening lyric is in marked contrast to the more prosaic, "essayistic" lines that follow:

Unitl the Sun and Moon go down
Comets weep and Leonids fly
Hunt the heavens and the plains
Whirled in a vortex that shall bring
The world to that destructive fire
Which burns before the ice-cap reigns.

That was a way of putting it--not very satisfactory;¹
A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion.

Also related to the musical qualities of the poetry are some of the rhetorical devices, especially repetition and enumeration. In Eliot these devices are evident throughout the poetry. Repetition occurs with images and motifs as well as words and phrases. A familiar example is the repetition of the word time in "Prufrock"; repetition certainly figures as the principal rhetorical device in Ash Wednesday and Sweeney Agonistes. Kivimaa also calls it "the most exploited rhetorical device" in Murder.² Enumeration is perhaps not as common, but it remains significant. In Murder the Fourth Tempter effectively taunts Thomas by enumerating his thought on the wrong kind of martyrdom, and the women's catalog of animal "death-bringers" builds to a crescendo of despair. The most extreme case of enumeration is probably the register of arms in "Triumphal March"; enumeration is prominent throughout "Coriolan" I and II. Again, the nine-time repetition of the word and, and the consequent enumeration serves to underline the sense of the "hard time" of

¹C. P. P., pp. 178-179.

²Kirsti Kivimaa, Aspects of Style in T. S. Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral" (Turku; Turun Yliopisto, 1969), p. 75.

the travel in "Journey of the Magi."¹

Dijkhuis also finds repetition and enumeration among Nijhoff's chief rhetorical devices, although the number of examples cited is very small. It does not appear to me that repetition and enumeration are as prominent in Nijhoff as in Eliot, but they are, nevertheless much in evidence. The opening poem is a good example with both repetition and enumeration in "I sit," "I draw," "I curse," "I am," and the phrases "from the time of the Carolingians," "from the time of the Renaissance," "from the time of Baudelaire." "Pierrot aan de lantaarn" also has many examples of repetition, such as the repeated cursing of eyes and sight. Dijkhuis cites the repetition of the third and first lines in each stanza of "Het lied der dwaze bijen"; words and phrases are also repeated throughout "Tweespraak." The Biblical plays are sometimes reminiscent of Eliot's Murder in the repetition of words and phrases by different characters. When the disciples review their desertion of Christ, there are successive admissions of "I too," and "nor I." Enumeration is found, for example, in the listing of musical instruments in "Kleine prélude van Ravel," and in the swans, boats, trees, butterfly, blossoms, and iris which sum up the garden imagery of "Tweerlei dood." In "De nieuwe sterren" there is an effective summary of the passion of Christ in the crown of thorns, scourge, nails, dice, and spear. The plays again furnish many examples of enumeration as in the citations of the Old Testament Scriptures supplied by the scribe at Herod's behest, and in the listing of the gifts of the three kings, which are in juxtaposition with

¹C. P. P., pp. 254, 269-270, 127, 103

the shepherds' three-fold assertion of what Christ has given to them.¹

Imagery

The recurring of words or concepts in poetry can be analyzed in different terms. One may wish to stress the musical and rhetorical dimensions, if the repetitions are in close succession. Or the words may be studied as motifs which are the vehicle of the poet's ideas. At a different level the repetitions may be examined in a study of the poet's imagery or symbolism.

In my discussion I also study some of the same concepts in different contexts. For example, in the comparison of Eliot's and Nijhoff's views of man and of life, I shall cite their frequent use of the word "street," and analyze how the street serves as setting for the characters, for the establishing of moods, and as a symbol of modern life. There my concern is to see how the street serves as donnée for the poet, and how it plays a role in giving expression to the poet's view of life and man. The same word and its occurrence in the poetry can also be analyzed somewhat differently, however, when trying to discover a composite picture of the imagery or symbolism.² In the discussion of imagery I shall allude to the importance of the street image, but since its significance is further dealt with in a subsequent section, I shall

¹V. W., pp. 9, 75, 200, 89, 361, 121, 131.

²The terms "image" and "metaphor" do not always have fixed meaning in literary criticism; they are sometimes used interchangeably. In Eliot criticism, for example, the same words and concepts are discussed by Leonard Unger as images (in Tate, ed., T. S. Eliot, pp. 203-230), and by Genesisius Jones as symbols (Approach to the Purpose, pp. 186-299). I shall use the word "image" when the word evokes a reference; "symbol" when the word or image is extended to a different level of experience.

not elaborate on it here. Other images which are discussed in the later section include weather, death-life, certain aspects of nature, the child, the mother, and the simple life.

Among nature images the garden and trees figure most prominently in Nijhoff. Gardens appear most frequently as images of an idealized world where one can retreat from the harshness of the world, or where the child-like life of simplicity can flourish. In "Het liedje van de simpele" the trees and flowers provide the setting for the simple joys of mother and child, as do the grass and trees in "Het meisje." An even more paradisiacal aura is suggested in "Tweerlei dood" as the poet prays that God will not take the girl on high, but

Breng haar bij de zwanen, booten onder boomen,
In 't warm rijk van de vlinder en den bloesem,
En leg de witte lischbloem aan haar boezem.

(Take her to the swans and boats under the trees,
into the warm kingdom of the butterfly and the blossom,
and put the white iris at her bosom).

In some other poems the garden also suggests a place of quietness and retreat, but then often with an undertone of decadence. There is again an absence of discomfort and harshness, but instead of simplicity and purity, there is escapism and lushness, tinged with a spirit of melancholy. This perspective is most evident in the series of poems Tuinfeesten. In "De twee pauwen" the shimmering vanity of the peacocks, the dropping blossoms, the oppressive heat, and the languid spectator, reclining among the flowers, coalesce into a picture of listless beauty.² Elsewhere in these poems "the sunlight sleeps in the warm stillness,"

¹V. W., p. 131.

²Ibid., pp. 113-123.

"blossoms shiver," "sunlight shimmers in the cypresses," and the scent from the garden is "overly sweet."¹

There are also poems in which the beauty and serenity of the garden serve to accentuate man's loneliness. In "Het licht" the park is beautiful and peaceful in the warm spring, but the benignity of nature is flanked by two stanzas of crucifixion imagery--the crucifixion of Christ and of everyman. "Lente," which continually interweaves contrasts of joy and oppression, presents the trees and fountains in a jubilant mood, but "Een groote stilte scheidt mij van de dingen" (A vast stillness separates me from things).²

Trees can serve a dual function, either of severity or of life. In "Middag" the inescapable glare of the noon sun (here symbol of God's merciless harshness and exposure) is not even mitigated by the shade of the trees, because they "Flame like fiery-green nine-pins." The old tree, bare and ugly, in "De twee nablijvers," is a metaphor for the lonely writer who is bereft of everything.³

In later poems, however, the tree frequently becomes a symbol for life and hope. When the poet first follows Awater, the city streets are oppressive in their asphalt confines, but the openness and freedom at the end is signalled by wide streets and by trees, dripping with dew.⁴ The trees in Het Uur U seem insignificant at first, especially since they are never planted. However, the mention of the absence of the trees at the beginning of the poems (the sun is hotter because there are no trees), and the reassertion in the final lines that the trees had

¹Ibid., p. 113. ²Ibid., pp. 10, 13.

³Ibid., pp. 12, 190. ⁴Ibid., p. 221.

not been planted, indicate that Nijhoff wished to stress the absence.¹ The workman who was to plant the trees left when the stranger came to present the people with his promise of the full life. The people reject the stranger, and prefer their undisturbed life of selfishness and mediocrity, and this rejection is mirrored by the absence of the trees.² The tree of Een Idylle also plays a significant role. When Protesilaos is granted his one hour of reprieve from Hades to visit his wife, the life and growth of the earth is symbolized by the oak tree which had grown up in lush beauty.³

Eliot's garden imagery is very pervasive and complex, and, more so than in Nijhoff, it evolves into an intricate symbolic pattern. It ranges from Stetson's garden with its buried corpse through the dead garden of The Hollow Men to the rose garden of Burnt Norton. Jones, in a study of Eliot's religious motifs, considers the garden scenes pivotal.⁴ He outlines the three kinds of love (or perversions of love) in Eliot's poetry, and proposes that the particular garden scene frequently indicates the nature of the love. Thus in "Gerontion" the "disturbed aspects of love" are suggested by the "Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds," and by the garden of "depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas." The absence of love is presented in the arid wastelands of The Waste Land. Ash Wednesday is particularly rich in garden imagery, which embodies both the themes of purgation and of new life. In Four Quartets the garden imagery is mostly asso-

¹Meeuwesse quotes a letter by Nijhoff in which he explicitly identifies the trees as a symbol of life (Gids, CXVIII, p. 405).

²V. W., p. 240.

³Ibid., p. 247

⁴Jones, pp. 87-145.

ciated with perfected forms of love. In Burnt Norton, for example

. . . the elements of Charis which transfigure Eros all appear. We hear the hermit-thrush with its deceptive water-dripping song We hear

The unheard music in the shubbery.

The echoes move

In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air
till at last their charismatic force, in a refreshing Herakleitean transformation, lifts Eros to its highest point.

The tree imagery in Eliot is usually more specific than in Nijhoff--that is, specific trees have specific symbolic content. To cite just one example, the yew tree, which has traditional symbolic associations of death and life, also becomes a personal symbol for Eliot; it can even shift its meaning within one poem, as it does in Four Quartets, where it alternately suggests foreboding and security.

One nature image which appears with great similarity in both poets is the night; even the development in the use of the image from early to later poetry shows similarity. For both Eliot and Nijhoff the night usually expresses or accentuates a mood of desolation or despair. Prufrock begins his wanderings in an evening when fog and smoke contribute to a sense of desolation. Preludes I sings ironically about "The burnt-out ends of smoky days," and in III:

You dozed, and watched the night revealing
The thousand sordid images
Of which your soul was constituted.

In "Rhapsody" the catalog of street-lamps, broken springs, the cat in the gutter, and "female smells in shuttered rooms" are punctuated by

¹Jones, p. 129.

the announcements of the night hours, and watched over by a moon with "feeble eye." The mysterious-sinister machinations in "Sweeney Among the Nightingales" take place while

The circles of the stormy moon
Slide westward toward the River Plate.

A similar aura of foreboding hangs over most of "What the Thunder Said," with its "torchlight red on sweaty faces," and "bats with baby faces in the violet light." In all these poems the night underscores the sense of dingy solitude or of lurking fear.¹

The evocation of the night in many of the poems in Nijhoff's first collection is often reminiscent of Eliot. About one third of the poems in this collection take place at night. In "Bruckner"

's Nachts kijken oogen waar het donker scheurt,
Stemmen verwaaien wirwar door de bomen.
Een man licht plat in 't natte gras en schreit.

(At night eyes look where the darkness rends;
voices blow tangled through the trees.
A man lies flat in the wet grass and cries).

"Het einde" describes the dawn of a new day, but the memory of the night is one of "madness of words and despair of gestures." Several of the sonnets in De Vervloekte are set in the night, and the dialogue preceding Pierrot's hanging himself from the lamppost takes place in the drab early-morning hours. Sometimes the moon appears as does Eliot's moon in "Rhapsody"--unromantic or even sinister. In "Sonate"

De maan kijkt met verschrikkelijk wit gelaat
Vlak voor het raam dwaas-lachende de zaal in.

(The moon, with a terribly white face,
right in front of the window, looks into the room,
laughing foolishly).

¹C. P. P., pp. 22-23, 24-25, 56, 72.

The scene in "Het strijkje" appears romantic at first glance, with music and lovers and the moon; but the moon "leers through the branches," thus undercutting the romantic sentiment.¹

The night loses much of its terror in the later poetry of both poets. The night is not used as frequently to suggest despair (partly because the despair is now often in juxtaposition with release and hope), and the night is now sometimes used as a setting for peace and harmony. Thus the vision of the matrimonial dance in East Coker is seen "on a summer midnight,"² and Nijhoff's vision of the goodness and warmth of earthly life (in "Het veer") is revealed in the stillness of the night.³

Since the poetry of Eliot and Nijhoff is peopled with so many characters, it is not surprising that they (their bodies) are important in the poetry; or, perhaps even more frequently, that their presence is indicated by parts of the body. For Eliot eyes are probably the most often occurring image to suggest the whole person, and, as the people are, so are the eyes. Prufrock's apprehension, his shudder about the people surrounding him, is felt most clearly in his shrinking from their observing, calculating eyes--"The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase." The shabby, pitiful woman at the door in "Rhapsody" has an eye that "twists like a crooked pin." Or again, Bleistein's portrait is completed with

A lustreless protusive eye which
Stares from the protozoic slime.

¹V. W., pp. 16, 21, 17, 30.

²C. P. P., p. 177.

³V. W., p. 193.

In The Hollow Men the impotence and deadness are expressed by sightlessness, and in Ash Wednesday the beginnings of grace recover " . . . the strings of my eyes."¹

Nijhoff does not use eye imagery as insistently as does Eliot. When eyes do appear, they usually suggest a person's character. The mother's eyes are mentioned several times, and idealized childhood finds expression in "the silent life of your shining eyes." At the other extreme of emotions is a stanza of destructive love:

'k Zie in jouw oogen, in die bruinen glans
Den waanzin als in de oogen van een aap
En het rumoeren van een dooden dans.

(I see in your eyes, in that brown glow,
the madness as in the eyes of a monkey,
and the noise of a dance of death).²

The most significant body images for Nijhoff are hands and blood. In De Wandelaar poems, hands figure prominently to symbolize the sense of listlessness and impotence. Thus there are dead hands, powerless hands, pale, still hands, confused hands, empty, despairing hands. In several poems hands are pale and bloodless. Blood, for Nijhoff, has the (traditional) meaning of life. Within this broad traditional meaning there are variations, however, and blood becomes a personal symbol for Nijhoff as well. In De Vervloekte I "the gentle singing of the blood" is an expression of loneliness and desire; in "Aan mijn kind" the father's warnings about the coming sorrows of life are summed up in "the pain of blood." Sometimes the blood image unites with the dance image to suggest impetuosity or even madness:

¹C. P. P., pp. 14, 24, 40, 85, 91.

²V. W., pp. 53, 18.

Het maanlicht zingt mijn bloed tot dansen wakker

(The moonlight sings and awakens my blood to dancing).

De dans van het bloed begeert een daad van doem

(The dance of blood desires a deed of doom).

The dancer, preparing for the dance, seems possessed by a mad animal:

Zijn donker bloed bonst . . .

(His dark blood pounds)¹

As with some other images there is a resolution in a later poem.

The acceptance of life by Sebastiaan is expressed in a body image ("the wonderful body"), and the greater beauty of earth over heaven is expressed in the contrast,

hoe dieper bloed is dan de hemel hoog

(that blood is deeper than heaven is high).²

Since the image of the city is dealt with largely in the section on thematic development, I shall not repeat the discussion here. However, one image which is not stressed there is the window. The appearance of windows is much more prevalent in Nijhoff than in Eliot. The window sometimes serves as a means of contact between people, but more often it separates. In "De wandelaar" the persona's non-involvement and separation is underlined by his observation post at the window, and in "Twee reddelozen" the separation from both God and man is contemplated while looking out of a window. The street musician comes home at night and opens the window of his lonely room (perhaps leaning out in shirt-sleeves as in "Prufrock"). Another instance of partial

¹Ibid., pp. 37, 54. ²Ibid., p. 194.

similarity is found between "De alchemist" and "Sweeney Among Nightingales." The alchemist, surrounded by the colorless, soundless tools of his trade, is suddenly joined by a skeleton climbing in at the window.¹ The macabre apparition produces fear at the window, just as in the sinister scene from "Sweeney Among the Nightingales" where

The silent man in mocha brown
Sprawls at the window-sill and gapes

and "the man with heavy eyes"

Leaves the room and reappears
Outside the window, leaning in,
Branches of wistaria
Circumscribe a golden grin.²

The most insistent use of the window appears in Nijhoff's Het Uur U, where it occurs at least eight times, always enforcing the theme of separation. The people remain in their houses, watching the stranger of the full life, while they sink back behind the windows into their shriveled selves. At the end of the poem the people open the windows wide, but they look out on a street without trees, and the stranger has now turned the corner.³

At times the window serves to effect communication. In "Langs de wereld" the communication is transitory. As the traveller passes a house, he sees a woman at a table, awakening from a dream. She seems to recognize the traveller from her dream and looks at him briefly. Then she goes about her work, and the traveller moves on, but the fleeting recognition haunts him, and he keeps a longing to return

¹ Ibid., pp. 9, 100, 29, 33.

² C. P. P., pp. 56-57.

³ V. W., pp. 227-240.

. . . naar ditzelfde
Venster terug, een aanhoudend verlangen
Naar thuiskomst, hier, en in deze nacht.

(to this same window; a constant longing
for a coming home here, in this night).

Although the window image is usually troubling, there is again a positive resolution in "Het Veer." Even though Sebastiaan feels separated from and envies the earthly life, the beauties of that life are nevertheless communicated to him--through a farm window.¹

There are several other images used by both poets, albeit often in different degrees. Among these are animals, flowers, colors, laughter, dreams, travel, and dance. However, since this study is not aimed at a complete analysis of all the imagery, but rather at the discerning of correspondences and differences, perhaps a sufficient number of images has been analyzed. Even though differences emerge, especially in Eliot's greater use of recurring symbolism, there are nevertheless a substantial number of images which are used by both poets, often with similar intent.

Dramatization

The concepts of "objective" and "impersonal" poetry, which are often used in discussions about Eliot and Nijhoff, are not only drawn from their poetry; both poets also showed concern with these ideas in their critical writings. Eliot's earliest formulation came in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," where he phrased the famous dictum that poetry ". . . is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality."² In later essays he often returned to the concept of ob-

¹Ibid., pp. 129, 193.

²Selected Essays, p. 10.

jectivity. Nijhoff is perhaps not as clear in his intention at objectivity at the beginning of his career; the emphasis on and the greater consciousness of objectivity is partly related to his philosophic change which came in the 1930's. But some awareness and formulation of objectivity came earlier. In 1921 he wrote: "The greatest and most profound task of the poet is not the expression of his feelings . . . ; the task of the poet is the manipulation of the nature of language." In 1925 Nijhoff characterized modern Dutch poetry in terms of a shunning of personal revelations and of a new emphasis on form. Later, in the whimsical tale of Nijhoff's encounter with the Pied Piper, the Piper elevates the music of the flute over singing, because singing involves too much personal emotion, whereas the flute is a more "independent" instrument. The Piper urges the poet to look upon language as an instrument, and to be less concerned with his personal emotions.¹

Flowing out of poetic objectivity is a concern with dramatization. If the poet does not wish first of all to speak in his own person, then he invents characters to speak for him, and to portray the human condition. Even a cursory reading of Eliot's and Nijhoff's poetry will reveal the appearance of a large number of characters. For each poet upward of a hundred characters are actually "in" the poems, and many, many others are alluded to. The characters are frequently contemporary, but there also are a large number of historical and literary figures. Eliot's portrait gallery includes Hamlet, Matthew Arnold, Sir Philip Sidney, Christ, Simeon, and a host of less notable characters. In Nijhoff one encounters Christ, Mary Magdalene, Hermes, Bruckner, and Aubrey Beardsley.

¹V. W. II, pp. 98-99, 340, 1066.

One difference between Eliot and Nijhoff in the treatment of characters concerns the identity of the character. Although some of Eliot's characters are clearly delineated and "identifiable," many others lack clear identity, and they merge easily with other characters. The process of shifting and merging identities is most evident in The Waste Land, where even the sexes merge in Tiresias, and in the women figures of Ash Wednesday.¹ In Nijhoff the characters do not usually share identities or melt into one another.

Perceived slightly differently, however, there is a multiplicity of identity in the characterization of both poets. Here the characters do not shade into each other, but one persona embodies different characters. Eliot's Sweeney, for example, represents several characters, and the "I" of The Waste Land also has multiple identity. Nijhoff does not use the device of multiple identity as frequently, but it does appear in the opening poem of De Wandelaar, where the persona is successively "a monk from the Carolingian time," "an artist from the Renaissance," "and a poet from Baudelaire's time." Another notable example is the character of Awater, who simultaneously appears as a modern office clerk, and as Adam, Moses, John the Baptist, and Christ.

The characterization in the poetry often does not strive for wholeness, for full portrayal, but it catches the character in a pose or situation, and evokes a predicament, or a thought, or a mood. Thus Cousin Nancy is caught in her small bravado of pseudo-modernity, and in "Portrait of a Lady" the lady and the young man are cast in a situation of unwanted attention, awkward refusal, and broken half-promises.

¹See Geo. T. Wright, The Poet in the Poem (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), pp. 162-162 for a fuller discussion.

The woman in "A Game of Chess" is revealed by little more than her taut voice on the verge of hysteria, and the "young man carbuncular" is portrayed in his programmed sexual assault.¹ In Nijhoff one often has the same kind of "snapshot" effect. The lonely persona of "De eenzame" is pictured looking out of a window, with only his desolation and loneliness etched in the reader's mind. In "Het souper" the party-goers are seen in a pose of raising a toast, seeing their loneliness reflected in each other's eyes; in "De vogel" the focus is solely on the fear of the characters as they react to the sudden noise against the window. The people in Het Uur U seem literally frozen behind the windows as they observe the stranger pass through the street. In the same poem the vision of escape which is offered is caught in the person of the bitchy lady who for a liberating moment is in the woods in her naked innocence.²

As the characters appear in the poem, they are often confronted with a situation which demands a decision, or which represents a turning point in life. They are presented at the moment of crisis, or insight, or change--that is, at a "dramatic" moment. Prufrock's soliloquy is structured around the crisis of his decision and his potential "moment of greatness"; in "The Burial of the Dead" the scene in the hyacinth garden is presented as a critical moment of failure (" . . . I could not / Speak, and my eyes failed . . ."); and the old man of "Journey of the Magi" recalls the great turning point of his life. In Ash Wednesday the nature of the choice is not spelled out in detail, but the whole poem depends on the importance of turning and regeneration.

¹C. P. P., pp. 30, 18-21, 65, 68.

²V. W., pp. 15, 108, 109, 232.

Many scenes in Four Quartets also embrace the themes of change, of purgation, of new beginnings--of crisis. Nijhoff's soldier who crucified Jesus is haunted by the deed of the crucifixion, and he recalls the change which came into his life. In "Het einde" the speaker addresses his lover: "This was the end of the last night . . . ; what existed between us was destroyed," and Pierrot, in contemplating his utter loneliness, finds release in suicide. Even though Awater ends on a note of fulfillment, the occasion for the search was a critical one--the death of the poet's brother. In Het Uur U the crisis motif is strongly accentuated by the title ("Zero Hour"), by the quasi-military terms, and by the constant emphasis on decision.¹

Sometimes the crisis is more a moment of realization, or the situational crisis is accompanied by insight and change. Thus the quests in The Waste Land and in Awater are prompted by the realization of futility or lack of companionship. In (partly) reverse ways the decisions of Sebastiaan ("Het Veer") and of the persona in Ash Wednesday arise out of a contemplation of their state. Sebastiaan considers the bliss of heaven, but finds greater depth and warmth in human affections, while the persona in Ash Wednesday rejects natural allurements, and chooses spiritual discipline. In "Impasse" the lack of interest of the woman in the man's writing reveals their lack of spiritual affinity, just as "Portrait of a Lady" uncovers the absence of mutual love. The insight of "Gerontion" is gloomy and despairing--the summing up of an arid, useless life: "I am an old man, / A dull head among windy spaces."² The character of Nijhoff's "De eenzame"

¹Ibid., pp. 86, 21, 77, 216, 227.

²C. P. P., p. 37.

does have a brief glimpse of hope, but life for him is also largely filled with despair:

Ik ben een stille man waar God mee speelt,
Zoodat ik 't leven als een waanzin zie--

(I am a quiet man with whom God¹ plays,
So that I see life as madness).

At other times there is, of course, realization of brightness and new life. Simeon's rather peevish welcome of the Christ child is eclipsed by his vision of "peace" and "salvation," and although the change of "Marina" may be dimly perceived, the king's vision of new life opens up promising perspectives:

This form, this face, this life
Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let me
Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,
The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships.²

Nijhoff's "Maria Magdalena" is an ambiguous poem, but it is unmistakable that Mary's life of aimlessness and cursing is set right by Christ, and she can "laugh loudly, because God died for her sins."³ In Idylle the God Hermes finds temporal life more enchanting, and seizes the opportunity to stay in the world of men.

Thematic Developments

Criticism of Modern Life

Both Eliot and Nijhoff are city poets. Perhaps one can even call them street poets. A statistical word study of Eliot's early work would demonstrate the frequent use of the word street. A familiar example is

¹V. W., p. 15.

²C. P. P., p. 110.

³V. W., p. 20.

the opening stanza of "Prufrock":

Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent.

More insistent even are "Preludes" and "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" with their ironic-romantic titles celebrating the modern city street--grimy, stale, muddy streets. In "Rhapsody" the streetlamp dominates the scene as it highlights the dishevelled woman, the cat which ". . . flattens itself in the gutter, / Slips out its tongue / And devours a morsel of rancid butter," and other, equally sordid snapshots. The Waste Land includes both the description of the Unreal City with its death-in-life streets and inhabitants, and the brief evocation of lost harmony in the lament "O City city" In the later poetry the city and street imagery is not as frequent, but it does reoccur in Four Quartets where the "distraction" and "apathy" are called forth with images of the London Underground and the description of

Eruption of unhealthy souls
Into the faded air, the torpid
Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of London.¹

Coupled with specific street imagery of the early poems are the restaurants, pubs, dingy boarding houses, tenements, gutters, vacant lots, soot, fog.

Nijhoff's opening poem, "De Wandelaar," presents the persona walking the streets. Other poems also call up city streets, often emphasizing the inhospitable. In "Sonata" ". . . de wind waait door de vale straat" (the wind blows through the drab street), the encounter

¹C. P. P., pp. 13, 25, 69, 174.

and dance of despair of Pierrot and the woman take place in a dismal street, and in sonnet IV of De Vervloekte the failure of love is mirrored in the shrill, violent street scene:

Een draaiorgel gilt 's middags in de straat
Straat geel van licht, wild van klankenvloek--

(In the afternoon a barrelorgan screeches in the street; street of yellow light, wild with the curse of sounds).¹

The streetlamps which are prominent in Eliot's "Rhapsody" also become a motif in Nijhoff. "Polonaise," probably Nijhoff's grimmest poem, opens with the approach of dawn. The daylight bodes horror just as did the night:

Welkende bloemen in het bloedloos licht,
Branden nog de lantarens in de straat.
Boven de huizen grauw de dageraad,
Een groene grijns van Gods gruwelijk gezicht.

(Like fading flowers in the bloodless light the lanterns in the street are still burning. Daybreak appears drably over the houses-- a green sneer of God's horrible face).

In "Nacht" man's fear of the night, which he tries to submerge in boisterous hilarity, is exposed by streetlamps which are set about like skulls on stakes. Similarly, Pierrot begins his poem with an address to the streetlamp whose light conducts poor wanderers to their hell, and he ends by hanging himself on the lamppost, finally achieving release from life.²

Nijhoff's two major poems are also street poems. In Awater the speaker pursues Awater through the narrow streets of the city, until he "finds" him in the square of the train station. Het Uur U is charac-

¹V. W., pp. 9, 17, 19, 40.

²Ibid., pp. 18, 397, 65-79.

terized even more distinctly by the street. The street is both locale and metaphor--metaphor partly for life in the city which is often stifling, but more specifically (as Nijhoff himself insisted) metaphor for the upper middle class which denies the full life of the spirit.¹

To characterize Eliot and Nijhoff as city poets or street poets is not to suggest, of course, that each poem is set in a city street, or that the city figures everywhere. Many poems take place inside of homes (even then, however, often with a window facing the street) and others are not bound by the contours of the city. Eliot's poetry after The Waste Land uses city imagery sparingly, and Nijhoff has many garden and sea scenes, or poems devoid of any particular setting. Nevertheless, the city imagery is pervasive. In both poets the street is usually dismal and sordid, and becomes a synecdoche for the city, which in turn becomes a symbol for modern civilization.

Another aspect of the physical setting concerns the weather. In Eliot's poems the weather usually serves to enhance the feeling of desolation. Or, perhaps better, the loneliness and despair are evoked through the description. The fog of "Prufrock" and "Morning at the Window" calls up and accentuates a sense of separation; the dryness of "Gerontion" and The Waste Land suggest the withered spirit of man; and the cold, wet, leaf-cluttered wind of "Preludes" evokes images of desolation and loneliness.²

"Preludes" is one of the best examples of the weather determining the mood of the poem. The description in I merges with the

¹Cf. Karel Meeuwesse, "Van Voorstraat tot Herenstraat," De Gids, CXVIII, (1955), p. 405.

²C. P. P., pp. 22, 67.

woman's "thousand sordid images" of II:

And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The showers beat
On broken blinds and chimney pots.

Or again in The Waste Land;

The river's tent is broken; the last fingers of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
Crosses the brown land, unheard.

One poem of Nijhoff is particularly reminiscent of Eliot's manner of presenting a scene to evoke or reinforce a feeling. In "De Vogel" the fear of the unknown is captured in the people's reaction to the bird blown against the window:

Als menschen lachen die 's nachts iets vreemd vreezen,
Lachten wij na de slag met koud gelaat.
Ik riep: "Het zal een moede vogel wezen
Die door de nachtwind tegen 't venster slaat."

Er vloog een schaduw langs het glas met smal
Geklap van natte vlerken aan de ruiten,
En viel toen vormloos als een zwarte bal
Omlaag. En 't floot en waaide en kraakte buiten.

(After the thump we laughed with cold faces,
as people laugh who fear something strange in the night.
I called out: It must be a tired bird
which was blown against the window by the nightwind.
A shadow flew past the window,
weakly beating its wet wings against the panes
and then fell down, shapeless as a black ball.
Outside it whistled and blew and creaked.)

The wind often suggests destructive power, as in "Het souper" where the violent winds leave no protection as man is swept to death.²

At times Nijhoff uses a peaceful scene as contrast to man's

¹ Ibid., pp. 22, 67.

² V. W., pp. 109, 108.

malaise--a device not often found in Eliot. Thus "Het Licht" juxtaposes a gentle spring with man's gruesome suffering, and "Lente" is structured around the contrast of a joyous, quickening spring with the hardness of God and the desolation of man.¹

Sometimes the city scenes create a mood independently. More often the scenes merge with the people to work the effect of desolation. Both poets have a strong dramatic sense, and as they highlight their characters in critical situations, the characters embody the same sense of despondency which is evoked by the setting.

Many of Nijhoff's early characters are frozen into passivity. Without purpose, content with the role of observer, they survey the world. The important first poem again embodies this characteristic most clearly. The wandelaar is also spectator, as he surveys the world from his high tower:

Toen zich mijn handen tot geen daad meer hieven,
Zagen mijn ogen kalm de dingen aan:

(When my hands no longer lifted themselves for action,
my eyes calmly observed things.)

The persona often looks out of the window, as in "Tempo" where the complaint is voiced that "time has passed by without any purpose." In "De Chinese Danser" man's lack of purpose is part of a cosmic aimlessness:

. . . Zie de wereld zijn
Doellooze vaart door donkere ruimten wenden.

(See how the world winds its aimless journey
through dark spaces).

The old alchemist is also reduced to live in a colorless, soundless world, short on deeds.²

¹Ibid., pp. 10, 13. ²Ibid., pp. 9, 23, 32, 33.

Eliot's Prufrock is again a near-prototype in his indecision and inactivity, letting the "moment of greatness" of the deed pass. "Gerontion," The Waste Land, and The Hollow Men are all haunted by images of passivity and sterility, in which the "motion" never finds fruition in the "act." Or again, perhaps less familiar, in "Animula":

Issues from the hand of time the simple soul
 Irresolute and selfish, misshapen, lame,
 Unable to fare forward or retreat,
 Fearing the warm reality, the offered good,
 Denying the importunity of the blood,
 Shadow of its own shadows, spectre in its own gloom.¹

Van der Plas' essay on Nijhoff and Eliot is titled "De onmachtige wandelaar,"--the impotent, powerless walker--and he demonstrates how the title is applicable to the characters of both poets. Van der Plas also alludes to the admiration both poets had for Baudelaire for whom the deed (even an evil deed) served as a release from deadly inactivity.²

The sterility and the lack of purposeful activity ultimately rob man of his humanity. Thus man is sometimes portrayed as being machine-like, as in Awater's mechanical behavior, or the automatic hand of Eliot's typist. More often the subhuman is pictured by Eliot in terms of animality,³ by Nijhoff in terms of madness and animality. Animal imagery is pervasive in Murder in the Cathedral, where it suggests both the cruelty of the knights and the identification of the women with the animal world. Because they are only "partly living" and deny their full humanity of faith and deed, the women are sub-human, "mastered by

¹C. P. P., p. 107.

²van der Plas, Roeping, XXVIII, pp. 341-355.

³See also Northrop Frye, T. S. Eliot (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), pp. 58 ff. for a discussion of animality.

the animal powers of spirit." Among other examples of the identification of man and animal are the bear, parrot, and ape of "Portrait of a Lady," Rachel née Rabinovitch who "tears at grapes with murderous paws" in "Sweeney Among the Nightingales," and the feline attraction-repulsion of Grishkin in "Whispers of Immortality."¹

Nijhoff frequently signals the loss of humanity by the waanzin, the madness of his characters. In at least three poems Nijhoff couples madness and animality:

'k Zie in jouw oogen, in dien bruine glans,
Den waanzin als in de oogen van een aap.

(I see in your eyes, in that brown glow,
the madness as in the eyes of a monkey).

Het lacht om alles wat mijn waanzin doet,
Ik speel voor hond, voor mensch, voor olifant:
Ik blaf, ik schreeuw, ik daver met mijn snuit--

(The public laughs at everything my madness does;
I play dog, man, elephant; I bark, I cry, I
thunder with my snout).

. . . het zwart der openschroeiende oogen
Den waanzin van 't inwendige dier verraadt.

(The black of the wide-open searing eyes betrays
the madness of the inner animal).²

Thus through loss of his mind, and his descent to the animal level man is twice removed from his intended stature of reason and spirit and purpose.

The state of partly living, of aimlessness, of sub-human activity naturally affects the relationships between people. Just as man has no meaningful existence, he can experience no meaningful communion

¹C. P. P., pp. 271, 21, 56, 52-53.

²V. W., pp. 18, 31, 106.

with others. The theme of loneliness and separation certainly runs deep in Eliot and Nijhoff. Indeed, one critic asserts ". . . the consciousness that one is in essence an unapproachable stranger for others and for oneself, forms the foundation of Nijhoff's poetry."¹ Often the isolation is felt most intensely when one is alone in a room. "Prufrock's" "lonely men in shirtsleeves leaning out of windows" are frequently mirrored in Nijhoff. Thus the gay, daytime music of the street musician belies his sense of loneliness.

Maar niemand weet, wat lied ik moet bedwingen
 Als 't avond wordt in de verlaten laan
 En ik mijn dakraam hoog heb opgeschoven

(But no one knows what song I must suppress--
 when evening comes in the deserted street,
 and I have pushed my attic window up high).

So with Pierrot. He sums up his catalog of non-companionship with

Maar ik ben bang voor de eenzaamheid
 Die door mijn stille kamer schreit--

(But I'm afraid of the loneliness
 which cries in my silent room).²

But even when surrounded by people one can be isolated, "each in his own prison." In The Waste Land the crowds throng over London Bridge, but no one is aware of his neighbor as ". . . each man fixed his eye before his feet."³ Nijhoff's wandelaar also is lonely as he walks the street, and in the raucous partying of "Het souper" the dinner guests see their estrangement reflected in each other's eyes.⁴

¹G. Sotemann, "Nijhoff, de werkelijkheid en het menselijk tekort," in In Memoriam, p. 64.

²V. W., pp. 29, 69.

³C. P. P., p. 62.

⁴V. W., pp. 9, 108.

In the later work of both poets the tone is more muted, but the difficulty of establishing genuine communion remains. Thus, for example, The Confidential Clerk explores the theme of aloneness and the tenuousness of human ties, and Awater is the story of a desperate search for a friend and travel companion.

Just as union between people can find its fullest expression in sexual love, (the "becoming one flesh" of the Biblical phrase suggesting complete oneness), so the failure to reach others becomes most acute in the love relationship. The love experience is hardly ever a satisfying one. Examples in Eliot are rife. The lack of understanding in "Prufrock," the selfishness in "Portrait of a Lady," the sordidness of Albert and Lil in "The Game of Chess" (as well as all the other man-woman relationships in The Waste Land), the pettiness of Edward and Lavina in The Cocktail Party--these and many other examples attest to the lack of love in the man-woman relationships. The same conclusion can often be drawn from Nijhoff, for example, in the sonnets of De Vervloekte:

Maar waarom, waarom heb je niet geweten
 Het zachte zingen van het bloed in mij, 't
 Vragend verlangen van mijn eenzaamheid?
 Waarom heb jij die stille stem vergeten?

(But why, why didn't you know about the
 soft singing of my blood, the longing
 desire of my loneliness? Why did you forget
 that still voice?)¹

Even in the later Nieuwe Gedichten, in which the human condition is pictured much less darkly, the tranquil domestic scene of "Impasse" is undercut by the lack of response and understanding. The man's tremulous,

¹Ibid., p. 37.

expectant "What shall I write about?" is dashed by a flat, apathetic "I don't know."¹ Even when there is sexual contact, there is no genuine union. Ennui is clearly written in the response of Eliot's typist; after the encounter on the divan she dismisses the affair with a "Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over."² Nijhoff's "Maria Magdalena" presents an equally jaded love on "the bed on which we were bored with each other."³ At other times the sexual act is reduced to animality. Grishkin's "Promise of pneumatic bliss" shifts to the animal kingdom,⁴ and the "madness as in the eyes of a monkey," quoted earlier, is also found in the context of a love scene.⁵

The deformities in man's being and the failure to find communion with others frequently converge in images of deadness. Although physically alive, man's existence is more often a death-in-life. The death-in-life motif colors much of Eliot's work. The crowd over London Bridge ("I had not thought death had undone so many"),⁶ the impotent straw men of The Hollow Men, the death of all that surrounds and constitutes man in Little Gidding II--all portray a spiritual sterility and deadness. The Chorus of Murder in the Cathedral, when begging Thomas to leave, expresses the condition of those who fear involvement and life: "Leave us to perish in quiet."⁷

¹Ibid., p. 208. ²C. P. P., p. 69.

³V. W., p. 20. ⁴C. P. P., p. 52.

⁵V. W., p. 18. ⁶C. P. P., p. 62.

⁷Ibid., p. 243.

In both poets the death-life theme is more complex than the passages cited here indicate (since death is sometimes a prerequisite for new life), and the theme will be explored in some more detail later. But Nijhoff also frequently suggests that man's existence is like death. The wandelaar has dead hands, and the love in "Sonata" is undermined by death ("We must die at the dawn of day"), the contracting world of the old alchemist is governed by images of death, and the Chinese dancer is really performing a dance of death on "the floor which is the stone covering a grave." Death also plays such a pervasive role in Het Uur U that the stranger has been identified with Death.¹ Even if this identification is questionable, death, or rather, death-in-life, remains the crux of the poem.²

When surveying the work of Eliot and Nijhoff, especially as it pertains to the view of man's condition, the similarities are indeed striking. In both poets the portrayal of man is largely a criticism--criticism of human life, especially in the twentieth century. (Neither poet works out of a golden age framework; past and present often merge, and if an ideal state is implied, it is usually not in any historical period. At the same time, the focus of the depreciation is largely contemporary). The verdict of both is that modern life is characterized to a great extent by its setting, and they find the city inhospitable

¹V. W., pp. 9, 17, 33, 32, 227-240.

²Cf. Karel Meeuwesse, "De straat als symbool," De Gids, CXXI (1958), pp. 52 ff.

and antagonistic, often sordid and degrading. Man in the city is alone-- alone in the acute awareness of his isolation, alone in his private hell of being both unloving and unlovable.

Another similarity concerns the locus of this critique within the total work of each poet. In both cases there is a measure of continuity. From Eliot's work I have cited material from "Prufrock" through Four Quartets and the plays, and in Nijhoff from De Wandelaar through Het Uur U. However, the continuum is certainly in the shape of a descending curve. In Eliot the motifs traced are most representative of the poems before Ash Wednesday; in Nijhoff the greatest concentration is in the first collection, De Wandelaar.

There are of course differences as well. The principal difference lies in the tone. Some of Nijhoff's poems, for example, De Ver- vloekte sonnets, are impassioned, at times violent and theatrical. Thus one reads:

Toch--nu mijn mond je beet, beet als ik kuste,
Nu jou mijn stem verbijserde als de gekke
Schreeuw van een vogel die in zee neerstort--

(Yet--now when my mouth bit, bit when I kissed,
now, when my voice bewildered you, as the crazy
screech of a bird which is flung into the sea.)¹

Eliot, on the other hand, seldom departs from a more ironic, detached, at times sardonic tone:

But this or such was Bleistein's way:
A saggy bending at the knees
And elbows, with the palms² turned out,
Chicago Semite Viennese.

Contributing to the greater detachment is the fact that Eliot assumes the I-figure much less frequently than Nijhoff.

¹V. W., p. 37.

²C. P. P., p. 40.

Affirmations

To limit a comparison of Eliot and Nijhoff to their exposure and censure of modern life would present a distorted image. Even though the critique plays a significant role in their work, neither poet is finally a poet of negation. Much as they may sometimes skirt nihilism, neither succumbs to it. Not only are there Eliot's "hints and guesses" of certainty; both poets finally do present a sustained affirmation.

The affirmations are intimately related to the turning points of Eliot and Nijhoff mentioned earlier, and one must not underestimate the significance of the change. At the same time one must guard against an unduly schematic reading of the poems. In the criticism on both poets the Scylla of seeing only continuity or the Charybdis of stressing only the change have not always been avoided. Ronald Spoor, in a review of Luc. Wenseleers' book on Nijhoff chides the author (rightly, I think) for conceiving of Nijhoff's wending too categorically and ignoring continuity in Nijhoff's poetry.¹ Graham Martin, when discussing the significance of Eliot's conversion, criticizes Northrop Frye (again, rightly) for not sufficiently recognizing the change in Eliot's poetry.² Examples of the opposite critical error for each poet are equally prevalent. Rather than comparing the poets point by point, it may be more helpful here to sketch the development of an affirmative stance for each poet separately.

¹Ronald Spoor, "Lees maar, er staat wel degelijk wat er staat," Tirade, IX, (Nov.-Dec., 1966), pp. 811-816.

²Graham Martin, "Language and Belief in Eliot's Poetry," in Martin, ed., p. 113.

When reading Eliot's poetry after The Hollow Men, one is struck by the more frequent reference to nature, especially the more benign and beautiful aspects of nature. It appears that Eliot's more affirmative vision of life is accompanied by a greater awareness of and appreciation for nature, perhaps even using the traditional schema of a sordid city versus a beneficent countryside. It is true that in Ash Wednesday the attractiveness of nature is in perpetual tension with spiritual claims, but certainly the sensuous attraction is powerful:

At the first turning of the third stair
 Was a slotted window bellied like the fig's fruit
 And beyond the hawthorn blossom and a pasture scene
 The broadbacked figure drest in blue and green
 Enchanted the maytime with an antique flute.
 Blown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown,
 Lilac and brown hair.

So the "scent of pine and the woodthrush singing" of "Marina" and the "temperate valley" of "Journey of the Magi" carry the feeling of hope and new life. Examples of a joyous natural setting are also found in Four Quartets of which the rose garden of Burnt Norton I and the country dance of East Coker I are the most familiar.¹

There is then indeed a greater sensitivity to and acceptance of nature, perhaps related to Eliot's conversion and search for affirmation, since a submission to the God of Hebrew and Christian scriptures may well be accompanied by a greater appreciation for "the earth and the fullness thereof."

However, one can hardly designate Eliot as a nature poet at any point in his career and closer reading of the nature passages reveals

¹C. P. P., pp. 93, 109, 103, 171, 177-178.

that Eliot's interest is not primarily in nature an sich. (Among exceptions would be, for example, "Cape Ann" of the Landscape poems). Helen Gardner discusses the greater awareness of nature in Eliot's later poetry in the context of imagery,¹ and that is where the focus comes, since the descriptions serve nearly always as metaphorical vehicle. In Ash Wednesday the nature descriptions are usually images which merge with the themes of renunciation and forgiveness; in section IV the fountain, spring, rock, sand, yew, and bird carry the promise and the hope. In Burnt Norton I the rose, bird, leaves, and sunlight are the physical embodiment of the glimpses of spiritual ecstasy. Another passage of Four Quartets also shows nature symbolizing a spiritual state.

For most of us, there is only the unattended
Moment, the moment in and out of time,
The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,
The wild thyme unseen or the winter lightning
Or the waterfall²

So in Murder in the Cathedral, where the animal imagery is first used to depict the depravity of man, but in the concluding chorus the total redemptive scheme is mirrored in the affirmation of nature which testifies to God's greatness and goodness. Thus Eliot is indeed more susceptible to the beauties of nature, but his affirmation of life does not find its root in nature itself.

Eliot's depiction of man and human relations also contains equivocation. On the one hand one notices the change from the earlier aloofness and frequent cynicism to Eliot's recognition that true com-

¹Gardner, p. 100.

²C. P. P., p. 190.

munion can take place. Becket evidences genuine concern for the people under his spiritual care, Edward and Lavinia achieve a bond of respect and love, The Confidential Clerk, even though it accentuates man's aloneness, does portray the possibility of rapprochement, and the matrimonial country dance in East Coker I signifies "concorde." Jarrett-Kerr, in his estimate of Eliot's conversion, sums up, "For, as Eliot's Christian understanding deepened, the early harsh, almost cynical laughter at man's stupidity and pride gave way to compassion: compassion for the women of Canterbury, for the mediocre Edward and Lavinia as well as the exceptional Celia, in The Cocktail Party, and even for the middlebrow muddlers of The Confidential Clerk."¹

At a wider, theoretical level one can also chart a broadening of concern. Already in 1935 Matthiessen wrote about Eliot's " reaction against the centrifugal individualism which characterized the America into which he was born," and in the discussion of Coriolan he suggests that Eliot " . . . understands that no wholeness exists in isolation, that the individual cannot find fulfillment except through also giving of himself to society" ² Kristian Smidt still finds Eliot's concern more personal-religious than social, but does grant that " . . . we see a development in Eliot's poetry, as in his prose, from individualism by way of Christianity to a search for social unity and an acceptance of social obligations."³

¹Martin Jarrett-Kerr, "'Of Clerical Cut': Retrospective Reflection on Eliot's Churchmanship," in Martin, ed., p. 246.

²F. O. Matthiessen, The Achievement of T. S. Eliot, 3rd ed. (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 144, 40.

³Kristian Smidt, Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot (Oslo: I Kommissjon Hos Jacob Dybwad, 1949), p. 163.

Still, I spoke of equivocation, of a hesitation to presume too much about man. There is, first, an artistic difficulty. Undue emphasis on the affection between characters may well weaken dramatic import. Indeed, Jarrett-Kerr concludes that Eliot succumbed to that danger, and the comment quoted above is found in the context of Jarrett-Kerr's disappointment with the last three plays: he finds that dramatic conflict has been vitiated by the author's charity. One can also hazard that Eliot's temperamental reserve may have restrained him from a more exuberant portrayal of human love. Probably more significant was Eliot's awareness of both the continued sinfulness even of a redeemed man, and the frailty of human affections. Thus Simeon remains a rather peevish old man while awaiting Christ's coming (with echoes of Gerontion?), and the spiritual and emotional release of Lord Claverton in The Elder Statesman is exacted at great price. Even the "concord" of East Coker is circumscribed by the cycle of life and death, "Eating and drinking. Dung and death."¹

As with Eliot's attitude to nature, one may well speak of a shift in his conception of man, of warmer sympathies, and of acknowledgement of whole human relations; yet, this acceptance is always with hesitation and qualification. Humanity does not become the ultimate affirmation.

When studying possible development in Eliot's work, one might juxtapose two citations and ask what constitutes the change. "The Fire Sermon" closes with

¹C. P. P., p. 178.

To Cathage then I came

Burning burning burning burning
O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest

burning

Fire imagery reappears in Little Gidding

The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre--
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

In both passages the fire imagery calls up the need of restoration through ordeal and suffering, and it is evident that the theme of purification is present in Eliot before as well as after 1927. The principal difference lies in the fact that in The Waste Land passage the realization of redemption is very uncertain; both here and in the latter part of the poem the need for redemption is stressed, but the outcome is very pessimistic. In the later poetry the way is no less arduous or painful, but the possibility of salvation is much more evident.

One important addition to the later poetry is the way of the saint. The Cocktail Party circumscribes the saint's route rather clearly, and it is there personified in the life and death of Celia. What characterizes the saint's way especially is the one momentous decision, a negation of self, a living out of a "vision," of "faith that issues from despair." After the initial transformation the way is not easy, but it does not seem plagued as much by constant doubt and the need for daily small decisions. At the end of The Family Reunion Harry is also gripped by a power which dramatically changes his course and will enable him to take the road of reconciliation and service. In the case of both Celia and Harry there is indeed as much intimation of an

¹Ibid., pp. 70, 196.

outside power taking hold of them as of an inner determination. A force out of time and place enables them to surmount the limitations of doubt, of perplexity, of despair. In The Dry Salvages this route is summed up:

But to apprehend
The point of intersection of the timeless
With time, is an occupation for the saint--
No occupation either, but something given
And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,
Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.¹

Few seekers, however, are able to take the road of radical commitment; they have to go a different route. The intuitive, miraculous experiences of insight, wholeness, and dedication are only temporary, fleeting moments:

Sudden in a shaft of sunlight
Even while the dust moves.

Later in the Quartets these moments are called "only hints and guesses."
Outside of these moments

Ridiculous the waste sad time
Stretching before and after.²

In The Cocktail Party Eliot comes close to an elitist conception in suggesting that the second route is one for the spiritually drab and undistinguished, but elsewhere this way is accorded greater universality and has its own kind of dignity and comfort. Thus Ash Wednesday on the one hand has strong overtones of a once-only conversion in its use of death and rebirth imagery, but the poem does not portray the way which is elsewhere called the way of the saint. The references to "my people" enlarge the poem to a general Christian experience, and the Ash Wednesday designation points to a day of regular occurrence in the Christian life.

¹Ibid., pp. 189-190. ²Ibid., pp. 176, 190.

The road of purgation is portrayed most frequently in terms of the traditional Christian concepts of renunciation. In Ash Wednesday the renunciation is highlighted especially in the denial of earthly attractions; in Four Quartets there are many borrowings from John of the Cross and a pointing to the Dark Night of the Soul, the ". . . internal darkness, deprivation / And destitution of all property." More generally the life of denial is summed up in ". . . prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action."¹

I pointed out above the frequent allusions to death-in-life of the earlier poetry. In the later poetry death returns, but now often with salvific power, as a necessary prelude to new life. The saints Becket and Celia crown their perfected wills and devotion quite naturally with death, and Lord Claverton's death seems an inevitable climax to his loss of selfishness. As Monica says, at his death "In becoming no one, he has become himself." Part II of Ash Wednesday, with its mysterious images of physical disintegration, also embodies the theme of the need for dying before restoration is possible. The healing power of death is again present in the Four Quartets. The Dark Night of the Soul is often conceived in terms of death, and in East Coker IV the death of Christ and of man are united in a redemptive purpose:

If to be warmed, then I must freeze
 And quake in frigid purgatorial fires
 Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars.

The dripping blood our only drink,
 The bloody flesh our only food.

Even though the daily experience is frequently seen in terms of renunciation and negation, the final goal is always a search for purpose,

¹Ibid., pp. 174, 190. ²Ibid., pp. 181-182.

for union, for beatitude. And a measure of this beatitude will already be experienced in the temporal sphere. After the women of Canterbury go their way of involvement with Becket's death, they emerge with their own Te Deum which includes their everyday life, ". . . with the hand to the broom, the back bent in laying the fire"; Lord Claverton's purgatory gives him a sense of peace, "the peace that ensues upon contrition," and he frees his daughter from his possessive grip; Edward and Lavinia have to go through their hell of self-knowing, and then they achieve greater understanding and love. In Ash Wednesday and the Quartets the nature of the achievement is not spelled out as clearly, but here there is also a groping for peace. A glimpse of fulfillment is somehow contained in

Whisper of running streams, and winter lightning,
The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry,
The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy.

In Four Quartets the search for beatitude is also caught up in a complex web of theological, philosophical, and artistic considerations. The union of God and man, the nature of time and history, the struggle for artistic perfection are all enmeshed in the search for meaning and pattern. Frequently the tone is dark, and the answers not discernible. But even if the solutions are not readily come by, and if the vision often remains blurry--there is the glorious, miraculous manifestation of the Incarnation which somehow breaks through the intellectual difficulties.

The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.
Here the impossible union
Of spheres of existence is actual,
Here the past and future
Are conquered, and reconciled.²

¹Ibid., p. 180. ²Ibid., p. 190.

Elsewhere the incarnation is also crucial. Both the speaker of "Journey of the Magi" and Becket in his sermon are aware of the deep mystery of life and death which surrounds this event, but for them the incarnation is nevertheless pivotal in achieving new life and in forming a pattern of existence. In the incarnation the antinomies of temporal and eternal, of flux and pattern, of God's holiness and man's imperfection, of life and death are resolved.

Even though the incarnation is crucial in Eliot's later poetry, one must be careful not to minimize the significance of the atonement. Both H. R. Williamson¹ and Kristian Smidt² propose that Eliot stresses the doctrine of the incarnation more than the atonement. Smidt further states that Eliot's emphasis on the incarnation is occasioned by the fact that "the Incarnation attaches a greater value to human nature and human life than does the atonement."³ This assertion about Eliot's theological skewing is open to question. I suggested earlier that Eliot's acceptance of man and human nature is never unequivocal; he remains very aware of the ethical and spiritual frailty of man. Furthermore, the emphasis on purgation certainly intimates that human nature needs continuous refining, and for Eliot the refining is always related to the atoning work of Christ. Ash Wednesday certainly provides an unmistakable link between man's rebirth and the death of Christ, as does "The wounded surgeon . . ." lyric of East Coker.

These considerations lead to the question: is Eliot's later

¹H. R. Williamson, The Poetry of T. S. Eliot (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), p. 161.

²Smidt, p. 158.

³Ibid.

poetry this-worldly or other-worldly, natural or supernatural? There is indeed a measure of acceptance of and glorying in this world, but always with reservation. It is significant that the final chorus of Murder in the Cathedral, in its catalogue of the glories of God in nature, nevertheless climaxes with "we thank Thee for the mercies of blood" ¹ Graham Martin touches upon the matter in a footnote where he says: "It is not much of a simplification of Eliot's religious poetry and plays to say their main concern is to assert the 'primacy of the supernatural over the natural life.'" ² Perhaps the statement ought to be altered slightly to say that for Eliot the natural is acceptable and good only as it has been hallowed by the supernatural.

As in Eliot's work, nature or at least, nature description does not play an overwhelming role in Nijhoff's poetry. I discussed earlier how nature, especially weather, is often part of the dreariness which envelops man. Thus, in an unusual comparison of man's bitter lot from which even death offers no escape, Nijhoff writes of flowers which have lost life, but continue to stand in brittle rigidity:

De bloemen staan in 't donker bed
 Als porceleinen scherven--

 Nooit komen wij de wereld af,
 Al barsten wij tot scherven,

(The flowers stand in the dark flower bed
 like pieces of broken porcelain.
 We'll never be rid of this world, even
 if we burst to pieces). ³

¹C. P. P., p. 281.

²Martin, p. 130.

³V. W., p. 14.

Elsewhere nature is portrayed less harshly. There are a number of poems where nature is presented in a way not found in Eliot. These are the garden scenes, where, as van der Plas notes in passing,¹ one notices a decadent flavor; the scene is often overripe and tinged with melancholy. The poem "Het Tuinfeest" is characteristic:

De Juni-avond opent een hoog licht
 Boven de vijver, maar rond om de helle
 Lamp-lichte tafel in het grasveld zwellen
 De boomen langzaam hun groen donker dicht.

(The June evening opens a high light
 above the pond, but around the bright
 lamp-lit tables in the grass, the trees
 slowly swell and close up their green dark).²

Then the poem continues to speak of the melancholy and sentiment which suffuses the scene.

But at other times nature functions in a more robust, sustaining manner. The early "Holland," unlike the poems of despair of most of De Wandelaar collection, glories in the exuberant life of the Dutch countryside:

Boven mijn hoofd hebt gij uw lucht gebreid:
 Een hemel, rijk van zon en wijd van wind--
 Terwijl ik juichend door de ruimten schrijd,
 Of aan uw borst lig als een drinkend kind.

(Over my head you have spread out your sky,
 a heaven rich with sun and wide with wind--
 While I stride through the wide spaces,
 shouting jubilantly, or lie at your breast
 like a drinking child).

In some later poems the same sense of the sustaining power of nature is expressed. In "De Moeder de Vrouw" the speaker relaxes in the grass

¹ van der Plas, Roeping, XXVIII, p. 347.

² V. W., p. 100.

"my head full of the spacious landscapes," and the pivotal poem "Het Veer" expresses the acceptance of life partly through its portrayal of nature:

. . . dit blanke water,
breed bed van vrede, uit dieperliggend land
opgeknelde als een zware scheur, vol gloed,
vol spiegeling

(The white water, in its wide bed of peace, pressed
in as a heavy breach out of the lower fields,
glowing, reflecting)

At the close of the poem the new-born child, who is a reincarnation of Sebastiaan, is described in terms of the beauties of nature:

dat men, de warmte ziende van zijn blik,
aan blauwe lucht moest denken, melk en vruchten,
aan stromend water waar men baadt en waar
men na het bad naakt inslaapt in het gras.

(So that, when one sees the warmth of his
glance, one thinks of blue sky, milk, fruit, of
running water where one bathes and where, after the bath,
one falls asleep naked in the grass).

Het Uur U takes place in a city street--a street without trees. But the very absence is significant. The workman who had been busy digging holes for the new trees has disappeared, and the failure to have the trees planted is apparently related to the failure of the people to accept the full life offered by the stranger. The companion poem Een Idylle similarly has the tree as a symbol of life.

Just as nature sometimes serves to express a positive inclination, (increasingly so in the later poetry), so there are three manifestations of human life which reflect an affirmative stance. These are the simple life, the child or childhood, and the mother. In two of the poems just quoted the simple life conjoins with beneficent nature

¹Ibid., pp. 27, 212, 192-194.

to suggest wholeness:

't Eenvoudig leven Gods is diep en klaar:
Een man in blauwen kiel en een vrouw in een
Geruiten rok en witten boezelaar.

(The simple life in God is deep and clear;
a man in a blue smock, and a woman in a
checkered skirt and white apron).

So in "Het Veer" where Sebastiaan looks in at the farmhouse window. The scene is disturbing because the woman is suffering the pains of childbirth; yet Sebastiaan looks upon the household of simple people with longing, and identifies with them by bestowing his soul on the newborn child. "Ad Infinitum" speaks of the brevity of happiness which must always be established anew; nevertheless, the good life can be found in the simplicity of a forest home.

The child and childhood images are more frequent--at times sentimental and escapist, at times as a symbol of goodness and purity. An effective catching of the child's spirit occurs in the sonnet "Aan Mijn Kind III"

Ik denk, God is als een vereenzaamd man,
Die naar de wereld kijkt en keurt haar goed--
Maar ziet hij kinderen voor een venster, dan
Lacht hij en wenkt zoals een vader doet.

(I think that God is a lonely man, who
looks at the world, and approves it.
But when he sees children at a window, then
he laughs and beckons as a father does.)

The (self-destructive) innocence and idealism of the child is commemorated in "De Kinderkruistocht": "The heart of a child, so warm and free, so outside of this world, and reckless." "Liedje" again speaks of the "spotlessness of the child."² The children of Het Uur U are more real and less idealized than those in the early poems. Since they return to their

¹Ibid., p. 27. ²Ibid., pp. 57, 93, 98.

homes, after briefly following the stranger, they have apparently been tainted by the debased values of their parents. Still, their initial following of the stranger indicates that they are more open to the full life, and the hope of the poem certainly lies with them.

In many poems the child appears with the mother (for example, in "Kerstboom," and "Wolken"). Even the most cursory reading of Nijhoff's poetry will reveal the pervasive presence of the mother figure. It is not necessary to belabor the psychological implications of a mother complex; E. L. Smelik comments that it needs no great skill to discern an unusual mother relation here, since both latent and obvious evidences are very plain.¹ In De Wandelaar collection the mother figure is often used in the evocation of a childhood in contrast with the dreary world of the poet's adult life. The juxtaposition certainly has escapist overtones, but perhaps one can also see the child and mother poems as attempts to regain a hold on reality--a hold which is threatened when the poet is engulfed by the ugliness of contemporary life. In Awater there is a brief glimpse of the mother figure in the young Salvation Army girl who is preaching in the station square; (Nijhoff's mother was an active Salvation Army worker). She preaches a message of love, and becomes the means for the recognition of Awater and the poet.

Nijhoff's poetry of pessimism and negation is therefore to be partly read against the backdrop both of nature which can be beneficent and the evocation of innocence and love. But these are rather

¹E. L. Smelik, "De laatste dienst," in Bittremieux, p. 101.

frail affirmations. What else is there in Nijhoff's poetry which can take a stand against the personal and cosmic despair of De Wandelaar? Both Nijhoff and the critics are at pains to demonstrate the change which took place in his vision of life. In "De Pen op Papier," which tells the story of the Pied Piper appearing to Nijhoff, he writes about this evening of the Piper's visit as "the hour of a decisive turning point."¹

Before sketching the change in Nijhoff's outlook, it is well to recall his poetic output. A. M. Korpershoek, who was the first to write in detail about Nijhoff's wending, also recognizes "De Pen op Papier" of 1926 as the record of a fundamental change, a change, Korpershoek continues, "which was then theoretically justified in the [Gids] article of 1931, and confirmed in 1934 with the collection Nieuwe Gedichten."² If the change in Nijhoff's outlook was more or less completed by 1934, then the poetic output which is to reflect the change is very slim indeed. Nieuwe Gedichten contains six lyrics, eight sonnets, and the long Awater. After that Nijhoff published the two relatively long poems Het Uur U and Idylle. Nearly all his further work consisted of the Biblical plays, occasional poems, translations, and criticism. Of the poems mentioned not all embody the new direction very clearly. The result is that the critics, in discussing the change, lean heavily on crucial passages in some of the poems, on the prose pieces which reflect the change, and at times on events in Nijhoff's life.

¹V. W., p. 1070.

²A. M. Korpershoek, "Nijhoff's wending," De Nieuwe Taalgids, XXXI, (1937), p. 301.

The new direction manifested itself partly in a heightened involvement with other people. If the early poetry had frequently shown either aloofness from or antipathy to people, Nijhoff now wishes to be a servant-poet among the people, and he becomes aware of the possibilities of true life in the city: "There is life in the offices, the factories, the hospitals, the cafes, the stations, in all places where masses of people are together."¹ In "Het Veer" Sebastiaan looks in on the farmer couple, and he is especially moved by the sight of the woman about to give birth, whereas he had never been a parent:

dat hij geen zoon had kwelde hem, dat hij
verzuimd had, voor hij heen ging, van zijn jeugd
iets hier te laten, wakend

(it especially troubled him that he had no son,
that he had neglected, before he left this world
to leave something of his youth here, waking).²

Then Sebastiaan bequeaths his spirit to the new-born child. In a completely different context Nijhoff's wider sympathies find expression in "the only socialistic poem he ever wrote,"³ "De Vogels." Heaven has demanded that birds receive the crumbs of the earth; but the birds are more fortunate than the impoverished laboring classes:

Als die om kruimels van de hemel vragen,
een bioscoop, een fiets, een radio,
komt de cavalerie de hoek om jagen.

(When these ask for crumbs from heaven,
a movie, a bicycle, a radio, then the
cavalry comes charging round the corner).⁴

¹V. W., pp. 1164-65.

²Ibid., p. 194.

³Korpershoek, De Nieuwe Taalgids, XXXI, p. 304.

⁴V. W., p. 210.

In Awater one is aware (as in the early poetry) of the dangers of the city which can isolate and dehumanize a man, but the search for companionship is nevertheless conducted through the streets of the city, and the moment of recognition and union comes while the poet and Awater are in a crowd of people. The same ambivalence is evident in Het Uur U. The poem is largely an attack on the stunted lives of an urban middle class; yet, the poem sets forth the possibility of a richer life. Even though most of the people fail in their hour of decision, their children show themselves more susceptible to the offer of the stranger, and the judge becomes the model for the acceptance of the full life in his new sense of concern and forgiveness for fellowmen.

The issue of Nijhoff's new outlook can also be explored in his change to a this-worldly focus. The earlier revulsion against contemporary life, the aversion to people in some of the characters, the sense of ennui and despair (sometimes in juxtaposition with an idealized past), certainly suggested that an escape from this world into another life was to be desired. Even if the other life was not always defined very clearly, or if escape was not possible, this life could, at best, be endured with distaste. Nijhoff himself again describes the reorientation of his vision. In some ways life must still be regarded as a wilderness, but one has to accept it without nostalgic dreaming about the past:

Of course poetry has to live in the wilderness. But no, it must not give in, must not pretend any more. Art must no longer be consolation; poetry must not fool a half-awake people.

¹Ibid., II, p. 1164.

(Nijhoff then announces the change in his personal life. He moves from The Hague--to which he was very attached--to another city, where he lives very simply, and begins language study at the university. The change may not appear very drastic to us, but for Nijhoff it was deeply symbolic).

The poems "Het Lied der Dwaze Bijen" and "Het Veer" are cited most frequently as embodying the new tendency. The foolish, intoxicated bees leave their natural habitat, the earth, and soar toward the azure skies, pursuing some ideal. But the flight is both selfish and self-destructive.

Constantly yielding further,
constantly more translucent
constantly yielding further
to the elusive symbol.

we climbed aloft and vanished,
disbanded, disembodied,
we climbed aloft and vanished
away like things asparkle.

It's snowing, we are dying,
fluttering worldwards, homewards;
it's snowing, we are dying,¹
snowing between the hives.

"Het Veer," touched on earlier, tells the story of St. Sebastiaan. Brutally martyred, he is granted some kind of half-life on the evening of his death as he walks the Dutch countryside, half person, half spirit. He approaches the river ferry which doubles as the ferry to heaven. One expects Sebastiaan to board the boat and claim his heavenly reward, but he wavers and lingers. He is captivated by the simple life in the farmhouse, the promise of new life, the silence, not of heavenly bliss, but

¹V. W., pp. 200-201; tr. by James Holmes, "The Song of the Foolish Bees," Delta, III, (1960-61), p. 68.

die stilte daar was aards en warm, was zwanger,
 hoop, aanvang,

(this silence here was earthly and warm, was pregnant,
 hope, beginning,)

Sebastiaan now regrets that he had not valued the body while alive and
 had not left a son,

dat hij begeert had naar de geest terwijl
 het wonderbaarlijk lichaam in de tijd
 hem gans bewoonde; en dat wie sterft eerst ziet
 hoe dieper 't bloed is dan de hemel hoog;
 dat hij geen zoon had kwelde hem

(that he had desired the spiritual, while
 the wonderful body had then completely lived
 in him; and that one first sees that blood is
 deeper than heaven is high at the time of death.
 It troubled him that he had no son)¹

The story is told, says the poet, that a child, embodying all the beauties
 of the earth, was born that night. Sebastiaan will relive this life in
 the child, but now, one is led to suppose, in full acceptance of all that
 life has to offer.

Nijhoff's critics all recognize the change in Nijhoff's outlook,
 but there is disagreement about the nature and the degree of the change.
 Luc. Wenseleers accepts a total change most unreservedly. Nijhoff, ac-
 cording to Wenseleers, began to see that ". . . man through the secret
 of a gradually incarnating word carries heaven in his own body."² This
 view is buttressed by citing influences and parallels including Nietz-
 sche, Whitman, Lawrence, and especially Teilhard de Chardin. I cannot
 here discuss the aptness of all these parallels; however, it seems that
 one needs to engage in some tortuous hineininterpretieren to equate

¹V. W., pp. 193-193.

²Wenseleers, Het wonderbaarlijk lichaam, p. 50.

"Song of Myself" and Lady Chatterley's Lover with Nijhoff's poetry. (Eliot is also bracketed with these writers, with reference to the matrimonial country dance of East Coker II, and the Incarnation passage of Dry Salvages V. Here again, one ought to link authors more cautiously. Eliot has perhaps some intimation of the ". . . deepest union of the body with the eternal life-force of the earth,"¹ but to mention him without qualification in one breath with Whitman and Lawrence does violence to Eliot).

Other critics of Nijhoff are more hesitant to ascribe a complete this-worldliness to Nijhoff. Even though the acceptance of earthly realities, of this world, is real, there continues to be ambivalence in Nijhoff's vision. Ed Hoornik speaks of the "profound difference in style as well as in attitude" in Nieuwe Gedichten, wherein Nijhoff recognized that "he can no longer withstand the enchantments of the earth."² But, Hoornik adds, this difference in Nijhoff does not mean that he fails to recognize a higher, supernatural reality. Knuvelder similarly points out both the new direction of Nieuwe Gedichten and the remaining dualism; there is always ". . . a bent for the mysterious, for the wonderful and supernatural phenomena which accompany and form the background and purpose for natural phenomena."³ Jo de Wit, in defending Nijhoff against escapism, sees the essence of his poetry in his dualism. As a "wandelaar between two worlds" he feels the attraction of both the

¹ Ibid., p. 55.

² Ed Hoornik, "Tussen hemel en aarde," Vlaamse Gids, XXXVI, (1952), p. 29.

³ Gerard Knuvelder, "Op zoek naar Nijhoff," in In Memoriam, p. 41.

real, present world and an ideal, spiritual world, and thus lives in perpetual tension. At times the focus (and the disagreement) of the critics falls on one poem. The final lines of Het Uur U are somewhat ambiguous:

Hoe mooi anders, ach, hoe mooi
zijn bloemen en bladertooi.--
Hoe mooi? De hemel weet hoe.
Maar dat is tot daaraantoe.

(But how beautiful, ah! how beautiful
are blossoms and foliage.
How beautiful? Heaven knows how.
But that's neither here nor there.)¹

Luc. Wenseleers interprets these lines as a summing up of Nijhoff's disappointment with the people who have not been sufficiently stirred by the life of the stranger: ". . . the longing for a more natural, more beautiful, more just life does not spur them on to conscious action at all. On the contrary, they dream away their vitality in musing, unreal blossoms and foliage, repressed by the vague notion of a distant death."² Meeuwesse, on the other hand, suggests that Nijhoff is here aware of the limitations of this world; the full life of freedom and justice can never be completely achieved here, but must be complemented by the ideal and the assistance from another-worldly reality.³

Nijhoff's relation to the Christian faith is more ambiguous than Eliot's. (Certainly the strong mother relation plays a role in Nijhoff's religious views throughout his life. His mother was a very devout woman, first a member of the Salvation Army, later a convert to Roman Catholicism).

¹V. W., p. 240

²Luc. Wenseleers, "Een schuldeloos wolkje," De Gids, CXXXI, (1968), p. 169.

³Karel Meeuwesse, "Nog steeds die man door de straat," De Gids, CXXX, (1967), pp. 88-89.

In the early collections there are sensitive, sympathetic portrayals of Christ's passion and of Christian mystics. However, strongly clashing with these are the pronouncements in other poems, which emphasize the harshness and cruelty of God:

God die ons pijlen zendt, en in dien wemel
Lacht als één onzer hoog als Babel gaat.

(God who sends us arrows, and who laughs among that shower if one of us climbs high as at Babel).

Ik ben een stille man waar God mee speelt

(I am a silent man with whom God plays).

. . . de dageraad
Een groene grijns van Gods gruwelijk gezicht.

(The dawn, like a green sneer of God's horrible face).

God heeft ons op de weg alleen gelaten.

(God has left us alone on the road).¹

One need not identify all these expressions with Nijhoff's personal faith (or lack of faith). Yet these and similar expressions occur frequently enough that one may well assume that part of Nijhoff's credo comes to the fore here.

Nijhoff's wending was not a dramatic conversion to Church and Christianity as was the case with Eliot. A greater love for the present life, which was a major dimension of Nijhoff's new outlook, can be expressed outside as well as inside the Christian tradition. Moreover, Nijhoff's poetry after 1934 is not what one would normally call "Christian" or even "religious" verse. For example, the preference for earthly fullness over heavenly glory, which is the main theme of "Het Veer," is certainly not an expression of traditional piety.

¹V. W., pp. 12, 15, 18, 28.

There are, of course, some poems in which elements of the Christian religion are evident. Nijhoff's use of the young Salvation Army woman in Awater is no doubt influenced by the memory of his mother; however, the intent probably goes deeper, since the message of the young woman encompasses the fundamentals of Christianity. The stranger in Het Uur U can to a great extent be identified with Christ. This choice of a Christ figure in itself does not require Nijhoff to be an adherent of Christianity; however, it is significant that the touchstone for a life of purpose and compassion is found in the figure of Christ.

It is difficult to assess the importance of Nijhoff's Biblical plays. After 1942 most of his poetic efforts were expended on the Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost dramas. In the preface to the plays Nijhoff explains that he is seeking to continue the work of his mother who also wrote Biblical plays. Is this devotion to the memory of his mother the only cause for the writing of the plays, or is there religious motivation as well? Similar questions arise about Nijhoff's interest in liturgics. Although he hardly ever attended church, he was a member of a church committee on the revision of the Dutch psalms; he himself wrote the verse for several psalms and was the moving force of the committee. Guillaume van der Graft, in a study of the Biblical plays, discusses the ambivalence of Nijhoff's relation to Christianity. Nijhoff himself explains that in these plays he had used Euripides as a model for the verse form. Van der Graft comments:

Here one is again aware of the close relation which is established between "profane" and "sacred." Euripides and Gospel, church and theatre, are mentioned in one breath One need not see Nijhoff's distance from the church as a circumstance which destroys the integrity of his intentions about the religious plays. Neither, as has been

presupposed by those outside the church, is there evidence here of self-deception Nijhoff is completely present here, but the complete Nijhoff is not present Nijhoff could not think in a high church tradition. He moved, freelance, as it were, in the area where Gospel and Hellas meet.

These comments, sympathetic to Nijhoff, yet aware of the ambiguities, are perhaps the closest one can come to defining Nijhoff's religious attitude.

Conclusion

In the Dutch criticism on Eliot his name is linked with Nijhoff more frequently than with any other Dutch poet. Often the mention of likeness is in passing, as when Emmy Lonkhorst suggests a "strong affinity between the English and the Dutch poet" in connection with Nijhoff's translation of The Cocktail Party.² Similarly, in Berkelman's study of Nijhoff he incidentally alludes to Nijhoff as Eliot's counterpart in Dutch poetry.³ Kool refers to the excitement which greeted the work of both Eliot and Nijhoff in the 1920's.⁴ The more substantial essays which explore the Eliot-Nijhoff parallels have been cited frequently in the foregoing discussion.

How well can the assertions of affinity and parallels be substantiated after a more thorough examination? It is obvious that two writers, both with a strongly individual bent in their poetry, who are

¹ Guillaume van der Graft, "De Lekespelen van Nijhoff," in In Memoriam, pp. 55-56.

² Emmy van Lonkhorst, "Toneelkroniek," De Gids, CXVI, (1952), p. 143.

³ Frans Berkelmans, Martinus Nijhoff; Dichter van nu (Amsterdam: Stichting IVIO/AO-reeks, 1969), p. 12.

⁴ Halbo C. Kool, "Dichter in stad," Kroniek van Kunst en Kultuur, X, (1949), p. 45.

from different languages and cultures, will exhibit many differences. Some of the differences have already been touched on when exploring the parallels. Thus it was noted that Eliot's poetic form represented a stronger break with the previous poetic tradition than did Nijhoff's. Also, Eliot's poetry, especially after 1927, is more imbued with the Christian tradition. Or again, Nijhoff's use of the images of hands and windows is more insistent than Eliot's.

There are of course many other differences as well. In terms of "production" there are Nijhoff's patriotic poems, his Biblical plays, and the translations of poetry and drama, which have no counterpart in Eliot. Conversely, Nijhoff wrote no society plays, nor, more significantly, any poem of the length and complexity of Four Quartets. Again, Eliot's allusiveness, certainly a prime feature of his poetry, plays a much less important role in Nijhoff. (The fact that the surface difficulty of Eliot's poetry is much greater is partly due to Eliot's greater allusiveness).

Nevertheless, the similarities and parallels are substantial. Many parallels in their lives and writing careers are of course incidental, and need not be significant for the poetry. Some, however, are reflected in the poetry. The unhappy marriages, the religious-philosophic change in mid-career, the influence of Baudelaire and other French writers undoubtedly account for many of the resemblances signaled in the foregoing discussion. Further, the poetic form of both Eliot and Nijhoff differed from that of their predecessors in the admitting of a wide scope of subject matter into the poetry, in the shunning of a poetic diction, and the concomitant development of poésie parlante. Music, both as subject matter and as constituent of the po-

etry is very significant for both poets. Thematically the poets share broad areas of agreement. Their attitude toward modern civilization, especially as exemplified by the modern city, is largely one of censure. In the early poetry the estimate of man and his relation to others is usually negative; man is unlovable in his petty, selfish, often sub-human attitude, and unloving in his failure to establish true communion with others. In the later poetry this censoriousness is often eclipsed by a more affirmative stance. Eliot's change is more controlled by Christian insight, and frequently tends to an other-worldly emphasis, but both see man as redeemable, and capable of building genuine relationships with others.

The comparative juxtaposition of Eliot and Nijhoff serves at least two purposes. First, it illumines the work of both authors. When analyzing the imagery, for example, one becomes aware of the importance of body parts in the poetry of both, but also that eyes are a predominant image for Eliot, and hands for Nijhoff. Or again, the examination of Nijhoff's ambivalence about this-worldly and other-worldly values, helps one to formulate similar questions about Eliot. Secondly, the comparison gives perspective to the literary oeuvre. The seeing of parallels in the works of poets from different languages helps to place their work in a wider context of (here: European) literature, ". . . in relation to which," said Eliot, "individual works of literary art, and the works of individual artists, have their significance."¹

¹Selected Essays, pp. 12-13.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF THE DUTCH TRANSLATION OF ELIOT'S POEMS AND PLAYS

Exactly how does "the young man with pimples" differ from "the young man carbuncular," and how do "feet kicking the empty wineskins" become "footservants," and which reader of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" would recognize the line "I was not laid in the cradle to be Prince Hamlet"? These brief examples exhibit some of the hazards of literary translation. Translators are of course aware of these hazards, and practicing translators and translation theorists have explored both the possibilities and the limitations of literary translation. It will be helpful to examine some general, theoretical aspects of translation before turning to the Dutch translations of Eliot.

Theoretical Considerations

In essays on translation one frequently encounters a citation of the French saying that translations are like women, homely when faithful, and unfaithful when lovely. This saying arose, no doubt, in recognition of the fact that translation invariably involves change and interpretation. Renato Poggioli states categorically: "That translation is an interpretive art is a self-evident truth."¹ The collec-

¹Renato Poggioli, "The Added Artificer," in R. A. Brower, ed., On Translation (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 137.

tion of essays The Nature of Translation has as its opening section three essays on "Translation and Interpretation."¹ This insistence on the interpretive aspect of translation (especially poetry translation) is in recognition of the difficulty, often the impossibility, of finding semantic or prosodic equivalents between languages. As the translator chooses from the alternatives in the target language², he in effect limits, that is, interprets the meaning of the original. Or, looked at more holistically, the translator often has to choose a certain mode which affects the complete work. For example, in translating Greek drama, will he maintain most of the flavor of Greek culture, or will he modernize whenever he can? This decision will shape the reader's response, and is thus an interpretive decision.

The emphasis on the interpretive aspects of translation points to one designation for the translator--the translator as critic. The scrutinizing of the text, the linguistic and prosodic analysis, and the interpretive decisions bear many resemblances to the work of the critic.

Translation of poetry, however, is also a poetic process. In the re-creation of a poem the translator has to be sensitive to the potentialities of his language, the multiple meanings of words, and the literary tradition of his language. It is therefore frequently suggested that the translator of poetry be (or ought to be) a practicing poet in his own language. John Hollander uses Eliot's definition of

¹James S. Holmes, ed., The Nature of Translation: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Literary Translation (The Hague: Mouton, 1970).

²Terminology is often not fixed in translation theory. I shall use commonly employed terms, or identify the source of the more restricted terms. "Source" and "target" language are frequently used terms for the original language and the translation language.

the poet for the translator:

And finally, translation has come to the brink of identification with the process of literary invention as such, with respect both to the practice, and to the role of the practitioner (the job of the poet outlined in T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" is strangely like that of an Ideal Translator).

In the study of poetry in translation one thus asks questions which are asked about all poetry: Does it sing? Are sound and sense still meshed inextricably? Is the image successful?

The translation process can be further circumscribed in a three-fold framework. Holmes, a translation theorist and translator of Dutch poetry into English, discusses the translation factors with the terms "linguistic context," "literary intertext," and "socio-cultural situation."² The linguistic context is the language in which the poem is written; this element is the most obvious one in translation. The literary intertext embraces the literary traditions and conventions of the poet. Blank verse, for example, is a staple in the history of English poetry, but has no similar standing in French and Dutch poetry. When translating, one has to make a decision about the best rendition of blank verse, or of internal rhyme, or of a certain symbol from the source language. The poem also takes place in or reflects a particular cultural condition. This socio-cultural situation may need to be changed or adapted in order to make the poem function properly in the language.

¹John Hollander, "Versions, Interpretations, Performances," in Brower, p. 209.

²James S. Holmes, "Rebuilding the Bridge at Bommel: Notes on the Limits of Translatability," Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters, II (1972), p. 67.

In the principal decision process of translation one has to determine if the metapoem¹ ought to become largely independent from the source poem and embrace the target language contexts, or if it ought to be a clear imitation of the original poem and its contexts-- that is, one has to decide between what Holmes calls "exoticizing" ("retention"), and "naturalizing" ("recreation").² Should the poem reflect the syntax of the original language, even if this syntax is somewhat unnatural for the target language? Should an iambic foot be maintained, if it strains the speech rhythms and poetic tradition of the target language? (This question is reminiscent of the old argument whether Homer ought to be rendered in English hexameters). Should place names, or customs, or forms of address be retained, even if these will look "exotic" in the new poem? Holmes illustrates that the decisions in the three areas do not (and need not) run parallel: "Among contemporary translators, for instance, there would seem to be a marked tendency toward modernization and naturalization of the linguistic context, that is, the metapoem is first of all a new poem in the target language tradition, paired with a similar but less clear tendency in the same direction in regard to the literary intertext, but an opposing tendency toward historicizing and exoticizing that is, the metapoem strongly retains the imprint of the original poem in the socio-cultural situation."³

¹The term used by Holmes for the poem in the target language. See James S. Holmes, "Poem and Metapoem: Poetry from Dutch to English," *Linguistica Antverpiensia*, III (1969), pp. 103-104.

²Holmes, *Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters*, II, pp. 67-69.

³*Ibid.*, p. 69.

One fundamental concept in translation theory which needs some further amplification is that of equivalence. Modern translation theorists generally agree that one cannot speak of identical or equivalent terms between two languages: ". . . if forms of words differ, a priori, semantic equivalence cannot be expected."¹ Of course not only the forms of words differ, but, more importantly, their grammatical structures, multiple meanings, and connotative values are seldom identical from one language to another. The terms "identity" and "equivalence" are therefore to be used sparingly, if at all, when speaking of translated words in two languages, since the totality of possible meanings and uses will not be the same. The terms "correspondence," "similarity," or "match" are more appropriate, since they convey the idea of analogy which recognizes both sameness and difference.

With poetry, moreover, equivalence is even more difficult to achieve. Eliot himself writes that "Poetry is a constant reminder of all the things that can only be said in one language and are untranslatable."² Similar statements of Robert Frost and Gottfried Benn are quoted by Holmes.³ At the poetic level there may also be attempts to establish improper correspondences. Perhaps an image or rhythm can be produced in the metapoem, but it may be foreign and intrusive here. Then "the translator has to invent formal effects in his own language that give a sense of those produced by the original. This is working

¹Werner Winters, "Impossibilities of Translation," in William Arrowsmith and Roger Shattuck, eds., The Craft and Context of Translation (Austin: University of Texas, 1961), p. 70.

²"The Social Function of Poetry," in On Poetry and Poets (New York: Noonday Press, 1957, 1961), pp. 13-14.

³Holmes, Linguistica Antverpiensia, III, p. 102.

by analogy."¹

In the analysis of literary translation one deals, on the one hand, with the metapoem as an independent creation which must be evaluated in terms of the target language and its literary tradition. However, since the translation is inextricably related to the original poem, one always moves back to comparison (even if one must heed the reminder of translator Alan Conder that "to single out a particularly happy line in a poem and to expect to find its perfect counterpart in a translated version, is, to say the least, somewhat unreasonable"²). In the comparison the differences from the original will usually receive the main attention. When discussing a French translation of The Hollow Men, Matthews writes, "As usual, the 'points of departure' from the original are the points of interest."³ In my analysis of the Dutch translations of Eliot the focus also will be frequently on comparison and on the points of departure.

The resemblance between the original poem and its translation is affected partly by the relative closeness of the two languages. To translate Hebrew Scripture into South African Bantu or Homer into modern English will normally present greater difficulties than to render Eliot into French or Dutch. Certainly English and Dutch are very similar in many respects. Since both are historically from Indo-European and then West Germanic linguistic stock, one can expect a broad stratum

¹Jackson Matthews, "Third Thoughts on Translating Poetry," in Brower, p. 67.

²Quoted in Justin O'Brien, "From French to English," in Brower, p. 84.

³Matthews, p. 72.

of agreement. Moreover, Dutch has also had periods of French "infiltration" which, at least in vocabulary, has brought it closer to English. R. W. Zandvoort has further demonstrated the recent influx of English words into Dutch;¹ many of these words have not yet been "inburgerd" (if I may use a Dutch idiom), but the borrowing shows that Dutch is amenable to English influence. However, this commonness cannot obscure many historical divergences. C. B. Van Haeringen suggests as the principal causes of divergence the isolation of English from continental Germanic contacts, the period of Scandinavian influence, and especially the sustained Romance impact, which has made English in effect an "amphibian" language.²

The common heritage has produced many areas of agreement for the contemporary setting. In vocabulary, for instance, one finds a great number of words which are similar, and syntax can often be duplicated. To name just one similarity: although Dutch word order is more flexible, the basic structure of subject-verb-direct object is the same as in English. But here the differences probably concern us more, since they affect the translations. Many of the differences will become evident in the comparison of the two texts; I will therefore merely suggest a few matters which most strongly influence translation. Since English has lost most inflections, the same word can often serve different syntactic functions, thus producing opportunities for repetition and parallelism. If the translation has to alter the form of the

¹R. W. Zandvoort, English in The Netherlands (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1964).

²C. B. Van Haeringen, Nederlands tussen Duits en Engels (Den Haag: Servire, 1956?), p. 17.

root word to accommodate the foreign syntax, the parallelism will be diminished or lost. Because of the loss of inflection English tends to eliminate the final syllable of the Germanic word stock (Dutch and German: "werken"; English: "work"). This reduction of syllables naturally affects line length and meter considerably, and tends to produce masculine instead of feminine rhymes. Syntactically the English use of "do" for interrogative and negative sentences can set up patterns of repetition which will be lost in Dutch.

There are also some translation hazards which crop up especially in closely related languages. Words may look alike and even share a common etymology, but be different in semantic content. These "false friends," as they are sometimes called, are a temptation to the translator in his attempt to be faithful to the original. Shattuck, in discussing French and English, comments, "there could be no friends between a modern language and Egyptian, only larger and smaller degrees of approximated meaning. In our dealings with a closely related language, therefore, the great danger consists in regarding this intimacy as an unqualified advantage."¹ We shall see that translating from English into Dutch is also open to the hazard of false friends and that translators have not always escaped the pitfalls.

It would be somewhat difficult to arrange poets on a definitive scale, according to their difficulty of "translatability," since all would have their particular problems, but Eliot certainly presents a great challenge to the translator. He is an innovator of poetic idiom

¹Roger Shattuck, "Artificial Horizon: Translator as Navigator," in Arrowsmith and Shattuck, p. 147.

in the twentieth century, he has a wide range of stylistic versatility at any one time in his life, and he exhibits a steady poetic development throughout his career. Eliot, moreover, is even more characterized by his use of language than many other poets. Helen Gardner, using Eliot's own critical theories, suggests that his stature as a major poet is determined not primarily by his breadth of vision, but by his gift of language--of which his metrical sense is the most significant.¹ And the gift of language is more difficult to capture in translation than a vision of life.

Most of Eliot's poetry, four of the plays,² and a number of the essays have been translated into Dutch. This study is not an exhaustive analysis and critique of all the translations. Rather, I have selected certain passages to focus on a number of translation difficulties. The analysis will concern itself successively with the lexical and semantic, the poetic, and the socio-cultural elements, or, to use the terms introduced earlier, the linguistic context, the literary intertext, and the socio-cultural situation. A concluding section will be a comparative study of those poems which have multiple translations.³

¹Helen Gardner, The Art of T. S. Eliot (New York: Dutton, 1950, 1959), ch. 1.

²The Confidential Clerk was translated by H. W. J. M. Keuls for the Dutch stage performance, but was apparently not published.

³The principal source of translations is T. S. Eliot, GEDICHTEN, toneel en essays, ed. by Michel van der Plas (Hasselt, Belgium: HeideLand, 1962; series: Pantheon of the winners of the Nobel prize for literature). Citations from this volume will be indicated by G. T. E., followed by the page number. The edition of the English version is The Complete Poems and Plays (London: Faber and Faber, 1969); citations will be indicated by C. P. P. and the page number. For consecutive citations from short poems the page reference will be given only once.

Translation ProblemsLinguistic Problems

The departures at the linguistic level are of different kinds. The word-to-word change is the easiest to analyze. There are various causes for the changes from the exact foreign synonym. In some instances the target language may lack the proper word; at other times there may be a word with close verbal or root correspondence, but a formally more "distant" word may catch the intended meaning better. Among the examples to be cited there will be substitutions which are satisfactory or felicitous, while others do injustice to the original--either because of a hiatus in the target language or a translator's error.

Among changes in The Waste Land¹ which are defensible is Tiresius' lament "I walked among the lowest of the dead" which becomes "met het schuim der doden heb verkeerd."² "Schuim" (scum) is permissible if lowest indeed refers to degradation rather than hierarchy; (this rendition is a good example of translation often involving interpretation). The translation "kleine lui" is an apt one for "humble people".³ The phrase means more than small folk; it has the special connotation of working people of modest economic/social standing. An example of a more precise word in translation is found, perhaps, in "wij schuilden in de colonnade";⁴ the original has "stopped" which does not suggest "sought protection" as does "schuilden." In other examples, Madame

¹The Waste Land was translated by Theo van Baaren.

²C. P. P., p. 69; G. T. E., p. 83.

³Ibid., p. 70; p. 85. ⁴Ibid., p. 61; p. 76.

Sosostris' "wicked pair of cards" becomes "duivels" (devilish);¹ and the necktie, "rich and modest" of "Prufrock"² is "stemmig,"³ which has just the proper ring of fitting sobriety. In Murder in the Cathedral⁴ the "figure of God's purpose" is rendered as "mozaiek,"⁵ age and forgetfulness are not sweetened, but "verzacht" (softened, or mollified)⁶, and the somewhat anachronistic sightseers with guide books become "toeristen met Baedekers."⁷ A more descriptive word is substituted for the phrase ". . . in the thick light of dawn." The translation reads, ". . . in het troebele licht van de dageraad"; "troebele" means both "troubled" and "turbid."⁸

There are many other changes, however, which are much less satisfactory. Perhaps these are again looked at best when the examples are discussed in some detail, to suggest the difficulties which face the translator. The first example is a curious one. "I had not thought death had undone so many" is translated "Ik wist niet dat de dood zoveel had ontdaan."⁹ "Ontdaan" has a very close verbal resemblance to "undone," but usually means to dispose of or get rid of. Thus van Baaren succumbed to the temptation to use a word which looks and sounds like the original, but the destructive connotation of "undone" is sacrificed. This error is an example of what was earlier called the haz-

¹Ibid., p. 62; p. 77.

²"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" was translated by Martinus Nijhoff.

³C. P. P., p. 14; G. T. E., p. 68.

⁴Murder in the Cathedral was translated by Michel van der Plas.

⁵C. P. P., p. 271; G. T. E., p. 158.

⁶Ibid. ⁷Ibid., p. 281; p. 169.

⁸Ibid., p. 269; p. 156. ⁹Ibid., p. 62; p. 77.

ard of "false friends," of apparent similarities in related languages. In another instance the use of "false friends" would seem to be intentional (since the words in question are very elementary). "I am aware of the damp souls of housemaids / Sprouting despondently at area gates" is translated "Zie ik de klamme zielen der dienstboden / Land'rig ontluiken aan de keldergaten."¹ "Gates" would normally be translated by "hekken"; "keldergaten" are "basement openings." Apparently Binnendijk chose "gaten," because of its visual resemblance to "gates," justifying the choice by reference to the basements of line 1. In The Waste Land passage just discussed, "unreal city" is "stad der verbeelding" where the aura of threat is again lost, since "verbeelding" means "imagination." (In "The Fire Sermon" the same word is used, but in "What the Thunder Said" "unreal" is translated "onwerkelijk," which seems much closer).

Often the multiple meanings of a word cannot be captured. The English "know" is very broad and is translated into Dutch by at least two words, "kennen" and "weten" (cf. German: "kennen," "wissen"). In "omdat ik weet dat ik niet zal kennen," the repetition (so essential to Ash Wednesday)² of "Because I know I shall not know" is inevitably lost.³ The word "dissemble" means feign or deceive, but in the line "I who am here dissembled" the context allows for the additional meaning of "dis-assembled." The Dutch has "verborgen" (hidden), which is not a particularly good translation of the first meaning and of course

¹"Morning at the Window," translated by D. A. M. Binnendijk, in Kroniek van Kunst en Kùltuur, X (1949), p. 47. C. P. P., p. 27.

²Ash Wednesday was translated by Michel van der Plas.

³C. P. P., p. 89; G. T. E., p. 95.

lacks the possibility of the second.¹ The passage which begins "Datta: what have we given?" is ambiguous. Is the suggestion here only of more lust without love, or is there an intimation of genuine, honest passion? The word "awful" in "The awful daring of a moment's surrender" can carry both the meanings of horror or disgust and the older meaning of awe and admiration. However, "gruwelijk" suggests only the horror.²

Probably the most frequent discrepancy between the original and the translation arises out of different connotations. A number of words from The Waste Land illustrate this well. The opening line reads,

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of dead land, mixing.

The translation appears very close:

Wreedste der maanden is april, drijvend
seringen uit dood land, mengend.³

The word "drijvend" suggests pushing and forcing, but lacks the connotation of growth and fertility of "breeding," which is used ironically here in contrast to the later aridity. In "What the Thunder Said" the third figure "in a brown mantel, hooded" is mysterious, and perhaps receives a sinister aura by the sound association with the "hooded hordes" of destruction a few lines later. This association is not available in Dutch and is lost in the translation "in bruine mantel, met een kap" (hood), and "vermomde horden" (disguised hordes).⁴

The tone of a literary passage is established partly through the level of the vocabulary. The highly poetic passages of The Family Reunion⁵ are frequently at several removes from colloquial language and

¹Ibid., p. 91; p. 96. ²Ibid., p. 74; p. 89.

³Ibid., p. 61; p. 76. ⁴Ibid., p. 73; p. 88.

⁵The Family Reunion was translated by H. W. J. M. Keuls as De familie reunie (s'Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, 1957).

are heavily interspersed with Latinate words. Thus Harry speaks of the twilight "Where the dead stone is seen to be batrachian, / The aphyllous branch ophidian." The Dutch has a much more mundane "Waarin de dode steen een pad lijkt / En de bladerloze tak een slang." (Where the dead stone looks like a toad, and the leafless branch like a snake).¹ A similar failure to capture the proper tone occurs in the opening section of "A Game of Chess." Here the sense of richness and luxuriousness is suggested partly by the level and the sound of the words. Such words as "burnished," "candelabra," "unguent," "laquearia," "coffered ceiling" have a richness of tone which set it apart from colloquial language. In Dutch one cannot as readily suggest a formal level of speech by the use of Latinate words as in English, and words often have to serve at different levels. Thus the corresponding Dutch words in this passage ("gepolijste," "luchters," "zalf," "zoldering," "vakken,") are not per se formal words.²

Many of the translation difficulties encountered in the discussion of one-word synonyms also pertain to idiomatic expressions. One soon discovers that idioms are difficult to handle in translation.

It is easy to demonstrate that many idioms cannot be translated directly, and that one often must resort to a discursive statement which is less picturesque or metaphorical. Thus Thomas' description of "The raw nobility, whose manners matched their fingernails" is weakened to "wiens boersheid aan hun nagels was te zien" (Whose boorish-

¹C. P. P., p. 308; De familie reunie, p. 39.

²C. P. P., p. 64; G. T. E., p. 78.

ness could be seen from their nails).¹ Or again, when Prufrock contemplates wistfully about his lost opportunity, "To have bitten off the matter with a smile," the Dutch reads, "als ik de zaak had gebruskeerd met een lachend gezicht" (If I had brushed off the matter with a smiling face).² At times the change is very subtle. In The Family Reunion Downing discreetly refers to the drinking habits of Harry's wife: "I always thought that a very few cocktails / Went a long way with her Ladyship." The Dutch has the idiom ". . . dat een paar cocktails / Haar al een heel eind van streek brachten";³ the intent is the same, but now there is a more explicit reference to her Ladyship's irresponsible behavior.⁴

But it is noteworthy how the translators have often been able to substitute a Dutch idiomatic expression, rather than a prosaic circumlocution. In "Prufrock" a line reads "Neen, ik ben niet voor Prins Hamlet in de wieg gelegd" (No, I was not laid in the cradle as Prince Hamlet); this expression is an effective idiom for "No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be."⁵ Sympathy for the underdog becomes "sympathy . . . naar degene die het onderspit moet delven."⁶ Earlier, in the speeches of the First Tempter, van der Plas introduces several Dutch idioms:

¹Ibid., p. 258; p. 145. ²Ibid., p. 15; p. 69.

³C. P. P., p. 299; De familie reunie, p. 27.

⁴I shall not attempt to translate all the Dutch idioms back into English, since the effect would often be meaningless or ludicrous.

⁵C. P. P., p. 16; G. T. E., p. 70.

⁶Ibid., p. 276; p. 164.

My Lord, a nod is as good as a wink

Laten wij elkaar niet voor de gek houden

Your Lordship is too proud!

Uw heerschapp heeft het te hoog in zijn bol!

Leave well enough alone,
Or your goose may be cooked and eaten to the bone.

Maak je toch niet druk,
Of je word nog je eigen ongeluk.¹

Idioms are of course used frequently in colloquial speech. The café discussion about Lil and her husband is a good specimen of speech full of colloquialisms and slang. In many cases the Dutch matches the speech, not with literal translations, but with expressions of the same intent and flavor:

I didn't mince my words	'k wond er geen doekjes om
I swear	waarachtig
Something o' that, I said	Nou en of, zei ik
Others can pick and choose	andren hebben te kust en te keur
it won't be for lack of telling	zal het niet zijn door gebrek aan raad
The chemist said it would be all right	De drogist zei 't kwam in orde ²

In some cases the idioms in the two languages are very close. "To let sleeping dogs lie" is "slapende honden moet men niet wakker maken" (one must not awaken sleeping dogs),³ and "This is what the Communists make capital out of" becomes "Daar slaan de communisten munt uit" (make mint

¹Ibid., p. 247; p. 135. ²Ibid., pp. 65-66; pp. 80-81.

³Poems and Plays, pp. 297, 328; De familie reunie, pp. 23, 68.

from). Instead of letting the genie out of the bottle, the Dutch let the devil out of the box.¹

At times the translation is more idiomatic than the original. A prime example is The Cocktail Party. The sentences "Go away yourself!" and "Now I must be going," are rendered "Jij eruit trekken!" and "Nu moet ik er vandoor"; neither sentence uses the verb "go," but substitutes an idiom. For the short lines "Well, one can't be too careful / Before one tells a story," Nijhoff supplies two idioms: "Men moet altijd poolshoogte nemen / Voor men van wal steekt"; and "Alex knows all about Pan-Am-Eagle" becomes "Alex kent de Pan-Am-Eagle van haver tot gort."²

So far I have considered departures from the original largely in terms of the incompatibility of the two languages. In most cases the non-availability of an exact synonym or the need for a different idiom were the reasons for the discrepancy. Often the intended meaning was still approached. There are other discrepancies, however, which are less easily accounted for, and which disturb the original meaning unduly. The translator either took undue liberty with the text (often with better alternatives available), or he completely misread (and therefore mis-translated) the original text. Admittedly, the lines between 1) inadequate synonym, 2) undue liberty, and 3) outright error are rather fluid, but the three degrees of departure are often recognizable.

¹C. P. P., p. 361; G. T. E., p. 179.

²Ibid., pp. 358, 354, 431; pp. 176, 174, 244.

For instance, the word "construct" in ". . . having to construct something / Upon which to rejoice" (Ash Wednesday) is translated by "vinden" (to find).¹ The meaning of obtaining a substitute value is maintained, but "find" is an unnecessarily weak work for "construct." A similar weakening occurs in "Journey of the Magi," where "hard and bitter agony" is rendered as "onverbiddeijk einde" (inexorable end) which loses most of the force of the line.² Other examples of too free translation might include "doet vruchten rijpen" (makes fruit ripen) for "Send the sap shooting," "orgie" for "pleasure,"³ and "Nergens vind ik de galg" (I find the gallows nowhere), for "I do not find the Hanged Man."⁴

Other departures seem to go beyond liberties and as errors cause serious misreadings. The fine image in "Prufrock" "But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen" is strangely translated "Als een toverlantaarn wierp ik pogingen schetsmatig op een doek" (As a magic lantern I cast attempts as sketches on a screen). Another disturbing line is "Ik zag de dood, als een knecht, mijn jas nemen en verdwijnen" (I saw death, as a servant, take my coat and disappear). This is recognizable for "And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat and snicker";⁵ however, even though death for "eternal Footman" may be an acceptable interpretation, the metaphor is lost and "disappear" for "snicker" is inexcusable. No doubt Nijhoff wanted a rhyme with the previous line ("schijnen"), but since the lines are not

¹Ibid., p. 89; p. 95. ²Ibid., p. 104; p. 103.

³Ibid., pp. 247, 258; pp. 134, 145.

⁴Ibid., p. 62; p. 77. ⁵Ibid., p. 15; p. 69.

in consistent couplets, this forcing was unnecessary. Two consecutive lines in Murder also have errors which could have been readily avoided. The original reads:

Then I leave you to your fate.
I leave you to the pleasure of your higher vices.

Both lines are mis-translated: "fate" becomes "dromen" (dreams), and "vices" becomes "feesten" (feasts).¹ A final inexplicable substitute is the use of "acht" (eight) for ". . . on the final stroke of nine" (Waste Land).²

A more interesting sample of errors comprises those in which one can discern the cause of the mis-translation. In some cases Eliot's text is rather involved, and careless reading may produce errors. Thus in The Cocktail Party, when Edward is inventing his story about Lavinia's stay at an aunt's, Julia asks, "Her favourite aunt?" and Edward responds, "Her aunt's favourite niece" (that is, Lavinia is a favorite of the aunt). The translation reads, "Neen, een nicht daarvan" (that is, "No, Lavinia is staying with a niece or cousin of the aunt"). The mistake is perpetuated a few lines later, where "that aunt in Hampshire" is given as "die nicht van die tante in Hampshire." Earlier Julia had been discussing an acquaintance who ". . . had a remarkable sense of hearing-- / The only man I ever met who could hear the cry of bats." It does not appear that Julia is accentuating "man," and therefore one can substitute "person." However, the Dutch "man" or its plural never has the meaning of "person(s)," and Nijhoff reads the English in the same manner; thus the translation becomes "he had a very keen sense

¹Ibid., pp. 247-248; p. 135. ²Ibid., p. 62; p. 77.

of hearing for a man."¹ Here the error does not materially affect the meaning of the passage, but at times a line or passage may be altered significantly. In "Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider," "memories" is apparently mis-read as "memorials," since the Dutch has "grafstenen" (tombstones).² The disturbance of the seasons in East Coker II is given a strange twist when "And snowdrops writhing under feet" becomes "en sneeuw (snow) vertrappt onder voeten."³ The mistake would seem to have been avoidable, since Dutch has the flower, "sneeuw-klokje"; moreover, the mention of a flower in the next line should also have guided the translator.

When a word has several distinct meanings, the possibility of error is of course very likely. In the passage of The Cocktail Party just mentioned, Julia says, "I understand those tough old women," referring apparently to their hardness and longevity. This is translated as "Ik ken ze, die kleverige oude vrijsters." "Kleverig" means, literally, "sticky"; here it means, perhaps, "overly-attached." "Tough" is often translated as "taai," which in turn can mean both strong and sticky; apparently the second meaning was chosen and changed to "kleverig" -- a far remove from the original. With another error one can similarly speculate on the process of mis-translation. The traveller in "The Journey of the Magi" observes

Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.

In translation the hands become "handswerklieden" (artisans or ser-

¹Ibid., pp. 357, 355; pp. 177, 174. ²Ibid., p. 74; p. 89.

³Ibid., p. 178; p. 115. East Coker was translated by Michel van der Plas.

vants of manual labor) and the feet "voetknechten" (footservant?).¹ I presume that "hands" could mean servants, as in "farmhands," but this would be a somewhat unusual meaning, and the parallel use of "feet" in the next line virtually excludes the servant meaning (unless one stretches the meaning into a synecdoche). A third example of an error due to multiple meaning of a word is found in "Sever/The cord, shed the scale" (Murder). "Scale" can, of course, refer to either a weighing scale or animal scales; the Dutch "schaal" can have both these meanings, and can also mean "dish." The line reads "Stort leeg/de schaal, knip het koord door" (pour out or empty the scale . . .).² The meaning is not clear; the most likely reading is "empty the dish." However, the original suggests the shedding of a former life as a snake sheds its skin; this meaning cannot be derived from the translation. Finally, the word "ragged" usually refers to something being in tatters, "in rags," but in a different context it means "uneven," or "jagged." This latter meaning is intended in "I should have been a pair of ragged claws." The translation of Hawinkels, however, uses "voddige klauwen," which would be "claws in rags."³

Poetic Problems

As the previous section indicates, translation is often a challenging and perplexing affair, and departures and errors are often un-

¹Ibid., p. 103; p. 103. "Journey of the Magi" was translated by Martinus Nijhoff.

²Ibid., p. 247; p. 135.

³"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," translation by P. H. H. Hawinkels, Raam, XXXVI (1967), p. 11. C. P. P., p. 15.

avoidable. The changes contemplated so far have largely centered on diction and syntax; these changes can occur in both prose and poetry. However, in the translation of poetry the process is further complicated by such "poetic" matters as imagery and rhythm, which can be rendered in the target language only with great difficulty.

In an essay "On Translating Images" Bohuslav Ilek explores the difficulties of transplanting images from one language to another. The task is difficult because the poetic image " . . . is incorporated into a complex fabric of specific literary and aesthetic traditions and conventions." Frequently the translation is left out, or it is destroyed by explication, or a " . . . banal image is given in the place of a fresh and new one."¹

This is not to say that the translator cannot be successful in capturing images. Frequently he is, and the image in translation may retain the vigor of the original, and be compatible to the target language. A few lines from The Waste Land will illustrate:

. . . when the human engine waits
Like a taxi throbbing waiting.

. . . de menselijke machine wacht
als een taxi schuddend wacht.

Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit

Bergmond dood vol tanden tot spuwen niet in staat.²

The extended fog-cat metaphor from "Prufrock" is also sustained well.

The translation of "I have measured out my life with coffee spoons"

¹Bohuslav Ilek, "On Translating Images," in Holmes, ed., The Nature of Translation, pp. 136-137.

²C. P. P., pp. 68, 72; G. T. E., pp. 83, 87.

loses some of the rhythm, but the use of the diminutive further helps to suggest the triviality of the salon life: "ik heb met hun koffie lepeltjes mijn leven uitgemeten."¹ Another instance of both gain and loss in translation is the line "wortel en mortel zullen ogen en oren wegvreten." Since "vreten" suggests the eating of animals or uncouth eating, it accentuates the ravenous connotation of "Root and shoot shall eat our eyes and ears" (Murder). But "mortel" (mortar) has been substituted for "shoot" in order to rhyme with "wortel" (root).

Two more examples will show identical or similar images:

Sweet and cloying through the dark air
Falls the stifling scent of despair

becomes

De verstikkende stank van de wanhoop, om te walgen
zo zoet, komt ons in het donker overvallen.

(The stifling stench of despair, so sweet it makes
us sick, overpowers us in the dark).

The conflict between Thomas and King Henry is summarized in the phrase "Hoe kan er vrede / Ontstaan tussen hamer en aanbeeld?" which is a close rendering of "What peace can be found / To grow between the hammer and the anvil?"²

In many cases, however, the imagery is not as readily translated. Stylistic, syntactic, or idiomatic considerations may make the original image incompatible to the Dutch. The difference may be slight. Thus "sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells" changes to "oesterbars waar zaagsel de vloeren bedekt" (oyster bars where sawdust covers the

¹Ibid., p. 14; p. 68.

²Ibid., pp. 240, 257, 241; pp. 128, 145, 129.

floors; "Prufrock.")¹ The situation described remains the same, but the Dutch has lost the sense of insubstantiality which "sawdust restaurants" implies. A similar kind of explicitness subtly changes another metaphor. In

This is one moment,
But know that another
Shall pierce you, with a sudden painful joy.

the sword metaphor remains submerged, but in the translation the image is spelled out:

. . . Dit is een ogenblik,
maar weet dat een ander
u met een zwaard van onverwachte vreugde zal doorboren.

(another shall pierce you with a sword of unexpected joy).

Moreover, the oxymoron "painful joy" is also sacrificed (Murder).²

A very interesting shift occurs in the borrowing from Ecclesiastes 12 in Murder in the Cathedral. Eliot paraphrases

For who knows the end of good and evil?
Until the grinders cease.

If one is unacquainted with the Scriptural passage, "grinders" will probably denote "people who grind." However, the passage is usually interpreted as an extended metaphor of aging in which "grinders" also refers to molars. The English can carry both meanings, but the Dutch has to choose between "maaltanden" (molars) and a coined "maalster" or "mensen die malen." The translation reads "Tot the maaltanden stil staan" thus disallowing the surface meaning of "those who grind."³

In another instance I am not certain if the elimination of an

¹Ibid., p. 13; p. 67. ²Ibid., p. 271; p. 158.

³Ibid., p. 243; p. 131.

image is gain or loss. The Unidentified Guest in The Cocktail Party freely mixes his metaphors when discussing the loss of personality in terms of a medical operation:

. . . But stretched on the table,
You are a piece of furniture in a repair shop
For those who surround you, the masked actors:

The translation reads:

. . . Maar op de operatietafel
bent u een meubelstuk in een meubelfabriek
in de gehandschoende handen van de operator.

(But on the operation table you are a piece of
furniture in a furniture factory, in the
gloved hand of the operator).

The actors disappear; instead the intertwined images of a medical operation and a furniture shop are further extended in the gloved hand of the surgeon-furniture-repairman.

Elsewhere there are more drastic departures from the original. To "pick bones" in "A current under sea / Picked his bones in whispers" connotes cleansing, but also hints at malignancy and destructiveness, whereas "een stroming onder zee / wies (washed) fluistrend zijn gebeente" maintains only the cleansing connotation (Waste Land).² "Prufrock" also contains a number of striking images which are either changed or eliminated. "Streets that follow like a tedious argument / Of insidious intent" becomes "Straten die met boos opzet hun smerigheden herhalen," (Streets which with evil intent repeat their nastiness). The two-part metaphor

To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it toward some overwhelming question.

¹Ibid., pp. 362-363; p. 182.

²Ibid., p. 71; p. 85.

perhaps keeps the general meaning, but is changed radically:

Als ik het heelal als een noot had doen kraken
 onder de druk van een verpletterend vraagstuk.

(if I had cracked the universe like a nut under
 the pressure of a crushing question).

The (mock) heroic element is maintained, but the metaphor is changed
 and the second line loses most of its active tone.

Three other images are completely lost in translation:

To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet

om tegemoet te zien wat men ontmoeten gaat
 (to look forward to what one is going to meet)

I know the voices dying with a dying fall
 Beneath the music from a farther room.

ik ken hun klankloze stemmen die hun klankloze taal
 vermengen met muziek uit een aangrenzende kamer vandaan.
 (I know their toneless voices which mingle their tone-
 less speech with music from a neighboring room).

To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?

en het pover resultaat van mijn leven en streven presenteren?¹
 (and to present the meager result of my living and striving?)¹

In some ways the problem in regard to imagery is like that of the idiomatic expressions (which are often old metaphors and similes). Both are difficult to translate. However, it appears that an idiom can frequently be approximated by an alternative expression with roughly the same meaning. The more "original" imagery, however, if not directly translatable, is often rendered by a discursive phrase, rather than an alternate metaphor.

When discussing more specifically the sound of poetry, one often deals with somewhat elusive evidence. Rhyme or alliteration may

¹Ibid., pp. 13-15; pp. 67-69.

be easy to pinpoint, but what does the rhyme "do" for a passage? How will elimination of the rhyme in translation change the poetry? And even if the same lines rhyme, the sounds are nearly always different from the original; what effect does this change have? Not all readers will scan a passage in the same manner, nor will they necessarily agree on the significance of a certain rhythm. What happens if the translation adds a metrical foot to a line? How does one determine the tone of a poem? Can tone be translated into another language? These, I say, are rather elusive questions and perhaps not as open to analysis as those involving diction or metaphor. In the following discussion I sometimes merely register the differences between the original and the translation, without always being able to ascertain the full implications of the change.

It is a safe generalization to assert that regular rhymes are kept intact for most of the poetry. That is, the lines which rhyme in the original also rhyme in translation (though hardly ever with the corresponding sound). All the rhymes in "Prufrock," for example, are matched in the Dutch version, and the sonnet-like typist passage of The Waste Land follows the same rhyme scheme.

A more frequent practice of Eliot, however, is the use of irregular rhyme patterns. This practice frees the translator from a rigid sequence, since in most cases he will not try to rhyme the same lines; the rhyming of certain lines within a passage will adequately suggest the sound pattern of the original. Thus the lyric of East Coker II has a rhyme scheme, a a b b c d e f f g d h i a j i; the translation has, a b c d e d f a a g c a f g h i h.¹ The remainder

¹Ibid., pp. 178-179; p. 115.

of The Waste Land passage cited in the previous paragraph has occasional rhymes; so does the translation, but not for the same lines.¹ These examples can be readily multiplied from a great number of passages.

Murder in the Cathedral furnishes many rhymed lines. A few of these can be examined in some more detail. In a response of Thomas to the knights, the a b c d d c b a rhyme scheme is kept in the translation. In the reply of the knights the rhyming couplets are very effective:

Priest, you have spoken in peril of your life.
 Priest, you have spoken in danger of the knife
 Priest, you have spoken treachery and treason.
 Priest! traitor confirmed in malfeasance.

The rhymes accentuate the tone which is both ominous and slightly ludicrous. Here, however, the translation sacrifices the rhymes. A similar passage in the following scene is much stronger. There the knights' demands are punctuated with "excommunicated-arrogated-appropriated-violated," and the translation (although losing the multi-syllable effect) rhymes effectively with "geexcommuniceerd-zweert-teert-ontteert." A less successful passage is Thomas' last speech in Part I. The English has mostly rhyming couplets, but a considerable number of unrhymed lines as well. The translation, with one exception, produces all rhymed couplets, with some rather curious results: "pleasure" becomes "orgie," "curiosity," "odyssee," and "the lilac tree" a rather tortuous "seringenbloemen-tooi" (lilac-flowers-attire).² Van der Plas could have avoided these by taking his cue from the unrhymed lines--perhaps increasing

¹Ibid., p. 69; p. 83.

²Ibid., pp. 296, 275, 258; pp. 156, 162, 145.

these, rather than multiplying the rhymes.

Usually the translator will produce his own rhymes without regard to the sound of the original. However, at times the text may force him to rhyme with the original. An example is the retention of Michelangelo and the consequent need for an "o" to rhyme. Nijhoff coins a designation for the women with pretensions: "Mevrouw Zus en freule Zo" in order to get the "o" sound.¹ Hawinkels' solution of the same lines is much more drastic: he keeps "gaan" (go) as the end word and substitutes "Titiaan" for "Michelangelo"² ("Prufrock").

Internal rhyme is often neglected in the translations. Two memorable lines in Ash Wednesday read

No place of grace for those who avoid the face
No time to rejoice for those who walk among noise and deny
the voice.

The translation substitutes some assonance, but the rhymes are lost:

Geen plaats van genade voor hen die haar gelaat vermijden
Geen tijd van verblijden voor hen die wandelen in rumoer
en de stem ontkennen.³

Elsewhere internal rhyme is kept. In Nijhoff's "Prufrock" "decisions and revisions" become "eden en zekerheden," "days and ways" "leven en streven," and a rhyme is gained in "Hun ogen, die je fixeren en determineren" for "The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase."⁴

With all the other demands for fidelity on the translator, it is understandable that assonance and alliteration will frequently be

¹Ibid., p. 13; p. 67.

²Hawinkels, Raam, XXXVI, p. 9.

³C. P. P., p. 96; G. T. E., p. 95.

⁴Ibid., p. 14; p. 68.

sacrificed. The last line cited, for example, although it compensates with a rhyme, loses the alliteration of "fix-formulated-phrase." Or again, Prufrock's "Do I dare / Disturb the universe?" is weakened by the loss of alliteration. (These lines, incidentally, are probably the most circumlocutory of all the translations. They read, "Zal ik het wagen te vertellen / en het heelal te slingeren uit zijn gareel?" (Do I dare to tell and thus to fling the universe out of its harness?)¹ In East Coker I "flesh, fur and faeces" is rendered word for word as "vlees is en pels en faeces," with the loss of an "f" sound; the "f" could have been maintained with the use of the word "vacht" which is another translation for fur.²

But it may be more charitable to cite some instances where the Dutch has effectively transmitted alliteration, sometimes even producing the same sounds as in English. Murder in the Cathedral has these lines:

dispelling dismay and doubt	ontzetting en ontzekerheid ver- drijven
still and stifling the air	still en verstikkend de lucht
evasive flank of the fish	de vluchtende flank van de vis. ³

And elsewhere alliteration is also kept:

faces sneer and snarl	gezichten . . . grijzen en grauwen. ⁴
trees flower, and springs flow	bomen bloeien en bronnen vloeien. ⁵

¹Ibid. ²Ibid., p. 177; p. 113.

³Ibid., pp. 242, 263, 270; pp. 130, 150, 157.

⁴Ibid., p. 72; p. 87. ⁵Ibid., p. 89; p. 88.

With the meter of the poems there is again a mixed pattern of shortcomings and successes. Some lines which (partly through familiarity perhaps) seem very felicitous, are disappointing in translation; the disappointment arises largely because the rhythm has been disturbed:

Ill the wind, ill the time, uncertain the profit, certain
the danger.

De wind is kwaadgezind, de tijd kwaadgezind, elk voordeel on-
zekēr, mār zekēr hēt gēvaar¹ (Murder).

And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory

De kamelēn, diē hun knieēn ontveldēn, hun hoeven bēzeerdēn,
werdēn onhandēlbaar² ("Journey of the Magi").

Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.

Hoe dat vraagstuk luidt doet niet ter zake.
Laat ons gaan en onze visite maken³ ("Prufrock").

But other passages suggest well the rhythm of the original.

One can cite the four-beat lines from Murder in the Cathedral:

Is woven like a pattern of living worms
In the guts of the women of Canterbury.

Wōrd gēweefd als eēn patroon vān levēndē wormēn
in dē darmēn vān dē vrouwēn vān Kantēlberg.⁴

The sonnet in "The Fire Sermon" cited earlier also maintains the rhythm of the original faithfully, and the dance passage of East Coker I generally keeps the same lilting cadence, coupled with the sense of finality suggested by the last two accents:

The time of milking and the time of harvest
The time of the coupling of man and woman
And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.
Eating and drinking. Dung and death.

¹Ibid., p. 243; p. 131. ²Ibid., p. 103; p. 103.

³Ibid., p. 13; p. 67. ⁴Ibid., p. 270; p. 157.

de tijd van het melken en de tijd van de oogst
 de tijd van het paren van man en vrouw
 en dat van dieren. Voeten rijkend en vallend.
 Eten en drinken. Drek en dood.

One very carefully structured passage is "The wounded surgeon" lyric in East Coker. The predominant meter is iambic, with four stresses in lines 1-3, five in line 4, and six in line 5. The translation follows the metrical design very closely. The last stanza will demonstrate the similarity:

Het bloed is nog je enige drank,
 het bloedig vlees al wat je voedt;
 en toch geloof je, wars van dank,
 dat je gezond bent, levend vlees en bloed,²
 en toch, en toch noemen wij deze Vrijdag goed.

Another selection in which the meter helps to control the meaning is a Chorus passage in Murder. The short, measured lines suggest the emotional numbness which has gripped the women:

Numb the hand and dry the eyelid,
 Still the horror, but more horror
 Than when tearing in the belly.

The Dutch adds some syllables, but the four-beat rhythm is kept throughout. The last stanza reads:

Meer dan stappen in de gangen
 meer dan schaduwēn op de drempel,
 meer dan furien in 't portaal.

Socio-cultural Problems

In certain respects the socio-cultural elements of poetry do not form as pervasive a translation problem as do the linguistic and literary factors. For each poem the translator has to make a decision

¹Ibid., p. 178; p. 114. ²Ibid., p. 182; p. 119

³Ibid., p. 272; p. 159.

about the proper verse form, and the question of rhythm has to be resolved for every line. Linguistic choices are inescapable for every question of syntax and for each individual word. Socio-cultural considerations, however, come to the fore only at those points where the cultures differ; and the closer the cultural affinity, the less the need for cultural translation.

In many aspects of its life and tradition Holland shows a broad stratum of similarity with England and America. As random examples one might cite the following: a somewhat parallel medieval period in English and Dutch history; a money rather than a barter system; the pervasive influence of the Christian religion; an industrial society; a taste which considers lobster a delicacy, dogs unfit for human consumption, and the rat a vicious, reprehensible animal; a democratic form of government with a limited monarchy; an identical calendar. Given the many areas of similarity, much of Eliot's poetry will be readily grasped in terms of cultural background. Thus when Amy in The Family Reunion complains about the long, dark, dreary winter, the Dutch will immediately empathize with her complaint. Or, at a less mundane level, Eliot's conception of the Incarnation will be understood by most Dutch readers.

Another factor which facilitates trans-cultural understanding is the nature of at least part of Eliot's poetry. Often the focus is not Anglo-American, but international or universal. As central themes in Eliot one might single out his pre-occupation with the modern city, the relation of past to present, and the importance of the Christian faith. In these themes Eliot no doubt points to London, or to his English ancestors, or to the religious community of Little Gidding. At

the same time, however, the city, the significance of time, and Christianity have broader implications, and will find equivalent or parallel expression in Dutch culture.

Thus far I have stressed the similarities of English and Dutch culture which aid the translation of Eliot's poetry into Dutch. Of course, a recognition of the similarities does not obscure the substantial differences between the cultures, and the realization that these differences, when they emerge in the poetry, can confront the translator with his most stubborn problems. Whenever there is a local reference, the translator has to decide if he ought to "exoticize," that is, to retain the local reference. If he does, he runs the risk of calling undue attention to the reference, which is now foreign in the target language, and of confusing the reader with an unfamiliar item.

When discussing the problems of exoticizing versus naturalizing, Holmes observes that the translator will not necessarily be consistent in his choices; he may naturalize at the linguistic level, but exoticize at the socio-cultural.¹ In the Eliot translations it will be seen that there is no consistency even at the one level. The translator may retain all local references from the original, but at a given moment find it necessary to substitute with an item from the target culture.

Socio-cultural differences appear first, at what one may call, the everyday level. Money designations, meals, newspapers, clothing

¹Holmes, Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters, II, pp. 68-70.

are but some of the items which are frequently not identical even in cultures as closely related as in England and The Netherlands. I shall illustrate the translator's dilemmas with some varied examples. Foods can often be easily translated from English into Dutch, but there are several instances of changes. For three of these the changes may have been occasioned as much by prosodic as culinary considerations. In "The Hippopotamus" the lines

But fruits of pomegranates and peach
Refresh the Church from over sea

are translated by Nijhoff as,

maar er keert geen schip uit de oceaan
of de Kerk krijgt rijst en muskaat.

Rice and nutmeg are a far cry from pomegranates and peaches, and not particularly well-chosen for "refreshment." However, they maintain the "from over sea" connotation, and were apparently chosen partly to obtain a rhyming word with "straat" from line 2. The Hawinkels version of "Prufrock" takes similar liberties. ". . . after tea and cakes and ices" is rendered ". . . na de thee, de cake en de olijven."² Olives are, I believe, no more common with tea in The Netherlands than in England, and the choice seems determined solely by the need for a rhyme with "drijven" in the next line. A happier solution is found in "Coriolan I" "Crumpets" are certainly an English specialty and are not found in The Netherlands. The translation reads "croquetten," which are a bread and meat pastry; the food item is rather close, and "croquetten" provides a suitable rhyme with "trompetten," just as "crum-

¹C. P. P., p. 41; G. T. E., p. 74.

²C. P. P., p. 15; Hawinkels, Raam, XXVI, p. 11.

pets" rhymes with "trumpets."¹

Some other common items can be listed more briefly. The pounds and shillings of "Coriolan II"² are retained, but the Stock Exchange Gazette of East Coker is changed to Economisch Dagblad.³ Since Holland does not have women's colleges, the translation uses a circumlocutory "school for women students," "half-term" becomes "at Christmas,"⁴ and the "English Essay" is translated by "the Book of the Year";⁵ (not a very good solution, since the English Essay is associated with schools, whereas Book of the Year is not). Names of hotels and restaurants are often maintained, but in The Cocktail Party the "Saffron Monkey" becomes "De Gele Aap,"⁶ and in The Elder Statesman "at the George" is changed to "a small hotel."⁷ An understandable error occurs in The Family Reunion. Winchell explains that the injured John is "at the Arms"; this is translated by "we took him to the police station."⁸ At a more subtle level there is, for example, the nursery rhyme. "London Bridge is falling down," and "Here we go round the prickly pear" present no great translation difficulty, but the association which every English-speaking reader has is completely lost.

¹C. P. P., p. 128; G. T. E., p. 107.

²Ibid., p. 129; p. 108. ³Ibid., p. 180; p. 117.

⁴C. P. P., pp. 331, 318; De familie reunie, pp. 71, 53.

⁵C. P. P., p. 256; G. T. E., p. 143.

⁶Ibid., p. 430; p. 244.

⁷C. P. P., p. 565; The Elder Statesman, translated by H. W. J. M. Keuls as Een staatsman van verdienste ('s Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, 1959), p. 68.

⁸C. P. P., p. 322; De familie reunie, p. 59.

Some other categories of socio-cultural concepts are also problematic. English plants and animals may present difficulties if they are not found in The Netherlands, or if they are less common. "Goldenrod" mistakenly becomes "ranonkel" which belongs to the crowfoot rather than the aster family (Ash Wednesday).¹ For "hummingbird" the dictionary lists "kolibrie," and that is the name chosen in "Marina";² however, the "kolibrie" is unfamiliar to most Dutchmen, and thus the unfamiliarity makes the reference different, even though it is lexically and botanically correct. Elsewhere sacrifices are made in terms of sound or association. "Jackal, jackass, jackdaw" loses its repetition in "jackal, kaw, ezel"³ (Murder). "Yew" is impoverished to "boom" (tree),⁴ probably because the proper name "taxus boom" has three syllables and because it has a much more scientific ring than does "yew" (Ash Wednesday). An error is "vleermuis" (bat) for "bullbat"⁵--an error which could have been avoided by the consideration that all other animals cataloged in "Cape Ann" are birds. Finally, the "hyacinths" of The Waste Land are given a Dutch twist, when "the hyacinth garden" becomes "de bollenvelden" (literally, "the flower-bulb fields," but with the connotation of "tulip fields.")⁶

Geographical designations are usually kept unchanged; few modern translators would, I believe, substitute place names from the translation country, even though the lack of familiarity will again put the

¹C. P. P., p. 98; G. T. E., p. 101.

²Ibid., p. 109; p. 105. ³Ibid., p. 269; p. 156.

⁴Ibid., p. 98; p. 101. ⁵Ibid., p. 142; p. 111.

⁶Ibid., p. 62; p. 77.

foreign reader at a disadvantage. The London streets and districts of the "Fire Sermon" and Burnt Norton III, for example, will normally carry no associations for many Dutch readers. Neither do landmarks such as "Saint Mary Woolnoth,"¹ or the designation "Bradford millionaire"² (Waste Land). If the reference is likely to be completely meaningless to the foreign reader, the translator can resort to a descriptive phrase; thus Lord Claverton's reference to Mrs. Carghill's acting career ("Before your name appeared in very large letters / In Shaftesbury Ave.") is changed to "large print on the playbills" (The Elder Statesman).³ At one point a geographical designation is added. "When Lil's husband got demobbed" now reads "when Lily's husband came back from France"⁴--probably an unnecessary emendation (Waste Land). Names are occasionally written in the Dutch spelling: "Saint Mary Woolnoth" becomes "Sint . . .," "Canterbury" "Kantelberg," and "Thames" is changed to "Theems" (although "Lower Thames Street" is left unchanged).

One also encounters difficulties in the translation of titles and forms of address. Here again the tendency is to retain the original whenever possible. In The Family Reunion, The Cocktail Party, and The Elder Statesman the forms Sir, Mr., Mrs., Lady, Peer, Duke are kept unchanged; only Lady- and Lordship are changed to an awkward "Lady- and Lordschap." The orders in "Coriolan II" are partly translated, for ex-

¹Ibid. ²Ibid., p. 68; p. 83.

³C. P. P., p. 552; De familie reunie, p. 48.

⁴C. P. P., p. 65; G. T. E., p. 80.

ample, into "Ridders van het Britse Rijk," and "Broeders van de Orde van Bath."¹

It has become a truism of Eliot criticism that Eliot is one of the most allusive poets, and that many of his allusions suffer from obscurity. Even though it is probably true that one can read the poetry profitably without reference to all the quoted and borrowed passages, most readers will at some time avail themselves of the Quellenforschung supplied, for example, by Grover Smith. In certain respects, therefore, the foreign reader is at no greater disadvantage than the English or American, since few would be able to recognize or interpret "Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyatta," and similar lines, without a gloss. For the interpretation of much of Eliot's poetry, then, a general background in literary, religious, and historical studies is more important than a specifically English education.

Nevertheless, Eliot remains an American-English poet, and most Dutch readers will lack the store of historical and literary background which the English-speaking reader has acquired. It will not be necessary to recite the many allusions to English history and literature which may escape the foreign reader. Let me indicate just a few by way of illustration. An obvious example is Murder in the Cathedral. The particular period in history, the struggle between the throne and the church, the position of the nobility, and Anglo-French relations form a backdrop which cannot be readily assumed for a Dutch audience. Or again, the Elizabeth and Leicester scene in The Waste Land can be understood fully only with some knowledge of Queen Elizabeth's reign. At

¹Ibid., p. 129; p. 108.

times both native and foreign reader may need an explanatory note. The "broken king" of Little Gidding¹ and "Matthew and Waldo" of "Cousin Nancy"² may have to be identified for English and American readers; however, mere identification should be sufficient for the native reader, whereas the Dutch will need further amplification. Quotations or partial quotations are similarly elusive. "April is the cruellest month"³ and "When lovely woman stoops to folly"⁴ can be translated satisfactorily, but for most Dutch readers the echoes of Chaucer and Goldsmith will be largely lost, both in the wording and in the recollection.

After considering a number of translation problems as illustrated from selected passages, it will perhaps be helpful to concentrate on one passage to highlight the several factors as they are operative simultaneously. I have chosen the opening section of "The Fire Sermon" as a "fair sample."⁵ This passage is not as complex as some others in The Waste Land, and it contains a variety of poetic techniques; the translation, moreover, is very competent. Since I have frequently illustrated the translation process in its weaknesses and departures from the original, it will be well to conclude with a consideration of a strong passage--although here again some shortcomings are inevitable.

The Dutch approximates very closely the "meaning" of the original, as the word-by-word translation back into English indicates. There are some differences, however. "Vertrokken" denotes "departed,"

¹C. P. P., p. 192.

²Ibid., p. 30. ³Ibid., p. 61.

⁴Ibid., p. 67. ⁵Ibid., pp. 67, 82.

VUURREDE

1 De tent der stromen is gebroken: 't loof met laatste vingers klampt
 2 zich vast en zinkt in 't natte oeverslijk. De wind
 3 doorkruist de bruine landen, ongehoord. De nimfen zijn vertrokken.
 4 Lieflijke Theems, stroom zacht, tot ik eindig mijn zang.
 5 Geen lege flessen draagt de stroom, geen boterhampapieren.
 6 zakdoeken van zijde, dozen, sigarettepeukjes,
 7 of andere getuigen van een zomernacht. De nimfen zijn vertrokken.
 8 Hun vrienden ook, de luiierende zoons van grote zakenlui;
 9 vertrokken, zonder achterlating van adres.
 10 Aan de waatren van Lemman zat ik terneer en weende . . .
 11 Lieflijke Theems, stroomzacht, tot ik eindig mijn zang,
 12 lieflijke Theems, stroom zacht, want ik spreek niet luid noch lang.
 13 Maar achter mijn rug in koude vlagen hoor
 14 ik beendren raatlen, en grinniken gespreid van oor tot oor
 15 Een rat kroop zachtjes door de vegetatie
 16 zijn buik vol slijm over de oever slepend
 17 terwijl ik viste in het grauw kanaal
 18 achter de gasfabriek een winteravond
 19 de ondergang bepeinzend van mijn broeder, de koning.
 20 en peinzend over de dood van de koning, mijn vader, voor hem.
 21 Witte lijven naakt op lage natte grond
 22 en beendren liggend op een vliering, klein, laag, droog,
 23 krakend enkel, jaar op jaar, van rattepoten.
 24 Maar achter mij hoor ik een claxon stoten
 25 en soms komt er een motor gonzend aan getoerd.
 26 die in de lente Sweeney naar mevrouw Porter voert.

FIRE ORATION

1 The tent of the streams is broken; the foliage with last fingers
 2 tightly and sinks into the wet bank-mud. The wind (clutches
 3 crosses through the brown lands, unheard. The nymphs have left
 4 Dear (sweet) Thames, run softly, until I end my song.
 5 No empty bottles carries the stream, no sandwich papers,
 6 handkerchiefs of silk, boxes, cigarette butts,
 7 or other testimony of a summer night. The nymphs have left.
 8 Their friends also, the loitering sons of big businessmen;
 9 Left, without notification of address.
 10 At the waters of Lemman I sat down and wept . . .
 11 Dear (sweet) Thames, run softly, until I end my song,
 12 Dear (sweet) Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud nor long.
 13 But behind my back in cold gusts I hear
 14 Bones rattle, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.
 15 A rat crept softly through the vegetation
 16 its belly full of slime dragging over the bank
 17 While I was fishing in the drab canal
 18 behind the gasfactory (on) a winter evening
 19 musing (upon) the ruin of my brother, the king,
 20 and musing on the death of the king, my father, before him.
 21 White bodies naked on the low wet ground
 22 and bones lying in an attic, small, low, dry,
 23 rattling (creaking) only, year by year, from rats' feet.
 24 But behind me I hear a horn sound
 25 and sometimes a motor comes driving along, humming,
 26 which in the spring takes Sweeney to Mrs. Porter.

but lacks the slightly archaic and formal tone; "stroom" is used, even though "rivier" would be closer; "luierende" is close to "loitering," but since the base word is "lui" (lazy) it has a slightly different connotation; "heirs" and "city directors" are both more formal than "zoons" and "zakenlui"; "blast" is more explosive than "vlagen." "Grauw" is a good word--it suggests a drab, dirty grey; both "wreck" and "ondergang" can refer to a ship-wreck as well as to more general ruin; "vochtig" would normally be used as a synonym for "damp."

The sentence structure also follows the original rather closely. The repetition of "peinzend" in line 20 is probably not necessary, and lengthens that line uncomfortably. "But at my back" is translated slightly differently (11, 13, and 24), thus losing some of the parallelism. Lines 24-26 add material and disturb the original construction considerably.

The rhythm of the poem is again difficult to capture, and as in previous examples there is a tendency to lengthen the lines. The scansion of a few lines will visually illustrate the difference:

- 1 The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf
 De tent der stromen is gebroken: 't loof met laatste vingers
 klampt
- 2 Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
 zich vast en zinkt in 't natte oeverslijk. De wind
- 3 Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed
 doorkruist de bruine landen, ongehoord. De nimfen zijn vertrokken.
- 15 A rat crept softly through the vegetation
 Een rat kroop zachtjes door de vegetatie
- 16 Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
 zijn buik vol slijm over de oever slepend

- / - / - - - / - /
 17 While I was fishing in the dull canal
 - / - / - - - / - - /
 terwijl ik viste in het grauwe kanaal.

In some of these lines, as in others of the passage, the translation increases both the line length and the accents. In lines 1-14 the difference is not always noticeable, since the original line fluctuates between five and seven feet; however, many of the lines 15-26 have a rather regular iambic pentameter, and this is often lost in the translation. Recollecting again the thesis of Miss Gardner that Eliot's principal significance may well be his metrical virtuosity, and the fact that his verse reflects an interaction with earlier English poetry, will demonstrate that this dimension of the poem is manqué.

In many ways the tone is transmitted well in the translation. The "Sweet Thames" lines are perhaps not quite as melodious in the Dutch, but certainly the contrasts between the idyllic, resonant pastoral scene and the stale horror of the modern are suggested very vividly. The "nimfen" and "Lieflijke Theems," and the "waatren van Leman" are in ironic juxtaposition with the "sigarettepeukjes," "een rat . . . zijn buik vol slijm," and "witte lijven naakt op lage natte grond."

The socio-cultural translation difficulties in the passage are not numerous, but some are troublesome. The lack of personal acquaintance with the Thames may be a disadvantage for the reader, but there are proportionately probably more of the Dutch than American readers of The Waste Land who have seen the Thames. The Thames associations for the Dutch would not necessarily be the same as for the British, but there are vivid historical recollections from the Dutch-English naval battles of the seventeenth century. Also, the notion of a syl-

is not significantly different. Even though Nijhoff has more of a tendency to increase the number of syllables, the number of accents in both is often the same as in the original. A scanning of the first three lines will demonstrate the attempt to achieve the same rhythmic pattern:¹

- 1 Let us go then, you and I,
 Laat ons gaan, jij en ik, laat ons gaan,
 Kom, dan gaan we, jij en ik,
- 2 When the evening is spread out against the sky
 nu de avond zich strekt langs de hemelbaan
 Als de avond langs de hemel ligt
- 3 Like a patient etherized upon a table;
 als een patient onder narcose op een operatietafel
 zoals een patient onder narcose op tafel,

In other respects there is alternating gain and loss between the two versions. Hawinkels' substitutions of "Titiaan" for "Michelangelo" and of "olives" for "ices" (to achieve rhymes) were already mentioned. Eliot's "indecisions . . . visions and revisions" is difficult to maintain. Hawinkels is closer to the intention with "geweifel . . . visies en . . . twijfel" (hesitation, visions and doubt), but Nijhoff's "onzekerheden . . . gebeden en eden" (uncertainties, prayers and oaths) captures the rhymes better. The repetition of "Do I dare?" and "Do I dare?" is better in Hawinkels' more literal "Durf ik het aan?" en "Durf ik het aan?" than in Nijhoff's "Zal ik het wagen?" en "Zal ik het vertellen?"

¹For the scanning I have indicated a three-level stress, in order to compare the rhythm more accurately: /= primary accent; X= secondary accent; -= unaccented. The first translation is Nijhoff's, the second Hawinkels'.

(Shall I risk it? and Shall I tell it?), which is not as accurate, loses the repetition, and gains more syllables.

In capturing the proper semantic nuance, Nijhoff is more precise in the line "To lead you to an overwhelming question." He reads, "Bij een levensvraagstuk dat ons verpletterd . . ." (a fundamental question which crushes us), thus keeping the sense of the magnitude and the awesomeness of the question; this notion is lost in Hawinkels' "met een levensvraag," which in effect eliminates "overwhelming." Other examples of superior translations of Nijhoff are "drab" (dreglike water) over "water" for "the pools that stand in drains," and "Dus wat matig ik me aan" for "And how should I presume?" which is much closer than "En hoe kom ik aan die energie?" (How shall I get the energy?) Hawinkels, however, maintains the "peukjes" (cigarette butts) of "To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?" which Nijhoff describes with a weak "present the poor result of my living and striving." "The eternal Footman" who "snickers" becomes "death as a servant" who "disappears" in Nijhoff. Hawinkels follows the original very closely: "En ik de eeuwige Lakei m'n jas zien ophouden, en gniffelen." One word which, in the nature of a "false friend" gives difficulty to both translators is "flicker" in "I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker." In English the word usually means to flutter, ready to go out. Thus Eliot here stresses the waning, the disappearance of Prufrock's potential glory. In Dutch, especially when used with "op-," "flikkeren" often means to shine brightly for a moment. Hawinkels indeed uses "opflikkeren" to suggest a momentary brightness, and Nijhoff translates explicitly, "At moments I saw the day of my glory shine."

In "The Journey of the Magi" one can compare Nijhoff's translation with that of the poet Bert Voeten, who also translated several other poems.¹ The principal difference here lies in Voeten's repeated attempts to echo Eliot verbally and visually, whereas Nijhoff is more concerned with crafting an independent Dutch poem. A few examples will demonstrate how Voeten strives for verbal and syntactic resemblances whenever possible; (the first translation is Voeten's):

The ways deep and the weather sharp

De wegen diep en de wind scherp

De wegen modderig, het weer guur.

A hard time we had of it

Een harde tijd was het voor ons

het was een ellendige tocht.

With the voices in our ears, saying

Met de stemmen in onze oren, zeggend

en hoorden gedurende in onze oren zingende stemmen,
zeggend.

Voeten tries too hard, I believe, to imitate the original. The expression, "Een harde tijd" is understandable in the context, but is not idiomatic Dutch. Also, the frequent use of the progressive, which is natural in English, sounds forced in Dutch. Nijhoff's bolder efforts to provide Dutch idiom and syntax is generally to be preferred. However, some of his changes are unnecessary. Eliot's repetition of "and" in

¹C. P. P., pp. 103-104; Nijhoff translation, G. T. E., pp. 103-104; Voeten translation in Bert Voeten, De Ammonshoorn (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 1949), pp. 56-57.

the first part (twelve times) is a purposeful connective device which provides a cumulative effect of heaped on difficulties. Nijhoff eliminates nearly all of the "and's." Elsewhere he is too discursive, and the lines become uncomfortably long. Thus, "And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory," becomes "De kamelen, die hun knieën ontvelden, hun hoeven bezeerden, werden onhandelbaar" (the camels, which skinned their knees, and hurt their hoofs, became unmanageable).

Nijhoff's error (cited earlier) of translating "hands" and "feet" by "artisans" and "footservants" is only partly avoided by Voeten who has "knechts" (laborers) and "voeten" (feet). The ambiguous last line is kept intact by Voeten, so that "another death" may point both to Christ's death and to the speaker's own death. Nijhoff disallows the first meaning by translating "I shall be glad when I die again."

In another translation of Voeten which can be compared to an alternate translation, he does not strive for the same kind of verbal resemblances. His translation of "Morning at the Window" and that of D. A. M. Binnendijk¹ are not as strongly differentiated as are some of the other paired translations. Among the differences are the renditions of "trampled edges of the street." "Trampled" here probably refers to worn down and broken sidewalk curbs, but it also suggests a state of "metaphysical" decay. Binnendijk's "afgetrapte" is a literal translation which carries both meanings, but Voeten's "gore" (dingy) has only the second meaning. In the second stanza Binnendijk's "verwongen gelaten" is again a near-literal translation of "twisted faces,"

¹C. P. P., p. 27; Voeten translation, in *De Ammonshoorn*, p. 53; Binnendijk translation, *Kroniek van Kunst en Kultuur*, X (1949), p. 47.

and is both more accurate and stronger than Voeten's "grimassen." Voeten's change of "a passer-by with muddy skirts" into "a man with muddy trousers" is unnecessary. Eliot's passer-by is obviously feminine, and nothing is gained by changing the sex. The only preference for Voeten's version is in line 8, where the "aimless smile" remains intact, whereas Binnendijk reads, "a smile which hovers aimlessly."

No other poems have, I believe, multiple translations. However, two fragments of East Coker can be compared to van der Plas' version in the Pantheon edition. The first thirteen lines are translated by A. K. Rottiers¹. His translation is generally no improvement over van der Plas'. Actually the two are rather similar, with many identical phrases. Line 4 of Rottiers adds "where they stood," and thus lengthens the line unnecessarily. He apparently misreads "tattered arras," which is translated "kreupele dakweefsel" (literally: lame roofweaving; perhaps: tattered roof). One wonders if Rottiers took a (false) cue from line 11, where "pane" might suggest "(dak)pan" (rooftile). Both translators render the repeated "to" of lines 5 and 6 by "voor." "Voor" is often the equivalent of "for" and "naar" of "to"; "naar" would have better captured Eliot's intention of cyclic transmutation.

Most of East Coker III (beginning with line 12) was printed anonymously with an article on Eliot by St. John Blanchard Nixon.²

¹C. P. P., p. 177; van der Plas translation, G. T. E. p. 113; Rottiers translation, Vlaamse Gids, XLIX (1965), p. 151.

²C. P. P., pp. 180-181; van der Plas translation, G. T. E., pp. 117-118; anon. translation, Vrij Nederland, 13 November, 1948, p. 7.

As elsewhere in the Four Quartets repetition is an important structural device, and both translators have retained the repetitions in most cases. The Vrij Nederland version loses one "hope" in line 24 with the reading "Want hij die hoopt, verwacht het verkeerde . . ." (For he who hopes, expects the wrong thing); van der Plas is more accurate and retains the repetition with "want hoop zou hoop op het verkeerde zijn . . ." The opposite happens in line 22. ". . . the mind is conscious but conscious of nothing--" is translated by van der Plas ". . . de geest zich het niets bewust is--" (the mind which is conscious of nothingness), but the other translation has a closer ". . . de geest bewust is maar bewust van niets." The positional value of "hope," "love," and "faith" at the end of lines 23-25 is maintained by both versions. The predominance of the "o" sounds in lines 15-19 is also captured to some extent by both.

Neither "angst" (fear, van der Plas) nor "schrik" (fright) is strong enough for terror. Vrij Nederland's "donker" (dark and Darkness) is preferable over van der Plas' "nacht" (night), although Vrij Nederland sometimes substitutes with the synonym "duister," thus losing some repetition. "Requiring" of line 32 is problematic. Apparently "requiring" here means "to stand in need of," or, to paraphrase the line, "agony is needed for the completion of ecstasy." Vrij Nederland's "asks for" is therefore closer than van der Plas' "desiring."

The tone of the last segment is perhaps not uniform. The tone is largely informal and the language colloquial, but the repetitions, and words such as "ecstasy" and "dispossess" lend a more formal aura. The translations have each accentuated one of the two elements. Van der Plas has made his translation more informal than the original, es-

pecially by his use of the personal pronoun "je" (like "tu" in French and "du" in German). Vrij Nederland has stressed the formal element by using "gij" which, although not completely archaic, comes close to the English "thou." A better choice for both would have been the polite form "U" (French "vous"; German "Sie").

Comparisons between the translators are rather difficult to make (other than those based on double translations). The translation demands of the several poems are often different, and the attacks and solutions therefore not always comparable. One generalization can probably be made in comparing Nijhoff to the other translators. His work bears more of a personal stamp than that of the others. In The Cocktail Party he is highly idiomatic, and in the poems he departs further from the original in words, syntax, and prosody. More frequently than with the other translators one can demonstrate these departures to be errors--probably caused by lapses in the comprehension of English. But at other times the departures are bold, successful recreations which transmute the English into Dutch poems. Of the Dutch poets who have translated Eliot, Nijhoff is certainly the most accomplished, ranking as one of the most significant in modern Dutch poetry. No doubt his eminence as a poet has influenced his translations, and his own voice as well as Eliot's sounds in the translation.

Conclusion

In trying to determine the cause for the difficulties of translation cited above, one might wonder if English and Dutch are particularly ill-matched for translation, or if the translators are generally inept. Neither of these constitutes the real cause, however. Rather,

most of the translation problems encountered can be brought under the heading of tension between the claims of the original poem and the demands of the metapoem. In analyzing the "departures" one sees what was earlier called "the limits of translatability."

In some ways these limits are most noticeable at the socio-cultural level. There are many socio-cultural aspects which form barriers to a full comprehension of the poetry. Thus the reader may encounter an unfamiliar city, or a bird name which cannot be translated, or an unknown historical figure, or a literary allusion which does not call up the intended association. Some loss of setting, context, and allusion is thus unavoidable in the translation process. Still, the socio-cultural translation problem is not the most pervasive. English and Dutch culture are often similar, and much of Eliot's work therefore needs no cultural "translation." Also, Eliot's poetry is frequently not specifically English or American, but has cross-cultural significance, and need not cause translation difficulties.

I earlier cited translation theorists who assert that one cannot achieve true equivalence between two languages. Even when words have the same referent, they have different form and sound, and are, therefore, not equivalent. Moreover, the syntactic variations between two languages further eliminate the possibility of equivalence. At a certain level this theory is valid. Many of the differences between the original and translated versions examined above are testimony to the theory of non-equivalence. The difficulty of achieving equivalence is greatest when Eliot strains the limits of diction and syntax. The closing lines of The Waste Land, for example, are a highly condensed, complex shorthand both of allusionary richness and of a chaotic world view.

To achieve the same condensation and richness in translation is extremely difficult. Or again, the strongly connotative, highly symbolic verse of Ash Wednesday, which eludes paraphrase, also frequently eludes the translator.

Much of the analysis therefore involved an exploration of the difficulties of achieving equivalence. Such an approach, with an emphasis on the linguistic departures from the original, is, I believe, a proper one. However, one must be careful not to absolutize the theory of non-equivalence. Even though all the possible meanings of word pairs in two languages are never identical, there are limits to the number of meanings; words in discourse are always in certain contexts, and the context circumscribes the meaning. It is possible to transmit semantic content from one language to another, and one can say that Eliot's work can be effectively communicated in translation. To give some random examples, the character of Becket can be apprehended by the Dutch reader, the ambivalence of feeling about the Incarnation in "Journey of the Magi" is discernible in translation, and the spiritual aridity of modern man can be seen in Braakland as it can be in The Waste Land.

The tension between the original poem and the translation is most insistent at the poetic level of rhythm and sound. In Chapter IV I have summarized some of the characteristics of Eliot's poetry. Following Helen Gardner's analysis, I there discuss Eliot's exploitation of contemporary speech rhythms which opened up a new mode for English poetry. What needs stressing here is the fact that poetic rhythm is always related to a particular language. Factors such as syllabication, stress, duration, and syntax affect the poetic rhythm. Asso-

nance and rhyme are also dependent on the sound of the spoken language.

There are, fortunately, some factors which facilitate even the transmission of the poetic elements. Because of the common linguistic heritage, English and Dutch share a number of speech characteristics. Neither are the poetic traditions completely different; iambic pentameter, for example, is a "native" meter for Dutch as well as English poetry. Also, Eliot's use of accentual verse in his later poetry makes his verse more amenable to translation; since the number of syllables in the line is no longer fixed, the translator has greater flexibility.

Still, one certainly has to speak of analogy instead of equivalence here. Because of the dependence of poetic rhythm on the speech rhythm of a language, many elements cannot really be transferred. For instance, Eliot's poésie parlante is firmly grounded in English speech patterns; to achieve an analogous effect in Dutch, the translator has to exploit the rhythms of Dutch speech. Also, the repetition of a vowel sound in assonance and rhyme can hardly ever be reproduced. Instead, the translator has to produce different sounds in Dutch, in which he has to strive both for semantic fidelity and the desired sound effect. At the poetic level the metapoem is therefore at considerable remove from the original poem, and here the recreative aspect of translation is most dominant.

CONCLUSION

Most literary works cannot be apprehended apart from various contexts and relations. Just as the source or influence shaping a work may be important for full comprehension, so the critical evaluations about or the influence of an author help to establish the total critical framework of an author and his work. Among the contexts are an author's relationship to other countries and their literatures. Studies of cross-cultural literary relations place an author in a wider literary tradition than his own.

Eliot's connection with The Netherlands is a one-way relationship. Eliot read some Dutch literature in translation¹, but there is no evidence at all that he was influenced by Dutch literature. A study of the relationship therefore focuses on the Dutch reaction to Eliot. Such an analysis is significant partly because of the cosmopolitan nature of Dutch culture; the educational system and the broad exposure to other literatures make the Dutch knowledgeable and perceptive comparative critics.

The amount of Dutch critical writing on Eliot has not been overwhelming. In Chapter III I suggested that the rather limited influence of Eliot on Dutch poetry is partly attributable to the fact that the Dutch awareness of German and French literature has been greater than

¹See Michel van der Plas, "Gesprek met T. S. Eliot," De Nieuwe Eeuw, October 2, 1948, p. 8.

that of English. The same cause may underlie the somewhat limited amount of criticism. However, a survey of the criticism, from the first reviews of Poems 1909-1925 to an article on The Waste Land manuscript in 1971, does show a great variety in the critical reception.

The interest in Eliot has come more from reviewers and critics than from academicians. The fact that the first Dutch dissertation on Eliot is to be published in 1973, is telling commentary on the rather slight academic interest. Again, Michel van der Plas, who is the most frequent Eliot commentator, and the editor of the Dutch translations, is, significantly, a poet-critic and journalist. Another hiatus in the criticism is the meagerness of detailed studies of individual works. Perhaps this inadequacy can be understood and justified in the light of the intended audience. The Dutch criticism is often intended for a general audience which does not have a "professional" interest in English literature. The focus of the criticism is therefore properly introductory, or thematic, or comparative. Those who wish to explore Eliot in greater detail will normally have the requisite familiarity with English, and access to the critical material in English. Still, the critical output would be more complete, and a certain segment of the reading audience would be served by more attention to individual titles.

If one considers the mass of Eliot criticism written in English, one will perhaps not discover many ideas or approaches in French, or German, or Dutch criticism, which have not been touched on at some time in English. Exceptions to this statement are studies which relate Eliot to a native tradition, such as Caretti's comparison of Eliot and

the Italian Eugenio Montale,¹ or the Dutch essays on Eliot and Nijhoff. But one need not, I believe, judge the criticism from another country only on its originality, that is, with the intent of finding studies which have not been performed in English, or insights which differ from those in English criticism. The criticism must also be judged in terms of its intent. Among the principal purposes of the Dutch criticism are attempts to introduce Eliot to Dutch readers, to see him in relation to English and European literature, and to help the readers come to grips with the work. These functions are generally performed well. In spite of the observation in the previous paragraph about the paucity of detailed studies, it remains true that even if a Dutch reader is not acquainted with Eliot criticism in English, the Dutch criticism can help him to achieve an informed, balanced, judicious reading of Eliot.

As with the literature of other countries, Dutch poetry frequently embodies influences from other literatures which merge with the native tradition. The Dutch poets of the 1920's, for example, wrote in the wake of the Dutch neo-romanticism of the 1880's (often in defiance of it), while also being attuned to German expressionism. The English influence on Dutch poetry has not been as great as that of Germany and France, at least not before World War II. This relatively minor influence of English poetry is probably one of the reasons for Eliot's limited impact on Dutch poets.

In terms of new departures the movements of 1880 and 1950 were

¹Laura Caretti, T. S. Eliot in Italia, Chapter 2.

most important in Dutch poetry. In both cases the artistic and philosophic impulses of European literature made a delayed impact in The Netherlands; but when the new developments did make their entry into Dutch literature, they were foreshortened, more concentrated, and intermixed with other literary forces. The total effect on a small, rather homogeneous literature was therefore very dramatic. Thus the revival of 1880, with its mixture of romanticism, aestheticism, symbolism, and naturalism abruptly changed the contemporary poetry. Similarly, the experimentations with new forms, which had surfaced briefly in the early twenties, but had been tempered by the Forum movement of the thirties, and forgotten during the war years, came to explosive expression in 1950.

Martinus Nijhoff's career in modern Dutch poetry is a long one, from his debut in 1916 to the publication of the Biblical plays in 1950. His poetry collections, however, all appeared before 1941. Although Nijhoff was not closely associated with the experimental poetry of 1920, there is much in his poetry which gave cast to modern Dutch verse. Even within traditional verse forms his language shows great flexibility and builds on contemporary speech rhythms. His themes often reverberate with twentieth-century Angst, as he explores the deadening effect of the city which causes personal and cosmic despair.

Eliot and Nijhoff show some striking parallels. Among the mutual influences on their work are the Greek classics, the Bible, Dante, French late nineteenth-century poetry, and James Joyce. Both show strong interest in the formal, theoretical aspects of language and poetry. Their oeuvre, in the combination of poetry, drama, and criticism, as well as the drift from poetry to drama, is again very similar.

The importance of music as subject matter, but especially as a constituent of the poetry, is fundamental in the work of both Eliot and Nijhoff; although they wrote in different languages and literary traditions, the musical element forms a base of comparison. The thematic development, from pessimism and despair to an affirmative stance, also shows great likeness. The affirmations partly grew out of fundamental personal and philosophic changes in both poets.

There are, of course, many differences between the two poets as well. Because of different influences, languages, literary traditions, interests, and viewpoints, large areas of dissimilarities are to be expected, and need not all be belabored. Within the contours of this comparative study there are some pertinent differences, however. The difference in poetic technique is often relative. Both Eliot and Nijhoff built on their traditions, while they also diverged from them; Eliot, however, broke with his immediately preceding tradition more self-consciously and sharply than did Nijhoff. The designation "transitional poet" is therefore applicable to Nijhoff, but probably not to Eliot. The philosophic change in Eliot is more closely associated with a religious turning point than is Nijhoff's, although Nijhoff's change also has religious overtones.

There are positive as well as negative aspects about the Dutch translations of Eliot. The publication of a substantial part of Eliot's work in the Dutch Pantheon series of Nobel Prize winners presents Eliot in an excellent format. All of Eliot's poetry collections are represented in this volume, as well as Murder in The Cathedral and The Cocktail Party, and nine essays. The Family Reunion and The Elder States-

man have been published separately. For a few of the poems there are other translations available in periodicals. Still, there are some regrettable omissions, of which The Hollow Men and the complete Quar-
tets are the most conspicuous.

In the analysis of the Dutch translations one encounters departures from the original, which are caused either by the limitations of the translation process itself, or by the mistakes of the translator. Translation problems are inherent in the process of attempting to transfer a poem from one language to another. The translator has to strive for fidelity to the original, while at the same time he has to make the poem "fit" the language, poetic tradition, and socio-cultural pattern of the foreign reader. The two conditions of fidelity to the original, and integration of the translated poem into the target language can rarely be completely met--certainly not for extended passages. The departures caused by the "limits of translatability" are sometimes brilliant recreations, sometimes serious impairments, either of the original poem or of the translation.

One cannot always decide if errors are due to the limits of translatability, or to the translator's incompetence. Certainly there are examples of translation faux pas, and in several instances I have demonstrated that better options were available to the translator. However, the translators are generally very competent. Several of them have translated widely from English, and the command of English is usually excellent. The Dutch renditions, at their best, also ring true, partly, no doubt, because all the translators have published their own poetry. And perhaps the translations form one of the most meaningful Dutch tributes to Eliot, because one of the best ways in which a country

can honor a foreign author is by providing first-rate translations in its own language.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Harry Boonstra has been read and approved by members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

DATE

5/23/73

ADVISOR'S SIGNATURE

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