

NIJHOFF'S SYMBOLISM

Thesis submitted towards the degree of Ph.D. by

William James Woods

Bedford College, University of London.

Acknowledgements are owed to all those people who, over the years that this thesis has been in preparation, have contributed help and advice, and in particular to Professor Emeritus Th. Weevers, formerly Professor of Dutch at Bedford College, for his M.A. course 'The Dutch Post-Symbolists' held in 1970-1, to the University of Ghent, Belgium, for the finance and wealth of material opened up under the provisions of a scholarship for foreign students of Dutch, 'Studiebeurs Neerlandistiek', 1972-3, and above all to my supervisor, Professor R.P. Meijer, current Professor of Dutch at Bedford College, for his thorough attention and kind and constant guidance.

W. J. Woods

July 1978



ProQuest Number: 10098353

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10098353

Published by ProQuest LLC(2016). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

Abstract of Thesis

W.J.Woods: Nijhoff's Symbolism

Nijhoff's symbolism develops from a close orientation to the fringe world of the French Symbolists, with Christian culture and contemporary Dutch Post-Symbolists providing further sources of influence. A study of psychological and literary background and of Nijhoff's own poetic theories helps to determine what his symbols mean. A change of attitude which Nijhoff underwent between the publication of the volumes 'Vormen'(1924) and 'Nieuwe Gedichten'(1934), as a result of which he starts to express a belief in and liking for the real world, though retaining an amount of counteraction between real and ideal, brings his symbolism to an orientation in the real world and makes it more complex and extensive, while maintaining its function of conveying correspondences with another life, another world, a distant universe or imaginary ideals. He abandons a mood of reluctant withdrawal and drops former imitations in order to deal with his own personality and situations directly, to expand the narrative element and make poems symbolic for their story, and to give figures a more independent characterisation. Definite patterns of consistency throughout his poetry are found in recurrent major symbols such as mother, child, martyr, street, journey, bird and boat, and themes of death, dualism and religion. Basic wish impulses are continued, but become transposed to new surroundings, and eventually no longer related to an 'I-figure', but to other people. With the extension of symbolism into common surroundings, it becomes less monolithic and less comparative in type, not so predominantly a projection of the poet's own mental state, but more ambiguous and suggestive, relying more on inducing ideas in the reader, whose own capacity for symbolic determination is given increased scope.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 - Principles of Symbolism	p.1.
Chapter 2 - Symbolist and Post-Symbolist Poetry .	p.13.
Chapter 3 - Dutch Post-Symbolists and Nijhoff ...	p.32.
Chapter 4 - Nijhoff's Early Poetry ('De Wandelaar', 'Pierrot aan de Lantaarn' & 'Vormen')	p.56.
Chapter 5 - New Poems and a New Attitude	p.103.
Chapter 6 - 'Awater'	p.163.
Chapter 7 - 'Het Uur U'	p.232.
Chapter 8 - Conclusion	p.294.
Page Index to Symbols	p.298.
Appendix of Definitions	p.301.
Bibliography	p.303.

ERRATA

- p.23, line 4 - channelled
p.50, line 23 - "la part ...
p.66, line 12 - averse to
p.67, line 30 - ... world"
p.76, line 11 - inconformity
p.80, line 5 - different
p.122, line 1 - (1912)
p.130, line 27 - begeerd had
p.155, line 23 - ... stuck on a bridge):
p.220, line 37 - too heavy
p.284, line 15 - bad and not
p.301, line 32 ends - reference
line 33 begins - to
p.306, line 13 - 289-293).
p.309, line 5 - 'Poésies Complètes'

Chapter 1

PRINCIPLES OF SYMBOLISM

" - Een beeld
 deelt mee wat het meedeelt
 in minder tijd dan een woord. - "
 ('Het Uur U', 1937 text)

In a discussion of symbolism in poetry, the main consideration is a literary one; the poetry is the basis on which the symbolism is assessed. Poetic symbolism is a literary device governing the meaning and effect of the poetry in which it is used, and instances of this symbolism have to be identified and explained. Individual images can be identified as symbols, but combinations of images, actions, and whole poems can also be symbolic in their own right. Certain images and certain poems stand out as examples of what the poet is trying to convey via this literary device of symbolism, but every image contributes to an overall picture. Small parts of the jigsaw may fall into place without the poet himself being conscious of any symbolic function that they fulfill. It is an impossible matter to draw a dividing line between supporting imagery and deliberate symbolism. Even the poet himself does not afterwards know how much he consciously intended at the time of writing a poem.

Explanation of symbolism falls into two parts: what and how. What symbolism is all about is still a literary question, because the meaning or impression conveyed is the primary concern of both writer and reader. How symbolism performs this function is more of a scientific matter, but a technical analysis of the development of symbolic meaning in the mind helps to give an idea of what sort of meaning can be derived from poetic imagery.

Symbols are instrumental to the communication of ideas, and anything to which the mind attaches meaning generates a symbol in the mind. Objects and conditions exist outside the mind, and the images of them that are recorded in the mind are thus technically symbols. Nijhoff's

remark (above) that an image communicates its message more quickly than a word is accounted for by the mental processes that govern the communication of meaning. An image perceived by the mind is a symbol that stands directly for something, whilst a word stands for a mental image and so ranks at a second stage of symbolism with a fractionally less immediate effect.

The term symbol has its derivation in the Greek word 'sumbolon', meaning a mark or token; its precise definition is a broad one, and might be stated as: 'something which stands for something else through a process of mental association'.

The term symbolism splits formally into three segments, with 'symbol' as its noun root, and two suffixes, '-ise' and '-m'. These suffixes modify the root of the word to a specific area of meaning, namely through the verb suffix '-ise' (symbolise) to: 'to use symbols or to act as a symbol', and through the noun suffix '-m' (symbolism) to: 'the use of symbols or the process of acting as a symbol'.

A symbol is formed purely as a mental interpretation of something; it may be visual, but can also be an image formed in the mind from any of the physical senses, as, for example, a sound symbol. With a wide field of reference, the word 'symbol' may be used as a blanket term to cover other terms such as 'sign', 'emblem', 'badge', 'simile', 'metaphor' and 'allegory'; it has broad areas of synonymy with the terms 'image', 'concept' and 'idea', which are forms of symbol in so far as they stand for something. More commonly, the term 'symbol' is applied in a narrower sense, within its general definition, to refer to a representative image with meaning extending beyond what it directly represents, one with a quality of suggestion. (v. Appendix for definitions).

The meaning that is attached to a symbol may either be essentially a creation of the individual mind or substantially imposed upon it from outside; the mind is both receptive for given symbolic meaning and capable of applying its own meaning to an image. From a viewpoint of psychological science, meaning is either purely the product of perceived stimuli from a person's environment, as is argued by the behaviourist school of psychology, or else meaning is in part this and in part an innate faculty which uses

external forms as symbols for its expression, as argued by cognitive psychologists.

Commentators on symbolism tend to adopt equally different approaches. From the point of view of a symbol dictating semantic connotations:

"a symbol is more than a mark, a sound, a gesture, or an image; it is any of these together with the effect it has in a mind, that is, together with the psychological attitude to which it gives birth"

(R.M.Eaton, 'Symbolism and Truth', p.149).

Seen in this way, a symbol acts as a stimulus causing a reaction on the mind. From the other point of view, meaning precedes a symbol, which is not the stimulus but the result of a thought process:

"a symbol is an outwardly projected image of the inward feelings and thoughts of man"

(Jana Garai, 'The Book of Symbols', p.8).

These two ways of looking at the relationship between symbol and mind reflect the two-way process in which thinking operates and have a bearing on the use of symbols in poetry. A poetic symbol may function deductively to convey the poet's state of mind (as is witnessed in Nijhoff's early poetry), or inductively as the source of ideas or inspiration (as witnessed in Nijhoff's later poetry). There is always an interaction between the two channels of thought, so that a deductive symbol answering to the poet's inner feelings also generates feelings in the reader, but where inducement of associations in the mind is the dominant factor, the imagination of the recipient is greatly responsible for how much meaning is derived. It is not a straightforward question of stimulus and response, since the mind must be equipped in advance with a capacity for transference of meaning, which is then activated.

Stages of Symbolism

The two most elementary forms of symbolism are direct mental imagery and direct self-expression. At the beginning of life a child learns to recognise objects for their significance and to make appropriate sounds to communicate its feelings (beyond the automatic cries it starts with). Gradually utterances are harnessed into a more advanced

system of symbolism that the mind grasps during its maturation: the combination of sounds which form speech. Here, the audible symbols are taken to represent mental images, themselves symbols of objects or feelings or circumstances; thus speech is a second stage of symbolism representing a first stage of symbolism. Written language is a third stage of symbolism, since it employs visual symbols to represent audible symbols which represent mental images (though in practice written words are almost directly linked with mental imagery).

An important characteristic of a system of symbolism is its ability, once created, to display properties peculiar to itself, which are outside or additional to the principal function in which it serves. Fantastic images can arise in dreams which are unreal to the actual world, but real and meaningful to the dream-context. The human voice can utter words in such a form that the mind interprets them as incomprehensible or nonsense. A set of words can be written on a page and although they stand there for mental images, the mind may not be able to translate them into real meaning. It is also possible to construct written symbols which have no apparent equivalent in the real world but are meaningful to an imaginary world (e.g. 'dragon' and 'angel'). Since the symbolic system which the mind creates from impressions received by the five senses, stands for objects, feelings and circumstances of the real world (i.e. the world of the mind draws from the real world), it is possible by exploiting the potential of mental imagery to imagine things that do not, as far as is known, exist, but that could exist. For everything that can be imagined a second-stage symbol can be produced, because a second-stage symbol stands for an image in the mind. The mind can imagine a dragon and an angel, thus these ideas can be represented in auditory or visual second-stage symbols. Some creations of the mind may be close enough to reality to be realised. The car and the aeroplane were at one time no more than ideas - the dream of a horseless carriage and a flying machine - but via the world of the mind, the real world was augmented to include these objects.

What exists in the world of the mind is mental imagery or imagination, and this includes ideas of things that

could possibly exist at present or in the future, or that did exist in the past; the term 'imagination' is usually applied to things not generally considered to have possible existence either in past, present or future, and which may also be referred to as 'fantasy'. Second-stage symbols such as words and pictures are derivatives of the first stage of symbolism, which is mental imagery, and fantasy or imagination are extensions of the first stage of symbolism, which can themselves be translated into second and third stage symbols. When first stage symbolism becomes distorted it is interpreted as imagination or fantasy, but distorted second stage symbolism (when beyond the bounds of comprehensibility) is interpreted as nonsense. The stages of symbolism, leading from reality, might be illustrated in diagram-form as follows:

REALITY	
MENTAL IMAGERY (1st stage symbolism)	> Imagination & Fantasy
2ND STAGE SYMBOLISM (speech, pictures)	> Nonsense (e.g. incomprehensible speech)
3RD STAGE SYMBOLISM (writing, artistic symbols)	> Nonsense (e.g. incomprehensible writing)

Working in a reverse direction, writing can be taken as a starting-point and deductively interpreted as reality or as imagination. Nonsense can come close enough to comprehensible symbolism to be given some meaning in the mind, as shown in nonsense poetry by Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear. Such lines as:

"Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe"¹

make some call to the imagination, and such one-time nonsense phrases as 'chortle'² and 'runcible spoon'³ have since been adopted into the English language. Images symbolised and not understood will be interpreted as nonsense if

1. Lewis Carroll, 'Through the Looking Glass', Chapter 1, 'Collected Works', p.140.
2. id., p.142.
3. Edward Lear, 'The Owl and the Pussy-Cat', 'The Complete Nonsense of Edward Lear', p.62.

considered to make no sense to anyone except perhaps their originator, or will be rated as incomprehensible by the recipient and often scarcely registered in the mind.

When mental imagery is given form at the second stage of symbolism, it still resides in reality as far as its perceptible form is concerned (the sound of the word, or the picture on the paper). Because this form has an existence of its own, the meaning it conveys may be different from or more than it was originally intended to represent. A poet will have the idea for a poem, but the end-product will turn out differently from his idea, because in expressing his idea he has to conform to a reality different from that of his mind. Nijhoff holds a corresponding belief in a new existence of the word, which he sees as an incarnation. He also holds views on the creation of art by a process which conforms with the stages of symbolism ("een werkelijkheid, een verbeelding en een beeld")¹. The created word, he believes, takes on a life of its own ("De stem word woord, het woord wordt zang")², and this life has an independence which allows it to loose itself from its everyday meaning ("mijn woorden, stijgend, zingen zich los van hun beteekenissen")³.

The kind of symbolism used in art is a third stage of symbolism acting as a substitute for something at the second stage. A new image, which has not just a form of its own but a meaning of its own, is substituted for a second-stage symbol. Substitute symbolism is a device normally used to convey ideas difficult to convey in second-stage forms because they are abstract concepts. Substitute symbols in everyday use are the green light for permission to go ahead, the hand-shake for friendship, and the nod of the head for agreement. Abstract concepts can be described in words, but not easily put in picture images, and there is often nothing except a word to represent the idea at the second stage of symbolism. Context plays a part in determining what a substitute symbol represents; a raised arm

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.338.

2. id.

3. M.Nijhoff, 'Tweeërlei Dood', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.131.

from a pupil in a classroom means something different from the raised arm of an umpire on a cricket pitch. A substitute symbol has dual meaning: its normal meaning which is directly linked to mental imagery, and its symbolic meaning which is linked to the mental imagery of what it stands for. So, if a bulldog is used as a symbol of Britain, the image corresponds with its normal dog connotations and also with connotations of the British nation. Except with certain conventional symbols like the raised arm and the nodded head, there is some correspondence between the normal meaning of a symbol and its substitute meaning - in the case of the bulldog, it concerns similarity of temperament between the dog and the nation. Children tend to find relatively more semantic correspondence than adults, because they have not learned to differentiate so finely; the children in 'Het Uur U' see a scooter as similar to a car, and, because of its wing-like indicators, also seem to find a resemblance to a bird. The wide range of image-generalisation that children employ make them in this respect more imaginative than adults.

Artistic Symbolism

Poetry commonly employs figurative language, and in such cases when words are not literal in their meaning, a form of symbolism exists. The correspondence between what is said and what is meant in figurative or metaphorical description is quite close, so that when, for instance, the word 'sea' is used in "a sea of troubles" ('Hamlet'), there is no doubt that the sea is not the subject in hand, but the troubles are, and 'sea' is clearly meant as an epithet for a vast amount; likewise the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune"(id.) are not presented as real weapons but as an epithet for the afflictions of severe bad luck. But the term symbolism in the field of poetry or in any artistic field is usually reserved for a specific type of symbolism where the correspondence of meaning is not so one-to-one. Artistic symbolism refers to the description of a subject in such a way that the imagery presented suggests something else beyond the subject in hand.

Artistic symbolism is sometimes an attempt to give

formal expression to notions that are vague or largely beyond human understanding; thus religious art has always been to a large extent symbolic. Non-determinacy is what governs Jung's definition of a symbol in 'Symbols of Transformation': "a symbol is an indefinite expression with many meanings, pointing to something not easily defined and therefore not fully known."¹ There are some symbols used in art which have been brought through custom to one established symbolic meaning, like the olive-branch standing for peace, and the phoenix for rebirth, but most art-symbols are governed by the context in which they occur. The moon, for instance, may be used as a symbol for death, the soul, or romance. Two poems from 'De Wandelaar' portray the moon with different symbolic meaning: in 'Sonate', the associations are chiefly with death -

"De maan kijkt met verschrik'lijk wit gelaat".

In 'Het Strijkje', the context of music, gardens and words of affection evoke romantic associations; -

"De maan gluurt door de takken. Oh la la!"

Symbolism in dreams, as examined by Freud, has much bearing on the underlying origins of artistic symbolism, although the latter is much more refined than dream symbolism, and where it takes material that is identical to dream material, does not analyse its origins in unconscious impulses, but develops analogies of the conscious mind. For instance, the tower in Nijhoff might in a psychoanalytic study be taken back to a fundamental sexual origin in the unconscious part of the mind, but for literary means Nijhoff clearly uses the tower at an ideological level far above primitive somatic associations, to express a private social condition and an individual longing. Symbolic implications leading to the content of the unconscious mind are inherent in all creative art, but the symbolic implications of symbolist poetry cannot be led too far from conscious understanding and still be valid to the meaning intended for the reader. Sometimes, as with Nijhoff's mother symbol, fundamental subconscious impulses will come to light in fairly intelligible form, so that one has little difficulty in recognising an Oedipus complex in Nijhoff's case:

1. C.G.Jung, 'Symbols of Transformation', p.124.

thoughts of the mother and the lover combined into one person are clearly stated in 'De Vervloekte' ("Moeder moest je zijn"). Elsewhere, as in the fairy-tale dream of the little man sitting on the bed ('Aan mijn Kind II'), which to the psychoanalyst would offer an example of the dwarf as a creative phallic symbol,¹ the unconscious level is of no relevance, since the symbolic intent of the poem is solely directed towards conveying a romantic longing for a fantasy world.

Verbal associations of word-form, which in dreams can build bridges between thoughts and images on the strength of form alone (as Freud discovered)², can only function in the field of poetry, where conscious consideration is at work, with some transfer of meaning, be it to link disparate meanings of similar forms in a pun, to intensify meaning in an allusion, or to link related meanings in a symbol. The writer and reader of symbolist poetry are intimately concerned with word-meaning relationships, so that where the poetry contains wording of striking similarity to wording found elsewhere, it is usually aimed at assimilating the meaning behind the wording in the outside source, and possibly opening up symbolic considerations. (Symbolism can of course generate associations of meaning without needing associations of word-form).

The wide context of a poet's work in general also plays a semantic role in poetic symbolism, so that a reader retains in his mind associations which a poet has aroused with a particular image on a previous occasion, though he may decide that they do not greatly apply. Despite all the possible associate meanings of a poetic symbol, its normal meaning probably remains the dominant one, so that whatever the moon is thought to symbolise, the reader will think of it firstly as an object in the night sky (whereas the metaphorical 'sea of troubles' will only be thought of as the sea itself in a secondary sense). If an image occurs with one symbolic meaning in one instance and another symbolic meaning in another instance, it is properly speaking a different symbol in each instance, although for the sake of

1. C.G.Jung, 'Symbols of Transformation', p.124.

2. S.Freud, 'The Interpretation of Dreams', p.677.

the common normal meaning it is easier to talk of one symbol (e.g. the moon) with different symbolic meanings. If an image is used to represent two or more symbolic meanings at the same time it is a complex symbol and is ambiguous. Nijhoff's earlier poetry generally contains a more straightforward symbolism, whereas the symbols of his later poetry tend to be ambiguous. Sometimes this ambiguity is quite divergent. Awater represents in part the modern man and in part an ancient prophet. The pedestrian in 'Het Uur U', according to Nijhoff in a private letter¹, represents 'living man', but he is also suggestive of death or fate.

Artistic symbolism often aims to present images in such a way as to bring out suggestive qualities in them that are not generally noticed or remarked upon. It takes a personal view to discover this sort of suggestiveness, and in expressing his subjective ideas an artist tends to develop a sort of private symbolism tailored to his own beliefs. A poet who concentrates on expressing a personal insight into the suggestive qualities of objects and situations might even evolve a type of private diction as well. The formal expression that a poet employs does not necessarily tally with what the poet was trying to communicate. A poet may mean more than he says in two ways:

- i) What he says may not convey all the meaning he wants it to convey,
- ii) What he says may convey meaning that he did not realise it conveyed.

Because symbolism in poetry deals through substitute symbols with ideas that are abstract, vague or enigmatic, it is not closely linked with reality, and its message often lies in the realm of supposition rather than truth. Yet human appraisal of truth is dependent on symbolism, since it is a correspondence of mental imagery with reality that determines truth. The theory of correspondences that lies at the heart of the Symbolist Movement in poetry is based on the use of images known from reality to describe matters largely beyond human knowledge, like eternity, the universe, pure beauty, an ideal, or the absolute. Thus an

1. 'De Gids 118', 1955, I, No. 6, June 1955, p. 405.

attempt is made to construct some correspondence between what is known and what is not known, though there is no proof of whether grand conjecture reflects the ultimate truth or a glorious lie (as Mallarmé wondered).

The Symbolist Movement relied on certain standard motifs such as sea, moon, bird and garden, including some traditional motifs which it used in a special way, such as wine, music and the clown. In developing symbols with a special 'Symbolist' significance, there was also a development towards private, personal symbolism. The further development of this course was carried on by Post-Symbolists and tended to lead into surrealism or expressionism; some of these later poets made much use of standard symbols with their own personal slant, others preferred to use new symbols of their own. It is sometimes possible to differentiate in a poet's work between standard meaning that applies to a symbol and private meaning applying to the same symbol. The former is recognised through the reader's own general knowledge and the latter is recognised from the poetic context and knowledge of the particular poet's work. Standard symbols have a fixed meaning - one of general acceptance - but private symbols are likely to have a variable meaning, because they depend not only on the personal view of the poet but also on the reader's own impression. Any word of a language may have special significance to one person beyond its accepted meaning (e.g. a word that sets off deep psychological associations in an individual), but when a reader is no longer dealing with accepted meanings, the chance of bringing out personal interpretations not valid for other readers is increased. Quite opposing interpretations of a symbol may be made by different observers. For instance, if an artist paints a big streamlined car tearing along a road, one person may be stimulated by the aspects of excitement and modern progress, another put off by aspects of ostentation and danger; the artist, too, may be consciously expressing opposing aspects. When Nijhoff's poetry moves closer to everyday life, the variable quality of his symbolism increases. Symbols in the early poetry often occur with much the same meaning in more than one poem, though there

are plenty of cases of symbols with one meaning in one poem and another meaning in another. But in the later poetry a symbol can have more than one meaning in the same poem. The suggestiveness of 'Awater' is such that different readers are bound to draw different conclusions about the poem. Nijhoff goes a step further in 'Het Uur U' by not just leaving the reader to draw a conclusion, but deliberately putting forward two different sides of the story in the opposing attitudes of adults and children towards the man walking along the street.

Chapter 2

SYMBOLIST AND POST-SYMBOLIST POETRY

The use of artistic symbolism has been practised through the ages (for example emblems and allegories in mediaeval and Renaissance literature), but the emergence in the nineteenth century of the Symbolist Movement in France made symbolism into a doctrine of poetic expression. One particular poem by Baudelaire - "Correspondances" - is often taken as a landmark heralding the onset of Symbolist poetry, but a Symbolist Movement as such was only recognised some years after Baudelaire's death. Baudelaire was not responsible for developing the theory of symbolic correspondences, which was the work of philosophers dating back to Plato. Basically the theory of symbolic correspondences is the proposition of a system of analogies, by which analogy can be made to anything in the universe. Plato saw a role in a system of universal analogies for the artist, who could use art to mirror aspects of the universe: the 'mimetic' theory of art. Strictly speaking, Plato's thinking accords art a third-class status, in that it views Ideas, or an ideal, as being reflected in nature, and art as reflecting nature. Later Platonist thinking allows the artist's ability to reflect the Ideas at first hand, which is the basis of Neo-Platonist thinking.¹

An artist is able to draw correspondences with aspects of the universe as a result of mental grouping and grading. All things can be grouped, and all groups can be graded, so that in a scientific approach to symbolic correspondence, a hierarchy can be set up of such sensations as colour, sound, light, objects, and movement. These hierarchies or ranges can be interrelated. For instance height of pitch is linked with rapid movement and, proportionately, depth of pitch with less rapid movement. Cold may correspond to distance and warmth to nearness. The colour spectrum can also be related to warmth or coldness (red is a warm colour, blue a cold one). Thus symbols from one plane correspond to

1. M.H.Abrams, 'The Mirror and the Lamp', pp.42-4.

symbols on another plane and in theory analogy can be made to anything in the universe.

In a religious context, the philosopher Swedenborg claimed to experience through correspondences communication with the world of the spirit. A religious approach to symbolic correspondence was important to Baudelaire and also to Nijhoff, both of whom tried to find in religion some comfort and reconciliation of an inherent dualism in their nature and in the world.

Symbolist poetry itself is rooted in Romantic poetry, in the emotive and imaginative style of which much symbolic content is to be found. In conveying their deep personal feelings and desires, Romantic poets sought imagery that suggested moods and aspirations and so began to work on the basis of imagery suggesting more than was actually stated. A notion of correspondences was expressed by the German Romantic Novalis, and Shelley in his 'Defence of Poetry' compares poetry to a mirror reflecting another reality, and refers to its quality of suggestiveness with the words, "Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar."¹ In other words it substitutes in the mind a different world from the familiar world.

A major influence on Baudelaire, and on other Symbolist poets, was Edgar Allan Poe, who in setting out specific views on the writing of poetry² argued that a poem should have an undercurrent of suggestiveness and perfection of form. Yet Poe objects to excess of suggested meaning, to "transcendentalists"³ and "the cloud-land of metaphysics"⁴, and endeavours to keep within "the limits of the real"⁵, maintaining that the "emblematical" nature of his poem 'The Raven' is not revealed until the end.⁶

The essence of Symbolist poetry is a suggestiveness whereby the reader "completes the work for himself, with

1. 'The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley VII', p.111.
2. E.A.Poe, 'The Philosophy of Composition', 'The Complete Poetry and Selected Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe', pp.178-191.
3. id., p.190.
4. E.A.Poe, 'The Rationale of Verse', 'The Complete Poetry and Selected Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe', p.192.
5. E.A.Poe, 'The Rationale of Verse', op.cit., p.190.
6. id., p.191.

some element which he discovers within himself."¹ Art forms are able to convey meaning without being specific as to what the meaning should be. In accordance with Poe's doctrine, Symbolist poets attempted a carefully controlled suggestiveness, though some were inclined to develop a rather obscure style, and to use uncommon or exotic images. T.S.Eliot coined the term "objective correlative" to describe that particular process of correspondence by which emotion is expressed in art: "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events, which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked."² Writing in an earlier period, the English philosopher John Stuart Mill expresses a somewhat similar idea when he says that poetry embodies itself "in symbols, which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet's mind."³(1897)³

Early Symbolist poetry, emerging from the Romantic background of subjective expression of emotion, has more of a proximity to metaphor than is the case later, describing feelings through imagery that is implicitly comparative. Later Symbolist and Post-Symbolist poetry moves to implicit suggestiveness rather than comparison, giving imagery more independence to speak for itself. When Nijhoff in his opening poem 'De Wandelaar' describes himself as a Carolingian monk or a Renaissance artist, the feeling is given that he is comparing himself with these types, whereas in his later poetry imagery is used not so much to put forward a model as an actual state of affairs, which in itself suggests something else.

The general process by which Symbolists constructed their type of art can be labelled one of synthesis rather than analysis; it was an effort to combine elements found

1. Edward Lucie-Smith, 'Symbolist Art', p.15.
2. T.S.Eliot, 'Hamlet and his Problems' (1919), 'Selected Essays', p.145.
3. quoted by M.H.Abrams, 'The Mirror and the Lamp', p.25.

in the real world, or in other works of art, to convey an alternative reality. Since this principle made it acceptable to borrow ideas and concepts from another, many Symbolist poems, paintings and musical compositions are based on the works of other poets, painters or composers, or on the people who created them. Portraits of Mallarmé and Verlaine, themes from Wagner, and drawings by Aubrey Beardsley, are examples of subject matter appearing across differing media of Symbolist expression and used as a key to a particular mood or atmosphere. Effect was sometimes more important than message, and Poe, who sees poetry as the creation of beauty, stresses that beauty is an effect: "When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect", which is an "intense and pure elevation of soul - not of intellect, or of heart."¹ (Prior to Poe, the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher David Hume states, similarly, that beauty is not a quality of an object, but the effect it produces on the mind).²

Certain guidelines that were accepted by Symbolist poets were given by Poe in his critical prose. In 'The Poetic Principle' he emphasises the importance of musical quality to poetry, and states, "I would define, in brief, the Poetry of words as the Rhythmical Creation of Beauty."³ He goes on to link beauty with melancholy, saying that all higher manifestations of beauty have a taint of sadness, which he cannot explain.⁴ Giving priority to form, he also supports the idea of poetic art for art's sake.⁵ In 'The Philosophy of Composition' he takes exception to long poems.⁶ Because the 'effect' which beauty consists of has immediate operation, for Poe the short, lyrical poem is best. Symbolists tended particularly to favour the sonnet, a form well-suited to combining contrasting elements, and Nijhoff is also one who favours the sonnet.

'The Raven', Poe's best-known poem, depicts a student sitting in his room at the dead of night, half reading,

1. E.A.Poe, 'The Philosophy of Composition', 'The Complete Poetry and Selected Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe', p.182.
2. quoted by M.H.Abrams, 'The Mirror and the Lamp', p.64.
3. E.A.Poe, 'The Poetic Principle', op.cit., p.161.
4. id., p.165.
5. id., pp.158-9.
6. E.A.Poe, 'The Philosophy of Composition', op.cit., pp.180-1.

half dreaming of a beloved mistress deceased - "the lost Lenore". The theme of an unreachable female figure is by no means new in Poe, but it became something of a standard in Symbolist poetry. Poe maintains that the sadness accompanying beauty provokes the subject to self-torture, because the most delicious of sorrow is the most intolerable.¹

The controlled composition advocated by Poe denies a place for inspiration. He claimed that he wrote 'The Raven' without call to intuition, but relying on a reasoned selection of components for poetical effect.² So, by this way of thinking, symbols of the supernatural cannot be viewed as coming, so to speak, from above, but as being reached through the mind's eye of the poet. What is perceived of any ideal is dependent on the mind's power of conception.

Lines of correspondence can be drawn in two directions and the poet may see his ideal purely as a product of his imagination, or as having an independent existence which communicates with him. Mallarmé, taking Poe's stand to the extreme, suspected that his own whole poetic vision was a lie.³ Nijhoff, on the other hand, believed that the poet was, in fact, a potential recipient of inspiration from above.

Whilst Poe's influence was mainly due to Baudelaire's esteem for his doctrines, Baudelaire led by poetic example and the impact of 'Les Fleurs du Mal' on European poetry of the time was immense. Nijhoff refers to himself as a poet from the age of Baudelaire in the title poem to 'De Wandelbaar', and another Dutch poet of his generation, P.N. van Eyck, calls himself Baudelaire's bashful slave ("uw blode slaaf alleen")⁴. The main Baudelairian aspect that Nijhoff recognises in his own condition is that of suffering and separation from society.

The whole orientation of Symbolists towards another world and their dissatisfaction with the real world led to an apartness, to an attraction towards the cult of the dandy or bohemian. Paris had its community of dandyist

1. E.A.Poe, 'The Philosophy of Composition', 'The Complete Poetry and Selected Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe', p.185.
2. id., pp.180-3.
3. "le Glorieux Mensonge", 'Correspondance de Mallarmé (1862-1871)', p.208.
4. P.N. van Eyck, 'Charles Baudelaire', 'Verzameld Werk I', p.24.

poets and artists, another such group evolved around the notorious Café Grossenwahn in Berlin, and in Amsterdam the Leidse Plein was a similar sort of focal point.

For some, unconventionality led to asceticism or a strong anti-social attitude. The image of the socially apart figure occurs often in Baudelaire's poetry: the clown (in 'Le Fou et la Vénus'), the monk (in 'Le Mauvais Moine'), the social outcast under the light of a street-lamp (in 'Le Vin des Chiffonniers'), the Muse herself as an acrobat with a false smile (in 'La Muse Vénale'). Echoes of such images are to be found throughout Nijhoff's earlier poetry. Amongst other typical Baudelairean images that reverberate through ensuing Symbolist and Post-Symbolist poetry can be listed:

the city, the street-lamp, twilight, the corpse, the frozen emptiness of a lofty position, inability to act, sluggishness and weariness, forlorn longing, and on a happier or more sentimental note:

music, sea, mother, childhood nostalgia, flowers, greenery, an ideal woman figure.

One innovation in poetry to be accredited to Baudelaire is the use of synaesthesia, which is the description of images perceived through one sense in the terms of a different sense (such as colour in terms of taste, or sound in terms of smell). This device is tied in with the theory of symbolic correspondences. P.de Smaele in his work on Baudelaire claims that this poet was the first French poet to make a conscious and systematic use of synaesthesia:

"Door deze verrassende ontdekking heeft Baudelaire de poëtische uitdrukkingsmogelijkheden tot in het oneindige vermeerderd, en in dien zin is zijn invloed op de latere lyriek Europeesch geweest."¹

Nijhoff certainly likes to make use of this device. Some examples of it in his poetry are:

"een blank licht luist'rend in haar vochtige oog" ('Het Bruidje'),

"de verwelkte geur van een sonate" ('Mozart'),

"ik adem hijgend een ijskoud licht in" ('Tweeërlei Dood').

Because of their acute awareness of dualism as part of the system of universal correspondences and their need to

1. P.de Smaele, 'Baudelaire en het Baudelairisme', p.32.

express in their poetry the pain that is the counterpart of pleasure, and the evil that is the counterpart of good, considerable attention became focused on the unsavoury side of the Symbolists' work, and at first the movement was labelled with the term 'decadentism'. It was Jean Moréas who first rejected the decadent label in favour of the term 'symbolist' in a declaration published in 'Le Figaro'.¹

The mood set by Poe's tales, known in France through Baudelaire's translations, was partly responsible for creating the decadent image, by their concern with death, murder and evil under titles like 'The Imp of the Perverse' and 'The Devil in the Belfry'. A literary magazine entitled 'Le Décadent', to which Verlaine contributed, was published in Paris from 1886-9.

Many poets deliberately threw a spotlight on perversity and the accursed nature of their worldly lot, readily accepting the name of 'poètes maudits' (as put forward by Verlaine). Devotion to an ideal in the mind remote from reality caused a problem as to how to treat material concerns. The body held associations of transitoriness and corruption in contrast to the mind's associations with the spirit and eternity. In Baudelaire, "l'enfer" is where the urges of senses and heart are directed at, and "le ciel" is where the soul is aimed. Physical desires might be dealt with either by gratification or by mortification, by indulgence or by discipline. But if the body was doomed and the mind was compounding fabrications, there arose the horrible prospect of nothingness - "le néant" or "das Nichts". One influence behind this way of thinking lies in the philosophy of Hegel, based on the principle of the identity of contrasts, whereby existence is identical to "das Nichts". Mallarmé was one who was particularly disturbed by the thought of nothingness, having turned away from the real world and concentrated on an ideal of the imagination terminating in perfection and the absolute. Different Symbolist poets took a different stance according to whether they most wanted to capture in their poetry their physical

1. September 18th 1886.

predicament or their mental ideal. Verlaine and Rimbaud had a different orientation from that of Mallarmé - in the words of Paul Valéry: "Tandis que Verlaine et Rimbaud ont continué Baudelaire dans l'ordre du sentiment et de la sensation, Mallarmé l'a prolongé dans le domaine de la perfection et de la pureté poétique".¹

The decadent image of those who indulged their physical sensations in the dandy life-style was enhanced by the effeminate manners of the dandy. Reconciliation of sexual dualism was seen in the androgynous character, and Verlaine proclaimed publicly that he was androgynous by nature. The female element comes out strongly in his poetry. Many poets have considered that they must have something of the female in them in order to produce poetry, or that writing poetry is like giving birth. Mallarmé presents the idea of creating a poem as being like giving birth to a child in 'Don du Poème', an idea which Nijhoff also expresses (- to the child, the poet is "O moeder mijn")². A figure representing change of sex, Tiresias of Greek mythology, is used by Eliot in 'The Waste Land' as a symbol of masculine and feminine aspects combining in one person (the same character is also used by Van de Woestijne). The regular symbol of the ideal female is often so remote and unattainable as to have minimal physical attributes, and to be practically sexless in physical terms, representing solely the spiritual feminine. Resolution of sexual counter-attraction and other such worldly contrasts in a concept of an absolute or infinity gave a sterile ideal, and Mallarmé in particular was concerned about poetic sterility and the difficulty in knowing what to write about, a problem that also caused Nijhoff some concern. where?

Whilst Symbolist poets divided their attention with respect to subject matter between a pure ideal and an impure world, they consistently strove for purity of form. Poe's attempts to explain his procedure of writing 'The Raven' were gradually developed by Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé and Valéry into a theory for achieving "la poésie

1. P.Valéry, 'Situation de Baudelaire', 'Oeuvres I', p.613.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'Het Steenen Kindje'.

pure" - "Donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu".¹ To some poets sound was supposed to take precedence over meaning in order to bring poetry nearer to the realm of music. "De la musique avant tout chose"² proclaimed Verlaine, and Nijhoff's famous utterance about words singing themselves free from their meanings ("En mijn woorden, stijgend, zingen zich los van hun beteekenissen") can be interpreted in the light of the Symbolists' concentration on musical effect. In order to reproduce more closely the free flow of music, there was some experimentation with free verse forms, though an overall preference for the metrical control of traditional forms was maintained.

The attempt by poets at a rapprochement with the realm of music was reciprocated by composers who tried to approach nearer to the art of poetry. Schönberg's 'Pierrot Lunaire', first performed in Berlin in 1912, consisted of a recital of a cycle of twenty-one poems by Albert Giraud (in German translation), backed by a small instrumental ensemble. In this first performance a female reciter dressed in Pierrot costume appeared alone on the stage, with the instrumentalists hidden from the audience behind screens, to emphasise the texts rather than the music. Symbolists had a special admiration for Wagner, in whose art they saw drama, music and poetry combined.

For poetry to achieve effects comparable to those of music required, in Mallarmé's view, that words should somehow be divorced from their ordinary meanings,³ and also that the poet should be detached from his work. Detachment was one of the lines that Symbolist poets took, but it was not followed by all. Roger Fry, in his introduction to Mallarmé's poems, puts an extreme view when he says that Mallarmé's attitude is "purely detached and objective".⁴ The Irish novelist George Moore, who compiled an anthology 'Pure Poetry' (1924) defines pure poetry in his introduction as "something that the poet creates outside of his own

1. S.Mallarmé, 'Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe', 'Oeuvres Complètes', p.70.
2. P.Verlaine, 'Art Poétique', 'Jadis et Naguère', p.25.
3. v.Bowra, 'The Heritage of Symbolism', p.14.
4. R.Fry, Introduction to 'Poems of Mallarmé', p.305.

personality" and that conveys "the world of things".¹ Moore refers to the content of the anthology as "objective poetry", from which anything considered too subjective is excluded. These views of objectivity are, nevertheless, relative to what is still a subjective base.

To attain a precise and balanced form most Symbolist poets chose a classical mould to work with, though flexible enough to avoid rigidity. But it was an immense task to approach the absolute perfection sought after, and the major poets of the genre were continually revising and altering their poems, and finding it very difficult to settle on a final version. Valéry tried to embrace mathematics within the theory of pure poetry, relating the process of pure thought to mathematical progression. But Valéry had carried the theory to its limit, and owing to his strict adherence to the code, his poetry sometimes appears rather forced. Eliot criticises preoccupation with theory ("the poet's theories should arise out of his practice rather than his practice out of his theories")², whereby subject matter is an insignificant means towards the goal of pure language, and says that poetry ought to retain some of the so-called "impurity", and that subject matter should be valued for its own sake.

Whilst 'la poésie pure' was considered to be relatively objective and the poet aspired to a detachment from his poetry, the poet himself was not ruled out of his product. Rather, part of his personality was renounced in the interests of realising his pure self. The goal of the pure self was an obsession with Valéry, and Mallarmé speaks of the poem he creates as the absolute projection of himself. How much of the physical self, with the passions of flesh and blood, that was portrayed in a poem was a matter of the poet's own inclination, so long as the poem was not an expression of immediate emotion. Much in common as there is between Romantic and Symbolist poetry, the latter was concerned to move away from the direct expression of feelings (which Nijhoff, in a letter to Van Eyck, called

1. quoted by R.V.Johnson, 'Aestheticism', p.68.

2. T.S.Eliot, 'From Poe to Valéry', p.31.

just the first step in writing poetry)¹ to give a more considered view. It was by a method of 'emotion recollected in tranquillity' (Wordsworth), and the means of the symbol, that Symbolists channelled personal feelings into common understanding. (Jung illustrates this function of the symbol with a quote from Spielrein: "a symbol seems to me to owe its origin to the striving of a complex for dissolution in the common totality of thought".)²

Verlaine makes a distinction in the human make-up between the poet and the man, the poet being the equivalent of the purer aspect of the individual. Shelley also makes this distinction - "The poet and the man are two different natures; though they exist together, they may be unconscious of each other, and incapable of deciding on each other's powers and efforts by any reflex act".³ It is the poet when standing apart from worldly reality who, in the Symbolist view, formulates the poem. Nijhoff was very familiar with this idea of the poet and the man through the expressed belief of Kloos that the man had to die in order for the poet to live. He refers several times in his prose to Kloos's utterance: "De mens moet sterven eer de kunstenaar leeft".

The embodiment of the ideal self as a sort of alter ego is a theme which develops as a follow-on from the idea that the worldly counterpart is doomed. For Baudelaire the dual character is represented by the conscience or self-awareness that exists within the surroundings of a world of evil - "La conscience dans le Mal".⁴ Arthur Rimbaud advocated a profound and minute examination of one's own personality, to examine passion and evil for the purpose of knowledge, but others renounced the worldly character in a policy of depersonalisation. Either way there emerged a view of the worldly self as doomed to suffering and death. It might even be a question of suicide ("Victorieusement fui le suicide beau")⁵ or martyrdom in order to

1. 'M.Nijhoff aan P.N.van Eyck, 26/12/1924', 'Maatstaf V', 1957-8, No.8, November 1957, pp.540-4.
2. C.G.Jung, 'Symbols of Transformation', p.141.
3. 'The Works of P.B.Shelley, Volume VIII', p.207.
4. C.Baudelaire, 'l'Irrémédiable', 'Les Fleurs du Mal', p.86.
5. S.Mallarmé, 'Oeuvres Complètes', p.68.

realise the pure self; for Nijhoff self-sacrifice is a dominant theme. There are in fact similarities to Christ in this ultimately immortal, pure self, and Nijhoff refers to this element of Christ traceable in man in the dedication to his trilogy of religious plays, 'Het Heilige Hout': "Wie buiten zichzelf weet te treden, ontmoet terstond een naaste, en wie er dan in slaagt hem lief te krijgen, begint een Gestalte te zien, waarvoor men Virgilius of een Evangelist moet zijn om zelfs zijn omtrekken te durven schetsen."¹ Mallarmé came to associate the pure self with the spiritual universe - "je suis maintenant impersonnel et non plus Stéphane que tu as connu, - mais une aptitude qu'a l'Univers spirituel à se voir et à se développer à travers ce qui fut moi"² - and to sum up the impersonal, detached nature of the poet, Rimbaud produced the utterance: "Je est un autre."³ He goes on to explain that his ideas have a life of their own which he helps to engender and his work comes to life after he has activated it: "j'assiste à l'éclosion de ma pensée: je la regarde, je l'écoute: je lance un coup d'archet: la symphonie fait son remuement dans les profondeurs, ou vient d'un bond sur la scène." In the interests of detachment from and observation of self and world, an ascetic, self-contemplative figure became typical of the late nineteenth-century writer. A well-known model was Des Esseintes, introduced by J.K.Huysmans in 1884 as the hero of his novel 'A Rebours'. Des Esseintes creates his own world by shutting himself in his room with various religious objects, jewels, perfumes and books, which serve to trigger off his idealistic imagination. Following on this in 1894, came Valéry's prose story of Monsieur Teste, a character who, quite divorced from ordinary life, develops his intellect via mathematical principles towards the goal of the pure self, who practises being himself and seeing himself. In his later poems, particularly the volume 'Charmes', Valéry is much concerned with the relationship between the intellect and the senses, detaching his inte-

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.257.
2. Letter to Cazalis, 14/5/1867, 'Correspondance de Mallarmé I, 1862-1871', p.242.
3. Letter to Paul Demeny, 15/5/1871, 'Arthur Rimbaud, Oeuvres Completes', p.250.

Intellectual self to observe his sensual self. But Valéry's later poems occurred after a long period of poetic non-productivity (1898-1917) and showed the need to take some account of reality and the worldly self, because the goal of purity led also to sterility. What had started as a desire amongst Symbolist poets to put a distance between themselves and subjective worldly emotions and to view these more objectively, had led in some instances to rejection and total neglect of the real world, to be replaced by a no less subjective world of the mind. Nijhoff in his earlier poetry often portrays himself as cut off from the world ("een ruimte scheidt mij van de wereld af")¹, but nevertheless in many poems he expresses extreme sensitivity for physical emotions. His poetry varies between the detached, the sensitive and the sentimental.

Complementing the concept of the ideal self in Symbolist poetry is that of the ideal woman figure, and there is considerable similarity between the two concepts. A female motif may operate in much the same role as the ideal or immortal aspect of the self. Poe pictures his own soul as feminine in the poem 'Ulalume'², where he describes a nocturnal walk with Psyche, the configuration of his soul, the notion being related to the Greek myth of Psyche, the most beautiful woman, who came to personify the mind or soul. Among seventeenth-century mystics, Jakob Böhme had expressed the view that the divine virgin, Sophia, was originally present in primordial man, but she abandoned him, and man cannot be saved until he finds her again. (Böhme is subject of a Nijhoff poem). A famous epigram on the quest for the immortal female is provided by the final words of Goethe's 'Faust': "Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan."

A type of ideal female emerges from Symbolist poetry which embraces purity, beauty and love, and which is sometimes represented by the Madonna or Beatrice. Any physical properties of sex are disregarded and the spiritual femininity may be vague enough for the whole concept to appear

1. M.Nijhoff, 'De Wandelaar'.

2. 'The Complete Poetry and Selected Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe', pp.122-5.

sexless. Baudelaire envisages an ideal female with whom his soul communes - "Que diras-tu ce soir, pauvre âme solitaire ... à la très-belle, à la très-bonne, à la très-chère?"¹ - and who combines female Muse and Madonna with male guardian angel: "Je suis l'Ange gardien, la Muse et la Madone." There is always an idea of death associated with the ideal female, since she is unattainable in the real world. Often she takes the shape of a deceased loved one who is apotheosised, as Novalis had done with his lost Sophie. Baudelaire and Verlaine describe visitations at night in dreams of the ideal female, a theme which is prominent in the poetry of Gérard de Nerval (to whom Arthur Symons traces the origin of Symbolist literature)². When the female is representative principally of love she has a maternal air. Baudelaire imagines a visitation ("venant du fond de son lit éternel") by his old nurse³, but does not use the image of his own mother to represent any immortal concept of woman. Affection for mother is a strong factor in the lives of several Symbolist poets, particularly Baudelaire and Rimbaud, and longing for motherly affection is an important aspect of Jules Laforgue's poetry, in which the image of his deceased mother plays a haunting role. Nijhoff has an obsession with the mother motif, and, even in her lifetime, elevates his mother to an ideal beyond the grave.

Just as the ideal self had a counterpart in the doomed worldly self, the ideal female had a counterpart in the 'femme fatale', which also provided a prominent theme in Symbolist art and writing. Physical communion with woman was associated with corruption and destruction, but was also associated by some with corporal sacrifice for the attainment of the ideal. The worldly self and worldly woman were both thought of as doomed and might be portrayed in sensual relationship as doomed together. Baudelaire portrays lesbians as another type of accursed woman, applying to them the term "femmes damnées" and seeing them as

1. 'XLII', 'Les Fleurs du Mal', p.47.

2. A.Symons, 'The Symbolist Movement in Literature', p.3.

3. 'La servante au grand coeur', 'C', 'Les Fleurs du Mal', p.112.

braving perversity for the sake of virginity and martyrdom, contemptuous of reality in the quest for eternity ("de la réalité grands esprits contempteurs, chercheuses d'infini")¹. For the body, self-indulgence was linked with suicide or self-destruction, and self-denial was linked with martyrdom. The type of accursed woman who indulged sexual desires might thus have superior motives, undergoing a sort of physical sacrifice in the pursuit of a higher ideal.

All Symbolist and Post-Symbolist poets conveyed the contrary themes of imperfect world and perfect ideal, but most tended to concentrate on one or the other. Among those who were principally geared to purity and the absolute - who continued Baudelaire "dans le domaine de la perfection et de la pureté poétique" - were Mallarmé, Valéry and Claudel. Their negative attitude towards the material world caused them to be disdainful of and aloof from reality, and carried them on a course of asceticism which ultimately led to a dead-end and necessitated some renewal of contact with reality. They may have looked at themselves objectively, but there was still a concentration on the self and the world of the individual. Valéry links the self-contemplative type of figure to the Narcissus legend ('Fragments de Narcisse') - the search for the pure self is represented by the man gazing into the pool to see the reflected image of himself. (Nijhoff, gazing into water in 'Het Kind en Ik' sees a configuration of his ideal self as a child).

Though Mallarmé tried to dismiss the material world in order to find a spiritual delight of his own, there remains an amount of the Baudelairean decadent aspect in his work. Clownish figures, artificiality, paint and make-up occur in his poetry, but as an undercurrent to the absolute. For Verlaine, Rimbaud, Laforgue and Apollinaire, the accursed or decadent element dominates. The material world is the centre of their attentions, though they feel alienated from it. Purposeful activity is difficult, which gives rise to the nagging prospect of persistent reluctance and failure to act, as conveyed in Verlaine's 'Les Indolents'.² But much of their verse is set in society, in the

1. 'Femmes Damnées', 'CXI', 'Les Fleurs du Mal', p.132.
2. 'Les Fêtes Galantes', p.164.

midst of the city, where transitory phenomena are seen as a web of deception and falsity when offset against eternity. Suffering and death, like that of a martyr, is inherent in the city, but without an ulterior purpose - "un martyr sans espérance" is how Verlaine describes London.¹ Masked, costumed and outlandish figures on the fringe of society represent the poet's essential fear of life. There is an obsession with the theme of death, but the death-wish is tempered by the prospect of an infinite nothingness, so that fear of life is restrained from converting into a firm commitment to suicide by a counteracting fear of death. Darkness is a refuge from daylight reality, but a lamp in the night is a refuge from total darkness. Moonlight, twilight or other forms of half-light offer a compromise state between extremes. The fringe specimen on the edge of human society but unable to make the final severance for fear of the abyss is one of the major motifs of the age. Often the role is enacted by a clown, whose costume and make-up covers a bitterly unhappy person with insane and suicidal characteristics, abhorring reality. His function of providing laughter serves rather to make him a source of mockery or ironical self-parody. The main clownish figures in art and literature of the Symbolist and Post-Symbolist periods are Pierrot and Harlequin, characters derived from the Italian 'Commedia dell'Arte', which had a considerable influence on French literature, from which its repercussions spread. Pierrot appears regularly in the poetry of Verlaine and Laforgue, and features in several musical compositions (e.g. Schönberg's 'Pierrot Lunaire', Rachmaninov's 'Polichinelle', and Debussy's adaption of Verlaine's 'Fêtes Galantes')² and paintings (e.g. Ensor and Picasso). Laforgue's volume 'l'Imitation de Notre-Dame la Lune' contains a whole series of poems about Pierrot, and a series of 'Locutions des Pierrots' in simple iambic quatrains, a style of which Nijhoff's 'Pierrot aan de Lantaarn' is reminiscent. In the theatre, Alfred Jarry caused a stir with his clownish drama 'Ubu Roi' (1896), and a well-known clownish ballet was Stravinsky's 'Petrushka' (1911) based on the Slavic legend of the everlasting

1. P. Verlaine, 'Sonnet Boiteux', 'Jadis et Naguère', p.20.
2. T. Kurpershoek-Schurft, 'De Episode van 'Het Getij'', p.148.

clown.

Grotesque imagery with abundant use of costumes, make-up, masks and skeletons stands out in the work of Symbolist painters, like the Belgian artists Félicien Rops and James Ensor. The drawings of Aubrey Beardsley, which found popularity in the 1890's, depict the grotesque and perverse, and a notable motif in his work, typifying the decadent mood of the times, is that of Salome (- "dans ik als Salomé" - Nijhoff, 'De Wandelaar'). (Beardsley also became the subject of a Nijhoff poem). A play published in French by Oscar Wilde, entitled 'Salome', was illustrated by Beardsley; Salome is a dominant theme in the paintings of Gustave Moreau, and is featured in Huysmans' 'A Rebours'.

Mental anguish and despair, expressing the feeling of life as an infernal existence, were highlighted by Rimbaud, who won particular fame with his 'Une Saison en Enfer'. With gruesome or lugubrious images, masks and shadows, corpses and wretches echoing through Symbolist poetry from Baudelaire onwards, the scene that was painted often had an underworld aura. Even those poets who tried to ignore the material world employed images of spirits normally impish or fiendish in association, such as fauns and satyrs - Mallarmé presents 'l'Après-midi d'un Faun', and Valéry 'La Jeune Parque', whilst fauns and satyrs recur in the poetry of Henri de Régnier.

Those poets who followed the line of the first generation of Symbolists of the latter part of the nineteenth century, generally gravitated like their predecessors to either a preoccupation with purity and ideal or a concern with the doomed world. Next to Valéry and Claudel in France, those who can be numbered amongst the former group are Rilke and George in Germany, and Verwey in Holland. Apollinaire, Eliot and Nijhoff were amongst those who were concerned with the doomed world. Characteristic decadent images, like masks and shadows, appear through Apollinaire's poetry, especially in the volume 'Alcools'(1913), and Eliot acknowledges being particularly influenced by Laforgue, mainly with respect to the early work in which Laforgue uses mask, clown, dance, night-time, moon and street-lamp images; he sees society as spiritually barren.

Not quite everything in the material world was deplored by the Symbolist, and naturally enough where some ray of happiness was to be found, this came in for fairly sentimental treatment. Childhood, mother, naivety, simple rustic scenes, and reminders of past nobility are ideas that are romanticised, representing not so much a viable reality as a refuge from reality. Happiness of times past is a recurrent theme of Poe's, and Baudelaire associates music, flowers and greenery with childhood:

"Mais le vert paradis des amours enfantines,
Les courses, les chansons, les baisers, les bouquets,
Les violons vibrant derrière les collines,
Avec les brocs de vin, le soir dans les bosquets."¹

Childhood and naivety come out strongly in Verlaine and rural scenes abound in his volume 'Poèmes Saturniens'. He has a disposition for simple verse forms. Something of an attempt to recapture the atmosphere of former times is seen in the stately and graceful modes of the 'fête galante', although this relies on illusion. Similar to the idea of the 'fête galante' is that of the world of courtly or Arthurian legend which sometimes occurs in Symbolist poetry and is used by Nijhoff. Rilke is one who likes to use child and mother images. The child represents an innocent and uncorrupted state and is thus close to the idea of the pure self. But the search for this former self does not always have romantic connotations. In Georg Heym's 'Umbra Vitae' (1912) it is fatal:

"Selbstmörder gehen nachts in grossen Horden,
Die suchen vor sich ihr verlornes Wesen".²

Nevertheless there is a trend to develop the idea of a possible happy existence within the world, and Henri de Régnier adopts this course in a sort of rural-aristocratic mood. Whilst most were crying doom, there were some who found room to enjoy in the beginning of the twentieth century a last age of happiness - "la belle époque".

Christianity offers a refuge for many of the 'poètes maudits'. It grows in importance for Baudelaire, and Verlaine eventually becomes a firm advocate of Christianity;

1. C. Baudelaire, 'Moesta et Errabunda', 'Les Fleurs du Mal', p.70.
2. 'Menschheitsdämmerung', ed. K. Pinthus, p.39.

three of his collections, 'Sagesse', 'Amour' and 'Bonheur', are of a specific Christian tenor. Eliot in his later poetry comes out in favour of the Church, and Nijhoff throughout his poetry constantly deals with Christian and Biblical themes. Although not becoming committed to Christian belief in his life, Nijhoff's work contains poems and plays that entirely embody Christian principles, and often there is a Christian motif filling the point of contact between decadent world and remote ideal.

Outside the group of French poets near to the hub of the Symbolist Movement (those close in place and time as much as in thinking), there is no clear-cut classification of poets under Symbolist, Post-Symbolist, or other tags. Some poets known as surrealists or expressionists are as much symbolist in orientation as others known as symbolists. Strictly speaking, Post-Symbolists are those who based their poetry on first-generation Symbolist predecessors, as Valéry, Claudel, Apollinaire, and a number of Dutch poets did. Since the French Symbolist Movement was a development out of and an answer to Romanticism, and since a Romantic Movement has figured in the literature of several other countries, it is not surprising that poetry of a symbolist nature should also develop from a Romantic background in such another country. As symbolistic representation was already a device of German Romantics like Novalis and Heine, and of English Romantics like Keats and Shelley, so in Holland certain members of the equivalent late-romantic movement of the Tachtigers moved towards symbolism. Thus there arose poets like Rilke and George in Germany, and Verwey, Leopold and Boutens in Holland who, not satisfied with spontaneous expression of emotion and obsession with beauty, originated a brand of symbolism from their own background, which was influenced by and parallel to the French movement, but was not part of that movement nor derived from it. These are, however, poets of a symbolist type, and their successors, who derived more from the French Symbolists, like Nijhoff, Van Eyck, Van de Woestijne, Adriaan Roland Holst and Bloem in Dutch literature, are the effective Post-Symbolists.

Chapter 3

DUTCH POST-SYMBOLISTS AND NIJHOFF

However much a writer draws from a foreign culture, he remains indebted to the heritage of his native language and culture, so although Dutch Post-Symbolists were largely influenced by the French Symbolists, their poetry must also be seen in terms of what was going on and what had gone before in Dutch literature. Nijhoff, between 1916-19, published many poems in 'De Beweging', under the editorship of Albert Verwey, and it was this periodical which provided a mouthpiece for a lot of symbolist-type poets, not just ones following the guidelines of Verwey, and including a generation of young poets who published their early poetry in the decade starting 1910 and for whom the Symbolist Movement in France was a strong source of influence, next to the Movement of Tachtig and its repercussions in Dutch literature. This 'generatie van '10' constitutes the core of the Dutch Post-Symbolists, though other closely related poets may be classified under that heading.

According to a report, by W.L.M.E. van Leeuwen,¹ of a speech given by Nijhoff to the Volksuniversiteit at Enschede in 1927 entitled 'Over Moderne Poëzie' (the actual text of which has not survived), Nijhoff saw his own generation as directly linked with the Tachtigers. In this speech he described Dutch poetry from 1880 on as like a cathedral, of which the Tachtigers produced the initial building work, the next generation (in which he included Leopold, Boutens, Henriëtte Roland Holst and Karel van de Woestijne) contributed qualities to the song that was produced, and of which the "generatie van 1910" (he specifies Adriaan Roland Holst, Bloem, Van Eyck, Werumeus Buning and Nijhoff) were working with mortal dread on the roof and the towers, trying to fashion their emotion into well-controlled form -
 "Zij streven naar hartsuitstorting in bewuste taalbeheersing, in tegenstelling met Kloos, die de onmiddellijke

1. pp.325-8 of 'Herinneringen aan Martinus Nijhoff', 'De Vlaamse Gids 38', No.6, June 1954, pp.321-9.

expressie wilde, directheid, naaktheid en hartstocht. De jongeren zien de vorm als een materie van eigen aard, niet als een om de inhoud geslagen kleet."¹

In this view of form as "een materie van eigen aard" lies one of their similarities with the Symbolists, recognising an evocative power of words independent of what the poet feels.

At the time of the second decade of the twentieth century, most of the Tachtigers were still writing, and a somewhat similar split in direction to that of the French Symbolists is observable, with orientation towards or away from the real world. The main trend amongst those poets primarily concerned with the real world was towards Socialism, for which Herman Gorter (of the Tachtigers) and Henriëtte Roland Holst (of the following generation) were leading lights. Nijhoff was not in practice an ascetic, transcendalist or mystic, so that Theun de Vries wants to fit him in with the Socialist trend.² But though there are traces of that ideology in his poetry, Nijhoff is much closer to the decadent atmosphere of the 'poètes maudits', and feels an outsider from normal society. Ngh!

It took some time before Baudelaire's work had much effect on Dutch literature, and some of his immediate successors had influence in this area before him. De Smaele narrows down the emergence of 'Baudelaireanism' in Holland to around 1910 and particularly to those poets who began to publish in 'De Beweging' from about then.³ In order to counter Baudelaire's decadent reputation, Van Eyck and Bloem took pains to play down the corrupt and perverse side of his poetry, and paint him as an essentially moral and religious poet. Nijhoff was the only one of the group to concentrate on the decadent theme, though in Belgium where Baudelaire's impact had come earlier, Karel van de Woestijne had embraced this aspect and consequently merits classification amongst the Dutch Post-Symbolists. The extent to which this generation drew from Symbolists and Tachtigers

1. W.L.M.E. van Leeuwen, 'Herinneringen aan Martinus Nijhoff', 'De Vlaamse Gids' 38, No. 6, June 1954, p. 327.
2. Theun de Vries, 'M. Nijhoff, Wandelaar in de Werkelijkheid'.
3. P. de Smaele, 'Baudelaire en het Baudelairisme', p. 193. /p?

can be gauged from an utterance by Nijhoff in 1949 when, looking back, he says that he would not put the inception of the twentieth century proper before 1930:

"Een zeer vertraagd 'fin de siècle' was oorzaak dat deze eeuw niet voor omstreeks 1930 definitief in de twintigste eeuw overging."¹

Nijhoff and his generation were opposed to that stance of the Tachtigers which advocated spontaneous expression and individualism - "de allerindividueelste expressie van de allerindividueelste emotie"(Kloos) - but there were specific ideas that were taken over from the Tachtigers and developed, and two particular quotations from them are repeatedly referred to by Nijhoff in his critical prose as basic to his own thinking:

Kloos's "de mens moet sterven eer de kunstenaar leeft";

Perk's description of sonnets as "kindren van de rustige gedachte".

These quotes are noticeably consistent with the Symbolist attitude and the theory of correspondences, indicating that the poet is an extension beyond the ordinary man and poetry an extension beyond the mind of the poet. Despite his own concern with society and the material world, there was a time when Nijhoff believed that, from the time of Baudelaire, poetry in general had moved right away from the real world to another domain, as he states in an article of 1924:

"De wereld der poëzie blijft, hoezeer zij aandrift, motief en beeld daaraan moge ontleen, een andere wereld dan die der werkelijkheid. Zij is zelfs geen directe weerkaatsing daarvan in de eeuwigheid. Zij is een geheel aparte wereld, die door een geheel aparte actie van de menselijke geest, hoezeer ook door het natuurlijk leven daartoe aanzet, wordt benadert. Zoals een lichaam zich in zijn schaduw voortzet, zoals een figuur door mathematische constructie verlengd kan worden, heeft (om het kort te zeggen) de nadering van leven naar poëzie plaats. Dit wordt mogelijk gemaakt door een andere functie in de mens: de mogelijkheid het leven in een gedachte te kunnen overzien en dan deze gedachte, in vorm gebracht, te kunnen continueren totdat zij, losgekomen, uit eigen activiteit een eigen

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Veertig jaar dichterlijke arbeid', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1021.

verwezenlijking in haar woordvorm samenstelt.

Drieërlei daad dus: de levensdaad der gedachtevorming enerzijds, en anderzijds de poëtische daad der verwezenlijking daarvan, met, als schakel tussen beide, de zelf-aangedreven beweging van de eenmaal opgeroepen woord-vorm."¹

As a result of this threefold act of writing poetry, Nijhoff sees a shift in late nineteenth-century poetry towards a complete disengagement from the world - "toen Baudelaire, de laatste dichter die terugblikte, ophield te schrijven, was wat men 'het leven dezer wereld' noemt voorgoed uit de belangstelling der poëzie weggeval- len."² The formulation of a totally different world is the contribution of the Symbolists:

"Wij krijgen dan, in het laatste kwart der eeuw, de geweldige krachtsinspanning der zich 'poètes maudits' wetende dichters, het formuleren van wat ik de derde daad noemde, het letterlijk scheppend verwezenlijken en ontdek- ken en benaderen van de 'andere' wereld. Hier moet ik, zoals zoëven Baudelaire, de naam van Mallarmé noemen, de Pool-reiziger naar het poëtisch-absolute, de naam van Keats, de eerste Robinson Crusoe op het eiland van dit volstrekt buiten-wereldlijk geluk, van Rimbaud, de alchi- mist van het woord, die voorgoed adieu zeide en niet meer omzag."³

The view expressed here in this article is an extreme one, dating from shortly before the time when Nijhoff changed his poetic standpoint to express a conviction in the real world. His critical prose from both before and after this turning-point does in fact give recognition to elements of realism in poets from the period referred to in the above quote.

Of his immediate predecessors in Dutch poetry, Nijhoff felt closest to Leopold and Boutens. One of Leopold's poems, 'Nachten van Gedragen Extase', is alluded to in the third poem of 'De Wandelaar' (1916):

"In dezen morgen zie ik dat de nachten
 Dragend geweest zijn, van extase zwaar - "
 ('Na een Jaar').

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Nieuwe Geluiden I', 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp.192-3.
2. id., p.193.
3. id., pp.193-4.

The first poem of the volume (the title poem) expresses a remoteness from the world which recalls an early poem by Boutens which runs:

"Ik heb geleefd als een, die kalm en blij
Ver van de wereld in zijn lichtlief thuis
Mijmert en werkt in lamplichts blanke tent. - "1

Boutens also uses the theme of the solitary, nocturnal Pierrot (e.g. 'Pierrot Moderne') and sombre images of the moon. But both Boutens and Leopold were to a greater extent than Nijhoff concerned with capturing sublime experiences and less with lamenting worldly troubles. There is a strong melancholic element in Boutens, but without the degree of suffering felt by Nijhoff. So, although Nijhoff considered that his own poetic development owed much to these two predecessors, his work does not have the same style and approach. He shows some early affinity to Boutens, but his relation to Leopold is one of admiration more than affinity. (It is characteristic of his fascination with the child symbol, that he considers 'Kinderpartij' to be the pinnacle of Leopold's poetry)².

Nijhoff's style is much closer to Van de Woestijne, whom he regards as belonging to the age of Symbolism.³ Van de Woestijne shows the same feeling of torment and injury:

"Misschien zal ik vergeten
hoe doornen langs een liefde-laan
mijn lede' aan stukken reten..."⁴

Nijhoff's "Ik heb me plat tegen de grond gelegd
En woorden heb ik tot mezelf gesproken,
Die ook een doode tot zichzelf zegt" ('Na een Jaar') recalls Van de Woestijne's

"'k Heb mij in bedden neêr-geleid
waar vreemde doden lagen..."⁵

and "Een stoet van beelden zag ik langs mij gaan" ('De Wandelaar') resembles the "schone stoet van vreemde beelden" that Van de Woestijne sees in the poem 'o Schone Boom' (1909).⁶

1. P.C. Boutens, 'Verzen' (1898), p.14.
2. M. Nijhoff, 'Een brief aan Anthonie Donker' (1929), 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp. 579-580, note.
3. M. Nijhoff, 'Karel van de Woestijne, "Zon in den rug"' (1926), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p. 376.
4. K. van de Woestijne, 'Wat deert me nieuwe liefdes-tijd' (1903), 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p. 11.
5. id.
6. K. van de Woestijne, 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p. 90.

Other similarities between the two poets include: sentimental garden images, the ideal woman figure, attraction of the sea, giving birth to poetry ("'k voel hoe verzen, barens-rede, mij bewonen")¹, a dialogue between happy and unhappy counterparts (Nijhoff's 'Pierrot aan de Lantaarn' (1916) and Van de Woestijne's 'De Dubbele Nachtegaal' (1905)²), and the empathy felt between two lonely people with similar longing (Nijhoff's 'Langs een Wereld' (1924) and Van de Woestijne's 'Weer staat mijn venster open' (1920)³).

The poet amongst his contemporaries with probably the greatest influence for Nijhoff, certainly as far as his symbolism is concerned, is Adriaan Roland Holst. Holst, through his poetry and prose stories, builds up a monumental myth, and much of this myth re-echoes in Nijhoff's symbolism - the sea, the mirror, the past, decay ('ondergang'), nostalgia ('heimwee'), longing ('Elysisch verlangen'), the coast, dunes, silence, the moon, fire, wind, and roaming are major images of Holst which all enter into Nijhoff's poetry with equivalent symbolic meaning. The importance for Nijhoff of the wave, the flame and the breeze as symbols of the intermediacy between bounded form and boundlessness reflects their dominant role in Holst's poetry. However, not all of Holst's major images are treated in the same way by Nijhoff. Holst's myth is firmly pagan, and the Cross holds other associations for him than for Nijhoff, who adopts Christian values. Like Nijhoff, Holst views mortal men as wretched and doomed, but despises these "neerslachtigen", whereas Nijhoff shows sympathy. Though Holst finds himself forced to take some notice of the material world, the Elysian myth takes an emphatic first place, and he is firmly dedicated to it.

In a prose story, 'De Afspraak' (1925), Holst deals with the quest for an ideal figure who complements the self, but takes the shape of a brother figure rather than the ideal self. The idealised figure is someone he had once

1. K. van de Woestijne, 'Niet waar? Een snede vlees' (1905), 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p. 67.
2. K. van de Woestijne, 'Verzamelde Gedichten', pp. 36-41.
3. id., pp. 127-8.

met one evening when a child, and the story builds up to a long-awaited reunion with this figure, at which it is realised that the ideal figure is a brother: "Toen voor het eerst, terwijl ik voelde, onverwonderd, dat gij naast mij waart, wist ik, dat wij broeders zijn, al zijt gij ouder en zooveel sterker en helderder dan ik."¹ Nijhoff also dreams of an ideal figure whom he sees in a brother role in 'Awater': after seeing the fascinating figure of Awater from his window, the narrator of the poem conceives of him as a companion to replace his deceased brother. The idea of a longed-for meeting with a brother figure also occurs in Van de Woestijne's 'Weer staat mijn venster open' (1920), which shows a man standing at his window and wondering whether he will find the brother of his dream:

"of hij hem vinde die hem staat te wachten:
de broeder van zijn droom".²

Holst's conception of an ideal figure becomes more closely identifiable with the pure self or 'alter ego' in his poem 'De Nederlaag' (1925), which describes the appearance of "hij, die ikzelf had kunnen zijn".³

Such is Nijhoff's admiration for Holst's work that themes from it continually occur in his own work. In his prose he quotes from Holst the words "ik voel mij weer gelukkig worden, loopende, loopende"⁴ several times to represent a particular attitude to life. The enthusiasm with which he reviews Holst's volume 'De Wilde Kim' (1925) in an article for the 'Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant' (1925) indicates the extent of his admiration -

"Het is wonderlijk, wonderlijk, deze gedichten hier aan te kondigen. Reeds lang vóór zij verzameld werden om in boekvorm te verschijnen, kende ik ze, kende ik ze goed en ze stonden me voor de geest, gedurende het ruime jaar dat ik in deze rubriek wekelijks poëzie-kronieken voor u schreef, als het zuivere element waar het werk van al de anderen aan te toetsen viel, als mijn eerste en laatste argument tegen anderer tekortkomingen, als een verzwegen bewijsstuk voor de geldigheid van sommige denkbeelden,

1. A. Roland Holst, 'De Afspraak', 'Verzamelde Werken III, Proza I', p.187.
2. K. van de Woestijne, 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.128.
3. A. Roland Holst, 'Verzamelde Werken II, Gedichten II', p.28.
4. A. Roland Holst, 'De Ontkomen Zwerver', 'Verzamelde Werken I, Gedichten I', p.193.

die ik misschien slechts naar aanleiding hiervan de moed had op te werpen, als een proef op de beweringen 'in petto' gehouden, maar, en misschien vóór alles, als een 'vaderland voor de ziel', waar men meer bemint naar de mate men beter kent, waar de dingen geheimzinniger worden naarmate men meer met ze vertrouwd geraakt, terwijl onze bewondering telkens weer onze liefde verdiepte en overtrof, totdat deze nog maar als een uiterst aanvoelingsvermogen overbleef, dat met de intuïtieve kennis van haar voorwerp samenviel."¹

Dirk Coster, in comparing Nijhoff with Holst,² picks out Nijhoff's tendency towards 'ontwereldlijking' and argues that Holst is the model for what he is striving to achieve himself - "Inderdaad: hier dan eindelijk vindt hij de dichter, die de belangstelling in de wereld "verloren heeft", die zich ontwereldlijkt, hij is het, die niet "over het leven" terugziet, hij is het die "enkel een boven dit leven uitgaande vreugde" tracht te zingen, die zich daarin geabstraheerd heeft."³ (he quotes opinions expressed by Nijhoff in an article of 1924). Moreover he criticises Nijhoff's theory that writing poetry is a threefold activity as being written to comply with Holst's poetry.

Certainly Nijhoff, in addition to the esteem he shows, is very conscious of the common ground he shares with Holst, though he himself tends to hold an exaggerated view of his affinity to him. "Toen zich mijn handen tot geen daad meer hieven" runs the title poem to 'De Wandelaar' (1916), and "De laatste daad viel uit mijn moede handen" says Holst in 'Voorbij de Wegen' (1920);⁴ but Holst's withdrawal from reality results from the firm resolve in his dedication to an other-worldly myth. Nijhoff never succeeds in severing his connections with the real world nor in renouncing his interest in it. Indeed he does not see Holst in the way that Coster asserts, because he regularly points to ties with the real world which he finds in Holst's poetry. He admires his use of ordinary language,

1. M. Nijhoff, 'A. Roland Holst, "De wilde kim", 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp. 358-9.
2. Dirk Coster, 'Naar Boven of Voorbij de Wegen of het Credo van een Dichter', 'De Stem', III, 1930, pp. 983-1000.
3. id., p. 998.
4. A. Roland Holst, 'Voorzang I', 'Verzamelde Werken I, Gedichten I', p. 166.

and says that his poems are directed at reality, whereby the poem "naar de werkelijkheid van ons aards gevoelsleven richting neemt en daarin afdalend binnendringt en wortel schiet" - a process for which he coins the term "binnensmelten".¹ In his later articles, Nijhoff stresses Holst's worldly aspects to a somewhat disproportionate degree, in a way that makes Holst fit more closely to his own changed attitude towards reality, e.g. "hij is ondanks zichzelf stedelijk geworden",² and he refers to an "inkeer die hem voerde tot verbondenheid met de mensheid".³ Yet in earlier articles, the basis of Holst's poetry was seen as a "vreugde die het leven te boven gaat",⁴ and "alles is bij hem uitdrukking van het Ene Andere".⁵ Though this supernal element is important to Nijhoff's poetry, it is overshadowed by anguish and sorrow and sensuality; in his later poems it becomes perceptible in the real world. In keeping with Nijhoff's more materialistic standpoint, his imagery also has relatively more of the concrete and less of the abstract.

Van Eyck, Bloem and Werumeus Buning are the other important figures amongst the Dutch Post-Symbolist poets, and of these Van Eyck is the most influential for Nijhoff, not so much through his poetry as through his critical work and through friendship and correspondence between the two. He begins in poetry, like Nijhoff, on a note of disillusion and alienation, which closely echoes the way Boutens started - Boutens: "Ik sloot de blinkevenstren van mijn Ziel",⁶ | Van Eyck: "I lock my Door upon Myself".⁷

Also like Nijhoff, his early poetry is occupied with personal suffering, and longing for divine light. He laments that pure light is not to be found on earth, which only receives a form broken into colours. This theme of the pure

1. M.Nijhoff, 'A.Roland Holst, "De wilde kim"' (1925), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.359.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'A.Roland Holst en Nederland' (1948), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.997.
3. id., p.1009.
4. M.Nijhoff, 'Nieuwe Geluiden I' (1924), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.194.
5. M.Nijhoff, 'A.Roland Holst, "De wilde kim"' (1925), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.361.
6. P.C.Boutens, 'Verzen' (1898), p.13.
7. title taken from a painting (1891) by Fernand Khnopff (Belgian Symbolist painter); P.N.van Eyck, 'Verzameld Werk I, Gedichten I', p.11.

light and the idea that things on earth are just broken or breaking reflections of their perfect form plays a part in 'De Wandelaar', which in the first edition opened on these lines with the poem 'Het Licht'. Another similarity between Van Eyck and Nijhoff is that they both tried to develop a religious philosophy based on Christianity. But Van Eyck was close to Verwey and, through him, to Spinozist doctrine which in the end led him to a pantheist belief. An essential part of his belief was that pure happiness exists within the world, and it is his defence of the natural world, particularly in a spell of correspondence with Nijhoff around Christmas 1924, which is a telling factor in Nijhoff's change of attitude in favour of the virtues of the natural world. However, Van Eyck develops a metaphysical concept in his poetry which tends to dissolve distinctions between finite and infinite and to express a sublimeness of beauty, love and bliss, born of the reconciliation of conflicts, whereas dualism is always fundamental to Nijhoff's poetry.

J.C.Bloem's overriding preoccupation is with longing for happiness, which is symbolised by roaming and travelling. In many ways he resembles Holst, but because he does not go so far as Holst in pursuing his longing, Nijhoff rates him a minor poet. Instead of thinking "ik voel mij weer gelukkig worden, loopende, loopende", Bloem is not content with this but harbours regrets over material satisfactions left behind - according to Nijhoff in 1921.¹ Nijhoff takes the view that only through separating oneself from the world can one appreciate one's indebtedness towards the world. Nevertheless there is much in Bloem's poetry that is reminiscent of Nijhoff: roaming, the journey, the train, darkness, death, pessimism, concern that his poetic source may dry up, doubts about his ideal and his profession, enjoyment of tranquillity, antiquity and simplicity.

Werumeus Buning has a slightly different initial stance from the other poets of his generation, in that he is trying to come to terms with the world after having experienced a sublime happiness in love terminating in the

1. M.Nijhoff, 'J.C.Bloem, "Het verlangen"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.102.

death of the loved one. Articles by Nijhoff in 1921¹ and 1924² convey his admiration for Buning's first volume 'In Memoriam' (1921), and there is a tenderness, sensitivity and musical quality in Buning's poetry comparable to some of Nijhoff's, though in his early poetry Nijhoff's tone is conversely often callous, harsh or bitter. His later poetry where he is trying to concentrate more on the earth and bring spiritual elements within the context of the earth shows rather more affinity to Buning, who sees that achievements are produced through the contention between material and spiritual forces, and uses the Biblical image of Jacob and the angel to symbolise this contention, an image which Nijhoff employs in his prose story 'De Pen op Papier' (1926).

One other, lesser-known, poet from the 'generatie van '10', J. van 't Lindenhout Jr., a close friend, also deserves mention because of his special attraction for Nijhoff. Van 't Lindenhout died young in 1916 after having published a few poems in 'De Beweging' in 1914-15 under the pseudonym J. Berkel. His dissatisfaction with and tendency to withdrawal from reality is wholly compatible with the age. Where he was particularly close to the early Nijhoff was in the fact that he could not suppress worldly disappointment and pessimism for the sake of his dream. In an article in 'De Beweging' in 1919,³ Nijhoff gave a character sketch of Van 't Lindenhout and reproduced a prose story by him entitled 'Van Drie Lichtschuwen'. Van 't Lindenhout is shown in this article as a typical representative of an age of pessimism and dilettantism, in which its artists, in a tone which is tortured and disconsolate, "zoeken, vluchtend, een uitweg in de dood, een elysium, berustende religie, extase, waanzin."⁴

It is a unifying factor in the work of the Dutch Post-Symbolists that they so typify the age. As they matured they progressed to a less period-bound output, and this is particularly true of Nijhoff, who from 'Nieuwe Gedichten'

1. M.Nijhoff, 'J.W.F.Werumeus Buning, "In memoriam"' (1921), 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp.115-7.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'J.W.F.Werumeus Buning, "In memoriam"' (1924), 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp.202-7.
3. M.Nijhoff, 'Een brief aan een meisje', 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp.7-15.
4. id., p.10.

(1934) onwards produces poetry that reflects its age but with an originality that extends beyond any restricted time or literary movement. 'De Wandelaar'(1916) and 'Vormen'(1924) dovetail into the specific Symbolist and Post-Symbolist setting; but influences from a broader cultural background also play a part in them. Figureheads of previous ages, such as Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe have their bearing, especially where they deal with unworldly or distorted motifs: Dante's journey through the underworld, Shakespeare's clowns and fools, Goethe's Faust who conspires with the devil and has a dual personality. Nijhoff finds a particular model of unhappiness and death-obsession in the fifteenth-century French poet François Villon, whom he evidently sees as a forerunner of the 'poète maudit'. 'De Wandelaar' and 'Vormen' each contain an adaptation of a Villon poem. Nijhoff was also fascinated by Dostoyevsky's character Prince Myshkin of 'The Idiot'(1868), whose suffering in simple honesty and goodness is suggestive of Christ.

The sentimental conception of childhood which is a consistent Symbolist theme, is reinforced in Nijhoff through fairy-tale and legend. He had a liking for the work of Hans Andersen, and the poem 'Aan mijn Kind II' (in 'Vormen') is reputedly based on Andersen's fairy-tale 'Ole Luk-Oie, the Dream God'.¹ Certain dreamy, picturesque poems by Nijhoff, where the tone is one of contentment, recall poems by Heine, who was also drawn to the enchanted world of myth and fairy-tale, and who uses simple verse forms like Nijhoff and also expresses mother-affection. There is the same sentimental streak in Heine's poetry, tinged with melancholy, nostalgia, and pessimism towards reality, that runs through Nijhoff's first two volumes. ?

The most important of all these sources from the broader background is the Bible and, wider still, the Christian culture that surrounds it. Christian themes feature strongly in Symbolist poetry, but none of the Dutch Post-Symbolists draws so largely from Christian tradition as Nijhoff. In fact, from the Tachtigers to

1. according to M.A.Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, 'De Opbouw van Nijhoff's De Wandelaar', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 68', No.3, May 1975, p.221.

the 'generatie van '10', pagan mythology and legend provide a more important source, as witnessed in such major poems as Perk's 'Iris', Emants' 'Lilith', Gorter's 'Mei', Van Eyck's 'Medousa', not forgetting Holst's use of Irish and Greek mythology. No consistent pagan source is used by Nijhoff, and his Christian imagery far outweighs his pagan imagery. A parallel to his Christian motifs can be drawn with the seventeenth-century Dutch poet, Jacobus Revius, on whom he produced a commemorative article for 'De Gids' in 1936.¹ Crucifixion, Christian suffering and martyrdom images are prominent in the poetry of Revius, and his sonnets on Biblical themes bear a resemblance in style and tone to Nijhoff's sonnets on Biblical themes.

The Bible, Symbolist and Post-Symbolist poetry rank together as major sources for Nijhoff. From this background he developed a poetic theory, in which poetry was viewed as a sort of religion giving an insight to another realm, and form was a material with an existence of its own acting as an instrument of correspondence with that realm. His belief in form as a "materie van eigen aard", as reported by Van Leeuwen, and the relevance of this idea for his contemporaries, is expressed in an article written in 1925:²

"Men kan onze jongere poëzie niet verstaan, zonder te begrijpen hoezeer haar uitgangspunt anders is dan het 40 jaar geleden voor de toenmaals jonge dichters was. Men heeft thans, voorzover ik zien kan, het accent van de arbeidzaamheid verlegd naar de in creatieve spanning gebrachte vorm."³

Form is regarded as an organic substance with its own metaphysical quality, and contemporary poetry as being aimed at expressing a supernatural world:

"Deze poëzie is kosmisch, extatisch, mystisch, religieus, speculatief, alles wat ge wilt, maar haar doel is de uitdrukking van een bovenwerkelijkheid in een hetzij door ontbinding hetzij door persing hetzij door stromende beweging uiterst gevoelig geworden dichterlijke woordbeelding. Wat haar daardoor misschien vreemd wordt is de

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Jacobus Revius 1586-1936', 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp.806-819.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'Herman van den Bergh, "De spiegel"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp.338-342.
3. id., p.340.

menselijke natuurlijkheid, in de uitdrukking waarvan zij de poëzie van '80 nooit zal evenaren. Zij verwijdert zich van de directe uitstorting, van de ontroering, van wat men het leven noemt. Zij heeft haar vreugden elders: de verheldering der gestalte, de bewustijnsvorm van een besef, een apartheid en absolutisme van haar wereld."¹

The autonomy ascribed to written form is partly related to Perk: "Geschreven woorden hebben op gesproken woorden dit voor, dat ze, om met Perk te spreken, kinderen zijn der rustige gedachten."²

Through the agency of syntax, individual words blend into a world of their own, just like mankind and society are different from a number of people,³ like a crowd has a soul of its own quite different from the sum of its constituent parts.⁴ This idea echoes the unanimism expressed in the poetry of Paul van Ostaïjen, where a crowd is seen as a unit with a common soul, and a parallel can be drawn with the conceptual theory of Gestalt psychology, by which the concept of the whole exceeds the sum of the parts -

"Is een waterdruppel de samenstelling zijner bestanddelen, een gedicht de opeenvolging der regels, en God de som van zijn werkingen in de natuur? - Indien dit niet zo is, is het eerste en het laatste wat wij zoeken moeten datgene waarin ieder geheel zijn onderdelen overtreft, wat het merkwaardig vermeerderende is van iedere samenstelling".⁵

Nijhoff at one time considered it a fault in modern literature that it had an excessive concern for an analysing type of psychology, with a single aim of dissecting its data - "Men behoeft onder een schilderij niet te schrijven van welke samenstellingen de verven zijn, om het

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Herman van den Bergh, "De spiegel"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.340.
2. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk' (1935), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1152.
3. M.Nijhoff, 'Jacob Israël de Haan, "Jeruzalem"' (1922), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.166.
4. M.Nijhoff, 'Kees van Bruggen, "Zondvloed"' (1920), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.63.
5. M.Nijhoff, 'J.C.van Schagen, "Narrenwijsheid"' (1925), 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp.332-3.

te doen bewonderen en begrepen worden."¹ Greshoff recalls a conversation with Nijhoff, dating from shortly before 1932, in which Nijhoff put forward a 'Persian carpet' theory of poetry ("theorie van het Perzische Tapijtje").² Nijhoff argued that a poem is complete in itself and independent from its poet (- "Het gedicht eindelijk bevrijd van zijn dichter, veroverd zich een fiere onafhankelijkheid" -), just like a Persian carpet arouses admiration without anyone knowing anything about who made it.³

In an article of 1931, he says that the word, and the syntax, and the poem, and the collection of poems all combine by degrees to extend man's horizons towards another realm:

"Niet het uitbeelden van onze wil binnen onze grenzen, maar het meer en wonderlijker voortbrengen dan wij ooit gedroomd hadden; niet het helder werk en de kortstondige bewustheid moeten het doel zijn, maar het teweegbrengen van een ding, dat, al is het maar met één centimeter, onze grenzen overschrijdt; een vrucht, die, al is het maar met één aanwijzing, los van ons geraakt, zelf een wil krijgt, een organisme wordt, en, al is het maar voor één ogenblik, buiten ons getreden een eigen leven vervolgt, iets meer uitsprekend dan wij het konden meegeven."⁴

A perceptible word, he says in an earlier article, contains a primordial essence that precedes it, that is already vaguely or imperceptibly in existence, "totdat het, gesproken of geschreven, vorm aanneemt, letterlijk een plastische zichtbare vorm, een tastbaarheid, die men, als een insect, als een blad, bijna van het papier zou geneigd zijn te willen opnemen"⁵, it is, in its reproduction in language, a living organism that moves, breathes, and in its form suggests a hidden inner meaning of higher order,⁶ it has a more magical power than its evident meaning.⁷ A poem is seen as consisting not only of words, but of words

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Karel Wasch, "Dialogen"' (1920), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.78.
2. J.Greshoff, 'Volière', p.193.
3. id., p.194.
4. M.Nijhoff, 'Kroniek der Nederlandse Letteren I' (1931), 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp.666-7.
5. M.Nijhoff, 'Henri Bruning, "De sirkel"' (1925), 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp.256-7.
6. id., p.257.
7. id., p.259.

and their silence - "Misschien zelfs, durf ik zeggen, uit zo weinig mogelijk woorden en zoveel mogelijk stilte."¹ One of the distinctions he makes between a good and a bad volume of poetry is whether it consists of a random collection of poems, or whether the poems are arranged in a meaningful order - "Dit geeft een merkwaardige toevoeging van organische bewustheid, van eenheid in eigen wereld, een zekere tijdloosheid. De bundel wordt meer een ding op zichzelf."²

Autonomy of poetic form is an idea that ties in with expressionism, and, amongst poets of Nijhoff's period, finds a more advanced outlet in the poetry of Van Ostaijen, Van den Bergh and Marsman, who do not properly belong to the Post-Symbolist group. Paul van Ostaijen grew to reject the expression of personal sentiment in a poem and any need for a poem to rely on personal associations with its creator: "ik wil dat de gedichten verschijnen als vrije organismen zonder verband tot de schepper."³ Herman van den Bergh in his declaration of poetic reform, 'Nieuwe Tucht' (1928), accords poetry a free and independent existence - "dichtkunst is onafhankelijk en autonoom".⁴ Nijhoff's 'De Wandelaar' does not altogether meet with his approval; he quotes "en ginder rijst het parallelogram der ophaalbrug" (from 'Zondagmorgen') as an example of spiritless technique: "Hier voelen we alleen de techniek van den blasé, dien niets ontroerde, maar die hongerig uitkeek naar een vergelijking."⁵ Influence from expressionism increases in Nijhoff's poetry, but in the same way that the idea of being cut off from the world does not fully account for his early work, so the idea of autonomous form is developed more in theory than in fact. It is a belief in an underlying organic power which the symbolist poet has the ability to evoke, and how this fits in with symbolist theory Nijhoff explains extensively in an article on Marsman in 1924 - ⁶

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Martien Beversluis, "Canzonnen"' (1927), 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp.509-10.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'J.W.F.Werumeus Buning, "In memoriam"' (1924), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.203.
3. P.van Ostaijen, 'Wiens Moens en Ik', 'Verzameld Werk, Proza II', p.358.
4. H.van den Bergh, 'Nieuwe Tucht', p.8.
5. id., p.25.
6. M.Nijhoff, 'H.Marsman, "Verzen"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp.231-235.

As he recognises three stages in the writing of poetry, so he also recognises three stages in the existence of language going back into pre-history. He says he believes that language in daily use is a circumstantial and relatively recently developed form of words, belonging to a tertiary period that began when, due to social instinct, the need for communication of feeling and for indication of an object were gradually deemed more important than the feeling and the object themselves. In this tertiary period where language is an interplay of understandings, the only opportunity for development lies in the adaption of words in their relationship, namely syntax. The function of poetry is to purify language and to activate elements of deeper and more primary origin, stemming from an era of more direct word-emotion. This almost purely biological function of poetry operates mainly through metrical technique, assonance and stanza construction. It makes the underlying word discernible - "het ding van het woord" - which precedes the time when it became merely a means of expression. Whilst the word in daily use remains a transitional formula and a means of intelligibility, in which its referential function overshadows its organic power, a poetic technique is required to try and produce a profounder language, presumably equivalent to the language of a hypothetical pre-history, in which the word was an organ of objectivity rather than of personality.¹ The underlying word remains present in man's physical subconscious, where it originated at the same time as the laws of poetic technique, which still exist there. There, where it belongs to the secondary period, the word is an independent body, "een lichamelijkheid", which appeals not only to man's linguistic faculty, but directly to all his senses:

"Het zintuig dat daartoe vooral in aanmerking komt, schijnt het gehoor te zijn, de klank is het eerste fysieke woord-element dat wij tamelijk gemakkelijk waarnemen ("De la musique avante toute chose"). Maar ieder dichter zal mij begrijpen, wanneer ik zeg dat men een woord zien kan, zien als een voorwerp, en een proef op de som is wel

1. This paragraph, to here, summarises p.231 of the article 'H.Marsman, "Verzen"' in Nijhoff's 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp. 231-5, and the rest of the paragraph is taken from p.232.

terstond de grotere kracht die het geschreven of gedrukte dan het gedachte of gesproken woord als woord heeft (De persoonlijke betoogtrant van een redenaar moet hier natuurlijk buiten beschouwing blijven). Ik herinner terloops aan de klinker-kleur-theorie van Rimbaud, en zou kunnen volhouden, dat de gehele betekenis der zogenaamde 'symbolisten' bestond in een poging tot het weder in werking stellen van het woord als ding, als werkelijkheid met een dieper zin dan de gebruikelijke, van het secundaire, zintuigelijke woord. Het symbolisme is een woord-realisme, en het stamt niet voor niets uit de tijd toen de bewonderde Wagner muziek liet zien en het gevoel thematisch tastbaar maakte. Wat onze andere zintuigen, de reuk, de smaak en het om-tasten betreft, zij zijn zodanig van hun kant verzwakt en verward door misbruik en onbruik, en het woord van zijn kant is zodanig ondergezonken, dat zij, naar ik meen, nauwelijks meer, maar misschien toch nog geheel onderbewust en rudimentair, en dan nog vermengd met talloze associaties en vertroebelende bij-factoren, op dit plan medewerken."¹

Symbolism, thus, involves engaging the word in its secondary period, where it corresponds closely with the senses. Whilst the word in the secondary period proceeds from man's physical subconscious, in the distant, hypothetical primary period it would seem to proceed from man's mental subconscious, he says, like a cry, or a discharge of an emotional current of boundless proportions - "zo groot en zo diep als de ether zelf".² It is man's highest delight, he continues, and only great poets, whose technique, perfected for the purpose, unveils language and evokes the original word-organisms, and in whose work these organisms develop a force of independent activity far surpassing personal and human capability, arouse recollection of this word, scarcely incarnate and continuously re-ascending to its divine nature: "Maar hier ligt, onder het zaak-aanwijzende, onder het zaak-zijnde, de creatieve functie van het woord, het geheim van alle poëtische eeuwigheid, een verbeeldings-heimwee van al het stoffelijke naar de eerste en heilige geest."³

1. M.Nijhoff, 'H.Marsman, "Verzen"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.232.

2. id., pp.232-3.

3. id., p.233.

The most famous utterance that results from Nijhoff's word-theory comes in the poem 'Tweeërlei Dood' (in 'Vormen') where he claims that his words rise free from their meanings. But although his word-theory attributes an independence to words that seems to allow them to exist separately from the individual, and is formulated in terms of historical periods, it obviously relates to layers of mental consciousness. What Nijhoff calls the primary period of the word stemming from the psychical subconscious ("zou dit primaire uit ons psychisch onderbewustzijn moeten voortkomen")¹, in which the word is "nauwelijks vlees geworden"² and continually reverting to its "goddelijke natuur"³, is closely analogous to what Freud defines as the unconscious area of the psyche, and what Nijhoff calls the secondary period of the word, "van vóór dat het uitdrukkingsmiddel geworden was"⁴, is closely analogous to what Freud defines as the pre-conscious area of the psyche. So Nijhoff's three historical periods of the word can be looked on as similar to Freud's three layers of the human psyche: unconscious, pre-conscious and conscious. The divine character of the word in the primary period relates to the divine archetype that Jung discovered in the unconscious mind.⁵ Nijhoff himself talks of "le part de Dieu" contributing to the writer's work, and which is an inspiration which could equally be of internal or of external origin: "Men krijgt toewaaaisels van buiten, of van binnen"⁶. The lack of contact between Nijhoff's primary period and the real world can thus be put down to an exclusively internal subjective source, dictating his early period. As for the underlying word as a thing in itself ("het ding van het woord")⁷, Freud noticed a tendency in dreams (the chief outlet for material from the unconscious mind) for words to be regarded as things, in this unreal context ("words are frequently treated in dreams as though they were things").⁸

1. M.Nijhoff, 'H.Marsman, "Verzen"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.232.

2. id.

3. id.

4. id., p.231.

5. C.G.Jung, 'Symbols of Transformation', p.368.

6. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1153.

7. M.Nijhoff, 'H.Marsman, "Verzen"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.231.

8. S.Freud, 'The Interpretation of Dreams', p.403.

Because symbolist poetry is not just concerned with expressing the emotions experienced in communicating with an ideal state, but tries to convey the existence of that other world, the real creativity comes with the poem itself, born like a child:

"Het direct-uitspreken van ontroeringen, evenals het formuleren van levensinzichten, is voor mij slechts de eerste, als het ware, de parings-daad. De poëzie komt met het kind, en schept een andere wereld, waar wij, de dichters, slechts passief aan mede hebben geschapen."¹

In his critical prose, Nijhoff sometimes criticises young poets for giving too much emphasis to sensations and not enough to creation, objecting to Kloos's view of poetry as "de aller-individueelste expressie van de aller-individueelste emotie". While in a state of emotional rapture, he says, the poet is not able to see the full meaning inherent in language; language can act "als een wapen, als een vorm, waarin het verbeeldingsleven zich afkoelt en waardoor het door de nadrukkelijkheid der voltooiing een betekenis verkrijgt, welke de bewogen ontroering niet heeft kunnen beseffen."²

Accepting Kloos's other saying, that the man must die before the artist lives, he says (in 1922) that this causes two processes: doubling ("verdubbeling"), in which a man becomes an observer of himself, and depersonalisation ("depersonalisatie"), in which the bond between the ego and the alter ego is broken, producing a strange impersonal figure who looks down on his earthly counterpart.³ The writer who takes the standpoint of an onlooker viewing his own life, he calls an 'aestheticist' ("estheticus"), but there is another type of writer which he calls the 'ethicist' ("ethicus"), whose will takes part in the struggle between intellect and natural life.⁴ So he determines two sorts of artistic expression: one arrived at through

1. 'M.Nijhoff aan P.N.van Eyck' (1924), 'Maatstaf V', 1957-8, No.8, November 1957, p.542.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'Over Johan de Meester' (1931), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1149.
3. M.Nijhoff, 'J.van Oudshoorn, "Verhalen"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.153.
4. M.Nijhoff, 'Dirk Coster, "Marginalia"' (1920), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.19.

perfection of talent, and the other arising from the urge to formulate a philosophy of life.¹ The first sort is "een scherpe, geperfectioneerde, desnoods bizarre ordening, zoals wij die zien in mozaïeken en tapijten"², (identifiable with what is expressed in the poem 'De Wandelaar' - "Stil mozaïkspel zonder perspectieven") suggesting that Nijhoff's early mosaic impression of the world does not meet his full expectancy of what, with greater maturity, he might achieve. The second sort has been produced by writers who carried on a "wanhopige strijd voor de mensheid, strijd om een levenshouding, strijd om een geestelijke waarde, met meer persoonlijke kracht gevoerd naarmate ze zich meer met de mensheid identificeerden."³

There is something of a paradox in the desire for less subjectivity, yet for the exercise of human personality. In one of his early articles (1920), Nijhoff attaches great value to the personal element present in a poem:

"Ik voor mij geloof niet, dat een dichter om zijn verzen alleen eeuwig is. Ik geloof dat de mensheid zich geen gedichten, maar in de eerste plaats zich mensen herinnert, en dat de gedichten dan vooral als afdrukken van hun persoonlijkheid van waarde blijven."⁴

The poet is part of mankind, he says in another article of that year, and attached to the earth; if he cuts himself loose from the human part of him, he tosses away on high for a while, to be eventually battered and lost; he should recognise that his place ought to be amongst the people.⁵

In 1925 Nijhoff explains that after the man has died to let the poet live, there is a rebirth in the poem of the refined self, pointing out that Kloos followed up his famous saying with "maar Ik zal heerlijk in mijn vers herrijzen". - "Wederopstanding van gelouterd en verheer-

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Nico van Suchtelen, "Demonen" (1920), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.52.

2. id., p.53.

3. id.

4. M.Nijhoff, 'Dirk Coster, "Marginalia"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.16.

5. M.Nijhoff, 'Frederik van Eeden zestig jaar', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.38.

lijkt leven in de poëzie, ziehier het uiterst doel, ziehier de hoogste menselijkheid"¹. His interpretation of Kloos's saying, however, becomes further complicated when he reaches that stage of his career (about the time of 'Het Uur U') when he wants to reduce as much as he can the appearance of his own personality in his work. First class writers like like Dante and Shakespeare, he says, disappear in their work; the second-rate writer remains important himself, letting the man die in order that the artist lives, but not letting the artist die so that the work of art lives: "Hij blijft zelf belangrijk. Hij doet wat Kloos zegt: hij laat de mens sterven opdat de kunstenaar leeft. Maar hij laat niet de kunstenaar sterven opdat het kunstwerk leeft."² A similar idea is given by Van Ostaijen in his 'Gebruiksaanwijzing der Lyriek' when he says: "Het Ik blijft het hoogste goed, doch niet het Ik van de dichter, maar wel het Ik van het gedicht."³ In 'Nieuwe Gedichten', 'Het Uur U' and 'Voor Dag en Dauw', the presence of a narrator or I-figure in Nijhoff's poems diminishes, there is a shift away from the lyrical towards the epic, and this, together with a tendency to describe other people, gives some counterweight to the large personal content of the earlier poems. Interest in humanity is maintained or even increased with the reduction in subjectivity.

Alongside the variations in opinion about the role of human personality in poetry, the critical prose gives variations in opinion about the role of reality, with an increasing emphasis coming on reality's importance. As in the poems, the element of spiritual and idealist longing is combined with doubts about the value of life on earth: "het leven heeft misschien een waarde als werkelijkheid, maar dan alleen omdat daarin de ziel verwerkelijkt wordt."⁴ However, a detrimental view of worldly life, which is common in the poetry, is rare in the critical prose. Here

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Herman van den Bergh, "De spiegel"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.339.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'Antwoord op een enquête van 'Het Vaderland' (1934)', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.769.
3. P.van Ostaijen, 'Verzameld Werk, Proza II', p.321.
4. M.Nijhoff, 'A.Draaijer-De Haas, "De gelukzoeker"' (1922), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.173.

Nijhoff mostly encourages the use in art of aspects of daily life and a message relevant to the times:

"kunst die niet eens voor zijn eigen tijd van belang is, hoe zal hij het voor volgende tijden zijn? Kunst 'voor de eeuwigheid' is onleesbaar en onbelangrijk. Wie de zes-en-twintig letters van het alfabet te gering acht voor de uitdrukking van zijn gevoel zal nooit een dichter zijn, en wie de zes-en-twintig feiten van het dagelijks leven niet kent, zal nooit als kunstenaar een wereld-aanschouwer kunnen zijn."¹

For the symbolist writer, trying to establish links between real and ideal, between transitory and eternal, trying to reach a higher plane of existence and to convey the concept of another world, his art is a religion -

"Aannemend dat een der functies van de kunst, zo niet haar roeping zelve, bestaat uit een buiten de werkelijkheid stellen van het leven, aannemend dat de kracht daartoe geput wordt uit een ingeboren verlangen van de menselijke geest naar iets boven zichzelf, zien we dat de geschiedenis der kunst met die der religie nauw samengaat."² Such a writer's principal task is not to interpret his feeling, nor to reproduce reality, nor to describe what exists and is generally known, but to mould language so that it provides an experience of a superior realm:

"Zijn beheersing en beeldvorming scheidt andere overzichten, nieuwe duidingen, die wij uit het leven en uit de werkelijkheid nog niet vermochten te ontraadselen. Juist dit buiten-werkelijke, dit onmenselijke en bovenmenselijke, geeft het 'goddelijke' dat aan het dichterschap wordt toegeschreven, het 'vreemde' dat alle kunst eigen is."³

One example given of a writer formulating a religion in his art is Dostoyevsky:

"Zo vormt zich uit de gestalten van Dostojewsky zo iets als een moderne mythologie, symbolen voor een nieuwe religie."⁴

It is a religion which has its recluses and martyrs, and

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Henriëtte Roland Holst, "De held en de schare"' (1921), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.81.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'Modernissimus' (1922), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.140.
3. M.Nijhoff, 'Frederik Chassalle en C.J.Kelk, "Lampions in den wind", Thomas Beker, "De zonde van Pierrot"' (1921), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.99.
4. M.Nijhoff, 'Dirk Coster, "Dostojewsky, een essay"' (1921), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.92.

one of its most direct exponents is Adriaan Roland Holst, particularly in his poem 'Het Gebed van de Harpspeler':

"Heeft de poëzie een functie als van een nieuwe religie (hoeveel kluizenaars en martelaars reeds?) dan heeft deze religie niets uit te staan met godsdienst, met dagelijkse goedheid, met 'drang naar eerste menselijkheid', maar is een door haar met tekens in dit leven verstaanbaar maken van een voortdurend wezenlijke vreugde die het leven te boven gaat. ... waar is het zo direct en eenvoudig uitgesproken, als in 'Het gebed van de harpspeler' van A.Roland Holst, neen, in bijna ieder gedicht van deze vormrijke dichter, tot in de titel 'Voorbij de wegen' van zijn bundel toe?"¹

The greatest art, he thinks, attains its religious function by means of a three-part process. Whilst lesser art consists of two main components - a content and a form for it - greater art consists of content, form and form-content:

"een levens-inhoud, een vorm daarvoor en een geestelijke inhoud weer van die vorm; of anders gezegd: een werkelijkheid, een verbeelding en een beeld; of weer anders, speciaal voor romans: figuren, compositie en openbaringen van bovenmenselijke kracht; of speciaal voor poëzie: menselijk of natuurlijk gevoel, uitdrukking in het woord, goddelijke aanduiding. Realiteit, expressie, creatie. De stem wordt woord, het woord wordt zang. Het is op duizend manieren te zeggen, deze merkwaardige drieledige functie der kunst, die misschien de zuiverste menselijke arbeidzaamheid vertegenwoordigt, en die bewerkstelligt dat de natuur van zichzelf bewust wordt en dat deze bewustwording, aanvankelijk middel, tevens materiaal wordt tot de schepping van het hoogste geestelijk besef."²

The greatest art is seen as using its form potential as a key to the highest spiritual awareness.

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Nieuwe Geluiden I' (1924), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.194.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'Herman van den Bergh, "De spiegel"' (1925), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.338.

Chapter 4

NIJHOFF'S EARLY POETRY('De Wandelaar', 'Pierrot aan de Lantaarn' and 'Vormen')

Since much of the symbolism in Nijhoff's early volumes is closely related to Symbolist and Post-Symbolist tradition, it tends to convey standard meanings from these sources. Though context always plays a large part in determining a symbol's meaning, such symbols of the early poems as the street, the moon, the mirror and the flower are used by Nijhoff in more or less established senses, and complex context-bound symbols to the extent of the train in 'Awater' and the man in 'Het Uur U' are not found. In the early period symbolism is used more to explain the poet's ideas or state of mind, whereas later, images are used to spark off ideas in the reader, and thus become symbols or not according to how the reader reads them. Thus a clown or a tower in the early poetry are obviously presented as symbols (whether or not they are understood), whereas the typewriter or cigarette-smoke in 'Awater' are presented as suggestive images open to symbolic interpretation. In the psychological terms of a two-way mental process between objects and meaning, the symbolism of the early poetry follows more of a deductive mental process in the direction of meaning > object (the poet finds a symbol to correspond to his ideas or feelings), whilst the later poetry follows more of an inductive mental process of object > meaning (the poet describes an object in such a way that it becomes a symbol by taking on new meaning). In the first case a rather odd situation may be worked with, but in the latter case a very ordinary situation may be the starting-point. One early example of this technique of developing an ordinary situation occurs in 'Vormen', in the poem 'Langs een Wereld', where the scene involves two people looking at each other with a common understanding, one from outside a house and one from inside; they both share in a dream of home-coming brought about by their own longing ("Zoo namen wij beiden deel aan een wereld voor beiden ver van ons leven vandaan").

The everyday surroundings in 'Awater' and 'Het Uur U' are used to give an at times surrealist effect,¹ and there are also shades of surrealist imagery in early poems, for example some pensive furniture in 'Holland':

"De bruine meubels denken aan elkaar",
and animated flowers in 'Het Oude Huis':

"Een stoet van bloemen gaat dalen en stijgen
Rondom waar moeder is, op het behang."

This extension of animate quality to objects is similar to the extension of perception across senses by the device of synaesthesia already observed. Surrealist touches rely on an exploitation of objects in their context and are less frequent in the early poetry where there tends to be a consistency of symbols with fixed meaning, which allows the symbolism to be examined on the basis of symbols occurring across a series of poems. When the use of symbols becomes more dependent upon context, in the later poetry, another approach, a poem by poem approach, is more practicable.

The poems of 'De Wandelaar' and 'Vormen' are grouped into sections, and each volume has an opening section where motifs of suffering and death are prominent, and ends with poems of a romantic or sentimental tone, so that the grouping of poems follows a theme in the poetry that mortal suffering precedes any possible attainment of a happy state.

'DE WANDELAAR'

'De Wandelaar' is divided into four parts:

- an untitled first section of fifteen poems,
- a group of eleven poems under the title 'Scherzo',
- a series of nine sonnets called 'De Vervloekte',
- a final section of thirteen poems entitled 'Het Zachte Leven'.

The volume is, in Baudelairean fashion, arranged so that poems relate to or follow on from each other, rather than a collection of single poems, though the grouping is mostly a general relation of theme and not a close integration of poems. In fact some poems fit only loosely in their group or are not congruous with its heading, as for instance the

1. G.Kamphuis, 'Een Dichter in de Voorhoede', 'De Weegschaal II, Essays', p.101.

solemn Crucifixion theme of 'De Laatste Dag' in 'Scherzo', and the picture of Boehme as a frugal recluse (also with allusions to the Crucifixion) in 'Het Zachte Leven'. Such incongruities can be put down to the dualism of Nijhoff's style, which manifests itself in images and themes occurring in the same section but related by their opposition. Thus in the adjacent poems 'Lente' and 'Middag' is found the motif of God laughing followed by that of God not laughing; and after several poems expressing the force of death and destruction ("omdat ons leven doodgaan moet" - 'Middag') comes the claim in 'De Tuinman': "Het leven kan niet sterven".

The title-poem 'De Wandelaar', in which the narrator presents himself successively as a lifeless stroller, a Carolingian monk, a Renaissance artist, a Baudelairean poet and a remote onlooker from a tower, is not a programmatic outline of themes for the volume,¹ but it introduces a number of regular symbols. The fundamental characteristics common to the types of figure in the title-poem are isolation and inactivity (the stroller moves but performs no acts), which adds up to a separation from the real world and a deathly condition. Major themes of the volume not covered by the opening poem are suffering, destruction, madness, clowning, longing and romantic or sentimental pleasures. A theme of mortal suffering leads the first edition of the volume (1916), which has 'Het Licht' as the opening poem, with the title-poem second, an order which is changed round from the second edition (1926) onwards. The volume is composed almost entirely of short descriptive scenes and character sketches; there is little in the way of narrative action (except in 'De Vervloekte').

The poem 'De Wandelaar' makes plain that death and unworldliness characterise the situation of its author, and these themes constantly recur in subsequent poems. They provide the key to the symbolic meaning that is attached to a great deal of Nijhoff's imagery. Death is mentioned in poem after poem of 'De Wandelaar' (in 23 altogether), and though its frequency lessens after that, it remains a dominant theme. In part, death and unworldly phenomena evoke

1. T. van Wallendaël, 'Nijhoffs Wandelaar-gedicht in het kader van de algemene thematiek van de bundel De Wandelaar', 'Koninklijke Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis, Handelingen XXIII', 1969, pp. 391-8.

fear because they are largely unknown and offer a threat to worldly existence, but in part, they are attractive because they present the possibility of a better existence. The fear of life ('levensangst') that is commonly attributed to Nijhoff's early poetry really stems from a fear of death; since the transitory earthly life is doomed to end in death, the earthly life itself is abhorred.

The figure of the stroller, with which Nijhoff's collected poetry opens, is symbolic of a detachment, because the stroller is a person in passage, not showing signs of roots in or attachment to a location in worldly society. (Actually, the title is not wholly representative of the poem, since the moving figure becomes a static one after the first stanza, except that in the fourth stanza the Baudelairean poet dances). Pleasure in walking is not expressed in this poem (there is no trace of Holst's "Ik voel mij weer gelukkig worden loopende, loopende"); walking is presented coolly as a state of affairs with an attendant feeling of lack of worldly attachments, but elsewhere it does have pleasurable associations (e.g. in 'Het Licht'). The connection between walking and transition arises again much later as a basis for 'Het Uur U', but the aimlessness of a stroller is replaced there by the purposefulness of someone striding. In 'De Wandelaar' the walker belongs substantially to the land of the dead, because he says his hands are dead ("Er stroomt geen bloed meer door mijn doode handen"), and his heart has let deeds die ("Stil heeft mijn hart de daden sterven laten"). Unlike the heroic wanderers of ancient legend, whose wandering is a symbol of longing, and who are paralleled in some of Nijhoff's characters like the troubadour and Christoffoor, the stroller of his opening poem is already in such a situation of remoteness that he is becoming lifeless and inert.

One of the places where the walker strolls is in the streets:

"Mijn eenzaam leven wandelt in de straten".

The street occurs regularly in Nijhoff's poetry, and in the early poetry offers a solace to solitary characters. Streets are thoroughfares in a community and can symbolise the course of life, or the path to, through and away from

had the poet
in Nijhoff
through
(1870)

earthly life. It is this connection with what precedes and follows life, with eternity or death, that has most bearing on Nijhoff's early poetry. Characters of unworldly nature, like Pierrot, take a refuge in the street, especially at night-time when it is most devoid of life. As well as being a thoroughfare, a street also consists of houses containing people who are members of a community, and it can therefore act as a symbol of worldly society. Practically no interest is shown, in the early poetry, in the people who live in a street, which remains a rather blank image, but later, in 'Het Uur U', it becomes a symbol with a complexity of associations centring on the two aspects of community and thoroughfare.

A testimony to the walker's death-like state is the lack of blood flowing through his hands:

"Er stroomt geen bloed meer door mijn doode handen".
Blood represents life, and Nijhoff often gives an image of loss of blood to represent loss of life, as in 'Het Licht':

"O zie mijn bloed dat langs de spijkers leekt!"
Blood's red colour can suggest fire and passion, and the Symbolists tended to connect it mainly with the physical senses; Baudelaire and Rimbaud saw it as representing base or animal instincts, with some connotation of evil (as implied in Rimbaud's 'Mauvais Sang'). Nijhoff does not connect it with evil, but he does connect it with basic animal nature in 'De Danser': "Onder mijn huid leeft een gevangen dier ... zijn donker bloed bonst".

One other aspect of blood which Nijhoff highlights is its fluid mobility, which can be beneficial:

"Leven is iets heel stils en zachts: een stroom
Dwars door het lichaam als het goede bloed".

('Middag')

Blood is in constant supply, and has the same infinite quality that is attached to the fluidity of water.

Life is also represented by the heart, which, on account of its central position in the human body and its function of pumping the blood, is a nucleus from which life radiates. Cessation of activity is ascribed in 'De Wandelaar' to ineffectiveness of the heart:

"Stil heeft mijn hart de daden sterven laten."

The heart as a symbol can be a counterpart of the soul, the one the essence of man's mortal existence, the other the essence of his immortal existence. Traditionally the heart represents the seat of human emotions. It is regarded as the governing element of physical activity and the focal point of physical experience. In the poem 'De Troubadour', as well as in 'De Wandelaar', the heart is a source of vital activity for the body, but a source which dries up:

"Hij voelde 't leven uit zijn hart weg-stroomend - "

Picturing himself as a Carolingian monk, the narrator of 'De Wandelaar' sees himself sitting at a window:

"Zit ik met ernstig Vlaamsch gelaat voor 't raam".

The window is one of a number of boundary symbols denoting the place where one area ends and another begins, and often implying a border between one existence and a new existence. It is situated between the inner world of a room and the expansive world outside. The door is a similar symbol, but whereas this provides access to another place, the window is primarily for visual perception, and may be otherwise something of a barrier. To bring the girl of 'Tweeërlei Dood' (in 'Vormen') to the land of death, the narrator of the poem asks God to break the glass in her window ("breek vannacht de ruiten uit haar raam"). An open window in 'Het Licht' signifies a readiness to accept death:

"Mijn raam is open, open zijn mijn deuren -

Hier is mijn hart, hier is mijn lichaam: breekt!"

Impending death is signified in 'De Alchemist' by the sudden opening of a window through which a skeleton leans.

Because one of its main functions is to let light into a room, the window may be thought to have contact on one side with divine light and the realm of eternity. Mallarmé expresses this idea in 'Les Fenêtres':

"leur verre, lavé d'éternelles rosées,

Que dore le matin chaste de l'Infini".¹

A figure gazing through a window finds a visual attraction to what is on the other side, and this is the situation in which the window occurs in the poem 'De Wandelaar', where

1. S.Mallarmé, 'Oeuvres Complètes', p.33.

the Carolingian monk looks out on a sunny green.

Besides what he sees, the window-gazer hears the sound of sailors singing coming from outside:

"En hoor matrozen langs de kaden zingen."

This image recalls Mallarmé's 'Brise Marine':

"Mais, ô mon coeur, entend le chant des matelots!"¹

Like all forms of music, song arouses associations of a state of order and harmony, and the mention of sailors in this instance connects the singing with the sea and with voyaging overseas.

Some form of music occurs in more than half of Nijhoff's poems, and this reflects the importance of music to the French Symbolists. Its harmonious arrangement is suggestive of an ordered pattern in the universe, and the feelings of pleasure it arouses give an intimation of a blissful ideal state. There is a close relationship between music and poetry, and Nijhoff thinks of his poetry operating in a transitional stage between the objective world in which words are used and the abstract world of music. A capacity of words to pass out of the field of their normal meanings is achieved in song:

"mijn woorden, stijgend,

Zingen zich los van hun beteekenissen."

('Tweeërlei Dood')

Because of its harmony, singing raises language to a purer form than that of everyday speech. Poetry, in its rhythmical arrangement of words, approximates to song; a poet will often refer to his poem as a song, and in its earliest known forms poetry was sung by a bard or troubadour. Music is a term of broader compass than song, and when wordless, and hence without the determinate meanings attached to words, it is obscure in its significance and relates more closely to an undifferentiated state of eternity or infinity. (In terms of correspondences, a gradation of semantic specification might be made through objects - words - language - poetry - song - music - abstraction).

1. S.Mallarmé, 'Oeuvres Complètes', p.38.

After depicting himself as a Carolingian monk at his window, the narrator of 'De Wandelaar' depicts himself as a Renaissance artist, who at night looks into a mirror ("buig me over een spiegel"). The mirror is a similar symbol to the window, seemingly giving insight to another world. But the world of the mirror is visually the duplicate of what lies before it, and the correspondence between actual object and mirror image can be viewed as a correspondence between real and ideal direct counterparts. Only visual communication exists with the world of the mirror, and its absence of sound suggests the silence of eternity. The image of the self as it appears in the mirror is an intangible figure, that leaves when one moves away from the mirror, and may be held to be a configuration of one's spiritual counterpart, alter ego, or ideal self.

Art is like a mirror in the way that it creates images, and the 'mimetic' theory of art, based on Platonist thinking, maintains that art mirrors an ideal universe. Shelley calls poetry a mirror in his 'Defence of Poetry' (first published 1840): "Poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted".¹ The mirror is a common Symbolist motif, and is particularly prominent in the work of A. Roland Holst.

Quite apart from symbolising an ideal or eternal world, the mirror can be a symbol of truth because it gives a true reflection of what is before it. In 'Pierrot aan de Lantaarn' Harlekijn gives Pierrot a mirror to show him what he really looks like. Applied to the self, the mirror gives a faithful visual reproduction and presents one particular view of reality which is otherwise missed. Nijhoff's Renaissance artist also uses a mirror to look at himself, or, more specifically, his own eyes, but the meaning of the mirror has a different slant: it conveys the introspection of the isolated figure (he beholds "van de eigen oogen het ontzaglijk glanzen"). Always in the mirror image of the self there is an aspect of reality unseen, but it remains a substitute image with different qualities from the original, and the reflection of the self, however revealing, is

1. 'A Defence of Poetry', 'The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley VII', p.108.

equally strange in comparison to the subjective phenomenon that the self normally is. The mirror is not a symbol that Nijhoff tends to build on or round, but one that he borrows as a standard symbol, and nearly always with an otherworldly or introspective significance.

The Baudelairean poet, who is depicted in 'De Wandelelaar' after the Renaissance artist, dances like Salome. Altogether dancing occurs in fourteen poems of the volume (and several times in 'Vormen'), whilst, in contrast, it does not occur at all in 'Nieuwe Gedichten'. At times the type of movement exercised by the dancer seems frenzied or crazy:

"waaninnig dansende" - 'Maria Magdalena',
 "Gekke gedaanten dansen door de nacht" - 'De Vervloekte II',
 "een troep van dwazen danst en zucht" - 'Pierrot aan de
 Lantaarn'.

It may resemble a dance of death ('danse macabre') as in 'Polonaise':

"het rumoeren van een dooden-dans".

Sometimes the dancing is ordered and controlled, representing a superior form of movement. In either case, Nijhoff connects it with a separation from ordinary life:

"Een danser ziet de dingen van ver-af" - 'De Chineesche
 Danser'.

Theun de Vries considers dancing to be an illusory substitute for real-life activity: "De danser is bij uitstek een plaatsvervangende gedaante voor den actuelen daadwerkelijken mens; waar de dichter er niet in slaagt tot een volledige, bevrijdende practijk des levens te geraken, verliest hij zich in de illusie van de dans, die als verschijnsel het best een bedrieglijke activiteit kan worden genoemd."¹

The rhythmic movement of the dance can be related to the eternal rhythm of the universe; it is incongruous with everyday movement, such that in 'Tempo di Menuetto' Nijhoff implies that dancing is characteristic of the soul in a previous existence:

1. T.de Vries, 'M.Nijhoff, Wandelelaar in de Werkelijkheid', p.27.

"God heeft ons in een vreemde wereld gezet:
 Wij dansen nog zooals we vroeger deden,
 De ziel danst nog het oude menuet".

Life's brief independence peters out into conformity with
 with the dance and perishes:

"Ik hoor de stilte hijgend ademen,
 Hoor hoe het leven in een dans vergaat - "

('Sonate')

The rhythm of the dance also exists in the blood, which is
 fluid but, in the body, restricted in its flow:

"De dans van 't bloed begeert een daad van doem."

('De Vervloekte IV')

A type of female dancer with a callous disregard for the
 world is typified in Symbolist art by Salome, to whom ref-
 erence is made in 'De Wandelaar' ("Vloek ik mijn liefde en
 dans als Salomé"). A dancing-girl of similar type appears
 in 'Kleine Prélude van Ravel' (in 'Vormen'); she dances
 naked between mirrors and makes a cruel dancing movement
 ("een wreeden danspas"). Although it is an active pursuit,
 dancing is an exceptional form of conduct that is incongru-
 ous with reality, and belongs to Nijhoff's defiant or with-
 drawn characters. In 'De Danser' (in 'Vormen') the movement
 of the blood is in complete contrast to the control which
 the dancer imposes on his body. The animal force in his
 body, which drives the dancer to movement, is constrained
 into an idealistic art-form, the superior nature of which
 is betrayed by a mouth which is "god'lijk trots". (In the
 variant first edition text the dancer's countenance is said
 to fraudulently make a game of a death struggle - "den dood-
 strijd lachend tot een spel gelogen").

A culmination to the mood of solitude in the opening
 poem comes when the narrator pictures himself as an onlooker
 from a tower:

"Toeschouwer ben ik uit een hoogen toren".

On account of its structure rising above the ground towards
 the sky, the tower can act as a symbol of the ascent to
 heaven. All symbols involving height contain an idea of
 proximity to heaven. But in its lofty isolation, the tower
 is often associated more with remoteness from the world
 ("een ruimte scheidt mij van de wereld af" - 'De Wandelaar'),

and, for whatever reasons it may have been ascended, the tower in 'De Wandelaar' is an ascent to nothing. In Nijhoff's religious play 'Des Heilands Tuin', the apostle Bartholomeus expresses a similar idea of separation from worldly society, when he offers to fill the role of tower to God's church:

"Maar ik, eenzelve, blijf als een torenspits
tussen wolken en vogels aan mijn volk onttrokken."¹

An urge for contact with God is visible in many poems of 'De Wandelaar', but as Spillebeen points out,² this urge is continually frustrated because God remains withdrawn and even seems aversive to or scornful of contact (e.g. God "lacht als één onzer hoog als Babel gaat" - 'Middag').

After the static and lethargic experience of a deathly condition described in 'De Wandelaar', the next poem, 'Het Licht', describes an experience of death in which there is active suffering. In both poems death is not actual but symbolic of a human condition contrary to a normal concept of life. The death-experience in 'Het Licht' is one of physical destruction, seemingly in the form of crucifixion ("O zie mijn bloed dat langs de spijkers leekt!"). Expression of personal suffering in terms of Christian affliction or martyrdom was commonly used by the French Symbolists, though they do not identify themselves with a crucified man as Nijhoff does. Pain and suffering are, according to religious belief, necessary effects of the mortification of the body, to control desires of the flesh and achieve a purer life. A barrier of pain surrounds a normal state of life, and up to a point the more life is oppressed, the greater the degree of suffering. Excess of suffering marks a person out as different from ordinary people, and in 'Het Groote Lijden' (in 'Vormen') it is seen in Christ as a sign of alienation from others: "Zijn leed vervreemde hem". Crucifixion and martyrdom are major themes for Nijhoff, providing the basic scheme for several poems. Symbolised in the physical persecution of the martyr are the inner tor-

1. M. Nijhoff, 'Des Heilands Tuin', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p. 374.
2. W. Spillebeen, 'De Geboorte van het Stenen Kindje', p. 27.

ments of the self caused by the conflict between instinctive urges and moral dictates. The Cross itself symbolises the inexorable transversity of opposing principles, which must result in the sacrifice of man's body. The inevitability of physical breakdown is an obsession in 'De Wandelaar', and is epitomised by the narrator's determination to force the issue in 'Het Licht':

"Hier is mijn hart, hier is mijn lichaam: breekt!"
Breaking and fragmentation are constantly recurring images of the early poetry (but scarcely to be found later on).

In 'Het Licht' an analogy is drawn between the destruction of life and the refraction of light into colours. Light in this poem is a divine symbol, and the underlying idea is that just as pure, white light - "Gods witte licht" - breaks into the array of colours found on earth, so human life becomes broken in the performance of worldly actions: "Het licht, Gods witte licht, breekt zich in kleuren ... Het leven breekt zich in het bont gebeuren". This is similar to a Platonist concept of worldly forms as imperfect reflections of their ideal forms, and corresponds to Van Eyck's views on light and its refraction into colours (v.pp.40-41). Nijhoff particularly associates light with properties of divinity, purity and bliss. In 'Nieuwe Gedichten' he talks of "hemels licht" ('Het Veer') and "licht van puur geluk" ('Aan een Graf').

The fact that heavenly bodies, notably the sun, are a source of light is fundamental to the use of light as a divine symbol. The Bible states that God is the creator of light (Genesis I, 3) and that Christ said he came "as a light into the world (John XII, 46). Because light is essential for visual perception and recognition, it may symbolise intellect and understanding. But this aspect is not always viewed with welcome by Nijhoff, since it reveals unpleasant truths. In his article 'Een Brief aan een Meisje' (1919) he speaks of a "licht dat te veel dingen te scherp zien laat",¹ and light is cursed by Pierrot:

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Een Brief aan een Meisje', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.14.

"Ik vloek het licht, ik vloek het oog,
Dat mij liet zien en niet bedroog!"

('Pierrot aan de Lantaarn')

In contrast to darkness, which is connected with death, light, having associations with day-time, awareness, and energy-sources such as sun and fire, is connected with life. Although in reality only visually perceptible, light gets qualities ascribed to it that are applicable to other senses, through Nijhoff's use of synaesthesia as a literary device. Examples of synaesthesia applied to light are:

"Drinkend het licht" - 'Maria Magdalena',

"Een blank licht luist'rend in haar vochtige oog" - 'Het
Bruidje',

"ik adem hijgend een ijskoud licht in" - 'Tweeërlei Dood'.

Such imagery increases the impression of supernatural quality attached to light in Nijhoff's poetry.

Neither in 'De Wandelaar' nor in 'Het Licht' does the writer show any inkling of happiness for himself. But he does give indications that he recognises other people's enjoyment of happy situations: in 'De Wandelaar' he mentions people walking on a sunny green and sailors singing along the quays, and in 'Het Licht' he includes a tercet describing a spring scene in which people are strolling in the grass beside lakes. These short references to happier states of affairs hint at the romantic or sentimental themes which provide an opposite to worldly suffering and unhappiness, as part of the system of dualism that characterises Nijhoff's (and Symbolist) poetry.

One setting of pleasure is that of the garden or park, and this setting is idealised in a concept reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. In a garden, nature is found in an ordered, beautiful and peaceful state, and so the garden is used to symbolise a place of ideal or heavenly happiness. Nijhoff particularly associates it with warmth, sunlight, water, flowers, fragrance, rest and protection. Most of the associations of the garden are feminine in character, and Nijhoff often links it with the image of a female figure, especially the mother. Its secluded composure makes the garden a haven from everyday life, and Nijhoff relates it above all to the early days and latter days of life. In the

first instance he relates it to the time of childhood happiness ('Het Liedje van den Simpele', 'Het Meisje'), and in the second instance to Gethsemane ('Maria Magdalena' and, in 'Vormen', 'Het Groote Lijden') where Christ prepared for his death ("Daar, in dien duist'ren tuin, ter zijde van de wereld"¹). Many garden images appear in 'Vormen', where one of the sections is entitled 'Tuinfeesten'.

Other symbols connected with the garden are the flower and the tree. The circular symmetry of the flower represents perfection of form, and because of its delicate nature it seems more suited to another environment than the harsh earthly one. It is principally a symbol of beauty, and when connected with female beauty may have erotic connotations, though in Symbolist poetry it normally represents a pure beauty. Gérard de Nerval calls the flower a soul:

"Chaque fleur est une âme à la Nature éclosée".²

As a reminder of the brief duration of earthly things of beauty, and in anticipation of an everlasting beauty, flowers have always been an important part of funeral ceremonies. Flowers growing on a grave are a sign of life and beauty springing anew from death, and symbolise immortality:

"Zie naar de bloemen op een graf,

Het leven kan niet sterven." ('De Tuinman')

However, Nijhoff tends to concentrate more on the transitory nature of flowers due to their delicate constitution. He depicts flowers falling, wilting or breaking apart, in indication of living beauty's incompatibility with earthly reality, for example:

"Pioenrozen, die berstend dood-gaan willen."

('De Vervloekte VI')

More durable than the flower is the tree, which can be a symbol of everlasting life. The cycle of growth, decay and regeneration of the leaves suggests the perpetual cycle of earthly life, whilst the tree itself continues to live for ages. The Bible tells of the tree of life in the middle of the Garden of Eden (Genesis I, 9) along with the tree of

1. 'Het Groote Lijden'.

2. G.de Nerval, 'Vers Dorés', 'Les Chimères', 'Oeuvres de Gerard de Nerval', p.38.

knowledge. On account of its upright stance and growth, the tree has anciently been a symbol of the life of man, and is specifically compared to man in 'Aan mijn Kind I':

"En je zult gaan rijpen

Als een boom die eenzaam staat - "

The tree as a symbol of human life occurs prominently in Nijhoff's later poetry in 'De Twee Nablijvers' and 'Een Idylle'. Referring to 'Het Uur U' and the planting of trees in the street there, Nijhoff calls these trees "symbool van het leven dat ook in een straat kan bestaan".¹ Like man, the tree is a product of the earth and grows towards the heavens; its top, like the head of man, is the part most closely connected with a higher nature, and may receive communication from above or afar via birds or the wind ("stemmen verwaaien wirwar door de boomen" - 'Bruckner'). In its aspect of connection between earth and heaven, the tree is a similar symbol to the tower, and since its roots go below ground it also resembles an axis linking underworld, earth and heaven (it is found in several cultures as a world-axis symbol, including the Nordic myth of the mighty Yggdrasil). Sometimes Nijhoff points to the tree's contact with a higher plane (e.g. "Ruischend omhoog de hoge boomen steken" - 'Het Meisje'), but in 'Aubrey Beardsley' (in 'Vormen') the tree represents life that falls short of heaven because it spreads its branches and does not go "steil omhoog" in the fashion of its trunk. The difference in direction between trunk and branches is a point of similarity between the tree and the Cross, which unites in its horizontal and vertical bars the passive-worldly principle and the active-transcendent principle (tree and Cross also have wooden composition in common - N.B. Nijhoff's 'Het Heilige Hout'), but Nijhoff makes no clear allusion to the Cross in his images of the tree (though in 'Het Veer' Sebastiaan is martyred at a tree).

Natural phenomena which have a strong influence over earthly life, such as day and night, wind and water, sun and moon, are important images for Nijhoff, used with traditional symbolic meanings. They all represent external forces

1. M.Nijhoff, Letter to Mej.van Dis, 'De Gids 118', 1955, I, No.6, June 1955, p.405.

superior to man. In 'De Wandelaar' and 'Vormen' night predominates over day, a situation which is reversed in the later poetry.

At night man's capacity to see things on earth is severely reduced, and on account of this black-out, night becomes a symbol of death. The darkness of night provides a refuge for characters averse to light and life. Whilst visibility of an earthly environment is diminished at night, distant objects of the sky become visible, and so communication with an extraterrestrial environment is increased. In 'De Eenzame', 'Bruckner' and 'Herinnering', Nijhoff refers to eyes in the night, suggesting that the night world, for its part, is also interested in making communication, though in other contexts night can be suggestive of unconsciousness or 'le néant':

"Nog nimmer kwam de groote nacht

En is een mens gaan slapen." ('De Tuinman')

Day, on the other hand, is associated with life, since it facilitates awareness of earthly reality, harsh reality in some cases:

"Hij ziet een dag over zijn moeheid komen,

Een nieuwen dag, een nieuwen dag van strijd."

('Bruckner')

Daylight provides consciousness and knowledge, and since it is caused by the sun may be connected with divine providence.

Recognition of the sun as a deity dates back to primitive cultures, where it was worshipped on account of man's dependence on it. It is a source of power dispensing warmth and light, and its composition of fire is a sign of a spiritual nature. Though it is essential to life on earth, its power can also be a threat to life; it is a divine symbol that can be both benevolent and hostile. The formidable aspect of the sun is one that occurs throughout Nijhoff's poetry:

in 'Middag' (fourth poem of 'De Wandelaar') -

"De zon, de zon martelt de steenen gevels,

De gele gevels van de oude straat."

in 'Pierrot aan de Lantaarn' -

"De zon, de zon! Het zonlicht zoekt

De mens die God en leven vloekt - "

in 'Het Uur U' -

"De doodstille straat lag
te blakeren in de zon."

The first reference to the sun's effect, however, is the "zonnig grasveld" of 'De Wandelaar', and the sunny setting (for instance sunny gardens in 'Aan mijn Kind II' and 'De Vervloekte IV', and a sunny room in 'Aan mijn Kind III') often relates to a mood of pleasure or well-being. In contrast to the moon, the sun represents a forceful, vital deity. It is consistent and bright, whilst the moon wanes and is pale.

The moon is hence a symbol of death, and, appropriately, is most evident at night-time. Because of the relation between the lunar cycle and the physical cycle in women, the moon is generally considered feminine in character, and because of its whiteness and radiance can act as a symbol of divine female beauty, a notion that is common in Romantic poetry. In this respect the moon may be equated with purity and the soul. Symbolist and Post-Symbolist poets give attention to the deathly aspect of the moon. Jules Laforgue sees the purity of the moon as sterile (one of his poems is called 'La Lune est Stérile'), and his weird Pierrot has an affinity to the moon ('Pierrot Lunaire'). Holst refers to the moon as a symbol of death in 'De Afspraak', where he pictures a woman singing "tusschen dood en leven, tusschen maan en vuur"¹; in the poem 'De Tusschenkomst' (1925) he also indicates that the moon is symbolic of death: "de dood rees als een maan in mij".²

The moon can be a ghastly image for Nijhoff:

"De maan kijkt met verschrik'lijk wit gelaat" ('Sonate').

But he also portrays it in a romantic light:

"De maan gluurt door de takken. Oh la la!" ('Het Strijkje').

To the solitary, alien figure, the moon can be an incitement to an alternative existence:

"Het maanlicht zingt mijn bloed tot dansen wakker"

('De Eenzame').

It normally appears with fatal connotations for earthly life.

1. A. Roland Holst, 'De Afspraak', 'Verzamelde Werken III, Proza I', p.186.

2. A. Roland Holst, 'Verzamelde Werken II, Gedichten II', p.7.

Wind and water are symbols of transition between boundless and bounded form. Like all four ancient elements - earth, air, fire and water - they have traditional life-giving connotations, and since they have a non-finite character, are connected with divine creativity. Nijhoff talks in his (1935) Enschede lecture of an afflatus ("toewaaaisels") inspiring the writer, and which he equates with what Gide called divine assistance: "la part de Dieu".¹

The wind is the rarest in form of the four elements, being invisible and almost intangible. A gentle breeze traditionally symbolises the breath of creation, whilst a strong wind symbolises divine wrath. The wind may disturb things or bring changes in the weather, and is commonly symbolic of change. It seems to symbolise change in 'Awater' where the narrator is musing about the past, recollecting on his deceased brother, and reports an order from the wind to move on: "Oei, zei de wind, voort, voort!" In some poems reference is to a night-wind, which is suggestive of a wind of change bearing death. Pierrot is prompted to macabre ballads by a combination of night-wind and moon:

"Maar 'k ben Pierrot, als in de straat
De nachtwind door mijn haren gaat -
Als dan de maan zich naakt gaat baden,
Zing ik macabere balladen."

('Pierrot aan de Lantaarn')

The silence of death in 'Het Veer' (in 'Nieuwe Gedichten') is compared to a wood full of wind ("een bos vol wind"), and in 'De Soldaat en de Zee' a voice from the sea mingled in the wind and the tide brings a message of both happiness and doom. In an article on Holst, Nijhoff claims that tokens of a "land van eindeloze verrukkingen" and of an untainted prehistoric race are to be found in the sounds of sea, fire and wind.² Of these three, the wind is mainly connected with communication from a far eternal realm, whilst fire and water are considered to have more of an eternal power in themselves.

1. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1153.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'A.Roland Holst, "De wilde kim"' (1925), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.361.

Water has more substance than air, and through its material properties is of more direct benefit to man. It nourishes and fertilises, purifies and dissolves. Across all cultures water is regarded as a primordial element in the creation and sustenance of living matter. It has an infinite quality through its fluid and shapeless nature, and is connected with transition between heaven and earth by the way it descends from the sky as rain and evaporates. In Nijhoff's early poetry water is mainly connected with river and sea as something apart from the land. It is a region of infinity in 'Zondagmorgen':

"In 't stille, bleeke water drijven booten:
Zij wachten in de oneindigheid der grijze
Rivier".

In 'Boehme' the reflecting capacity of water makes it a similar symbol to the mirror, suggesting another world, and the reflection gives an insight to the future (Boehme sees himself as older and in a crucifixion setting). The same idea of reflection of the future in water occurs again in 'Nieuwe Gedichten' in 'Het Kind en Ik' (the narrator sees written "al wat ik van mijn leven nog ooit te schrijven droom"). Qualities of reflection and of cleansing give water a special appeal in 'Het Veer' ("vol gloed, vol spiegeling"). The contrast between water and land is expressed in 'Satyr en Christoffoor' (in 'Vormen') through the contrast in character between the satyr, who likes the pleasures of the earth, and Christoffoor, who is more at home in water ("vertrouwer in 't water dan op 't land"). In 'Het Souper' (also in 'Vormen') water is used to represent a feeling of instability threatening earthly existence:

"Als water woelden in den nacht de landen
Onder het huis".

A different aspect of water, that of the creative, life-giving element, comes to the fore in 'Awater' and 'Het Uur U' ("wateren van aanvang" and "levend water"). Nevertheless the potential threat to life of water is also presented in 'Het Uur U' in a shipwreck scene, and in 'Nieuwe Gedichten' a critical comment on the attraction of water is given at the end of 'De Soldaat en de Zee', where it is said that "het strijdende volk een schoner zee is dan water".

Contrastive significance is found in all the four elements as Nijhoff uses them. Wind and water can be propitious or threatening, fire can be invigorating or destructive, and the earth is linked with procreation and with burial. Fire is commonly used in religious symbolism to denote the Holy Spirit, and in the form of a single flame may denote the spirit of man. The Bible has many instances where God or the Holy Spirit is present in the form of fire (e.g. the burning bush, and the tongues of fire descending on the apostles). Holst in 'De Afspraak' speaks of fire together with waves and wind as symbols of transition between soul and body: "Alle grensovergangen tusschen ziel en lichaam staan in de teekens van wat hier waarneembaar is als de golf, de vlam en de vlaag".¹ Nijhoff echoes this idea in his article on Holst's 'De Wilde Kim' when he speaks of communication from a land of infinite bliss where an ancient, nobler race live: "Waar vindt men de tekenen elders dan in het harde aanhoudende ruisen zelf, van de zee, van het vuur, van de wind, waaronder wij vergaan?"² The power and indefinite form of fire associate it with a divine nature. Whilst the single flame suggests the spirit of the individual, fire in large measure can be purgative or destructive:

"Wij moeten met den brand der wereld verbranden"

('Bruckner').

By and large, a spiritual meaning applies to Nijhoff's fire imagery, though not necessarily in a pure or non-carnal sense. In the early poetry it is sometimes connected with sexual passion, as in 'De Vervloekte VIII': "onze nacht brandde als een zwarte vlam". There is still a spiritual significance to fire in an erotic context, because the passion of love combines physical destruction with sublime delight. In 'De Vervloekte', which gives an account of a sexual relationship, poem V has an image of downfall ("Tuimelen moet wie voor die steilten staat") juxtaposed to one of beauty in fire ("De roode vlam, de bloem van vuur,

1. A. Roland Holst, 'De Afspraak', 'Verzamelde Werken III, Proza I', pp. 173-4.

2. M. Nijhoff, 'A. Roland Holst, "De wilde kim" (1925), 'Verzamelde Werk 2', p. 361.

bloeit uit"), and in poem IX, fire is juxtaposed to death ("En toen wij naast den dooden jongen stonden, - Een roode brand joeg door den zomernacht - ").

The fire of passion opposes level-headed reason, and states of frenzy are akin to madness:

"Als een brand

Joeg waanzin door mijn lijf heen" ('Pierrot').

Insanity in some degree, whether foolish, delirious or downright mad, occurs repeatedly in 'De Wandelaar', and is characteristic of the clown and other alien or isolated figures. The incomformity of madness with common sense may suggest a mentality of either a superior order or an inferior disorder. Nijhoff relates madness to both godliness and ungodliness. The effect of Christ on Maria Magdalena ("waanzinnig dansende") and the soldier who crucified Christ ("werd een gek") is to produce signs of madness (Christ himself, in 'De Soldaat die Jezus Kruisigde', is portrayed with a certain wildness when his fingers grasp "wild om den spijker"). Allied to this religious type of madness is the innocent foolishness of the simpleton (e.g. 'Het Liedje van den Simpele'). Pierrot, on the other hand, links fools with remoteness from God - the world, he says, is:

"Ver van haar God, maar verder steeds -
Een bal vliegt door de blauwe lucht,
Waar een troep dwazen danst en zucht."

('Pierrot aan de Lantaarn')

In many poems madness is closely related to pleasure, being a consequence of pleasurable activity or of the attempt at sublime happiness. It applies to dancing in 'Pierrot' and 'Maria Magdalena', to the antics of the clown in 'Clown', and to sexual love in 'De Vervloekte'. But so little separates joy from dejection in the derangement of insanity that the subject is as near to tears as to laughter:

"Mijn waanzin barst in lachend schreien uit."

('De Vervloekte V')

Laughter is a very odd phenomenon in Nijhoff's poetry, linked with distortion, mockery and irony rather than with pleasure. It is a characteristic of the alien figure like the clown, whose laugh is "de lach ... van iemand die ...

niet meer rechtstreeks met de dingen zelf in verband staat".¹ Nijhoff finds laughter and smiling in such morbid situations that, whilst it is supposed to be a sign of happiness, it is clearly meant to reflect a state that is not of real life. Pierrot claims that corpses have smiling faces ("De mond half open, de ogen dicht, bevriest glimlachend hun gezicht" - 'Pierrot aan de Lantaarn') and in 'Polonaise' there is the image of a child smiling as he plays with his mother's corpse:

"Wring 'k een vertrokken glimlach als de knaap
Die met zijn moeders doode lichaam speelt."

The lady in 'Kerstnacht' (in 'Vormen') looks for the laughter of death:

"Geen einde, geen einde, geen dood die lacht - ".

In keeping with the unworldly associations of laughter, God is said to laugh in 'Middag' and 'Aan mijn Kind III', and the moon has a crazy laugh ("dwaas-lachende") in 'Sonate'. A smile belonging to a woman - an allusion to the smile of the Mona Lisa - is the fascinating subject of the Renaissance artist's efforts in 'De Wandelaar' ("Teeken ik 's nachts den glimlach van een vrouw").

Many poems of 'De Wandelaar' are governed by a theme of sexual relationship, but this theme gradually diminishes in importance until in 'Nieuwe Gedichten' it occurs as main theme of just one poem ('Haar Laatste Brief'). The situation gradually changes too, from something fated to something dead and gone. Love is cursed by the Baudelairean poet in 'De Wandelaar' ("vloek ik mijn liefde"), and the lover is a person accursed in 'De Vervloekte'. The first poem to give any account of a sexual relationship is 'Na een Jaar', where the end of a year represents the end of a cycle which concludes in death. Destruction and death in love is fundamental to 'De Vervloekte', where the doom of lovers is accompanied by cruelty ("Wreed heb ik in je weeke vleesch gebeten" - poem I), suffering and shame ("Gezichten wringende van pijn en schande" - poem II).

1. M.Nijhoff, 'J.C.van Schagen, "Narrenwijsheid" (1925), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.331.

The nine poems comprising 'De Vervloekte' form an integrated unit, which makes this section different from the other sections of 'De Wandelaar', in which poems are more independent of one another. There is one other sequence in the volume - 'Aan mijn Kind I, II & III' - but this does not have an interdependence of meaning like 'De Vervloekte', which because of its special composition does not fit in well with the rest of the volume. The poems of 'De Vervloekte' are something between a continuing narrative and an interrelated set of scenes. The elements of story-line give a contextual slant to the symbolism. A tale of destruction and death in a sexual affair culminating in the murder of a boy represents the corrupting effects of carnal indulgence and the sacrifice of childhood innocence. The meaning of the last poem (IX), in which the boy is murdered, can only gain its symbolic interpretation with reference to what has gone before, particularly the words in the third poem:

"Het is mijn wil die dezen moord begaat",
and in the sixth poem, as the couple lie together:

"Wij willen wat als moord slechts kan gebeuren."
The title 'De Vervloekte' is reminiscent of the 'poètes maudits', but in this series of poems any complaint or remorse about being accursed is subordinate to a willingness to accept this condition. The damage inflicted on the body in a sexual relationship is integral to an experience of high delight:

"Ik werd zoo heerlijk door je kracht gebroken." (poem III)
The enjoyment of this seems justified and unregretted, and the final outcome is not misery, but smiles and song (poem IX). A similar beneficial aspect to an accursed life is found in 'Maria Magdalena': she "zag haar leven vervloekt", yet is sanctified with a halo round her head. The ideal sought by the 'I-figure' from the love relationship in 'De Vervloekte' goes beyond the sexuality he gets, to include the tenderness and comfort of the mother:

"Moeder moest je zijn" (poem II).

The position of the mother here provides a classic example of Freud's Oedipus theory. What the narrator wants is sex with a mother substitute.

In the poems that follow 'De Vervloekte', namely those of 'De Wandelaar's' concluding section, 'Het Zachte Leven', the mother becomes the most important motif, and the final poem is entitled simply 'Moeder'. The main properties that the mother symbol stands for are love, succour, protection, and the provision of life. Although the mother is normally strongly associated with birth, Nijhoff continually links her with death, since the latter is conditional on the former:

"Moeder, die leven geeft, dat sterven moet"

('De Vervloekte III').

The dead mother appears in several poems of 'De Wandelaar':

"de knaap die met zijn moeders doode lichaam speelt" ('Polonaise'),

"De rimpeltjes om je gestorven oogen" ('Het Oude Huis'),

"Ze ligt in 't graf met het gelaat naar boven" ('Moeder').

This motif is not a direct account of an actual experience, since Nijhoff's mother was still alive at the time, but belongs to a concept in which the mother is allotted to an eternal, rather than an earthly existence, and death is the means to this status ("Zachter dan het leven zij haar de eeuwige dood" - 'Moeder').

The mother often appears in the context of Nijhoff's memories of childhood happiness; because she takes care of worldly worries, the child is able to enjoy a blissful, carefree, sheltered existence. Theun de Vries sees Nijhoff's mother-figure as a combination of symbol of the past and religious ideal, describing her as: "het eigenlijke quasi-realistische zinnebeeld van het verleden, en aan haar koppelt zich het religieuze zinnebeeld tot een schone illusie van een oorspronkelijke, breukloze zuiverheid, die voor de zondeval der volwassenheid geheerst moet hebben."¹ The picture of the mother can be highly sentimental in poems written from the attitude of a child's affection:

"Moeder, mijn moeder -

Wil je nu zacht mij wiegen? -

Mijn hoofd in uw schoot.

Lieve, melieve. - " ('Rust')

Psychologically, the mother is an archetype of the

1. T.de Vries, 'M.Nijhoff, Wandelaar in de Werkelijkheid', p.30.

unconscious mind, and the innate sexual urge is governed by this archetype (Freud's Oedipus theory). Despite the overriding purity of Nijhoff's mother symbol, a blatant sexual connotation comes out in 'De Vervloekte'.

Two different roles of the mother, the one governing the child, and the one immortalised by the adult, relate to the psychological phenomenon of the dual mother. Jung explains that in hero myths, the hero needs two mothers for the attainment of immortality, one to give him human life and one to make him immortal: "One of the mothers is the real human mother, the other is the symbolical mother; in other words she is distinguished as being divine, supernatural, or in some way extraordinary".¹ In anticipating the death of his mother, Nijhoff gets over the obstacle of having the real mother blocking the way to the creation of the concept of the sublime eternal mother.

Another symbol treated with great sentimentality by Nijhoff is that of the child, which plays a major role throughout his poetry. It embodies an initial state of purity, innocence and happiness, close to a state of eternity relinquished at birth. A child, in its earliest innocence, does not know advance that leads to decline and decay, and so has a state of mind theoretically equivalent to that of an immortal being. In the eyes of an adult, the child lives in a different, more imaginative world, and to Nijhoff this world is quite remote and mysterious: "Een kind is een onbereikbaar wezen, dat in een aparte wereld leeft, en dat, en dit maakt de apartheid des te geheimzinniger, met ons een overeenkomstige gedaante vertoont, een gedaante, die in dezelfde mate naar ons toegroeit als er het eigenwereldse uit verdwijnt."² In one respect the child symbolises formative forces and the future, and when knowledge begins to take over from innocence, the child must give way to the adult; adolescence necessarily involves childhood destruction, as implied in 'De Vervloekte', and this idea corresponds to words of Saint Paul: "When I was

1. C.G.Jung, 'Symbols of Transformation', p.322.

2. M.Nijhoff, 'Kinderportretten' (1934), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.772.

a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things".¹ In his prose, Nijhoff quotes these words of Saint Paul, but in a version which gives more of a sense of destruction of childishness: "zoo heb ik teniet gedaan hetgeen eens kinds was".² However, Nijhoff believes that, despite man's natural transition away from the state of childhood, the child remains as his essential being, and that there is an eventual return to this original state. After the climax of 'De Vervloekte', the narrator finds himself singing a children's song, and the section 'Het Zachte Leven' that follows is full of childhood themes. In 'Con Sordino', a return to childhood follows a night of sex:

"En ik ben weer een kind na dezen nacht."

The child, in Nijhoff's concept, is like an embodiment of the soul, representing man's pure inner self. In its earliest and purest state, the child is parallel to the Christ-child, and sometimes when Nijhoff talks of "het kind" he is alluding to the Christ-child (e.g. in 'Satyr en Christoffoor'). He thinks of children as close to God, and in 'Aan mijn Kind III' a scene is presented of children in friendly communication with God, in a "stil gesprek".

When Nijhoff uses the words 'stil' and 'stilte', a spiritual atmosphere is often denoted. In addition to the quiet conversation between God and children in 'Aan Mijn Kind III', communication between God and man is said to take place in silence in 'Kerstnacht' (in 'Vormen'). There are sounds of silence in the street of 'Het Uur U', comprising sounds like those of gas, electricity and water supplies, which are not normally heard and hence do not seem to belong to everyday life. Small or distant sounds which normally go unnoticed may be connected with the spirit world, and the silence in which these sounds can be heard may thus constitute a spiritual or eternal silence. Stillness, as an indication of quietness or motionlessness, is

1. I Corinthians XIII, 11.

2. M. Nijhoff, 'Willem de Mérode, "Het heilig licht"' (1924), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p. 217.

often closely associated with an atmosphere of death (the epithet "doodstil" occurs in three poems). The narrator of 'De Wandelaar' says "Stil heeft mijn hart de daden stervan laten", and in 'Lente' silence forms a division between the narrator and the things of the world:

"Een groote stilte scheidt mij van de dingen".

Another special sort of silence, which is of an earthly nature ("aards en warm"), is described in 'Het Veer', as a contrast to the silence of death that is described first, but this is an exception to the deathly or spiritual atmosphere that silence usually symbolises in Nijhoff's poetry.

'PIERROT AAN DE LANTAARN'

Van Eyck recognises in Pierrot a similar symbol to the child: "Ik geloof niet, dat ik ongelijk heb, als ik in Pierrot, tegenhanger van het kind, zoals de Satyr het van Christophoros is, het door de gemaskerde natuurkracht uit zijn eenzame onvolledigheid weggelokte en tot haar eigen genotsdrift geprikkelde kind zelf herken, dat, nadat Pierrot zich verhangen heeft, tot zijn oorspronkelijke, eenvoudige kinderlijkheid terugkeert."¹ At the end of the poem, as he dies, Pierrot enters into a dream state, as in a child's dream, and calls on his mother:

"Het wordt een droom als kinderdromen:

Moeder, de witte engelen komen - ".

'Pierrot aan de Lantaarn' dates from about the same time as 'De Wandelaar' (1916), and echoes the motif of the clown which is introduced there in 'Pierrot' and 'Clown'. It recalls Jules Laforgue's plaintive Pierrot poems. The clown is a common image in all forms of Symbolist art (according to Cirlot it is an inversion of the king - the first and the last²). Nijhoff conceives of the clown as a complex character who does not fit in with the world, who is spiritual by nature, and in whom there is an inner suicidal conflict; clowns, he says, are "de "kleine zielen", ... de halfbloeden van de geest, zij in wier ziel een voortdurende strijd is en die daarin tegen zichzelf meestrijden, zij die snakken naar de vernietiging van hun eigen kern,

1. P.N.van Eyck, 'M.Nijhoff, Vormen', 'Verzameld Werk IV', p.375.
2. J.E.Cirlot, 'A Dictionary of Symbols', p.51.

smeken om zich zonder genade te mogen overgeven aan een vijand die zij verheerlijken, en die altijd weer de verraderlijke genade ondervinden gespaard te blijven".¹

The clown is supposed to represent a world of laughter, his disposition is one of longing to be happy, and other people look to him for laughter, but inwardly he weeps at his unhappy lot. The apartness of the clown from normal society is typified in 'Clown' by the fact that in his madness he does impressions of dog, man and elephant to amuse the public: "Ik speel voor hond, voor mensch, voor olifant". That he imitates man shows that he looks as an outsider on man.² 'Pierrot aan de Lantaarn' takes the form of a dialogue between Pierrot, as the typically alien figure with suicidal tendencies, and Harlekijn, as a more lively, practical type. Pierrot is deathly pale in appearance, he is a roamer, and he flees from daylight, preferring to linger in the dark by a street-lamp ("een gasvlam heeft je ziel verwarmt"). Because he finds life repulsive but death attractive, Pierrot finally hangs himself. His suicide is shown as a blessing for him, just as death is regularly shown by Nijhoff as an escape from an unhappy state. Little is said of Harlekijn's character; he acts as a foil to Pierrot and often speaks from Pierrot's point of view. The two can be regarded as symbolising two sides of one personality, like an ego and alter ego, or as two opposite types of human character (comparable duos are narrator and child in 'De Vervloekte', satyr and Christoffoor, and Awater and the figure who follows him).

'VORMEN'

Published in 1924, 'Vormen' consists of six sections: 'Houtsneden' (nine poems), 'Kleine Liederen' (seven poems), 'Steenen tegen den Spiegel' (six poems), 'Tuinfeesten' (nine poems), 'Dagboekbladen' (seven poems), and a short verse drama called 'Kerstnacht'. As in 'De Wandelaar' there is a diversity between motifs of suffering and death and motifs

1. M.Nijhoff, 'J.C. van Schagen, "Narrenwijsheid" (1925), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.331.
2. M.A.Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, 'De Opbouw van Nijhoff's De Wandelaar', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 68', No.3, May 1975, p.221.

of romantic pleasures or fancies. Gone are the clown and the accursed figure; whilst cursing or accursedness are mentioned in the texts of nine poems of 'De Wandelaar', as well as in 'Pierrot aan de Lantaarn', this motif never occurs in 'Vormen', nor in the later poetry. The love affair is no longer seen in progress, but only in its aftermath; the merits of its passing are doubted in 'Twee Reddeloozen':

"was ik grooter geworden

Wanneer ik had liefgehad?",

but undoubted in 'Adieu' where a musician secretly leaves his lover. Short descriptive scenes and character sketches again predominate (the title of the volume is more suitably translated as 'forms' than as 'formation'), but there are a number of poems that rely on a narrative base. Slightly less attention is fixed on the person of the narrator (the pronoun 'ik' does not occur in such a high proportion of the poems), and more attention is given to historical figures, who nevertheless are representative of idealistic tendencies with which Nijhoff can to some extent identify. Besides Biblical characters, Memling, Shakespeare, Aubrey Beardsley and Novalis are presented in 'Vormen' (in 'De Wandelaar', Bruckner and Boehme appear). The use of characters who correspond to a side of Nijhoff's own personality is discussed by Kazemier, who uses the term "identificatie".¹ He sees certain figures who embody qualities to which the poet himself aspires, as symbols for overcoming an inner fear, and names the soldier as one of these ("een symbool voor de overwinning van de existentiële angst").² Yet, on the other side of the coin, Nijhoff often identifies himself with quite different types of character, who stand for illusion or pretence (especially in 'De Wandelaar' where the clown, for example, puts on a show of being funny, but is inwardly distraught).

A feeling of pity is attached to the descriptions of the wretched figures, and they correspond to a conscious view of the self in its mood of hopelessness, and give vent to an expression of self-pity. The admiration attached to

1. G.Kazemier, 'Nijhoff, de speelse', in 'Het Spel in de Literatuur', pp.5-31.
2. id., p.12.

the soldier or the martyr marks these figures as hero-figures corresponding to wishful elements of the unconscious psyche. Jung defines the hero as an "animus-figure", which operates in a compensatory function and brings into consciousness a substitute, who performs a role which is the opposite of how the self really acts: "he does what the subject ought, could, or would like to do, but does not do. All the things that could happen in conscious life, but do not happen, are acted out in the unconscious and consequently appear in projection."¹ In practice, hero-symbolism, like mother-symbolism, is developed into all sorts of shapes and figures, including the anti-hero. (Taking classical models, Jung states categorically: "The hero symbolises a man's unconscious self".²).

The opening of 'Vormen' makes a noticeable change from 'De Wandelaar' by virtue of the narrative style of 'Satyr en Christofoor', including a partial shift of focus away from the narrator himself onto the objects of his description (he introduces his own feelings in the last two lines). As in 'Pierrot aan de Lantaarn', a duo of contrasting characters is portrayed (Kazemier takes the psychological approach that they are two aspects of Nijhoff's own personality: "De satyr en Christofoor symboliseren twee factoren van zijn wezen"³). They are brought into relation with the narrator at the end, when in successive lines he puts Christofoor's position, the satyr's position, and his own position. Christofoor is a type not at home in a worldly environment (he prefers water to land), and the satyr is a type who revels in the pleasures of the earth ("Hij die langs alle wegen zijn lusten had verkregen"), but in this case a child is present (the allusion is to the Christ-child carried by Christopher across a stream) as a third element uniting the other two. The different inclinations of the satyr and Christofoor convey in one respect an inverted symbolism, since Christopher is known for his physical strength and a satyr is known as a spirit. This latent idea of longing in inverse relation

1. C.G.Jung, 'Symbols of Transformation', p.310.

2. id., p.333.

3. G.Kazemier, 'Nijhoff, de speelse', in 'Het Spel in de Literatuur', p.16.

to form (seen in humans longing for spiritual bliss while spirits long for earthly delights) is something that comes out in the later poetry, as in 'Het Veer' where Sebastiaan - "de geest" - finds that he admires the body most of all ("het wonderbaarlijk lichaam") and 'Een Idylle' where mortals look for happiness in the underworld while the god Hermes longs to settle on earth.

Besides being a duo of differing personality types, and a duo of differing essences (mortal and immortal), Christofoor and the satyr are a duo of differing cultures: Christian and pagan. The satyr is Nijhoff's first borrowing from Greek culture, and foreshadows a major concern in the trilogy of religious plays, 'Het Heilige Hout' (1950), to express the unification through Christ of pagan and Biblico-Christian cultures. In between, there are examples of glaring disparity between Christian and pagan in 'De Vliegende Hollander' (1930) and in 'De Nieuwe Sterren' (in 'Nieuwe Gedichten'), but again a unification of the two cultures in 'Awater' (with the hint at Awater's Greek and Irish interests) and 'Het Uur U' (with its Greek and Christian allusions).

The narrator's position at the end of 'Satyr en Christofoor', in connection with a little bit of happiness found in the child, looks rather closer to that of the satyr than to that of Christofoor (though the respective positions are worded in a mystifying way; happiness that "klemt" is supposed to be either not to be waded through, or unapproachable, or untouchable):

"Men vindt op land of op water
Een klein geluk dat klemt:
Voor Christofoor ondoorwaadbaar,
Voor den satyr ongenaakbaar,
Voor mij, ach, onaanraakbaar
Wegzingend door mijn lied - ".

A trace of Nijhoff's theory of words freeing themselves from their meanings is noticeable in the last line. In 'Tweeërlei Dood' the cue to the ascending words is the perception of a happiness that is continuously out of reach: "Vreemd ijlt geluk voorbij oneindig missen."

Another poem, 'Zwerver en Elven', which ends the section 'Kleine Lieder', again makes mention of Christoffoor and a child, and in the context of the volume seems to be a sequel to 'Satyr en Christoffoor' (an elf is an impish deity like a satyr), though it was published separately in 'De Gids' (1924) and must therefore be open to an independent assessment. Regarded as a sequel, it describes a situation in which the child is no longer with Christoffoor, since a voice says:

" - O Christoffoor, waar is het
Kind, het kind - "

Taking the poem on its own, these words might mean a frustrating attempt to find the child, but the construction, which uses a past tense ("Te zwaar was het water, te licht is de wind") in the previous sentence, before the present tense in this one, still implies that there was a time when the child was present, but that now it is lost.

A succession of spoken phrases occurs throughout 'Zwerver en Elven', and it is difficult to make out who utters these words, because no specification is given, though some of them are evidently addressed to the roamer (whom one assumes is Christoffoor), namely:

" - Verstoor je mijn tuin en stilte om niet?",
" - Je voeten liepen waar ik sliep", and
" - Als jij zal ik eeuwig verder gaan."

These words seem thus to come from the elves, and it may be that the very lack of specification indicates that all the spoken parts come from the elves, as slight, elusive creatures. One phrase, however, looks more appropriate to the roamer: " - Blijf bij me, bij me, zwervende - "

But this could also be spoken by an elf to follow up the earlier: " - Als jij zal ik eeuwig verder gaan."

The main contribution of the elves is to raise complaints about the roamer's interference in their lives, leading to the scornful:

" - Waarom tot onaardsche
Droomen gewekt
Zonder opwaartsche
Ziel die trekt?"

So despite their supernatural being, they are inclined towards earthly pleasures. They inhabit a sort of in-between area, but do not care much for the unearthly tendency that brings Christoffoor into contact with them as he roams the

boundary regions of the earth. Yet there is a development in their situation, and they seem to have been influenced by the roamer, because their complaints turn from bitter to desperate:

" - Van verbroken beloften

Blijven wij buit.

- Niets, niets is op de

Wegen vooruit.

- Te zwaar was het water, te

Licht is de wind.

- O Christofoor, waar is het

Kind, het kind -".

The poem ends with the disappearance of a "bijna zwijgende wolk", which suggests that this cloud makes some spoken contribution, but as other utterances are said to emanate from the sea-shore, the wind and the waves, the cloud may be another source of elf-speech, because the elves, as spirits, haunt the boundary regions of the coast and the transitional forms of wind and water. Their disappearance in a cloud at the end would represent their passage into a rarer or remoter state, beyond perception, as is appropriate to their spiritual nature. A further interpretation of the disappearing cloud might link it with loss of the child. This cloud ascends past the moon, suggesting thus a passage beyond death into heaven:

"En, eindelijk, stijgend de

Maan langs en heen,

Een bijna zwijgende

Wolk verdween."

It might represent the child's passage to an immortal realm, reminiscent of Christ's ascension in a cloud. But it is more likely to relate to the spoken phrases that have gone before, to signify that as a result of Christofoor's intervention the elves lose their attachment to the earth and pass away to a higher realm.

The Christian themes dominating 'Vormen's' opening section, 'Houtsneden', imply that this heading relates to church wood-carvings. Although the heading implies either a pictorial source or a pictorial effect, a certain amount of

story-telling is combined with description. The legend of Saint Christopher is a common motif in church wood-carving, as, of course, is the Crucifixion (presented in 'De Soldaat die Jezus Kruisigde', 'Het Groote Lijden' and 'Johannes'), but the story of the Children's Crusade, which also features in 'Houtsneden', is more obscure (the source for Nijhoff's 'Kinderkruistocht' is Marcel Schwob's 'La Croisade des Enfants').

Nijhoff's sonnets on Biblical themes show some similarities to those of Jacobus Revius, and a particular comparison can be drawn between 'De Soldaat die Jezus Kruisigde' and Revius's 'Hy Droech onse Smerten'. Nijhoff identifies himself with the soldier performing the Crucifixion, and Revius identifies himself with the instruments of the Crucifixion:

"Ick ben den swaren boom die u had overlaen,
 Ick ben de taeye streng daermee ghy ginct gebonden,
 De nagel, en de speer, de geessel die u sloech,
 De bloet-bedropen croon die uwen schedel droech:
 Want dit is al geschiet, eylaes! om mijne sonden."¹

The title 'De Soldaat die Jezus Kruisigde' is ambiguous because it could mean that the soldier is either crucifier or crucified.² Since the reader presumably knows already that Christ was crucified, he is likely to assume the first interpretation at first, and this is borne out by the first two quatrains which depict the soldier hammering in a nail. In the final quatrain and couplet the other interpretation is evoked when the soldier has a nail through his own hand. (This coincides with a change of tense-form from past to present). The concept of resolving dualism in religion is epitomised in this poem with its juxtaposed contrasting images of wildness and gentleness:

"Zijn vingers grepen
 Wild om den spijker toen 'k den hamer hief -
 Maar hij zei zacht mijn naam en: "Heb mij lief -"

This unity of opposites reveals to the soldier a profound

1. J.Revius, 'Hy Droech onse Smerten', 'Over-Ysselsche Sangen en Dichten', p.222.
2. S.Strydom, 'De Soldaat die Jezus Kruisigde', 'Tydskrif vir Letterkunde XIII', 1, February 1975, pp.52-9.

mystery - "'t groot geheim". There is no question of regret about the soldier's action (in contrast to Revius's "eylaes"); he performs his duty readily:

"Ik had hem lief - en sloeg en sloeg en sloeg

Den spijker door zijn hand in 't hout dat barstte."

The nail, which in the first part of the poem is the instrument of death, becomes in the second part the instrument of creativity, used to draw the emblem of Christ in any material, be it wall, wood, flesh or sand - from the most solid to the most yielding.

Compared to 'De Wandelaar', themes of human suffering and death in 'Vormen' are centred more on Christian affliction, since love does not play a role any more, except as a memory. A Crucifixion setting occurs in three poems, and there are references to Crucifixion and Cross in several others. In two poems ('De Soldaat die Jezus Kruisigde' and 'De Kloosterling') the narrator closely identifies himself with Christ by undergoing the same suffering. The variant text of 'De Kloosterling' in 'De Beweging' (1917) is particularly explicit in this shared Crucifixion, when the narrator is met by a stranger who is obviously Christ and who says:

"'k Zie gij hebt mijn kruis gekozen:

Ik zie mijn harde doornen om uw slaap

En wonden in uw handen en uw voeten."¹

Identification with Christ is in Jungian psychology an identification with a hero-archetype of the self, and the choice of self-sacrifice represents a final measure to force out a solution between contrary urges formulated in the mind.²

Gentler Christian themes also occur in 'Vormen', such as that of Christmas, which stands for a time of supreme happiness, combining joy at the birth of Christ with an atmosphere of childhood festivity. The Children's Crusade is also a romantic theme of Christian background, and is used by Nijhoff to symbolise a passage from earth to heaven;

1. M.Nijhoff, 'De Kloosterling', 'De Beweging XIII', 1917, III, p.56.

2. C.G.Jung, 'Symbols of Transformation', p.368.

the children journey over land and then sea until they reach God's house.

The symbol of the soldier, which is prominent towards the beginning of 'Vormen', represents for Nijhoff a sentimental concept similar to the child, which also features strongly in 'Vormen'. The soldier is first introduced in 'De Wandelaar' in 'Zingende Soldaten', where an analogy to the child is drawn:

"Een goed soldaat heeft een groot kinderhart."

This idea is repeated in 'Vormen' in 'Soldatenkerstmis':

"God gaf een kinderhart aan den soldaat".

Nijhoff's sentimental treatment of the soldier motif stems largely from his own pleasant memories of life in the army. The soldier is a member of a society based on order and conformity, and in Nijhoff's view has a simple loyalty and devotion to duty which compares with the innocence of a child and its faith in its elders. There is also an idea of self-offering in the concept of the soldier; in his uncompleted novel 'Luctor et Emergo' Nijhoff says: "Ik zou te allen tijd mijn leven voor mijn land beschikbaar stellen, precies zoals ik, toen mijn moeder ziek was, mijn bloed voor transfusie had aangeboden."¹ The soldier's devotion to the service of his country is a characteristic which is parallel to the religious notion of the Christian as a soldier battling through the world, offering his life to the service of God. Nijhoff tends to place the soldier in a Christian context, and even when this context is one of Crucifixion (as in 'De Soldaat die Jezus Kruisigde'), the soldier is still obediently performing his duty. The soldier who crucified Christ is Nijhoff's classic symbol of sacrifice, and the key to self-sacrifice. His task of driving in the nails brings him closer than anyone on earth to Christ being crucified, and this physical proximity is expanded by Nijhoff into a sharing of the Crucifixion, not just to the extent of sympathy, but even to sustaining the same physical wounds ("een spijker door mijn hand" - a phrase which the soldier repeats). Only the fact that the soldier is inno-

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Luctor et Emergo', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1112.

cently acting on orders prevents him from being equivalent (he says he is "als een dwaas") to the suicidal Pierrot. 17

In the course of his military duties, even the ordinary soldier leads a life continually faced with the prospect of death; the constant threat of death is applicable to all people, though the general public are not usually confronted with it so much. As a figure relevant to all men in their struggle through life, is how the soldier appears in 'De Geschiedenis van den Soldaat' (Nijhoff's translation, circa 1925, of Ramuz's 'l'Histoire du Soldat'), concerning which Nijhoff interprets the soldier as a symbol of the soul and his story as symbolic of the course of life that everyone inwardly experiences: "Wij zien ... dat de Soldaat niet anders dan de directe vormgeving is van de mannenziel en zijn Geschiedenis het kort relaas van een iegelijks innerlijk levensavontuur."¹ In 'De Soldaat en de Zee' (in 'Nieuwe Gedichten') the soldier is a figure going through an early stage in the course of life, a stage in which idealistic attractions divert him from reality.

A symbol which plays an important part in 'Vormen' is the journey, which is connected with motifs like walking and the street. In 'Het Derde Land', longing to journey to another land stands for a wish to leave the earthly life in order to find a better life after death:

"Maar laat mij uit dit land vandaan,
O laat mij zonder herinnering

En zingend het derde land ingaan."

In 'Het Schip' a sea-voyage has paradise as its destination, but on a more despairing note in 'Twee Reddeloozen', transition is a journey to a solitary end:

"En de wind en de lichten der schepen
Zeggen dat al wat voorbijgaat
Op een reis is zonder thuisreis
Naar een einde waar niemand ons bijstaat - "

The sea-voyage, because it requires a departure from land,

1. M.Nijhoff, Introduction to 'De Geschiedenis van den Soldaat', 'Verzamelde Vertalingen', p.9.

symbolises passage from the earthly life at death. The course of life from birth to death takes the form of a progression like a journey, and so the journey may symbolise life, as well as the passage beyond life:

"het leven is een vreemde reis" ('Het Schip' and 'De Jongen').

In the thinking of Nijhoff's later period, the journey of life entails a return to one's origins or to one's former self: "ik werd die ik was gebleven" ('De Soldaat en de Zee'). He talks about a pursuit in life of one's basic self in an article of 1936: "De reis gaat de wereld om, om zichzelf te achterhalen, dat snelle ding steeds ons vooruit."¹

The boat or ship, as a vehicle of the voyage, is a symbol of communication between the earth and the land of the dead, as found in most ancient cultures, such as the Greek myth of the ferry over the Styx, and the Germanic rite of ship-burial. In 'Het Schip' it appears to be the means of conveying the soul to its eternal abode. Three people, a seaman, his mate, and his wife are sailing towards paradise in this poem, and Kazemier sees them as more figures representing facets of the poet's own personality, though there is no reason for not taking them at face value as three sorts of individual ("de drie figuren van de schipper, de schippersmaat en de schippersvrouw, die het schip en zijn vaart elk op een eigen wijze beleven"²). In the early poetry the boat is mainly connected with departure from the world, but in the later poetry (as with the ferry of 'Het Veer' and the battleship in the sky of 'Het Uur U') there are also associations of approach from an eternal region.

Another symbol of communication between the earth and an eternal region is the bird, which is used several times in 'Vormen'. The main attributes of birds are their wings and feathers which can be suggestive of an angel or some

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Stroomlijnen. Leonard Huizinga: "De gestroomlijnde wereld"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.800.
2. G.Kazemier, 'Nijhoff, de speelse' in 'Het Spel in de Literatuur', p.16.

sort of celestial messenger. In the separately-published poem 'Het Bezoek' (1931),¹ the sudden entrance of a bird through a window represents a visitation from God: a writer is at his work, he protects himself from the bird by shooting at it, and then realises that God has visited him ("Het besef van uw komst, mijn God"). The bird's freedom of movement through the air is like a spiritual freedom, contrasting with the material restraint of the human body, and its ability to rise high above the earth connects it with higher things. In 'Het Schip' a "witte vreemdeling", presumably a sea-bird, goes in front of the ship on its journey to paradise. Later, in 'Het Veer', a white bird flying towards the sea is proposed as a symbol of the immortalised Sebastiaan leaving the earth after his martyrdom (though another proposal is given that he is reborn on earth). On two occasions in 'Vormen' a bird flies into a human environment from a hostile exterior region. In 'De Vogel' a bird slams against a window inside which people are dining, whilst outside the night is so bitter that even candle-flames seem to flee it. The actions of both the bird and the candle-flames suggest that spiritual life needs a haven in human company from the forbidding absolute outside. In 'Lili Green' a bird seeks refuge from moonlight under a human hand:

"Maar al de bloesems huiv'ren uit den boom,
Wanneer de blauwe vogel neerstrijkt, die
Onder haar hand zich voor het maanlicht bergt."

Here the representative of the spirit-world looks for a sanctuary from a deathly exterior under the material protection of human life.

Some of the doubts and disillusionments about an external ideal are grouped together in the section 'Steenen tegen den Spiegel', based on the schism between unsatisfactory reality and untenable ideal. The longing for the other world is still strong, as seen in 'Levensloop':

"Zal ooit mijn ziel uw vreemd wild rijk in vliegen
Baanbrekend naar uw mythe en uw rythmiek?"

But the artificiality of an affected, outlandish life-style

1. M. Nijhoff, 'Het Bezoek', 'Helikon', 1931, pp. 11-12, also in 'Verzamelde Gedichten', pp. 402-3.

amounts to a lie:

"Steeds dupe van toegeeflijke intrigen,
 Bewust behaagziek en melancholiek,
 Weet ik, zonder scrupule, als voor publiek,
 In iedren oogopslag een ernst te liegen."

Failure of the quest for an ideal leads to guilt feelings about the neglected existence that is left, and to doubts about the profession of being a poet:

"Moest ik tot zoo'n verlatenheid geraken:
 Oud worden, aan eenzame tafels zitten,

Werken, om 't werk niet, maar om tegen 't zwijgen
 En twijf'len argumenten te verkrijgen,

Het hart tot de onvruchtbare plek ompitpen,
 Pooltochten droomen en gedichten maken?"

J.C.Bloem was affected by similar doubts about his profession:

"Is dit genoeg: een stuk of wat gedichten,
 Voor de rechtvaardiging van een bestaan".¹

In two of the poems of this section, 'Het Souper' and 'De Vogel', counteraction to an illusion comes from an outside force against a window: a raging wind which bursts open a window and gives people a feeling of being carried towards death in 'Het Souper', and a frozen night in which a bird slams against a window in 'De Vogel'. In each case people are gathered for a festive meal, a situation which in itself arouses expectancy. The meal is a transformation symbol, on account of the conversion of foodstuffs into energy. An obvious example of the symbolic meal is found in the Christian eucharist,² and 'Het Souper' gives a hint of this connection in a mention of wine and bread. The meal of 'Het Souper' is a prelude to a feeling of impending death, and yet it is a prelude which is boosted up as a bluff to any desire for change:

1. J.C.Bloem, 'Dichterschap' (1945), 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.189.
2. C.G.Jung, 'Symbols of Transformation', p.336.

"Maar als de winden langs de daken huilen,
 Vergeet, vergeet waar ons zwak hart om schreit,
 Lach en stoot glazen tegen elkander."

Fear of the consequences arising from the meal is a mood in both poems: in 'Het Souper' the diners lack anywhere to hide ("Wij konden ons niet bij elkaar verschuilen"), and in 'De Vogel' utter the laugh of people who fear something strange in the night ("die 's nachts iets vreemds vreezen").

As at the end of 'De Wandelaar', the tone softens towards the end of 'Vormen', in the sections 'Tuinfeesten' and 'Dagboekbladen', but there is no denying that the paradise-goal and the mother-goal sought in these sections are just as remote from real life as the lofty isolation. The garden party is admitted as a sham:

"Zij zingen, nijgen naar elkaar en kussen,
 Geenszins om liefde, maar om de sublieme
 Momenten en het sentiment daartusschen."

('Het Tuinfeest').

In 'Tweeërlei Dood', the garden setting of "zwanen, booten onder boomen, in 't warm rijk van den vlinder en den bloesem" is admitted as a form of death, alternative to the lofty isolation of "jubelend in de sneeuwstormen". The variant text of the first edition (1924) combines the garden and the mother in this picture of a death-state (the poem concerns a girl the narrator had seen singing and picking flowers):

"Breng haar bij zwanen, booten onder boomen,
 In een tuin warm als die waar zij in zong was,
 Muziek hoort ze, en haar moeder toen ze jong was
 Is haar glimlachend tegemoet gekomen."

All the poems of 'Vormen', with the exception of 'Satyr en Christoffor', were first published in various periodicals, and the bulk of them are fairly close in time to 'De Wandelaar', dating from 1916-19. Of the rest, 'Kerstnacht' and 'Kleine Prélude van Ravel' were published in 'De Stem' in 1921 and 1922 respectively, and two groups were published in 'De Gids', I, 1924:

pp.33-38, 'De Profundis', 'Memlinc', 'Liedje', 'Tweespraak',
 'Zwerver en Elven';

pp.387-392, 'Levensloop', 'Twee Reddeloozen', 'Langs een Wereld', 'Het Steenen Kindje', 'Tweeërlei Dood', 'Het Derde Land'.

The only one of these 1924 poems which shows any signs of attraction for the real world (which becomes a main theme of 'Nieuwe Gedichten') is 'Het Steenen Kindje' (but the earliest poem of 'Nieuwe Gedichten' - 'Het Lied der Dwaze Bijen'(1926) - still concentrates on the attempt to escape from earthly life). The others tend to convey an escapist mood, as highlighted by 'Het Derde Land's' "laat mij uit dit land vandaan". However, 'Het Steenen Kindje' (last poem of 'Vormen' except for the verse drama 'Kerstnacht') does connect with the concern for reality expressed later in 'Nieuwe Gedichten'; its stone cherub which tries to come to life stands for the work of the writer waiting to be produced, and relates to themes of newness and creativity in 'De Twee Nablijvers' and 'Het Veer':

"O zoontje in me, o woord ongeschreven,
O vleeschlooze, o kon ik u baren -
Den nood van ongeboren leven
Wreekt gij met dit verwijtend staren."

Unfortunately, this birth was abortive. Apparently Nijhoff intended to close 'Vormen' on this dismal note, but was persuaded by Van Eyck to add on the verse drama 'Kerstnacht' (as stated in a letter from Van Eyck to Nijhoff of 31/12/1924)¹. The three poems of 1924, which would otherwise have brought 'Vormen' to a close, are far from hopeful, presenting successively a goal that is passed by unentered ('Langs een Wereld'), the two sorts of death ('Tweeërlei Dood') and the abortive birth ('Het Steenen Kindje'). 'Kerstnacht' of 1921 and also 'Kleine Prélude van Ravel' of 1922 are much more promising.

'Kerstnacht' brings in its message of God's "vleeschwordend woord" and reconciliation with humanity through Christ's birth a considerable counterweight to the earlier Crucifixion poems, which show Christ withdrawing totally from the world ("Toen viel alles dicht" - 'Het Groote

1. 'P.N.van Eyck aan M.Nijhoff, 31/12/1924', 'Maatstaf 5', 1957-8, No.8, November 1957, pp.544-553.

Lijden', "hij ons in den dood ontweek" - 'Johannes'). The birth of Christ comes nearer to the themes of renewal and birth in 'Nieuwe Gedichten', though opposing views of it are held in 'Kerstnacht' (for 'De Edele Heer' it is an incentive to approach townschildren, but 'De Edele Vrouw' exclaims "o mijn hart, mijn hart - gered? - Verloren, verloren").

'Kleine Prélude van Ravel' is quite a revelation, considering Nijhoff's usual seriousness (whether moody, wry or distraught). He describes the poem in a letter to Dirk Coster of 9/3/1922 as a humoresque,¹ and it tells, in amusing fashion, of protracted preparations, which keep the public waiting, for a music and dance performance. A pear-headed musician, after spending all day getting his musical odds and ends together, waits for and helps a dancing-girl as she gets her dress and make-up sorted out. The easy-going manner in which the account is given (which runs into dubious grammar on two occasions - Westenbroek picks out 'verkeren tot' instead of 'verkeren in' or 'maken tot', and 'aan een spiegel treden' instead of 'voor een spiegel treden'²) is a prelude to the conversational style that begins to appear in 'Nieuwe Gedichten'. Humour is a rare commodity in Nijhoff's work, and apart from an occasional witty remark (e.g. "ik kijk de kat, zo men zegt, uit de boom" - 'Awater') does not appear again until 'Het Uur U'. But it is in theme that a real prelude to Nijhoff's later poetry is given: 'Kleine Prélude van Ravel' describes a prelude to artistic creativity, and though it ends just before the work is performed, everything is set up ready to begin, and to add to the promising atmosphere, a fountain is spouting water and a nightingale is in song (cf. the nightingale in the city of 'De Twee Nablijvers'). A separate middle section even gives a prelude to Nijhoff's future poetic theory, and is in stark contrast to the blockage of 'Het Steenen Kindje'. It expresses admiration for the virtuoso musician who finds music in all the things around him and, unlike the poet of 'Het

1. J.J.M.Westenbroek, 'De druiven in het boudoir', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 64', 1971, p.60.
2. id., pp.60-61.

Steenen Kindje', can breathe life into what is hard and lifeless: "Die, waar hij aanraakt, musicceert,
Die wat hard is en levenloos
Tot instrument verkeert."

He taps the same sort of creativity that was at work in the creation of man:

"Hij hoort muziek in elk ding Gods,
Niets werpt hij waardeloos terzij;
Zoo steeg eens water uit een rots,
En 't menschenkind uit klei."

Yet, at the same time, the idyllic atmosphere of a garden party reigns, combining, in Meeuwesse's view, eighteenth-century rococo and oriental styles¹ with primitive ritual (mask, spear and blood-red knife).² Also, the nightingale is singing near a bridge, which indicates a link to an 'other side'.³ But in the middle section of the poem the reader is told that the virtuoso's art is not to transport people to a 'sweet mystery' ("zoet geheim") as a gypsy musician does, but to elicit music from anything, so the reader is led to a different interpretation of the nightingale, bridge and fountain than he might otherwise have made, namely that the art to be performed is not a vehicle of removal but of delivery, bringing something of the 'other side' to the public. Such an interpretation is entirely dependent on applying the definition of a virtuoso in the middle section to the pear-headed musician who is about to perform. He is actually never referred to as a virtuoso, but merely as a musician. He is certainly very ingenious in his method of producing music, using a zither, trumpet, stringed coconut-shell, lids, castanets, a leather-knobbed stick, a silver ball, a flat piece of wood, and a contraption of half-filled bottles and a ring hung up on a string. But these materials are not altogether common objects and his appearance is far from ordinary. He has wide clothes, the forehead of a Chinese philosopher, a fez and glasses.

1. K.Meeuwesse, 'Een Commentaar op Nijhoffs 'Kleine Prélude van Ravel'', 'Raam 36', June 1967, p.53.
2. id., p.60.
3. id., p.52.

In other words he is an eccentric, both in his music-making and his dress, which are composed of contradictions and contrivance and not in the natural way that the middle section advocates in its closing lines:

"Wie oor heeft om te hooren hoort
Muziek in de natuur."

So the poem shows a split between theory and practice, between the call for natural virtuosity in the middle section and the use of contrivance in the bulk of the poem. But not a split without any carry-over. The range of the musician's attributes, from the exotic to the mundane, must not be overlooked: a fez and glasses, a zither and a piece of wood. His exotic taste is not exclusive, and he acknowledges a value for common items at hand. So although the atmosphere of boudoir preparations and artistic performance is still escapist, there is a definite theme of improvisation, bringing in anything available, a theme that is already struck in the opening verse: "een boudoir geïmproviseerd op het gras". The setting appears contrived and unreal, and the creative act is not yet performed, but in the midst of this setting a role is acknowledged for handy items, just as in the middle of the poem a theory of music in all things is proposed. The middle section is not a total contradiction, but takes a special theme from the poem and highlights it.

A further new element noticeable in the poems towards the end of 'Vormen' is an awareness of the extent to which symbolic correspondence can be exploited. In 'Kleine Prélude van Ravel' the poet is said to hear births of literature in every word, like the virtuoso who hears music in everything:

"De dichter hoort in ieder woord
Geboorten van literatuur".

In 'Tweeërlei Dood' there are the words which sing themselves free from their meanings. This extension of lexical reference beyond normal meanings is parallel to the statement in 'Awater': "er staat niet wat er staat". In 'Tweeërlei Dood' Nijhoff does not say whether words that no longer have their original meaning acquire a new meaning, or a vaguer meaning, or no meaning; he implies, in describing the words as "stijgend", that they relinquish any objective meaning. From the standpoint taken in 'Tweeërlei Dood', a

lexical item can pass beyond the bounds of its definition and lose its original meaning, but looked at from another angle, a lexical item can retain its original meaning and have new meaning added, so that there can be transference without loss. After saying "er staat niet wat er staat" in 'Awater' in respect of office-typing, Nijhoff goes on to propose an alternative meaning. The extent to which imagery generates new meanings is increased in the later poetry. The old reliance on the stereotyped symbols that regularly crop up in 'De Wandelaar' to reproduce a preconceived idea (a more metaphorical type of symbolism), gives way to a blend of standard and new symbols, often set in a more ordinary context, which induce a chain-reaction of new meanings. It does nothing to clarify symbolic meaning, however, to have symbols set in everyday life. The old eccentric Symbolist background was at least built for the job of symbolic expressing, and symbolic intention can be much less easily recognisable in a context where symbolism is not normally perceived and is thus more unexpected.

One of the poems towards the end of 'Vormen' - 'Langs een Wereld' - anticipates the contextual reorientation, by dealing with a fairly incidental everyday situation. The narrator passes a window and feels an empathy with the woman he sees inside. Like the other poems at the end of 'Vormen', the mood is still dreamy, but the situation is different from the fantasy ones of 'Tweeërlei Dood' and 'Het Steenen Kindje'. The same contextual differentiation between poems can still be found in 'Nieuwe Gedichten': not all the symbolism there arises from office or street; balanced against everyday situations ('Impasse', 'De Vogels', 'Awater') are the romantic or sentimental settings ('Aan een Graf', 'Ad Infinitum'). But the dead-end feeling is removed from the romantic settings of 'Nieuwe Gedichten' with the implementation of the new theme of renewal on earth. Where reverie is sparked off by an everyday situation, the same abortiveness of the dream as in 'Langs een Wereld' is continued in 'Nieuwe Gedichten' (e.g. in 'Impasse'). 'Langs een Wereld' concerns the longing for the ideal female who is equivalent to the mother, and the inability to achieve reunion or to make real contact is repeated in several

poems of 'Nieuwe Gedichten' and especially in 'Awater's failure at reunion with his dream woman.

Glimpses of the future, then, at the end of 'Vormen' are found in the themes of renewal and creativity of 'Kerstnacht' and 'Kleine Prélude van Ravel', in the extension of symbolic correspondence in the latter poem (which is directed towards everyday objects) and also in 'Tweeërlei Dood' (though this is directed away from the earth), and in the everyday setting of 'Langs een Wereld'.

Chapter 5

NEW POEMS AND A NEW ATTITUDE

During the ten-year period between the publication of 'Vormen' (1924) and 'Nieuwe Gedichten' (1934), a considerable change took place in Nijhoff's poetic outlook. Indications are that the turning-point lay towards the beginning of this intervening period (around 1925-6), and that poetic formulation of the new attitude was a more gradual process. In 1926 he wrote a whimsical prose story, 'De Pen op Papier', telling how a decision to adopt a less personal style came to him; and a marked decrease in the production of lyrical poetry is accordingly found in the following years. Much of the time between 1926-1930 he devoted to dramatic and translation work, possibly as an effect of the desire to concentrate less on his own personality in his literary production.

The first three poems of 'Nieuwe Gedichten' are concerned with change, and the new attitude that they convey is one of inclination towards and liking for the world and humanity. As a result, a more realistic and objective vein of imagery is tapped in the volume, though themes and imagery of the old style reappear (especially the mother and the child). Greater concern for reality and objectivity does not provide simpler or more explicit symbolic meaning, because instead of strange images to represent strange ideas, one finds ordinary images to represent, or invoke, strange ideas, and meaning can in fact be more obscure, since the symbolism relies more on inducing ideas in the reader (a rather open-ended process) and less on giving precise formal representation to the poet's own mental state. Included in the move towards objectivity is an attempt by Nijhoff to look objectively at his former self (though the soldier representing his generalised concept of the former self in 'De Soldaat en de Zee' is an idealistic figure not quite the same as the early poet).

Change of direction towards a more objective line is a phenomenon to be seen in successive movements in poetry in the wake of the Romantics with their predominantly sub-

jective disposition. In France, the Parnassian movement began with a desire for simplicity and objectivity as a reaction to Romanticism, but gave way to Symbolism, which in turn produced an objective swing amongst its Post-Symbolist successors. In England, the Pre-Raphaelite movement also started with a desire for simplicity and objectivity, but gave way to Aestheticism, which was followed by an objective reaction from the Imagist group (whose poetic exponent was Ezra Pound). The Surrealist movement in twentieth-century art was viewed by Nijhoff as a movement founded on objective principles, using matter-of-fact objects to open up a cosmic awareness; in his now famous lecture at a further education centre ('volksuniversiteit') in Enschede (1935), he equates New Realism in modern prose writing with Surrealism ("het één is de letterkundige, het ander is de schilderkundige aanduiding van hetzelfde beginsel").¹ In these two movements Nijhoff recognised an attempt to express universal qualities of mass and abstraction ("menigte en abstractie") through images of ordinary things. Mass and abstraction, he says, may themselves be unportrayable, just as the unconscious and the forces of nature are unportrayable, but they are present in all things, and the realisation of their presence gives a realisation of the beauty inherent in all things:

"Het wezen van menigte en abstractie is onuitbeeldbaar. Evenals het onbewuste, evenals de natuurkrachten op zichzelf onuitbeeldbaar zijn. De vreugde bestaat enkel in het beseef van hun aanwezigheid. Die aanwezige werking heeft overal plaats, onverschillig waar. De waar te nemen aanwezigheid in elk ding, in welk ding ook, van een natuurkracht, een onbewustheid, een menigte, een abstractie, doet dit ding vibreren, en deze geladenheid maakt het ding tot bezielde materiaal, d.w.z. tot schoonheid. Eén blad van een boom, welk blad ook, is schoon, niet om een schone vorm, zoals men vroeger zei, maar omdat het het vertegenwoordigend produkt is van het bos, zon en regen, de grond en het moment. In iedere golf golft de gehele zee, in ieder mens, hoe ook,

1. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1165.

wie ook, leeft de gehele massa, als hij zich niet kunstmatig begrenst en in de slavernij geraakt van zijn persoonlijkheid."¹

Nijhoff's symbolism of the later period operates on the same principle of revealing properties of a profounder or more universal nature in ordinary objects and settings. He acknowledges a debt to modern prose for opening up a deeper insight into everyday things, influencing his planning of 'Awater' - "modern proza, waarin juist alledaagse verrichtingen, die wij, zoals men zegt, onverschillig, onbewust doen, als van meer universeel belang worden voorgesteld dan de hevige momenten van conflict en gemoedstorting, waarin we doorgaans meer dan ooit de slaaf zijn onzer persoonlijke bepaaldheid".² The writers he had in mind (according to textual notes in the manuscript of the Enschede lecture) were Lawrence, Proust and Joyce.

The perception of the universal, and hence of beauty, in all things is a view that seems to denote the resolution of dualism. 'Nieuwe Gedichten' does not have the fierce conflicts of the early poetry, but dualistic tendencies do remain apparent. A longing for ideal is now countered by a reality that is no longer treated with aversion but an attraction which cancels out much of the magnetic pull of the ideal. Only one poem, 'De Nieuwe Sterren', portrays earthly life in the old climate of doom and suffering, and it does not offer any opposite notion of happiness either. Elsewhere, earthly life is desirable and not threatened in its own context, the only danger coming from a renunciation of the earth in the hope of something better, as in 'De Soldaat en de Zee', where the sea transmits to the soldier words of doom and bliss together ("woorden van doem en van gelukzaligheid beide"), and in 'Het Lied der Dwaze Bijen', where bees die as a result of a heavenward flight. A comprehensive scheme, in which the world is integral to and a key to an infinite universe, comes to replace the polarisation in the former dualism between finite world and infinite ideal. In this new role, the world usually appears as a

1. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Oven eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp.1165-6.
2. id., p.1166.

highly desirable asset. Nijhoff therefore shifts away from the standpoint of the French Symbolist Movement, which is essentially dualistic, and comes nearer to the standpoint of German symbolists, who had a more comprehensive view, like Rilke and George (a sort of view to which Dutch poets Verwey, as witnessed by his theory of 'het Al', and Van Eyck also subscribe). Rilke underwent a change from a subjective standpoint at about the same age as Nijhoff (nearing thirty), and went on to produce the main part of his poetry from a more objective standpoint, employing a type of poem known as the 'Dinggedicht', devised on a principle of symbolism proceeding from objects. Like Nijhoff, he signified his change in a volume of new poems, 'Neue Gedichte' (1907). (Nijhoff's turning-point came when he was about thirty, and the earliest poem expressing it, 'Het Veer', first appeared when he was thirty-seven. Jung, in the foreword to the fourth Swiss edition of 'Symbols of Transformation', talks of a metanoia, or mental transformation, marking the beginning of the second half of life - for him, when he was about thirty-five.¹)

The universal view that Nijhoff expresses in his Enschede lecture, which is inclusive of and favourable towards the real world, is appropriate to the overall mood of 'Nieuwe Gedichten', but does not take into account the amount of counteraction between real and ideal that remains. It might be better to speak of a compromise between former conflicts, with some give and take, rather than reconciliation. In 'Het Uur U' (1936), he goes on to deal with people who are blind to or repudiate universal perception ("Men is uit gemakzucht, onmacht of ijdelheid straatbewoner geworden"²), people who have stifled their longing for some ideal situation ("Verlangen, doodgekneeld, een kind vermoord in een put"), and in them conflicts of opposing world and ideal cause trouble. A drawback, which might be inferred from this poem, to the view that finds aspects of the universe and of beauty in all things is that there are adverse elements in the

1. C.G. Jung, 'Symbols of Transformation', p. xxvi.

2. M. Nijhoff, Letter to Mej. van Dis, 'De Gids 118', 1955, I, No. 6, June 1955, p. 405.

world which have to be taken account of. Still, 'Het Uur U' ends on a cheerful note, with apparent harmony between heaven and earth, whereas cheerfulness is not a mood that belongs to the early poetry. Any question of accounting for adverse factors in the real world, in the new attitude, results from a quite different stance from that taken by the French Symbolists, who rejected the real world as unsatisfactory and looked exclusively for an unworldly ideal. The pessimism with regard to the world, which is a dominant mood of Nijhoff's former attitude, is in keeping with his closeness to the French Symbolists, who tended to consider the real world as fundamentally evil in nature (as conveyed in 'Les Fleurs du Mal'). Nijhoff retains some sympathy for the world in his early aversion, and does not denounce it as evil. (There is an instance of the world as evil in his translation 'De Geschiedenis van den Soldaat', in the foreword to which he interprets the Devil of that play as a symbol of the world - "deze soldaat ... met zijn wereld als Duivel"¹). The French Symbolists were liable to be carried further and further from reality in their pursuit of a pure ideal, and it was in a similar position of remoteness from reality that Nijhoff found himself in 'De Wandelbaar'.

Whilst Symbolism as a movement resorted to an estrangement from the real world and concentrated on the subjective field of the individual mind, it was directed towards a universal absolute, and so ultimately towards the dissipation or consummation of individuality in a universal psyche. Desire for detachment and depersonalisation led Mallarmé to announce "je suis maintenant impersonnel" and Rimbaud "Je est un autre" (v. p.24). A detached view of the self was part of an objective tendency that was present in the Symbolist Movement, for all its subjective foundations. Through the expediency of symbolism, the subjective was transformed into the objective and traits of the individual became modes of a common character. Although many Symbolist and Post-Symbolist poets turned their backs on the real world and their so-called objectivity was an impersonal or

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Verzamelde Vertalingen', p.9.

universal one not concerned with objective reality, they were eventually inclined to feel that their course was leading to a dead end and that they needed to take the real world into account and effect some measure of conciliation. Mallarmé pays some attention to the common life in his later poetry in 'Les Chansons Bas', and Valéry ends his 'Cimetière Marin' with the words "il faut tenter de vivre"¹; in later additions to Valéry's 'Teste' cycle, Monsieur Teste begins to come into contact with reality and the physical world. Paul Claudel underwent a similar change of view to Nijhoff, in which he rediscovered the earth: "Le poète a pris possession de son domaine: à la rencontre des deux diamètres, il exploite les quatre horizons. Car c'est à lui, héritier du premier Adam, que l'Eternel a livré le Paradis terrestre, ce Paradis dont il s'aperçoit avec surprise qu'il n'était jamais sorti, pour en faire à ses frères et à ses enfants communication."² Comparable ideas are expressed by Nijhoff in 'De Soldaat en de Zee', when he says that life brings one back to where one started from, that one awakens to the earth, and sets to work to write for one's brothers who have still to recognise the beauty of ordinary people.

In part, then, the return to reality can be seen as a natural route for Post-Symbolist poetry, but other cultural developments during the early twentieth century also had their influence on Nijhoff's change of view. In the Enschede lecture, besides New Realism in prose and Surrealism in art, Nijhoff refers to Dada. This phenomenon, which preceded the aforementioned movements, flourished from around 1916-1924, and aimed at negating traditional artistic values and working with haphazard and unconventional forms. Dada was not a well-defined movement, and the principle which Nijhoff recognises behind it is formulated, as with Nijhoff's assessment of other cultural movements, from a very personal angle. He regards it as a glorification of human technology in preference to the divine universe. It was, he says,

1. P. Valéry, 'Le Cimetière Marin' (1920), 'Charmes', 'Oeuvres I', p. 151.
2. P. Claudel, 'Introduction à Francis Jammes' (1943), 'Oeuvres Complètes XVIII, Accompagnements, Discours et Remerciements', p. 161.

atheistic: "De dada-beweging was een directe Godverzaking. Het door de mensen gecreëerd universum werd gelijkgesteld, ja verheven boven het goddelijk universum."¹ Atheism is foreign to Nijhoff's own beliefs, yet he considers that he comes very close to Dadaistic poetry in conveying his admiration for the efficiency of human technology. Looking at the city with its street-lights, trams and policemen on point duty, he sees a cosmic structure of human making, driven by the collective power of mankind: "De mens heeft een technische structuur over de wereld aangelegd, en deze structuur werkt even perfect als de jaargetijden, als dag en nacht, als geboorte en dood in de natuur. De tram is een ster, de politieagent is een ster, al zijn het sterren langs hun banen voortbewogen door een door mensen, massa's van mensen, geslachten van mensen, geschapen drijfkracht."² It is in identifying stars in objects of everyday life, such as the tram and the policeman, that Nijhoff finds himself approximating to Dadaistic poetry: "Ik bemerkte, dat ik bij een woord als: de tram is een ster, de agent is een ster, op weg was dadaïstische poëzie te maken".³ This aspect of universal significance in ordinary reality is the same as he recognises in Surrealism, which itself developed out of Dadaism. (It can be noted in his own poetry that he compares Awater to a planet, because both have an inner drive). Where Nijhoff's poetic outlook differs from his own estimation of Dada is that he does not renounce God or glorify the technology of man above the natural universe, but that he sees the ordinary world as a continuation of the divine universe, and sees a continuation towards the divine universe within the ordinary world. Dada, though it threw a new perspective on reality, was nihilistic in outlook, and actually pointed to the chaotic nature of the man-made world, rather than commending it for its new order as Nijhoff proposes.

Another early twentieth-century artistic movement giving a new relief to reality was Expressionism, particularly, as far as poetry is concerned, the Expressionist Movement in German poetry from about 1910-1925 (with Georg

1. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk'(1935), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1160.
2. id., pp.1159-60.
3. id., p.1160.

Trakl, Georg Heym and Franz Werfel among its leading figures). As with Dada, Expressionists were concerned about the upheaval in society and anxious about the new order. They gave a subjective utterance to their troubled feelings, though the expression of inner feeling was often effected as much as possible in an impersonal manner. Paul van Ostaijen was allied to Expressionism and called for the transfer of focus away from the ego of the poet onto the ego of the poem ("Het Ik blijft het hoogste goed doch niet het Ik van de dichter, maar wel het Ik van het gedicht").¹ In moving away from direct personal emotion, Van Ostaijen discovered a common spirit in mankind, and this idea of unanimism (based on a contemporary French school of thought) was most influential for Nijhoff in his belief in the collective potential of the mass. He rates unanimism, and particularly Van Ostaijen's 'Bezette Stad', as important symptoms for the future ("voor een wachtend mens van hoge waarde").²

A movement in philosophy of the early twentieth century, related to the shift towards the real world in the arts, was existentialism, which opposed the Hegelian view of a rational metaphysical system of the universe. Initially developed by Søren Kierkegaard and subsequently owing much to the philosophy of Nietzsche in his condemnation of religion in favour of earthly reality, existentialism emphasises the independence of human personality and the role of will in contrast to reason. Thus a man who merely contemplates life is failing to make the acts of choice which realise his existence. Man's being in the world is seen as his first priority, and metaphysical questions are dismissed as illusory or irrelevant. Nijhoff himself does not become so exclusively committed to the real world, but he does seem to move in an existentialist direction away from a more Hegelian standpoint.

On the whole Nijhoff does not become disenchanted with former idealism, though there are hints of disenchantment in

1. P. van Ostaijen, 'Gebruiksaanwijzing der Lyriek', 'Verzameld Werk, Proza II', p.321.
2. M. Nijhoff, 'Herman Gorter, "De grote dichters"' (1935), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.785.

one or two poems of 'Nieuwe Gedichten'. Heaven takes second place to the earth in 'Het Veer' ("hoe dieper 't bloed is dan de hemel hoog"), the call of the sea is less attractive than that of human society in 'De Soldaat en de Zee' ("het strijdende volk een schoner zee is dan water"), and at the end of 'Awater' there is talk of illusion ("zelfs voor de illusie een reisgenoot te hebben is ze immuun") and possible deception ("ik was geen dupe") accompanying the departure of the train for some far horizon. Evidence of social conscience in the poems 'Florentijns Jongensportret' and 'De Vogels' carries some faint implicit criticism of the refined society portrayed in earlier poems by contrastively throwing attention on the predicament of common folk. On the other hand a lot of idealistic notions remain with the same attraction as before, such as mother, child, soldier, mirror and journey, and there is a pledge to spiritual sovereignty in 'Aan een Graf' ("Moeder, vrees niet dat ik bij dit verzonken handjevol as mij om het vuur bedrieg"). But weird, eccentric or unnatural motifs have virtually disappeared, and where allusion is made to the spirit-world or eternity, it is in the context of an ordinary earthly setting. Symbolist vision is undiminished, but rather increased by the orientation towards the real world to find the universal in the particular, as the Enschede lecture professes, or to borrow the words of William Blake:

"To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour" ('Auguries of Innocence').²

Nijhoff's view is one of reciprocal correspondence, rather like that in the 'Tabula Smaragdina' of Hermes Trismegistus, quoted by Jung:¹

"Heaven above, Heaven below, stars above,
stars below, all that is above also is below.
Know this and rejoice."

In short, Nijhoff's change of attitude is from an alienation from the everyday world in the search for an ideal of happi-

1. C.G.Jung, 'Symbols of Transformation', p.50.

2. W.Blake, 'Auguries of Innocence', 'Complete Writings', p.431.

ness, beauty or eternity, to inclusion of the everyday world as a means of recognising an ideal inherent in the universe. The change in his use of symbolism is likewise, in general, from an alienation from everyday situations in favour of weird or fantastic ones to an inclusion of the everyday world as a formula to universal perception.

The poems at the start of 'Nieuwe Gedichten' deal with an intention to concentrate, more than actually concentrating, on earthly subjects, and are followed by a number of poems that look back to the past, so that it is mainly in poems towards the end of the volume like 'Impasse', 'De Vogels', 'De Moeder de Vrouw' and 'Awater' that the everyday world itself becomes the springboard to symbolic meaning. Nine of the poems are written from the point of view of an I-subject who is identifiable with the poet, two ('Het Lied der Dwaze Bijen' and 'De Nieuwe Sterren') have a broader we-subject bearing an element of identity with the poet, one ('Haar Laatste Brief') has an I-subject of a distinctly separate identity from the poet, and the other three ('Het Veer', 'Florentijns Jongensportret' and 'De Vogels') are written in the third person (except that first person remarks from the poet occur in both 'Het Veer' and 'De Vogels'). The volume still contains a large degree of subjective orientation, although apparently one of Nijhoff's major concerns in his new attitude was to reduce subjectivity, as he states in 'De Pen op Papier' (1926). The poems themselves, of course, with their themes of a return to earthly reality, provide the chief evidence for the change of viewpoint, but supporting evidence from his prose stresses firstly the aim to banish personal feelings ('De Pen op Papier') and later, in the Enschede lecture (1935) which mainly has bearing on 'Awater' and 'Het Uur U', the comprehensive symbolic view based on everyday reality.

Nijhoff's literary work in the period between the publication of 'Vormen' and 'Nieuwe Gedichten' reflects an attempt at the policy proposed in 'De Pen op Papier' more than 'Nieuwe Gedichten' does. In his verse drama 'De Vliegende Hollander' (1930) and in his translations of those years, he tries to get away from the expression of personal feelings. 'De Pen op Papier' is his only published avowal

of a basic change of attitude before 'Nieuwe Gedichten', though there are signs of it elsewhere. M.J.G.de Jong fixes the turning-point at Christmas-time 1924, when Nijhoff received from Van Eyck an advance copy of the latter's critical article on 'Vormen' (which appeared in 'De Gids' of January 1925).¹ Van Eyck complains about the tendency to abstraction and isolation from reality and says that poetry should take the natural world, not artificiality, as its subject, and attempt a spiritualisation ("vergeestelijking") of nature.² Exchange of letters about the article occurred between the two,³ in which Nijhoff reveals that the criticism worried him sufficiently to cause him two sleepless nights.

The fable related in 'De Pen op Papier', which Nijhoff considers a decisive turning-point for him, is a culmination of various factors influencing his poetic development. "Een uur van beslissende omkeer" is how he introduces the adventure,⁴ which is dated "Den Haag 1926" at the end. The adventure is an imaginary meeting with the Pied Piper of Hamelin, taking place one night, after midnight, at the Vijverberg in The Hague. The meeting occurs in a straightforward manner, as if pre-ordained, with Nijhoff sitting on a bench where he is joined by the Pied Piper, who addresses him by name. There are resemblances between this meeting and Holst's 'De Afspraak' (1925), the Pied Piper representing some sort of mystical mentor or guardian. While the encounter is going on, a figure remains in Nijhoff's study, sitting at his writing-table, and when he returns he recognises this figure as himself: "Ik herkende hem: de korte breedgeschouderde gestalte in het zee-blauw pyjama-jasje, het was ik, die daar zat."⁵ So the story involves a dual self, of which one element occupies its place in the real world, whilst the alter ego departs into an imaginary world. In 'Het Uur U',

1. M.J.G.de Jong, 'Baudelaire, Van Eyck, en Nijhoff', 'Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde', 1965, p.44.
2. P.N.van Eyck, 'M.Nijhoff, 'Vormen'', 'Verzameld Werk IV', pp.370-395.
3. published in 'Maatstaf 5', 1957-8, No.8, November 1957, pp.540-553.
4. M.Nijhoff, 'De Pen op Papier', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1068.
5. id., p.1077.

under the same circumstances of a writer at his table, the spirit enjoys a flight from the body - when the spirit returns the body is in a deathly state, just as the figure at the table in 'De Pen op Papier' ("ik hoorde dat zijn adem had opgehouden zich door de doodse stilte op en neer te heffen").¹

As a prologue to the actual tale, Nijhoff discusses two elements operative in the poet when he writes; one of these he calls consciousness ("bewustzijn") and the other is the body. Earlier, he says, he had written from the side of the consciousness, but the best method is for consciousness to engage in a struggle with the body in order to harness the instinctive side of putting pen to paper ("de willekeurige bewegingen van de pen op het papier" produced by "het dromend dier"): "besta ik zodoende niet uit twee elkaar tegenwerkende elementen, elkaar bestrijdend, buiten controle der rede, misschien op leven en dood?"² Put another way, he describes his new policy as holding the soul down in the body instead of trying to drive it on high. He goes on to criticize the conscious, and reputedly objective, style of a writer who tries to stand as an observer outside his subject, because it leads to sterility and rigidity of feeling. A poet using this technique he calls a secretary of his own life, and he gives Baudelaire as an example. Verlaine, on the other hand, is his example of a poet who remains within and responsible to his own life, as a pioneer of new feelings.³ These attempts by Nijhoff to give some explanatory introduction to the tale of 'De Pen op Papier' seem to imply that the Nijhoff-figure who goes off and meets the Pied Piper corresponds to the rational side of himself as a writer - the consciousness - and that the Nijhoff-figure who remains at work at the writing-table corresponds to the physical side - the body. As well as consciousness and body, he also mentions as counterparts: soul and body, "gedachteleven" and "verzonken zelf", and draws a Biblical analogy to Jacob wrestling with an angel (Genesis 32, 24-32).

1. M.Nijhoff, 'De Pen op Papier', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1078.
2. id., p.1064.
3. id., p.1065.

(According to Jung, the angel in the story of Jacob and the angel represents the same as the animal-symbol - "the animal nature of the divine power", against which man defends his humanity, struggling with "the violence of all unconscious dynamism")¹.

The figure who meets the Pied Piper is a totally separated counterpart to the bodily self, and belongs to an imaginary, idealised world. The main factor in the lead-up to the tale is Nijhoff's admitted mood of estrangement from his body: "ik ben vervreemd ... ikzelf, met mijn bewustzijn, heb part noch deel meer aan dit lichaam".² But he is no stranger to the world of the Pied Piper, who by calling him by name, numbers him among his own people: "Door het uitspreken van het zonderlinge woord dat mijn naam in zijn mond was, had de Rattenvanger mij te verstaan gegeven, dat, zoals ik hem herkende, ik ook voor hem geen vreemde was. Ik behoorde tot zijn wereld, wie weet hoelang reeds en in welke betrekkingen, hij rekende mij met recht tot een der zijnen."³ The ideal nature of the Pied Piper's world is revealed in the enchanting message of his music: "Voor de ratten floot ik van rozijnen en spek, van open provisie-kasten, van een land zonder vergif en vallen; voor de kinderen vloot ik van speelgoed en wafels, van boten en zigeunerwagens, van een land zonder school en bedtijd".⁴ The important part of the story with regard to Nijhoff's future poetry is the Pied Piper's advice to him to put only other people's feelings in his poetry - "Beschrijf alleen gewaarwordingen van andere mensen."⁵ The reason given is that in his personal style Nijhoff is formally conveying his inner feelings but not producing good-sounding poetry - piping with his mouth instead of with a pipe is how the Pied Piper puts it: "de kwestie is dat gij fluit met uw mond en niet met een fluit. ... De mond zingt slechts waar het hart van vol is, maar iedere fluit is een toverfluit en zingt het ledige hart van

1. C.G.Jung, 'Symbols of Transformation', p.338.

2. M.Nijhoff, 'De Pen op Papier', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1063.

3. id., pp.1070-1.

4. id., p.1073.

5. id.

andere mensen vol".¹ The aim in expressing only other people's feelings is for Nijhoff to get free from himself, and in so doing he will come to lead a double life: "Wacht tot ge vrij zult zijn, wacht tot ge een vreemdeling voor uzelf zijt geworden, tot gij als het ware een dubbel leven gaat voeren. Er komt voor ieder een tijd dat een mens zichzelf ziet wandelen uit zijn eigen leven."²

An example from Nijhoff's later poetry of a duo of corresponding characters appears in 'Awater', with Awater as a seemingly ideal counterpart to the narrator. Awater actually remains a bit too incognito to be established as the ideal self of the narrator, he is intended as more of a generalised ideal, but the narrator does see him as a brother-substitute and a travelling-companion, and at the climax of the poem Awater turns round to look at him with a glimmer of recognition ("als kent hij mij van ouds"). A clear example of the dual self occurs in 'Het Uur U', where the worldly selves of the street-residents see their ideal selves in a vision.

An article by Nijhoff of 1925, entitled 'H.W.J.M.Keuls, "Om de stilte"', gives a preview of the idea of separate existences of the self as proposed in 'De Pen op Papier'. He talks about moments of soul-awareness bordering on normal consciousness: "een wijder besef, dat even overweldigend naast ons bewustzijn opduikt en dan weer vervaagt. Het kan aanhoudend en obsederend terugkeren, het kan tenslotte een apart leven worden, alsof we met ons lichaam en ons natuurlijk gevoel op deze wereld en tussen deze mensen blijven, maar daarboven, en geheel los ervan, aan een ander leven gaan deelnemen. We worden een tweede persoonlijkheid in onszelf gewaar, die de eerste als onder zich ziet gaan en praten en handelen."³ This experience of a separate spiritual existence of the self is compared to the feeling of dying people, and suggested as a basis for myths of doubles and of the mirror: "Het moet het wezenlijk gevoel zijn van de stervenden, die de dood rustig tegemoet zien. Het moet

1. M.Nijhoff, 'De Pen op Papier', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1073.

2. id., p.1074.

3. M.Nijhoff, 'H.W.J.M.Keuls, "Om de stilte"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.274.

de diepe grond zijn van de talloze verhalen en fantasieën van dubbelgangers, van het geheimzinnige van een spiegel."¹

Response to the Pied Piper's advice to express only other people's feelings is found not so much in the collected poems of 'Nieuwe Gedichten' as in the verse dramas 'De Vliegende Hollander' and 'Heer Halewijn', which were published before it, and in 'Het Uur U' and 'Voor Dag en Dauw' published after it. One poem in 'Nieuwe Gedichten', however, which is possibly anticipated in the Pied Piper's words is 'Haar Laatste Brief'. The Piper says that if Nijhoff has anything go wrong in a love-relationship, he should try to express the woman's point of view.² 'Haar Laatste Brief' is a letter from a lover justifying her leaving. The Pied Piper's disapproval of subjectivity, as stated in the tale, does seem a bit contradictory to Nijhoff's disapproval of the objectivity of consciousness, as stated in the prologue. When Nijhoff says that he should struggle to harness the productive capacity of his body, this could mean that the body can be used for the purposes of reproducing other people's feelings, but his meaning is somewhat obscure. It seems as if he is saying first that he wants to get more of his own personality into his work, and that the Pied Piper then advises less personal expression. The prologue recommends clamping the alter ego to the ego, and the Piper recommends letting the alter ego walk away out of one's life. (It is incorrect to view, as Spillebeen does, the prologue as a theoretical introduction to a clinch between spirit and flesh or consciousness and body in the tale,³ since the tale is only concerned with the division of these elements). The call for a change of policy from consciousness writing (Baudelairean) to consciousness-body duel (Verlainean) in the prologue is a call to move from a phase 1 to a phase 2, but the tale calls for something much more radical than this phase 2. Not only does the Pied Piper implicitly reject the method of giving consciousness the

1. M.Nijhoff, 'H.W.J.M.Keuls, "Om de stilte"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.275.

2. M.Nijhoff, 'De Pen op Papier', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1074.

3. W.Spillebeen, 'De Geboorte van het Stenen Kindje', p.157.

upper hand, he also implicitly rejects the method of subjecting consciousness to the power of the body, and recommends getting rid of consciousness altogether, by which is meant subjective consciousness or self-consciousness, and replacing it with feeling for other people. Nijhoff moves as far as giving the body its due in 'Het Veer', when "de geest" Sebastiaan remarks that "het wonderbaarlijk lichaam in de tijd hem gans bewoonde" and combines this insight with a new outlook on life, but it takes him till 'Het Uur U' before the Pied Piper's recommendation takes effect. As already noted, it is better to relate the Pied Piper's words to Nijhoff's other poetic work of the years following 'De Pen op Papier' rather than to 'Nieuwe Gedichten', though he also manages to make this other work (translations, 'De Vliegende Hollander' and 'Heer Halewijn') quite personal. The story of the Pied Piper is most important in showing a turning-point in his change of attitude and also in giving insight into the theory of the double personality.

An issue that lies behind the meeting with the Pied Piper, Nijhoff discloses, is a serious problem in composing a long epic poem - "Ik ben al tijden lang aan een gedicht bezig dat hier op de Vijverberg moet spelen".¹ This poem is meant to be a monument to an aspect of Dutch history or heritage (he has Huygens' 'Voorhout' in mind as an example), but although Nijhoff says that he has been working on it for some time, and quotes a stanza from it, there is no proof that he made much headway with his original project. It is difficult to take the lines he quotes seriously (he concedes that they are "vier houderige verzen"), in view of their halting rhythm, feeble rhymes and flat ending:

"Geen enkele stad ter wereld, weet ik, heeft
 Iets schoners dan wat dit wijd vierkant geeft:
 Praag noch Parijs - neen, in geen enkele plaats
 Wandelt men van 't Tournooiveld naar de Plaats."²

Between the lines is a hint that this poem is a non-starter, and it could be that he replaced the scheme with one for a different sort of major work, which was realised in the

1. M.Nijhoff, 'De Pen op Papier', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1071.
 2. id., p.1073.

verse drama 'De Vliegende Hollander'. From the Pied Piper he gets the advice to look for a historical figure, or one from his own sphere of acquaintance, who has roughly the same nationalistic feelings as himself ("zulk een gevoel omtrent het vaderland, het volkslied en de verfijnde republiek van zeelieden en schilders")¹, and to use that figure as the hero of his poem, so that he can get something of his own feelings represented in the feelings of another.

The legendary Flying Dutchman is a suitably famous national emblem, capturing the spirit of a sea-faring nation (and in the play Nijhoff gives him a snatch of national anthem - "Vrij ben ik, onvervaard"²). But although drama lets characters other than the author speak, there is too much of Nijhoff's personality in the figure of the Dutchman to allow the broad lines of national characteristic to develop. He corresponds to the image of Nijhoff that emerges from the early poetry, a loner and outsider - "Vreemdeling in zijn eigen land", says Nijhoff in the introduction.³ He renounces the world for the eternity of the sea, and his companions are a child (Tijs) and a look-out from a tower (De Torenwachter). Conversely there is in Bonifacius a figure who puts the real world first and, in order to complete his worldly task as a Christian leader, gives up an opportunity of fulfilling a dream (that of returning across the sea to his native Britain). In combining the story of Saint Boniface with the legend of the Flying Dutchman, Nijhoff has landed himself with two major characters, and is able to make the most of neither. On the whole the practical Bonifacius is more imposing than the mysterious Dutchman, and the interest which Nijhoff had in Bonifacius led him to publish separately a special introductory soliloquy for this character.⁴ If the play's central theme of the Dutchman's commitment to the waves fits the unworldly disposition of Nijhoff's former attitude, there is at least a sign of change in the development of the Bonifacius character. (By

1. M.Nijhoff, 'De Pen op Papier', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1075.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'De Vliegende Hollander', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.182.
3. id., p.145.
4. M.Nijhoff, 'Een Voor-studie van de Bonifacius-figuur uit 'De Vliegende Hollander'', 'Balans, Algemeen Jaarboek der Nederlandsche Kunsten, 1930-1', p.39, also in 'Verzamelde Gedichten', pp.550-1.

way of contrast, Nijhoff's earlier verse drama, 'Pierrot aan de Lantaarn', concentrates solely on the Pierrot figure, and shows little interest in Harlekijn).

Another verse drama written by Nijhoff during the period of change also centres on a remote unworldly character. 'Heer Halewijn' (published in 'De Gids', 1933), presents a solitary outcast who seduces young ladies. His habitual refrain is:

"Ik zing mijn lied voor mij alleen.

Ik ben voorbij mijn lied alleen."¹

Once again the theme of the tale fits the old style, but Halewijn is vanquished by a girl known as 'Het Kind', who, though reclusive, acts for earthly life against his fatal seductions. A note at the beginning of the text, which was written under commission, gives an indication of Nijhoff's desire to cultivate a less subjective style, by commending the commissioners for realising that "in dezen tijd van afslijtend individualisme, kunstenaars initiatief van buiten noodig hebben."²

Like the verse dramas, the translations which Nijhoff produced in the years immediately before 'Nieuwe Gedichten' tend to fit in with the old attitude, but show signs of a change of view. There is 'De Geschiedenis van den Soldaat' (1930),³ in which a soldier loses his life in his desire for more happiness than is possible; and 'De Storm' (1930),⁴ which Nijhoff subtitles 'Een Spel van Toverij', in which a king is beset with sedition because he neglects his kingdom so as to improve his mind in seclusion. In the former, the soldier loses his soul to the devil, and in the latter, King Prospero arouses a devil in his brother:

"Ik, toen ik 't wereldse uit het oog verloor
En in afzondering mijn geest verrijkte
Met dat, wat, als het niet zo eenzaam maakte,
Meer waard zou zijn dan gunst des volks, - ik wekte
Een duivel in mijn broeder".⁵

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Heer Halewijn', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', pp.407-435.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.556.
3. translation of 'Histoire du Soldat' by C.F.Ramuz.
4. translation of 'The Tempest' by W.Shakespeare.
5. M.Nijhoff, 'Verzamelde Vertalingen', p.47.

A moral of both stories is the folly of forsaking the real benefits of one's worldly heritage.

An important theme in translations of this time is that of the journey, symbolising the departure from reality. In 'De Geschiedenis van den Soldaat' it is a journey, which costs the soldier his life. 'Moer'(1928),¹ which Nijhoff links with the old clownish themes in a subtitle 'Narrenspel', is concerned with a journey to the desert; 'De Twee Duiven'(1927)² shows the futility of making a journey, and the threat of death that it holds. A culmination of this special interest in the journey is reached in 'Awater', with the search for a travelling companion, and ultimate departure of the Orient Express.

Various indications of Nijhoff's new concern for reality and objectivity occur in his critical articles from the period in question. He shows admiration for certain poets who advocate the real world, namely the Englishman Coventry Patmore (nineteenth century), whom he twice mentions in 1926, and the Americans Walt Whitman, from whom he quotes "de grasspriet is niet geringer dan het wentelen der sterren",³ and Edgar Lee Masters, part of whose 'Spoon River Anthology(1914) he translated.⁴ He recognises an American 'tone' of poetry which he calls "werkelijkheids-poezie".⁵ He warns in another article against the temptation for a poet to isolate himself from the world: "Dit is de verzoeking van de dichter: zijn geest buiten de wereld te houden. Niet deel te nemen aan het creatieve proces, door zich af te zonderen, en in zelfbespiegeling een gewaande hemel te aanschouwen."⁶ Several times he discusses the double nature of personality, which enables a poet to have an objective view of himself. One radical theory he puts forward for making language objective is a restriction in the use of adjectives; a good tip for apprentice poets, he says, is to observe the doc-

1. translation of 'Paludes' by A.Gide.
2. translation of 'Les Deux Pigeons' by J.de la Fontaine.
3. M.Nijhoff, 'Moderne dichters, Paul van Ostaijen'(1929), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.626.
4. M.Nijhoff, 'Verzamelde Vertalingen', pp.554-567.
5. M.Nijhoff, 'Poëzie I, "The best poems of 1924"'(1925), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.292.
6. M.Nijhoff, 'H.Moulijn-Haitsma Mulier, "Het paradijs herwonnen"'(1925), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.272.

trine of Marinetti in his manifesto of futurism (1911): "schaf de bijvoegelijke naamwoorden af".¹ Applying his theory of adjective-restriction in a criticism of Boutens, he says that sections of Boutens' verse containing few adjectives lead him to believe that if Boutens had written in French his poetry would have been more earthly ("hij was aardser gebleven"), since in French nouns come before adjectives and so the sensation ("gewaarwording") of an object is secondary to its perception ("waarneming").² (Though this ignores the fact that adjectives placed after nouns are liable to come into end-focus as far as sentence or verse arrangement are concerned). Nijhoff himself never goes in for abundant use of adjectives and no significant shift in adjective use can be observed in his poetry, but the idea reflects the policy of his later poetry to let objects speak for themselves.

The Enschede lecture reveals that Nijhoff was influenced by modern literature from abroad at the time of his preparation for 'Awater'; he read the prose of Joyce, Proust and Lawrence, and the verse of Eliot, and Cocteau's youth poetry. In a section deleted from the text but appended to the edition arranged by Kamphuis,³ he mentions some Dutch poetry he was reading: "'Experimenten' van Geerten Gossaert, 'De wilde kim' van A.Roland Holst, de eerste 'Verzen' van Marsman, 'Clair obscur' van Slauerhoff, gedichten van J.I.de Haan, het gedicht op de dood van zijn vader door Werumeus Buning en 'Maria Lecina', het prachtige 'In den trein' van Bloem."⁴ Trying to find a common denominator in this selection of poetry, he points to the objective view of life, by which these poets were using language not to convey their own moods, but to gain an understanding of the things surrounding them:

"de taal, de stijl van elk dichter drukte niet zijn gemoedsaard, zijn persoonlijkheid uit, maar was een noodbrug om tot de verstaanbaarheid van de ook de dichter zelf ob-

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Moderne dichters, Paul van Ostaijen' (1929), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.626.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'Kroniek der Nederlandse letteren IV' (1932), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.730.
3. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp.1168-1174.
4. id., p.1172.

sederende dingen te geraken.

De poëzie was, om het kort te zeggen, objectiever geworden. Geen directe lyrische gevoelsuitstorting meer, maar korte stukjes geobjectiveerd leven, geconstrueerd, gecomponeerd, meer in de stijl, waarin vroeger epische gedichten werden geschreven. De persoonlijkheid van de dichters scheen voldoende onderwerp te vinden in het gewaarworden niet van zichzelf als dichter, maar als mens."¹

Yet in his plea for an involvement with actual life, he maintains a longing for the past, which supposedly offers a more genuine form of life: "In onze dagen is het belachelijk een dichter te zijn, men moet in het leven staan. En dan worden de noodbruggen geslagen. De verbeelding zoekt naar de voortijden van de mens, daar is het leven; de herinnering zoekt naar kinderland, daar is het leven; de eenzame zoekt naar de massa, daar is het leven."² Longing for ancient times and for childhood are characteristics of the idealism of Nijhoff's personal state of mind, but are of more general appeal than other escapist attractions of his earlier style, and he does treat them in the quoted passage as being of general relevance. Childhood always maintains its major appeal, but only traces of the appeal of former times (for instance in 'Awater') are found in his later poetry.

In addition to the Dutch poets mentioned above, another name that deserves mention is Hendrik de Vries, for his use of bold images of the modern city. Nijhoff, in an article of 1932, acknowledges him as an innovator in this field: "Hij was de eerste in ons land, die in poëzie stadsbeelden gaf van beton en glas, staalribben en schoorsteenpijpen, welke de tegenwoordige gevoeligheid zo aanspreken."³

Coming to the 'Nieuwe Gedichten' themselves, one finds that theory again does not exactly work out in practice. The new attitude is quite striking right from the start, but it is some time before any actual penetration into the everyday world is found. Good intentions, with some regres-

1. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1172.
2. id.
3. M.Nijhoff, 'Kroniek der Nederlandse letteren IV', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.733.

sion, take the stage first, and although bits of everyday life continually emerge, it is only in about three poems ('Impasse', 'De Vogels' and 'Awater') that one feels that Nijhoff has got right into the ordinary world. When he is on the outside looking in, or on the threshold, the new attitude fills him full of optimism for earthly life, but the three poems set in everyday reality all end on a defeatist note. The earlier defeatism of the outsider committed to his withdrawal who fails to transfer real life into an ideal state, is repeated in the defeatism of the insider committed to reality who fails to transfer an ideal into real life. So, in 'Impasse' the writer fails to get a subject for a poem, in 'De Vogels' the poor people fail to get "kruimels van de hemel", and in 'Awater' the narrator fails to get his "reisgenoot" (for a journey that is finally revealed as an escapist delusion anyway). But no anguish or despair cloud the later cases of failure as happened earlier. In 'Awater' there is great fascination in the exploration of the ordinary world, from which the ultimate failure, being accepted philosophically, detracts little. Also in 'Het Uur U' defeat (when the man disappears inconsequentialy) is accepted philosophically, and relieved with humour.

The layout of 'Nieuwe Gedichten' is extremely straightforward, and the section-titles - 'Zes Gedichten', 'Acht Sonnetten' and 'Awater' - as well as the title of the volume, are brief and give scarce information as to the content of the poems. All the sonnets are grouped into the middle section, poems of various length and form comprise the first section, and the long narrative poem constitutes the final section. One poem, 'Het Lied der Dwaze Bijen', first appeared in 1926, a few years before any of the rest (the next to appear was 'Aan een Graf' in 1930), and one poem, 'Impasse' (first published in 1935), only gained inclusion in the third (1942) and subsequent editions of the volume, being preceded by two other poems in the first and second editions respectively.

The mood of renewal struck in the first three poems is, in the first of these, 'De Twee Nablijvers', not so much of revival as of replacement. A tree and a lonely writer are

the two stay-behinds of the title, and a nightingale which resumes its song in a town centre has also been an aspect of the past. But it seems as if the nightingale has changed its haunt, and taken its song from the old tree to the new town. The familiar symbol of the tree clearly stands for the writer in some way, and Kees Fens has suggested that it symbolises Nijhoff's old style which has become unproductive¹ - the tree hardly bears fruit any more:

"ik vraag mij af of jij nog leeft,
zo weinig vruchten als je geeft."

There is a notable contrast between the solitary situation of the tree in a garden (the text of the first edition begins "O eene boom in den achtertuin" instead of "O oude boom") and the communal concept of the town, and this reflects Nijhoff's change of standpoint from isolation to collectivity. The nightingale may be equivalent to the poetic Muse, with its song as the poet's inspiration, but the nightingale's song is also a song of love (as mentioned by L.P.C. van den Bergh,² whose work Nijhoff used for 'De Vliegende Hollander'). The writer pictured in 'De Twee Nablijvers' is alone because his wife and child have left him ("je vrouw en kind zijn heengegaan"), so one possible deduction is that they have moved to the town and the nightingale's song is a song of love beckoning the writer to leave his old life for a new one. To interpret the poem as symbolic of Nijhoff's poetic change of style requires an amount of meta-knowledge, for there is no explicit indication that the writer is a poet, nor that the tree's fruits represent the writer's literary production. Actually, while the tree is bearing few fruits, the writer is still writing:

"ik vraag mij af of dat jij schrijft
het enige is wat je overblijft."

So although the poem may prompt a reader to think of the change of course in Nijhoff's poetic development, it is more accurately read as just a consideration of a writer's opportunity to change from the secluded situation represent-

1. K.Fens, 'Het Veer' van M.Nijhoff', 'Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde te Leiden, 1966-7', p.39.
2. L.P.C. van den Bergh, 'Nederlandsche Volksoverleveringen en Godenleer', voorwoord, p.vii.

ed by the tree in the garden to the communal situation represented by the town. Wife and child may be the main fruits of his old life, but they no longer remain, and either they, or prospects of new love, or prospects of more productive writing belong to the fruits offered in town. It is by no means impossible to read the poem as a call to give up writing altogether (cf. "In onze dagen is het belachelijk een dichter te zijn" in the Enschede lecture¹) as an isolating occupation and to turn to social relationships. Knowing Nijhoff's poetic vocation, however, one is inclined to ascribe poetic significance to the nightingale in the town.

Leopold has a poem in which a tree and its fruits symbolise his own life - "Mijn boom heeft kweeën tegen ooft"² - and Van de Woestijne makes some comparison between himself and a solitary tree in 'O Schone Boom'.³ In one of his articles, 'Vragen en Antwoorden II', Nijhoff tells a story centred on a tree which makes way for new building work. This tree held special sentimental attachment for Nijhoff because it was where in childhood he used to meet his first love. Years later the tree was removed to make way for a new building, but Nijhoff is helped over his regret at the passing of the tree by remembering Lafontaine's fable of a robbed miser - "waarin een vrek de raad wordt gegeven erin te berusten dat men zijn opgegraven schat voor een steen verruilde, aangezien hij die schat zelf toch niet gebruikte".⁴ The miser should not complain about a stone being substituted for his buried treasure, since he did not use it anyway, and by analogy, Nijhoff should not complain about his treasured tree being replaced by useful stonework.

An unpublished poem by Nijhoff, dated by Kamphuis (in the collected work) at around 1927, called 'De Kreupele',⁵ gives an idea of the fascination which he developed for the town or city. The narrator of the poem, going towards the city, sees its universal compass:

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1172.

2. J.H.Leopold, 'Oostersch II' (1924), 'Verzameld Werk I, Verzen', p.143.

3. K.van de Woestijne, 'O Schone Boom', 'Poemata 1907-1918', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.90.

4. M.Nijhoff, 'Vragen en antwoorden II' (1941), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.933.

5. M.Nijhoff, 'De Kreupele', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', pp.519-520.

"Daar lag, langs beide zijden,
 Stroom-op en stroom-af, de stad
 Haar breed beeld uit te breiden
 Dat de twee einders omvat."¹

There is a lustre to the town-dwellings in 'De Twee Nablijvers', which might almost belong to a heavenly city:

"Men heeft er woningen gebouwd
 van nieuwe steen en blinkend hout."

Earlier, the city was neglected or spurned ("Wij, die boven de stad te dansen dorsten" - 'De Vervloekte VII'; "Moest ik ... van de stad niets merken" - 'Levensloop', 'De Gids', 1924). Now it is a place of life and hope, with a heart ("t hartje van de stad"); it becomes a communal entity with a self-motivation and wide embrace which make it into a microcosm, and the next two poems highlight this cosmic scope:

- "de stad in de verte met haar torens, rood vuur en viaducten langs de kim" ('Het Veer');
- " ... wijken de huizen der stad uiteen naar een einder van sluizen en dijken" ('De Soldaat en de Zee').

'Het Veer' is the first poem (to specifically) advocate earthly reality, which it does in a story of resurrection and birth. It is also the first poem that does without the conventions of stanza and rhyme schemes. The advent of a freer form of verse owes something to the influence of writing prose, if it can be related to an article by Nijhoff in 1932, where he ascribes the tendency of modern poetry to have an earthy nature to the effect on poets of being also accustomed to writing prose, including critical articles.² Notwithstanding the new style and theme of new life, 'Het Veer' reintroduces issues from the past. Sebastiaan, the subject of the poem, is a Christian saint (like 'De Heilige', Christofoor and Johannes before), and death and the symbol of the boat again play an important part. But death is here a beginning, and the ferry not only carries passengers away,

1. M.Nijhoff, 'De Kreupele', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.519.
 2. M.Nijhoff, 'Kroniek der Nederlandse letteren IV' (1932), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.731.

it also arrives to discharge a load of life and bustle. Nijhoff's version of the Saint Sebastian legend is that Sebastian arose as a spirit after being executed by archers, and found himself in country between dunes and a city near an ordinary twentieth-century ferry. The traditional story is that Sebastian, an officer in the Roman army of Diocletian, became a Christian and began to convert others, for which Diocletian ordered him to be tied to a stake and shot with arrows. After he was left for dead, a devout woman came to bury him, but finding him still alive nursed him back to health. He then returned to Diocletian to reproach him, but Diocletian had him carried off and beaten to death with rods. A well-known version of the story, the mystery play 'Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien' by d'Annunzio, for which Debussy composed music, appeared in 1911, and Rilke has a poem on Saint Sebastian in his 'Neue Gedichte'. But Wenseleers believes that 'Het Veer' was inspired specifically by a German expressionist novel by Franz Herwig, 'Sankt Sebastian vom Wedding' (1921), which appeared in Dutch translation around 1930 as 'De Heilige Proletariër' - Een Legende van Franz Herwig'.¹

Traced back to the unconscious, the legend of Sebastian is viewed by Jung as symbolising the renunciation of libidinous impulses, with the arrows as symbols of the inner torments which these impulses create.² At the same level, the rebirth from martyrdom to earthly life in 'Het Veer' has the unconscious meaning that self-imposed withdrawal, or repression, is wrong, but that one has to follow this disposition to its limit in order to understand what disposition is right. Obviously there is no inkling of unconscious libido in the surface suggestivity of the poem, but the tracing of analogies towards Nijhoff's own psychological condition is justified by the correspondence between the change of outlook expressed in the poem and Nijhoff's own change of outlook.

Sebastiaan's resurrection in 'Het Veer' is not a return in human form, but a resurrection in spiritual form. Where

1. L. Wenseleers, 'De Poëzie is niet meer van gisteren', note, p.147.

2. C.G. Jung, 'Symbols of Transformation', p.290.

his life ends, Nijhoff's poem begins, and he is referred to as spirit ("geest"), deceased ("gestorvene") and shadow ("schaduw"). Some aspects of the poem recall 'Het Licht' and suggest a continuation where that poem left off. 'Het Licht' ends with the death of somebody tied to a post, and 'Het Veer' begins with Sebastiaan's death tied to a tree. When pierced with arrows Sebastiaan himself experiences heavenly light ("het hemels licht ... dat Sebastiaan toen pijlen hem doorboorden had aanschouwd").

After his martyr's death, Sebastiaan, instead of awakening in heaven, or some land of the dead, wanders about in a limbo between the expanse of the sea and the expanse of a city. The appearance of a ferry after a short while suggests that Sebastiaan will pass over to the land of the dead, and that the ferry is a symbol of this passage, equivalent to the mythical ferry of Charon across the Styx. But the similarity breaks down when the ferry's load is seen: an arrival of passengers, cattle, carts, bicycles and cars, incongruous with the Roman era which Sebastiaan comes from. Besides the lively load, there is incipient life in the house next to the ferry, where a woman is lying pregnant. When the ferry departs for the far side, it again becomes like the ferry of death, passing out of sight in dusk beyond a veil of dew, with passengers described as "ingescheepten", as if they are on a voyage, and their destination given as "een overzijde", a term that Nijhoff uses several times in his later poetry in connection with death. The double significance of the ferry, denoting arrival in and departure from life, is marked by its double image ("'t verdubbeld beeld") as it is mirrored in the water.

An atmosphere of silence reigns by the ferry, but it is not the silence of death, as silence usually means with Nijhoff. This silence is fundamentally different and is a cause of puzzlement to Sebastiaan, who had already experienced the silence of death when the arrows pierced him. This new sort of silence is earthly and warm, pregnant, filled with hope, commencement and happiness:

"die stilte daar was aards en warm, was zwanger, hoop, aanvang, was een ademhaling die zich inhoudt bij de diepste teug, geluk dat zich een hand voor ogen legt en zwijgt en peinzend zich bezint, een oponthoud waarin, als in een slaap, het vrije bloed de dag verzoent en onbelemmerd droomt van nieuwe dagen deze dag gelijk."

Whereas in his old attitude Nijhoff renounces life because it is doomed to death, now he sees death leading to a rediscovery of life. Sebastiaan, like Pierrot, finds a homecoming in death (Pierrot's dying words are "Nu zwerft Pierrot weer - maar naar huis - "1), but for Sebastiaan it is not a homecoming in an unworldly surrounding, but in a situation of earthly procreation. He typifies the Christian martyr, trusting in a heavenly ideal, but when he loses his life he discovers that the state of well-being found in earthly life is preferable. He wonders how he could have wished for something better:

"zeer bevreemd

dat hij, toen hij in leven was, zijn hoop gesteld had op een hoger heil dan dit thuiskomen in een slapend vruchtbegin".

Having sacrificed his body for his beliefs, he discovers that the human body is wonderful, and wonders how he could have longed for the spirit:

"dat hij begeerd has/ naar de geest terwijl het wonderbaarlijk lichaam in de tijd hem gans bewoonde".

/d

Proclamation of the virtues of the human body is a theme in several writers Nijhoff was reading around the time of his turning-point. He talks, in 1926, of Coventry Patmore's "prachtige ode" to the human body.² This ode 'To the Body' (Nijhoff quotes the second line) begins:

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Pierrot aan de Lantaarn', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.78.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'Peinzende over "Kleine Inez"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.423.

"Creation and creator's crowning good;
 Wall of infinitude;
 Foundation of the sky,
 In heaven forecast
 And longed for from eternity,
 Though laid the last."¹

In the deleted section of the Enschede lecture, he refers to D.H.Lawrence's admiration for the human body: "Lawrence, de letterlijke aanbidder van het lichaam".² Another advocate of the body known to Nijhoff was Walt Whitman, who in the preface to the first edition of 'Leaves of Grass' (1855) said that it is "not consistent with the reality of the soul to admit that there is anything in the known universe more divine than men and women."³ He glorifies the body in 'I Sing the Body Electric':

"If anything is sacred the human body is sacred".⁴

Unfortunately for Sebastiaan, his experience of a homecoming in a scene of earthly regeneration is temporary, for he is a spirit and destined for a spiritual realm. It is a source of regret to him that he must make the journey to his eternal abode - "de barre tocht naar de overzijde" - without having fathered a son to perpetuate his flesh. But in an epilogue, in which the narrator speaks in the first person, Nijhoff suggests that Sebastiaan's body, which went missing, did not pass out of this world, like a white bird heading seawards, but was rather reborn in the child born beside the ferry. The first alternative, which would have meant transformation into a bird "rechtstandig, wit, heendrijvend met gestrekte hals naar zee", is what might have happened in Nijhoff's old style; one can compare Pierrot, freed from his 'cross' by white angels, and the almost silent cloud rising past the moon in 'Zwerfer en Elven'.

At the beginning, Sebastiaan had washed his body free of muck and blood ("bevrijdde zijn lichaam van bezoedeling en bloed") as if his nature was so alien to earthly life

1. 'The Poems of Coventry Patmore', p.408.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1169.
3. 'Walt Whitman. Poetry and Prose', p.408.
4. id., p.92.

that he wanted his body to embark on a new existence, rid of all traces of that former one. By the end he wishes that, although his spirit is destined for the 'other side', his body could participate in the continuance of earthly life, which, if this wish was realised, meant rebirth in the child. But how far short of a proper return to reality 'Het Veer' actually comes, despite all the argument in its favour, is betrayed in the closing words describing the child that is supposed to have been born beside the ferry:

"zo stralend schoon,
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."

Nijhoff is still not getting down to brass tacks, but romanticising his objective to a degree that is summarily dismissed in 'Het Uur U' ("hoe mooi zijn bloesems en blader-tooi ... dat is tot daaraan toe."). The circumstances of Sebastiaan's revival in the modern world and the narrator's choice of one ending (the birth) rather than the other (the bird) do show that the belief in reality is there.

'Het Veer' tells a story and, more than in the past, development of the narrative itself is of considerable symbolic meaning. Judged on its basic elements of death and birth, it is a story symbolising immortality through regeneration, since even the childless martyr gets some feedback into following generations. Taking Nijhoff's own life into consideration, it can be read as a story symbolising his change of outlook. The unfolding of a story is again symbolically important in 'Awater', but there the story is built on real life, whereas 'Het Veer' is still based on fictitious and fanciful material. Whether or not the reader accepts the proposal that Sebastiaan's body was reborn in the child, at least the immediate results of Sebastiaan's resurrection are a return to an earthly scene, and not a rebirth to a heavenly state, which is what happens in a poem by Holst on a similar motif - 'Wedergeboorte'(1920).¹ Fens draws a com-

1. A. Roland Holst, 'Verzamelde Werken I, Gedichten I', pp.218-9.

parison between these two poems,¹ and there are several similar images (death of the body, washing, a child), but Holst makes a finish with the world and so presents a different type of rebirth. Not only is there a return to earthly life in 'Het Veer', but death serves to provide a deep insight into life. Sebastiaan finds that a full appreciation of life only comes through experiencing death:

"dat wie sterft eerst ziet
hoe dieper 't bloed is dan de hemel hoog".

A return to earthly life via an experience of death is also the theme of the following poem in 'Nieuwe Gedichten', 'De Soldaat en de Zee', which is written as an account by the poet of the course of his own life. The experience of death is represented in the sea, described as "doodsvijandin" though highly attractive. In 'Het Veer' there was also a connection between the sea and death, where the silence of death was "gelijk een zee". Return from the sea is a homecoming:

"Zo komt men tenslotte thuis,
ziende het ongeziene".

Again Nijhoff identifies himself with a soldier, the familiar idealised symbol of man in his struggle through life, and here more specifically the romantic youth who is his former self: "een voormalig ik". (In the first and second editions - 1934 and 1937 - the soldier is specified as an image of his youth - "ik dacht dat mijn jeugd het was ..."). Through or in spite of the encounter with the sea, the course of his life brings him back to his origins:

"Geleidelijk bracht de brug
van het leven over het leven
mij naar mijn oorsprong terug
en ik werd die ik was gebleven."

Preoccupation with the sea is a standard feature of Symbolist poetry, but does not come into any major relief in Nijhoff's work until 'De Vliegende Hollander' (1930). The picture of himself in 'De Soldaat en de Zee' as a young man

1. K.Fens, 'Het Veer' van M.Nijhoff', 'Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde te Leiden, 1966-7', pp.43-4.

captivated by the sea conforms more to a stereotyped picture of a Romantic or Symbolist poet than to an impression of himself given by his own early poetry. His first song, he says, was evoked by a vision coming to him at the sea-shore, revealing another land on the opposite shore:

"Daar speelde muziek, en ik,
verscheurd, tot antwoord gedrongen,
heb met een juichkreet en een snik
mijn eerste lied gezongen."

Yet sea-enchantment plays no great role in his early volumes. Only three poems each in 'De Wandelaar' and 'Vormen' mention the sea, though there are other associated images, such as the sailor, the boat, and various forms of water. In retrospect Nijhoff looks on the sea as a major attraction dominating his past:

"Zee, geliefde en doodsvijandin,
hoelang hield gij mij gevangen?
Hoelang hield uw lege kim
geboeid mijn weerloos verlangen?"

Traditionally the sea is a feminine concept, thought of as the universal mother, the source of all animate matter, but because of its formlessness and fluidity it also represents an eternal origin and destiny, in contrast to the more stable and more readily productive mother earth. Nijhoff talked of the "eeuwige zee" in 'Twee Reddeloozen' (in 'Vormen'). The sea can also represent forces of the unconscious. In 'De Soldaat en de Zee' it suggests the fatal eternal feminine, enticing men to an untenable eternity of happiness. The doom of the void is mingled with the bliss of eternity in the sea's message of a distant world:

"Terwijl een krans van bleek schuim
zich bevend legde om mijn voeten,
terwijl mijn blik in het ruim
niets dan het niets ontmoette,

naderden woorden van doem
en van gelukzaligheid beide,
en opende zich een vizioen
van een land aan de overzijde."

A contemporary of Nijhoff, in whose poetry sea-enchantment

is far more dominant throughout, is Holst, for whom the sea contains nostalgia for an eternal past and presentiment of an eternal future. As well as with eternity, Holst links the sea with death, happiness, song and the soul ("de geheime zee ... die is de ziel"¹). Many echoes of Holst's sea myth are contained in Nijhoff's description of the sea in 'De Soldaat en de Zee', but enchantment is answered with disenchantment: "gelukzaligheid" (cf. Holst's "eiland der gelukzaligen") is laden with "doem", the "kim" (cf. Holst's 'De Wilde Kim') is a "lege kim", and "verlangen" (cf. Holst's "Elysisch verlangen") is "geboeid" and "weerloos". Fens gets the impression in comparing the poetry of Holst and Nijhoff that the latter felt a certain creative competitiveness ("kreatieve wedijver") which becomes evident in 'De Soldaat en de Zee'.²

Connection between the sea and enchantment of the past occurs in Poe:

"And thus my memory is to me
Like some enchanted far-off isle
In some tumultuous sea - "³.

For Baudelaire in 'l'Homme et la Mer' the sea has infinite motion and mirrors the soul:

"Homme libre, toujours tu chériras la mer!
La mer est ton miroir; tu contemples ton âme
Dans le déroulement infini de sa lame."⁴

He also associates music with the sea:

"La musique souvent me prend comme une mer!"⁵

For Mallarmé, in 'Brise Marine', the sea holds an irresistible enchantment although it brings death ("Rien ... ne retiendra ce coeur qui dans la mer se trempe")⁶, and for Verlaine the sea has a sublime beauty ("la mer est plus belle que les cathédrales")⁷. A note of disillusion with the sea, similar to that found in 'De Soldaat en de Zee',

1. A.Roland Holst, 'De Geheime Zee' (1920), 'Verzamelde Werken I, Gedichten I', p.224.
2. K.Fens, 'Het Veer' van M.Nijhoff', 'Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterhunde te Leiden, 1966-7', pp.42-3.
3. E.A.Poe, 'To F - ', 'The Complete Poetry and Selected Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe', p.82.
4. C.Baudelaire, 'Les Fleurs du Mal' XIV, pp.21-2.
5. id., LXIX, p.74.
6. S.Mallarmé, 'Oeuvres Complètes', p.38.
7. P.Verlaine, 'Sagesse' XV, p.149.

is expressed by Heine in the section 'Die Nordsee' of 'Buch der Lieder', where the poem 'Fragen' depicts a young man standing by the sea at night, seeking an answer to the mystery of life, and ironically concludes that the young man is a fool.¹ Van de Woestijne experiences a compulsive attraction in the sea, and in the 'Zee' section of his volume 'Substrata' (1918-1921) contrasts the eternal rhythm of the sea with the step of a soldier, the soldier being himself:

"Nacht over zee: nacht over zee: een luie maatzang.
Maar ik loop als een klein en vlug soldaatje loopt:
Een-twee, een-twee."²

A parallel with the sea motif in 'De Soldaat en de Zee' can be found in T.S.Eliot's 'The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock' (1917), but with a feeling of loss at reawakening from the sea's domain:

"We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us and we drown."³

Nijhoff is not bothered in 'De Soldaat en de Zee' about loss of contact with eternity by a return to earthly origins, though such a loss of contact and consequent lack of vision become important in 'Het Uur U'. Return to the earth is a reawakening - "ontwaakt men als kind der aarde" - recalling the end of 'De Pen op Papier', at which the narrator seems to awake for the first time when, after his dream, his family rejoin him (the last word of the story is an italicised "ontwaken").⁴ Another reference to this idea of awakening from romantic dreams can be found in Nijhoff's commemorative play 'In Holland Staat een Huis' (1937), where the character Goed says:

"Men keert nooit onverrichter zake
uit dromen, als men durft te ontwaken.
Volstrekte zelfverloochening
is de enige bestendiging."⁵

1. 'Heine, Selected Verse', pp.82-3.

2. K.van de Woestijne, 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.113.

3. T.S.Eliot, 'Collected Poems', p.17.

4. M.Nijhoff, 'De Pen op Papier', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1080.

5. M.Nijhoff, 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.494.

Sustainment of an ideal self means denial of the worldly self (though, there again, total interest in the worldly self means denial of the ideal self). It is noticeable how the view of earthly life in 'De Soldaat en de Zee' has become more realistic than that in 'Het Veer'. Now practical work and activity are observed:

"Ik keerde, ik zag mijn land,
ik zag de dijken gegraven,
de duinen met helm beplant,
de bezigheid bij de haven."

The message at the end of the poem is that mankind as a collective mass forms a more beautiful sort of sea than the watery one - "het strijdende volk een schoner zee is dan water". In the first and second edition texts, this message is contained in the middle of the poem, so, in bringing it to the end in the later variant (that of the definitive version of 'Verzamelde Gedichten'), Nijhoff gives this social theme emphasis. At the same time Nijhoff makes his experiences sound a little less personal and more applicable to other people by replacing "ik" a number of times with "men" (e.g. "ontwaak ik als kind dezer aarde" becomes "ontwaakt men als kind der aarde").

'Het Klimop', the next poem, looks to the past without giving any new ideas about the future. It brings back the motif of the dead mother, but now her death is real and not imagined. A passage in the deleted section of the Enschede lecture tells how ivy grows up the fence outside the hospital where Nijhoff's mother died, and how its scent is inseparably connected with childhood happiness, since certain sounds are able to conjure up for him vivid scenes from the past, and the scent of ivy is one that takes him back to a time when he used to be looked after in an ivy-walled garden during a period of illness as a boy: "De geur van klimop bijvoorbeeld, brengt mij zo snel terug naar de tuin van mijn ouderlijk huis, waar ik, onder de klimopmuur, jarenlang heb ziek gelegen, dat ik klimop niet anders ruiken kan dan met dit beeld voor ogen."¹ He describes how he discovered the

1. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk' (1935), 'Verzamelde Werk 2', p.1174.

scent of ivy ("de klimopgeur, d.w.z. die jeugdherinnering in de tuin") at the hospital fence after visiting his dying mother.¹ In the poem, the ivy works its charm without there being mention of any scent. It grows up a wall instead of a fence, and it enables the poet to climb up and see the hospital building, and at the same time is a stimulus to happy memories of the past:

"Maar tegelijk, o klimop, die mijn slaap beroert,
 hebt gij mij naar een verre dag teruggevoerd.
 Ik lig in een prieel, ik ben een zieke jongen,
 en zij zit bij me en heeft ons lievelingslied gezongen."

Due to its effect on him, ivy is a private symbol for Nijhoff, with a special charm (which is "het wonder dat gij steeds weer doet" in the variant first edition text). On a more general note, ivy, as a climbing plant, is connected with ascent to a higher plane, and at the end of 'Het Klimop' the dead mother is pictured lying in ivy watching the stars. Because it grows against something, such as a wall, it shows life dependent on a supporting power. Ivy, thus, in its relationship to its support, is an apt symbol for the relationship of son to mother, in which respect it is significant that the narrator, who lay amidst ivy as a child, remarks that the ivy outside his mother's hospital has grown taller. Subsequently ivy also does duty for the relationship between the mother herself and a senior authority when she in turn lies amongst ivy in death, looking towards the stars.

The wall in Nijhoff's childhood garden is a source of imagery in several of his poems (as in 'Het Liedje van den Simpele' - "Ik zit met mijn rug tegen het zonnige muurtje"). Sometimes a wall appears as a restrictive barrier, but mainly for Nijhoff it represents steadfastness, protection and security (which make it another appropriate companion to the mother), and it also functions as an attribute of God:

"God heeft een kranke rank gevonden
 En aan zijn warme muur gebonden."

('Pierrot aan de Lantaarn').

In 'De Vervloekte IV' there is a wall shining with blessing:

1. M. Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p. 1174.

"Wanhopig grijpen leege handen tegen

Den hoogen, witten muur, blinkend van zegen - ".

Although the wall in 'Het Klimop' is nothing grand, it lends itself to the dreams of the narrator, who is reminded by the ivy of his present situation and the need to stop dreaming:

"Dromer" zegt het klimop "kom van dat muurtje af,
ga heen en leg een deken op je moeders graf.
Zij moet het op den duur ontoegedekt koud krijgen
nu zij in 't klimop ligt en de sterren ziet stijgen."

This recall from dreaming is the only aspect of 'Het Klimop' conforming with the main theme of the previous three poems - the return to reality. After carrying him away in dreams, the ivy is finally instrumental in nudging him back to the present, although with a message of consideration for the deceased. In the variant first edition, the ivy does not have this function, but there is a counter to its wonderful charm in the mention of its cold touch - "koude plant, die aan mijn slapen drukt".

Before the ivy transports the poet to his childhood, the sight of the hospital takes him back to the time of his mother's illness:

"Ik ruik de rozen weer, ik ruik de creolien,
ik ga de trap weer op, ik loop door lege gangen,
ik kom weer voor de deur waar 't bordje is omgehangen."

So it is actually the hospital to which imagery of smell applies in the poem - a smell of roses and disinfectant. Two poems in 'Nieuwe Gedichten' refer to a hospital (this one and 'Awater'), and in 'Het Uur U' there is a picture of a clinic. All three cases have a mood of dreaminess; in 'Het Klimop' the roses and disinfectant add a note of perfection and purity. The hospital is a sanctuary symbol, an assembly place of those who are near to the land of the dead, and for Nijhoff it represents, like the grave, a last point of contact on earth with his mother. The mother's progression from hospital to grave is a theme of both 'Het Klimop' and the meditation in the office of 'Awater' (but other associations apply to the clinic in 'Het Uur U'). It is obvious from the way the narrator is drawn to walk past the hospital, just to look at the building in its garden (another feminine symbol), that he closely identifies the hospital building itself with

his mother.

Scent again plays a role in the following poem, 'Het Lied der Dwaze Bijen', in which a sublime scent of honey has the effect of transporting the recipients of this scent away from reality. The bees are lured from their homes by "een geur van hoger honing", which together with an indeterminate soft buzzing that repeatedly says nothing ("een steeds herhaald niet-noemen") holds out the prospect of enigmatic roses ("raadselige rozen"). Pursuit of an unworldly ideal here ends in death with no rebirth or return to reality, except that the bodies of the bees fall back to earth. 'Het Lied der Dwaze Bijen' is the earliest published poem (1926) of the volume and it is the most removed from everyday reality in the opening section.

Bees are light, spritely creatures, and symbolise a spiritual nature. Their buzzing and their production of honey support their metaphysical connections (Nijhoff talks of a "zacht zoemen in het azuur bevrozen" as well as a "hoger honing"). Buzzing is a dozy sound, so that it is linked with sleep and dreams, the bees' flight being connected with flights of fancy. The honey that bees produce has divine associations, since it is sweet, golden and health-giving, and was once considered a near equivalent to the divine ambrosia. In classical literature, Virgil shows bees as an ideal community, a model for worldly society,¹ and he attributes a form of immortality to them, by describing how they can arise from a carcass. Stories of bees arising from carcasses, suggestive of spirits arising from the flesh, are found in the Bible (the story of Samson) and in the Greek legend of Hercules. Timmer calls bees symbols of souls, quoting from the 'Vitis Mystica' attributed to Saint Bernard: "De bijen zijn het symbool van de zielen, die weten hoe zij zich verheffen kunnen op de vleugelen der beschouwing en die zich, om zo te zeggen, losmaken van hun lichaam, gelijk het nijvere insect zijn korf verlaat, om heen te

1. P. Vergilius Maro, 'Georgics IV'.

zweven naar de lusttuin der hemelse genietingen."¹ A comparison can be drawn between Nijhoff's "dwaze bijen" and the words which in swirling snow sing themselves free of their meanings in 'Tweeërlei Dood'. After their flight, in which they are "ontvoerd, ontlijfd, ontzworven", the bees fall back to earth like snowflakes:

"Het sneeuwt, wij zijn gestorven,
huiswaarts omlaag gedwereld,
het sneeuwt, wij zijn gestorven,
het sneeuwt tussen de korven."

Among French Post-Symbolists, Valéry and Claudel both use the bee as a symbol of the word. In Valéry's 'l'Abeille' (1918),² man is represented as the hive from which the word in the form of a bee issues. In Claudel's 'Abeille' (1925) (originally entitled 'Abeilles et Pensées'), the human being is the flower from which the bee draws nectar, whilst in return fertilising thought.³ Nijhoff's "dwaze bijen" are personified, in that they relate the poem, and, in human terms, their hive is called a dwelling ("woning") and their colony a people ("volk"). So although they may be suggestive of words or thoughts, the crazy bees are in the first place representative of a particular type of people from human society. In other poems of Nijhoff, bees do not correspond to any worldly society, but to members of another world, like that which the crazy bees aspire to. The first mention of bees occurs in 'De Kinderkruistocht' where the children, following their dream of reaching the Holy Land, are compared to a swarm of white bees ("Als een zwerm witte bijen over het veld"). In 'Het Veer', the silence of death sounds like a hive of bees ("gelijk een korf vol bijen"), and in 'Aan een Graf' bees are bracketed together with flies, butterflies and children as participants in a pure happiness:

"de vrije vonken,
de bij, het kind, de vlinder en de vlieg,
die in het licht van puur geluk verblonken."

1. J.J.M.Timmers, 'Symboliek en Iconographie der Christelijke Kunst', p.781.
2. P.Valéry, 'l'Abeille', 'Charmes', 'Oeuvres I', p.118.
3. P.Claudel, 'Abeille', 'Oeuvres Complètes II, Poésie', p.401.

But while bees are associated with the spirit-world in other poems, the "dwaze bijen" are only aspirants to the spirit-world, and the fact that they fail to fulfill their longing and regret the attempt - "ach roekelozen" they say of themselves - anticipates Nijhoff's new attitude, although the poem does not express renewal or the real world. It is, in a way, an allegory of his former attitude, symbolising the folly of idealistic longing, which is in effect suicidal; in using bees as subjects of the story, Nijhoff follows a traditional form of allegory which uses characters from the animal world (as seen in 'De Twee Duiven' - his translation from Lafontaine), to act out a message or moral for human society.

Last poem in the opening section is 'Het Kind en Ik', which like the earlier 'Langs een Wereld' (of 'Vormen') starts with an ordinary occurrence and lets the symbolism take off from there. The ordinary occurrence is a fishing trip, and reflectiveness of water is the source of imagination. An orientation towards everyday life is noticeable in the colloquial tone in which the poem opens - "Ik zou een dag uit vissen" (cf. "Ik keek laatst door een venster naar binnen" opening 'Langs een Wereld'). The use of colloquial language is an important development in Nijhoff's later poetry, to root his symbolism more closely in the everyday world, and is a device which he exploits in 'Awater' and 'Het Uur U'. Out fishing, the narrator of 'Het Kind en Ik' makes a gap in weeds and sees in the water the image of a child in a garden. Reflecting water, like the mirror, represents an imaginary world, and the child is a reflection of the narrator's own ideal self, since he sees it writing on a slate in his own handwriting:

"Het woord onder de griffel
herkende ik, was van mij."

Not only does the reflected child image relate back to a former pure and original state of the self, but also takes in the ideal future, in which the writer sees everything written that he ever dreams of writing:

"al wat ik van mijn leven
nog ooit te schrijven droom."

In spite of its connections with the narrator, the child retains an impersonality by being referred to as 'het' instead of 'hij' or 'hem' (except for one 'hij' at the end). This separate identity of the child, concurrent with its function as an ideal with which Nijhoff is able to identify himself, is recognised by Kazemier: "Het kind is hier een kind 'in his own right', maar toch evenzeer de dichter zelf in zijn zuiverste, ideale wezen".¹

For perception of the ideal state shown in the water, a stillness is necessary which cannot be sustained in the real world of motion and variations, and to compel reality the child deliberately disturbs the water and removes the image in it:

"liet hij het water beven
en het werd uitgewist."

Just as in 'Het Steenen Kindje', there is no delivery of potential into reality. Clearly 'Het Kind en Ik' brings up again the question of the poet's need to give form to ideas, and again offers no solution. But the mood of distress and incapacity which plagues 'Het Steenen Kindje' is absent here. The child has become a symbol of the poet rather than of the poem, and the narrator nods to it in understanding. He has lost the anxiety about being or not being able to produce. The problem of the creative difficulty remains, and is dealt with again in 'Impasse' (and three different poems entitled 'De Schrijver' of 1933, 1934 and 1937).

The middle section of 'Nieuwe Gedichten' consists of poems grouped together on account of their sonnet form, as the title 'Acht Sonnetten' tells, but fairly miscellaneous with regard to theme. Some are deeply entangled in Nijhoff's past, but others have more bearing towards present reality and the future. To open and close the section the theme of the mother is again presented, firstly with memories at the graveside, and lastly with a message of trust in God for the future.

'Aan een Graf', the first poem of the section, is second earliest of the volume in publication (1930), and

1. G. Kazemier, 'Nijhoff, de speelse' in 'Het Spel in de Literatuur', p.16.

carries a mood of reverie all the way through, without any recall to reality. A relation is drawn between the grave and the cradle - "'k Sta aan je graf als jij eens aan mijn wieg" - so that the grave seems to provide a return to origins, almost like a return to the womb. Mother and grave are in close correspondence because they stand at the borders of earthly life; the entrance to life is through the mother, and the exit through the grave. The two images were placed together in 'Moeder' (in 'De Wandelaar'), with the grave as a cradle of the mother earth:

"Ze ligt in 't graf met het gelaat naar boven.

Donkere moeder, wieg haar lichaam warm,

Zie, als een kind ligt zij naakt in uw schoot - "

Symbols of the spirit-world - flies, butterflies, children and bees - are in attendance at the mother's grave in 'Aan een Graf', and make tracks between the ground and the heavenly azure:

"en duizend lachjes, liedjes, mijmerijen,
tintelen uit het gras naar het azuur."

Besides the signs of the spirit-world that he sees, the fact that the poet speaks to his mother at the grave shows that he finds there a point of communication with the land of the dead. (Later, in 'Awater', communication with the dead mother comes much closer to everyday life, when Awater is listening to the typewriter in his office). Far from advocating the real world, there seems to be a pledge of faith to the supremacy of the spirit:

"Moeder, vrees niet dat ik bij dit verzonken
handjevol as mij om het vuur bedrieg."

It might be contended that fire equals life, and fire is indicated as the element of the mother - "moedertje, schoot van vuur". But the sparks of fire that belong to the mother are the insects and children which rise sparkling to the azure:

"Vliegen en vlinders, kinderen en bijen,
al wat als stipjes vonkt door de natuur,
warm, blij en snel, moedertje, schoot van vuur,
daar hield je van, en zie, die bleven bij je."

These "vrije vonken" shine in the light of pure happiness, thus not in normal earthly life ("de vrije vonken ... die in het licht van puur geluk verblonken").

'Florentijns Jongensportret' is the first poem of 'Nieuwe Gedichten' in which Nijhoff makes a theme of class distinction. ('Vormen' ends with a touch of this in 'Kerstmacht', where townschildren come asking for sweets from the lord and lady of the manor). The lot of an upper class Florentine boy seen in a portrait is contrasted with the lot of a donkey and an old woman, who have a thin time for his benefit:

"en 't is alleen opdat

gij zorgloos zingt, een hand in uw ceintuur,
dat de ezel zwoegt langs 't ongebaande pad
en de oude vrouw hurkt bij het houtskoolvuur."

These words end the poem, and they make a sobering comment on the preceding description of the privileged position of the Florentine boy. He is privileged on many counts -

- his age, since Nijhoff continually glorifies youth,
- his Florentine parentage, since Florence was renowned for its richness of culture and life-style during the Renaissance,
- his perfect features: face rounded like an olive, eyes like jewels, a chin finer than grapes decked in dew,
- his apparent nobility: the river in its course through the city, nature with her bread and wine, the donkey in its labours and the old woman by the fire all serve his well-being.

This boy is symbolic of an ideal situation in life, because he has got everything going for him:

"Voor ú buigt de rivier zich door de stad;
voor ú, in wijn en brood, stremt de natuur
haar zware stroom".

But in showing the harsher reality that underlies his superior position, Nijhoff implies criticism not only of upper class society, but of the ideal that it represents. Spillebeen has pointed out that in harking back to the Renaissance, Nijhoff is also harking back to his old posture in 'De Wandelaar': that of "Kunstenaar uit den tijd der Renaissance" (this artist paints a woman's smile and has shining eyes, the Florentine boy has shining eyes and a

girl's mouth).¹ One can therefore read an amount of self-criticism, directed at the element of superior detachment in his old attitude, in Nijhoff's description of the Florentine boy. Grové compares the transformation of natural reality into the refined image of the boy with the transformation of natural drive into an art-form in 'De Danser' (in 'Vormen').² Nature is constrained into wine and bread for the boy, yet a picture of the nature that makes him still comes out in his portrait: olive-like face and grape-like chin.

'Haar Laatste Brief' (called 'Haar Laatste Woord' in the first edition, and 'Haar Laatste Antwoord' in the second edition) looks back on a finished love relationship through a letter justifying the break-up. This is the last time that Nijhoff deals with a romantic love affair, a subject that was already regarded as practically over and done with in 'Vormen'. One poem there, 'Adieu', expresses a man's secret farewell to and departure from his lady, and 'Haar Laatste Brief' also concerns a lover's departure, but here the roles are reversed and the lady is the one who departs and breaks off the relationship. The expression in a poem of the woman's side of the issue of breaking up recalls the advice of the Pied Piper in 'De Pen op Papier', where Nijhoff is told to confine his own feelings to a diary and put other people's feelings in his poetry, so that if, for example, he has any love troubles he can put the lady's point of view in a poem: "Er hapert bijvoorbeeld wat in de een of andere verhouding van liefde of vriendschap: zet uw eigen stemming in het dagboek, maar tracht de houding en het verdriet van uw vriendin in een gedicht uit te drukken."³ Just the same reason lies behind the woman's departure as behind the man's in 'Adieu': the relationship is unrealistic. She realises that she is not wanted for her real self, but for the youth and beauty that she represents, and that her lover might as well make do with saying her name to conjure up her romantic image,

1. W. Spillebeen, 'De Geboorte van het Stenen Kindje', p.186.
2. A.P. Grové, 'Aktualiteit in die Poësie', 'Standpunte' 40-41', 15th year, April-June 1962, p.7.
3. M. Nijhoff, 'De Pen op Papier', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1074.

as have her:

"Want meer van mij bevindt zich in die klank
dan in de jeugd waarom je van mij houdt,
mijn bijna-jongensborst, mijn haar van goud."

She is therefore another symbol of the ideal woman figure, similar to what Awater recognises in a Salvation Army girl with golden hair. In his immature mentality, her lover treats her with a tenderness which is a wound to the actual relationship: "de wond ... ener tederheid die op toekomstig leven is gericht". In Spillebeen's view the future life which the tenderness is aimed at is the woman's child,¹ but one might also see it from the lover's side as an after-life like that which is sought through murder of the self in 'De Vervloekte', and that to which Awater's dream woman belongs.

Another male-female relationship which follows in 'Impasse', is a steady, routine one, seemingly between man and wife, in which any romantic element is buried under. Because the man wants to ask the woman a sensitive question hoping for an imaginative answer - he is a writer and wants a suggestion for what to write about - he has had to wait for days to get the right moment, an unguarded moment, at which to put his question. By choosing an unguarded moment when the conscious mind has not got a ready defence against wishful material, he is presumably trying to get a genuine, unaffected response, and the chain of images which ensue suggest that he feels that his question has struck deeply and has stirred the subconscious and thoughts of a fanciful nature. It all occurs in a kitchen, the poem opening with one of the typical flat-statement openings of Nijhoff's later poetry:

"Wij stonden in de keuken, zij en ik."

(cf. "Ik zou een dag uit vissen" - 'Het Kind en Ik', "Ik ging naar Bommel om de brug te zien" - 'De Moeder de Vrouw', and "Het was zomerdag" - 'Het Uur U'). In the kitchen, Nijhoff is getting closer than ever to common situations of everyday life. Just when the man has asked his question, a kettle whistles, a cloud of steam envelops the woman and

1. W.Spillebeen, 'De Geboorte van het Stenen Kindje', p.190.

rises towards wistaria through a skylight, and water is poured onto coffee which emits a fragrance. This in itself is nothing out of the ordinary, but the symbolic meanings of all these images combine to evoke a fantasy mood: the kettle's whistle has a rousing pitch; a cloud (especially ascending or descending) could imply spiritual transformation (like the cloud rising past the moon in 'Zwerver en Elven') and hints at the elevation of the woman to the level of divine female¹ - "haar hullend in een wolk die opwaarts schiet"; wistaria is a climbing plant like ivy, connected with longing for higher things; coffee has a stimulating exotic aroma. (A combination of fragrance and kettle occurs in 'Tweeërlei Dood' - "Haar vaders pijp geurt, de ketel gaat zingen"). (Discovery of underlying romantic notions in a kitchen scene may be compared to Freud's discovery that "details of sexual life may be thought and dreamt of in seemingly innocent allusions to activities in the kitchen"²).

The atmosphere in 'Impasse' fails to produce an imaginative answer from the woman, just an 'I don't know'. Her inability or unwillingness to provide a constructive answer is perhaps symptomatic of the creative difficulty, which was the theme of 'Het Steenen Kindje'. Whether the man is suffering from this problem of finding ideas or translating ideas into words is not revealed, but this is a likely reason why he, as a writer, asks the woman what she would like him to write about. Two other poems which stood in the place of 'Impasse' in the first and second editions of 'Nieuwe Gedichten' do convey the theme of creative difficulty. Both are entitled 'De Schrijver', and the first one (1934) tells of a writer who receives inspiration from birds flying in through his window with text, but who is ashamed at his inability to write it down.³ The second 'De Schrijver' (1937) (which is actually the third poem of that name in 'Verzamelde Gedichten' since an earlier one was published in

1. L. Spies, 'Droom en Dagbreek', 'Standpunte 97', 25th year, 1971-2, No. 1, p. 41.
2. S. Freud, 'The Interpretation of Dreams', p. 463.
3. M. Nijhoff, 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p. 405.

'De Kunst in Nood', 1933) gives a sarcastic account of a poem that failed and was scrapped.¹ Although 'Impasse' ends in a stale^{mate}ment on the subject of what to write about, another sonnet appears in 'Voor Dag en Dauw' (1936) with the same text except for a different ending; the atmosphere created by the whistling kettle is described there as like waking in a train and finding oneself in a different land:

"Weer is dit leven vreemd als in een trein
te ontwaken en in ander land te zijn",²

and the woman's answer to the man's question is that he should write a new wedding song; the two people are identified in a prefatory letter as an older married couple.³ But the empty ending in the 'Nieuwe Gedichten' version adds an ironic note in which the stimuli to imaginative thought come to nothing.

The Crucifixion returns as subject of 'De Nieuwe Sterren', and its symbolic significance is fitted into the framework of pre-Christian astronomic symbolism (the Zodiac). Stars, as heavenly bodies, are traditional symbols of souls; set in the night sky they represent immortal beings in the realm of death. Where ancient peoples immortalised heroes or animals by naming constellations after them, Nijhoff finds objects of the Crucifixion now replacing the old symbols in the stars. That Nijhoff meant these instruments to relate to the people who used them and set a precedent that is still being followed, is confirmed by a letter he wrote to Gerrit Kamphuis (1937), where he says that in his poem he drew the new stars "niet alleen aan het uitspansel maar - in de terzinen - op aarde".⁴ (The stars of the tercets in the 1934 version he is referring to are Pilate, Peter, the maid and Barabbas). But now Nijhoff is divesting living creatures of the immortality that they could aspire to in the old mythology and setting up a code of activity as immortal,

1. M. Nijhoff, 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p. 406.
2. M. Nijhoff, 'Voor Dag en Dauw VIII', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p. 450.
3. M. Nijhoff, 'Open Brief', 'Voor Dag en Dauw', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p. 441.
4. Letter from Nijhoff to Kamphuis, 26/10/1937, quoted by W. Spillebeen, 'De Geboorte van het Stenen Kindje', p. 194, note 17.

which is followed in a vicious circle by successive generations. In the sky he sees a crown of thorns, rod, nails, dice and a lance as new constellations for the current age:

"Voor ons werd marteltuig tot sterrenpracht.
Wij zien de Doornenkroon ten hemel beven,
zien Geselroe en Spijkers schijnsel geven,
en Dobbelsteen, en Lans met lange schacht."

The figures used in former times to designate the constellations were, he says, those of an innocent race ("schuldeloos geslacht"). Their bull, bear, swan or eagle (these figures are named in a 1932 version called 'De Gesternten'¹) stood respectively for ideals of strength, courage, beauty and power, and such ideals were held sacred, but when the perfect man, the son of God, came to earth he was murdered ("de moord te Golgotha"), and so the ancient ideals no longer apply, and symbols of a murdered ideal replace them.

While the objects of the Crucifixion are visible in Nijhoff's view of the constellations, Christ himself, the Crucified one, is invisible behind them:

"Verheimelijkt temidden van die luister
breidt de Gekruisigde zijn armen uit."

Use of the word "verheimelijkt" infers that Christ is deliberately concealed from view, and the variant first edition text goes so far as to suggest that Christ is anxious to get away from the world, stating that the sound can sometimes be heard in the sky of divine footsteps fleeing from the earthly gloom ("goddelijke voeten ... die langs den melkweg vluchten uit dit duister"). However, in 'De Gesternten' (1932) (the original version of the poem), Christ's ascension to an absolute darkness in heaven - "volslagen hemeldonker" - has caused him no comfort, but a mood of despair ("vertwijfeld").² What is intended in Christ's action of extending his arms is a matter for surmise; it could be a sign of totality, an all-embracing gesture, but could indicate total surrender or total acceptance, or it could be a forbidding gesture. According to 'De Gesternten' it is a hopeless gesture ("Gekruisigde armen ... strekken zich vertwijfeld uit"),³

1. M. Nijhoff, 'De Gesternten', 'De Gemeenschap', 1932, p. 19.

2. id.

3. id.

just as in the earliest 'De Schrijver' poem (1933) a writer, torn between looking above and below, also experiences in "vertwijfeling" the outstretched posture of a crucified man ("Zoo ziende wordt hij op een kruis geworpen en in vertwijfelingen uitgerekt"¹). By setting the appearance of the instruments of affliction against the concealment of Christ, Nijhoff implies either that the world is left alone to its own suffering without any contact with Christ, or that reunion with Christ is only possible by way of suffering. Experiences similar to those undergone by people at the time of the Passion still occur:

"Wie voeren in het ondermaanse duister
onder Pilatus' oog zijn Passie uit?

Petrus, de Dienstmaagd, Barbas zonder kluister.

Geen haan kraait. Geen hond blaft. De zon blijft uit."

Mortals are consigned to the gloom of "ondermaanse duister", both the moon and darkness being symbols of deathliness. When people act in similar scenes to those of the Passion, no signals of divine intervention are given; no cock crows, nor dog barks, and the sun keeps shining. Nijhoff clearly alludes in the last line to the account in the Gospels of Peter's denial of Christ, immediately after which a cock crew. A cock is a herald of dawn and the sun, and when it crows it takes its cue from the sky (a cock is a character in 'In Holland Staat een Huis' and its authority overrules that of Klok, symbol of earthly time²). It acts therefore as a symbol of heavenly announcement or warning, and of divine truth; in the context of Peter's denial, it signifies an irrefutable accusation that puts to shame. Nijhoff also clearly alludes in the last line to the Gospel report that the sun became dark when Christ died. Since the sun is a traditional divine symbol, its darkening signifies either the loss of Christ to the earth or God's displeasure. With two allusions to Biblical accounts of the Passion in the last line, one would expect that the other reference - to a

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.404.

2. M.Nijhoff, 'In Holland Staat een Huis', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', pp.455-495.

dog's barking - was drawn from the same source, but this is not so (the only place where the Bible makes a connection between dogs and the Crucifixion is in Psalm 26, verse 6: "For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet"); neither is the source an apocryphal scripture, so it looks like a personal interpolation to the Crucifixion story by Nijhoff. A dog's bark is a warning signifying trouble in the air; because of its keen perception, the dog was reputed in folklore to be able to detect spirits, including the Angel of Death.¹ As a guardian, a dog guards entrances and exits, and so may be thought of as guarding the entrances and exits of life and death. It has associations with death from the legend of Cerberus guarding the gates of Hades. Thus in 'De Nieuwe Sterren', the dog's bark is probably meant to represent a warning of death or of supernatural disturbance (cf. a suspicious dog eyeing Sebastiaan in 'Het Veer'). Such a warning is not given in the current world of lost ideals. It seems that in the themes of suffering and gloom in 'De Nieuwe Sterren', Nijhoff is getting back to the pessimistic attitude of his early poetry. There is no expression of enjoyment of life or feeling that life is wonderful, but at the same time no expression of longing for an afterlife. Enactment of the Passion by people in this life recalls the condition of the man "naakt aan een paal geslagen door de koorden" in 'Het Licht' and of the soldier - "een spijker door mijn hand" - in 'De Soldaat die Jezus Kruisigde'. This idea that man suffers like Christ, but irrevocably separated from Christ, is succinctly put by Nijhoff in an article of 1936, with reference to Revius's 'Hemelvaart': "Christus is onherroepelijk ten hemel opgevaren en heeft op aarde geen ander licht nagelaten dan het licht dat de menselijke figuur, het lijdend evenbeeld van Christus, kan omstralen."² In former religious poems, a heavenly ideal is usually visible as a compensatory factor for worldly suffering, but in 'De Nieuwe Sterren', man is left with just

1. A.de Vries, 'Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery', p.140.

2. M.Nijhoff, 'Jacobus Revius 1586-1936', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.817.

his arduous lot, and the only visible symbols he has from the sky confirm the suffering he must endure. There is a clue to the mood behind this poem in the Enschede lecture, where Nijhoff talks of a bankruptcy of ideals in modern times, and cites a book by J. Huizinga, 'In de Schaduwen van Morgen' (1935), as an embodiment of this view. In a pessimistic utterance not in tune with the rest of the lecture, he says that everything in the modern era is doomed: "Wij leven in een periode, waarvan hoogstwaarschijnlijk alles verloren gaan zal, en waarin alles wat nog gecreëerd wordt ten dode gedoemd is."¹ (But he does shrug his shoulders in the next sentence: "Maar zo is het nu eenmaal"). 'De Nieuwe Sterren' also expresses an extreme view that is discordant with the rest of the volume.

A completely different note is struck in 'De Vogels', which accepts the possibility of good things in life if different social levels can exercise a bit of give and take, which they do not do at the moment. Approval shows through for the working class, because they provide things for others. They offer bread to the birds, who are representatives of heaven:

"De hemel vraagt om kruimels van het land."

By analogy, in working the factories (it is factory workers who appear in the poem), they provide supplies for those levels of society above them. But the authorities do not act in like manner by providing tit-bits for the poor people (those at the "stempelbureau") dependent upon them; tit-bits in the shape of cinemas, bicycles and radios:

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

To the poor, the authorities who could provide such benefits are the representatives of heaven. Not that the poor people equate them with heavenly beings, but in asking heaven for what they want, they know that the authorities are the means by which they can get it. "Om kruimels van de hemel vragen" sounds as if they pray, but they are outside the labour

1. M. Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp. 1161-2.

exchange in the poem, so their request to heaven is closely related to a request to the authorities. The moral of the poem is cooperation between higher and lower levels of society, and correspondingly between heaven and earth.

'De Vogels' is the first poem in which Nijhoff uses the term workers or workman to designate a type, although the toiling donkey and the old woman in 'Florentijns Jongensportret' belong to a similar category. The relation, in the latter poem between upper and lower classes, with implicit criticism of the former, is brought into an up-to-date context in 'De Vogels'. Admiration for workers is an idea that arises from Nijhoff's new attitude, and the worker comes to occupy a place in his estimation not unlike that of the child or the soldier. His attention is drawn to the figure of a workman in Menno ter Braak's novel 'Hampton Court', which he reviewed in 1932. The hero of the novel is a prodigal who ends up sitting on a park bench next to a workman, and Nijhoff regrets that the novel, instead of ending here, does not start with the insight into life which the prodigal derives from seeing the workman sitting eating his bread.¹ In 'Awater', workers - "arbeiders, hun blauw werkpak nog aan" - are to be found amongst those attracted to the preaching of the Salvation Army lady. 'Het Uur U' has mention of a workman who has been digging holes for trees in the street; the trees, as Nijhoff says in his letter to Miss van Dis, symbolise life, and the workers are to thank for digging the holes to plant them in - "dank zij de arbeiders, zijn de kuilen daarvoor gegraven".² Thus Nijhoff has a rather sentimental opinion of the workman, who, like the soldier, stands for the exemplary way of life of a man performing his simple duty in the service of his superiors, like man living his life in the service of God. The workers from whom the birds receive their crumbs in 'De Vogels' come from a factory on the opposite side of something ("fabriek aan de overkant"). On the opposite side of what is not stated, but the place they have come over to is a place of

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Kroniek der Nederlandse letteren III', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.708.
2. M.Nijhoff, letter to Mej.van Dis, 'De Gids 118', 1955, I, No.6, June 1955, p.405.

leisure which contrasts with the place of work they come from:

"De arbeiders der fabriek aan de overkant
gaan, als de stoomfluit schaften heeft gefloten,
op een terrein, door muren ingesloten,
voetballen, vechten, eten."

At the sign of a steam whistle (reminiscent of the whistling kettle in 'Impasse' which signals a change of mood from mundane to romantic), they cross over for their lunch-break to the security of a piece of land flanked by walls, where they can relax and play games. It is as if they have crossed over from real life to a miniature paradise. This little sanctuary of pleasure (called indeterminately a "terrein", but more attractively a "wei" in the variant first edition), in which the birds come right up to hand and foot, provides a hint that the workman is one who can come close to heaven.

But while the factory workers have found their pleasure ground, the poor people who go to the state benefit office lack amenities, and they are observed on a bridge, as if hoping to cross to a better standard of life (the workers reach the "overkant", but those out of work are stuck on a bridge):

"Ik heb hen vaak op de brug gâgeslagen,
zij haalden brood op het stempelbureau."

They do not get the gifts from above that would satisfy their wishes. So the second part of the sonnet (the final tercets) is essentially about class distinction, which, through the phrase "kruimels van de hemel vragen", is related to a distinction between heaven and earth. Whereas the workers (who are in a position of giving) have a good relationship with above, the poor people (in a position of need) have an abortive relationship, because they are denied by the authorities of society who could help.

After the two sonnets with themes of hardship - physical suffering in 'De Nieuwe Sterren' and deprivation in 'De Vogels' - the final two sonnets of the volume are quite idyllic, backed by an atmosphere of eternity.

'Ad Infinitum' has perpetuity in its name, and it ends

in a scene of complete happiness and new-born life, that recalls the end of 'Het Veer'. But there are serious undertones to the start of the poem, with solemn Biblical language alluding to the Virgin Mary and the Crucifixion. Right at the beginning, a handmaid pours the blood of a slaughtered lamb from a bowl:

"De dienstmaagd giet van het geslachte lam
het bloed de schaal uit."

"Dienstmaagd" is a term practically unused outside a religious context. It may be remembered that the word occurred two poems earlier (in 'De Nieuwe Sterren') in reference to the maid to whom Peter denied Christ, but it also has specific associations with Mary, who was "de dienstmaagd des Heren".¹ The bowl which has collected the blood of the lamb could suggest the grail, which was supposed to have been used by Joseph of Arimathea to collect Christ's blood at the Cross; in Robert de Borron's 'Joseph of Arimathea', the first Christian grail romance, the grail is reputed to be the dish on which the Paschal lamb was served at the Last Supper.

A lamb is a common symbol in Christian culture for Christ, who was introduced by John the Baptist with the words "Behold the Lamb of God". (One famous example of the lamb symbol in art is that of the Van Eycks' painting 'De Verheerlijking van het Lam Gods'). In ancient Jewish custom, the lamb is a victim for sacrifice, and Christianity compares Christ to the slaughtered lamb. The flesh of the slaughtered lamb in 'Ad Infinitum' is being roasted over a fire, which may recall God's instructions to Moses concerning the institution of the lamb sacrifice at the original Passover (the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt): "they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire".² Nijhoff deliberately juxtaposes images of flesh and flame in a single sentence - "Het vlees hangt in de vlam" - so that with the flame as a spiritual symbol, the combined image is symbolic of the body being consumed in the spirit. Revius has a similar image in his 'Paesch-lam' of Christ as a slaughtered lamb being roasted in the flame: "O lam gebraden

1. Luke I, verse 38.

2. Exodus XII, verse 8.

inde vlamme".¹ Christ's Passion coincided with the feast of the Passover, and as the lamb-slaughter is taken to predict the Crucifixion, Christ confirmed the prediction and re-enacted the original Passover rite at the Last Supper, symbolically offering his body and blood as food for man's salvation. The meal in preparation in 'Ad Infinitum' may thus also bring the Last Supper to mind.

Besides the handmaid, there is a woman who brings fresh wood to the hearth, and this woman could in turn be reminiscent of Mary, because she is said to preserve the voice of the narrator in her bosom - "vrouw, wier schoot mijn stem bewaart" - as Mary kept the sayings of Christ in her heart.²

A Christian significance might also apply to the wood that she brings ("Gij legt naast de haard nieuw hout neer"), because wood is the material of the Cross, an idea which occurs again more explicitly in the title of Nijhoff's trilogy of religious plays, 'Het Heilige Hout'. Genesis, chapter XXII, where Abraham is prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac as a burnt offering to the Lord, has a similar reference to wood, fire and lamb, in the words of Isaac: "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"³ At the end of 'Ad Infinitum', wood is again mentioned, with the smell of carpentrywork - "pas getimmerd hout" - contributing to a blissful atmosphere.

Added to the Biblical connotations at the beginning is a tone of enchantment provided by a shining mirror, brought into focus in a three-word sentence: "De spiegel blinkt." The mystical atmosphere thus built up is the prelude to a miraculous event - the birth of a wolf cub, which turns into a white and hairless child. Both in Christian and pagan culture a wolf is a common symbol of evil, since it is feared for its vicious nature and hostility to man. It is used to represent such vices as avarice, lust and brutality. The circumstances of the wolf cub's birth, deep in a wood, its mother howling in labour, invoke initial sinister asso-

1. J.Revius, 'Paesch-lam', 'Over-Ysselsche Sangen en Dichten', p.215.
2. Luke II, verse 51.
3. Genesis XXII, verse 7.

ciations:

"Diep in het bos huilt een wolvin die baart".

A thick wood is a shady place fraught with danger, and so can stand for the unknown, or the forces of darkness, death, or the underworld. With the transformation of the cub into a child, there is a suggestion of the Christian notion of human birth produced from sin and suffering, and in consequence of the lamb's slaughter, of man's birth to salvation through Christ's death.

A man referred to as the narrator's ancestor has taken the cub from the lair and brings it indoors as a child:

"en mijn stamvader die de deur inkwam
verheft wat hij als welp het nest uitnam
en nu een kind is, blank en onbehaard."

Being instrumental in the original creation of human life, the ancestor could be suggestive of Adam; Van Dale's dictionary gives "stamvader" as a figurative meaning for the word "Adam". He might also be taken for Joseph, in view of the allusions to Mary, the mention of carpentry, and the fact that he is not the real father of the child (remembering Nijhoff's previous use of the child symbol to correspond to the Christ-child; this child has purity and innocence in its "blank en onbehaard" state).

To the end of the poem, the ancestor and the child on his shoulder stand with the narrator to take in for a moment a scene of sheer happiness. The status of the narrator is rather enigmatic; he is a descendent of the ancestor and seems to stand in a mother-son relationship with the woman ("vrouw, wier schoot mijn stem bewaart"). Standing in the company of the ancestor and the child - "Wij staan één ogenblik, hij, ik, en 't wicht dat aan zijn schouder leunt" - he may represent the present in companionship with the past and the future.

The blissful scene at the end includes some of Nijhoff's regular idealistic images: whiteness, light and appealing fragrances. It is revealed finally as being at a farm in a forest clearing, thus not close to worldly society, but an outpost of civilisation in the mysterious world of the forest:

"een wit vertrek, vol licht,

vol geur van vlees en pas getimmerd hout,
vol kort geluk, telkens opnieuw gesticht,
een hofstee op een open plek in 't woud."

The atmosphere is one of renewal, in purity and clarity, with meat for sustenance and wood for creativity. The emphasis on wood in this poem is an emphasis on productivity:

- the firewood is fuel for conversion to energy and in its production of fire stands for either the birth or (on account of the slaughtered lamb) release of the spirit. (Jung traces a sexual implication of kindling firewood in the unconscious mind, with wood as the female element¹).
- the forest is the centre for the emergence of life (the cub) from the dark unknown.
- the carpentry wood is the material for construction, like the "blinkend hout" of the new houses in 'De Twee Nablijvers'. (Freud interprets wood as female 'material', with the implication of 'mater', mother²).

Farm and forest are both productive places ensuring the continuity declared in the title. The forest farm is close to formative nature and, it seems, with the Christian allusions, close to salvation.

It is no surprise to find the motif of the mother concluding the series of eight sonnets. She is now identified closely with the general concept of woman, such that the title 'De Moeder de Vrouw' combines the two words woman and mother without any conjunction or comma between them. The woman, whom the poem is about, is sailing a boat down river singing psalms, and the narrator lying on the bank imagines that it is his mother. This is again a dreamy, unreal situation, but it arises from an ordinary one which in some respects is quite mundane. The location is given as Bommel, the only time that Nijhoff specifies a Dutch place-name, and this gives the setting the familiarity of home ground. A homely touch is the fact that the narrator drinks

1. C.G.Jung, 'Symbols of Transformation', p.148.

2. S.Freud, 'The Interpretation of Dreams', p.472.

tea there, and also familiar is the language, which begins in straightforward manner - "Ik ging naar Bommel om de brug te zien" - is at times prosy, and in one place colloquial to the extent of ungrammaticality: "Een minuut of tien dat ik daar lag, ... " starts a sentence, which breaks off to end with:

"laat mij daar midden uit de oneindigheid
een stem vernemen dat mijn oren klonken."

Bommel is chosen as the location because of its bridge, which is a symbol of access and linkage like the ferry. Four poems in 'Nieuwe Gedichten', and also 'Het Uur U', use the word "brug"; in 'De Soldaat en de Zee' it is metaphorical for life - "de brug van het leven over het leven" - which is a bridge between a starting-point and a finishing-point that are identical; in 'Het Uur U' it is metaphorical for the transfer between life and death (across the "ravin des doods"). Since a bridge passes through the air to enable man to cross from where he is to a goal, usually separated by water, it is a standard symbol of a link between earth and heaven, or life and death. The bridge at Bommel is more than just a means of access, it represents a conjunction of opposites, because before the bridge was there, the two land areas seemed to be avoiding one another:

"Twee overzijden
die elkaar vroeger schenen te vermijden,
worden weer burenen."

When Nijhoff uses the term "overzijde" or "overkant", it is usually with a strong hint that this 'other side' represents some sort of eternal realm of the spirit. It may be vaguely suggestive of a sort of Elysium, a happy land across the water, as in 'Het Tuinfeest' ("Ginds, aan de overkant, gaan reeds gitaren, en lampions, en zacht-plassende riemen") and 'De Soldaat en de Zee' ("een vizioen van een land aan de overzijde"), or be associated more with the underworld, as in 'Het Veer' and 'Een Idylle' (across Charon's ferry). In concept, the 'other side' is a composite of features which are missing from an immediate, familiar situation; thus eternity, perfection or happiness may be attributed to the other side, but in practice it is just a place or situation that is apart from and has little relevance to present

reality. Until the bridge was built, each side of the river at Bommel was remote from and had little to do with the other one, which was thus of as much relevance as the symbolic 'other side'. With the establishment of contact between the two, a neighbourliness is created instead of what seemed to be a mutual avoidance, and in this neighbourliness a message of cooperation between earth and heaven can again be read (as in 'De Vogels'). (The text says that the two sides become neighbours again - "worden weer buren" - although the people have always been separated in their current existence; if one was to question when they were in contact before, the answer might be in a previous existence). In the setting of the bridge's connection with a far bank and the expansiveness of the landscape, an impression of infinity is created, and the woman's voice that is then heard seems to be a communication straight from infinity: "midden uit de oneindigheid".

Religious associations are, as in 'Ad Infinitum', attached to the woman; in this case, and also in 'Awater', the ideal woman figure preaches the word of God, which makes her consistent with Nijhoff's own mother, whose religious convictions led her to join the Salvation Army. Awater's dream woman recommends faith, the boatwoman in 'De Moeder de Vrouw' sings psalms and calls for praise of God:

"Prijs God, zong zij, Zijn hand zal u bewaren."

Sailing through the bridge, the boat brings an extra dimension to the bridge's communicative function. Combined with the vastness of the landscape which the bridge joins, there is infinity in the river which passes under it. Because she seems to come from an infinite realm, and because she is singing psalms, the boatwoman is identified with the mother, who, to Nijhoff, has heavenly status:

"O, dacht ik, o, dat daar mijn moeder voer."

Some discussion has arisen as to whether this line means that the narrator imagined that the woman was his mother (i.e. 'I thought that my mother was sailing there'), or that he wishes that the woman was his mother (i.e. 'Oh that my mother were sailing there').¹ Knowing Nijhoff's speciality

1. A.L.Sötemann, 'Nijhoffs 'De moeder de vrouw'', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids W.A.P.Smit-nummer', 1968, pp.134-145, & 'Naschrift', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 63', 1970, No.6, pp.458-460, & W.A.Ornée, 'Martinus Nijhoff en de binnenscheepvaart', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 63', 1970, No.6, pp.453-458.

of meaning more than he says, the answer is both. On the surface, "dat" belongs to "dacht", because a comma separates it from "o", and there is also an "O" before "dacht" to show that it is a separate idea - one of surprise. But by repeating "o" before "dat", Nijhoff also implies the wish of "O dat".

As the 'Acht Sonnetten' close with the symbol of woman, so woman emerges as an important symbol of 'Awater'. Primarily, the goal of that poem is a travelling companion for the narrator, but his prospective choice, Awater, in turn has his own goal of an ideal woman figure. 'Awater' is much longer than any of the other poems in 'Nieuwe Gedichten', and stands out not only by its length, but by the epic style in which it is constituted. Consequently it deserves a chapter on its own.

Chapter 6

'AWATER'

Prior to the start of the poem, the reader gets a clue to two of its main themes from the inscription "ik zoek een reisgenoot". These two themes are the search for a companion, and the journey. Intriguing as the title 'Awater' itself may be, it is not very revealing, but the reader soon finds out that Awater is the name of the prospective companion, and as something of Awater's nature becomes known, it transpires that he tends to become occupied with thoughts of an ideal woman figure, and the longing for her emerges as a third major theme. In effect there are two main characters, the narrator and Awater, since the poem gives a combination of what an 'I-figure' does and feels and what Awater does and feels; it does not therefore conform with the advice of the Pied Piper in 'De Pen op Papier' to convey "alleen het gevoel van anderen". A hint that it concerns to some extent the subjective experiences of the writer is already given by the "ik" of the inscription. The desire to go on a journey is a common factor that unites narrator and Awater.

Nijhoff gives a lot of background information in the Enschede lecture about his objectives in 'Awater' and about his concept of the character Awater, but this information can be misleading when applied to the actual text, which gives a different impression from what he says he intended. For instance Awater is supposed to be a random individual - "onverschillig welk individu" - and yet his character and situation make him similar to Nijhoff: he appears to be a poet and to have lost his mother.

One section of the Enschede lecture, in which a comparison is drawn between the role of poetry in the modern world and John the Baptist preaching in the desert, is particularly relevant to the beginning of 'Awater', in which Awater is like a prophet crying his message in the desert. It seems strange that Nijhoff should be referring to the world as a desert when part of the Enschede lecture is full of admiration for the efficiency of the man-made universe.

But having stated his admiration for the new order, Nijhoff then finds a defect in it; he argues that with the sweeping away of the old order, its ideals were swept away as well, and as no new ideals have come to take their place, the world is spiritually impoverished. (Loss of former ideals is a view already expressed in 'De Nieuwe Sterren'). In calling the world a desert, Nijhoff is thinking along the same lines as T.S.Eliot in 'The Waste Land'(1922), and he mentions Eliot in the Enschede lecture as one of his influences for 'Awater'. In 'The Waste Land', the world is a desert through which the way of life passes, a desert produced by a decadent society which leads a meaningless existence. Support for the theory of the world as a spiritual wasteland is found by Nijhoff in the sociological treatise published by J.Huizinga in 1935 (just before the Enschede lecture, but after 'Awater') entitled 'In de Schaduwen van Morgen'; Nijhoff reads its subtitle, 'Een diagnose van het geestelijk lijden van onzen tijd', as supporting his theory of the bankruptcy of ideals. At the time of economic and political crisis during the early 1930s, when 'Awater' was written, the structure of the new order which would replace the old one was very much in doubt. Nijhoff accepted that this crisis would pass and hoped that the collective power of human organisation - "de mens als massa" - would bring a settled society, but he was not so sure whether there was any answer to the spiritual destitution caused by the "idealen-faillissement":

"niemand zal naar de oude simplistische idealen terug verlangen ... het geestelijk deel van de crisis, het idealen-faillissement, is definitief. Geen denken aan, dat dingen als geloof, schoonheid, natuur, ooit nog als toevluchts-oorden, anders dan voor de ingekeerde enkeling, zullen dienstdoen. De mens als massa kent deze begrippen geen leidraadgevende waarde meer toe en zal daar niet op terugkomen."¹

Because there are no spiritual values to knit human organisation together, this organisation is as loose as sand:

1. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1161.

"Onze menselijke organisatie, waarvan de details zo stipt functioneren, hangt als zand aan elkaar, als men überhaupt dan nog van een organisatie spreken kan."¹

A few individuals survive who uphold their spiritual beliefs, but they stand out on their own like museum curios:

"Er bestaan nog enkele geesten, die meesters zijn, maar er zijn geen discipelen meer. En wat is geest, zonder discipelen? Een museum-curiositeit, meer niet."²

Awater, with his dreams and thoughts of far-off places as he carries on his existence in a seeming desert-world, is a bit like this, a bit of an oddity, but apparently Nijhoff's intention was to make him not at all like a museum curio, but on the contrary to make him a figure of some relevance to, and with a message for, modern society as a whole.

Awater combines two contrasting facets: he is a businessman and he is artistic. It seems that Nijhoff wanted to portray him as a poet actively engaged in modern society, but actually in the course of the poem the practical side of his life is obscured by his idealistic nature. Nijhoff devotes some time in the Enschede lecture to discussing what role poetry can play in the world, especially in a time of crisis, and the descriptive language he uses bears many points of similarity to the opening of 'Awater', suggesting that he sees Awater as a model of the poet fulfilling the role he puts forward. This role is to pave the way for a new social order, to help the soul adapt to the man-made universe:

"Verzen kunnen in crisistijd juist van groot belang zijn. De wereld ligt ondersteboven. De oude orde, dat is wel zeker, dat zegt iedereen min of meer vriendelijk of bedekt, komt nooit terug. Er zal een nieuwe orde komen, een nieuw niveau, waarbij de oude ruimte plaats zal maken voor een door de mensheid geconstrueerde ruimte. De menselijke ziel moet aangepast worden aan hetgeen de menselijke techniek

1. M. Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p. 1161.

2. id.

schijnbaar argeloos tot stand heeft gebracht. De kunst kan bij dit aanpassingsproces een grote rol spelen. De poëzie moet voor de toekomst werken, d.w.z. zich de toekomst als reeds bestaand indenken en daar als het ware voor de menselijke ziel kwartier maken."¹

(A similar idea on the role of poetry in developing the imaginative side of man in an age when science and technology were running on apace is expressed by Shelley in his 'Defence of Poetry'²). Awater as the businessman-poet may be helping to adapt the souls of his fellow men to the modern world, though this is just a background idea and is not substantiated in the text. He is compared to a prophet preaching in the desert, but what his message is is not stated; he could just as well be calling on men to forsake the modern world. When Nijhoff calls the world a desert, this does not inspire much confidence in it. "De wereld is een hel, een woestijn, voor wie zijn ogen durft opendoen" says the Enschede lecture,³ and at the beginning of 'Awater' the world is called "woest en leeg" and seen to be full of ruins; Awater is a solitary figure proclaiming a message in the desert, but nobody understands it:

"Niemand heeft ooit hetgeen hij roept verstaan.

Het is woestijn waar hij gebaren maakt."

But while there is no evidence in the poem that Awater is particularly interested in his barren surroundings, Nijhoff in the lecture says that he himself, as a poet, has adapted himself to the times, and become an ordinary person:

"Ik ben niet een verbitterde dichter. Ik sta niet met een fluwelen jasje en lange haren te kankeren op mijn tijd, omdat mijn tijd mij en mijn ziel niet hoogschatten wil. Ik heb mij aangepast, ik ben een gewoon mens."⁴

It is not satisfactory to regard Awater as such a poet. He is certainly not the bohemian type of person, nor a dandy, and neither is he long-haired, because in one scene he goes to the barber's, but he cannot conversely be classified as

1. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1162.

2. P.B.Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry', 'The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, Volume VII, Prose III', pp.134-6.

3. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1162.

4. id.

an ordinary person or as someone who has whole-heartedly adapted himself to the world, however much Nijhoff may have wanted him to fit such an image. He has a few touches of the modern man, but the poem concentrates on him as an isolated character, longing to escape the reality of his surroundings for a better existence. Yet when Nijhoff in the lecture poses the question what poetry must do to make the desert-like world inhabitable, the answer he gives fits very closely with how Awater appears in the opening page of the poem:

"Natuurlijk ook in de woestijn wonen. Maar, neen, neen, niet zwichten, niet mooi weer spelen. Geen kunst meer als troost, niet met het poëtische een half ontwaakte mensheid bedotten. Zichzelf liever beschouwen als een Johannes de Doper, gevoed met honig en sprinkhanen, gekleed met kemelhaar, schreeuwend in de dorre vlakte, op goed geloof, dat er iemand zou komen waardiger dan ik, die ik niet waardig was de schoenriem te ontbinden. Zichzelf eindeloos verminderen, maar een vast geloof hebben in de orde, in de getallen, in het door de mens gecreëerd universum, door zijn rijpe hand maar nog onrijpe ziel tot stand gebracht. Als een monnik zijn, als een soldaat zijn, met steeds die orde en discipline voor ogen, voorlopig nog alleen aanwezig in abstracte vreugde."¹

Awater is depicted just like John the Baptist:

"Hij is bekleed met kemelhaar
geregen door een naald. Zijn lijf is mager
gespijsd met wilde honing en sprinkhanen."

He also has similarities to a monk and a soldier:

"Hij heeft iets van een monnik, een soldaat".

Obviously, then, in the way he is introduced, Awater fits Nijhoff's conception of the poet performing his function in the modern world, but his subsequent conduct gives little indication that he has any firm belief in the man-made universe. At the end he does show some interest in the preaching of a Salvation Army girl, which may be a sign of him looking for a practical application for his spiritual beliefs, though his motives in watching the Salvation Army

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1164.

girl are debatable. Apart from this incident, his conduct is that of a man who lapses into reverie, who sets his eyes on the horizon, who longs to journey to another land, and who longs for an ideal woman figure.

All Awater's ideals, and most of the other aspects of his life that are disclosed, make him consistent with Nijhoff in his old poetic attitude; the one notable aspect that makes him different from Nijhoff is his office job, and this aspect reflects how Nijhoff is now seeking an outlet for wishful elements in surroundings of modern working society. By the way the narrator is attracted to Awater as a prospective companion and feels a common understanding with him, his ties with Nijhoff are at least those of a kindred spirit. However, Nijhoff denies that Awater was meant to represent anything of his own personality:

"Awater moest een willekeurig mens zijn, waarmee ik geen persoonlijke relatie had. Awater moest de naam zijn voor een mens, maar hij moest menigte en abstractie blijven. Ik moest à tout prix vermijden met hem in contact te treden, want dan beginnen de zwakheden, en ik merkte, over hem nadenkend, dat, al had ik hem nog geen naam gegeven, ik al veel van mijzelf in hem begon over te dragen. Neen, hij moest omtrek blijven, heldere, doorschonen oppervlakte. Hoogstens mocht hij een reisgenoot zijn."¹

Nijhoff therefore regards him as a sort of Everyman, embracing the generalisations of mass and abstraction; a random individual who could be anyone and is typical of the fellow man - "onverschillig welk individu, een naaste, een de menigte voorstellende, langs de dunste draad van contact mij genaderd evenmens."² What he claims for him is an anonymity like that of the man in 'Het Uur U', who also typifies the fellow man ("een evennaaste"). It is to be remembered that the date of the Enschede lecture falls in between the writing of 'Awater' and of 'Het Uur U', and that many of its ideas are more applicable to the latter than to the former. 'Awater' was written in 1934 (the first publication in

1. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1166.
2. id., p.1168.

'Nieuwe Gedichten' bore the information: "Utrecht 1934"), the Enschede lecture was delivered on 27th November 1935, and 'Het Uur U' was written in 1936 (the first publication in 'Groot Nederland II', 1937, bore the information: "Utrecht 1936"). Awater is a fairly type-cast individual rather than a symbol of "de mens als massa"; if anything, the narrator is given less personal characterisation than Awater is; he could be almost anybody going out on a brief adventure and then returning home (except that he is the same as Nijhoff in having lost his brother). The anonymous man in the street of 'Het Uur U' is much more of a random fellow man, and one suspects that Nijhoff's claims about Awater are strongly influenced by the new ideas he was formulating for 'Het Uur U'; either that, or he succeeded in creating an impersonal figure in 'Het Uur U' where he failed in 'Awater'. Even by naming Awater with that unusual name, Nijhoff invests him with a singularity and an apartness from ordinary people.

Much has been written about the meaning of the word Awater, and Nijhoff contributes to the debate in the Enschede lecture. From the horse's mouth, it was a name he accidentally overheard, which by its sound immediately struck him as perfectly suited to his projected poem. He says that at first he had tried using a different name (according to Cola Debrot, this was Ter Haar, the name of the brother-in-law of a friend¹), but this name had been a hindrance because it kept calling to mind the figure to whom it belonged - "Een naam is een mens."² One is tempted to point out that in severing all objective connections between his proposed hero and another person from the real world, Nijhoff leaves the way open for Awater to take on subjective qualities of his own personality.

There was a real person who had a name sounding like Awater, but this person was in no way known to Nijhoff. It was someone whom he heard a doctor enquiring about on the

1. C. Debrot, 'Ontmoetingen met M. Nijhoff', 'De Gids 116', 1953, No. 4 & 5, April-May 1953, p. 232.
2. M. Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p. 1167.

telephone:

"Op een middag dronk ik koffie bij een vriend van me. Er was ook een dokter aanwezig, die ik voor het eerst ontmoette. Hij zei: "Ik moet even het ziekenhuis opbellen, om te zien, of ik nog blijven kan." Hij vroeg de verbinding aan met een kliniek en informeerde, hoe de toestand was van de patiënt Awater. Ik hoor hem nog zeggen: "Awater, neen, neen, Awater". Terstond besloot ik die naam te nemen."¹

It is unlikely that this person's real surname was Awater, since it is very rare as a Dutch name (though Van Caspel notes that ninety-six instances of it were recorded in Gelderland, concentrated around Nijmegen, in the 1947 census);² a probable explanation is that the real name was A.Water, and the doctor was stressing the A, which may have been misheard at the other end of the line as an H or a K. Nijhoff could in turn have mistaken it for Awater, being susceptible to such a misinterpretation, since the sound Awater gave the right sort of associations he was looking for. But while the name arouses appropriate associations for Nijhoff, connections between him and the person it belonged to could not be flimsier:

"Een nog vluchtiger verbinding dan tussen mij en de man, die in het werkelijk leven Awater heet, is wel niet denkbaar."³

The same could be said for the connection between the character Awater and the real person (substituting Awater for 'mij' in the above quote). Awater has little in common with anyone except Nijhoff, though he still remains vague enough for Nijhoff to be able to claim that he is not meant to resemble him.

Some of the associations that the name Awater arouses are listed by Nijhoff in the Enschede lecture:

"A is het oude woord voor water. Awater = 2 X water. Het water, dat het water weer smaak geeft. Het eerste water.

1. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1167.
2. P.P.J. van Caspel, 'Er staat wel wat er staat', 'Spektator 6', 1976-1977, No.2, September 1976, p.70, note 42.
3. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1167.

Maar er is meer en dieper in dit woord. Het is ook een woord in het Sanskrit, waarop de heer Van Leeuwen heeft gewezen, het is ook een monogram van de beide voornamen mijner ouders."¹

Foremost among its associations are the fluidity of water and the notion of commencement in the latter A (as first letter of the alphabet). Nijhoff must have been fully aware of these two associations as he wrote the poem, they are not subconscious ones, because he starts with an invocation to the spirit that moves upon the face of waters of commence-ment:

"Wees hier aanwezig, allereerste geest,
die over wateren van aanvang zweeft."

The fluidity inherent in the name reminds Cola Debro of Heraclitus's doctrine of constant flux and change: 'panta rhei'(all things flow).² This would make Awater equivalent to the 'I-figure' in Proust's 'A la Recherche du Temps Perdu', whom Nijhoff describes in the deleted section of the Enschede lecture as "een ik, dat zo vaag en vloeibaar is gebleven, dat het geheel opengesteld is om iedere van buiten komende beweging te registreren, registraties, die duidelijker een objectief beeld krijgen naarmate zij van verder komen."³

Seeing as Nijhoff refers to a spirit together with the waters of commencement, it is probable that he is also conscious of spiritual associations aroused by the name Awater. These associations may come from the Sanskrit meaning of the word ('avatar'),⁴ although the Enschede lecture implies that Nijhoff only became aware of this Sanskrit connection after Van Leeuwen had pointed it out. (An 'avatar' is an incarnation of Vishnu, the Hindu god of the restoration and preservation of all created things). More than associations of fluidity, commencement and spirituality is not likely to have registered with Nijhoff initially; he became aware of other associations later. This is the case, for example,

1. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp.1167-8.
2. C.Debrot, 'Ontmoetingen met M.Nijhoff', 'De Gids 116', 1953, No.4 & 5, April-May 1953, p.232.
3. M.Nijhoff, 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1169.
4. W.L.M.E.van Leeuwen, 'M.Nijhoff', 'Drift en Bezinning', p.81.

with the observation that the name is a monogram of his parents' first names, as he admitted in a letter to Gerrit Kamphuis:

"Mijn zuster hoort in Awater een samenstelling van de voor-
namen mijner ouders (Alida-Wouter) - "Geef hem ons aller
vóórnaam bij elkaar." Maar ook daarop ben ik eerst na de
publicatie opmerkzaam gemaakt."¹

Kees Fens reckons that there is a suggestion of Adam because
of the line "Geef hem ons aller vóórnaam bij elkaar" when
Awater is introduced.² In the light of the Genesis allusions
at the start of the poem, it is a plausible connotation.
This line occurs a few lines before Awater is named, and in
a context which contrasts with the line in which he is
named, because at first he is introduced as nameless:

"Ik heb een man gezien. Hij heeft geen naam.

Geef hem ons aller vóórnaam bij elkaar."

Adam is used in expressions in both Dutch and English deno-
ting a loosely defined someone. Van Dale lists "familie van
Adams wege", with the meaning "even ver of na in de familie
als ieder willekeurig persoon"; English has the expression
'I don't know him from Adam'. But Awater is only the name
which is applied at the office, as opposed to his nameless-
ness in a more general context:

"Hij werkt op een kantoor, heet daar Awater."

So this name is a separate idea providing a specification
where before he was as unidentifiable as Adam, though it may
still carry an echo of the latter. As Lulofs has pointed
out, the stress on the first syllable of "vóórnaam", which is
accented in the text, could have a time indication suggesting
that Awater's nature derives from a time before names differ-
entiated individuals ("een naam van voordat we een naam
hadden").³ The name Awater is presumably a surname, because
it is used in the formal environment of the office, and later
someone who does not know him well uses it when referring to
him ("kent u Awater niet? ... ik ken hem, maar ik ken hem

1. Footnote to the Enschede lecture in 'Over Martinus Nij-
hoff', 'Maatstafdeeltje No.2', 1953, p.34.
2. K.Fens, Review of L.Wenseleers, 'Het Wonderbaarlijk Lichaam',
'De Tijd', 27th August 1966.
3. F.Lulofs, 'Aantekeningen bij "Aantekeningen bij Awater"',
'De Nieuwe Taalgids 60', 1967, No.4, p.263.

niet intiem"). A first name is what people are known by familiarly, and so "Geef hem ons aller vóórnaam bij elkaar" is an indication that, regardless of his name, Awater is meant to have in some respect a nature familiar to all humanity and representative of a collective concept of man (such as "de mens als massa"). (A minor detail concerning names in 'Nieuwe Gedichten' is that apart from the Biblical characters in 'De Nieuwe Sterren' only two characters are named, and both of them have names fairly similar to Dutch poets: Sebastiaan/Bastiaanse,¹ Awater/Adwaïta. This looks like coincidence, but it may be that Awater has the ring of a poet about it.)

Besides the information relating to the character Awater that Nijhoff gives in the Enschede lecture, Cola Debrot is also able to provide some inside information about him, gleaned from Nijhoff.² Debrot confides that Potgieter was the original model for Awater, because Potgieter was considered an ordinary businessman type of poet as opposed to the bohemian type. Awater was therefore given a little beard like Potgieter - a "ringbaardje" - but was named Ter Haar after a brother-in-law of Nijhoff's friend Pijke Koch. Later the name Ter Haar was abandoned as unsatisfactory, and Potgieter did not seem a modern enough example, so the new model became a certain acquaintance called Straat - "clean-shaven publicist".³ (Supporting this last description is a variant in the first edition text of 'Nieuwe Gedichten': "Awater is clean-shaven van gelaat."). By being brought more up-to-date, Debrot sees Awater made into a symbol of modern man, with something of the versatility of modern man conveyed in his name, with its suggestion of fluidity ("panta rhei").

From all this external information, a list can be made of some of the things that Awater might possibly represent, and tested against the internal information of the poem itself:

1. K.Fens, 'Het Veer' van M.Nijhoff', 'Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde te Leiden, 1966-7', p.32, note 3.
2. C.Debrot, 'Ontmoetingen met M.Nijhoff', 'De Gids 116', 1953, I, No.4 & 5, April-May 1953, pp.227-238.
3. id., p.232.

- 1) "geest zonder discipelen. Een museum-curiositeit".
- 2) a poet who is "een gewoon mens".
- 3) "een Johannes de Doper", with a firm belief in the man-made universe.
- 4) "onverschillig welk individu, een naaste".
- 5) modern man.

Serious objections stand in the way of most of these possibilities, but equally there are moments when they have some validity. Just as the Enschede lecture is contradictory, Nijhoff tried to combine contradictory aspects in Awater, but the resulting figure does fit a type, albeit not a type that Nijhoff describes accurately in his comments on the poem.

- 1) "Geest zonder discipelen. Een museum-curiositeit":

From the belittling tone with which Nijhoff describes the solitary, spiritual type of person as a museum curio, it is improbable that this is how he viewed Awater, and yet this is the type that most closely fits Awater's nature. He is not party to any general 'idealen-faillissement', but clings to ideals and, whether as prophet or poet, holds a firm belief in the power of the spirit. His orientation towards the spirit-world completely overshadows his participation in the real world: at the office it is as if he is in a temple and he gets carried away into dreams of his dead mother; when he leaves the office he notices nothing of the people or the city about him but is dreaming again with eyes only for the horizon; as he walks through the city streets he shows signs of a longing to travel overseas to a distant land; at the barber's he is enveloped in a deathly atmosphere and seems to enter into the world of the mirror; he goes into a café where he has a vision; he goes into a restaurant and recites a sonnet about an ideal female who visits him in sleep; and finally, he is attracted to the preaching of a Salvation Army lady. Although he lives in the modern world, he does seem out of place, and his resemblances to a Biblical character may have worked against what Nijhoff intended, making him rather quaint, instead of like a modern John the Baptist or a modern Moses. He follows remote ideals; in Nijhoff's opinion, ideals less remote than these are only for the introverted individual and no longer have any rele-

vance to the modern age: "Geen denken aan, dat dingen als geloof, schoonheid, natuur, ooit nog als toevluchtsoorden, anders dan voor de ingekeerde enkeling, zullen dienstdoen."¹ Awater is recommended to faith by his dream woman and seems to accede to this ideal when he listens to the Salvation Army lady. His principal ideals are a woman figure (for qualities of loving kindness rather than sexual attraction), and the journey to a new life. All his ideals are centred on a heavenly and not on a worldly existence, so that his preaching and the Biblical allusions seem to be connected with salvation and resurrection to a heavenly realm. If the passage about the primordial spirit moving over waters of commencement is taken as a clue to Awater's nature, it could allude, as well as to the Creation, to John III, verse 5, where Christ says, "Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." A resemblance which Awater shows to Moses, in a passage alluding to the serpent of brass that Moses set up in the desert, may recall Christ's analogy between this serpent and his own resurrection: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up".² As noted before, the interest in the Salvation Army lady at the end could mean that Awater sees a practical outlet for religious faith, but his interest could be more for the girl and personal consolation in her message of love.

Having established that Awater's nature is a spiritual or unworldly one, it cannot be said that he is completely alone and without adherents. He may not show any enthusiasm for the real world, but he is not cut off from it; he is actively engaged in it. He is acknowledged as a great artiste in the restaurant and applauded, but his audience are probably admirers rather than followers, since "niemand heeft ooit hetgeen hij roept verstaan". One definite follower he has, though, is the narrator, who, for the duration of the poem, inclines to him like a disciple to a master, but eventually fails to clinch such an association when put on

1. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1161.
2. John III, verse 14.

the spot (cf. "Er bestaan nog enkele geesten, die meesters zijn, maar er zijn geen discipelen meer"). It is the relationship between the two during the course of the poem that is the real key to what Awater symbolises. The curiosity value attached to Awater is really a question of what the reader feels. Awater is either a museum piece or a pioneer according to whether the reader finds this sort of character out of date or ahead of his time. There are indications either way:

ancient - Biblical prophet in the desert, and a reputation he has for reading Greek or Irish.

modern - office job, haircut and restaurant performance. This combination of ancient and modern is a basis for the universal quality in Awater's nature.

2) A poet who is "een gewoon mens":

In the opinion of one commentator, Awater is not a poet but a singer.¹ Nowhere in the text is it stated that he is a poet, though the sonnet in the restaurant is probably his own composition, since it is "zijn lied". Still, he is only presenting it as a performer singing a song:

"Dan staat Awater op en zingt zijn lied".

(The specification of poetry in the Enschede lecture in the passage about the poet operating like John the Baptist in the desert is not applicable to an internal textual assessment). Use of the phrase "zingt zijn lied", however, is no proof that Awater does not recite a poem. As pointed out in Chapter 4 (p.62), the close proximity between poetry and song is witnessed in the fact that poets often call their poems songs. Verse structure governs how close poetry comes to song, thus regular rhythm and rhyme invest a poem with musical quality. The sonnet in 'Awater' has a fairly balanced rhyme and rhythm, and especially in the context of the story-telling and at times colloquial style of the rest of the poem, is well-suited to the figurative description of song. Even if the reader chooses the reading that Awater literally sings, it must be acknowledged that the words, which are reported in full, are more important than the music, about which nothing is said. Moreover, some varia-

1. P.P.J. van Caspel, 'Er staat wel wat er staat', 'Spektator 6', 1976-1977, No.2, September 1976, p.66.

tions in metre and a pause in the middle of the third line do not exactly fit a musical tempo and are more appropriate to a spoken rendition. Awater, therefore, either recites a poem or sings a song with a verbal bias which brings it close to poetry. It is impossible to prove whether Awater is supposed to have composed the sonnet himself or not, but even this question does not decide whether he can genuinely be called a poet. A person does not actually have to write poetry to be called a poet; in everyday society, someone who is known to read poetry or who uses poetic turns of phrase in speech is liable to be labelled a poet by his mates. Awater is very much in sympathy with the words of the sonnet which are highly subjective, and even if he did not write them, he gets very emotionally involved in uttering them, so that he fits the poet-type. But whilst the words of the sonnet are all-important to Awater and to the reader, it is the performance that matters to the audience. This is a restaurant with a stage, and what they get is a cabaret act. By the phrase "zijn lied", it is possible that this sonnet is the piece by which Awater is known, and that the audience have heard it before, but the condition that Awater is in afterwards argues against this possibility. The experience is too profound to be a repeat performance. But it is still the rendition that counts for the audience, and not the words, which surely do not mean much to them. It is unlikely that the words have sunk in sufficiently for their meaning to be the cause of the ovation that immediately ensues. The statement that Awater 'sings' indicates both emotion and the element of performance which entertains the audience, while the fact that he presents a sonnet is an indication that he is a poet, or at least a poet-type. Awater's performing role is also indicated by the term 'artiste' ("Wij hebben tussen ons een groot artiest"), as Van Caspel notes,¹ and this function of Awater as a performer rather belies Nijhoff's attempts to make him an ordinary person. In the Enschede lecture Nijhoff says of himself, with regard to giving poetry a role in the world: "Ik heb mij aangepast, ik ben een gewoon mens."²

1. P.P.J.van Caspel, 'Er staat wel wat er staat', 'Spektator 6', 1976-1977, No.2, September 1976, p.66.
2. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1162.

Awater as a businessman-poet has at least tried to adapt himself to the needs of the world, he is not the 'fluwelen jasje en lange haren' type that scorns conventional society. By at first taking Potgieter as a model (on Debrot's evidence), Nijhoff demonstrated a desire to make Awater a poet who is an ordinary person, and one can imagine that with a regular office job, Awater would generally lead the life of an ordinary person. But this is not how he appears in the poem, where so much emphasis is placed on unusual and unworldly aspects of his character. Compared with a standard image of poets as long-haired eccentrics, he is fairly ordinary, because he conforms to an office routine and gets his hair cut. He is closer to everyday society than poets are normally reckoned to be. But being a poet who is more ordinary than some is not his chief function in the poem. His chief function is to be the narrator's prospective ideal companion, and from this angle he symbolises something unique, not something ordinary.

3) "Een Johannes de Doper", with a firm belief in the man-made universe:

John the Baptist is not specifically named in the text, as he is in the Enschede lecture, but Awater's resemblance to him at the start of the poem is indisputable. The wording of the text is closely adapted from the Bible:

"Zie hem. Hij is bekleed met kemelhaar
geregen door een naald. Zijn lijf is mager
gespijsd met wilde honing en sprinkhanen."

Matthew III, verse 4 states: "Deze Johannes nu droeg een kleed van kemelhaar en een lederen gordel om de lenden; zijn voedsel bestond uit sprinkhanen en wilden honing."

John the Baptist fulfills a role in the New Testament as the voice which precedes the arrival of the Word, and as such is an apt symbol for the poet striving to achieve pure poetry, to give written form to the divine word. He also baptised with water to symbolise spiritual purification, and as the comparison between Awater and John immediately follows the naming of Awater, the element of water in the name might set off an association of John baptising with water. (There is no mention of water or baptism in the scene in question, so this association is a tenuous one). If Awater were described as "een Johannes de Doper" because he conveys a divine mes-

sage, the analogy would be very fitting. This is enough to account for the comparison in the text, but in the Enschede lecture Nijhoff adds a qualification to the John the Baptist image that is not so fitting to Awater: "een vast geloof hebben in de orde, in de getallen, in het door de mens gecreëerd universum, door zijn rijpe hand maar nog onrijpe ziel tot stand gebracht." As far as the reader can tell, Awater only takes part in the man-made world because it is there, not because he has any genuine belief in it. However, although Awater begins to look more of a dreamer and more of an unworldly character as the poem goes on, it is quite probable that at the beginning, Nijhoff portrayed him like John the Baptist to show him working for the soul's place in a society in whose future he believed. At this stage there is no sign of him being a poet, but the Enschede lecture confirms that Nijhoff regarded John the Baptist as a symbol for a poet serving the interests of the real world, and so Awater can be seen as realising the role Nijhoff assigns to poetry: "voor de toekomst werken, ... voor de menselijke ziel kwartier maken". One result of Nijhoff's change of attitude towards reality was that it coloured his appreciation of other poets, and he tended to observe more of a concern for objectivity and reality among his contemporaries than was actually the case. For example, it was noted in Chapter 3 that he notices a move towards reality in the poetry of Holst, saying that Holst comes to a "verbondenheid met de mensheid" and "hij is ondanks zichzelf stedelijk geworden". In his article on 'De Wilde Kim',¹ Nijhoff says that, contrary to the manner of most poets of conveying what they feel in an attempt to capture an experience of the soul, with Holst, an ideal, a state of the soul, is an initial assumption, a starting-point from which the poem descends into the material world: "zodat het gedicht zelve dus niet naar een ideale formulering of symbolisering daarvan opvoert, maar, bijna integendeel, vandaar naar de werkelijkheid van ons aards gevoelsleven richting neemt en daarin afdalend binnendringt en wortel schiet."² Nijhoff's own term

1. M.Nijhoff, 'A.Roland Holst, "De wilde kim"' (1925), 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp.358-362.
2. id., pp.359-360.

for this process is "binnensmelten". In a similar manner, Awater can be seen as contributing an element of soul to the real world, although he turns out to have little liking for this world. There is much in Awater's nature that is reminiscent of Holst (e.g. the links with the mirror, the sea, and travelling), and there is one sentence describing Awater that could well be an allusion to Holst (with his interest in Greek and Irish myths):

"Sommigen zeggen, 's avonds leest hij Grieks,
maar anderen beweren het is Iers."

As far as a belief in the real world is concerned, Awater shows no proof of it in the text, but he is not a complete misfit because he does compromise with the real world. (A possible source of the John the Baptist idea is proposed by Wenseleers, who points to Van Ostaijen's 'Zomerregenlied', in which rain is personified as "de godsgezant, Johannes die de zielen zuiver zingen zou".¹)

4) "Onverschillig welk individu, een naaste":

Nijhoff's claim that Awater could be anybody does not hold water. Awater is continually being singled out, and the narrator keeps a careful watch on him to make sure that he is just the right man to be a travelling-companion. The first sentence in which Awater is referred to - "Ik heb een man gezien" - is ridiculous if it does not mean that there is something remarkable about this man. Those early comments about him being nameless and giving him everybody's first name are a decoy to the fact that in the narrator's eyes he is unique. Of course, until Nijhoff has filled in a few details about him, the reader does not know him from Adam, and his relationship to the narrator has not yet been developed, so he may look like a random individual to start with. When he first appears after the invocation to the "allereerste geest", as an anonymous figure who incorporates something of everyone, he seems to be a sort of spiritual Everyman. He is, like any man, the son of a woman and a father:

"Hij is de zoon van een vrouw en een vader."

In this apparent statement of the obvious there is just a

1. L. Wenseleers, 'Het Wonderbaarlijk Lichaam', p.176.

hint that Awater is only half human. His mother is categorically a woman, but it is not specifically stated that his male progenitor is a human being. It may be that the term "vader" is only used for the sake of the a-*assonance*, and that Nijhoff just wanted to say that as the son of a man and a woman, Awater is definable as the same as any man. But woman and father is a rather strange collocation, and the phrase 'een moeder en een vader' could have been used instead. Wenseleers is of the opinion that there is a suggestion of Our Lady and God the Father,¹ which is a possible association given the religious context (though Fens calls it fantasy²). (It is not surprising that Nijhoff should use the term 'vrouw' instead of 'moeder', as the two become almost interchangeable in 'Nieuwe Gedichten' - cf. 'De Moeder de Vrouw'. Possibly the term 'vader' stands out for lacking the human specification already given in 'vrouw', and thus potentially of special meaning, but the two terms depend on each other as a joint clause, and with 'vader' fitting into the *assonance* scheme, this in turn gives special relevance to 'vrouw' for not normally collocating with it).

When Awater comes to resemble John the Baptist, he appears as a champion of the spirit, and as such stands out as a very special individual. In this scene he is a public figure, and he comes into the public eye again in the scene at the restaurant where he is greeted with acclaim. Twice, therefore, he is a figurehead to whom the attention of the crowd is directed, a focal point for 'de mens als massa'. He must have some quality which is common to the aspirations of a lot of people, but he is not over-keen to collect people around him; at least, at the restaurant he tries to decline the offer of a platform to speak from. Thus although he does have some sort of universal quality, he is not shown blending in with other people, nor trying to unite people under him. Apart from these two scenes and the final one when the narrator leaves him, Awater is looked at in isolation, and

1. L.Wenseleers, 'Het Wonderbaarlijk Lichaam', p.190.
2. K.Fens, 'Awater, leven en leer', 'Merlyn 4', 1966, No. 5, September 1966, p.361.

again could not be just anybody because of his precise correlation with the narrator, who is particular in checking out his suitability as a companion:

"Als men een vriend zoekt, is het doodgewoon
dat men eerst ziet of men bij hem kan horen."

To make completely sure, he decides to tail him. The connection between Nijhoff and Awater is supposed to be the slightest possible - "een naaste, een de menigte voorstellende, langs de dunste draad van contact mij genaderd evenmens". This is only superficially true, because although Awater is a person Nijhoff has never met, the character he depicts is one of deep affinities to himself. Likewise the narrator has only a superficial contact with Awater, by way of his observations, but he has such a deep understanding of him that he knows what his deepest personal thoughts are (e.g. in the office). Awater can still be regarded as a fellow man, however, in the same way that, according to Nijhoff, one can look on oneself as a fellow man like other fellow men. Nijhoff puts forward this idea of the dual personality of self and alter ego, in which one regards the other as the fellow man, in the dedication to 'Het Heilige Hout':

"Wie buiten zichzelf weet te treden, ontmoet terstond een naaste, en wie er dan in slaagt hem lief te krijgen, begint een Gestalte te zien, waarvoor men Virgilius of een Evangelist moet zijn om zelfs zijn omtrekken te durven schetsen."¹ As Christ said "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself", Nijhoff says that one can also look upon oneself as a neighbour and love him. Because of his affinities to the narrator, Awater seems to represent his alter ego, and the narrator is so captivated by his subject that he views him at times as a man of God. Nijhoff, in the Enschede lecture, admits that he developed a love for Awater ("de liefde die ik voor hem heb opgevat").² Love of the fellow man concentrates on his better nature and uncovers an idealised figure similar to the child, as expressed in 'De Klok der Waarheid' (a play in tribute to Queen Juliana, put on in 1948):

"Want liefde is een genade die zich aan ieder voltrekt
Die in de medemens het kind ontdekt. - "²

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Opdracht', 'Het Heilige Hout', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.257.

2. M.Nijhoff, 'De Klok der Waarheid', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.527.

Awater is too special to be just anybody, but he does bear some aspects that link him with the mass, and the narrator may look upon him as a fellow man as he tries to strike a personal relationship with him.

5) Modern man:

Having been acquainted with Nijhoff in Utrecht at the time he was planning and writing 'Awater', Cola Debrot was led to believe that Awater was a symbol of modern man, to which Nijhoff had found it necessary to add a metaphysical component.¹ There are a number of contemporary features about Awater: he moves in a world of typewriters and telephones, he gets his hair cut, smokes a cigarette, and his job is referred to by the up-to-date term of 'accountant'. (He is versatile as a businessman-poet and his fluid-sounding name may strengthen this image. Debrot sees modernity in the suggestion of 'panta rhei'²). Balanced against this are his associations with antiquity (resemblances to Biblical characters) and his desire to get away from the city and travel to a desert land. The modern man image seems to be another of the original intentions which got overshadowed by Awater's unworldly inclinations and the special relationship between the narrator and him.

All the bits of information stemming directly or indirectly from Nijhoff about the significance of Awater, really concern secondary aspects, and side-track the main issue of "ik zoek een reisgenoot". Awater's function in the poem is primarily as ideal candidate to be the travelling-companion of the narrator. The first goal of the narrator is to make Awater's companionship, and his second goal to make a journey. (He thinks it will be a journey with Awater, but the final section of the poem presents a journey that is made alone). Both have the longing for the journey in common, the narrator apparently looking up to Awater as the leader whom he will tag along with, but the main issue is whether the narrator can effect a union. He has to ascertain that Awater fits the bill exactly and then make his acquaintance; when

1. C. Debrot, 'Ontmoetingen met M. Nijhoff', 'De Gids 116', 1953, I, No. 4 & 5, April-May 1953, pp. 232-3.
2. id., p. 232.

put on the spot he ducks out of the final move, either as a dismissal of Awater or the journey, or both. Most of the attention is centred on Awater, and not much is revealed about the background of the narrator, except that his brother has died; he wants Awater to become his travelling-companion in place of his brother, so Awater's relationship to him is meant to be close like that of a brother. (Holst's ideal figure in 'De Afspraak' is also regarded as a brother; as he describes the reunion with him, Holst says: "Toen voor het eerst, terwijl ik voelde, onverwonderd, dat gij naast mij waart, wist ik, dat wij broeders zijn, al zijt gij ouder en zooveel sterker en helderder dan ik."¹). Both narrator and Awater have factual resemblances to Nijhoff: Awater is poetic, and his mother has died; the narrator is a poet (he relates the poem) and has lost his brother. Nijhoff states in the Enschede lecture that the death of his own brother was a factor behind the origination of 'Awater' ("Mijn broer, in Indië, was gestorven. Van het reisplan, ik zou hem gaan afhalen, kwam niets.")². Narrator and Awater therefore embody elements of Nijhoff and could be taken as symbols of two sides of Nijhoff's character, with the narrator corresponding to the part of himself belonging to the real world, because when he finally gets close to Awater and the journey, he starts worrying about affairs at home, and Awater as the unworldly dreamer corresponding to his ideal or poetic self. The two correspond to Nijhoff's real self and ideal self with this qualification: real self, not in the sense of what Nijhoff was really like, but a conscious aspect of the self having to cope with longing and reality; ideal self, not as a projection of a figure resembling Nijhoff, but as a hero-figure with whom he can identify. The concept of Awater as a hero-figure may recall, in the light of the narrator's eventual failure to achieve union with his 'reisgenoot', Jung's comment that the hero "does what the subject ought, could, or would like to do, but does not do".³ If the reader,

1. A.Roland Holst, 'De Afspraak', 'Verzamelde Werken III, Proza I', p.187.
2. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1167.
3. C.G.Jung, 'Symbols of Transformation', p.310.

in ignorance of Nijhoff's life or other poetry, does not identify the narrator and Awater with aspects of Nijhoff's character, he may still view them as related to one another as a duo of worldly and ideal natures. The pair may even seem a bit like doubles, reminiscent of the common motif of the 'Doppelgänger' in nineteenth-century German literature, although they do not in fact have that degree of common identity. However much a psychological analysis points to narrator and Awater as symbols respectively of the conscious self and of the wishes of the unconscious, or as dual symbols of the self, their lives are still very loosely connected. When Awater finally turns to look at the narrator, he has vague recollections of a past acquaintanceship with him ("als kent hij mij van ouds"), but there is no firm indication that he recognises anything of himself in the narrator. Nevertheless the narrator does have an affinity with and attraction towards Awater, which puts the latter into the position of a personal ideal, and he also preconceives their relationship on the level of closely aligned friendship. It could be that the narrator recognises something of his former self in Awater, since the youth or child is a concept closely connected with the ideal self. This justifies the reference that Nijhoff makes in the deleted section of the Enschede lecture to Proust's 'A la Recherche du Temps Perdu':

"Zo is alleen leven mogelijk in "le temps perdu", in de jeugd, toen wij leefden en geleefd werden tegelijkertijd."¹ If the words of the Pied Piper, "Er komt voor ieder een tijd dat een mens zichzelf ziet wegwandelen uit zijn eigen leven",² are related to 'Awater', the narrator may be trying to recapture his former self. Equally, Awater, when he turns round "als kent hij mij van ouds", may unearth a vague recollection, in this follower, of his former self. In terms of personal attachment, the pair are closer than Pierrot and Harlekijn, and Christoffoor and the satyr, but not so close as the two selves of 'De Pen op Papier'.

The angle from which 'Awater' is told is different from that of 'De Pen op Papier', which is told from the side of

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1169.

2. M.Nijhoff, 'De Pen op Papier', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1074.

the unworldly figure. In 'Awater', the more worldly figure tells the story, although he too has a degree of unworldly longing. Whatever balance is seen between the two characters narrator and Awater, they remain independent of each other in so far as they both have their own opposing features. The narrator has a desire to leave reality for a new life, but the pull of affairs at home is strong. Nothing is known about what Awater actually thinks about the real world, since, apart from the sonnet and isolated remarks from other people in the café and the restaurant, everything about him, including what he thinks, is expressed by the narrator, but his predominantly spiritual inclination does have a counterweight in his business connections. Through the eyes of the narrator, which is what counts as far as his image and his symbolic significance are concerned, Awater looks a much more unworldly character than he might be in practice. What Awater means to Nijhoff and what Awater might mean to others he comes into contact with, besides the narrator, does not count in the final reckoning, which rests on what he represents in the context of the poem, and so on what he means to the narrator.

If the narrator sees Awater as a poet, then Awater could be summed up as an ideal companion who is a poet and thus taken as a symbol of the narrator's poetic self. He fits one half of the distinction in the make-up of the poet between a poetic nature and a worldly nature, or between the poet and the man (v. Chapter 2). The poet has a classic tendency to otherworldliness because he explores an artistic field rich in psychic links with the unconscious, links which go back to a universal psyche existing long before and long after his own life-span ('ars longa vita brevis'). To follow Awater, the narrator seems to divest his worldly nature for a time. He almost literally shadows Awater, calling on his brother in heaven to protect him unseen and unheard, that no light may show up his 'spectre':

"Bescherm mij, dat mijn schim geen licht vertoont.

Bewaar mij ongezien en ongehoord. - "

Wenseleers makes an interesting comparison with Hans Andersen's fairy tale 'The Shadow', in which a scholar one night permits his shadow to leave him in order to meet Poetry,

and later accompanies the shadow on a journey, this time in the role of shadow.¹ 'Awater's' narrator does not want to be a distinct shadow, but wants to merge in with all the other shadows of the evening. Just before he enters into the shadow-world of evening, he loses his sense of earthly time:

"Het slaat half-zes. De tijd wordt eindeloos."

His earthly nature reasserts itself as he nears the station, when he is torn between going home and carrying on regardless. At this point his thoughts contain a conflict, but Awater's mental disposition is imagined by him to be uniformly idealistic throughout the poem. Awater, in the narrator's eyes, (regardless of fact), is projected as pure ideal, whereas the narrator combines worldly and ideal tendencies; the two of them therefore fit a symbolic interpretation from the narrator's viewpoint of an actual self, which is contradictory, and an ideal self which is pure. Awater's movements coincide with the movements of the universe:

"Zodra de rode zon is opgegaan
gaat hij de stad in. Hij komt langs mijn raam.
De avond blauwt, hij komt er weer vandaan."

Another celestial analogy occurs when he is compared to a planet, with "een innerlijke vaart die diep vervoert". Such is Awater's propensity towards an imaginary ideal world that his body lapses at times into an almost deathly state, making the phrase "de mens moet sterven eer de kunstenaar leeft" highly applicable to him. There are four points at which his body looks lethargic or inert when he gets into a dreamy or unreal situation:

- i) in the office "Awater's hoofd voelt zwaar",
- ii) in the barber's his image is frozen and rigid ("als een ijsberg") in the mirror,
- iii) in the café his eyes are "koel en stroef", while mentally he seems to be in an agony,
- iv) in the restaurant "hij verstijft tot graniet" and waddles out "als een pop die te zwaar is voor zijn eigen mechaniek".

By following his ideal, therefore, the narrator is continually shown a rather lifeless physical condition, which might

1. L. Wenseleers, 'Het Wonderbaarlijk Lichaam', p.185, note 87.

be read as a sign of the ideal leading to a death-state. In 'Het Uur U', a process of similar sort happens the other way round: a prospect of death gives rise to a vision of an ideal self. Both poems have a common result that reality wins the day. After Awater turns to face the narrator, the latter takes the spot decision not to join him and walks away; similarly in 'Het Uur U', when the man turns to face the children, their eyes are deflected towards the street and they eventually return home, renouncing the man as their parents also do. Something different happens at a confrontation of real and ideal figures in Holst's 'De Nederlaag' (1925): there it is the ideal figure who turns away from his earthly counterpart. 'De Nederlaag' is similar in concept to 'Awater', and Anthonie Donker goes so far as to call 'Awater' "een Nijhoffsche pendant van Roland Holst's 'De Nederlaag'".¹ In the latter, the poet meets his ideal self, who is described as "hij, die ikzelf had kunnen zijn".² Holst takes a much more critical stand towards his earthly self than Nijhoff does towards his narrator. Holst's ideal self scathingly condemns the earthly counterpart for having taken refuge in the slavery of worldly society:

"Gij zijt van mij naar slavernij gevlucht."³

Eliot is like Holst when he shows a meeting with an ideal self in the 'Little Gidding' (1942) section of 'Four Quartets': it is the ideal self that turns away.⁴ With Nijhoff the boot is on the other foot, and in talking of a traveling-companion as an illusion ("de illusie een reisgenoot te hebben") at the departure of the train in the final section, he vindicates the narrator's renunciation of Awater's company and the journey. Only in the narrator's imagination is Awater an ideal person to accompany him on the ultimate journey, and it can be seen from the abundance of semblance-words ("schijnt", "blijkt", "alsof") during the course of the narrative, especially during the exotic sequence of section 4 ("'t schijnt waar te zijn, hij wil op reis") that his

1. A. Donker, 'Poëziechroniek door Anthonie Donker. M. Nijhoff, Nieuwe Gedichten', 'De Stem 15', 1935, I, p. 176.
2. A. Roland Holst, 'De Nederlaag', 'De Wilde Kim', 'Verzamelde Werken II, Gedichten II', p. 28.
3. id., p. 29.
4. T. S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding II', 'Four Quartets', 'Collected Poems', pp. 216-219.

concept of Awater is based merely on supposition. Awater is a symbol of one man's subjective ideal.

The theme of the journey, which unites narrator and Awater to a common purpose, has a close relation to the search for the ideal self. As well as the ultimate passage from life to death or eternity, the journey can stand for the course of life itself; in 'Awater' it also incorporates the idea of finding the ideal companion. There are accordingly two symbolic meanings to the journey in 'Awater'. In the early stages the impression is given that the journey is a regular affair: Awater travels daily to and from his office, and the narrator implies that his late brother was a customary travelling-companion:

"Ik heb sinds mijn broer stierf geen reisgenoot."

One might therefore assume that the narrator is seeking someone to accompany him in daily commuting. When he says that he will follow Awater that evening, and if all is well will introduce himself the next day, it is as if he were making a trial run over Awater's route to test his suitability, with the aim of joining him for regular travel thereafter. In this case the journey could symbolise a passage through life, involving a quest for an ideal self as a fulfilment of an ambition. Nijhoff puts forward an idea like this in an article of 1936:

"De reis gaat de wereld om, om zichzelf te achterhalen, dat snelle ding, steeds ons vooruit. Maar ook dit is zo oud als de weg. Draai u om, zegt de Arabier, en gij ontmoet u zelf in de woestijn. En zij wisten wat reizen was."¹

As in 'The Waste Land', the motif of the journey is combined with that of the desert. On a journey through the desert one supposedly comes close to one's alter ego, and the desert therefore provides a convenient background for portraying the dual nature of man's personality. The desert, like the journey, changes symbolic meaning during the course of the poem. To begin with, the world is a desert, having detrimental connotations as in the Enschede lecture. But in the fourth section of the poem the desert becomes attractive, taking on different associations of an overseas land with

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Stroomlijnen. Leonhard Huizinga: "De gestroomlijnde wereld"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.800.

the promise of a happier existence: there are references to a camel train, people camping by the Nile, a pyramid and a palm tree, and a Bedouin welcoming an approaching ship. This is the point at which the journey gains new meaning as well; with the words "Ja, ja, 't schijnt waar te zijn, hij wil op reis", it becomes clear that the journey to be made with Awater is not a regular one, but a momentous one, symbolic of a passage to a new existence.

In a Christian context, for instance in Grail legends and 'Pilgrim's Progress' (and in 'De Kinderkruistocht'), a journey stands for the quest for everlasting life. Meeuwesse is reminded of a Grail legend by the image of a snowflake amongst drops of blood, as Awater meditates in the café, recalling when Parsival sees three drops of blood in snow.¹ In most Grail legends, the journey in search of the grail is linked with the objective of restoring a wasteland to fertility. Nijhoff says in the Enschede lecture that the pursuit of Awater had the effect of making the desert inhabitable for him, or at least, negotiable:

"Het achtervolgen van Awater, de liefde die ik voor hem heb opgevat, maakte mij de woestijn bewoonbaar, althans bereikbaar. De reis begon achter zijn gestalte, maar de liefde ontaardde niet in gehechtheid. Zij verleende mij juist de kracht de reis te vervolgen. Ik hoop, dat het gedicht hier iets van overdraagt."²

While he is following Awater, the narrator does have a fascinating time, but as the full significance of the eventual journey dawns on him, he begins to get cold feet. For both of them, the journey has a different meaning: the narrator realises there is a goal to the journey, but seems to be seeking an enrichment of life in the journey itself; Awater is longing to quit for the goal at the end of the journey, and his longing can be equated with the longing for eternity. The final concept of the journey symbolised in the departure of a train in the epilogue, is a remorseless exit from current reality. Neither narrator nor Awater appear in the train section; they are seen to make the journey through

1. K.Meeuwesse, 'Aantekeningen bij Awater', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 60', 1967, No.1, pp.37-8.
2. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1168.

the city, but not the journey out of the city.

As mentioned in the last chapter, the theme of the journey plays a prominent part in Nijhoff's translations of the years preceding 'Nieuwe Gedichten': in 'De Twee Duiven' (1927), 'Moer' (1928), and 'De Geschiedenis van den Soldaat' (1930). 'Moer', in particular, shows many similarities to 'Awater'. It is related in the first person, it is concerned with the function of being a writer, there is a recital of a poem to an audience, and the narrator longs to go on a journey, conjuring up the image of sun, sand, palm trees and camels in Africa; Nijhoff interpolates an adaptation of a favourite quotation from Holst, illustrating the romantic outlook towards travelling:

"Wij voelen ons weer gelukkig worden
loopende ... loopende ..."¹

In the end two of the characters set off on a journey to the Sahara desert (Biskra). A correlation between making a journey and death is to be found in Eliot's 'Journey of the Magi' (1927) which Nijhoff translated (published posthumously).² The Wise Men journey to witness a birth, but experience in themselves a death which makes them feel out of place, like exiles, when they are back in their old homes:

"We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods,
I should be glad of another death."³

From information in the Enschede lecture, a source of inspiration for 'Awater' was James Joyce's 'Ulysses', which is based on a rambling journey through a city. Nijhoff talks, in the deleted section, about four contemporary novelists amongst whose work he sought material for his new poetry: Proust, Lawrence, Joyce and Virginia Woolf. He refers to 'Ulysses' as "het grote boek van Joyce, 'Ulysses', dat de gehele kosmos beschrijft in een door Dublin wandelend mens".⁴ The Ulysses of Joyce is the admired, intellectual, poetic,

1. M. Nijhoff, 'André Gide, Moer', 'Verzamelde Vertalingen', p.499.
2. M. Nijhoff, 'T.S. Eliot, De Reis van de Drie Koningen', 'Verzamelde Vertalingen', pp.546-7.
3. T.S. Eliot, 'Journey of the Magi', 'Ariel Poems', 'Collected Poems', p.110.
4. M. Nijhoff, 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1170.

roaming Stephen Dedalus, and the setting is Dublin at the turn of the century. Like Awater, Stephen is a rather vague, remote character, and most of the events are seen through the eyes of another figure, Bloom, similar in many ways to the narrator in 'Awater'. As the narrator has lost his brother and sees Awater as a replacement, so Bloom has lost his son and sees Stephen as a replacement. Both Awater and Stephen have lost their mothers, whose memory haunts them. 'Awater' presents an evening in the lives of narrator and Awater, 'Ulysses' a day in the lives of Bloom and Stephen, and in both works the basic action is that of a walk by the two figures through a city.¹ More evidence for a comparison between 'Awater' and 'Ulysses' is provided by a short story by Nijhoff, published in 'De Gids' in 1941, which shows signs of influence from Joyce's work. 'Vragen en Antwoorden I'² gives an account by a narrator of a wander round Amsterdam after meeting a certain Ter Booghe, an intellectual, poetry-loving character, who identifies his ideas with those of A. Roland Holst. The pair visit numerous cafés with names alluding to episodes in Homer's 'Odyssey': "Kalupso", "De Cycloop", "Circe", "Phaeaken" and "De Onderwereld". There is a reference to Joyce, and judging from the modern style and city setting, it is evidently to his Ulysses rather than the classical one that this story, with its resemblances to 'Awater', is most indebted for a model.³ As in 'Awater', the two main characters finally part at a station.

Together with the narrator's desire for Awater's companionship, and the journey, the third major theme of the poem is the familiar one of longing for an ideal female. Only Awater is visibly affected by this longing, which entrances him in the office and during the sonnet-recital at the restaurant. In the first instance it is his dead mother who fills his thoughts, and the woman of the sonnet could also be his mother, because, although he does not say who he is referring to, it is a woman who is comforting ("Steeds troostte ze") and kindly ("liefelijk"), and whom he will

1. K.Meeuwesse, 'O Awater, ik weet waarvan gij peinst', 'Raam 34', April 1967, pp.43-65.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'Vragen en antwoorden I', 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp.916-923.
3. K.Meeuwesse, op.cit.(above).

never see on earth again. Whether he is thinking in each case of the same woman or not, his concept is one of loving-kindness and not of beauty or sex. It is also very remote from reality; his mother belongs to the dead, and the woman of the sonnet only comes in sleep:

" - Steeds troostte ze, steeds heeft zij als ik sliep
mij met haar liefelijke komst beziend,
de aanbedene".

This dream woman is spiritually inspiring, and by calling her "de aanbedene", he elevates her to a divine status. Her coming is directly connected with some sort of compensation for a loss ("de laatste steun die mijn verlies zich schiep") and so she could well be the ghostly apparition of someone who has died. She brings a message of faith, "ik hoorde dat zij mij geloof voorhield", and thus could be accorded a saintly status, reminiscent of a Beatrice, a Sophia, or a Virgin Mary. Although the narrator himself expresses no feelings about a woman figure, it is difficult to separate him from Awater's longing. He has no share in the dream woman of the sonnet, which is quoted in the direct speech of Awater, but is responsible for reporting the substance of Awater's musing on his mother, which might only be what he imagines that Awater thinks, instead of what Awater really thinks. Accepting that Awater does actually think about his dead mother at the office, it is still hard to believe that the narrator does not have some share in his feelings, seeing that he is able to know what Awater's thoughts are. Later, when Awater stops to watch the Salvation Army lady, the narrator notes that she has golden hair and is talking about love, which may amount to Awater's own observations, suggesting that he equates her, considering also her religious connection, with the dream woman, or may just be the personal observations of the narrator himself. Information from Nijhoff's own life, that his mother joined the Salvation Army, provides external support to the impression that Awater's deceased mother, his dream woman and the Salvation Army lady are all modes of Nijhoff's mother concept.

Dreams of or fantasy visitations by a sublime female are a common feature of Symbolist poetry. Forerunners of the type can be seen in Novalis's lost Sophie, and Poe's "lost Lenore" in 'The Raven'. There is an echo of the raven's

refrain of 'Nevermore!' in the words of Awater's dream woman:

"niet hopen mij op aarde ooit weer te zien."

Verlaine, in 'Sagesse' describes a visitation by a female figure who announces herself as "le coeur de la vertu", "l'âme de la sagesse", "l'unique hôte opportun" and "la PRIÈRE".¹ Visitation at night in dreams by an ideal female is a prominent theme of Gérard de Nerval. In Dutch poetry, Boutens and Van der Woestijne also tell of visits during reverie or sleep of an adored female. In particular, Awater's obsession with memories of a lost loved one recalls Werumeus Buning's 'In Memoriam', which is dedicated to the memory of a loved one who after death has passed into divine form. In another poem, Buning speaks of a visitation by the deceased loved one in angelic form:

"Die als de liefste ging, kwam als een engel keren".²

It is interesting to note the way the narrator reacts when Awater's concern shifts away from the journey and towards a woman figure in sections 6 and 7 ("aanbedene" and Salvation Army lady). During the episode in the restaurant there is a stretch of forty lines devoted to what Awater says and does, and in which nothing is heard of the narrator; it is impossible to tell whether he has any personal interest in the dream woman of the sonnet or whether it is just Awater's performance that captivates him. Afterwards he becomes most eager in his pursuit of Awater - "Ik volg hem op de hielen" - but there is no evidence to link this action with an attitude to the dream woman. His keenness could be because he concludes that Awater's contact with his dream woman has been broken off, and he thinks that Awater is now left with no alternative ideal but the journey; or it could be because he thinks that now that Awater will no longer be visited by his female ideal, he will have to travel off in search of her, and he wants to go too; it could just be because he concludes, or is confirmed in an opinion, that Awater is a poet; or it could be because he finds out that, like him, Awater has lost someone dear to him (he seems to

1. P. Verlaine, 'Sagesse II', pp. 75-6.

2. J.W.F. Werumeus Buning, 'Oude Verzen 6', 'Dood en Leven' (1926), 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p. 53.

have already known this, but may not have had any confirmation); or it could be because the public acclaim that Awater receives fits in with his notion of him as a leader. The prospect of the journey is of more immediate consequence than the woman, since his mind is occupied with the journey as he follows Awater again. Having followed him up to the front of the station, he then gives up his pursuit when he sees Awater's interest in the Salvation Army lady. He notices an attractiveness about her, but does not want to stop. So one conclusion that presents itself about Awater's pre-occupation with these woman figures towards the end of the poem is that perhaps it conflicts with the narrator's priority of getting a travelling-companion. Both ideals of woman and journey are combined in the train of the epilogue, but any hope of companionship in realising them is ruled out.

Although the narrator's concern with the woman figure is all second-hand, his treatment in his poem of this clear objective of Awater's does give rise to the suspicion that the woman figure is his own veiled objective, which he is reluctant to admit to, and that what lies behind Awater's function as leader on the journey is a function as leader to the female objective. The female personification of the train in the epilogue shows that this objective remains even when the companion is removed. The degree to which the female objective is hidden behind Awater, and the reluctance of the narrator to face up to it when Awater ends up by the Salvation Army lady and when the feminine train departs betray his awareness of the futility of this objective (which in psychological terms is a legacy of infantile dependence on the mother).

Throughout the poem, the narrator's enthusiasm for the pursuit of Awater rises and falls according to how what he learns about him fits in with what he seeks as a companion. He is most enthusiastic:

- 1) outside the office, from which Awater descends like Moses from Sinai, with his gaze set on the horizon,
- 2) as he follows Awater along the street, with all its reminders of foreign parts and Awater's apparent longing to go on a journey,

3) when Awater leaves the restaurant after his performance. He is unenthusiastic:

- 1) in the barber's shop, where he gets physically close to Awater,
- 2) in the café that his brother used to visit, where a difference in personality between Awater and the brother is obvious,
- 3) in front of the station, where he leaves Awater listening to the Salvation Army lady.

In all the cases where the narrator is enthusiastic, Awater is displaying signs of making a journey. In all the cases where he is unenthusiastic, Awater is in a static situation. He is turned on by the journey through the city and by the prospect of going away with Awater, but is put off by the insight into the end of the journey through the city, and the finality attached to the journey out of the city. A trace of disillusionment is detectable in the narrator's mood after the barber's shop scene. Up till this time he has been continually invoking the spirit world, but in the barber's mirror Awater appears in conversely solid form: rigid and icy. Having witnessed Awater in seemingly lifeless circumstances, he does not follow him with a will, but just mechanically: "ik volg hem op straat, werktuigelijk". Chance has it that Awater then goes straight to the café which the late brother used to visit. This is a coincidence which achieves an objective, that of substituting Awater in the brother's place:

"Het toeval neemt een binnenweg naar 't doel.

Moest het, dat Awater belanden moest

in het café waar ik kwam met mijn broer?

Het moest, en hij zit zelfs in onze hoek.

Ik zet mij ergens anders. Plaats genoeg."

Once again the narrator is put off. He does not take the opportunity to join Awater in the very corner where he and his brother sat, and probably does not recognise that the chance is there. He goes and sits elsewhere, a bit apprehensive of, or even disappointed by, Awater's manner, which is so different from that of the brother. Where the brother used to breeze into the café, filling it with the sound of his presence, Awater sits quietly and meditates and plays chess on his own. So far, Awater has not matched up to the

expectations of spiritual flexibility, nor of similarity to the brother, but there still remains the promise of the journey, which falls through when the narrator leaves Awater in front of the station while the train departs at the appointed hour. The only person who can match up to the narrator's requirements for an ideal person to make the journey to another world is himself, and he forbears to make this journey alone.

With the up-to-date, everyday scenes in 'Awater', the symbolism follows the style developed from the new attitude in 'Nieuwe Gedichten', revealing far-reaching significance in ordinary things. Extension of symbolism into the familiar, everyday world is carried further than before, and the range of suggestiveness found makes for much ambiguity. Nijhoff's later poetry can be quite cryptic at times. Kamphuis, in his essay 'Een Dichter in de Voorhoede', following up Nijhoff's references to Surrealism and New Realism in the Enschede lecture, notes some examples of surrealism in the poem: cigarette smoke which makes a "stokroos" and "ontbloeit", the shower and thriving growth of spring which the finishing touches of Awater's hairdressing suggest, the locomotive which 'lifts a knee'. Possibly in this style, says Kamphuis, there is influence from the close-up technique of cinema.¹

The admiration which Nijhoff expresses in the Enschede lecture for the technical advancement of modern times, which is compared to the working of the universe, is reflected in 'Awater' in the examples of modern mechanism with their imaginative associations:

- "Steeds zilter waait dun ratelend metaal"; a typewriter arouses thoughts of a sea breeze, and starts Awater day-dreaming.
- "Een rij auto's glijdt karavaansgewijs met zacht gekraak van leer aan ons voorbij"; a line of cars evokes an image of a desert land.
- "Het schroefblad van de ventilator wiekt"; a ventilator arouses an association with a bird.
- "Zij ziet azuur"; a steam engine with distant azure in

1. G.Kamphuis, 'Een Dichter in de Voorhoede', 'De Weegschaal II, Essays', pp.100-102

view seemingly offers a means of conveyance between this world and the absolute.

Machinery is generally associated with rhythmic and cyclic processes, and Nijhoff relates it to the cyclic order of the universe and to mental processes of expansion beyond immediate reality. As Awater recites his sonnet in the restaurant, his mental mechanism is tuned in to coordinate with the spirit-world, an area with which his body is not able to correspond because it is too solid and cumbersome; when he leaves he is described as looking like a puppet that is too heavy for its own mechanism: "als een pop die te zwaar is voor zijn eigen mechaniek".

Apparently Nijhoff made deliberate efforts in 'Awater' and 'Het Uur U' to avoid too definite or distinct meaning, or to make some passages more abstract. He says as much about 'Het Uur U' in a letter to Hendrik de Vries.¹ Familiar imagery is meant to link with more obscure meaning. Debrot talks about a first version of 'Awater' in which certain features of the final version were missing, namely Awater's sonnet in the restaurant, the Salvation Army lady, and the departure of the train; according to him the text was therefore originally of a more realistic nature.²

So far, this chapter has dealt with the story of 'Awater' as a whole, its main characters, and themes that run through it. The poem is in fact divided into eight sections, of which six give separate narrative episodes, and they are preceded by an invocatory prologue and followed by an oratorical epilogue. Each section forms an assonance group with all lines ending in the same vowel sound:

- 1) 13 lines assonant with ē (the prologue),
- 2) 35 lines assonant with ā (Awater at the office),
- 3) 34 lines assonant with ō (Awater's descent from the office),
- 4) 43 lines assonant with ei (the barber's shop),
- 5) 42 lines assonant with oe (the café),
- 6) 47 lines assonant with ie (the restaurant),
- 7) 33 lines assonant with ou (the Salvation Army lady),
- 8) 26 lines assonant with ū (the epilogue).

1. M.Nijhoff, letter to Hendrik de Vries 24/9/1941, quoted in H.de Vries, 'Kroniek van de Poëzie. Eenheid in Veelheid', 'De Gids 117', 1954, II, No. 10, October 1954, p. 307.

2. C. Debrot, 'Ontmoetingen met M. Nijhoff', 'De Gids 116', 1953, I, No. 4 & 5, April-May 1953, p. 232.

This scheme is modelled on the 'Chanson de Roland', as Nijhoff discloses in the dedication to 'Het Heilige Hout',¹ and in the Enschede lecture, where he says that rather than choosing an experimental style without proper verse-form, like Cocteau and Eliot, he chose to search back towards the origins of poetry for a form:

"Ook ik voelde, dat de emotionele versvorm niet meer deugde. Maar ik zocht, voor wat ik hebben wilde, meer naar de oorsprong dan naar een uiterste."² In one of the sections, some symbolic relation can be determined between vowel sound and content, but there is no question of a categorical pattern of vowel symbolism governing each assonance group. Verlaine had proposed a theory of vowel symbolism in 'Les Voyelles', but his ideas are very vague, and in any case the diverse linguistic distribution of vowels and the little correspondence between vowel sounds in language and sounds outside language can only produce vague associations for any individual vowel sound. Nevertheless there are extremes in vowel sounds: a close sound has a high rate of vibration, which can be linked with height, rapidity or tension, whereas an open sound has a low rate of vibration and can be linked with depth, slowness or limpness. Only in the final section of 'Awater', where the \bar{u} assonances are consistent with a feeling of thrill, is any relation between meaning and a vowel sound discernible (it is a question of the \bar{u} giving more tonal emphasis than another vowel would have done). (The \bar{a} of the second section is appropriately assonant with the name Awater, who is introduced in this section, and reinforces the primordial element which the first letter of the alphabet invests in his name). It is hard to read much significance into the vowel sounds used; the main function of the assonance groups is to delineate each section as an individual unit. Such a division of episodes can be compared with the chapter divisions in 'Ulysses'; in the deleted part of the Enschede lecture, Nijhoff remarks on how different chapters of 'Ulysses' and different books of Virginia Woolf are all written in a different style:

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Opdracht', 'Het Heilige Hout', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.256.
2. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1167.

"Ieder boek van Virginia Woolf, ieder hoofdstuk van Joyces "Ulysses", is in een andere stijl geschreven. Niet alleen wat gebeurt is van belang, maar in de eerste plaats, de wijze hoe het wordt gezien en weergegeven. Een hoofdstuk beschrijving, een hoofdstuk gesprekken, een hoofdstuk mijmering, droomfantasieën, herinneringen, voor ieder thema wordt het geëigend instrument gekozen om de mededeling en het waarnemingsvermogen te doen overeenstemmen. De lezer leeft niet enkel het gebeuren, maar ook hoe het geregistreerd werd, mee. Het boek wordt boeiend door de activiteit, die het in de lezer opwekt, niet door gebeurtenissen, die, des te eenvoudiger ze zijn gekozen, des te meer toestraling van betekenis toelaten."¹

'Awater' does not have these radical changes of style, but there are comparable variations in presentation in the different sections, with invocation, reverie, some direct speech, a sonnet, and an oratorical close.

An invocatory introduction, calling on some form of divine assistance, such as from Muse or Spirit, is a standard method of opening an epic poem, used, for example, in Homer's 'Odyssey' and Milton's 'Paradise Lost'. Nijhoff's invocation to the primordial spirit, which is a clear allusion to the opening of Genesis, draws a correlation between the creation of his poem and the creation of the earth:

"WEES hier aanwezig, allereerste geest,
die over wateren van aanvang zweeft."

Genesis I, verse 2 states as the first step in the formation of the world:

"En de geest Gods zweefde over de wateren" ("And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters"). In the third line of 'Awater', the poem is referred to as a work ("dit werk"), and more Biblical allusions - to Noah and Jonah - follow in lines 12 and 13, so that the impression is given that an undertaking of considerable importance and originality has been embarked upon, like a religious epic or something equivalent to a Biblical scripture. Creativity applies

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1170.

not only to the writing of the poem, but also to its subject matter, for there is talk of building a new world. At present the world is said to be desert and rubble ("woest en leeg", "puinhopen"), but new construction is imminent:

"Een eerste steen ligt nauwelijks terneer."

It is stated that Noah nowadays builds something other than an ark - "Noach bouwt, maar geen ark meer" - implying that the present-day builder is not preparing for the destruction of land in a deluge, not boatbuilding to save himself from a watery future, but preparing for the development of land, house-building for an earthly future. Likewise, it is stated that Jonah nowadays preaches somewhere other than Nineveh - "Jonas preekt, maar niet te Ninive" - implying that the present-day preacher is not to be found in an Old Testament city under a threat of doom, but in the modern world (anticipating the Salvation Army lady's preaching later). Man under threat was a common factor to Noah and to Jonah, but in the modern world the threat is removed, so that Noah's construction and Jonah's message of reform continue in more promising circumstances. Noah and Jonah both returned from water to propagate the Word of God, and the mention of them in the prologue can be taken as a pointer to the appearance presently of a comparable character in the poem. Images in the prologue of the desert and preaching are repeated in the following section when Awater is portrayed like John the Baptist crying in the wilderness, and with Awater's name echoing the "wateren van aanvang" of the opening lines, he seems to be conveying an element of water and the spirit to the barren world of the modern city.

At first the notion of barrenness has detrimental associations; the world is seen as "woest en leeg", and the narrator says that he does not want his poem to sing of fine weather in the face of rubble: "niet, als geheel een vorige eeuw, puinhopen zien en zingen van mooi weer". He considers that such romanticising belongs to a bygone age. Not singing of "mooi weer" implies that the real condition of the world is the opposite, in other words that its desert state is something bad, which corresponds to what Nijhoff says in the Enschede lecture:

"De wereld is een hel, een woestijn, voor wie zijn ogen

durft opendoen."¹

The phrase "mooi weer" also occurs in the Enschede lecture, where Nijhoff talks about the need for poetry to exist in the desert-world: "ook in de woestijn wonen. Maar, neen, neen, niet zwichten, niet mooi weer spelen."² Yet his attitude is somewhat different from that of Mallarmé in 'l'Azur':

"Le poëte impuissant qui maudit son génie
À travers un désert stérile de Douleurs."³

The same idea of the poet faced with a desert occurs here, but Nijhoff does not see the poet as powerless nor the desert as incapable of productivity. Still, both poets show a common disapproval of the desert-world. Eliot, too, is disapproving of this wasteland; in 'Choruses from 'The Rock'' (1934), he observes the barrenness of the desert penetrating right into men's daily lives and into their hearts:

"The desert is squeezed in the tube-train next to you,
The desert is in the heart of your brother."⁴

Although there is a mood of condemnation of the world in the opening page of 'Awater', and the allusions to Jonah and John the Baptist suggest a message of reform, Nijhoff views the desert as a challenge rather than a curse. Development and innovation are constantly at hand:

"Een eerste steen ligt nauwelijks terneer.
Elk woord vernieuwt de stilte die het breekt.
Al wat geschiedt geschiedt nog voor het eerst."

And in this potential there is cause for rejoicing:

"Geprezen!"

Before long, a noticeably different desert image begins to emerge: a desert that is not "woest en leeg" but attractive and desirable. Allusions to Moses (section 3) and the Nile (section 4) may turn the reader's mind to thoughts of a Biblical desert that meant escape from bondage, (the desert was a first step for the Israelites in their search for the promised land), and for the modern explorer is the land of search for ancient civilisations. Awater's resemblance to a

1. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1162.
2. id., p.1164.
3. S.Mallarmé, 'l'Azur', 'Oeuvres Complètes', p.37.
4. T.S.Eliot, 'Choruses from 'The Rock'', 'Collected Poems', p.163.

prophet in the desert may recall that the desert was a favourite haunt of prophets as a place of closer communication with God. In the fourth section, after references to a camel train, people camping by the Nile, a pyramid and a palm tree, the desert is mentioned as a place people travel overseas to: a "Bedouin in de woestijn" is shown greeting a ship. Thus the desert becomes a symbol of a better land, a place of hope and promise. A similarly attractive desert occurs again in 'Voor Dag en Dauw' (1936), in which the tram-driver of sonnet III says "laat de kalveren weer weiden in woestijn",¹ and sonnet VI ends with the words "De wildernis zal bloeien als een roos".² A clue to this optimistic attitude in which Nijhoff regards the desert is given in a quote from Isaiah in the introductory letter to 'Voor Dag en Dauw': "Hij zal hare woestijn maken als Eden en hare wildernis als den hof des Heeren"³ ("and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord"). ("hare" refers to Zion in the Biblical text, but Nijhoff relates it to the world). The desert seems to have a pristine quality that may link it with the past and with youth, the time when self and alter ego were closely joined: "Draai u om, zegt de Arabier, en gij ontmoet u zelf in de woestijn."⁴ It is a place of purity and permanence, offering the promise of a new, unspoilt existence. In contrast to the motionlessness of hard symbols like stone and ice, which stand for an absolute of inflexible permanence, the desert can stand for a flexible form of permanence with formative potential. Its oceans of sand make it a symbol something like the eternal sea.

Awater is introduced immediately after the invocatory prologue, and more high-sounding language and Biblical allusions couple the description of him to the grand style of the opening. For all its reminders of the past, the main setting for this second section is Awater's office, but an

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Voor Dag en Dauw', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.445.
2. id., p.448.
3. M.Nijhoff, 'Open Brief', 'Voor Dag en Dauw', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.441, quoting Isaiah LI, verse 3.
4. M.Nijhoff, 'Stroomlijnen. Leonhard Huizinga: "De gestroomlijnde wereld"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.800.

aura of grandeur is continued there. Awater brings an air of religion (he resembles a monk) and authority (he resembles a soldier) to the office:

"Hij heeft iets van een monnik, een soldaat,
maar er wordt niet gebeden, niet geblazen,
wanneer men op kantoor het boek opslaat."

To deny that there is prayer or a fanfare at the office is to raise the possibility that such events might have happened. The office symbolises some sort of focal point of religion and culture. It is like a temple or an oracle, and the accounts on which people are working there contain a mixture of Arabic numerals and Roman alphabet, combining symbols of two cultures:

"Men zit als in een tempel aan een tafel.
Men schrijft Arabisch schrift met Italiaans.
In cijfers, dwarrelend als as omlaag,
rijzen kolommen van orakeltaal."

Arabic is the language of an ancient desert civilisation, which has left its legacy in modern numerals. Italian is the modern form of language used by the descendants of the Romans, who endowed western civilisation with their alphabet; the term "Italiaans" is perhaps meant to bring out the modernity of the Roman alphabet, to illustrate the conjunction of ancient and modern in figures and letters. In the 'Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal', "Italiaansch schrift" is defined as "het gebruikelijke loopende schrift", which corresponds to the 'Oxford English Dictionary' entry under "Italian": "Applied to the form of handwriting developed in Italy, and now used in Great Britain, America, the Latin countries, and other countries of Western Europe, which approaches in form to italic printing: as opposed to the Gothic hand, formerly used in England and still in Germany, etc." The function of the references to Arabic and Italian is to indicate the cross-cultural reach of Awater's activity, supporting the impression of universality, but at the same time they help to make the office seem a foreign sort of place. In the mystical atmosphere there, people are like temple scribes, and columns of figures convey an oracular language. At a certain moment it becomes silent and warmer, and the rattle of a typewriter carries an obscure message,

in a crazy form of speech:

"Steeds zilter waait dun ratelend metaal.

De schrijfmachine mijmert gekkepraat."

A typewriter's normal function is to communicate in script, but here it seems to offer a communication in sound wafted on the breeze to or from a location beyond the sea. (Spillebeen reads "dun ratelend metaal" as being a different noise from that of the typewriter, namely that of a ventilator).¹ Because the flavour of the breeze gets saltier, it seems to be incoming, but the message of the typewriter is outgoing, addressed to Awater's dead mother. It seems as if the breeze is acting in an inspirational capacity like the "toewaaaisels" Nijhoff talks about in the Enschede lecture, but this does not prevent its inspirational source from being internal. Nijhoff acknowledges that "toewaaaisels" which come to a writer could equally come from within as from without. ("Men krijgt toewaaaisels van buiten, of van binnen").² The typewriter's message is the climax to the mystical atmosphere that has built up, and in view of the concentration on religious motifs so far, culminating in a 'temple' and "orakeltaal", this message might be presumed to belong to a pagan rite, communicating with some sort of sacred Elysium across the sea, in respect of which Awater would be acting in the function of high priest in the office-temple.

The meaning that Awater actually derives from the sound of the typewriter is a lament concerning his dead mother. He sees written down words addressed to his mother, thus a communication to her spirit:

"Lees maar, er staat niet wat er staat. Er staat:

"O moeder, nooit zult gij de bontjas dragen
 waarvoor elk dubbeltje werd omgedraaid,
 en niet meer ga ik op mijn vrije dagen
 met een paar bloemen naar het hospitaal,
 maar breng de rozen naar de Kerkhoflaan ... ""

Awater's woman figure, specifically his mother in this instance, is his religion. Here a religious background leads

1. W.Spillebeen, 'De Geboorte van het Stenen Kindje', p.221.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'Enschede lecture' 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1153.

to communication with her; in section 6, communication from a dream woman leads him back to religion. His last memories of his mother are centred on a hospital, and, as in 'Het Klimop', there is the idea of progression from the hospital to the grave. These thoughts of the dead mother give an added meaning to the falling ash and rising "orakeltaal" perceived in the figures and columns of the accounts in the office-temple, which could now relate to prayer at a funeral. Nijhoff refers to ash three times in his collected poems and in each case it is connected with something rising up from a residue: in 'Liedje' ('Vormen') it is a phoenix, and in 'Aan een Graf' ('Nieuwe Gedichten') it is little creatures rising up as sparks to the 'azure'. Later on in 'Awater', there is also the 'hollyhock' of smoke which flowers from an ashtray. So, with a hint of 'dust to dust, ashes to ashes' and the "handjevol as" which remained of the mother in 'Aan een Graf', the ash and "orakeltaal" bring to mind a funeral or mourning rite in a temple. (An oracle is not necessarily a Greek place of prophecy or a prophet, but can be the holy of holies in a Jewish temple).¹

In both cases where Awater muses about a woman figure, he is physically lethargic afterwards, as if his body is not fully alive, in much the same way as the residents in 'Het Uur U' are lethargic after their visions. Awater has been day-dreaming in the office, and when he comes to he feels the after-effects; his head is heavy, and the feeling of drowsiness is transferred to the telephone, which appears to be sleeping on its desk:

"Hoe laat is het? Awater's hoofd voelt zwaar.

De telefoon slaapt op de lessenaar."

The first thing he thinks of on waking up again is 'What is the time?' He had lost all sense of time in his dreamy state, and probably wonders whether he has unwittingly lost a considerable amount of time. But time drags a bit in his office:

"De klok tikt, tikt, slaat, tikt tot half-zes slaat."

This is one of two occasions in the poem when Nijhoff uses the image of a clock, a reminder of earthly time. The second

1. Oxford English Dictionary.

occasion is in the epilogue when the hand of the station clock jumps from minute to minute, as if eager to get to the end of an allotted time. In each case the clock imposes an awareness of time when the mood is tending more towards timelessness.

In section 3, the decision to follow Awater is taken, and the start of the pursuit is heralded by Awater's descent from his office. The idea to go and wait for Awater to come out of his office came to the narrator while he was watering flowers in his window, so some symbolic connection might be made between making the acquaintance of Awater and watering flowers: perhaps that Awater's contribution to life is like water contributing to the beauty of a flower, or that a beautiful result will come from a link-up between narrator and Awater. As with so much of Nijhoff's imagery, little meaning need be attached - in fact the remark about watering flowers is fairly casual - but an association is there if the reader wants to look for one.

It is strange that the narrator should go and wait for Awater outside the office; after all, he knows about the part of Awater's route between his home and the office. Awater passes his window every morning and evening, therefore he might just as well start his pursuit where the unknown part of Awater's route begins, namely outside his house en route to wherever Awater goes to after work. On the particular day of the story, when the narrator follows Awater from the office, Awater and narrator either pass the narrator's house without the narrator mentioning it, or Awater diverges from the norm and goes a different way.

Another peculiarity of time occurs while the narrator waits outside the office. He hears half past five struck and finds himself in an endless stretch of time:

"Het slaat half-zes. De tijd wordt eindeloos.

Normal sense of time seems to desert him from now to the end, because in section 7 he makes a faulty assessment of time, thinking that it is midnight when he sees a crowd assembled in front of the station, although it is obviously much earlier, since children and workers still in their working-clothes are in the crowd.

As he waits for Awater, passers-by fill the street and a shadow-world begins to take shape:

"In elke schaduw wordt een licht ontstoken,
makend, al dwalend, omtrekken in rook."

Lights in the shadows show up outlines in smoke, due evidently to people lighting cigarettes, but smoke may also figuratively apply to the darkness, suggesting that not only in light but in substance, the atmosphere seems to be different from normal day-time. The narrator wants no light on him, he just wants to merge in with the shadows, and calls on his brother in heaven to protect him from being seen or heard:

"O broeder in den hemel, wees hier ook.
Bescherm mij, dat mijn schim geen licht vertoont.
Bewaar mij ongezien en ongehoord. - "

So at half past five narrator and Awater each undergo a transformation, which in a way is a reversal of situations. Awater emerges from the mysterious sphere of the office-temple, and the narrator enters into a mysterious sphere of infinite time and shadows. There are two short invocations in this section, echoing the prologue; the first is to the spirit of the brother (quoted above), and the second, as Awater walks away from the office, is a repeated call to an already invoked spirit, thus either to the "allereerste geest" or to the brother:

"Wees hier, nogmaals, gij die op hoogten woont
zo onbewoonbaar als Calvario."

Whichever spirit is being invoked, it is one that is equated with the spirit of Christ. These echoes of the prologue inserted just before and after Awater's descent from the office, show that, although the prologue is a separate section, its spiritual tone is intended as an accompaniment to the pursuit of Awater.

When Awater descends the stairs, he takes on the likeness of another Biblical character:

"Hij komt gesneld van boven,
zandstenen trappen af langs slangen koper."

The allusion is apparently to Moses' descent from Mount Sinai.¹ Sandstone could evoke an association with that

1. L. Wenseleers, 'Het Wonderbaarlijk Lichaam', p.195.

desert mountain, and the "slangen koper" by which banister rails are described, allude to the serpent of brass which Moses set up on a pole in the desert to save his people from snake-bites.¹ Van Caspel thinks that this Biblical reference is merely a verbal association without any symbolic function ("een louter verbale associatie, een beeld zonder functie in het gedicht als zodanig"),² and that the same goes for other Biblical references, but such a claim denies some ready-made chains of thought and pre-supposes a short-sighted reader; if he is up to recognising a Biblical reference concerning Moses, he ought to be up to making a correspondence between the religious authority and purpose of him and the character of Awater; verbal associations in poetry are always likely to have some transfer of significance (and thus be more than just verbal associations). At the least, the Moses allusion is bound to enhance Awater's prestige. Awater's eyes are blinking as he emerges from the office, as if he has just woken up, and he notices nothing of what is going on around him. He seems to see a shining horizon, which may represent the goal of a promised land, and a dream or vision is in his mind:

"Hij ziet, schijnt het, een horizon, een zoom
 waaruit ononderbroken weerlicht gloort.
 Het is alsof hij hoort waarvan hij droomt
 en de plek ziet waar hij te vinden hoopt".

He resembles the troubadour from 'De Wandelaar', who also had touches of Moses coming from the mountain:

"En zijn gelaat was bleek, en blonk van licht,
 Als van den man die, uit de bergen komend,
 God zag van aangezicht tot aangezicht."

('De Troubadour')

Wenseleers reads "de plek ziet waar hij te vinden hoopt" as meaning "het hemelrijk ziet waar hij zijn moeder te vinden hoopt".³ It is possible to read reunion with the mother into Awater's goal, but not so much from this line, which merely states that Awater has a goal in mind where he hopes to find

1. Numbers XXI, verse 9.
2. P.P.J. van Caspel, 'Er staat wel wat er staat', 'Spektator 6', 1976-1977, No.2, September 1976, p.61.
3. L. Wenseleers, 'De visioenen van een close reader', 'Raam 34', April 1967, p.80.

something, as from the previous line. Since he has just been dreaming about his mother, it is logical to read "alsof hij hoort waarvan hij droomt" as meaning 'as if he hears the sound of his mother', though there again there is no reason why Awater should not have another dream, concerning the place he is aiming for.

To leave the building where he works, Awater passes the narrator and walks through a hall. (An anomaly here, incidentally, is that previously the narrator was standing in the street by the entrance steps, but he is suddenly transported inside the building). As Awater passes him, the narrator feels transfixed: "ik voel mij doorboord". The word "doorboord" is perhaps too common in a figurative sense for there to be any implication of a literal piercing (an example of its literal sense is found in the second edition variant of 'De Nieuwe Sterren', with the image of Christ's "doorboorde voeten"), but a hint of fatality is possible in the way the narrator succumbs to Awater's penetrative presence. At the exit, Awater hangs up a key and takes his stick; the key could be taken as a sign of finality - that he is shutting up shop and heading for a different life; the stick is described as a dry thistle, and thus another symbol of a barren landscape. He is whistling as he walks off, so he is happy enough to be leaving the office and making for the horizon. The final actions of narrator and Awater in this section illustrate their reversal of situations: Awater puts a hat on, the narrator takes his off. Partly because it is worn on top of the head, a hat can be a sign of superiority or authority; Awater certainly has more confidence (he is whistling), more of an air of being himself, as he starts his walk through the city streets, while the narrator, on the other hand, is not himself, but in a state of ghosting behind Awater. His baring of his head is an act of deference as he makes his last invocation to the spirit-world ("Wees hier, nogmaals, ...").

More signs of the desert appear at the start of section 4, and there is strong evidence that Awater intends to make a journey, but the main feature of the section is a scene in a barber's shop. The narrator's first observation in passing from the hall of the office-building out into the street is

that a change in floor surface allows him to walk more quietly. His footsteps were highlighted by an echo in the tiled hall, whereas the asphalt of the street offers silence. Asphalt, because of its contrast with the tiles, seems thus to be a more receptive sort of durable surface, and fits in with the desert imagery. Although the reason why the narrator's footsteps cannot be heard could be due to general street noise muffling them, it is the silence that the city street gives to the footsteps which is pointed out - "De stad verleent de voet geluidloosheid" - and this silence lends itself to the secrecy of his pursuit. When a background is without noise, the slightest sounds become audible, and in the sacred atmosphere of the office-building, which must be fairly quiet, the material presence of the narrator is too obtrusive to pass for a "schim". But in the more common surroundings of the street, his materiality counts for less, and he is able to walk as silently as a spirit would. Several images of the desert are discovered in the city streets:

- i) a line of cars which is compared to a caravan of camels; soft creaking of leather ("zacht gekraak van leer") coming from the cars, must mean that they are open with leather upholstery.
- ii) a window-display in a fashion shop which has dolls with plaids and telescopes encamping by the Nile, with a pyramid and palm tree to complete the scene; there is another hint of a journey in the fact that the dolls are encamping ("legeren"); with their telescopes they look like explorers hunting for a lost civilisation. (Meeuwesse thinks Awater is put in mind of the children of Israel on the look-out for the promised land.¹)
- iii) a name-plate of a shipping company, which depicts a Bedouin in the desert greeting a ship arriving from overseas; a sea-voyage can be taken to symbolise the passage from one life to the next.

A further exotic image is provided by a bank, at which a list of foreign money is posted; the building looks like a

1. K.Meeuwesse, 'Aantekeningen bij Awater', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids' 60', No.1, 1967, p.41, and 'O Awater, ik weet waarvan gij peinst', 'Raam' 34', April 1967, p.44.

palace ("het bankpaleis").

Awater's interest in all these signs of far-away places confirms the narrator's belief that Awater is intent on making a journey. "Ja, ja, 't schijnt waar te zijn, hij wil op reis", he says when Awater first stops at the fashion shop window. But such images do not belong to Awater's present life, and at the end of the sequence he suddenly vanishes into a barber's shop, where he seems to become frozen in a mirror and then imbued with new life; it is as if the barber's shop episode symbolises a radical transformation that he must undergo in order to reach his goal.

One of the most salient features of the barber's shop scene is the restrictiveness to which Awater is subjected in it. The room is small but seems even smaller on account of a strong smell of perfumery:

"Het klein vertrek met kasten aan weerszij
lijkt door de sterke geur van allerlei
parfumerie-artikelen nog kleiner."

Awater himself is wrapped in a cape of starched linnen: "een mantel van gesteven lijnwaad". An accompanying stoniness in images of a white porcelain wash-basin and Awater framed in the mirror like an iceberg conveys a feeling of rigidity and inertia that might even indicate Awater's approximation to a death-state. All these images combine to produce an almost sepulchral atmosphere. Perfumery tends to have exotic connotations, but in a confined space like this could be associated with the scented ointments of a tomb. The archaic word "lijnwaad" for linnen adds a note of solemnity, and the cape may appear shroud-like (an echo of 'lijkwa' might even arise in the word "lijnwaad").

The purpose of Awater's entry into the barber's shop is to undergo a transformation. In the mirror, surrounded by shining bottles, he is mysteriously solidified as ice:

"Tussen de flessen, glinsterend verbrijzeld,
verrijst hij in de spiegel als een ijsberg
waarlangs de gladde schaar zijn snavel strijkt."

The surrounding bottles are described as shattered glass, thus crystal; crystal is a favourite symbol of Holst, for whom it is a reflector of pure light, excluding not only the tangibilities and sounds of the real world (as the mirror

also does), but recognisable visual forms as well. These crystal surrounds heighten the unreal effect of Awater's appearance in the mirror, and as the barber's scissors pass over him like the beak of a bird skimming the iceberg, the standard analogy might be made between a bird and the soul, to hint at the transmigration of Awater's soul. With white porcelain and glass, the small room is perhaps more clinical than a tomb, and makes Spillebeen think of a mortuary.¹ There is a striking resemblance between it and the clinic with its cupboard, glass and enamel in the vision of the doctor in 'Het Uur U': "in een kast langs de muur spraken dingen van glazuur, email, glas en metaal, een tintelende taal ... ". Though seen from close by, Awater, in the mirror, has never seemed so unreachable as at that moment:

"Nooit zag ik Awater zo van nabij
als thans, via de spiegel; nooit scheen hij
zo nimmer te bereiken tegelijk."

Literally the narrator has got very close to Awater, but remains an eternity away from what he stands for symbolically. However, Awater does not stay in this absolute corpse-like condition, but comes to life again in a spring scene, as the barber adds the finishing touches to his work:

"Maar het wordt lente, en terwijl wijd en zijd
de damp hangt van een bui die overdrijft
ploegt door het woelend haar de kam de scheiding."

The hair-spray is like a spring shower and the comb like a plough. So, as a result of his visit to the barber's, Awater becomes a new man, and the whole episode is like a process of death and regeneration. It may suggest resurrection to another existence after death, but in fact, like the spirit in 'Het Uur U' which returns to earth after passing through a needle's eye, Awater returns from the surroundings of the mirror to those of the city. Leaving the barber's shop, the narrator is no longer following his own mind, but follows mechanically ("werktuigelijk"). He has lost his purposefulness, either because this was killed off by a glimpse of death, or because he has got so close to Awater that he has come for a moment under his control.

1. W.Spillebeen, 'De Geboorte van het Stenen Kindje', p.230.

It is noticeable at the start of the next section that the narrator's mood towards Awater has changed. Awater chances to enter the very café that the narrator used to visit with his brother, and even to sit in their corner. By encroaching on the brother's patch, Awater is right in line for comparison, and the comparison that is made is by implication unfavourable to Awater. Both the narrator and the waiter in the café are affected by the comparison and each understands what the other is feeling, a mutual understanding which is reflected in the abbreviated manner of their conversation: Waiter, 'Times are not what they were'; Narrator, 'Who is that?': Waiter, 'Someone visiting the place for the first time.' Their brief words to each other provide a key to what the café symbolises and to what Awater's visit there symbolises: the café is a relic of times past (narrator and waiter are affected by memories), and Awater's visit a sign of change (he is there for the first time). Thus Awater, when he goes and sits in the usual corner of the narrator and his brother, is felt to be an intruder, because the narrator refrains from sitting there and in consequence has to find an alternative to his normal place:

"Ik zet mij ergens anders. Plaats genoeg."

A measure of inconvenience is felt, although there is plenty of room for him to sit elsewhere, and the waiter knows that he thinks of his brother and is affected by the necessity of sitting elsewhere:

"De kelner kent me. Hij weet wat ik voel."

Just as the waiter knows how he feels, he knows what lies behind the waiter's remark that times are not what they were:

"Ik weet dat hij ook aan mijn broer denkt, hoe
met zijn hond aan de ketting en zijn hoed
iets acterover op, hij binnenwoei
en 't hele zaaltje vulde met rumoer."

In the past, when the brother used to come into the café, the place was filled with life, and the insinuation is that there is not much life left in the place now, and that Awater's presence is quite different from that of the brother. Even in the jaunty way in which he wore his hat, the latter cut a more dashing figure.

Two features remaining from the past are noted - sand on the floor and a dove in a cage - which are followed by lines alluding to the enforced change caused by the brother's death:

"Hier ligt hetzelfde zand nog op de vloer,
dezelfde duif koert in zijn kooi als toen.

Oei, zei de wind, voort, voort! Zo is het goed."

The sand and the dove are just incidental details, but can also be taken as signs of permanence in contrast to the disturbance of the wind, and not just because they remain; it is also possible to connect sand with the permanence of the desert, and a dove with the permanence of the spirit. During the scene, the waiter performs a couple of routine tasks, polishing a table ("Hij heeft mijn tafeltje al tweemaal gepoetst") and washing glasses, as if he is performing a ritual of the old order. The wind, signifying change, seems to decree either that the brother must pass on, or that the narrator must go on without him. The past tense of "zei" links it with the passage about the brother, since the rest of the narrative is in the present tense. Advance is good, according to the wind's message, but the waiter and narrator hardly agree, for their memories of the past combined with Awater's intrusion into the brother's place suggest that they regard the current situation as a change for the worse. Awater himself also signifies a change which is difficult to take, when, sitting playing chess by himself in circumstances of mental toil, he makes a move which alters the shape of the game:

"Het spel wordt tot een nieuw figuur gevoegd."

Then at the end of the scene, two or three phrases denoting conclusion suggest that Awater has come to the end of a phase, which could mean that he has squared up with his past life and is prepared to face his destiny. He drinks his glass dry ("Nu drinkt hij het glas leeg"), closes his book (the chess set) ("sluit het boek"), and pays his bill ("hij rekent af"). Drinking up and closing a book, as acts of conclusion, might recall the proverbial cup of life and book of life, and so it is possible to infer that Awater is ready to meet the end of his life. Whatever he works out, it is a hard-fought decision; his glass stands and mists up

untouched before he eventually takes it. As it happens, the move that he then makes is from the seclusion of the café to a face to face with the public.

Awater's chess set is at first taken for a book by the narrator because it is bound in leather; its covering of morocco ("een boekje van marocco groen") gives another association between Awater and desert country. The game, with its opposing pieces, may suggest the dualism of opposing forces in life, or between forces of life and death. Awater's solemn deliberation of the positions leads the narrator to believe that Awater has a vision, characterised by a snowflake among drops of blood, which may, as Fens¹ and others have remarked, relate to one of the white pieces infiltrating among red pieces (a colour often used in pocket chess). This apparently life or death conflict of the vision, which tosses in his forehead and is thus urgent and not something in the back of his mind, is an extension of the contest being fought out on the chess-board:

"Awater's ogen kijken koel en stroef.

Zijn hand, op tafel trosselend, schenkt moed
aan het visioen dat door zijn voorhoofd woelt.

Een sneeuwvlok dwarrelt tussen droppen bloed.

Het spel wordt tot een nieuw figuur gevoegd."

Wenseleers sees the chess game as symbolic of the poet at work, citing an example in Jean Cocteau's 'Le Rappel à l'Ordre' where a poet is compared to someone playing chess with himself.² Meeuwesse notes that the image of a chess-board appears in Grail legends and Arthurian tales, and for him, as mentioned earlier, the image of the snowflake amongst drops of blood is reminiscent of the Grail legend in which Parsival sees three drops of blood in snow.³ If the snowflake is in opposition to the drops of blood, then Awater seems the type who would favour the snowflake and shed the drops of blood. A hint that his thoughts incline towards perfection and beauty (which are facets of the

1. K.Fens, 'Awater, leven en leer', 'Merlyn 4', 1966, No.5, September 1966, p.369.

2. L.Wenseleers, 'Het Wonderbaarlijk Lichaam', p.200.

3. K.Meeuwesse, 'Aantekeningen bij Awater', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 60', No.1, 1967, pp.37-8.

symbolism of the snowflake) is given in the image of a cigarette which, while he is meditating, makes a hollyhock of smoke, that flowers along the ceiling:

"De cigaret die in de asbak gloeit
maakt een stokroos die langs 't plafond ontbloeit."

In his appearance Awater has something that reminds the narrator of a flower, and at the same time of a planet:

"Hij heeft wat een planeet heeft en een bloem,
een innerlijke vaart die diep vervoert."

Although inner momentum is not a readily noticeable common property between a planet and a flower, the perception of such a common property in otherwise dissimilar things is an indication of the innate directionality guiding Awater through his inner conflict, the purposefulness or preordination that carries him through the difficulty of his deliberation and the 'woelen' of his vision. It is fitting that the distance implicit in the planet should follow up a picture of total solitude:

"Hij zit volstrekt alleen en ongemoeid."

Awater is engaged at the moment in a personal struggle that has nothing to do with anyone else, in the same way that he always appears on his own and unreachable when carried away. (Van Caspel suggests that Awater's study of the chess set may be to work out a move against an opponent,¹ but the absence of any opponent from this scene only confirms the impression that Awater is taking to heart both sides of the game within himself). The deliberation has no happy outcome, it just leaves him looking sad, and the narrator suspects that he wants to end his solitude, wrongly imagining that Awater calls him when he calls for his bill:

"Hij krijgt, nu hij stil voor zich kijkt, iets droevigs.
Hij kijkt mijn kant uit, zodat ik vermoedt
dat hij mij roept als hij de kelner roept."

Awater is ready to go, after a mental struggle which is almost a Gethsemane-like ordeal in a number of points: the meditation in solitude, the need for strength, the drops of blood, the delay in taking a drink, the look of sorrow, the apparent summons to a follower. (Christ, in the garden, is

1. P.P.J. van Caspel, 'Er staat wel wat er staat,' *Spektator 6*, 1976-1977, No. 2, September 1976, p. 64.

alone, sorrowful, strengthened by an angel, exudes sweat like drops of blood, wishes his cup may pass from him, and afterwards summons his disciples). This is just one of the possible shades that may be put on a scene which, since it provides no obvious allusions, could equally be seen in shades of Cocteau or of a Grail legend.

After leaving the café, Awater goes, in section 6, into a restaurant which is in many ways the antithesis of the café. Where the café was linked with the past and the atmosphere was depressed, the restaurant is modern, with bright lights and gaiety. Instead of solitude there is a throng of people ("een dubbele file mensen gaat in en uit langs de portier"), instead of anonymity Awater enjoys recognition ("Awater blijkt bekendheid te genieten"), and instead of a cool reception he is received with acclaim ("Wij hebben tussen ons een groot artiest"). The restaurant is certainly well-appointed, with illumination, revolving glass doors, music, stage, billiards room and balcony. Amid this setting, Awater is subjected for the first time to real exposure; he is presented with a stage and an audience, and feels obliged to accept this opportunity of being spotlighted and made a spectacle of. Some new facts about him are revealed in this section, though some of these are hear-say. He is believed to be an accountant, and to read Greek or Irish in the evening. The modernity and commerciality of being an accountant contrasts with the antiquity and culture of Greek and Irish. There is also a contrast which arises between the mythology associated with Greek and Irish, and the Christian faith which Awater begins to turn to, at first indirectly through the recommendation of faith by the dream woman in the sonnet, and secondly through the attention he pays to the preaching Salvation Army lady in front of the station. Greek and Irish literature as symbols of mythological learning as opposed to Christianity occur in Nijhoff's preliminary study of the character Bonifacius from 'De Vliegende Hollander'. There he makes a reference to Saint Columba, who "zijn Grieksche en Iersche letterkunde afzwoer".¹

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Een Voorstudie van de Bonifacius-figuur uit "De Vliegende Hollander"', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.551.

Another fact revealed about Awater in the restaurant is that he is a performer ("artiest"), and his performing talent is taken so much for granted that, although he came in to eat, he is asked to come up on stage. This request does not sound presumptuous, and Awater, although trying at first to decline, finally agrees, so he may be used to doing impromptu turns. At any rate he has something lined up, namely the sonnet, which he is able to present to his audience. Yet in spite of his preparedness, he does not give a polished performance, but seems to go through another mental ordeal, similar to those in the office and the café, because at the end he is under heavy stress. As in the office, a silence sets in before he gets wrapped up in thoughts of a woman figure; a hint that Awater is again communicating with the realm of the dead is found in the word "doodstil":

"Het wordt doodstil." (The words to his dead mother in the office were prefaced by "Het wordt stil"). The image of a ventilator which is 'winging' - "Het schroefblad van de ventilator wiekt" - could, by analogy with a bird, suggest an impending flight of the imagination or of the spirit. The crux of the sonnet is a message from a dream woman, in a visitation to the poet, that he can never hope to see her on earth again; spiritual contact here originates from the side of the spirit-world. That the dream woman is dead, is indicated both by the poet, who talks about his "verlies", and the words of the woman, who talks about a final evening when she left the world ("de wereld achterliet"). But the poet still maintains a dependence on her, which is met when she comforts him and inspires him in sleep. His attitude towards her is one of reverence - she is "de aanbedene" - but at the particular visitation described by the sonnet, she is in the reverent position, kneeling in distress, and informs him that she will no longer serve him by her visits, recommending him to faith instead:

"Zij was, toen 'k haar ontwaren ging, in diep
met schrik vermengd verdriet terneergeknield;
ik hoorde dat zij mij geloof voorhield
maar zonder dat het hoop of vreugde opriep".

It is as if her message of separation is a shock to her and not her will, in view of her distressed state. Another

indication that her message is enforced upon her is given when she says that she has, up till now, since she left the world, been unable and unwilling to report it:

"Ik kon, noch wilde ik, melden u sindsdien
hetgeen ik thans u te verstaan gebied:
niet hopen mij op aarde ooit weer te zien."

Faith and the woman figure are interwoven concepts for Awater, as they were for Nijhoff in his position of being influenced by his mother towards religion. If Awater's religious connections are attributable to a woman, then it is understandable that he finds no hope or joy in faith without her. It would otherwise be surprising that a person like Awater who seemed at the beginning to be motivated by some religious conviction should express coolness towards religion. Of course the view of religion could be put down to another writer, following Van Caspel's suggestion that Awater recites somebody else's sonnet,¹ but even so Awater can scarcely be dissociated from that view, with all the deep personal feeling his recital shows.

After the sonnet, Awater's condition is similar to that after his meditations on his mother in the office: he feels physically heavy. He also sets into a solid rigidity similar to the iceberg effect in the barber's: "Hij verstijft tot graniet." Instead of being lifted by the applause he receives (for a moving performance), he is most uneasy and waddles out like a puppet which is too heavy for its own mechanism: "Awater, als een pop, als een pop die
te zwaar is voor zijn eigen mechaniek,
waggelt den uitgang toe dwars door 't publiek."

Several associations may be sparked off by the word "pop". There have already been dolls camping by the Nile, and Awater could now be equated with them, looking like a character from his ideal world. Romantic or childhood-fantasy associations belong to the doll or puppet, and these are fitting to the way in which Awater has been carried away by the sonnet. But with his ungainly walk, he may look more of an oddity, like a clown. Physically he is too heavy for the mechanism of a puppet - in other words, he is spiritu-

1. P. P. J. van Caspel, 'Er staat wel wat er staat', 'Spektator 6', 1976-1977, No. 2, September 1976, p. 66.

ally motivated, or his mind is motivated to fantasy, but while giving free rein to his imagination, his body sinks into a deadly cumbersome state. Unlike Awater, the narrator is raised by the applause, because, as a streamer still floats behind his departing leader, he is already following close on his heels:

"Er wappert nog een smalle strook papier
hem langs de rug. Ik volg hem op de hielen."

Seeing Awater again as a figurehead, his enthusiasm for the journey is rekindled.

It is the journey which is uppermost in the narrator's mind as he and Awater approach their final scene in section 7. His course is now so much in unison with Awater's that he matches Awater step for step, so that the latter cannot hear that there are two of them proceeding down the street together. In what is a still and narrow street, it is now the narrator's turn to come under mental pressure as he struggles with the objections to making a journey:

"Mijn bezorgdheden worden menigvoud:
er ligt post thuis, ik heb aan de werkvrouw
nog niet gezegd dat ik op reis gaan zou,
mijn raam staat aan, er brandt vuur in de schouw.
ik heb niets bij me, wat doe ik überhaupt
op reis te gaan."

Originally he only intended making a trial run behind Awater before introducing himself, all being well, the next day. But he now believes that Awater is leading him on the great journey out of the city that very evening. All his arguments for returning home subside before the feeling of gay abandon attached to the journey:

"De vlieger aan zijn touw
tuimelt en stijgt: telkens slaat mijn benauwdheid
in vaster blijdschap om: wat zou 't, wat zou 't!"

A similar image of a kite occurs in 'De Pen op Papier', but one which has its string cut, describing the sensation caused when Nijhoff no longer feels part of the real world, but a member of the Pied Piper's world.¹ In 'Awater' a line

1.M.Nijhoff, 'De Pen op Papier', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1070.

of attachment to the earth remains. As he walks along debating with himself whether to make the journey or not, the narrator keeps his head bowed, a sign that it is entirely an internal conflict of the self:

"Zo voer ik, het hoofd diep gebogen houdend,
met mijzelf het beslissend onderhoud."

It seems that at this particular time his decision is to go ahead with the journey, because his arguments keep ending in "wat zou 't, wat zou 't!", and he does not turn back or stop. It is Awater who presently causes his mind to change by looking at him.

The narrow street broadens out and ends in an open space in front of a station, where a crowd of people are gathered. This place is the end of the journey through the city and the starting-point for the journey out of the city. Understandably but wrongly, the narrator thinks that it is the very end of the day, and is surprised to see a midnight assembly:

"Zou men hier middernacht een meeting houden?"

Though it is not really so late, midnight is appropriate to the stage reached in his pursuit of Awater, and symbolically to suggest the end of a life's journey.

Dew dripping from trees as the station square is reached anticipates the special atmosphere to be found there. Dew can be a symbol of purity and newness, being particularly associated with dawn. It is a divine symbol in 'Page' (in 'Vormen') - "de zuiv're dauw van God" - and in 'Het Veer' forms a veil concealing the other side of the water across which the ferry plies. The dew which drips from trees at the entrance to the station square could thus signify that this is the threshold to a new life, and in corroboration of this, the Salvation Army lady preaching to the crowd is telling them to change their lives:

""Wij leven" zegt zij "heel ons leven fout.""

She is standing between torches on a rough wooden construction:

"Tussen flambouwen
staat op een ruw getimmerte van hout
in haar heils-uniform, een jonge vrouw."

The flames of the torches may give a suggestion of the spiritual inspiration of her preaching, and the rough and ready stage she stands on gives her message a straightfor-

ward and elementary basis, completely different from the refined surroundings of the restaurant which provided Awater's platform, and where he was not at ease. She preaches love, and Debrot sees her in a Homeric light as a Christian version of the benign Nausicaä.¹ The narrator romanticises the composition of the crowd somewhat by focusing on travellers (i.e. tourists in travelling gear), children, women and workmen:

"Toeristen met rugzakken op de schouders,
kinderen, vrouwen, arbeiders, hun blauw
werkpak nog aan, staan onder de toeschouwers."

It is in this company, and just after the Salvation Army lady says "Wij leven heel ons leven fout", that Awater turns round and looks at the narrator. Whether there is any connection between his turning round and what is going on in the square is unclear, but he does connect the narrator with gatherings of people:

"Awater, die de pas heeft ingehouden,
kijkt naar mij om als kent hij mij van ouds.
Maar waar? in een tram? in een schouwburgpauze?
zo vraagt de blik waarmee hij mij beschouwt".

He connects him with the travelling public and with the theatre-going public. He also connects him with the distant past - "als kent hij mij van ouds". Kees Fens interprets these words as meaning from a previous life;² the vague recognition means that any previous contact could have been a long way back, but rather than belonging to a previous life, it may belong to Awater's youth, and perhaps, in thinking back into the past, Awater recalls, through seeing the narrator, traces of his former self and anticipates a reunion with his past. The wind is again in evidence at this time: Awater is holding his hat, and a lock of hair blows along the Salvation Army lady's sleeve. Its action could again have transitional implications, or suggest a breath of communication from afar. By remarking on the golden lock of hair, the narrator finds an element of beauty besides the

1. C. Debrot, 'Ontmoetingen met M. Nijhoff', 'De Gids 116', 1953, I, No. 4 & 5, April-May 1953, p. 233. (When Odysseus swam ashore to the island of Scheria, Nausicaä looked after him).
2. K. Fens, 'Awater, leven en leer', 'Merlyn 4', 1966, No. 5, September 1966, p. 379.

religious ideal which the Salvation Army lady stands for:

"Wind, spelend met haar haar, legt langs de mouw
der heilssoldaat een losse knoop van goud."

Despite the cover of her uniform, which is a sign of her conformity to her Christian belief, the narrator cannot help noticing this other attraction which shows through. Perhaps he feels that Awater is not just attracted to the message, but also to the woman, and thus cannot be his undivided companion for the journey. The religious message would not be enough to put him off, because he had already from the start ascribed religious inclinations to Awater. Judging from what is said in the epilogue, a realisation comes to him in this final scene that no companion is possible for the ultimate journey. He does not answer Awater's enquiring look, and as the Salvation Army lady continues to speak, he leaves. Ostensibly Awater is drawn to the preaching, but the last words that are reported from the preacher tie in with the trust in love which was the basis of his relationship with the "aanbedene":

"Liefde" zegt zij, "wordt nooit vergeefs vertrouwd."

The two simple messages that the Salvation Army lady puts across - reform (cf. "Jonas preekt, maar niet te Ninive") and trust in love - summarise exactly the two beliefs of Awater that lay behind his longing for the journey: the religious doctrine of a different way of life, and sincere love as found in the mother. With a meaningful embodiment for his beliefs, his need for a further journey is invalidated. The Salvation Army lady's image is very reminiscent of that of the boatwoman in 'De Moeder de Vrouw', combining mother and religion ("Prijs God zong zij. Zijn hand zal u bewaren").

Awater stays to listen to the preaching while the narrator walks on with a lesson learnt:

"Awater blijft, ik loop door, en zo gauw
of ik de trein zag die ik halen wou."

Although the narrator finds nothing to hold him in Awater's look nor in the Salvation Army lady's words, he is not necessarily repelled by either, but probably just realises at this point that Awater is not really about to embark on the great journey. He may draw the conclusion that Awater

has found what he was after, or just decide that the bulk of his assumptions about Awater's 'reisvaardigheid' were merely imagination. (The train in the epilogue, on the other hand, has a firm 'reisvaardigheid' which knows no looking back). Whether the narrator does actually board a train himself or not is left open to question, but seeing as it is only pretence when he hurries off after one, it sounds as if he does not really catch one at all. In any case he would have to make the journey alone, when the point of his exercise was to find a travelling-companion. Moreover the train section is no longer related by someone speaking in the first person, and only deals with a hypothetical passenger. The narrator has already had his journey and his travelling-companion, and discovered a way of life that they lead to. That other journey speculated on, the big one, is beside the point (cf. the way that 'Het Uur U' ends in "tot daaraantoe"). Whether Awater eventually boards a train is also unlikely. As far as the text is concerned, he is left standing listening to the Salvation Army lady and is not mentioned again, and to that extent he does not catch a train. What he does later, after the narrator has left him, is not part of the story.

The conclusive theme of departure governing the epilogue complements the theme of commencement in the prologue. Although the action of the scene is confined to departure, there is a notion of beginning as well as ending in that this is the start of a journey towards an azure horizon. Just as the prologue intimated the eternity that precedes commencement, the epilogue intimates the eternity that follows conclusion. Both prologue and epilogue have an imperative mood; that of the prologue is invocatory, addressed to the "allereerste geest", and that of the epilogue is oratorical, addressed to an unspecified second person. A deliberate echo of the prologue comes with the insertion of an exclamation "geprezen!", so that the poem begins and ends with a note of glorification. "Geprezen!" is an enclitic clause which, for want of any specification of to whom the praise is due, might logically be taken as an abbreviated form for 'God zij geprezen'. The train itself is almost a

divine figure, personified as a sumptuous female leaving, like a goddess of destiny, at the appointed hour. Not only does the train represent the ideal of the ultimate journey, but it also embraces the concept of the ideal female. Apart from being referred to with the feminine pronouns "zij" and "haar", it has personal touches in a belt of couplings ("Van schakels is haar klinkende ceintuur") and a wheel-rod that lifts like a knee ("zij tilt een knie, door stoom omstuwd").

In the Enschede lecture, trains are part of the advanced technical structure of the man-made universe, an "orde van treinen, stoomboten, vliegmaschinen, fabrieken, disciplinaire tucht".¹ In 'Awater', the typewriter, the ventilator and the train are examples of modern man-made mechanism which have a fascination that links them with the universe. They evoke, respectively, associations with the sea, a bird and the sky, and thus as symbols stand for communication with a heavenly or spiritual realm. In view of the admiration for technical progress in the Enschede lecture, these examples of modern machinery, of which the train crowns the lot, can be seen as symbols of ideals realised in the technical world ("deze structuur werkt even perfect als de jaargetijden, als dag en nacht, als geboorte en dood in de natuur")², to a perfection far outstripping moral development. The human soul is no further than the level of the soap-box preacher ("ruw getimmerte van hout") while the mighty locomotive is already bound for the orient. Many examples of train imagery occur in poetry from the time of the Symbolists on. It occurs several times, for instance, in the poetry of Jules Laforgue, who relates it to the longing for an ideal, and is frequent in German Expressionist poetry. S. van den Brent, in his comparative study of Nijhoff and Apollinaire, notes an obsessive recurrence of the train image in Apollinaire's poetry.³ The train in 'Awater' has an apparent longing, and even impatience, since it emits a "zuil van zuchten".

A train travels between distant places and is a link between different lands, an idea which Nijhoff makes use of

1. M. Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p. 1159.
2. id., p. 1160.
3. S. van den Brent, 'Martinus Nijhoff en Guillaume Apollinaire, Dichters van een Nieuwe Wereld', 'Revue des Langues Vivantes 37', 1971, No. 4, p. 448, note 25.

in the variant of 'Impasse' in 'Voor Dag en Dauw':

"Weer is dit leven vreemd als in een trein
te ontwaken en in ander land te zijn."¹

It is specifically the Orient Express which features in 'Awater', and the circumstances of departure on a very long journey at an appointed hour towards an azure goal could suggest the departure of the soul at death. A motif of a train in connection with death is given by Bloem in 'Huiswaarts Reizende' (1921), where the train symbolises a journey towards death, rather than at death:

"In den trein. De tijd vergaat met droomen.
Op de ruitjes wiegelt avondrood.
Als ik bij U ben gekomen,
Ben ik weer wat nader tot mijn dood."²

Nijhoff mentions reading "het prachtige "In den trein" van Bloem" in the deleted section of the Enschede lecture.³

The fact that the train in 'Awater' is named as the Orient Express is another reason for believing that neither Awater nor the narrator gets on it, because they seemed to be in a Dutch city, and the Orient Express traditionally leaves from Paris (unless railway euphemism includes connecting services under the name). There is nothing in the text which definitely marks the city as Dutch, but if not, the barber's sign "scheren en haarsnijden" and a sign "vreemd geld" in the bank would have to be translations, as would all the spoken parts. Anyway, Awater's situation is Dutch, because in the office he muses about each carefully saved "dubbeltje" and about roses to be sent to the "Kerkhoflaan". Even if the epilogue is read as a dressed up account of a departure from a Dutch station, it is still presented in terms of the midnight departure of the Orient Express, and as such is too fanciful to be taken as a continuation of the story so far. The action of the epilogue is best taken, thus, not as an action continuous upon the preceding narrative, but as an action separate in place and time, and linked to the preceding narrative only in idea. This action - the departure

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Voor Dag en Dauw VIII', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.450.
2. J.C.Bloem, 'Huiswaarts Reizende', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.108.
3. M.Nijhoff, 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.1172.

of the Orient Express - is in itself definite, with definite statements describing it, whilst the passenger on board is hypothetical, as conveyed in the the hypothetical phrases describing this person ("als gij plaatsnamen ziet in een schriftuur"; "Wat voor hoop gij ook koestert of wegduwt"; "dat gij ... beklemd voelt ... of dat gij het puurst geluk smaakt ... "). Given these data, the epilogue continues from the preceding narrative in the idea of what would happen if one of the characters forsook his world and embarked upon the great journey. Two people cannot share the experience as one, because leaving everything behind is an exclusively singular experience. Thus the epilogue stresses the total isolation of the ultimate journey: "geheel alleen" - "individu"; even the personified train has no sympathy for her passenger: "het deert haar niet" - "'t laat haar koud"; thoughts of a travelling-companion are illusion, to which the train is immune:

"zelfs voor de illusie

een reisgenoot te hebben is ze immuun."

A passenger who boards the train, say someone like the narrator who tends to think back and is concerned about affairs at home, might start looking back down the platform; another type of passenger, say someone like Awater was, before he reached the Salvation Army lady, someone who heads for a horizon with firm resolve and whistling, might be enjoying pure bliss:

"Dat gij, geheel alleen, u in haar luxe
beklemd voelt, 't raampje neerlaat, en zelfs nu
't perron nog afblijkt; of dat gij het puurst
geluk smaakt dat voor het individu
is weggelegd: te weten, 'k werd bestuurd,
't is niet om niet geweest, ik was geen dupe, -
geprezen! - ",

no matter what the passenger feels, the train's departure is final and remorseless. What is meant by the purest happiness reserved for the individual is indicated by broad generalisations which appear to refer back to the passenger's life as a whole: "'k werd bestuurd" would fit Nijhoff's idea of the poetic calling, in which the poet is dictated to by the ideas which he translates onto paper; the pronoun subject of "'t is niet om niet om niet geweest" seems also to refer to

life, and the refutation of doubt in this clause and in "ik was geen dupe" answers the earlier poem 'Levensloop' (in 'Vormen') in which Nijhoff questions the purpose of his career ("Steeds dupe van toegeeflijke intrigen, ..."). The train is impervious to any concerns of the passenger:

"'t laat haar koud. Zij ziet azuur.

Van schakels is haar klinkende ceintuur.

Zij zingt, zij tilt een knie, door stoom omstuwd.

Zij vertrekt op het voorgeschreven uur."

Awater, when he leaves his office, eyes on the horizon and whistling, has points in common with the train, which sees azure and sings,¹ but even he is not so remorseless in turning his back on the world, and in the end turns round to look at a figure he connects with his past, and tarries by the Salvation Army lady. Awater's dream woman, although less harsh than the train, has more in common with it than he has, since the train is personified as a female, and the inexorable departure recalls the dream woman's adamant "niet hopen mij op aarde ooit weer te zien". Both symbolically leave for a destination that lies beyond death. Azure, on which the train's sights are set, and which plays a part in the death of the bees in 'Het Lied der Dwaze Bijen', is the regular Symbolist (especially Mallarmean) symbol for the absolute.

There are similarities between the train section and the scene in Awater's office. One has the geometrical order of "rails-figures", and the other the mathematical order of columns of figures. The engine emits a column of smoke or steam, caused by fire, the columns of figures in the office look like ash, so that the action of fire is also implicit there. In both cases a clock is prominent, giving a reminder of time in a situation where time threatens to vanish. Like the steam from the kettle which rises in a cloud in 'Impasse', the engine's column of smoke or steam also becomes a cloud:

"Haar zuil van zuchten wordt een wolkenkluwen."

Its longing is directed towards the sky.

1. K.Fens, 'Awater, leven en leer', 'Merlyn 4', 1966, No. 5, September 1966, p. 366.

Because of its musical aspect ("Zij zingt"), the train might be equated with a Muse. Wenseleers points to similarities with Hans Andersen's story 'The Muse of the New Century', in which the Muse is compared to a train.¹ But a Muse is generally connected with bringing inspiration, and the calculated departure of the train at the appointed hour makes its divine connotations more in keeping with a Fate (also a female deity). Excitement and ceremony precede the dignified departure. Excitement in the passenger from reading place-names in travel literature (perhaps a timetable):

"uw jubel

als gij plaatsnamen ziet in een schriftuur
die de eerste klank is van het avontuur."

This official-sounding term "schriftuur" may have a hint of holy scripture, so that reading the itinerary of the journey is like reading place-names in the Bible, and the train's destination has something in common with the Holy Land. Ceremony is indicated in the action of the signals, which perform a prelude, as well as in the grandeur of the train itself. The mood of the epilogue centres thus on the importance and inexorability of the appointed hour of departure, when it is reached. Awater and the narrator did not quite reach it.

In the old days reality would not have prevailed, and a character would have made the journey, like the 'Troubadour' whose aim was "naar een horizon gericht" and who felt as a consequence "'t leven uit zijn hart weg-stroomend", or like the "dwaze bijen" who flew away and perished. Awater's likelihood of finding his dream woman and new world was about as likely as that of Orpheus bringing Eurydice back to life, and parallels with the Orpheus legend can be uncovered towards the end of 'Awater'. (In 'Een Idylle' an underworld context has clear Orpheus parallels). Like Eurydice, the dream woman was not to be seen on earth again. Like Orpheus, Awater looked round, and just afterwards the female locomotive steamed off into the distance.

Awater is in the end only human, unlike a machine which lacks all human interest and follows exclusively the direc-

1. L.Wenseleers, 'Het Wonderbaarlijk Lichaam', pp.373-4.

tion which is set for it. It is highly significant that after Awater has looked round, the train is explicitly said to know nothing about looking round:

"Zij kent in haar reisvaardigheid geen rücksicht."
Awater began for a moment to look like a mechanical man, after describing his last contact with his dream woman, but ultimately he regained an interest in his surroundings and an identity independent from the narrator's conjectures.

Chapter 7

'HET UUR U'

A man walks along a street while people peer at him from windows, he passes some children, who run after him, he turns to look at them for a moment, then walks on out of the street. Such is the basic action of 'Het Uur U'. Apart from a few details concerning the man's progress and the conduct of the children, and some circumstantial factors regarding the weather and atmosphere in the street, most of what happens is in the minds of the onlookers. This in itself marks a change of stance from 'Awater', which is predominantly to do with the personal experiences of a narrator. 'Het Uur U' is largely without personal utterances from the narrator, and generally conforms to the policy advocated in 'De Pen op Papier' of expressing only the feelings of others. In just a few places towards the end of the poem there are intrusions on the part of the narrator.

A colloquial style is employed, which supports the broader orientation by the use of common language in a fairly detached manner without many traces of personal idiolect showing up. There were colloquial touches in 'Awater', but a formal and at times elevated style held sway. Nijhoff chose the respective forms of 'Awater' and 'Het Uur U' as two experiments in different styles in order to get away from convention and find a more universal style, the one drawing from long ago, the other in a modern idiom, as he explains in the dedication to 'Het Heilige Hout':

"Ik geloof, dat in ons tijdperk, waarin de eeuw van het individualisme overgaat in die van de collectiviteit, geen groter moeilijkheid voor de schrijver bestaat dan de vorm zelf van zijn taal. Uit drang naar universaliteit zou men Latijn, zou men nog liever geheel taalloos willen schrijven. De traditionele vorm is evenzeer verraderlijk geworden als de spontane ontlading. Om uit deze impasse te geraken, kan men tweeërlei doen. Of teruggrijpen naar een zo oude traditie dat zij onbewust is geworden; of de huidige omgangstaal sprekend en vibrerend maken. In mijn gedicht "Awater", dat

geschoeid is op het Chanson de Roland, probeerde ik het eerste; in mijn gedicht "Het uur u" het laatste."¹

The poetic order of 'Het Uur U' is provided by a verse-scheme of rhyming couplets, in swift-moving trochaic rhythm which assists the colloquial style of language.

Despite colloquial language and minimal action, 'Het Uur U' is expanded into a narrative poem of epic scale, due solely to the excruciating effect of the circumstances of the man's passage through the street. At the heart of the story are motifs of an ideal self and experience of eternity, giving an epic of similar concept to 'Awater'. Not only is the treatment different, however, but the characters are quite different. Instead of inner longing motivating individuals to a quest for an ideal, the people of the street are totally passive, and are forced to witness an ideal through the operation of external forces. The situation bears some comparison in broad theme with part of the train section of 'Awater', in which the hypothetical passenger, addressed in the second person, is totally isolated and at the mercy of the fate imposed by the train. Although the crisis of 'Het Uur U' affects a lot of people in one street at the same time, it affects each person singly, and one way of looking at the "U" of the title is to read it as a personal pronoun. The people are at the mercy of a set of external factors, and each undergoes an intensely personal experience. It is, like the departure of the train, both a beginning and an ending:

"nu gaat het beginnen, nu
verdwijnt de onzekerheid
van de mij vergunde tijd,
nu is het voor alles te laat."

Apropos of the "mij gegunde tijd", this "uur u" has connotations of death, like the "voorgeschreven uur" at the end of 'Awater'.

"Uur u" is in fact a military term equivalent to the term 'H-hour' (cf. 'D-day') which was current during the Second World War, and for which the term 'zero hour' is also used. It is the hour at which a major attack or campaign is

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Opdracht', 'Het Heilige Hout', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.256.

launched, but was not such a widely known term that Nijhoff did not feel that some explanation was justified in his letter to Miss van Dis, a schoolteacher who had written to him requesting clarification about the meaning of the poem:

"'Het Uur U' is een militaire term. Het is het door de legerleiding geheim gehouden uur van de aanval. De gereedstellingen kunnen nu worden ingenomen, de voorbereidingen getroffen, maar tot de aanval gaat men pas over als het uur u bekend wordt gemaakt."¹

At such an hour, two parties are involved, the attackers and the attacked, for both of which the situation is one of life or death. The street-residents in this poem become aware of a signal announcing the zero hour, but do not know whether it has been made by their side or by an enemy. Whichever side has made it, the life or death threat remains. In the first version of the poem, published in 'Groot Nederland 1937', II, pp.1-14, which has some substantial differences from the final version published in book-form in 1941, the position of being under attack is more forcefully brought out, with the onlooker seeing "kanonnen op hem gericht". More doubt exists about the direction of the attack in the final version, but the threat of coming under attack is enough to cause panic. Moreover, the origin of the offensive is in the sky, where a battleship appears, which heightens the fear because it comes from the unknown. An attack stemming from heaven and becoming visible to people on earth has little alternative objective except the earth, so the fear of the people observing it is essentially one of whether they are the adversaries of heaven or not. (For the unknowing reader there might even be a hint of an attack from heaven in the inscription "Voor St. Storm" which precedes the text, although the "St." is not an abbreviation for 'Sint' but for 'Stefan', in dedication to Nijhoff's son, Wouter Stefan, who used the pseudonym Stefan Storm in his profession as a photographer).

The optical illusions of first a signal in the sky and then a battleship mark a variation in Nijhoff's use of

1. M.Nijhoff, letter to Mejuffrouw van Dis, appendix to K. Meeuwesse, 'Van Voorstraat tot Herenstraat', 'De Gids 118', 1955, I, No.6, June 1955, p.405.

imagery of modern mechanism. In 'Awater', the typewriter and the train give rise to thoughts extending beyond the familiar world. With the images in the sky of 'Het Uur U', there is a process of symbolism the other way round: a gaze towards the universe beyond the world produces visual forms of devices of modern warfare belonging to the world. This technique of making something vague and remote take on the shape of something definite and practical is one of the ways in which Nijhoff emphasises the situation of intervention in the real world from the spirit-world. The colloquial style assists by denoting the secular base to the lives of the residents, which is counteracted by the fanciful imaginings representing an incursion of an ideal world into the real one. Whereas 'Awater' portrays an excursion from reality, 'Het Uur U' portrays an incursion into reality from outside. This is the first and only time in his later poetry that Nijhoff sees mankind under an external threat to its existence, and although there is no return to the mood of doom found in his early poetry, there is a re-emergence of pessimism. With the exception of 'De Nieuwe Sterren', the mood of 'Nieuwe Gedichten' was generally optimistic towards the real world, and nowhere in the volume is earthly life shown under threat from outside forces.

There is one spot in 'Vormen' which 'Het Uur U' particularly harks back to. That is where the consecutive poems 'Het Souper' and 'De Vogel' show people suddenly jolted from mealtime conviviality by a force striking their windows from outside. In 'Het Souper', the window is actually burst open by a gust of wind and the people feel as if they are being carried towards death. Nijhoff's pessimistic attitude towards the society represented by the street in 'Het Uur U' is underlined in his letter to Miss van Dis:

"De 'straat' is het beeld onzer goede maatschappij. Men is uit gemakzucht, onmacht of ijdelheid straatbewoner geworden inplaats van levend mens te blijven. De 'man', die door de straat loopt, is zulk een levend mens. Zijn tegenwoordigheid herinnert de straatbewoners aan hetgeen zij verzaakt hebben. Men haat hem, men beschouwt hem als de vijand, vooral omdat de hemel (het wolkje) en een inwendige stem (de muziek) zijn partij schijnen te kiezen. Gedurende zijn passage moet men zich wel aan het leven gewonnen geven,

men ziet even het eigen tekort in, om echter terstond weer te ontwaken in het doods bestaan van straatbewoner. Behalve de rechter, want hij is de enige die eigen schuld bekend heeft. Ik hecht hier nl. grote waarde aan.

De kinderen zijn inderdaad, zoals U schrijft, ontvanke-lijker dan de mensen. De verstoktheid van de 'straat' blijkt hier uit, dat men de kinderen tot de orde roept. Terwijl men heeft ingezien zich vergist te hebben, dwingt men de kinderen zich aan deze vergissing te onderwerpen. De 'levende mens' (de man) blijft een enkeling. De bomen (symbool van het leven dat ook in een straat kan bestaan) zijn niet geplant. Wel, dank zij de arbeiders, zijn de kuilen daarvoor gegraven."¹

In the poem itself, condemnation of the street is not so explicit as in this letter. The residents are clearly portrayed in a position of wrong during the build-up to their visions, but afterwards they are seen in a more sympathetic light, and notes of humour and optimism come in towards the end.

Some of the symbolism of 'Het Uur U' is explained by Nijhoff in his letter, but what he says still leaves a lot unsaid. For instance the man is supposed to represent living man because he causes the people to see themselves living as they ought to live, but Nijhoff omits to say that how he causes this is by bringing a threat of death. At the climax, the people are supposed to see their own shortcomings ("men ziet even het eigen tekort in"), but this is an inference from what they actually see, which is a vision of their ideal selves. So Nijhoff explains things at a level of symbolism one step removed from that at which the onlookers see things. Since the text is given from the onlookers' point of view, the reader is liable to take their standpoint and see the man as a symbol of death to their current existence, and the visions as a revelation of a different life that they might ideally live. If, however, the reader takes Nijhoff's declared standpoint, which is hard to deduce from the text, especially as he at times treats the position

1. M.Nijhoff, letter to Mej.van Dis, 'De Gids 118', 1955, I, No.6, June 1955, p.405.

of the residents sympathetically, he will see the man as bringing a sign of a way of life to take the place of the residents' current deathly existence ("doods bestaan"), and he will see the visions of the ideal selves as a reproach for their current negligence.

With so little action forming the basis of the poem, much of its content is a description of symbolic associations concerning the man and the phenomena perceived at the time of his passage through the street. His passage is the thread which joins the various symbolic associations, and since the effect on the residents changes at different stages of his passage, he may appear at times to symbolise different things.

From the start, a strong correlation is made between the man and the sky. He enters a silent and deserted street in which the sun rules:

"De zon had het rijk alleen."

Since the sun rules, it seems that the man might be in league with the sun. The deserted street is a bit reminiscent of the desert-world at the start of 'Awater', and the anonymous introduction of the man with an indefinite and unqualified noun phrase ("een man") is similar to the brief "Ik heb een man gezien" with which Awater is introduced:

"HET was zomerdag.

De doodstille straat lag
te blakeren in de zon.

Een man kwam de hoek om."

This man remains an anonymous individual throughout the poem, and so fits the description that Nijhoff gave of Awater as "onverschillig welk individu, een naaste". Nijhoff disclosed in a letter to Ben Albach (who directed the original performances of his religious plays) that the man was "een evennaaste" (as reported to Theun de Vries,¹ and as told by Ben Albach to Lulofs²). Certain statements in the Enschede lecture about what Awater was supposed to be go much better with the man of 'Het Uur U', and one of these

1. T.de Vries, 'M.Nijhoff, Wandelaar in de Werkelijkheid', p.85.

2. F.Lulofs, 'Verkenning door Varianten', p.46, note 4.

is: "hij moest omtrek blijven, heldere, doorschonen oppervlakte". It needs a lot of qualification for Awater, but it is just right to call the man in 'Het Uur U' nothing but a surface outline. The same idea of the fellow man as a surface outline, this time a fellow man in the Jungian mould of Christ as the archetypal hero in the self,¹ is expressed in the dedication to 'Het Heilige Hout' ("Wie buiten zichzelf weet te treden, ontmoet terstond een naaste, en wie er dan in slaagt hem lief te krijgen, begint een Gestalte te zien, waarvoor men Virgilius of een Evangelist moet zijn om zelfs zijn omtrekken te durven schetsen.")². Since the man is the prime mover in the story, he is in some respect responsible for the self-hero or ideal self who is summoned up, and may be taken as analogous to the ideal figure, but even so he is so abstract as to be an aspect universal to all men. Details of the poet's own personal life are not important any more, and so Nijhoff has 'wandered out of his own life' ('De Pen op Papier') in the sense that he is no longer setting off his own life against an ideal figure, but the lives of other people against an ideal figure. In this way a view of the rest of the world is brought in, where there was an exclusively self-orientated world before.

The state of passive subjection to the power of the sun, which exists in the street as the man enters it, is like that expressed, though more severely, in the early poem 'Middag':

"De zon, de zon martelt de steenen gevels,
De gele gevels van de oude straat."

In this poem the sun is a shield to God ("De zon verdedigt, vader, uw gelaat"), and whether or not the sun initially has divine connotations in 'Het Uur U', a suspicion is at least there, that the man arrives with some measure of celestial backing. Combined with the sun's dominance is an aura of silence, with the term 'doodstil' to denote that the street is not in the normal day-time condition of a thoroughfare or a community. In order to convey the desertedness of this street, Nijhoff has to get over the presence of a group of

1. C.G.Jung, 'Symbols of Transformation', p.368.

2. M.Nijhoff, 'Opdracht', 'Het Heilige Hout', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.257.

children further down, because they play an important role later on. He does this by saying that they contribute to the desertedness, which makes them compatible with the reigning conditions, and hence conceivably on the side of the sun and the man:

"Er speelde in de verte op de stoep
een groep kinderen, maar die groep
betekende niet veel,
maakte, integendeel,
dat de straat nog verlatener scheen."

By saying that the children's presence does not mean much, Nijhoff is pulling a blind on their major significance later.

The street turns out to be residential, and is not the sort which in Nijhoff's opinion normally has much life in it. Nijhoff's idea of a street that is alive is a busy or commercial one, and in the Enschede lecture, when talking about his time as a mature student in Utrecht, he distinguishes between desolate suburbia, with houses like tents, and crowded streets and other places filled with people:

"Als ik door de volle straten liep, of 's avonds voor mijn raam zat, begon de mensenmenigte te ruisen als een rivier. Ik was zo verheugd als de dorstende woestijnreiziger die water hoort. Ik begon te zien, dat er niet geleefd werd in de onwezenlijke buitenbuurthuisjes, die als tenten in het land stonden; er werd geleefd in de kantoren, de fabrieken, de ziekenhuizen, de café's, de stations, in alle plaatsen, waar massa's mensen bijeen waren."¹

But whatever sort of street this one is, the degree of silence in it is extraordinary. (At the end the silence is replaced by activity in the form of a tram and birds fluttering about and singing). The extent of its emptiness is marked by the absence even of those whose second nature normally dictated their presence there at that time of day:

1. M.Nijhoff, Enschede lecture 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzameld Werk 2', pp.1164-5.

"Zelfs zij, wier tweede natuur
 hen bestemde, hier, op dit uur,
 te wandelen: de student,
 de dame die niemand kent,
 de leraar met pensioen,
 waren van hun gewone doen
 afgeweken vandaag;
 men miste, miste hen vaag."

Since these people were normally governed by their second natures at this time, either their second natures have forsaken them, or their second natures are also in league with the conditions and have kept them off the street. There is thus some possible correspondence between the man and the second natures of certain people who frequent the street, which means that the man may have some appeal to their alter egos.

More conspicuous than the absence of these people, who are just vaguely missed, is the absence of a workman who had been digging holes for trees in the central reserve:

"Sterker: de werkman die
 nog tot een uur of drie
 voor bomen in 't middenpad
 de kuilen gegraven had,
 had zijn schop laten staan
 en was elders heen gegaan."

He has left the holes ready-dug with his spade beside them, and so a further suspicion could arise, that the workman too is in league with the man, and that the holes and spade have been left for his benefit. There is nothing to say that these holes are in any way ominous, but one senses that the onlookers might be apprehensive about the implication of uncovering things or covering things up, and it may be recalled what morbid implication Nijhoff put on digging holes in 'De Tuinman' (in 'De Wandelaar'):

"En zacht en diep graven we hier
 Een kuil voor ons cadaver."

It can be argued that the street is already in a pretty dead condition, and that the man, in conjunction with the sun, which is a source of life, and the planting of the trees, which symbolise life and are meant to do so here as Nijhoff

states in the letter to Miss van Dis, represents the arrival of life in the street. On the other hand, the dead silence and desertedness are not normal for the street, and seem in some way congruous with the appearance of the man, who himself contributes to the silence in a very strange way:

"Maar vreemder, ja inderdaad
veel vreemder dan dat de straat
leeg was, was het feit
der volstrekte geluidloosheid,
en dat de stap van de man
die zojuist de hoek om kwam
de stilte liet als zij was,
ja, dat zijn gestrekte pas
naarmate hij verder liep
steeds dieper stilte schiep."

While the children are contributing to the desertedness, the man is contributing to the silence, and both therefore are accessory to conditions of abnormality, which sets them apart from the community. Silent footsteps recall the observation "De straat verleent de voet geluidloosheid" in 'Awater': in the temple-like office-building the narrator's footsteps echoed, but out in the street they made no sound. A change of circumstances from 'Awater', where the street was neither empty nor silent, makes the one in 'Het Uur U' filled with a mysterious silence against which someone walking ought to be heard. However, the man walks completely silently, as if not substantial enough to make noise even in the quietest conditions, and even seems to increase the silence, thus strengthening the link between the atmosphere and himself, and making him seem more akin to spirit than to human.

Another peculiar feature about his walk, besides its silence, is the extent of stride, which looks rather stretched, a peculiarity which is remarked upon several times: the term "gestrekte pas" occurs twice, "vreemde gestrekte gang" once, and "schrijdende" once. Wenseleers considers this stretched gait to be the manner of walking of a divine figure not used to walking in normal earthly fashion,¹ and

1. L. Wenseleers, 'Het Wonderbaarlijk Lichaam', p. 262.

one can conjecture that immortals, without a gravity factor, might be used to covering large distances in each step, but such fanciful ideas are a product of the strangeness rather than what a stride legitimately suggests. The main impression that the man's action gives is one of purposefulness, because he is not just strolling along, but stretching out. A sense of purpose also seems to underlie other points so far: the sun's dominance, the children's creation of desertedness, the man's creation of silence, the workman's spade left standing. Taken together, an overall impression comes through that the opening scene is a deliberate set-up.

With a situation holding one or two sinister possibilities in the deathly silence, desertedness and holes in the ground, it comes as no surprise that the appearance of the man, at first merely uncanny, arouses a sinister implication, which comes in a suggestion that he could be up to no good, his silent walk being compared to the stealth of a thief or a spy:

"Geen dief overtrof, geen spion,
hetgeen hij moeiteloos kon".

Secrecy is the mark of the thief and the spy, and secrecy marks Nijhoff's definition of "het uur u" as the "geheim gehouden uur van de aanval" (letter to Miss van Dis). Like a thief, the man might be coming to take something, or like a spy he might be the agent of a hostile power. His stealth is achieved without trying, and so potentially with greater inherent danger; he could be a demonic rather than a divine emissary, and have come to take someone off from their earthly life, being equated, for instance, with the bogeyman. Divine connotations are restored by the next image, which compares him with the god Hermes. According to Lulofs, Hermes has amongst his functions that of god of thieves and spies,¹ though this is little-known enough to be coincidental. (Hermes is also known for skill and cunning, and is also god of streets and roads.²). Hermes is best known as messenger of the gods, equipped with winged feet, and Nijhoff alludes to these winged feet, in comparing Hermes'

1. F.Lulofs, 'Verkenning door Varianten', p.52.

2. Van Dale, 'Groot Woordenboek der Nederlandse Taal', p.2495.

silent traversal of the sky to the silent steps of the man, without indicating any other function of Hermes:

"en het gevederd leder waarop
de god Hermes van zijn bergtop
neer te dalen placht
doorkruiste het ruim niet zo zacht
als hij op straat kon gaan,
gewoon lopend, met schoenen aan."

Although there is no allusion to it, a function of Hermes that might be recalled is that of conducting the souls of the dead to the underworld, which provides more support for the impression that the man is connected with death. Hermes operates expressly in this role in 'Een Idylle', which was published together with 'Het Uur U' in the 1941 book edition:

"naast hoeder van het vee en bode,
ben ik de leidsman van de doden."

In effect, the man resembles a divine visitor, an intermediary between two worlds, whilst in reality he is just like any man. It would be superfluous for Nijhoff to point out that he has got shoes on, if not to re-establish that he is still just a man in the face of all the supernatural associations that he arouses. His symbolic capacity is beginning to get the upper hand to obscure what he really is. It is not wholly clear what the motive behind his symbolic appearance as a spiritual intermediary might be, whether for instance he brings death or not, but the unknown quantity is a cue for serious apprehension.

Sinister implications are reinforced when his silent tread is directly linked to the "uur u", which is signalled in the sky. His inaudible footsteps are said to make the inaudible sound of a signal-flare, and this is ominous:

"Hij maakte op het trottoir
het onheilspellende maar
onhoorbare gerucht
van het hoog in de lucht
verschoten vliegerbericht".

This image is not just aroused by the footsteps alone, but, as later revealed, a small cloud is visible in the sky, and the street-residents imagine this cloud to have been made by a flare announcing the zero hour:

"in een wolkje ploft licht
 tot een blinkende ster uiteen,
 en langs heel de vuurlinie heen
 weet men: dit meldt het uur u".

Anything visible in the sky is immediately connected with the man, because of his possible role as an emissary from heaven. Nijhoff confirms in the letter to Miss van Dis that the residents imagine the cloud to have come from the signal for an H-hour, such a signal often being announced by a flare shot from an aeroplane:

"Deze bekendmaking geschiedt dan vaak, vooral in de stellingenoorlog, door lichtkogels uit een vliegtuig. (De 'straat' in het gedicht houdt het wolkje voor de damp van zulk een lichtsein)".¹ In the 'Groot Nederland' edition, the residents see it first as a signal for attack from their own side, since they wish to check the readiness of their own weaponry:

"Zijt gij klaar, batterij,
 bajonet, handgranaat,
 als het straks voorwaarts gaat? - "

A bit later the tables are turned, when anyone who looks up into the sky experiences:

"'t ontzettend gezicht
 van kanonnen op hem gericht".

In the book version, Nijhoff does not make this contrast between how the attackers might see it and how the attacked might see it, but leaves the position of the onlookers indeterminate, although without the suggestion that their side is making the attack, the sinister mood diminishes this possibility and makes them more vulnerable. This is a final hour which ends the uncertainty of "de mij gegunde tijd" and at which it is too late for anything, so it surely lies in the residents' minds that this is the final hour of life. One can only speculate what sort of uncertainty is meant by "de onzekerheid van de mij gegunde tijd"; the simplest explanation is that the uncertainty is over how much time has been allotted, and thus the uncertainty vanishes when the end is reached.

1. M.Nijhoff, letter to Mej.van Dis, 'De Gids 118', 1955, I, No.6, June 1955, p.405.

Following this signal of the beginning of the end, comes a detailed description of the silence which accompanies it. More than just a lull before a storm, it is a silence in which small sounds never heard before become audible, and resembles the silence of death which Sebastiaan heard in 'Het Veer'. Where Sebastiaan found in the silence of death a sound like the sea or like a hive of bees or like wind in trees, rippling and buzzing sounds of gas, water and electricity become audible in the silence of the street, and the electricity sounds like bees:

"een vonkende zoemertoon
als waren er bijen in de buurt."

Electricity, water and gas are all sources of energy which are normally harnessed and taken for granted, but which, like the sun, govern the lives of the residents, and have a latent threat. As the residents gaze unseen from their windows, the silence becomes music, just as in 'Het Veer' the silence of death was an "immer helderder gezang". On hearing this music which does not belong to their normal world, the fear of the residents turns to panic:

"Het is een groot woord: paniek,
maar het tekent de stille schrik
die op dit ogenblik
de ledige straat beving."

The reason perception of music causes panic must lie in where they suspect it comes from. They may imagine that they are close enough to death to be able to hear the music of a heavenly or eternal realm, which they are not ready for. Heaven seems to be coming to envelop them whilst they stand helplessly and watch; the cloud, which is taken as the sign of an offensive, also suggests a transformation, because it is unfolded:

"Een traag wolkje, als een eilandje in
de heldere hemel ontplooid,
beduidde het nu of nooit
ophanden zijnd offensief."

Transformation is one of the standard symbolic meanings of the cloud, and this cloud, looking like an island, could be taken as a staging-post between heaven and earth. An island is cut off from mainland life, but is still a bit of land though girded all round with sea. An island-like cloud is

thus significant for a transformation between land and sky or between earth and heaven. In the 'Groot Nederland' version, the cloud has such a lack of determinate form that it is not even called a cloud at this point, but a 'cloud-like thing', and its position is half-way to heaven:

"Het wolkjesachtige ding
halfweg ten hemel ontplooid".

As a result of the illusion of imminent attack evoked by the cloud, a new image, in the shape of a battleship, is envisaged in the sky, though the question of whether the attack is by ally or foe is still left in doubt:

"Al wie zijn kijker ophief
zag op de zee van azuur
een slagschip, klaar voor vuur.
Was het vriend of vijand?
Niet uit te maken, want
het schip voerde geen vlag."

There is no doubt about which quarter the attack stems from, since no earthly ship could sail the skies, so the street's worry is whether the wrath of heaven is directed against them or not. A battleship is a variation of the traditional ship symbol, which usually indicates passage between the land of the living and the land of the dead, but has the added ingredient of aggression; its element is a sea of 'azure', and this is the fourth time in Nijhoff's later poetry that the term 'azure' occurs, with its attendant idea of a distant absolute. Inevitably, a connection is once more made between the image in the sky and the man in the street:

"het schip voerde geen vlag.
Zoals ook de man die men zag
het minste niet droeg dat een man
van een man onderscheiden kan."

Just as the ship bears no mark of recognition, there is no distinguishing feature about the man which will help to classify him. The residents feel the authority behind him, and if they could find a sign of this authority, it might turn out to be one with which they are familiar in their own world. He might for instance be a policeman, but his plain clothes give nothing away, and do nothing to diminish the impression that his authority is beyond worldly authority.

Even if he were distinguishable as a supernatural figure, they would be able to adopt an appropriate stance, but their worry is so much the greater because there is nothing to tell them which stance to adopt.

All the while, the music heard in the silence continues, and swells to the proportions of a choir, "een groot, onzichtbaar koor", which is not produced by voices, but evokes thoughts of an angelic choir. It comprises, in addition to the sounds which can be compared with the silence of death in 'Het Veer' (quickly recapitulated as "water en gas en het zoemen ... van de elektrische stroom"), other sounds which can be compared with the second sort of silence described there: the silence of emerging life. These new sounds are:

"hartklop, en droom,
 en geeuw, en bloedsomloop,
 en wanhoop, en stille hoop,
 kortom al wat nooit stem werd".

In other words, all things which belong to unconscious human activity, but make little call to conscious thinking; internal forces corresponding to the external ones brought in the mains supplies. Hope, dreaming and the coursing of the blood contributed to the second silence of 'Het Veer'. Items like dream and yawn belong to the realm of sleep, but may occur as a prelude to waking. Heartbeat and blood circulation are fundamental sources of vitality. There is no attempt to delineate two different sorts of silence in 'Het Uur U' in the same way as in 'Het Veer', but the silence does combine elements that are associated with the spirit-world (the external ones) and others that are integral to human life (the internal ones). Accordingly, Nijhoff proposes that the longing which is consequently aroused within the residents is accompanied not just by a feeling of death coming upon them, but a double agony of death pangs and life pangs together:

"Om gestorven dood te gaan
 is genade, maar wee hem die
 als in dubbele agonie
 levens- en stervenspijn
 tegelijk voelt: hij moet het ravijn
 des doods over zonder brug."

What is felt is not simply a life or death struggle, but death coming to those with a life-faculty unused, of which the forces have remained available but ignored. This faculty is the realisation of an inner longing, and the people feel guilt at not having lived as they would have wished to have done. It is a complex situation, because what they have suppressed is something idealistic, a mental conception that has not been put into practice, a brainchild that has been stifled:

"Verlangen, doodgeknelde,
 een kind vermoord in een put,
 riep, eensklaps wakker geschud,
 om speelgoed en speelgenoot."

A connection may be made between the stirring of the "kind vermoord in een put" and the workman's holes. This resurrection of longing, which presently results in a vision, is a process most reminiscent of how Freud describes the revival of repressed desires in dreams. Some dreams, says Freud, may be "wishes of the past which have been abandoned, overlaid and repressed, and to which we have to attribute some sort of continued existence only because of their re-emergence in a dream. They are not dead in our sense of the word but only like the shades in the Odyssey, which awoke to some sort of life as soon as they had tasted blood."¹ The residents' longing is symbolised by a child, which is a sign that longing is supposed to come to something, and it is followed up by talk of actions. At first sight the child is a less objective symbol of potential here than on two previous occasions - in 'Het Steenen Kindje' where it stood for a product, and in 'Het Kind en Ik' where it stood for a source. Now it only stands for longing, but Nijhoff's further explanation substituting actions ("de daad die men naliet") for longing confirms that he is not just assigning the child to a wishful category. So it is not so paradoxical as it sounds when Nijhoff claims that the visions of the ideal selves, which the revived longing gives rise to, are representative of life ("moet men zich wel aan het leven gewonnen geven"). Although the music of silence takes the residents out of themselves and plays on their imagination, it has a

1. S. Freud, 'The Interpretation of Dreams', p.348.

twofold reaction in that the residents are transported to a state between life and death, to gain not only a full awareness of death, but also an awareness of the full extent of life. Their own lives fall well below this full extent, because their longing was stifled. To the extent of what is possible, positive action can be a consequence of longing, and the life pangs that they feel when their longing is revived are caused by thinking about the action that has not followed from their longing and not come and gone like other actions, but remains as a sort of 'ghost in the cupboard to haunt them:

"Want wat dood is is dood,
 maar wat vermoord is leeft voort,
 leeft voortaan minder gestoord
 dan wat onbestorven leeft.
 De daad die men naliet heeft
 meer kwaad dan de daad gedaan."

Potential action is a product of the longing which arises as part of the fanciful mood of the residents. When Nijhoff in his letter talks about the life which gets the better of the residents and which the man as "de levende mens" embodies, he is really talking about a product of the main body of metaphysical and death symbolism which the man's arrival in the street evokes.

In the passage about longing and death, which covers sixteen lines, there are no less than ten words (out of 77) referring to death ("dood" four times, "vermoord" twice, "sterven" twice, "doodgeknel'd" and "onbestorven"). When, after a blank line, the next sentence returns to the man in the street, Nijhoff starts with a personal pronoun ("hij"), and then confirms that he is talking about the man, as if the reader needs to be reminded that this is still an ordinary human being and not a death-figure walking down the street:

"Hij liep betrekkelijk vlug,
 de man, ... "

As with the remark about the man wearing shoes, the need has again arisen to re-establish the reality of the situation after the imagination has begun to take control. It is only a brief respite, but before the residents get completely carried away, there is time for an aside about the nature of the street:

"een straat die liefst niet
rept, als het kan, van verdriet,
die, integendeel, opgewekt,
zich slechts het leed aantrekt
dat een ander ondergaat, - ".

It is a street which tries to keep up appearances, so that people cover up their own troubles, and to bolster the impression that they are alright, take pity on the suffering of others. So far there has been little indication of the class level of the street, although in the 'Groot Nederland' version it has by this point already been shown to be well off and snobbish - people put up little signs saying "Armenzorg" to show that they help the poor, and indulge in petty bourgeois gossip:

"Draagt zij alweer die hoed?
Hoe heeft iemand de moed
als zijn zaken zo slecht staan
per taxi kantoorwaarts te gaan! - ".

In their eagerness to score one off their neighbours, the people are nosy and pass remarks about someone wearing the same hat, and a businessman trying to effect a cover-up by travelling to work in a taxi when his business affairs are in trouble. None of this is mentioned in the book version, which keeps class identification till later and so leaves the communal experience of the silence and the stranger open to more general application.

Gradually the music of silence builds up to a climax, and at the same time the languishing of the residents - an "onnoemlijk wee" - provides a silent counter-tone. Their muffled utterances of anguish produce no heavenly music, but stutterings of an infernal language:

"toen daar achter raam aan raam
de stamelingen tezaam
een infernale taal
aanhieven".

Thus they come to look like representatives of hell in opposition to the man as a representative of heaven. Their sounds are a shrill discord ("toen daar dan die dissonant schrille spiralen schreef ... "), a hellish harmony complete with heat: "dit hels accoord in de hete lucht". No matter

how they moan, the force of the music prevails; not, however, with gruesome results, but with the result that every mortal present witnesses a vision of almost heavenly euphoria:

"dat ieder sterveling daar
een visioen werd gewaar
van schier hemelse euforie."

As the man is not included as one of those having a vision, it sounds as if he is not included under the term 'mortal' either. The climax of the visions is actually not brought about directly by the man, but by the music, which itself stems from the silence, and relates back to the first epithet describing the street: 'doodstil'. Use of the word "sterveling" here, just before the visions, is a reminder that the residents are capable of death and contributes to the impression that they are confronted with death, especially as they go through an experience of hell and then heaven (which is how Christ in the Gospels experienced death).

In stating that the music is the cause of the visions, Nijhoff quickly sums up the other factors linked with it:

i) the workman who has left spade and holes -

"de man die zijn schop vergat,
die kuilen gegraven had
maar de bomen niet geplant, - ",

ii) the cloud -

"een schuldeloos wolkje dat dreef
in een onbewogen zee, - ",

iii) the man -

"de schrijdende vreemdeling".

Much as Nijhoff was in sympathy with workers, and expresses this in his letter to Miss van Dis ("dank zij de arbeiders zijn de kuilen ... gegraven"), he has not really succeeded in presenting a sympathetic picture of the workman in 'Het Uur U', who could easily be regarded as lazy (he has knocked off early) and negligent (he has left his spade behind, and not planted the trees). The term "schuldeloos" applied to the cloud implies that the external factors are not to blame for any suffering of the residents, but rather their own guilt complexes are. An alien nature is ascribed to the man in the term "vreemdeling", and it is interesting to note

how Eliot in 'Choruses from 'The Rock'' (1934) uses the figure of "the Stranger" to personify death:

"Though you forget the way to the Temple,
There is one who remembers the way to your door:
Life you may evade, but Death you shall not.
You shall not deny the Stranger."¹

Cirlot mentions that a stranger can be a symbol for the arrival of destiny.² In 'Vormen', Nijhoff had used the word "vreemdeling" in close connection with sanctity and Christ: a "witte vreemdeling" guiding a boat over the sea in 'Het Schip' is suggestive of the Holy Spirit, and in 'De Kloosterling' a stranger strongly suggestive of Christ appears. (In the variant text of the poem in 'De Beweging', 1917, he is unmistakably Christ³). The references in 'Het Uur U' to the man as a stranger or to strangeness about him lack allusions to Christian mysticism; Nijhoff wanted to put this stranger into a wider context, and leave him open to all sorts of superstitious interpretations, so long as he provoked the fear of force majeure.

In summarising all the factors involved in the prelude to the visions, Nijhoff uses a disjointed 34-line sentence, with the music as the thread which keeps everything together as one sentence, but with so many asides that it is barely grammatical. All these asides, bringing in the character of the street, the workman's holes, the cloud and the man to a sentence about the music, are part of the conversational style and convey a mood of excitement, as when someone tries to say a lot of things at the same time without sufficient deliberation to construct a formally integrated sentence. One of the asides refers to the music, and is so amazingly inane that its function is dubious; just before he finally states that the music brought about the visions, Nijhoff inserts the remark:

" - want zo is muziek: zij speelt - ".

As this clause adds nothing in meaning, it could be just a filler, but Nijhoff's careful attention to his verse would

1. T.S.Eliot, 'Choruses from 'The Rock', III', 'Collected Poems', p.171.
2. J.E.Cirlot, 'A Dictionary of Symbols', p.315.
3. M.Nijhoff, 'De Kloosterling', 'De Beweging 1917', III, p.56.

not allow anything so tame. Focus is on the word "speelt", which might denote the variation from ordinary reality that the music brings, but it seems wrong to look for this sort of meaning in a deliberate platitude. (A reading of "speelt" as something like 'plays tricks of fancy' is quite incongruous with the 'Groot Nederland' version, which says in the next line that the music brings an "onbedrieglijk beeld"). A better explanation is that this remark is a disclaimer on the part of the music, just as there have already been disclaimers on the parts of the man and the cloud: the man is just a man, the cloud is blameless, and the music just plays. Any blame for what happens lies squarely on the shoulders of the residents.

Euphoria is not exactly the outcome expected after the previous panic. Strictly speaking, euphoria is what the residents see, while their physical senses have no real part in it. Their spirits, as later revealed, partake of a blissful experience, but their bodies are in a state of slump during the "diepe mijmerij" of the visions. Although the visions themselves are pleasant enough, it is what they have to go through in gaining this insight which repels them, and also possibly the realisation of how far they fall short of the ideal that they see ("men ziet even het eigen tekort in"). Three visions are described in the book version, while eight additional ones (that of the "leraar met pensioen" together with the three main ones, followed by six others briefly described, and one more - that of an airman - in more detail) are found in the 'Groot Nederland' version. The upper class status of the street now becomes apparent for the first time in the book version, since two of the characters shown are a doctor and a judge.

All three characters, doctor, judge and a lady, see themselves as they could be, but only the doctor has once been in the situation in which he sees himself:

"hem bracht de wilde muziek
terug in een stille kliniek".

As a young assistant he had worked on a far-reaching experiment, but gave it up because he got barely enough to eat out of it. Ideally, a doctor works to extend the frontiers of life and conquer the domain of death, but instead of doing his best for this cause, this doctor has settled for the

smaller-scale but more secure and lucrative position of general practitioner in the street. Back in the clinic, sets of glazed and shiny objects seem to speak of a future where wrong does not exist:

"in een kast langs de muur
spraken dingen van glazuur,
email, glas en metaal,
een tintelende taal
van een achter alle kwaad
verrijzende dageraad. - "

There may be an insinuation that the doctor has failed himself by resigning himself to the realm of "kwaad", but the allure of the clinic is analogous to myth and seems to offer more of an ego-trip than a realistic enterprise. The "tintelende taal" and freedom from evil recall 'Het Kinderkruistocht', where the children heard a "stem in het licht" and passed out of the world, to which the narrator added in a refrain: "Libera nos a malo" ('Deliver us from evil' in the Latin paternoster).

The judge sees himself in his judicial function, but without his insignia of office ("geen toga, geen muts, geen bef"). He is being totally honest about his job, acting purely from a sense of justice, with no concession to personal prejudice or personal prestige:

"niet dan uit rechtsbesef
en met geheven hand
deed hij zijn eed gestand:
in naam der gerechtigheid
schold hij de zonde kwijt
en had eigen schuld bekend. - "

A judge is empowered with the authority to determine between right and wrong, and this judge in his vision appears to be a deputy of divine authority, because he exercises the forgiveness of sins. Without his insignia, he is comparable to the man himself, who also appears to represent divine authority, but wears nothing to mark it; the judge's function is not, however, obscure like that of the man, since he performs it openly with raised hand. In his vision, the judge shows greater insight than the others, who perhaps make the deduction that they fall short of the ideal (the

CP.
p. 252

text does not say so, but Nijhoff in his letter says they do), but show no clear recognition of their own guilt. The judge actually sees a confession of his own guilt. Nijhoff makes something of this difference later, after the residents have recovered their senses, though he makes more of it than can be read in the descriptions of the visions.

Doctor and judge see themselves dressed plainly: the doctor in a white coat, the judge without his insignia. The lady sees herself simply without any clothing. She is "de dame die niemand kent" who was mentioned at the beginning as one of the figures normally in the street at that time but absent on this particular occasion. Now she is also called a bitch ("krenge"), which means that people do know something about her, but what they know is unpleasant and causes them to deny acquaintanceship. (Or else, but less likely, the lady denies acquaintanceship with them as part of her nastiness, since "die niemand kent" is ambiguous and could mean either 'whom no-one knows' or 'who knows no-one'). In her vision she is in a position of reconciliation, so mild of manner that a deer comes up to her:

"De dame die niemand kent,
 het krenge, zoals men haar noemt,
 zag, zonder blouse gebloemd,
 zich naakt als Diana staan
 in een woud: een hert kwam aan:
 en toen zij zag hoe hij
 knielde, knielde ook zij:
 haar hand beefde, haar oog blonk
 nu zij levend water dronk. - "

Nakedness is a sign of honesty, innocence or truth, in contrast to the facade which the lady normally puts on by dressing herself in a fancy blouse. Her nakedness has its own beauty (she is "gebloemd" even without a blouse). Two fairly well recognisable allusions are incorporated in her vision: one to a classical myth, and one to the Bible. (In the other two visions, allusion is more vague; the doctor's "achter alle kwaad verrijzende dageraad" is vaguely suggestive of an Elysian myth, and the judge's remittance of sins is vaguely Biblical or liturgical). Mention of Diana and then a deer is a distinct allusion to the Roman myth of the goddess Diana and the huntsman Actaeon, in which Diana

punishes Actaeon, because he has seen her bathing naked, by turning him into a deer, and his own hounds tear him to pieces. Diana is goddess of chastity and virginity, and acts to protect her purity in this story. She is also goddess of hunting, but in this respect the lady in her vision is the opposite, because she kneels down with a deer, and so combines the pure nakedness of Diana with the meekness of a deer. Although there is no overt reference to Diana's chastity, the allusion to the encounter with Actaeon may imply that the lady does not normally have the same concern for her modesty. This possibility would tie in with the Biblical allusion of 'living water', which is a phrase used by Christ to the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well. Christ tells this woman, who is an adulteress, and whom he has asked for something to drink, that he himself is able to give living water: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."¹ Insufficient information is given about the lady to mark her as morally delinquent, but it is a possible reason why she is considered nasty; her failings as far as her vision indicates are in openness and humility. A completely alternative reason why she sees herself naked could be that normally she would take offence at nudity, and is therefore the prudish and stand-offish type. Her missed opportunity could have been in realising her womanhood in consequence of sexual repression.

The term 'living water', in all its Biblical occurrences, is a source of spiritual or eternal life, and Christ describes it to the woman of Samaria as "springing up into everlasting life".² Living water is specifically referred to as the Holy Spirit in John 7, verses 37-9, in explanation of some words of Christ: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive ...)." Longing for God is

1. John 4, verse 10.
2. John 4, verse 14.

compared to a deer thirsting for living streams in Psalm 42, verse 1: "As pants the heart for living streams, so pants my soul for thee, O God." Although Nijhoff says that the judge is the only one who confesses his own guilt, the lady kneels in response to the kneeling deer, and kneeling is connected with supplication, reverence or submission. Since his vision produces confession in the judge, by an analogy an implicit confession might be seen in the kneeling of the lady.

The phrase "levend water" gives textual evidence for Nijhoff's claim that for a moment the residents "zich wel aan het leven gewonnen geven". But they do not actually do anything at this moment. They are totally captivated by the visions, which show a form of life, but another life, different from their real lives. Nijhoff seems to be turning things round and calling life death and death life, putting the residents right into the same paradoxical situation that Pierrot describes in 'Pierrot aan de Lantaarn':

"Leven is dromen, en de dood,

Denk ik, is 't die ons wakker stoot."

The residents come to life in their dreams, and it is the confrontation with death that pushes them into those dreams. All the signs of death and fears of death that have gone before intimate that the visions are a moment of death for their normal lives, but as Nijhoff looks at it, their normal lives fall so far short of what they could be that they are pretty dead anyway. The alternative life shown in the visions is very idealised, but not so fictitious as to be quite untenable in the land of the living. After the visions, Nijhoff refers back to them in terms of the spirit having left the body, which confirms the impression that the "uur u" is a moment of death, but the prospect that is given in this experience of death is not necessarily of a form of after-life or spiritual existence, but of a new and better life, perhaps not realistic, but within the potential of the residents.

Of the eight other visions in the 'Groot Nederland' version, half are within easy reach and half are escapist dreams: the retired teacher sees himself in a library, the student sees himself as a piano virtuoso, a monk smells a rose, a seaman puts to sea, a professional tennis-player

lies in the sun, a policeman becomes a bus-driver, a bus-driver becomes an airman, and an airman becomes president of a giant company producing power from tidal ebb. Teacher, monk, seaman and tennis-player need have no difficulty in realising what they see, while the policeman and bus-driver are just jealous of other people's jobs. The eight are a mixed bunch, and not all within the upper class stratum, nor apparently guilty of suppressed potential. Still, with the exception of the seaman, their visions portray something contrary to what they normally do, and suggest that they lead a rather one-sided existence. Thus the student is one who learns instead of exploiting natural virtuosity, the monk is spiritually-orientated to the exclusion of sensual pleasure (smelling a rose is an ideal to him), and the tennis-player follows a career that is totally centred on physical activity.

In accordance with the two ways of looking at the moments of vision, as both a death for the normal life and a prospect of another life, two completely different consequences are presented. First the passing of this moment is seen as a loss of life, and secondly as a return to life. Since the prospect of another life in the visions is illusory, the scene depicting its passing as a loss of life is completely symbolic, whereas the revival of the residents as they regain consciousness is real. Symbolically, the momentary taste of pure happiness ("het puur geluk dat men mocht smaken") is described as a moment of peace before drowning in a shipwreck; a moment such as is achieved when, in observance of an ancient belief, people pour oil on troubled waters, and experience an unprecedented sensation of peacefulness:

"één ondeelbaar moment
treedt rust in, rust ongekend".

But it is only a temporary respite before the wreck sinks:

"Zo zakte, achter elk raam,
in de spiegelgladde vloed
een mens zijn beeld tegemoet,
zijn eigen ontredderd beeld. - "

This scene of drowning after the visions is confusing because it looks as if the residents' experiences so far have been fear of approaching death, momentary vision, and then death.

Lulofs ('Verkenning door Varianten') sees it like this, comparing the shipwreck scene to the traditional belief concerning a drowning man that he sees all his past life flash by in his last second. However the residents do not see their past lives in the visions but an ideal form of life, and it is this that perishes in the shipwreck scene whilst they themselves recover. The figure on the foundering ship can be interpreted as the ideal self, which has been forsaken, but which gets a momentary lease of life before succumbing to reality and its death in the face of its counterpart ("zijn beeld tegemoet"), the real self. Thus the visions and the shipwreck go together as an interlude between the residents' experiences of dying and of revival, an interlude in which an ideal lives and dies, and which is simultaneous with a death-like state inflicted on the body. From the time the man enters the street to the time he leaves it, there are just two sections in which he is not mentioned, and these are the sections of the visions and the shipwreck. They are totally devoted to a symbolic other world separate from current reality. That it is wrong to take the shipwreck scene as an indication that the visions are the residents' last moments before death, is shown by the following section, which correlates the shipwreck scene with the residents' revival, stating that the spirit had taken part in the moment created by the pouring of oil on troubled waters, and when it was over found itself back on earth:

"O, die olie verspeeld
was geenszins verspild geweest!
Eén ogenblik had de geest
in vergezichten gedwaald
en was, door het oog van een naald,
als de kemel, binnengegaan.
In welk land kwam hij aan?
Op aarde. - In eigen land. - "

Return to earth, after death and its strange silence, is what Sebastiaan had experienced in 'Het Veer'. The residents have undergone an aspect of death because at the time of their visions their spirit has departed, but return of the spirit, just previously symbolised as drowning, does not signify their death but the revival of their normal lives. A measure of the idealism of the visions is given in the

image of the spirit passing like a camel through the eye of a needle, which is another Biblical allusion. Christ compared the difficulty for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle to the difficulty for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God (the residents are also well off), so, in addition to the "schier hemels" epithet beforehand, this is another indication that the visions approach the level of a heavenly ideal; but since the spirit 'enters' the needle's eye and 'arrives' on earth, the spirit's discovery is that there is a correspondence between heaven and earth, that there is a feed-back from the level of the ideal to the earth. At the return of the spirit, the death-like state which the body is in before it recovers consciousness is shown:

"Gelijk een maan was de hand
die over het voorhoofd gleeed
en door een dauw van zweet
zich langzaam voortbewoog;
en ook het starend oog,
dat wijd open bleef staan,
het deed meer aan een maan
denken dan aan een zon."

Apart from death symbolism attached to the moon, especially in contrast to the sun, the body shows features of similarity to a death-sweat and a death-stare. Its lethargy is comparable to Awater's heavy-headedness after musing in the office, but much graver.

Life returns with a leaping sensation in the blood, which rises as if in a thaw after having been frozen at source:

"Maar weldra, uit dooiende bron,
ontsprong, sprongsgewijs, het bloed".

It seems that the blood becomes an equivalent to the "spiegelgladde vloed" in which the ideal selves of the visions had been lost, because the word "vloed" is now applied to the flow of blood, and in this flow the dream is said to have been carried off:

"en reeds spoelde op die vloed
- zoals na onweer een boom
de rivier afdrijft - de droom
met wat hij aanrichtte uit zicht."

Another symbol of life, the tree, is used in conjunction with the blood, to denote the life of the dream which is

cut off and passes away, while normal life resumes. The tree of the dream carried away here is equal to the tree not planted in the street.

There is something in common between the dream and a religious experience of being preached at, because the residents let out an amen under their breath, as if in relief that a sermon is over:

"Men ademde als verlicht
het amen na van een preek."

When the spirit returns to the body, it is explicitly stated that the normal everyday life is a dead existence ("deze dood"), just like Nijhoff describes it to Miss van Dis, but at the same time a note of criticism of the lofty alternative is introduced:

"De geest, toen hij nederstreek
uit het ledige zwerk
en thuiskwam onder de zerk
van vast werk en dagelijks brood,
was dankbaar dat deze dood
hem bevrijdde van ruimtevrees."

Although the ordinary routine may be soul-destroying, it is something tangible, and not empty like the land of the dream. At this point Nijhoff constructs a sympathetic picture of the everyday life, from the point of view of the spirit, which looks at the body with a feeling of shame for having left it:

"Maar kijk, die metgezel zat
alweer aan het schrijfbureau
te zwoegen, en wel zo,
dat de geest, beschaamd neerziend
naar die trouwe, arbeidzame vriend,
niet dan een lastige traan
verdrijvend tot hem dorst gaan."

No reconciliation is reached, however, because the body (which is referred to as "het vlees") is busy writing, and deliberately ignores the spirit, which is banished to a blue emptiness between earth and sun ("zijn ballingsoord, blauw en leeg tussen aarde en zon"). Both in the spirit's feeling of shame and in the rebuff meted out by the body, there is a degree of reproach for the spirit. Yet intermingled with the sympathetic portrayal of the body, counter-notes are

heard expressing faults of the body: it is called "die gebrekkige compagnon", it stubbornly resists the spirit's approach, and in an allusion to the Biblical saying, "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" ("de geest is wel gewillig, maar het vleesch is zwak"),¹ is called weak ("dit vlees, zo zwak het was"), while the spirit is called "de gewillige". With the banishment of the spirit, the situation in the street comes into focus again, notably with a chain of associations from the spirit to the cloud to the man:

"Even keek de compagnon
de gewillige na op zijn vlucht,
peinsde, zag in de lucht
een wolkje, en zag dat daar ging
nog steeds die vreemdeling,
nog steeds die man door de straat."

As on the last occasion that he was mentioned before the visions, the first reference to the man after the visions is with the word "vreemdeling", denoting his alien nature for the street.

A peculiarity in the section about the spirit's return is the sudden introduction of a writer sitting at his desk. Before the visions, and immediately after this section, the residents are looking out of their windows, but the spirit returns to a person busy writing away ("alweer aan het schrijfbureau te zwoegen"). It obviously cannot be supposed that at, or straight after, the moment of vision all the residents start writing at desks. Nijhoff seems to forget temporarily about the residents and put himself as a writer in their place, because the feeling of a writer getting back to the physical process of writing after being lost in thought corresponds with what the residents feel when resuming their normal lives. It is a similar situation to the one in 'De Pen op Papier' where Nijhoff returns from his meeting with the Pied Piper to find a figure sitting at his writing-table whom he recognises as himself.-Werumeus Buning also describes such an experience in 'Een Vlam'(1927) of a flight of himself away from his body, which remains at his writing-table.² The 'Groot Nederland' text dwells on the

1. Matthew 26,verse 41.

2. J.W.F.Werumeus Buning, 'Een Vlam', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', pp.94-5.

subject of conflict in the writer between spirit and body, describing a struggle which forms part of the occupation of being a writer, a struggle between equally uncompromising opponents (no "gewillige"), which is regular ("ving de oude strijd weer aan"), and symptomatic of a perpetual conflict ("de eeuwige onenigheid"), and which has less relevance to the residents. The briefer account in the final version is still a digression about a writer, but concerns an isolated and decisive experience (ending in banishment of the spirit) similar to what all the residents must feel.

When the narrative returns to the residents in the street, it is prefaced by the words "naar zich horen laat", as if Nijhoff, after the description of the writer, no longer feels with the residents. By now the man has passed and is seen from behind ("men zag hem nu op de rug"). A curious comment is added by Nijhoff that the residents had not given the man a festive reception into their homes, and furthermore there was no reason why they should:

"Men had hem niet bepaald
feestelijk ingehaald;
daar was ook geen reden voor".

This statement of the obvious confirms the incompatibility between the residents and the man, but does so by negating what might have happened if they had been compatible, namely that there might have been a reason for inviting the man in. The ideal selves were compatible with the almost heavenly level with which the man is associated, but these have been rejected, leaving the residents again in their former antagonistic attitude towards him. This hinted possibility of inviting in a stranger who has divine associations might recall a well-known passage from Revelation, in which the Spirit of God says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."¹ Nothing about the man indicates that he wants to be invited in, but merely the thought of doing so suggests that he might want it.

1. Revelation 3, verse 20.

Nijhoff's grammar becomes questionable again in this section after the return of the spirit. Just before the visions, sentence structure was disjointed but just within the bounds of acceptable syntax; now it is decidedly ungrammatical and does not even make good sense. A subordinate clause within a sentence runs:

"en toen de waarschijnlijkheid
 dat men hem weldra kwijt
 en voorgoed kwijt zou zijn,
 bij elke stap terrein
 en aan waarschijnlijkheid won,
 ... "

Alternate lines beginning with the conjunction "en" are perhaps meant to convey a rambling style, but in maintaining a string of conjunctions, Nijhoff has put in one "en" too many for the sense. While Nijhoff adopts a more detached view of the residents in this section, the faulty grammar reflects the lack of composure still affecting them.

When 'the probability' of the man's disappearance 'gains in probability', all the residents except one make the sign of the cross behind him. Making the sign of the cross behind someone is a gesture of good riddance; the person who makes it is glad to be rid of the person he makes it against, because the latter causes him some discomfort or harm and is therefore classified by him as bad. By putting a cross, which is a sign of Christ and of good, between oneself and another, one is invoking protection against evil, and the residents are classifying the man as evil from the point of view of their normal lives, which he threatens, although they know he is connected with a better life. To add solemnity to the making of the cross, a Latin phrase is inserted: "sit verbo venia" (which is an adaption of an anonymous Latin saying, "sit venia verbis"). The one resident who does not make the sign of the cross behind the man is the judge, a fact which the reader is supposed to be able to work out for himself by close reading: .

" - met uitzondering van één,
 en wie aandachtig las
 weet dat het de rechter was, - "

As there is nothing in the text indicating how individual residents are affected by the visions, it is impossible for

the reader to work out which one was the exception. A good guess would be the lady, because she saw herself drinking living water, and is not likely to condemn a man whom she associates with such sustenance. The judge saw himself as a sinner, which is very degrading for his position in the street, and one might think therefore that he would be quite happy to be rid of the man. What determines how the residents react when the man has passed is their basic individual character, something which the reader has no knowledge of. A proud or unscrupulous judge would have viewed the same ideal without reforming. Not that the judge necessarily reforms, since he may just be a bit slower in recovering his composure than the other residents. He is either a type of person who is naturally more sympathetic to the ideal or is more sensitive to a confrontation with it. Nijhoff's argument in the letter to Miss van Dis that the judge acts differently because in his vision he confesses his own guilt, rests on the assumption that his ability to make a far-reaching analogy about himself signifies a propensity to follow its example. There are two objections to this assumption: i) if he was good enough to have a better vision, he was not in the same dead category as the others in the first place; ii) if he was no better than the others, although blessed with greater insight, there is no reason why he should be any better afterwards. The picture he saw of himself was all very righteous, but did not provide sufficient information for the reader to be able to predict that he would be influenced by it in his future actions. Despite his different attitude towards the man, it does not necessarily follow that the judge's future life is changed by his vision. Kazemier believes that he immediately assumes the identity of the ideal figure he sees, making the leap into the alter ego which the others are not able to make: "De rechter is de enige die wel springt, maar hij springt niet terug."¹ All that happens in the text is that the judge shows a different attitude towards the man. This could be, for instance, because he

1. G.Kazemier, 'Nijhoff, de speelse', in 'Het Spel in de Literatuur', pp.29-30.

recognises a function in the man similar to his own job. For him, fear of death was followed by an image of judgment, and he might sympathise with a man whom he sees as bringing judgment, but still return to normal like everybody else. Because Nijhoff says in his letter that the judge does not immediately reawaken to the "doods bestaan" and that confession of guilt is the cause, more attention must be given to the possibility that the vision has an effect not only on his attitude towards the man, but on the conduct of his own life. Nijhoff only says in the letter, however, that the judge does not immediately ("terstond") reawaken to the "doods bestaan". From this viewpoint the judge is captivated by the vision for longer but may still revert to his old way of life sooner or later. Accepting what Nijhoff says about the judge, then the passage about the banishment of the spirit cannot apply to him.

It is obvious that Nijhoff is not being serious when he credits the reader with an impossible assumption, and the way that he half turns from the narrative ("en wie aandachtig las ... ") to address himself to the reader adds weight to the new angle that he is introducing to the text, namely a humorous one. The humour is more transparent in the 'Groot Nederland' version, with three extra lines about the judge, in flippant tone:

"ik zeg over hem meer
de eerste de beste keer
dat ik goed ben bij stem".

Three or four times towards the end of the poem the normally impersonal narrative gives way to personal comments from the narrator, and these are mostly in a humorous mood. In these later stages it seems that Nijhoff is no longer sufficiently at one with the street to confine himself to conveying the feelings of others.

Once they have made the sign of the cross behind him, the residents think they are rid of the man, but so long as he is in the street they remain subordinate to his power. Their self-examination may be over, but the children whom the man has not yet reached still have their part in the "uur u" to go through. As the man gets further down the street, the residents press their heads against the net curtains at the windows in order to keep watching him:

"Plat tegen de vensterruit,
 met het vitrage-net
 bloedrood in het voorhoofd geplet,
 kon men hem nog zien gaan."

The blood-red mark made in the foreheads typifies the torment suffered by the residents. As it occurs before the residents' fear about the children is aroused, it is a legacy of what has gone before, showing that they are marked as a result of their ordeal. The forehead is typically the place in which one's denomination in life is marked (as, for example, at baptism), and it seems fateful for the residents that they should be marked there in blood-red. In the apocalyptic account of the Day of Judgment, marks in the forehead are used to distinguish the servants of God from the servants of the beast.¹

Horror followed by anger are evoked with the realisation that the children are about to become involved, and another aspect of death becomes visible in the residents, because they turn deathly pale ("doodsbleek").

Right at the beginning it was stated that the children were playing in the distance ("Er speelde in de verte ...") and when the man reaches them they are still playing, not aware of any deathly silence or panic or even of the man, until he passes them. Not only are they separated from the residents in distance, they are in a different world, absorbed in play. Commenting on children's play in general, the narrator says that they often delight just in the words they use when they talk:

"de woorden zelf zijn plezier."

Words are a stage of symbolism, one step removed from the perception of objects (v. Chapter 1, pp.3-4), and Nijhoff proposes that children can use words as values on their own, without bothering about reference to the material world in which the meanings of words are based (cf. a childhood experience in 'De Wolken' of "De wond'ren werden woord"). This interest of children in words for their own sake ties in with Nijhoff's theory of word strata, from the basic word to the tertiary word in everyday use (v. Chapter 3, pp.48-50). A reduction in the referential function of words

1. Revelation 7,verse 3, & 13,verse 16.

increases the objectivity of their own forms, and if Nijhoff's observation of a different treatment of words by children is related to his theory of word strata, it shows a measure of agreement with Freud, who remarked that children "sometimes actually treat words as though they were objects".¹

Another factor which marks the children in the street apart from adults is their lack of sexual differentiation. Only after a closer look could it be seen that one of them was a girl, since she had her hair cut like a boy's.

The centre of their attention is a scooter owned by one of the boys, who is demonstrating that it has got indicators like a car, but against which the others argue that it is not really a car. Their play is an interplay between material concern and imagination. Two of the children, the eldest and the girl, show a materialistic tendency by letting it be known (the former by insinuation) that they have a car at home, and even the youngest boy is keen to establish a detail about the scooter which distinguishes it from a car, remarking that a bell rings on the scooter, but that cars do not have bells ("bellen doen auto's niet"). Nevertheless the children's approach to this material possession is a naïve one based on elementary facts. An example of the level of innocence at which the children exist is shown by an action of the girl, who sways her leg over the handlebars of the scooter (to show its difference in size from a car) in a way that is uninhibited but lacking in decorum ("alles aan haar was natuur ... te argeloos nog voor fatsoen"). The little boy in his attire, which is just a bathing-suit, is a picture of comparative innocence: whilst the eldest boy is wearing plus-fours, the girl a sailor's jersey and pleated skirt, and the other boy possesses the scooter, the smallest one is practically free of material attachment, a fact which the narrator draws attention to in describing his posture of hands behind back - before ever having mentioned what the little boy was wearing, the narrator begins a rhetorical question to ask where else the little boy could have put his hands except behind his back, and thus lends a humorous aspect to the picture:

1. S.Freud, 'The Interpretation of Dreams', p.412.

" - waar kon hij ze hebben gedaan
met niets dan een badpakje aan? - "

Imagination finally defeats the critical arguments about the scooter; the children's attempts at objective specification are not conclusive and take second place to the fascination evoked when the scooter-owner puts his indicators into operation:

"De bezitter, inmiddels, liet
met strak geworden gezicht
aldoor de vleugeltjes dicht
en klappend open slaan.
Een wonder is niet te weerstaan.
Niemand meer die iets zei.
Toen kwam de man voorbij."

At the moment the man comes by, the children are captivated by what to them is a miracle. It may just be miraculous to them that the indicators work like a car's, causing them to put the scooter on a level with a car, but the indicators are called "vleugeltjes", and so the miraculousness may lie in the scooter's transcendence of the category of material objects to which a car belongs. The children seem to find a bird-like quality in the scooter, which they cannot rationally explain, and therefore their first reaction is to classify this as a miracle (literally something inexplicable by natural causes and put down to supernatural agency). As the children follow the man when he comes by at this moment, which is the first time they notice him, their initial perception of him is made in a state of wonderment. Moreover the man's passage is enough to draw their attention away from the scooter, and they immediately incorporate him into their play; thus they treat him as a continuation rather than a divergence from a situation which had reached the level of a miracle.

It is actually the man's shadow which comes into the children's play, whilst he himself remains unaware of having any role, just as he was apparently oblivious to the effect he had on the residents. The shadow-play, called "schaduw-lopen", by which the children run after the man's shadow trying to step on it, is indicative of the vague, intangible world in which they are moving, and has sinister connota-

tions for the watching residents, who find it agonising to see their children running after a man who has caused themselves so much distress ("Het ging door merg en been, het was hartverscheurend, ... Het sneed, sneed door de ziel"). According to information Lulofs got from Vestedijk, the children's game was originally to have been called "kruisigingetje",¹ giving a strong death association, as if the children are not afraid to force a transition from life to death either on the one whom they are following or on themselves. This association of death-enforcement is removed with the removal of "kruisigingetje", leaving in "schaduwlopen" only a far remoter notion of transience, in that the children might be captivated by a shadow-world.

Their enchantment with the game of "schaduwlopen" causes them to skip and dance, the girl and eldest boy arm in arm, each holding one of the other children by the hand, and they go off with such a disregard for home and possessions that the scooter-owner leaves his scooter and the smallest boy loses his shoes. Aghast, the residents try to impose their authority by rapping on the windows to try to call them back, but achieve no communication because the children are too wrapped up in their game to be listening. As Nijhoff says in the letter to Miss van Dis, the children are more receptive to the form of life that the man represents ("de kinderen zijn inderdaad ... ontvankelijker dan de mensen"), but this form of life is an enchanted one that entails the abandonment of the reality of their lives in the street. They are drawn away from their parents by the man in a way reminiscent of Browning's story of the Pied Piper, almost into a realm of everlasting happiness; their happiness is shown in their conduct (skipping and dancing hand in hand), and to the observer the duration of this action goes beyond the bounds of time:

"Tijd, meer dan tijd werd het
dat dit een einde nam."

So long as the children are playing with the man's shadow, they continue in their course behind him, but at a certain point the shadow stops, and they are forced into a

1. F.Lulofs, 'Verkenning door Varianten', p.88.

confrontation with the man himself, who turns his head towards them. They are quite ready to face him and feel no fear, unlike the grown-ups, who hid behind curtains and were scared to death:

"Onvervaard

sloegen zij de ogen op
en namen de vreemdeling op
die stil was blijven staan."

The whole attitude of the children towards the man is completely different from that of the grown-ups; it is one of acceptance as opposed to evasion, and the strange remark about the adults' non-reception of the man ("Men had hem niet bepaald feestelijk ingehaald") becomes significant when taken in comparison with the way the children are happy to engage in contact with him. Meeuwesse hears a Biblical allusion in the phrase "namen de vreemdeling op",¹ which has a similarity in wording to a sentence in Christ's account of the Second Coming: "Ik was vreemdeling en gij naamt mij niet op" ("I was a stranger, and ye took me not in").² This is not a definite allusion on account of the two different meanings of 'opnemen', but it is true that the children are ready to encounter the man. Their readiness however is not reciprocated, because the man gives them a serious look:

"Nu zag hij hen ernstig aan,
het hoofd ten halve gekeerd."

There is a strong resemblance here to the final confrontation in 'Awater'; the narrator's pursuit of Awater ends when the latter turns to look at him, and likewise in 'Het Uur U' the children's pursuit of the man ends when he turns to look at them. But there is a difference in the manner in which Awater and the man look round; Awater looks searchingly as if for an acquaintance, whilst the man's look is fixed and uninviting, probably because he hears the grown-ups, who are rapping on window-panes, and realises that the children ought not to follow him. So he turns out in reality to be no

1. K.Meeuwesse, 'Nog steeds die man door de straat', 'De Gids' 130, 1967, No.1 & 2, January-February 1967, p.79.
2. Matthew 25, verse 43.

Pied Piper, though he looks like one in the context of the children's play. The difference in reaction between Awater and the man can be related to a difference in character between those who follow them; the narrator in 'Awater' is in quest of an ideal, but the children in 'Het Uur U' are already enacting an idealised existence in their play. It can be seen from the seriousness of his stare that the man is not playing, and the children look to the ground:

"Schoon niet verbouwereerd,
lieten ze elkaar niet los.
Als Klein Duimpjes in het bos,
stond nu het viertal daar
met de handen in elkaar
naar de steentjes omlaag te zien."

Their gaze is deflected towards the reality of the street, showing that they are constrained to accept that they do not belong to some fantasy world constructed around the man, but to the world of their homes in the street. Their comparison to Tom Thumb in the forest seems to allude to the version of this fairy tale by Charles Perrault, 'Le Petit Poucet', in which Tom Thumb led his six brothers out of a big forest because he was resourceful. Unlike his brothers, Tom was not very afraid, but realised that they had to get back home for their own survival. Just as the surroundings of the forest were forbidding to Tom Thumb, the man's stare must look forbidding to the children, and although they are not disconcerted when faced by the man ("Schoon niet verbouwereerd") they realise that they do not belong with him. It is thus the man himself who forces the children to conform to the society of the street, and not in the first place the residents of the street whom Nijhoff blames in his letter ("De verstoktheid van de 'straat' blijkt hier uit, dat men de kinderen tot de orde roept. Terwijl men heeft ingezien zich vergist te hebben, dwingt men de kinderen zich aan deze vergissing te onderwerpen."). Whilst the residents were forced, when the man passed them, to witness an ideal, the children are forced to face reality. Before the man stopped, the children already seemed beyond the bounds of time, and it still seems an eternity as he stands looking at them:

"Het duurde een minuut misschien,
maar die een eeuwigheid was."

Normal time returns when the man moves off again, leaving the children, and quickly ("spoedig") turns the corner out of the street (" - dit duurde niet lang - ").

As soon as the man has disappeared, the residents come out into the open again, and resume their authority over the street, throwing their windows wide open, while mothers go outside to call their children. A three-word sentence - "'t Was tijd." - announces that, after the previous feeling of eternity, a specific time has arrived. It is the children's tea-time, and in keeping with their wealthy background, they have silver spoons set out for them. But seeing as they are reluctant enough to return that it takes them a quarter of an hour to get back indoors, it looks doubtful whether they would have returned at all had the man not stopped them in their tracks.

Noise and activity return to the street both in the mothers' shouting and clapping and in the flapping and singing of birds:

"Het waren de mus, de spreeuw,
de merel weer en de meeuw.
Zij streken neer uit de goot.
Het sloeg, het tjilpte en floot
met trillende borst, luidkeels,
tot midden op straat".

Apparently the birds have played a part in creating the former silence by staying out of sight and out of hearing while the man was in the street. More activity is produced by the arrival of a packed tram moving swiftly to make up for lost time. All this life which comes to the street as soon as the man has left it, hardly seems to justify Nijhoff's claim that the residents reawaken to "het doods bestaan van straatbewoner". Perhaps they have little awareness of the reappearance of birds and other people, although they share a happy atmosphere because of their relief at the end of their ordeal. The birds and other people would therefore represent the forms of life which could alter their "doods bestaan" if they gave proper consideration to them.

An almost idyllic scene concludes the poem, with only the as yet unplanted trees needed to complete the picture:

"En bij de deur, op het dak,
 ja zelfs op zijn dooie gemak
 in 't open raamkozijn,
 zong een klein vogeltje zijn
 om kruimels popelend lied.
 Alleen in de bomen niet.
 Neen, niet in de bomen, want
 die waren nog niet geplant."

Nijhoff says that the trees are "symbool van het leven dat ook in een straat kan bestaan", thus they can be taken as symbolising how the residents' own lives could grow if given the chance. There is a message in this scene similar to that of 'De Vogels', where birds asking for crumbs are seen in a heaven-earth relationship ("De hemel vraagt om kruimels van het land"). The birds of the air in 'Het Uur U' have got plenty of access to the earth for their "om kruimels popelend lied", but birds are not ground-dwellers, and need a perch in between ground and sky, such as is provided by trees. Co-operation between heaven and earth is furthered by the representatives of the former, the birds, who come into the street, right up to the windows of the houses; but just as the street lacks trees for the birds, the residents lack a desire to reach or to take steps to get nearer to heaven (a desire symbolised in a tree's upward growth). (Since the workman has made preparations for planting trees "in 't middenpad", Meeuwesse draws a comparison with the tree of life in the city of God,¹ which according to Revelation is to be found in the middle of a street: "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life".²). If the lack of trees in the street is equated with the residents' deficient lives, then this is another reason for supporting the view that the residents are not conscious of the cheerful and lively atmosphere in which the poem ends. (The bird-song being heard everywhere except in the trees is by analogy received everywhere except in the residents' empty lives).'

1. K.Meeuwesse, 'Nog steeds die man door de straat', 'De Gids 130', 1967, I, No.1 & 2, January-February 1967, p.87.
2. Revelation 22, verse 2.

Nijhoff's little joke about the birds not singing in the trees contains the only criticism of the otherwise idyllic scene, and it deserves to be treated light-heartedly because the gap is about to be filled as far as the reader can tell from the earlier information about the workman getting holes dug specifically for putting trees in. What Nijhoff says in the letter to Miss van Dis clashes with this deduction and with the optimistic mood at the end of the poem, since he implies in the letter that the workman's job is just to provide holes and that the street itself is responsible for the trees, which remain unplanted ("De bomen ... zijn niet geplant. Wel, dank zij de arbeiders, zijn de kuilen daarvoor gegraven."). But the lack of trees detracts little from the air of well-being at the end of the poem, and whether or not the residents appreciate it, this well-being is more realistic than the euphoria of the visions. The last four lines of the poem suggest, in a play on words, that although the blossom and foliage of trees is beautiful to the extent of heavenly beauty, such a consideration is beside the point for the street:

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

Obviously there is a touch of regret that blossoms and foliage do not belong to the realm of the street, as shown by the interjected "ach", but finally it is the "tot daaraantoe" that counts, which is a common expression to dismiss something as irrelevant, and having a possible back-reference to the "hemel" of the previous line, implies that blossom and foliage appertain more to heaven than to the street. Another poem, 'Impasse', ended in an everyday expression of dismissal - "ik weet het niet" - but this was an empty dismissal and consequently rather sad. "Tot daaraantoe" on the other hand is a loaded dismissal; the mood is defeatist in a playful manner.

Light-hearted humour is a rare element for Nijhoff, distinct from a tendency in his poetry to play with words and images, which several commentators have remarked upon. Kazemier, for instance, in 'Nijhoff, de speelse', sees the

interaction between fantasy and reality in Nijhoff's poetry as a sort of game. But before 'Het Uur U', Nijhoff's image-play is not humorous but serious, and often sinister or wretched; funny in the sense of odd, but not in the sense of amusing, just as his clowns are not jovial, but pathetic. Only two or three instances of humorous mood can be found in the early poetry, one of which is the remarkable 'Kleine Prélude van Ravel' (which Nijhoff himself labelled a humorous). The 'Scherzo' section of 'De Wandelaar', where one would expect to find a brand of humour, has only got a few superficial touches, because the underlying melancholy and suffering is too strong; taken on their own, the poems 'Het Strijkje', in which a moon shining on lovers is given the comment "Oh la la!", and 'Clown', in which the clown regards his comic antics with approval, can be viewed as amusing sketches.

The cheerful air of dismissal at the end of 'Het Uur U' has one or two parallels in Nijhoff's prose. In the foreword to 'De Geschiedenis van den Soldaat' he talks about accepting in "speelsch besef" fatal conflicts between world and soul: "heeft één onzer meer kracht dan in speelsch besef deze fatale tegenstellingen te aanvaarden en te omvatten?"¹ There is a gesture of dismissal in the Enschede lecture when he shrugs his shoulders with a 'that's the way it is' after saying that the modern age is a doomed one: "Maar zo is het nu eenmaal."²

It is difficult to ascertain just where the note of humour creeps into 'Het Uur U'. There are amusing touches to the description of the children, and before that there is the remark about "wie aandachtig las", which makes sport with the reader's memory. Even before the visions, there is a hint of humour in a reference to the absent workman, which states that the residents would have liked to have done the same as him, namely gone away:

"zodat wie daar stond
hetzelfde zou hebben gedaan
- hetgeen zeggen wil: heengegaan -
als de man die zijn schop vergat".

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Verzamelde Vertalingen', p.9.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'Enschede lecture' 'Over eigen werk', 'Verzamelde Werk 2', p.1162.

But at this point, amid such a harrowing ordeal that the residents are going through, it is hard for the reader to attune to a humorous note.

Humour relieves tension and puts things in perspective, and is thus contrary to extremes of feeling such as the suffering, fear and isolation that is expressed in Nijhoff's earlier poetry. Eliot classifies humour as opposing the absolute:

"You, madam, are the eternal humorist,
The eternal enemy of the absolute".¹

Humour deals with situations that are odd; but only when not strongly felt because they are seen from a more normal point of view are odd situations amusing. The little boy in 'Het Uur U' with nowhere to put his hands is not an amusing picture when one only feels for his predicament, but when that predicament is moderated by being seen from and related to a more normal situation, it becomes amusing. Nijhoff's odd characters, such as clowns, in his earlier poetry live an abnormality which for them is real and not just a divergence from a norm, and so their oddity is serious and puts them into a category of intrinsic maladjustment or madness. Humour in poetry is a rare commodity for Dutch Post-Symbolists, and Nijhoff's use of it is something of an innovation. Over a long period in Holland, from Tachtigers such as Perk, Kloos and Verwey, to the generation of A. Roland Holst, Bloem and Nijhoff, humour is very scarce, though in Belgium, Van Ostaijen had advocated humour in poetry. In an article entitled 'Burssens, du Perron en ik', he attacks seriousness in literature, especially the excess of it in Holland, and calls himself an unserious poet.² The brand of humour which Nijhoff introduces at the end of 'Het Uur U' is mild and conciliatory, as befits his favourable attitude towards the real world in his later poetry. It had seemed that Nijhoff was returning to a pessimistic attitude to human society, but the change of mood brings 'Het Uur U' round to a more hopeful standpoint.

1. T.S. Eliot, 'Conversation Galante' (1917), 'Collected Poems', p.35.
2. P. van Ostaijen, 'Burssens, du Perron en ik', 'Verzameld Werk, Proza II', pp.373-4.

There is evidence in the alterations which Nijhoff made from the 'Groot Nederland' text, that he wanted to tone down extremes and make the threat to society look much less definite. In his letter to Hendrik de Vries, he says that he altered the original text "door een doeltreffender aaneenschakeling der motieven, en door eenige al te concrete passages te schrappen of abstracter te maken".¹ Thus as well as tidying up the visions by leaving out the more trivial ones, Nijhoff got rid of such images as "batterij", "bajonet", "handgranaat" and "kanonnen" from the 'Groot Nederland' version, to reduce the certainty of attack and leave the threatening aspect much vaguer (though all the more worrying for being vaguer).

Other changes, as mentioned before, conceal the well-to-do status of the street for a while, so that from the time the man enters it until the visions themselves are described, the street could represent any section of society or all human society. Collectively the people are put in an 'Everyman' situation, in which suddenly in the middle of their daily lives death comes to confront them, though in the case of these people the situation is imaginary. With his predominantly heavenly associations, the man can be accorded a symbolic equivalence to the Angel of Death in 'Everyman'. The alternative life seen in the visions does not preclude the man from symbolising death; he gives rise to combined notions of destruction and new life, just as the Angel of Death heralds new life by coming to take Everyman to everlasting life. Unlike in 'Everyman', the new life seen in 'Het Uur U' is not an after-life, but an ideal form of earthly life. Werumeus Buning puts forward such an idea of the Angel of Death as a key to life in his poem 'Triomf van den Dood 2' (1929):

"Hebt gij dien engel Dood eens wel herkend
Dan zijt gij levend van alle' angst genezen:
Men leert het leven door met hem te wezen,
De oneindigheid door hem te zijn bekend."²

1. M.Nijhoff, letter to Hendrik de Vries 24/9/1941, quoted in H.de Vries, 'Kroniek van de Poëzie. Eenheid in Veelheid', 'De Gids 117', 1954, II, No. 10, October 1954, p. 307.
2. J.W.F. Werumeus Buning, 'Triomf van den Dood 2', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p. 130.

Death is accepted philosophically by Everyman, but the street-residents are plagued by a guilt complex, which causes them to view the man hostilely and to make him out as possibly fiendish instead of heavenly, though this goes against the associations with the sky, the innocence of the man, and the better life that appears to them in the visions.

Evidence that such a moment as is experienced by the residents in the visions can be equated with an experience of death occurs in the article written by Nijhoff in 1925, entitled 'H.W.J.M.Keuls, "Om de stilte"'. Here he discusses a sensation which can come over a person, which he terms "het tweede hart". It is a sort of day-dreaming, and by way of example he refers to Gorter's 'Mei':

"Gorter beschrijft het in het laatste deel van zijn "Mei", het gevoel waarmee een lezende jongen over zijn boek opziet en vaag en hartstochtelijk peinzende blijft".¹

This recalls the dreams at the writing-table in both 'De Pen op Papier' and 'Het Uur U'. It is also similar to the musing of the woman who gazes out of a window in 'Langs een Wereld', for he also describes it as "het gevoel waarmee een jonge vrouw voor het venster talmt als het avond wordt in een stil stadje".² As one gets older, he says, the sensation gets more isolated from one's real life, but can suddenly strike one unexpectedly in the middle of a street or in the middle of a conversation. At such moments one has some sort of "verband met een zekere wereldgeest";³ they are moments of what Couperus has called "Zieleschemering":

"Het zijn korte momenten, waarin we ons slechts meestal rekenschap geven van een soort verwarring, en tevens van het gevoel, dat we even deelnamen aan een dieper zielsleven, dat er altijd al in ons moet zijn geweest. Couperus heeft het prachtig "Zieleschemering" genoemd, een wijder besef, dat even overweldigend naast ons bewustzijn opduikt en dan weer vervaagt."⁴

1. M.Nijhoff, 'H.W.J.M.Keuls, "Om de stilte"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.273.

2. id.

3. id., p.274.

4. id.

Around this sensation of "het tweede hart", a concept of a second personality leading a life on a higher plane can be formed, and people can participate in this higher life: "het kan tenslotte een apart leven worden, alsof we met ons lichaam en ons natuurlijk gevoel op deze wereld en tussen deze mensen blijven, maar daarboven, en geheel los ervan, aan een ander leven gaan deelnemen."¹

In this concept of an alter ego in another life, the sensation is also one that is experienced in dying, and is the basis for stories about doubles and the mystique of the mirror:

"Het moet het wezenlijk gevoel zijn van de stervenden, die de dood rustig tegemoet zien. Het moet de diepe grond zijn van de talloze verhalen en fantasieën van dubbelgangers, van het geheimzinnige van een spiegel."²

A feeling of this sort is so alien to the residents that they do not treat it with equanimity, and become panicky, but the awareness of themselves in another personality and another life is consistent with the sensation that Nijhoff describes in this article, and which may ultimately be experienced at death. What they see is a form of life, and not death, but to see it they leave their real lives for a moment.

There are many instances in literature of people having visions or insights just before death, but it must be remembered that while the residents physically succumb to a deathly slump, the visions are a prelude to their revival, and the limit, not the threshold, of their encounter with death. A parallel to the moment of euphoria can be found in Dostoyevsky's 'The Idiot', a book much admired by Nijhoff. Prince Myshkin experiences a timeless moment of happiness before he has an epileptic fit, a type of sensation that is also ascribed to people about to be executed. A reminder of one's own death in the setting of a street can be found in Baudelaire's poem 'Les Sept Vieillards', in which the poet looks from his window and sees seven old men pass, and then

1. M.Nijhoff, 'H.W.J.M.Keuls, "Om de stilte"', 'Verzameld Werk 2', p.274.
2. id., p.275.

turns his back to avoid witnessing an eighth:

"Aurais-je, sans mourir, contemplé le huitième".¹
 As a result of this sight, "Mon âme dansait, dansait ...
 sur une mer monstreuse et sans bords" (similar to the
 spirit's trip into infinity in 'Het Uur U'). The whole
 section of 'Les Fleurs du Mal' in which this poem appears,
 entitled 'Tableaux parisiens', deals with signs of eternity
 within the midst of the city. In Joyce's 'Ulysses', a des-
 cription is given of people peering from windows at a fune-
 ral cortege passing down a street; of an old lady it is
 said, "Thanking her lucky stars she was passed over."²
 An instance of a solitary man representing death is the
 previously-mentioned "Stranger", who comes to the city in
 Eliot's 'Choruses from 'The Rock'' (1934). Van Eyck deals
 with the figure of Death coming to collect a victim in his
 short poem 'De Tuinman en de Dood' (in the volume 'Herwaarts',
 1920-1945).³ Nijhoff's man in the street is just a symbol of
 intervention, suggesting death among other things, and not
 as definite as a personification of death. A more abstract
 idea of someone being visited by 'necessity' occurs in
 Holst's 'Mensch en Paradijs' (1925), where a man, "toen de
 ongeroepen nood kwam en hem riep",⁴ hid behind his window-
 blinds and lost Paradise; he contrasts with a man like
 Nijhoff's judge with a bit of guilt who "zichzelf aanklaagde
 om wat zijn ontucht aan de ziel misdeed".⁵

Meeuwesse⁶ and others have pointed to similarities
 between 'Het Uur U' and Ina Boudier-Bakker's short novel
 'De Straat' (1924). (Debrot has revealed that Nijhoff origi-
 nally gave his poem the title 'De Straat'⁷). In Ina Boudier-
 Bakker's street, the death of one of the residents is com-
 bined with the arrival of the magical but alien world of a

1. C. Baudelaire, 'XC', 'Les Fleurs du Mal', p. 98.
2. J. Joyce, 'Ulysses', p. 88.
3. P. N. van Eyck, 'De Tuinman en de Dood', 'Verzameld Werk II, Gedichten II', p. 38.
4. A. Roland Holst, 'Mensch en Paradijs', 'Verzamelde Werken II, Gedichten II', p. 20.
5. id., p. 19.
6. K. Meeuwesse, 'Van Voorstraat tot Herenstraat', 'De Gids 118', 1955, I, No. 6, June 1955, pp. 389-405.
7. C. Debrot, 'Ontmoetingen met M. Nijhoff', 'De Gids 116', 1953, I, No. 4 & 5, April-May 1953, p. 236.

street fair, and at the end attention is directed to refugee children whom residents are to adopt into their homes, bringing fresh blood and new life to their mundane existence. Two main fears oppress the bourgeois inhabitants of 'De Straat': strangers, because they pose a threat to their personal and domestic secrets, and old age which brings death. As one of them lies dying, they see death represented in the figure of a doctor (like Nijhoff's man, far from an ill-meaning character) going to his house: "Het was de Dood die door de Straat ging"; but from one point of view, "het was de vrijheid voor een van hen".¹ By comparison with the new life breathed into the street by the fair, which arouses memories and longing, their existence is a dull, worn out one. One commentator, Van Vuuren, finds that while the similarities pointed out by Meeuwesse are valid, the two works differ in their conclusions ("ten spyte van die ooreenkomste kom albei werke tot radikaal uiteenlopende konklusies");² he contrasts the stultified living death of the residents in 'Het Uur U' with the hopefulness of 'De Straat', in which a "kantonrechter" is apparently reformed and the refugee children arrive bringing fresh hope for the future. However, this view ignores the hopeful signs at the end of 'Het Uur U', where the judge could have reformed and a cheerful atmosphere accompanies the children's return to their homes. A gloomy outlook, which coincides with that expressed by Nijhoff in the letter to Miss van Dis, is not wholly consistent with the mood that the text conveys.

In 'De Straat', the street is, as in 'Het Uur U', a community undergoing a jointly felt experience, reflecting the idea of unanims, as expressed by Paul van Ostaijen. Van Ostaijen's 'Avondlied' (1918) depicts a unanimistic street in which various people are involved in the common experience of nightfall.³ With feelings of death, longing, children who return home late, girls with a "wipneusje" (the girl in 'Het Uur U' has "het neusje iets opgewipt"),

1. I. Boudier-Bakker, 'De Straat', p.137.
2. H.E.J. van Vuuren, 'Verskillende Interpretasies van 'Het Uur U' onder die Loep', 'Standpunte 115', 28th year, October 1974, p.14.
3. P. van Ostaijen, 'Avondlied', 'Verzameld Werk, Poëzie I', pp.91-7.

trams, and people peeping through curtains, there are several features in common between 'Avondlied' and 'Het Uur U'. Eliot, in 'Preludes' (1917), uses a street as a collective symbol in the converse situation of before dawn, a time when its inhabitants feel an atmosphere of infinity surrounding them and have an inner urge to get back to familiar daytime:

"The conscience of a blackened street
Impatient to assume the world."¹

'Het Uur U' goes further than putting a street in the position of being subject to external phenomena and drawing analogies from them. The collective experience extends to a vision. This vision in itself represents an ideal which is a projection of a way of life, not death, but in the context of what goes before and comes after, it can be viewed as the product of an ordeal equivalent to a death ordeal. As the man belongs more to what goes before and comes after the visions, he is more closely identifiable with death than the visions are. There is no mention of him at all during the visions, or that he was responsible for them, so his connection with the form of life that they portray is looser than his connection with the death threat that precedes them. He helps to provoke a crisis, and the crisis brings a moment of truth and insight, but his primary function in the poem is to operate in conjunction with other factors as a crisis-provoker.

The two main interpreters of what the man symbolises, F.Lulofs² and K.Meeuwesse³, both take the visions as the root of his symbolic function (rather than the product) and come up with two different answers: Lulofs that he is a death-figure, Meeuwesse that he is a Christ-figure. This is not an unreasonable way of looking at the question, since Nijhoff does the same thing in the letter to Miss van Dis

1. T.S.Eliot, 'Preludes', 'Collected Poems', p.24.
2. F.Lulofs, 'Verkenning' door Varianten', The Hague, 1957.
3. K.Meeuwesse, 'De Man in de Straat', 'De Gids 121', 1958, II, No.8, August 1958, pp.48-70; 'Nog steeds die man door de straat', 'De Gids 130', 1967, I, No.1/2, January-February 1967, pp.76-89; 'Bij Het Uur U van Martinus Nijhoff - Een klein commentaar', 'Ons Erfdeel VI', 1963, No.3, March 1963, pp.25-8.

when he says that the man is "de 'levende mens'". But while it is logical to attribute the visions to the man as instigator of the music which brings them about, a new dimension has to be coped with, because previously the mood was one of panic, but with the onset of the visions it suddenly changes to euphoria. If the man is responsible for the euphoria, then this is brought about as a follow-up to the panic which he elicits first; but the euphoria could be a subjective reaction as an escape from the pressure imposed by the man, thus not so much a creation of the man as a reaction to the man. Either way, the man can still be viewed as a causative factor for the euphoria, but in the latter case the euphoria is mainly attributable to the residents themselves rather than to the man. In their subsequent gesture of good riddance, they apparently still associate him with bad ~~not~~ good, though this does not prevent the reader from using his external view to equate the man with good on account of the visions. This salutary aspect, however, cannot be extended to cover the man's appearance in the rest of the poem, since the feelings he evokes there are not consistent with the visions. Equally, what the man represents in the rest of the poem cannot be proved on the grounds of the visions. It is possible to account for the man, ignoring the visions, whilst it is not possible to use the visions alone to account for him. Lulofs' argument that the man represents death is tenable when based on the sections in which the man appears, but not when relying on the evidence of the visions (though these can be fitted in as a consequence). Meeuwesse's argument that the man represents Christ is tenable when the man is explained solely on the strength of the section describing the visions, but does not cover his appearance in the other sections. Salvation is indicated in the visions where the doctor dreams of an "achter alle kwaad verrijzende dageraad", the judge dreams of forgiveness of sins, and the lady dreams of drinking living water. If the visions represent something the man represents, then he can be seen for a moment as a Saviour, but in the passages where he actually appears he is far from beneficial.

In his articles in which he puts forward various features of the man indicative of Christ, Meeuwesse focuses

in particular on the Christ of the Second Coming, but also finds analogies with the Crucifixion. Gospel versions of the Second Coming state that the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give her light and the stars will fall from heaven and men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds of heaven with power and great glory, accompanied by a host of angels.¹ Although there is a cloud in 'Het Uur U', which implies transition between heaven and earth, but in the first place is taken, as Nijhoff says, as a battle signal, there is no sign of the sun's demise (quite the reverse), nor any sign of glory about the man. Traces of the Second Coming remain vague compared with the fear of death which oppresses the residents. The Second Coming is supposed to happen suddenly, without warning, and Christ draws an analogy between its unexpectedness and the unexpectedness of the hour at which a thief strikes.² 'Thief' is also a term used in 'Het Uur U' in reference to the man, whose walk rivals that of a thief or spy for silence, and so it could possibly hint at Christ's coming as unexpectedly as a thief. But there is so little to connect the man himself with Christ that the terms 'thief' and 'spy' serve more to call into question the man's intentions and perhaps give a demonic slant to his character. Another account of the Second Coming, in Revelation, describes it as an armed attack, in which Christ comes with armies and with the sword to judge and make war.³ Again, the military aspect of 'Het Uur U' could be suggestive of the military assault at the Judgment Day. In Christian culture, the portrayal of this final battle tends to use the weaponry of its own age - for instance that of crusades and jousting is much in evidence in medi-aeval representations⁴ - and a modern writer would naturally think in terms of modern warfare; so Nijhoff's flare signal, firing line and battleship are not necessarily out of keeping with Armageddon. Also, the "groot, onzichtbaar koor" may recall the choirs of angels that will accompany

1. Matthew 24, verses 29-31 & Mark 13, verses 24-26.

2. Matthew 24, verses 43-44 & Luke 12, verses 39-40.

3. Revelation 19, verses 11-21.

4. J.J.M. Timmers, 'Symboliek en Iconographie der Christelijke Kunst', p. 560.

the Second Coming. Yet any associations that might be made with the final Day of Judgment are strictly due to the residents' fears that their own end is upon them, and not to any Christ-like associations with the man. There is a lot of doubt surrounding the man, so that amongst such things as death, fate, demon or celestial messenger, Christ is one of the possibilities that might arise for what he is. But if there are thoughts of doomsday, then these are connected with the death threat with which the man is also equated. Any thoughts of Christ are veiled behind the foremost thought that mortal danger is at hand.

The comparisons with the Crucifixion which Meeuwesse makes are very flimsy. He says that the man appears shortly after three o'clock, the time of the Crucifixion.¹ Actually three o'clock is only a rough estimate for when the workman departed ("een uur of drie"), and he may have been gone some time. It must be a bit later in the afternoon, about tea-time (probably somewhere between four and five), when the man walks down the street, because tables are set for a meal for the children, and the tram at the end is packed, which, even allowing for the effects of its delay, suggests a proximity to the rush hour. An hour some time in the afternoon is more likely to be a time appropriate to sultry conditions, rather than one associated with the Crucifixion. Life in a routine situation often begins to drag a bit in the afternoon anyway. (It may be recalled that Awater became drowsy in his office in late afternoon). Meeuwesse also mentions as pointers to the Crucifixion, the actions of the residents in making the sign of the cross, and the "schaduw-lopen" of the children which was reputedly to have originally been a game called "kruisigingetje".² Making the sign of the cross behind him hardly identifies the man as Christ, since the cross, as Christ's emblem, is used to invoke his protection from whoever or whatever the sign is made towards. It might seem ironic that the residents want to protect themselves from someone connected with visions of

1. K.Meeuwesse, 'Bij Het Uur U van Martinus Nijhoff - Een klein commentaar', 'Ons Erfdeel VI', 1963, No. 3, March 1963, pp. 25-8.

2. id.

an ideal, or that the way in which the man gets treated in being symbolically presented with a cross when he comes to their street is comparable to the way in which Christ was treated in being burdened with a cross when he came to earth. Such ideas are possible legacies of the visions, but the gesture of making a cross is primarily another indication of the threat which the man holds for the residents. No hint of crucifixion remains to the children's game without the term "kruisigingetje", and the man's action in causing the children to turn back argues against a resemblance between him and Christ (who called little children to him). Another point of correspondence which Meeuwesse finds between 'Het Uur U' and the Crucifixion is that the former seems to last about three hours (from about 3-6), the same duration as the Crucifixion.¹ References to time in the text tend to indicate either brevity ("één ademtucht duurde het", "één ogenblik", for the visions) or long duration ("Tijd, meer dan tijd werd het", "een eeuwigheid", for incidents concerning the children), whilst the whole action can be determined as lasting in reality just a few minutes, because the man "liep betrekkelijk vlug", and at the end the tram made up its lost time ("de verloren tijd herwon" - it would never make up a lost three hours).

It would be uncharacteristic of Nijhoff not to use a few religious allusions or Biblical turns of phrase, and these help to give the visions the appearance of a religious ideal. No firm allusion to Christ, however, occurs in the sections in which the man is mentioned, whereas death is explicitly referred to many times. If the man in his death-bearing capacity is to be equated with Christ at the Second Coming, then the chief association with him remains death. He can quite easily be regarded as a death-figure without any association with Christ, and just as easily be viewed in a pagan context as a Christian one (there is a specific reference to Hermes). A life-bearing capacity is a secondary, more doubtful association.

So little is actually said about the man that little can be firmly established about what he symbolises. Menace

1. K.Meeuwesse, 'Nog steeds die man door de straat', 'De Gids 130', 1967, I, No. 1/2, January-February 1967, pp. 79-80.

is attributed to the sky and the visions are attributed to the music of silence; he is linked to both by his footstep which seems to make the inaudible sound of a flare signal in the sky and to deepen the silence. But he only assists phenomena that affect the street, he is not directly responsible for anything, except when he reaches the children, and only acts deliberately in causing their return. At its simplest level, what he symbolises can be stated as some sort of intermediary between heaven and earth. What sort of intermediary depends on how his mission is conceived, whether destructive alone, or destructive with a life-giving ulterior motive. Both the death threat and the visions are illusory, but the panic caused by the former is physically felt. Since the fear and the death imagery extend either side of the visions, the impression that the man is a death-bearing emissary dominates, and a good case offers itself for him being taken simply as a symbol of death. The visions can be explained as a moment of profound personal insight which comes at a death-crisis. Although Lulofs' case for the man being a symbol of death comes a bit unstuck when he tries to connect the passing of the visions with the death of the residents instead of with the revival of the residents, some valid comparisons can be made between the insight of a drowning man and the insight of the residents, as being different circumstances in which impending death evokes a purview of life (in the case of a drowning man, for whom death does take place, his past life; in the case of the residents, who still have some life in front of them, their ideal lives). In the one case death comes conclusively and in the other case death is passing by.

Death embodied in a figure walking down a street or coming to people's homes is a motif found quite a number of times in this age in which writers were applying symbolism to an insecure modern society (v. pp.281-2). Three years after 'Het Uur U', Van Schendel presents a similar sort of incident in his short story 'De Tevreden Burger' (1939), where the heavens combine in a different way, to subject a community to forty weeks' rain, upon which an old lady comes to the deserted street of the hero, Tuiteling:

"Hij ziet niemand meer op straat, behalve zo nu en dan een onbekende dame, die aan de huizen aanbelt maar wie nooit

open wordt gedaan: het is de Dood, de Moira, het Noodlot."¹ These words are Nijhoff's, from an article on the story, and the labels of Death and Fate that he gives to the mysterious old lady could equally well apply to the mysterious man in 'Het Uur U'.

The short verse drama 'Een Idylle' (first published 1940) that appeared together with 'Het Uur U' at the back of the book edition (1941), also takes the theme of death and can be regarded almost as a sequel or epilogue to it, although it is not necessarily a key to the latter's symbolism. The frankness and equanimity with which death is discussed in 'Een Idylle' provides an answer to the residents' attitude of fear and evasiveness. Protesilaos, first Greek to die in the Trojan war, is permitted to return to earth for an hour, but does so reluctantly because he is happier in the underworld, and when he tells his wife Laodamia about his life among the dead, she contrives to go there too. In the role of intermediary between the two worlds - "leidsman van de doden" - is Hermes. Nobody is afraid of forsaking one existence for another; Hermes wants to live on earth, and Protesilaos and Laodamia want to live in the underworld. It is noticeable how the figures associated with death in 'Het Uur U' and 'Een Idylle', the man in the former and Hermes in the latter, despite what they symbolise, are not in their own actions opposed to humanity, but sympathetic. The man does not want to lead away the children, but wants them to stay; Hermes wants to grant Protesilaos and Laodamia as much time as possible on earth, and longs for an earthly life himself. In turn, Protesilaos and Laodamia are not opposed to death; but the residents in 'Het Uur U', because they have suppressed and been neglectful of life and because they are inwardly ashamed about it, fear death. Through the idyllic departure from life shown in 'Een Idylle' (which has a similarity to the carefree departure from life of the children in 'De Kinderkruistocht', and also to the unwitting action of the children in 'Het Uur U' in running off after the man), Nijhoff tries to show that death can be accepted

1. M. Nijhoff, 'Een kunst van grote vlakken. Arthur van Schendel: "Anders en eender"' (1939), 'Verzameld Werk 2', p. 894.

as a natural and not a frightening occurrence. Even death in warfare, which is how it confronts the street-residents, has its teeth drawn, because the victims of the Trojan war are said to be now enjoying a blissful existence in loving friendship with their former enemies.

Following the two allusions in 'Het Uur U' to characters from Greek mythology, Hermes and Diana, 'Een Idylle' is completely based on Greek legend. Nijhoff showed an increasing interest in Greek mythology in his later work (after 'Het Uur U'), combining Greek and Christian traditions in 'Het Heilige Hout', and translating Euripides' 'Iphigenia in Tauris'. This emergence of Greek motifs reflects a similar tendency in contemporary authors such as Joyce, Eliot and A. Roland Holst, which in turn is a legacy of a doctrine of New Hellenism that developed in the early twentieth century. (Oscar Wilde was one of its earlier advocates in 'The Soul of Man under Socialism', and this work had a particular influence on his fellow Irishman, Joyce). Nijhoff is not concerned so much with embracing Greek ideals (such as truth, valour, sincerity and nobility) as with embracing Greek and Christian cultures together (in his "drang naar universaliteit"¹). In 'Het Uur U', the man could just as well be regarded as a Greek deity as a Christian one.

For the poetry of Nijhoff's remaining years, the main field became religion, and he virtually turned his back on the lyrical poem after 1936. He devoted himself to the trilogy of plays 'Het Heilige Hout' and to adaptations of psalms. The Christian background from which he works does not prevent him from taking pagan beliefs into account in his drive for universal bearing. In the dedication to 'Het Heilige Hout' he puts Virgil on a level with a Gospel-writer, ascribing to both the capacity to handle a description of the Son of Man. Greek and Christian traditions are united in 'Des Heilands Tuin', where the Sibylline books are converted into the Gospels, and the Greek unknown god is taken to be the one God of Christian belief. Such compromising between Christian and pagan religion was not possible

1. M. Nijhoff, 'Opdracht', 'Het Heilige Hout', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p. 256.

at the time of 'De Vliegende Hollander'(1930), where the pagan Dutchman is condemned to roam the waves when Bonifacius establishes Christianity in Friesland. But a longing to unite Christian and pagan is still embodied in the character of Bonifacius, who admires the Dutchman and is unable to curse him. In the 'Voorstudie' on Bonifacius, this basic longing to harness pagan spirit into the Christian church is examined, and brings a reproach from Bonifacius' master, who sums it up as a wish to save the church of Rome by means of the infidel Trojan horse:

"Wilt ge

Rome gaan redden, kind, met het Trojaansche paard? - ".1

An urge for the reconciliation between pagan and Christian religions first became noticeable in 'Satyr en Christofoor' (in 'Vormen') with the mediation of the Christ-child to link the satyr of Greek culture and Christofoor of Christian culture. The incorporation of Greek deities into the modern circumstances of 'Het Uur U' is a sign that a dichotomy between Christian and pagan no longer exists.

Nijhoff tried all sorts of styles in his later work, and 'Het Uur U' is an experiment in one sort, one in which he comes closest to ordinary people and ordinary language. The diversity of styles in this period is a far cry from 'De Wandelaar' in which more than 70% of the poems were sonnets, but the experimentation with unconventional forms in 'Awater' and 'Het Uur U' does not mean that Nijhoff has dismissed the conventional sonnet. Eight of them make up the series 'Voor Dag en Dauw', published in 'De Gids' in 1936. But only one (poem VIII), which is a variant of 'Impasse' (in 'Nieuwe Gedichten') conveys the personal feelings of the poet. The others concern the lives of ordinary people, put, as in 'Het Uur U', in wider perspective. This perspective on life in 'Voor Dag en Dauw' is gained by viewing life right at the beginning of the day when the daily routine is about to start.

In the transitional period between night and day, dreams are fresh in the mind but action is about to begin.

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Een Voorstudie van de Bonifacius-figuur uit "De Vliegende Hollander"', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.551.

People are in a position to convert longing into reality. The people's longing is very similar to what is shown in the visions in 'Het Uur U', except that these people's longing is directed at future actions and is not a passing flash, although in some cases escapist. The series is partly inspired by an optimistic interpretation of Huizinga's 'In de Schaduwen van Morgen'(1935) and partly by prophecies of divine intervention in Isaiah, which are adapted to signify a new spirit on earth. Thus Isaiah 10, verses 17-18, which prophesy the light of Israel becoming a fire to consume soul and body, are turned by Nijhoff into an expression of longing for the consumption of the soul into flesh:

"o licht, wees vuur, onsteek de morgenwind
opdat de ziel tot het vlees toe vertere."¹

Isaiah 51, verse 3, which prophesies Zion's wilderness becoming like Eden, is turned by Nijhoff into a general vision of blossoming wilderness:

"De wildernis zal bloeien als een roos."²

The prospect of another land occurs twice, but only once in an escapist sense. In poem IV, a man intends to take his wife and child to emigrate to another land, but he is still in this sense building on foundations that he has already got. By contrast, the subject in poem VIII does not even have to move, but finds life taking on the surroundings of another land where he is (namely, in the kitchen, v. Chapter 5, p.149).

Whether or not the form is conventional, the symbolism in the later poetry is not conventional, particularly when judged by the standards of the Symbolist Movement. The move closer to everyday life has entailed a move away from standard symbolism. Conventional symbolism is generally paired with unconventional life, and conventional everyday life is paired with unconventional symbolism. Nonetheless the scale of Nijhoff's symbolism does not alter from being a system of correspondences to convey ideas of another life, another world, a distant universe and imaginary ideals. The significant changes displayed in 'Het Uur U' are a change of sub-

1. M.Nijhoff, 'Voor Dag en Dauw IV', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.446.
2. M.Nijhoff, 'Voor Dag en Dauw VI', 'Verzamelde Gedichten', p.448.

ject and a change of direction. A change of subject from the idiosyncrasies of an individual to the common awareness of ordinary people, and a change of direction in that correspondences are not so much sought as imposed on people.

'Awater' and 'Het Uur U' offer two ways in which symbolism is brought right into everyday life. The former is symbolic because Awater and, more importantly, the narrator are alive to symbolic correspondences in their everyday surroundings (office, street, café and restaurant). The residents in 'Het Uur U' are not alive to any symbolic correspondences in their everyday surroundings until momentarily disorientated in the midst of their routine and forced to see things they do not normally see. At the same time the narrator, though now behind the scenes, and the reader can share a wider, external view, being alive to a fuller range of symbolism. In effect, the residents are forced into a view close to that found in Nijhoff's early poetry: gazing at the sky, hearing strange music, suffering and thinking of death. To receive their view they are displaced into an odd set of circumstances, while the reader can both feel the crisis of the residents and look on the events as typical of any number of ordinary events that can give rise to symbolic correspondences any day.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

Nijhoff's legacy from the French Symbolists is greater than that of any of his Dutch contemporaries, and it only requires a look into that background to discover much of the meaning to his symbolism. At the same time, Nijhoff is intent on his own specialist themes, and the development of these with the addition of new ideas carries him far away from his early background. A study of his lyrical poetry over twenty years from 1916-1936 reveals definite patterns of consistency in his use of symbolism and choice of symbols. He remains faithful to most of his major motifs, though a few of the early motifs naturally fall by the wayside, and a whole new orientation, with new symbols, is found in his later poetry. Mother, child, martyr, street, journey, bird and boat are typical symbols that consistently reappear, whilst a nagging concern with themes of death, dualism and religion persists. Change is achieved more through progression, with an added new dimension, than through alteration. How this progression affects the symbolic meaning in Nijhoff's poetry can be plotted in four areas affecting it - attitude, theory, content and style.

a) Attitude.

The change of attitude which Nijhoff underwent in between the publication of 'Vormen'(1924) and 'Nieuwe Gedichten'(1934) is the major governing factor for his later poetry. The attempted withdrawal from reality in the old attitude is reflected in a belief that poetry too belongs to a totally different world from the real world. A change of attitude was necessary as a way out of a poetic deadlock or of just giving up, and after trying to renounce earthly life because it leads to death, Nijhoff comes to see death leading to a rediscovery of life. Expression of the new belief in earthly reality is itself the main theme at the beginning of 'Nieuwe Gedichten', notably in 'Het Veer' and 'De Soldaat en de Zee'. Basic wish impulses such as the mother and the journey are carried through in the

new attitude, but are transposed to different surroundings, and although the new attitude is more conciliatory compared to the fierce dualism of earlier, an amount of counteraction between real and ideal remains.

b) Theory.

Nijhoff's poetic theories function more as an outlet of his attitude than as an influence on his poetry. Their explanation of poetic processes and intentions is not always consistent with the poetry that is produced in practice. In the background ideas of his early period he is greatly concerned with the transcendental role of poetry as a sort of religion of transference to another realm, and ascribes an autonomy to form and to the word as means of correspondence with that realm. His word theory, distinguishing three stages of word operation, in which the word has a divine nature at the primary stage and is free from ordinary meanings, finds expression in 'Tweeërlei Dood' in the famous utterance about words rising free of their meanings. The new ideas put forward in 'De Pen op Papier' about describing the feelings of others and wandering out of one's own life are slow to have any effect on his poetry. More revealing with regard to the symbolism in his later poetry is the comprehensive view expounded in the Enschede lecture, in which the everyday world is integral to and a key to an infinite universe, so that properties of a profounder or more universal nature are discovered in ordinary objects and situations, and the ordinary world is simultaneously both a continuation of the divine universe and a pointer to the divine universe.

c) Content.

While there is no question of wholesale abandonment of early motifs, there are some which get pruned and others which get adapted. One to get the chop is the clown and 'poète maudit' ingredient, causing the virtual disappearance of dance, make-up, curse and sexual themes from the later poetry. The three main sources - Symbolist and Post-symbolist poetry, and Christian culture - hold their influence, but other sources in European and American literature begin to exert influence. A blend of standard and new symbols in a more ordinary context inducing a chain-reaction of new

meanings replaces the reliance on stereotyped symbols to reproduce a preconceived idea. References to the spirit-world or eternity are brought within the ordinary earthly setting. Where Nijhoff tried to get common settings, such as the street or the town, into his earlier poetry, they usually appeared blank or distorted. In the later poetry they are integral to everyday life. Much of the remoteness is removed from the standard symbols, so that whereas the bird symbol was represented by rare birds and sea-birds, there are common blackbirds and sparrows in 'Het Uur U'. The journey, which was exclusively one of removal, becomes also a journey through the daily life of the city in 'Awater'.

d) Style.

The reclusive and subjective mood of the early poetry is so dominant that Nijhoff's style is deeply affected by it long after his views have changed. Gradually the presence of a narrator or 'I-figure' diminishes, but there are only slight traces of the desire to describe other people's feelings in 'Nieuwe Gedichten', and it is not until 1936, with 'Het Uur U' and 'Voor Dag en Dauw' that a counterweight to the personal texture of earlier poems is given. A greater diversity of form to allow longer narrative poems in contrast to the predominantly short poems in the early poetry, of which most are sonnets, precedes an eventual shift from the lyrical to the epic. Development of narrative brings its own symbolic significance as poems become symbolic for their story, and not so much just vehicles for the conveyance of symbols. With the disappearance of weird, eccentric or unnatural motifs in favour of ordinary objects and situations, the everyday world becomes a formula to universal perception. The later conciliatory mood leads to a light-hearted humour in 'Het Uur U', which strikes a very different note from the wry affectation of earlier.

One of the most noticeable effects of the added new dimension in the later poetry is that the symbolism becomes more complicated. Even if the reader is unfamiliar with the Symbolist background which is the key to meanings in the early poetry, the symbolic intent stands out clearly enough,

and in this respect the early symbolism is still more straightforward. On finding a poet describing himself as a Carolingian monk, a victim tied to a post, or a murderer of a boy, the reader is confronted with the fact that this must be some sort of analogy. With the later work he may not be so sure; he can read 'Het Uur U' as a story of a chilling experience without picking up many of the symbolic pointers. Also, his knowledge of Nijhoff will influence his interpretation of the later poetry; it does not take any knowledge of Nijhoff's life for a reader to be able to tell that his early symbolism is all about himself, but a reader who knows a lot about Nijhoff will make much more extensive links with Nijhoff's own personality in the later symbolism than a reader with less background knowledge. Extension of symbolism into common surroundings brings a lot of doubts and suspicions about meaning and makes the later poetry quite cryptic. Symbols in the early poetry are relatively monolithic and often much the same in more than one poem, though they can differ from poem to poem, but later, symbols become variable and ambiguous. Ambiguity is quite polarised in the combined ancient and modern aspects of Awater and the hero and villain aspects of the man in 'Het Uur U'. Nijhoff recognised the ambiguity of Awater when he admitted in the Enschede lecture that he was putting a lot of himself into the character of Awater while trying to make Awater just like anybody. In 'Het Uur U' he does not just find himself led to ambiguity, but deliberately puts forward two different ways of looking at the man from the respective angles of adults and children.

In quality the symbolism moves from more comparative to more suggestive. Such images as the Carolingian monk or the Renaissance artist from 'De Wandelaar' are figures with which the narrator is comparing himself in a sort of elliptical metaphor. An impression of comparative relation to Nijhoff's own personality or situation continues as figures and scenes arrive that are more expressive of themselves, but in the course of time he begins to drop the imitations and deal with his own personality and situations directly, to introduce a narrative element, or to give

figures a more independent characterisation, while maintaining correspondence values. As a result, the symbolism becomes based not so much on what the imagery may offer a model of, as on the imagery's own implicit suggestiveness. The way in which the at one time empty symbol of the street becomes filled with a complexity of associations, involving both the people who live in it and the person passing through it, offers a good example of this.

Orientation in the real world does not reduce the extent of vision towards another life, a vast universe and distant ideals, but expands the scope of vision, so that instead of symbolism going to meet far-reaching ideas in remote images, far-reaching ideas penetrate into everyday life. In 'Nieuwe Gedichten' the extended symbolic correspondences are still sought by a narrator, but in 'Het Uur U' they are imposed upon other characters in the poem. The symbolism becomes no longer so predominantly a projection of the poet's own mental state, but relies more on inducing ideas in the reader. Consequently symbolic intent is less obvious than it was when in a standard symbolist context, though many of the regular motifs are still to be found in the new surroundings. More is asked of the reader in recognising the extent and aim of symbolic correspondences inherent in the everyday world than when he starts half-way along the path in a strange fringe world. Thus how and how far the reader himself interprets symbolic cues is a determining factor in the later poetry.

Page Index to Symbols

- Azure: 229, 246.
 Bee: 140-142, 144, 245.
 Bird: 93-4, 153, 213, 215, 273-4.
 Blood: 60, 216, 247.
 Boat, ship: 93, 129, 161, 211, 246.
 Bridge: 99, 155, 160.
 Buzzing: 140, 245.
 Child: 80-81, 87-8, 97, 132, 142-5, 158, 223, 236, 241, 248,
 267-273.
 Christ: 90, 97-8, 150, 152.

Christopher: 85-8.
Clock: 206-7, 229.
Cloud: 88, 148, 229, 243-6.
Clown: 28, 82-3.
Cross: 67, 70, 264.
Crucifixion: 66, 89-91, 149-152.
Curse: 77-8.
Dancing: 64.
Day: 71.
Desert: 163-7, 175, 189-191, 201-3, 211.
Dew: 222.
Dog: 152.
Farm: 158-9.
Ferry: 129.
Fire, flame: 75-6, 144, 156, 159, 222, 229.
Flesh: 156, 159, 261-2.
Flower: 69, 207, 217, 275.
Forest: 158-9, 272.
Garden: 68-9, 96.
Grave: 139, 144.
Heart: 60, 247.
Hermes: 242-3, 289.
Hole: 240, 248.
Hospital: 139, 206.
Insect: 140, 144.
Ivy: 137-9.
Journey: 92-3, 121, 183, 189-192, 196, 221, 224-231.
Lamb: 156.
Laughter: 77-8.
Light: 67-8, 129, 144.
Madness: 76.
Martyr: 66-7, 85, 128-133.
Meal: 95, 157.
Mechanism: 197-8, 205, 219-220, 226, 230-1, 235, 269.
Mirror, 63-4, 157, 212-3.
Moon: 72, 88, 151, 260.
Mother: 78-80, 96, 144, 158-9, 161, 192-3, 205.
Music: 62, 98-100, 230, 245, 247-253.
Night: 71, 94.
Nightingale: 98, 125-6.

Other side: 99, 129, 154-5, 160-1.
Pierrot: 82-3.
River: 74, 161.
Satyr, elf: 85-8.
Sea: 133-7.
Self: 113-8, 137, 142-3, 182, 184-9, 238, 253-9, 263, 279-80.
Shadow: 208, 269-70.
Silence: 81-2, 129-30, 211, 219, 238-9, 241-3, 245, 247.
Soldier: 84-5, 89, 91-2, 133.
Solidity: 97, 212, 228.
Song: 62, 176-7.
Star: 138, 149.
Stranger: 251-2.
Street: 59-60, 235-6, 239, 250, 272, 282-3.
Sun: 71-2, 151, 238.
Tower: 65.
Town, city: 125-7.
Train: 225-231.
Tree: 69-70, 125-6, 236, 240-1, 274-5.
Waking: 136.
Walking: 59, 191-2, 241-2.
Wall: 138-9.
Water: 74, 142, 171, 175, 178, 256-7.
Whistle: 148-9, 155.
Wind: 73, 75, 95, 215, 223.
Window: 61.
Woman: 25-7, 101, 146-8, 156-9, 161-2, 181, 192-5, 219-220,
222-4, 226, 229-230.
Wood: 157-9, 222-3.
Word: 48-50, 96, 100-101, 178, 267-8.
Worker: 153-5, 223, 240, 251.

Appendix - Definitions

- Symbolism - the use of something to stand for something else, or the process of something standing for something else, through the operation of mental association; artistic symbolism concentrates on deliberate usage and can be defined as: 'the use of images for their suggestive qualities to stand for images or ideas different from the subject in hand but with corresponding qualities'.
- Image - a perceptible form or sensation registered in the mind (irrespective of whether there is any meaning attached to it).
- Imagery - the use or appearance of images (referring to description of forms and not to meaning).
- Idea - a mental conception of the meaning attached to an image or set of images (irrespective of whether the meaning has any substance in reality).
- Concept - an idea combined with the understanding and mental attitude that surround it.
- Sign - an image which evokes an association with something else, without standing as a substitute for it.
- Correspondence - a relation of affinity in meaning or agreement of meaning between different things.
- Analogy - a correspondence between two different things on account of common properties.
- Counterpart - something that is related to something else by corresponding difference in meaning.
- Allegory - the use of narrative description about one topic in substitute for another topic for which it acts as a cover; a specific form of symbolism, such as a story about animals which caricatures human society.
- Allusion - the use of one topic with indirect reference to another (but not substituting for it).
- Emblem - a visual image acting as a substitute symbol for something else.
- Badge - a visual image, usually one worn or carried, acting as a substitute symbol for something else.
- Metaphor - description of an image in terminology not properly applicable to it but to another comparable

image, or the terminology used in such a description (e.g. 'He's in hot water').

Simile - comparison of images using a comparative conjunction ('as', 'like').

Idiom - a collocation of words in a set expression which means something other than the literal meaning of those words (e.g. 'jump the gun' = act too soon).

Figurative language - words used to convey meaning other than their literal meaning; this is a broad term including metaphor and idiom; the meaning conveyed figuratively (the substitute meaning) is usually the primary meaning, whereas with symbolism the substitute meaning is secondary (figurative: sea of troubles - sea = 1) vast amount, 2) sea; symbol - sea = 1) sea, 2) eternity).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. ABRAMS, Meyer Howard: 'The Mirror and the Lamp', New York, 1953.
2. APOLLINAIRE, Guillaume: 'Oeuvres poétiques', Gallimard, Paris, 1975.
3. BAUDELAIRE, Charles: 'Les Fleurs du Mal', Garnier, Paris, 1961.
4. BERGH, Herman van den: 'Nieuwe Tucht', Amsterdam, 1928.
5. BERGH, Laurent Philippe Charles van den: 'Nederlandsche Volksoverleveringen en Godenleer', Utrecht, 1836.
6. BESTEN, Adrianus Cornelis den: 'Nijhoff en de Na-oorlogse Poëzie', 'De Gids 116', 1953, I, No.4 & 5, Amsterdam, April-May 1953, pp.331-3.
7. BIBLE, The Holy: Authorised version.
8. BINNENDIJK, Dirk Adrianus Michel: 'M.Nijhoff: De Pen op Papier', 'Randschrift', Amsterdam, 1951, pp.7-9. (also in 'Groot Nederland 1937', I, Amsterdam, pp.260-3).
9. BLAKE, William: 'Auguries of Innocence', 'Complete Writings', London, New York, Toronto, 1966, pp.431-4.
10. BLOEM, Jakobus Cornelis: 'M.Nijhoff, Vormen', 'Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant', 13/12/1924, Rotterdam, literature supplement No.155.
11. 'Verzamelde Gedichten', The Hague, 1947.
12. 'M.Nijhoff', 'Verzamelde Beschouwingen', The Hague, 1950, pp.117-119. (also in 'Den Gulden Winckel 34', Amsterdam, 1935, pp.28-9).
13. BOUDIER-BAKKER, Ina: 'De Straat', Amsterdam, 1924.
14. BOUTENS, Petrus Cornelis: 'Verzen (1898)', Amsterdam, 1918.
15. 'Mijn Hart wou Nergens Tieren', Ooievaar, The Hague, 1959.
16. BOWRA, Sir Cecil Maurice: 'The Heritage of Symbolism', London, 1943.
17. BREMT, S.van den: 'Martinus Nijhoff en Guillaume Apollinaire, Dichters van een Nieuwe Wereld',

- 'Revue des Langues Vivantes 37', Brussels, 1971, No.4, pp.433-449.
18. CARROLL, Lewis: 'Through the Looking Glass', 'Complete Works', London, 1939, pp.121-250.
 19. CASPEL, P.P.J.van: 'Er staat wel wat er staat', 'Spekta-
tor 6', 1976-1977, No.2, September 1976, pp.59-73.
 20. CAUWELAERT, Augustinus Justinus van: 'M.Nijhoff: Vormen',
'Dietsche Warande en Belfort', 1925, Antwerp,
pp.727-730.
 21. CHADWICK, Charles: 'Symbolism', 'The Critical Idiom 16',
London, 1971.
 22. CHIARI, Joseph: 'Symbolisme from Poe to Mallarmé',
London, 1956.
 23. CIRLOT, Jan Eduardo: 'A Dictionary of Symbols', London,
1971.
 24. CLAUDEL, Paul Louis Charles Marie: 'Oeuvres Complètes I,
Poésie', Gallimard, Paris, 1950.
 25. 'Oeuvres Complètes II,
Poésie', Gallimard, Paris, 1952.
 26. 'Introduction à
Francis Jammes', 'Oeuvres Complètes XVIII, Accom-
pagnements, Discours et Remerciements', Gallimard,
Paris, 1961, pp.159-161.
 27. CORNETS DE GROOT, R.A.: 'Awater op dood spoor', 'Maat-
staf 15', 1967-8, No.10/11, The Hague, January-
February 1968, pp.674-688.
 28. COSTER, Dirk: 'Nieuwe Geluiden', Arnhem, 1924.
 29. 'Naar Boven of Voorbij de Wegen of het
Credo van een Dichter', 'De Stem', 1930, III,
Arnhem, pp.983-1000.
 30. DALE, van: 'Groot Woordenboek der Nederlandse Taal',
The Hague, 1970.
 31. DEBROT, Nicolaas (Cola): 'Het Uur der Vervulling',
'Criterium 3', No.3, Amsterdam, April-May 1942,
pp.163-176 (also in C.Debrot-G.Knuvelder: 'Ars et
Vita', Helmond, 1945, pp.9-25).
 32. 'Ontmoetingen met M.Nijhoff',
'De Gids 116', 1953, I, No.4 & 5, Amsterdam,
April-May 1953, pp.227-238.
 33. DIJKHUIS, Dirk W.: 'Nijhoff en Eliot/Eliot en Nijhoff',
'Merlyn 2', 1963-4, No.6, Amsterdam, September

- 1964, pp.1-24.
34. DONKER, Anthonie: 'Nijhoff's Vliegende Hollander. Een veronachtzaamde Sage', 'Den Gulden Winckel 29', 1930, No.7, Amsterdam, July 1930, pp.161-3, and No.8, Amsterdam, August 1930, pp.179-182.
35. 'Poëziechroniek door Anthonie Donker. M.Nijhoff, Nieuwe Gedichten', 'De Stem 15', I, Arnhem, 1935, pp.172-8.
36. 'De jongste generatie en de werkelijkheid', 'De Stem 19', I, Arnhem, 1939, pp.594-603.
37. 'Tovenaar of Mysticus', 'Critisch Bulletin 18', The Hague, February 1951, pp.60-67.
38. 'Awater, Stromend en Spiegelend', 'De Gids 116', 1953, I, No.4 & 5, Amsterdam, April-May 1953, pp.239-245.
39. 'Tussen de Regels', 'Maatstaf 1', 1953-4, No.2, The Hague, May 1953, pp.112-5.
40. 'Verwelkoming der Nijhoff-uitgave', 'Critisch Bulletin 21', The Hague, August 1954, pp.9-17.
41. 'Weerzien van De Wandelaar', 'Martinus Nijhoff', The Hague, Amsterdam, 1954, pp.9-17.
42. 'Nijhoff, de levensreiziger', Amsterdam, 1956.
43. DOSTOYEVSKY, Fyodor Mikhail: 'The Idiot', Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1955.
44. DUINKERKEN, Anton van: 'Binnenleiding tot Nijhoff's Lyriek', 'De Gids 116', 1953, I, No.4 & 5, Amsterdam, April-May 1953, pp.221-6.
45. 'Martinus Nijhoff, Symbolist', 'Martinus Nijhoff', The Hague, Amsterdam, 1954, pp.18-25.
46. DU PERRON, Charles Edgar: 'E. du Perron, 14 december 1931', 'Vijf-en-twintig Brieven aan A.Roland Holst', 'De Gids 121', 1958, I, No.5/6, Amsterdam, May-June 1958, pp.338-341.
47. EATON, Ralph Monroe: 'Symbolism and Truth' (1925), New York, 1964.
48. ELIOT, Thomas Stearns: 'Selected Essays 1917-1932', London, 1932.

49. ELIOT, Thomas Stearns: 'From Poe to Valéry', New York, 1949.
50. 'Collected Poems 1909-1962', London, 1963.
51. ENGELMAN, Johannes Aloysius Antonius: 'Jan Engelman in De Nieuwe Eeuw over Nijhoff', 'Dietsche Warande en Belfort', 1935, No.2, Antwerp, February 1935, pp.148-9.
52. 'Eenzaam schrijvertje in het raam', 'Over Martinus Nijhoff', 'Maatstafdeeltje nr.2', The Hague, 1953, pp.7-14 (also in 'De Gids 116', 1953, I, No.4 & 5, Amsterdam, April-May 1953, pp.289-293).
53. EYCK, Pieter Nicolaas van: 'Verzen en Vezels', 'Maatstaf 5', 1957-8, No.8, The Hague, November 1957, pp.514-553.
54. 'Verzameld Werk I, Gedichten I', Amsterdam, 1958.
55. 'Verzameld Werk II, Gedichten II', Amsterdam, 1958.
56. 'Nijhoff's Wandelaar', 'Verzameld Werk IV', Amsterdam, 1961, pp.46-48.
57. 'M.Nijhoff, 'Vormen'', 'Verzameld Werk IV', Amsterdam, 1961, pp.370-395.
58. 'M.Nijhoff: 'De Vliegende Hollander'', 'Verzameld Werk V', Amsterdam, 1962, pp.449-456.
59. FENS, Kees: 'Awater, leven en leer', 'Merlyn 4', 1966, No.5, Amsterdam, September 1966, pp.361-382.
60. 'Het Veer' van M.Nijhoff', 'Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde te Leiden, 1966-7', Leiden, 1968, pp.27-44 (also in 'Raster I', Amsterdam, October 1967, pp.306-324, and 'Waar komt Sebastiaan vandaan?', 'Tussentijds', Bilthoven, 1972, pp.82-102).
61. Review of L.Wenseleers, 'Het Wonderbaarlijk Lichaam', 'De Tijd', Amsterdam, 20/8/1966.
62. FREUD, Sigmund: 'The Interpretation of Dreams', 'Pelican Freud Library 4', Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1976.
63. GARAI, Jana: 'The Book of Symbols', London, 1973.
64. GILLIAMS, Maurice: 'Tussen Hier en Elders', 'Martinus

- Nijhoff', The Hague, Amsterdam, 1954, pp.30-44.
65. GOMPERS, Henri Albert: 'Nijhoff', 'De Geheime Tuin', Amsterdam, 1963, pp.103-113.
66. GOSSAERT, Geerten: 'Nijhoff's Ontdekking', 'Martinus Nijhoff', The Hague, Amsterdam, 1954, pp.45-47.
67. GRAFT, Guillaume van der: 'Poëzie en Drama' (on Nijhoff's translation of Eliot's 'The Cocktail Party'), 'Critisch Bulletin 18', 1951, The Hague, September 1951, pp.433-440.
68. 'De Lekespelen van Martinus Nijhoff', 'De Gids 116', 1953, I, Amsterdam, April-May 1953, pp.270-6.
69. 'Nijhoff en de Psalmen', 'Maatstaf 2', 1954-5, No.7, The Hague, October 1954, pp.496-516.
70. GRESHOFF, Jan: Conversation with Nijhoff, 'Volière', The Hague, 1956, pp.192-6.
71. GROVÉ, Alewyn Petrus: 'Aktualiteit in die Poësie', 'Standpunte 40-41', Cape Town, April-June 1962, pp.1-13.
72. HAMBURGER, Michael Peter Leopold & MIDDLETON, John Christopher: 'Modern German Poetry 1910-1916', London, 1962.
73. HEERIKHUIZEN, Frederick Wilhelm van: 'Glorie en Verval van "Het Uur U", 'In het Kielzog van de Romantiek', Bussum, 1948, pp.167-185.
74. 'Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant', 5/12/1953, Rotterdam, 'Wekelijks Bijvoegsel'.
75. HEINE, Heinrich: 'The Penguin Poets: Heine', Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1967.
76. HELLINGA, Wytze Gs.: 'Perspectief der Varianten', 'Martinus Nijhoff', The Hague, Amsterdam, 1954, pp.48-58.
77. HENKELS, Friedrich Robert August: 'De Dichter Kookt Pap', Utrecht, 1946.
78. HEUGTEN, Jan van: 'Streven', Antwerp, Amsterdam, October 1954, pp.14-24.
79. HOGENDOORN, W.: 'Nijhoffs 'De Vliegende Hollander'', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 57', 1964, No.4, Groningen, pp.220-230.

80. HOORNIK, Eduard: 'Tussen hemel en aarde', 'Over en Weer', The Hague, 1951, pp.53-63.
81. HUIZINGA, Johan: 'Brieven aan Nijhoff', 'Maatstaf 2', No.4/5, The Hague, July-August 1954, pp.203-217.
82. JOHNSON, Robert Vincent: 'Aestheticism', 'The Critical Idiom 3', London, 1969.
83. JONG, Johannes Marie de: 'De Bijbelse Spelen van M.Nijhoff', 'Voorrang aan de Toekomst', Nijkerk, 1969, pp.228-233.
84. JONG, Martien Jacobus Govardus de: 'Baudelaire, Van Eyck en Nijhoff', 'Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde 1965', Ghent, 1965, pp.31-49.
85. 'Vertalen als vorm- en levensprobleem', 'Van Bilderdijk tot Lucebert', Leiden, 1967, pp.62-73.
86. JOYCE, James Augustine Aloysius: 'Ulysses', Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972.
87. JUNG, Carl Gustav: 'Symbols of Transformation', 'Collected Works 5', London, 1956.
88. KAMPHUIS, Gerrit: 'Een Dichter in de Voorhoede', 'De Weegschaal II, Essays', Kampen, 1936, pp.87-104.
89. 'Verwey en Nijhoff', 'Maatstaf 1', 1953-4, No.8, The Hague, November 1953, pp.481-2.
90. 'Herzien-Herdenken', 'Critisch Bulletin 21', The Hague, March 1954, pp.138-143.
91. 'Nijhoff op Weg naar een Nieuwe Tijd', 'Martinus Nijhoff', The Hague, Amsterdam, 1954, pp.68-72.
92. KAZEMIER, Geert: 'Nijhoff, de speelse', 'Het Spel in de Literatuur', Wassenaar, 1970, pp.5-31.
93. KLOOS, Willem Johan Theodoor: 'Een Dichter bij de gratie van zijn innerlijkst wezen', 'De Nieuwe Gids XL', I, The Hague, January 1925, pp.98-106.
94. KNUVELDER, Gerardus Petrus Maria: 'Op zoek naar Nijhoff', 'De Gids 116', 1953, I, No.4 & 5, Amsterdam, April-May 1953, pp.251-269.
95. 'Martinus Nijhoff (1894-1953)', 'Handboek tot de Geschiedenis der Nederlandse Letterkunde, Vierde Deel', 's-Hertogenbosch, 1961, pp.280-298.

96. KORPERSHOEK, A.M.: 'Nijhoffs Wending', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 31', Groningen, 1937, pp.298-307.
97. KURPERSHOEK-SCHERFT, Tonny: 'De Episode van "Het Getij"', The Hague, 1956.
98. LAFORGUE, Jules: 'Poésies Complètes', Le Livre de Poche, Paris, 1970.
99. LEAR, Edward: 'The Owl and the Pussy-cat', 'The Complete Nonsense of Edward Lear', London, 1948, pp.61-63.
100. LEEUWEN, Willem Lion Marinus Ernest van: 'M.Nijhoff', 'Drift en Bezinning', Amsterdam, 1936, pp.76-82.
101. 'Over M.Nijhoff', 'Lezende onder de Lamp', Enschede, 1947, pp.205-221.
102. 'Herinneringen aan Martinus Nijhoff', 'De Vlaamse Gids 38', No.6, Brussels, June 1954, pp.321-9.
103. LEOPOLD, Jan Hendrik: 'Verzameld Werk I, Verzen', Rotterdam, Amsterdam, 1951.
104. LOKHORST, Emmy van: 'De Taal, zijn Instrument', 'De Gids 116', 1953, I, No.4 & 5, Amsterdam, April-May 1953, pp.308-312.
105. LUCIE-SMITH, John Edward McKenzie: 'Symbolist Art', London, 1972.
106. LULOFS, Frank: 'Verkenning door Varianten', The Hague, 1957.
107. 'Aantekeningen bij "Aantekeningen bij Awater"', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 60', 1967, Groningen, No.4, July 1967, p.263.
108. MACKAY, Agnes Ethel: 'The Universal Self', London, 1961.
109. MALLARMÉ, Stéphane: 'Poems of Mallarmé. Translated by Roger Fry', London, 1938.
110. 'Oeuvres Complètes', Gallimard, Paris, 1959.
111. 'Correspondance de Mallarmé, 1862-1871', Gallimard, Paris, 1959.
112. MARJA, A.: 'Nijhoff als kritikus', 'Maatstaf 9', 1961-2, No.11, The Hague, February 1962, pp.879-889.
113. MARS, F.K.M.: 'Een vroege 'voorloper' van Awater?', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 68', 1975, No.1, Groningen, January 1975, pp.46-47.

114. MARSMAN, Hendrik: 'M.Nijhoff, De Wandelaar en Vormen', 'Verzameld Werk III', Amsterdam, Bilthoven, 1947, pp.51-55.
115. MEESTER, Eliza Johannes de: 'Jongeren', 'De Gids 1917', III, Amsterdam, pp.360-2.
116. MEEUWESSE, Karel: 'Van Voorstraat tot Herenstraat', 'De Gids 118', 1955, I, No.6, Amsterdam, June 1955, pp.389-405.
117. 'De Man in de Straat', 'De Gids 121', 1958, II, No.8, Amsterdam, August 1958, pp.48-70.
118. 'De Straat als Symbool', 'De Gids 121', 1958, II, No.9, Amsterdam, September 1958, pp.154-161.
119. 'Bij Het Uur U van Martinus Nijhoff - Een klein commentaar', 'Ons Erfdeel VI', 1963, No.3, Rekkem, March 1963, pp.25-28.
120. 'Nog steeds die man door de straat', 'De Gids 130', 1967, I, No.1/2, January-February 1967, pp.76-89.
121. 'Aantekeningen bij Awater', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 60', 1967, No.1, January 1967, Groningen, pp.33-41.
122. 'O Awater, ik weet waarvan gij peinst', 'Raam 34', 1967, Tilburg, April 1967, pp.43-65.
123. 'Aantekeningen bij Awater II', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 60', 1967, No.3, Groningen, May 1967, pp.171-176.
124. 'Nijhoffs 'Kleine Prélude van Ravel'', 'Raam 36', 1967, Tilburg, June 1967, pp.48-65.
125. 'Martinus Nijhoff en de Kerkelijke Traditie', 's-Hertogenbosch, 1962.
126. 'Inleiding', 'Een stoet van beelden zag ik langs mij gaan', The Hague, 1970, pp.5-34.
127. MINDERAA, Pieter: 'Nijhoff en de Eenvoud', 'Opstellen en Voordrachten uit mijn Hoogleraarstijd (1948-1964)', Zwolle, 1964, pp.333-343.
128. 'Nijhoffs Awater', id., pp.344-361.
129. MISKOTTE, Kornelis Heiko: 'Martinus Nijhoff', 'Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde te Leiden 1957-8', Leiden 1958, pp.70-81.

130. MOOIJ, J.J.A.: 'Vorm of Vent', Boekbespreking 3', 'Raster III', 1969-70, No.3, Amsterdam, Autumn 1969, pp.389-392.
131. NERVAL, Gérard Labrunie de: 'Poésies', 'Oeuvres de Gérard de Nerval', Gallimard, Paris, 1952, pp.31-73.
132. NIENABER-LUITINGH, M.: 'Naar aanleiding van Nijhoff's "Florentijns Jongensportret"', 'Standpunte 45', 16th year, Cape Town, 1962-3, pp.38-42.
133. NIJHOFF, Martinus: 'De Kloosterling', 'De Beweging XIII', 1917, III, Amsterdam, p.56.
134. 'De Gesternten', 'De Gemeenschap', Utrecht, 1932, p.19.
135. 'Het Huis Nijhoff', 'Maatstaf 1', 1953-4, No.2, The Hague, May 1953, pp.68-80.
136. 'Over eigen werk', 'Over Martinus Nijhoff', 'Maatstafdeeltje nr.2', The Hague, 1953, pp.15-42.
137. Extract of letter to Hendrik de Vries, 24/9/1941, quoted in H.de Vries, 'Kroniek van de Poëzie. Eenheid in Veelheid', 'De Gids 117', 1954, II, No.10, Amsterdam, October 1954, p.307.
138. Letter, 'M.Nijhoff aan A.H.Nijhoff', 'Ontmoeting met Gide', 'Martinus Nijhoff', The Hague, Amsterdam, 1954, pp.118-9.
139. Letter to Mejuffrouw van Dis, appendix to K.Meeuwesse, 'Van Voorstraat tot Herenstraat', 'De Gids 118', 1955, I, No.6, Amsterdam, June 1955, p.405.
140. 'De Idioot in de Lente', 'Maatstaf 3', 1955-6, No.1, The Hague, April 1955, p.33.
141. 'Het Uur U', variant texts, supplement to F.Lulofs, 'Verkenning door Varianten', The Hague, 1957.
142. Letters, 'M.Nijhoff aan P.N.van Eyck 26/12/1924 & 28/12/1924', 'Maatstaf 5', 1957-8, No.8, The Hague, November 1957, pp.540-544.
143. 'Verzameld Werk 2', The Hague, 1961.
144. 'Verzamelde Gedichten', The Hague, 1964.

145. NIJHOFF, Martinus: 'Verzamelde Vertalingen', The Hague, 1964.
146. NIJLEN, Jan van: 'Over de Dichter M.Nijhoff', 'Martinus Nijhoff', The Hague, Amsterdam, 1954, pp.79-82.
147. ORNÉE, Wilhelmus Anthonie: 'Martinus Nijhoff en de binnenscheepvaart', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 63', 1970, No.6, Groningen, November 1970, pp.453-8.
148. OSTAIJEN, Paul André (Leopoldus Andreas) van: 'Verzamelde Werk', Antwerp, The Hague, Amsterdam, 1952-6.
149. OVERSTEEGEN, Jacob Jan: 'Martinus Nijhoff(1894-1953)', 'Vorm of Vent', Amsterdam, 1969, pp.125-154.
150. OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY: 'A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles', Oxford, 1884-1928.
151. PAAP, Wouter: 'Nijhoff en de muziek', 'Mens en Melodie 8', Utrecht, March 1953, pp.66-99.
152. PATMORE, Coventry: 'The Poems of Coventry Patmore', London, New York, Toronto, 1949.
153. PINTHUS, Kurt: 'Menschheidsdämmerung', Berlin, Hamburg, 1959.
154. POE, Edgar Allan: 'The Complete Poetry and Selected Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe', New York, Toronto, London, 1968.
155. POORTERE, José de: 'Ontmoetingen', 'Martinus Nijhoff', Bruges, 1965.
156. REDDINGIUS, Joannes: 'M.Nijhoff. De Wandelaar', 'De Nieuwe Gids XXXII', 1917, II, The Hague, July 1917, pp.181-4.
157. RENS, Lieven: 'Het Nederlandse versdrama', 'Raam 6-7', 1964, Tilburg, March-April 1964, pp.132-152.
158. REVIUS, Jacobus: 'Over-Ysselsche Sangen en Dichten', Amsterdam, 1930.
159. RILKE, Rainer Maria: 'Ausgewählte Werke I, Gedichte', Wiesbaden, 1951.
160. RIMBAUD, Jean Nicolas Arthur: 'Oeuvres Complètes', Gallimard, Paris, 1976.
161. RISPENS, Jan Albertus: 'M.Nijhoff', 'Richtingen en Figuren in de Nederlandsche letterkunde na 1880', Kampen, 1938, pp.292-6.
162. RODENKO, Paul: 'De Actualiteit van Nijhoff', 'Martinus Nijhoff', The Hague, Amsterdam, 1954, pp.83-7.
163. ROELANT-VERMEER, J.: 'Kultuurleven 20', Louvain, 1953, p.218.

164. ROLAND HOLST, Adrianus: 'Verzamelde Werken', Bussum, The Hague, 1948.
165. 'In Memoriam Nijhoff', 'Maatstaf 1', 1953-4, No.1, The Hague, April 1953, pp.11-13 (also in 'Over Martinus Nijhoff, 'Maatstafdeeltje nr.2', The Hague, 1953, and 'Martinus Nijhoff', The Hague, Amsterdam, 1954, pp.88-90).
166. 'Na Jaren Opgediept', 'Maatstaf 3', 1955-6, No.1, The Hague, April 1955, pp.31-2.
167. RUTTEN, Mathieu Jacques Henri: 'De poëतिक van Martinus Nijhoff', 'Spiegel der Letteren 18', 1976, No.1, Antwerp, 1976, pp.1-14.
168. 'Martinus Nijhoff, de dichter van de moderne hybris tussen twee wereldoorlogen', 'Spiegel der Letteren 19', 1977, No.2, Antwerp, 1977, pp.112-129.
169. SCHAIK-WILLING, Jeanne Gabrielle van: 'Pom', 'Martinus Nijhoff', The Hague, Amsterdam, 1954, pp.91-96.
170. SCHENKEVELD, Margaretha H.: 'De Achtervolging voortgezet', 'Raster II', 1968-9, No.4, Amsterdam, Winter 1968-9, pp.519-532.
171. SCHENKEVELD-VAN DER DUSSEN, Maria A.: 'De Opbouw van Nijhoff's De Wandelaar', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 68', No.3, Groningen, May 1975, pp.211-234.
172. SCHUMACHER, W. & HERINGA, P.: 'Er stond niet wat er staat', 'Raster I', 1967-8, Amsterdam, October 1967, pp.356-373.
173. SHELLEY, Percy Bysshe: 'A Defence of Poetry', 'The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, Volume VII, Prose III', London, 1880, pp.98-144.
174. SICKING, J.M.J.: 'Tweemaal Heer Halewijn', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 57', 1964, No.4, Groningen, pp.253-9.
175. SMAELE, Paul de: 'Baudelaire en het Baudelairisme', Brussels, 1934.
176. SMELIK, Evert Louis: 'De Laatste Dienst', 'Martinus Nijhoff', The Hague, Amsterdam, 1954, pp.97-103.
177. SÖTEMANN, August Lammert (Guus): 'Nijhoff, de Werkelijkheid en het Menselijk Tekort', 'De Gids 116', 1953, I, No.4 & 5, Amsterdam, April-May 1953, pp.277-288.

178. SÖTEMANN, August Lammert (Guus): 'Nijhoffs 'De Moeder de Vrouw'', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids, W.A.P.Smit nummer', Groningen, 1968, pp.134-145.
179. 'Naschrift', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 63', 1970, No.6, Groningen, November 1970, pp.458-460.
180. SPIES, Lina: 'Droom en Dagbreek', 'Standpunte 96', 24th year, Cape Town, 1970-1, No.6, pp.31-40, and 'Standpunte 97', 25th year, Cape Town, 1971-2, No.1, pp.34-46.
181. SPILLEBEEN, Willy: 'De Geboorte van het Stenen Kindje', Nijmegen, Bruges, 1977.
182. STRAAT, Evert: 'De Iphigenia van Nijhoff', 'Critisch Bulletin 18', The Hague, September 1951, pp. 386-398.
183. STRYDOM, S.: 'De Soldaat die Jezus Kruisigde', 'Tydskrif vir Letterkunde XIII', No.1, Pretoria, February 1957, pp.52-59.
184. SYMONS, Arthur William: 'The Symbolist Movement in Literature', London, 1908.
185. TEGENBOSCH, L.: 'Het Voltooide Leven', 'Roeping 29', Amsterdam, 1953, pp.71-81.
186. TIMMERS, Jan Joseph Marie: 'Symboliek en Iconographie der Christelijke Kunst', Roermond-Maaseik, 1947.
187. VALÉRY, Paul Ambroise Toussaint Jules: 'Oeuvres I', Gallimard, Paris, 1957.
188. VAT, Daniel Gerhard van der: 'Awater in het Engels', 'De Gids 117', 1954, No.2, Amsterdam, February 1954, pp.110-124.
189. VERLAINE, Paul: 'Poèmes saturniens suivi de Fêtes galantes', Le Livre de Poche, Paris, 1972.
190. 'La bonne chanson, Romances sans paroles, Sagesse', Le Livre de Poche, Paris, 1971.
191. 'Jadis et naguère, Parallèlement', Le Livre de Poche, Paris, 1970.
192. VERWEY, Albert: 'M.Nijhoff, De Wandelaar', 'Proza IV', Amsterdam, 1921, pp.145-8.
193. VESTDIJK, Simon: 'Over plastische poëzie', 'Groot Nederland 1937', I, Amsterdam, pp.303-4.
194. 'Hedendaagsch Byzantinisme', 'De Poolsche Ruiters', Bussum, 1946, pp.125-151.

195. VESTDIJK, Simon: 'M.Nijhoff', 'Gestalten Tegenover Mij', Amsterdam, 1975, pp.123-158.
196. 'Dichter in de Klassewereld', 'Zuiverende Kroniek', Amsterdam, 1976, pp.198-200.
197. VIRGIL (P.Vergilius Maro): 'Georgics IV', 'Virgil I', Cambridge (Massachussetts), London, 1974, pp. 196-273.
198. VOORDE, Urbain Pieter Marie van de: 'Critiek en Beschouwing I', Santpoort, 1930, pp.91-119.
199. VRIES, Ad de: 'Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery', Amsterdam, London, 1976.
200. VRIES, Hendrik de: 'Mens en Sterrenhemel', 'Tweede Ronde van Vers Tegen Vers', The Hague, 1951, pp.33-38.
201. 'Keur uit Vroegere Verzen, 1916-1946', Amsterdam, 1962.
202. 'Kroniek van de Poëzie. Eenheid in Veelheid', 'De Gids 117', 1954, II, No.10, Amsterdam, October 1954, pp.304-9.
203. VRIES, Theun de: 'M.Nijhoff, Wandelaar in de Werkelijkheid', The Hague, 1946.
204. 'Nijhoff's Experiment', 'Martinus Nijhoff', The Hague, Amsterdam, 1954, pp.104-112.
205. 'Meesters en Vrienden', 'De Gids 124', 1961, No.10, October 1961, pp.167-182.
206. VROMAN, Leo: 'Het Ontwortelde Woord', 'Martinus Nijhoff', The Hague, Amsterdam, 1954, pp.113-7.
207. VUUREN, H.E.J.van: 'Verskillende Interpretaties van 'Het Uur U' onder die Loep', 'Standpunte 115', 28th year, Cape Town, October 1974, pp.12-20.
208. WALLENDÆEL, T.van: 'Nijhoffs Wandelaar-gedicht in het kader van de algemene thematiek van de bundel De Wandelaar', 'Koninklijke Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis, Handelingen XXXIII', Oudenaarde, 1969, pp.391-8.
209. WENSELEERS, Lucien Gustaaf Albert: 'Het Wonderbaarlijk Lichaam', The Hague, 1966.
210. 'De visioenen van een close reader', 'Raam 34', 1967, Tilburg, April 1967, pp.74-84.

211. WENSELEERS, Lucien Gustaaf Albert: 'Een schuldeloos wolkje', 'De Gids 131', 1968, II, No.8, Amsterdam, 1968, pp.160-170.
212. 'De poëzie is niet meer van gisteren. Paul van Ostaijen, Martinus Nijhoff en het nieuw-realisme', Leiden, 1972.
213. WERUMEUS BUNING, Johan Willem Frederik: 'Verzamelde Gedichten', Amsterdam, 1970.
214. WESSEM, Constant van: 'De Beweging der Jongeren in onze Hedendaagsche Letterkunde', 'Den Gulden Winckel 16', Baarn, 1917, pp.99-101.
215. WESTENBROEK, Johannes Josephus Maria: 'De druiven in het boudoir', 'De Nieuwe Taalgids 64', 1971, No.1, Groningen, January 1971, pp.51-64.
216. WHITMAN, Walt: 'Walt Whitman. Poetry and Prose', Berlin, 1963.
217. WIT, Jo de: 'Bij open deur gewaakt', 'De Gids 116', 1953, I, No.4 & 5, Amsterdam, April-May 1953, pp.325-7.
218. WOESTIJNE, Karel Pieter Eduard Maria van de: 'Verzamelde Gedichten', Amsterdam, The Hague, 1967.
219. WOORDENBOEK DER NEDERLANDSCHE TAAL: The Hague, Leiden, 1864-1978.
220. ZELDENTHUIS, Jan J.: 'De Wandelaar. Verzen door M. Nijhoff', 'Den Gulden Winckel 16', Baarn, 1917, pp.25-26.