Lakehead University

The Modern Transcendental Vision of William Heyen

by
Sean Penney©

A thesis submitted in
partial fulfilment of
requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts

Department of English
Thunder Bay, ON
07\12\93

ISBN 0-315-86178-9

Canada

For Torrie

Acknowledgements

Thanks to William Heyen and Time Being Books
for materials without which this thesis
could not have been completed

Contents

Introduction

This paper shall attempt to outline William Heyen's Transcendental Vision. Chapter One, sections one to three, defines Transcendentalism, explores the visions of two well known American thinkers, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman, and shows how they are important to Heyen's work. Chapter Two explores Heyen's symbols and themes, specifically: Light, Prism and Vapour. Chapter Three likewise explores Tree, Wenzel and Machine. The final section shall coalesce and conclude Heyen's modern Transcendental vision.

William Heyen was born November 1, 1940, in Brooklyn, New York. His parents were German immigrants, and he and his three brothers were raised in Nesconset, Suffolk County, on Long Island. His father's brothers were German soldiers during World War Two, one, in Heyen's words, a "rabid" Nazi. This heritage resulted in a sort of family guilt he worked out in Erika: poems of the

Holocaust.

Heyen's family lived in Woodhaven, Jamaica and Hauppauge, all on Long Island, but he says when he sees himself as a child "it's in Nesconset, where I came to consciousness, to personality"(Canadian Authors Autobiography Series (CAAS) 35). He married Hannelore Irene Greiner, his college sweetheart, in 1962. His dissertation was on Theodore Roethke, and he received his Ph.D. in 1967 from Ohio University. He spent a year as Fulbright Lecturer in American Literature in Germany and he is presently a Professor of English and poet in residence at the State University of New York College at Brockport. He claims to be happiest when he manages to write, and the most meaningful word in the language, for him, is "home" (CAAS 31).

Home is more than the place where he was born, or raised. The "home" is our "home," our planet:

> maybe my equilibrium is uncertain and doom builds in me because our planet loses its ability to sustain life as we rain poisons on our food crops and oceans, as the air we breathe darkens, as the world's population increases by eighty million a year while in the United States alone each year one million acres of farmland go the way of asphalt and mall.
> (CAAS 32)

Heyen's environmental concern stems from his childhood love of Nature. His mother called him "Nature Boy" because of his gardens and fish tanks and animal cages (CAAS 36). He says

> As most young boys are, I was stupid and selfish, a marauder, took things for granted. Now, I hesitate to fish, or even to kill insects, though I do . . . .
> (CAAS 37)

As an adult, Heyen still finds home very important. His rural

childhood is with him always, infusing all that he writes. In a letter he told me

> At the ponds, in the woods, among the bees and blossoms of our back-lawn pear trees, underwater at the Sound, I was part of an eternal presence. When I'm not stupid and dull, I know and feel I still am.
>
> (Correspondence 02/05/9)

This recognition of an "eternal presence" was the beginning of Heyen's transcendental vision.

Chapter One

1

Transcendentalism

Heyen's view of Nature as paramount, as it is viewed in transcendentalism, leads one to believe he is a transcendentalist.[1] But what is a transcendentalist? A brief overview of the concept may help us understand the term and locate Heyen's position within the school.

Transcendentalism, as a word, traces its origin to the words transcendental and transcendent. John Duns Scotus, also known as Doctor Subtilis, used these words in the thirteenth century to describe conceptions that, in their universality, transcend the ten

[1]When describing either Heyen or Whitman as an "American Transcendentalist" I am referring to the fact that they are both Americans who adhere to the philosophy of Transcendentalism. The term "American Transcendentalist" generally describes those 19th century artists and thinkers who wrote for "The Dial" and considered Emerson their mentor. Neither Heyen nor Whitman clearly fits that description, but both are indeed transcendentalists and Americans.

Aristotelian categories (substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, posture, possession, action and passion). He held to the thought that true knowledge could be reached only through revelation from God. He also concluded that the existence of God was essentially unprovable and that God's nature was incomprehensible to man.

Kant drew a distinction between transcendental and transcendent. Transcendental he designated as nonexperiential--cause and effect elements of thought which are not products of experience but are manifested only through experience. By transcendent Kant meant transcendental elements that transcend, or lie beyond, all experience, such as God or the Soul.

After Kant, philosophy ceased to distinguish between transcendent and transcendental, and any system designed to reveal absolute knowledge was labelled Transcendental. Friedrich von Schelling called part of his system transcendental philosophy. He believed that the real -- the unconsciousness, as well as the absolute -- is part of nature, and therefore that all existence is a unity.

The O.E.D. defines transcendent as "Excelling, surpassing . . . Higher than, not included under any of, the ten categories. Not realizable in experience. (Esp. of God) existing apart from, not subject to limitations of, the material universe, cf. IMMANENT[1]." The O.E.D. defines transcendental as "Of **a priori**[2] character, presupposed in and necessary to experience . . . real

(unknown and unknowable) object Explaining matter and objective things as products of the subjective mind Abstruse, vague, obscure, visionary."

The Transcendental School is a term that has come to identify a group of Romantic American writers and thinkers reacting to the classical rules of art, and more specifically, to Puritan prejudices. Identifying elements of the school include idealism, mysticism, pantheism, and orientalism. Carlyle and Hawthorne and Thoreau have influenced and been influenced by the movement, but the thinker who gave the movement the most permanent expression was Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Kenneth Walter Cameron, in his book Young Emerson's Transcendental Vision, attempts to define transcendentalism.

> Transcendentalism was a warm and intuitional religious, aesthetic, philosophical and ethical movement -- the American tributary of European Romanticism -- a theoretical and practical way of life and a literary expression within the tradition of `Idealism' -- a new humanism based upon ancient classical or Neo-Platonic supernaturalism and coloured by Oriental mysticism. It maintained the spiritual `infinitude' of the individual person.
> (7)

This unwieldy statement is by Cameron's own admission "an attempt at a definition"(7) and perhaps should be called an attempt to reconcile all the definitions.

What then is Transcendentalism? This writer's conception is that it is a synthesis of beliefs, beginning with Plato's distinction "between the changing, imperfect and ultimately unknowable world of sense, and the unchanging, perfect and knowable

world of Reality . . . ."(Kitto, The Greeks 182), finding a foil in the Puritans, a catalyst in the Romantics Coleridge and Wordsworth, and final expression in thinkers like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, and contemporary artists such as William Carlos Williams, Theodore Roethke, Galway Kinnell and William Heyen.

As a synthesis, transcendentalism fuses many things into a greater whole, which is why it eludes a definitive label. The synthesis is the alchemist's synthesis of common elements into golden epiphany, or to slide the metaphor somewhat, "a many faceted gem whose reflected light sparkles and dances with the tantalizing elusiveness of a butterfly seen in a dream within a dream. To capture it in a phrase seems impossible." The author of the above quote, Donald Koster, refuses to define Transcendentalism, stating that it is "highly subjective <and> individualistic . . . "(Koster 3-4).

The difficulty in defining transcendentalism is natural given the descriptions we have. It has been described as "nonexperiential," meaning not a product of experience, and as transcending the sense impressions of the ten Aristotelian categories. How then does one define or describe that which transcends the senses?

In Young Emerson's Transcendental Vision, Cameron, after attempting to define transcendentalism, delivers three transcendental views and two transcendental theories (9-10). Broken down into aspects of transcendentalism, they should assist

in our understanding of the term and are therefore worth quoting at length.

The **TRANSCENDENTAL OUTLOOK UPON ULTIMATE REALITY** proposes that "All reality is in a transcendent or spiritual world -- the realm of the `Oversoul'." The everyday world we live in is without value, for "only as the Transcendent Spirit shines into man and nature or flows into them or (because of having created them) lingers in them, do they deserve respect." This transcendent spirit "is both above man's comprehension and also within man -- an `incarnate Logos' in every human being -- though in most people it slumbers and is never awakened, in which case men are bestial." A man's soul, his true self, is a fragment of God, the "Transcendent (and now Incarnate) Deity-with-him." Cameron tells us this particle of God within us is more then "the great tide of life", it is life. Most importantly, Cameron claims this spiritual way of viewing the world "demands spiritual adventuring."

In the **TRANSCENDENTAL VIEW OF MAN** "Man is a kind of 'mediator' between God and Nature." When the individual becomes self-aware, allowing, as it were, the god-fragment within to "flow . through one's life . . then the Natural World without us can become a paradise" since the material world is "a remoter incarnation of Deity and dependant upon man's spiritual condition for its 'effects'." Most importantly, perhaps, Cameron tells us "Man's goal should be to live his life according to the 'highest principles' of his intuition, and then cast off his body and

personality forever, allowing the God-element in him to return to the Oversoul whence it came."

In the **TRANSCENDENTAL VIEW OF NATURE** "Nature is really a mirage or a dumb and plastic servant of God, not <u>real</u> as the spiritual world is real." Cameron tells us the "natural world is . created <u>through man</u>" but is also "independent of man and serves not only to reflect his interior 'spiritual thermometer' reading but also to teach him spiritual truths which God or the Oversoul wishes to impart." Nature mediates between man and the oversoul. Cameron tells us Emerson sums up this system of mediation in <u>Nature</u> as "(1) practical use or commodity; (2) Beauty; (3) Symbolic Language; (4) Spiritual Discipline; (5) Revelation of the Spirit or Oversoul in Mystical moments."

THE TRANSCENDENTAL THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE "is concerned, especially, with <u>how</u> Nature is able to teach man and how man is able to receive this teaching." Cameron uses the image of two battery poles coming together. "One sees sparks only when the two poles are brought together." When the individual achieves self-awareness, when the god-fragment within meets the god-absolute without "the electric circuit is completed or, to phrase the thought a little differently, 'spirit comes full circle home to itself, the barriers being removed.'" To the Transcendentalist, knowledge is a condition rather than a goal, a "'mystical union' with God . . . a 'beholding of the Infinite through <u>transparent</u> phenomena.'" We cannot help but be reminded of Emerson's

transparent eyeball passage in Nature. Transcendentalists strive "to mount into this high, spiritual plane of intuition and occult recognition."

In **THE TRANSCENDENTAL THEORY OF ART** the Oversoul is the originator of all true art. Man is the tool, the brush and palette used to channel true art. Cameron claims "one ought, therefore, to allow the God-within to absorb as much beauty from the outer world as possible, allowing it to germinate to the highest level -- the God-level -- of the mind until it be ready to flow forth with a divine enthusiasm into visible form." This, of course, is Wordsworth's "spontaneous overflow of emotion." "Since God was the all-important factor -- the source of all aesthetic energy -- the Transcendentalists, like other Romanticists, had contempt for man-made rules of art, man's attempts to restrain the artist by standardized or acceptable 'forms,' etc." Originality and spontaneity were the criteria of the Transcendentalist. A good example is Whitman's "Song of Myself." "Hence the interesting mixture of genres during this period, commonly called the 'confusion of the arts.'"

These five basic tenets of transcendentalism all appear in the work of William Heyen, a modern writer who at times seems to be almost a reincarnation of Whitman and therefore another son of Emerson.

Endnotes

1.Indwelling, inherent, (in); (of God) permanently pervading the universe(O.E.D.).

2.(Reasoning) from cause to effect; deductively; (loosely) presumptively, as far as one knows . . . . <L, = from what is before>(O.E.D.).

2

Emerson and Whitman

> At its best, <American poetry> has generally centred its attention on searching out the possibilities of discovering ultimate meaning in individual experience, assuming no order as final except that discovered in the self and the `not-me'.
> (Waggoner 94)

In American Poets Waggoner calls Emerson's "system" "metaphysical idealism," a system of mind over matter with emphasis on perception and condition as being the key to the mind, and therefore reality(97). Not surprisingly Emerson's difficulty lay in "contradictory insights" that made his philosophy seem to lack clarity.

> Sacrificing consistency to new experience, logical coherence to growth, he contradicted himself more and more and did not care. Why should he, when his most important insight was that life always burst the bonds of systematic thought? When the clearest implication of his system was that there could be no system?
> (98)

In the thirteenth century John Duns Scotus postulated that true knowledge could be reached only through revelation from God, and conversely, concluded that the existence of God was essentially unprovable and that God's nature was incomprehensible to man. So

how could Emerson's system completely encompass such a God? His God is everywhere; Emerson strives to reveal him. "I draw from nature the lesson of an intimate divinity"(Selections 181). Transcendentalism is simply soul searching. The complexity derives from the complexity of the individual man, and the difficulty in ascribing a system, and thus a definition of the system, to a process that must be different for everyone. The search is not limited to the self, but must encompass all existence, and only when man expands his search outside the limits of his personality will he truly discover himself in all that surrounds him. Man's soul is "part or particle of God"(Emerson Selections 24). Upon achieving self-realization, man has God, existence, revealed to him.

> What Emerson intends to say -- and did sometimes say so magnificently -- is that if the term `God' means to us only an ancient belief, then for us God is effectively dead. Revelation did not cease when the canon of Holy Writ was determined, nor are true reports of Him limited to one book. Revelation is continuous, universal, and unmeditated.
> (Waggoner 100)

Whitman was Emerson's successor, writing, as Emerson had demanded, his generation's book: Leaves of Grass. In the 1855 preface, Whitman calls for his generation to produce the new American, a role into which he would project himself in the later sections of Leaves of Grass. His description of the new American is full of the terms we have come to accept as Emersonian. He tells us that the soul loves the "roughs and beards . . and ruggedness"(711) of the new American, and that the "genius of the

United States . . . is always most in the common people"(712). He assures us that "the largeness of nature or the nation were monstrous without a corresponding largeness and generosity of the spirit of the citizen"(712), recalling "The Transcendental Outlook Upon Ultimate Reality" which states that:

> The Oversoul is both above man's comprehension and <u>also within man</u> -- an `incarnate Logos' in every human being -- though in most people it slumbers and is never awakened, in which case men are bestial. The real SELF in a man is that `higher self' or `true self' -- that fragment of the Transcendent (and now Incarnate) Deity-with-him.
> (Cameron 9)

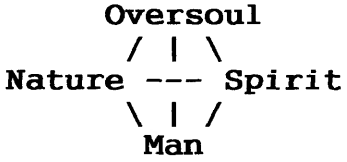
Whitman declares himself a Kosmos in "Song of Myself." We must remember that Kosmos is from the Greek, meaning the interconnectiveness of all things, and this is the incarnate logos that protects a man from the beast within; it is the largeness and generosity of the spirit of the citizen, the connection between a man's self and Nature.

When Whitman tells us that into the poet, the enlightened man, "enter[s] the essences of the real things and past and present events . . "(713), we see the "Transcendental Theory of Art," where:

> The Oversoul was the author of all genuine art. Man was merely a tool or channel. One ought, therefore, to allow the God-within to absorb as much beauty from the outer world as possible, allowing it to germinate to the highest level -- the God-level -- of the mind until it be ready to flow forth with a divine enthusiasm into visible form.
> (Cameron 11)

Whitman is not merely an Emerson clone. The transcendental theories have a place within his cosmos, but they do not explain

his total vision. The most important difference between Whitman and Emerson is Whitman's emphasis on the individual, and more specifically, the body. Emerson is more concerned with the spirituality of man as a whole. One could go as far as saying they reach the same goal from opposite ends. Emerson deals with the Oversoul and its importance in the life of Man as a whole, and thus in any man. Whitman deals with any man as representative of Man in his potential to realize himself through self-exploration, starting with the self's vessel, the body. Both are concerned with the Oversoul, Nature, and man's cosmic consciousness, but where Emerson sees the Oversoul as of prime importance, regulating man's existence, Whitman sees man as of prime importance, regulating his own destiny.



> And all the uses of nature admit of being summed in one, which yields the activity of man an infinite scope. Through all . . . it is faithful to the cause whence it had its origin. It always speaks of spirit. It suggests the absolute. It is a perpetual effect. It is a great shadow pointing always to the sun behind us.
> (Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson (Selections) 49)

In "Each and All"(Selections 413) Emerson, after listing the notable and humble of existence, such as "the heifer," "the sexton" and "great Napoleon," dictates that "Nothing is fair or good alone." To illustrate this point, he describes how he brought a sparrow home after admiring its divine song, but "it cheers not

now,/For I did not bring home the river and sky . . . ."

Emerson ends the poem with a lovely construction of half and whole rhymes that moves the reader with Emerson into "the perfect whole."

> As I spoke, beneath my feet
> The ground-pine curled its pretty wreath,
> Running over the club-moss burrs;
> I inhaled the violet's breath;
> Around me stood the oaks and firs;
> Pine-cones and acorns lay on the ground;
> Over me soared the eternal sky,
> Full of light and of deity;
> Again I saw, again I heard,
> The rolling river, the morning bird;
> Beauty through my senses stole;
> I yielded myself to the perfect whole.

The perfect whole is the oversoul, and the point is that beauty is beauty because of its interconnectiveness.

In "The Rhodora"(Selections 412) Emerson again deals with beauty, addressing a flower, declaring "that if eyes were made for seeing,/Then Beauty is its own excuse for being . . . ." The poem is sub-titled "On being asked, whence is/the flower?." In answer, Emerson, speaking to the rhodora, supposes "The self-same Power that brought me there brought you." The capitalization of "Power" makes clear that the Power is the oversoul. Emerson and the rhodora are connected through the oversoul. This is the Beauty that is its own excuse for being: it exists; therefore it is interconnected with all existence, and is therefore beautiful. Waggoner, in American Poets, explains that "both flower and observer are directly related to, and derive their meaning from, the Over-soul, and from this relationship get their relationship to

each other"(461). The rhodora is an object of the material world that is part of the "perfect whole" ; it is symbolic of that perfect whole because of its connection to each and all. Waggoner tells us "The beauty of every concrete aspect of being derives from, and is symbolic of, unconditioned Being"(462).

Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" celebrates his self, his interconnectiveness, his Self and the Over-soul, the "me" and the "not-me." He is explicit in this in the first three lines:

> I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
> And what I assume you shall assume,
> For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.
> (Whitman 28)

He links his self and his body to our selves and body, and to every atom in existence as well. Whitman's so called erotic passages become more germane:

> Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man hearty and clean,
> Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none/ shall be less familiar than the rest.
> ("Song of Myself" 31)

In "This Compost" Whitman again celebrates the interconnectiveness of things. This poem is more global and abstract in concept than "Song of Myself," yet it utilizes lists of material things. This is because the "compost" is the earth, Nature, a product of the dissolution of organic matter into the earth, and its reemergence as life. He asks the earth "Where have you disposed of their [the dead men's] carcasses?"(368) and is sure that if he simply turns some soil he "shall expose some foul meat"(368). But this does not occur. He marvels at the

"resurrection of the wheat"(369), the "chemistry" of the compost that creates life out of death. The last line reaffirms our connection to Nature and our place in the "perfect whole": "It gives such divine materials to men, and accepts such leavings/from them at last"(370).

3

Heyen

Donald Koster, in Transcendentalism in America, states that the Transcendental movement was important in American life, that it "set the tone--intellectual, moral, and spiritual--for an entire generation of Americans, and that its impact . . . can be felt even to the present day"(1).

Waggoner postulates that there are three poetic "lines" springing from Emerson and Whitman:

> There are those poets who have responded to Emerson but not, in an important way, to Whitman. There are others, chiefly in the twentieth-century, who have responded to the aspects of Whitman that are farthest from Emerson, that distinguish him from Emerson. And there are those, chiefly in the present and the very recent past, who have responded to both Whitman and Emerson, or else precisely those aspects of Whitman that are most Emersonian.
> (91)

William Heyen, like Roethke, Crane and Williams, may be traced to the Emerson-Whitman line. He owes his thematic debt to Emerson, with a touch of Whitmanese styling, and a footnote to Williams Carlos Williams. Emerson, with the wise prophetic Nature, "The Divinity School Address," and verses like "Each and All" and "The Rhodora," showed Heyen a design for existence that appeared to be a path to Truth. Whitman, with his emphasis on the self, served as

a focusing device for Heyen's eclectic vision. Whitman felt the poet should "indicate the path between reality and <man's> souls"(716), and this is perhaps what Heyen strives for the most.

Emerson's method of transcendence was through perception of things. Waggoner tells us Emerson utilized a "sharpened and expanded consciousness" to move "by means of the senses "through nature to God"(101). He compares Emerson's method with that of the mystics, calling it "*via affirmativa* the "affirmation of images"(101).

> Though its end is the same -- vision of and union with the Absolute of All -- its method is the reverse of that of the *via negativa*, the 'negation of images,' which moves downward into the darkness of the self instead of outward into the light of things.
> (101)

"Light" and "things" are important in William Heyen's vision. "Cow, Willow, Skull, Cowbell"(Heyen LIL 137-9) is a fairly typical Heyen poem in that it contains recurrent "things" from nature.

Cow, Willow, Skull, Cowbell

I

Gravity wants her.
Strings of spittle
drool from her slack jaw;
her coat hangs down in folds.
She just won't make it
for much longer.
Her knees
buckle,
the highest weeds tickle
tenderest her.

II

The earth draws nothing into it
so much as a willow

or old cow.

There's a spell under a willow,
a magic circle, the space
behind a waterfall.

Should the cow enter there, double
her own power, poof,
she'd be gone.

III

You'd think the rain, by now,
would have washed its edges smooth,
but the skull is chipped sharp.

You'd think, once it wore to pure bone,
insects would have nothing to do with it,

but it's always an ant's mountain,
a butterfly's throne.

Boss's shell dreams of water:
her meadow stretches away, like sand;
grass sways in the waves of the wind.

IV

A cowbell,
high up in one of the oaks
at the edge of Wenzel's meadow,
is brushed by leaves falling
like fingernails.

Whoever slung it over
a sapling's limb
is gone,
the skulls of its cows
are beyond hearing,
but if Wenzel has his way,
this bell will ring
with a silver tongue
when the dead break grass again.

The resurrection may begin
this windy autumn.

In the opening stanza we are shown the sad image of a dying

cow, a common, natural occurrence. We are told, though, that "gravity wants her," an anthropomorphization of the force of the earth, the eternal drawing of material back to its origin. In this first line we are shown the cycle of life and death, Whitman's compost, in the force of gravity on a thing.

In the second stanza we are shown the connection between dying cow and drooping willow, and because of this connection, Heyen informs us that the circle under a willow is magical, like the space behind a waterfall, a hidden, special place. Because the cow is close to death, it is also a special, magical thing, and "Should the cow enter" this special place, she would "double/her own power" and "poof,/she'd be gone." Because everything is dying from the moment it is created, doubling its power speeds the cycle, in the cow's case, to the point of making it magically disappear: "poof." Her "fragment" of God that makes her an individual being rejoins the oversoul, like the willow reaching back to the earth, to rejoin, and eventually reproduce. This is the eternal cycle.

In the third stanza we see that the cow's death is not a loss but a continuation, a reincarnation. The cow's skull is "always an ant's mountain,/a butterfly's throne." These are noble, powerful images; Heyen tells us it is "pure bone," something attractive, "pure" in beauty, and as Plato would have it, truth.

> Boss's shell dreams of water:
> her meadow stretches away, like sand;
> grass sways in the waves of the wind.

Boss's "shell" has three meanings. It is her skull; it indicates

that she was other than merely a physical thing, that her "shell" contained something. It "dreams of water," a seashell that echoes the sea. Her spirit is here compared to the eternal ocean, her meadow to sand, the grass to waves. This "thing," the skull of an old cow, is an indication of the Eternal, the endless waves, the grinding of rock to sand, sand back to rock, the cycle, the oversoul.

The fourth stanza gives us a thing, a cowbell brushed by leaves, chiming the resurrection in Wenzel's meadow. Wenzel is Heyen's eternal farmer. If he "has his way," the bell will ring the resurrection in autumn. As a farmer, Wenzel is linked to Nature; he knows the value of death. The resurrection begins in Autumn because that is where the cycle ends. It is the circle, the Zen paradox, death to life, life out of death, for there must be death for life to be reborn. The season of Autumn is one of death, so that is where the resurrection must begin: at the end. The dead that "break grass" are all those dead and decomposed beings (cows for example) that nourish the living grass, reentering the cycle as living matter. It is interesting that Heyen introduces a cow-bell, a man-made thing, at the end of the poem. It is a step beyond Emerson, including something synthetic within the cycle.

This introduction of a man-made item in to the catalogue of things is where Heyen truly steps beyond the bounds of his nineteenth century mentors. Kenneth Maclean comments on Heyen's relationship to Emerson and Whitman in "Animate Mystique: The

Dialectic of William Heyen's Poems":

> [One] might too easily conclude that his *metier* is a variety of American poetic naturalism, Transcendental in its inheritance, essentially at one with Emerson and Whitman . . . . But that is not sufficient to the complex in Heyen's work, the modern.
> (71)

So from cow, to willow, to skull to cowbell, we see four simple "things" that indicate the Absolute, the eternal cycle of the oversoul.

In American Poets Waggoner defines Emerson as a "Transcendental Idealist" and claims "without understanding Emerson we cannot possibly begin to understand the later development of our poetry"(91).

Heyen, unlike Emerson, is **not** a "Transcendental Idealist," or a Monist. This is not to say that Heyen goes against Emerson's ideals. But the darkness exists, the negative that must be named and understood else the world fall into that darkness. Mind, matter, God, spirit, Nature--all these are existence, but they are independent, or perhaps interdependent, but still separate. It is the link, the relationship of all existence that must be recognized. Heyen does reach into his soul in a form of the *via negativa*, but also reaches out in the *via affirmativa*. This is Heyen's enlightenment, and the fact that he has none of Emerson's naivete(Waggoner 96) detracts not at all from his positive vision of what is possible.

Heyen's dualism must be recognized, for he sees the negative possibilities of the future, and warns us vigorously to return not

to the past, but to the vision we possessed in the past. This vision is simply the effort to perceive existence and our place in it. This understanding logically contains the awareness of everything else in existence. Heyen is not calling for omniscience, simply the effort to be god-like in our perception.

The people of the past, more agrarian than we, were closer to capricious Nature, and therefore to existence. Their vision was clearer; they lived with the darkness of chance, with death, and life, every day. They knew what a human was. Heyen is concerned with what humans are becoming: deaf and dumb to Nature, Emerson's **Not-Me**. Man is concerned with himself. This loss of what was once a natural part of the only rational beast on earth has brought man to the level of the beast. Heyen refers to these individuals as "lost children"(Heyen TCR 8).

Chapter 2

1

Light

For Heyen, light is perhaps his most cohesive symbol, linking all existence. In one of his earliest works, "History of the Resurrection"(The City Parables (TCP) 24), Heyen details the funeral of a friend. Here light has auditory attributes, with "candles whose flames wavered like the sound of bells," and when the congregation begins to chorus "the same syllables, the same cadence,\the lost words, the lost tongue of the tribes/of lost light" we are told it is the "language of first dark." This group experience in speaking in tongues is the Word of God. "Hand by hand we formed/that ring of accepting flesh The Book describes.\ It was then the words came, to all of us at once . . . ." At the end of the poem Heyen tells us to listen to the wind, the bells, and the light.

This poem has the surreal qualities of a dream, but in the first stanza Heyen tells us that "When it happened the first

time\we thought we were dreaming:." The use of "we" rather than "I" shows that this is a group experience of the highest spiritual order. The death of a friend, the circle around the body, and the primal words lead to a blending of sound and soul, symbolized by the infinite circle, all of this combining into a dirge for the dead friend and a reassurance and realization that we continue after death. The Word of God is Light, the power of life. The group has touched that word and so momentarily rejoined that power while their dead friend more permanently rejoins it. But "that speech is heard,\ awakenings go across the land" for their "friend, who lives again." This is why we must listen to the wind and bells, for they are echoes of the Word, the light, and the friend.

Depth of Field, Heyen's earliest collection, shows from its very title that perception was important from the beginning of Heyen's career. He begins the book with a quote from Thoreau:

> If I ever see more clearly at one time than at another, the medium through which I see is clearer.

Thoreau's "see" is literal sight, but it implies an interpretation or deeper vision of an object. This is Heyen's "depth of field." His mind or spirit is the camera, his eye the lens or medium.

"To Live in the World" (Heyen Depth of Field (DoF) 54) is a poem about a tree that fell during hurricane Nancy in the 1950s. This tree looms large in Heyen's memory, its death replayed many times through many poems.

> There are still photographs.
> They'll have to do. But we
> are rendered mostly shadows

under influence of tree.
("To Live in the World")

The photograph, like the memory and the poem, is filled by the tree. The people are "rendered" into shadow, converted or melted down from the fullness of memory and life, perhaps in comparison to the tree. The tree took much of the light that would have illuminated the house and people, leaving them cold and dark in "the terrible winter's silhouette." Yet the tree was magnificent, with branches that held "full summer," a thing of "abstract beauties." Once the tree had fallen, "the house lightened to fit/the sky . . . ." Heyen sees the dichotomy of light and dark in this memory as a riddle, as the "act of balancing memories." He ponders this riddle, and the pondering "is enough." He knows "Trees are of knowledge and of life." The life and death of the tree caused Heyen to ponder, to become Emerson's "Man Thinking." He sees that when the tree falls, the house seems to brighten to fill its place. The death of the tree refocuses Heyen on his home and family; it is the "balancing of memories." Heyen was forced to see differently after the tree's disappearance, and his realization that perception has many levels was his birth as a poet.

Section XIIII of "Noise in the Trees: A Memoir"(Long Island Light (LIL) 91), is a prose version of "To Live in the World." Here he tells us that the loss of the tree "led me to need words" to express his contradictory sadness at its loss and his realization that it had been robbing them of light. That light was restored through a destructive act of nature. The poem is a

celebration of his new perception and the insight that the tree, nature and existence are above terms like good or bad. They are simply life and death, positive and negative. The tree, "fruited, but snowhung and dense/with cold, was yes and no, both words"("To Live in the World").

In "Depth of Field"(Heyen DoF 42) Heyen admires a spider for her "hundreds of cells of eye." It is morning, and the sunlight has dried the dew on her web so that it "drums taut" in the wind. She hears "her net sing the music of a dying fly" and "rises to focus her hundreds of cells of eye/upon her field." But there is no fly. The music of life and death stems from the light. The vibration of the light drying the web's moisture causing wind to make music upon her web provokes her to respond as if something alive touched her net.

> And yet, within her sharp
> geometry of sight, she is not angling
> deep enough, or high. It is the harp
> of the curved sun that orchestrates the morning.

Heyen's spider is like Whitman's "Noiseless Patient Spider"(Whitman 450) that "launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself" in an attempt to connect with something. But Heyen's spider is not "angling/deep enough, or high." Her depth of field is insufficient for the task of perceiving the life that strummed her web. Whitman's spider is clearly shown as a metaphor for the questing soul, similar to Emerson's viewing eye, and we can use Heyen's spider in a like manner. We must "angle" like the fisherman, with depth and skill, strive to see truly "Till

the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile anchor/hold,/Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul"("A Noiseless Patient Spider"). Heyen asks his readers to strive to expand their depth of field, the scope and focus of their vision, to actively see All.

Light is Heyen's most cohesive symbol because of its scientific truth. Light is energy, necessary for life. Light was first, the original energy of creation. Light is both particles and waves; light has finite speed and so is affected by its environment, such as gravity. Light follows laws. It will naturally spread into a sphere and never cease expanding. It moves and pulses and is always there. When one electron moves past another, photons may be given off, which we perceive as light. "Photon" is from the Greek, meaning "first." Light is composed of the basic building blocks of matter. In this way is everything linked by light.

In Heyen physics meets philosophy. This meeting is seen in "Witness"(Heyen LIL 142) where Heyen presents a memory of his childhood.

In the first stanza he witnesses life in the "spring lambs," then death as the farmer Wenzel "wrapped his left arm around a sheep's neck/and struck her with the sledge in his right hand." The boy runs home and strikes his head on an apple-bough. There is parallel symbolism here, with both sheep and child being struck on the head. The apple is the Christian symbol for knowledge of life

and death. Wisdom is often portrayed as light. It is appropriate that Heyen-child should now question life and death: "Where was the dead sheep?" He probes deeper and asks "Where is the witness now?" A witness must see to be a witness. This also requires light. Heyen is the witness, but he has to ask his question several times in the poem, as if he were temporally displaced. But this is a dream of memories. (He tells us in "Noise in the Trees"(LIL 68) "I have the distinct impression that I can never live in the present unless I find some means of relieving the obsessions of the past.") In the second stanza he is "nine or ten," and lying awake, tormented by the sheep's death and the questions: "Where is the dead sheep?", "Where is the witness now?" The operative word is "now." He seems lost within a dream-world of memories, aware that he is reliving important events but unable, until the third stanza, to accept or understand when he is:

> Not to accept, but to awaken.
> Not to understand, to cry terror, but to know
> that even a billion years later, now,
> we breathe the first circle of light,

He now knows he cannot accept life and death, but must awaken to it, become sensitive to its workings. He cannot understand it because it is beyond categoric interpretation. One must simply "know" it, know that the first pulse of light, the primal creative force, ever expanding, is still with us, that we "breathe" it, are of and part of it. Temporally, light records history, so history is held in light "even a billion years later" or "now."

This circle of light holds the cycle of life, as Heyen shows

us by listing things that are dominated by that first circle of light:

> and the light curves into us, into the deer's back,
> the man's neck, the woman's thigh . . . .
> The dead elms and chestnuts are of it, and do not
> break the curve. The jewelled flies sip it,
> and do not break the curve.

He goes on to include our homes riding the curve, and the mountains, the moon, the stars, nameless comets, "The struck ewe's broken brainpan," Wenzel and "this witness," none of which "break the curve." The point of all this is to show that the ewe's death by Wenzel's hand changes nothing in terms of the primal energies of existence. As with the tree of "To Live in the World"(DoF 54), the destruction of some living thing has given Heyen cause to reflect on the nature of existence. He takes comfort in the fact that the ewe remains alive in memory, and so remains alive now, somewhere in time. By writing this memory into a poem, Heyen has testified that

> You and I bear witness, and know this,
> and as we do the light curves into this knowledge.
> The struck ewe lives in this light,
> in this curve of the only unbroken light.

Heyen introduces "Cat and Star"(LIL 158) with a small paragraph of prose that encapsulates his concept of light.

> It takes nearly five hundred years for light from the North Star to reach earth. If we were on that star with a powerful telescope, we would be able to see Columbus's ships just now arriving in the New World. Nothing we do is ever lost to light.

This poem is Heyen's naming of a "twenty year obsession," his shooting of a cat when he was a boy. He knows that somewhere, or better, somewhen, a "cat/still drags its broken body/over the last

twenty years'/leaves." His mind replays the memory, and he knows light holds it also.

> the cat--one eye
> weeping blood
>
> the other a lustre of dead
> pearl light steering,
>
> forever, a signal,
> to a star--

The cat lives, but is eternally dying within Heyen's memories and within the light: "But here, now,/the sound of the cat crying / with all the dead light/of its dead eye." He links mind and space through light. He believes the "cat and boy" are together in "objective light" travelling to somewhere, and he hopes there may be a star "in the outer dark or/behind my eyes, where / the light turns back again." The star is behind his eyes, for the rest of the poem is dedicated to a meditative reversal of his shooting of the cat, until "I am back in bed,/never to begin this, / my rifle in its closet . . . ."

Connected to the light motif is that of the eye, for light is perceived by the eye. "Anthem"(LIL 44) is another poem about light, perception and spiritual awakening -- this time from his parent's materialism. Again it is a childhood memory, here initiated by the sound of a bell. It is a bitter memory of his parents during the depression. They are shrill and sad and perhaps a little mad, obsessed with money. He listens "to the bell/toll syllables of madness" that begins as his parents "slam themselves into their rusted Ford/and drive away." The bell is associated

with his parent's obsession, violence and poverty.

His parents' drive to make money consumed most of their lives. Heyen was a child of his father, and so he also knew that drive.

> I who had found that country
> where my parents sang
> 'Give us money, money, money,
>
> or give us death, O America,'
> walked out of the woods as they died.

The last line of the above stanza is very important, for it is Heyen's rejection of his parents' anthem. He knows the need for wealth can warp and bend perception, changing people, driving them in the direction of material gain rather than spiritual awareness. His father was "Broken, bearing his pockets' / emptiness behind his eyes."

We know how important the eye is in perception. Heyen's transcendence begins with the eye and perception of physical things. His spider in "Depth of Field"(DoF 42) had a multi-faceted eye, and the dead cat of "Cat and Star"(LIL 158) sent "a signal,/to a star--" with a dead eye. Light is a large part of perception, and transcendent perception (Emerson's transparent eye-ball) allows one to experience what the light carries. If one's perception is askew, such as Child-Heyen's under the influence of his parent's materialism, existence is hostile. When Heyen tells us he "descended once/into madness" at the beginning of "Anthem," he is describing his childhood. His present-perception of his past-perception is that it was warped.

> betrayed, dead, my Jesus lay suspended

in robes of stained glass, but about to rise
into the sun's rays?

But this was not my church;
I listened to the bell
toll syllables of madness while

the real sun's spectrum and glisten
rushed out of a huge backyard elm
like a sunburst in reverse.

He ran with the bell until "all colour returned to the world." His skewed perception juxtaposes a tree sucking light and colour from the world and the image of "his" Jesus resplendent in stained glass. The two images are separated, or perhaps connected, by the madness of the bell. The play on words of "son" and "sun" fits well with the mirror imaging of light-sucking elm and martyred Jesus. He ran from this madness, but carried it with him in the bell. He ran "into the back-woods" and there colour, or sanity, returned: "That bell diminished." He left his parent's materialism behind by retreating to the back-woods, and the primal solidity of "brush-slash and blood" allowed him to see himself as outside his parents' "vacuum/that drew all light at mid-day/out of the great tree." The tree and woods were warped and antagonistic because Heyen's childhood perception was warped by his parent's materialism. When he walked out of the woods, when his parents died, their "anthem" died and was left behind by the son.

"The Soldier"(The Chestnut Rain (TCR) 5) consists of alternating stanzas of italic and roman font. The stanzas in italics are dream, while the roman font is memory. His dream contains common plants and animals that are surreal within Heyen's

dreamscape. The memory stanzas are about an old woman who remembers the "massive, fallen/bodies of chestnuts."

They disappeared,
but this was all in shadow,
chestnut shadow,
one tree towering over the field.

This "one tree" is immense, blotting out the dream animals, throwing them into "chestnut shadow" by its greatness. The old woman remembers the fallen trunks being so big one could not climb over them, and imagines them as soldiers lost in the Great War. The poem's last three stanzas become important to our understanding of light, for here he is addressing the woman directly.

Dreamer, old woman, old man,
I have curled up
in chestnut shadow
inside this hollow
soldier beside you

Listen: his trunk curves
rain around us. Now,
from the soldier's shadow,
from the curved rain's source,
a light, a soft light:

from the tree's center, from the beginning,
from leaves glistening at summer's pitch,
a light, unfolding, a veincage of light.

The light in this poem is the light of creation, the wonder of life. We are told that this light comes from "the tree's centre, from the beginning," and "the curved rain's source." Beginning, centre and source all refer to the Oversoul. In his dream, Heyen has transcended sense to know the light's source: Nature. The immense tree is almost archetypal in his dream, representative of that primal creation energy that binds everything in a "veincage of

light."

We are told that this type of light is not the same as the light that brightens our days. In "The Light"(TCR 12-16) we are told that the "light bursting upward with sidewalk pigeons . . . ." is "the light of which our daily light is shadow." This is the light of the chestnut in "The Soldier." It is the light of Plato's Ultimate Reality. He begins "The Light" by enjoining us to

> Be with me in the light of this prism,
> for this is our earthly body again,
> solar light broken down,
> rays of decomposition . . . .

When light is refracted through a prism, it is separated into the seven colours. It is not by coincidence that this poem is number seven in the book-length The Chestnut Rain. It is a long poem that attempts to give an exhaustive spectrum-like overview of existence. This poem is the prism, and the events and images it contains are existence broken into component parts, all linked by light. Individually, each image is part of that light; together, they are light. Light is life. Light is All. It is Emerson's Oversoul and Whitman's float; it is the Western version of the Eastern Absolute. The poem's "rays of decomposition" are the lines of the poem, many of which are helpful in cataloguing Heyen's use of light.

> light of the smallest atomic particle struck until split
> into particles its own size, miracle
> of the undiminished lord,
> (12)

The miracle is that of transubstantiation. The undiminished lord is he who changed one loaf into many, the conversion of the

eucharistic bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. This is likewise the miracle of light, undiminished, the photons and other sub-atomic particles that make up light splitting into particles their own size.

Light is "rising into grass at Arlington"; a literal truth, but he also lists the "light left in a dead human eye, curving outward," which is perhaps the spirit of the being rejoining the Absolute, physically through the decomposition of matter into smaller particles, and spiritually and metaphorically through light.

> He shows us the
>
> light bursting upward with sidewalk pigeons,
> the full spectrum of their circling above the buildings,
>
> which is the light of which our daily light is shadow,
> (12-13)

which is the rush of sound created by many wings in the fullness of life, and the spectrum of their circling is the light of their life and energy, the circle reminiscent of the "ring of accepting flesh"(The City Parables (TCP) 24) that brought the mourners closer to their dead friend and the Absolute. The light of these pigeons circling "is the light of which our daily light is shadow." What is needed then is a higher perception to "see" it. Attaining this higher perception is like an initiation into the higher mysteries of Eastern philosophy.

> light entering our third eye,
>
> light of the Buddha's ear, of Francis' tongue-tip tuned to beasts.

(13)

He uses light to show the composting effect of "sheds sagging into lilacs and sumacs, / which is the light of candling, blood spots balanced in the cosmos"(13). Candling the egg, using light to see within, is like the higher perception needed to "see" the light to which daily light is shadow. "Seeing" the cosmos within the egg and the composting of wood to flowers is the same exercise, is in fact, the same thing.

The light is the **full** spectrum of existence, so Heyen must also list the negative.

> the light of Landsberg and *Mein Kampf*,
>
> aberrant light of killers working together,
>
> intricate black light of the Holocaust . . .

These negative images were all caused by man in the past killing man. This negative energy is also the

> light of snappers crawling up from dead dioxin and mirex swamps to die . . .
>
> light in the eyes of the last passenger pigeon,
>
> campfire light of "Kansas oak" on the treeless plains .
>
> on the flanks of the last buffalo . . .

which is man destroying his environment. These images are interspaced somewhat randomly through the poem. Included with the images of man killing man and man poisoning the environment are images of the poison killing man:

> the light seeping from atomic waste into our future .
>
> which is the light of the cruise missile named

Tomahawk .

but drunken light skidding the human family tree,

which is the light of leukaemia water

light of radium children,

which is the light of the dissolving chain, entropic light
crawling from dawn along its own curled tail,

which is the light lost to this earth forever,
light of an aborted child . . . .

Heyen is concerned with particles -- particles of light or matter. We know that we are constructed of the same energies as the rest of the world, but Heyen sees the exchange of these particles in the cycle of life perpetuated every day:

In the air of the night of this room,
I breathe your breath, deeply, slowly.
I am drifting back, into your body, drifting
back, into your body.
("Invocation" LIL 4)

The "skidding" of our family tree, the atomic waste seeping into our future, the "dissolving chain" and "radium children" all suggest damage to humanity's genetic codes. Our particles are warped, like the negative energy inherent in human atrocities. It is a physical and spiritual distortion. Man does not "see" with the proper depth and clarity. This warped perception has caused the damage to man and his environment. One could call these men the spiritually impaired, or handicapped, and this spiritual distortion is reflected in the physical distortion we bring upon ourselves. It is cause and effect. We need to see with that higher faculty to recognize our interdependent relationship and

return to a world balanced by the positive and the negative rather than one distorted by our egotism.

2

Prism

The prism is Emerson's transparent eyeball, a seeing device. Perception is like a prism. Anything that holds light and affects it is a prism. Light is existence. We perceive existence, physically through our eyes, and emotionally and spiritually through our personality, our self. Because our selves are mediums of perception, the self, or soul, is a prism. Every poem Heyen writes consists of "rays of decomposition"(Heyen TCR 12) because each poem is his perception of reality filtered through his soul, like light refracted through a prism. Heyen will strive to make each poem prism-like in an effort to help us "see." Emerson tells us "every object rightly seen, unlocks a new faculty of the soul"(Selections 36).

Emerson felt that all learning had one aim: "to find a theory of Nature"(Selections 22). This theory, if it is true, will serve to explain everything, will act as a template to existence. He claims "the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul"(Selections 22). The Soul is the "I"; everything else, the "not me," is Nature. He tells us

> The lover of Nature is he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood . . . . In the woods we return to reason and faith . . . I become a transparent eye-ball. I am nothing. I see all. The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God
>
> (Selections 23).

Heyen is a lover of Nature who has never stopped striving to align his inward and outward senses. In a letter to me he spoke of "this world" and the "other world," and I could not help but relate these worlds to Emerson's inward and outward senses. Heyen says, speaking of his newest collection, Pterodactyl Rose: Poems of Ecology,

> Its center is probably my center, and this might have something to do with the sense of vanishing beauty of this world tempered at the same time by love which is a reminder of the other world tempered by an eastern apprehension of beyondness that keeps us sane within and outside the primal sanities of nature and the soul.
>
> (Correspondence 02/05/91)

Nature and the soul. These are the primal sanities of this world and the other world, the "within and outside," the "inward and outward senses," the soul and nature.

Heyen knows the value of Emerson's "spirit of infancy." This "spirit of infancy," in Emersonian terms, is what allows us to align inward and outward senses. The perception of a child is more pure, more primal, and allows the poet striving for such perception to "see" Nature as an absolute, an entity huge and universal, yet still see it precisely enough to understand that man's soul is "part or particle" of this "Universal Being." It is a Being because of man's animating soul -- the collective spirit of man.

The inward sense allows perception of the Soul. The outer sense allows perception of Nature. When aligned, they produce the Absolute. He tells me, in his letter, that as a child

> At the ponds, in the woods, among the bees and blossoms of our back-lawn pear trees, underwater at the Sound, I was part of an eternal presence. When I'm not stupid and dull, I know and feel I still am.

Today's children do not have aligned senses; they do not perceive Emerson's oversoul, (Heyen calls it undersong) or the duality of existence.

"Stereoscope"(TCR 7) is about higher perception. A stereoscope is an optical instrument, a type of prism, that presents to a viewer two similar but suitably different pictures, one to each eye, superimposed to give the effect of depth. In normal vision the two eyes, being a certain distance apart, see slightly different aspects of a scene. The impression of depth is produced when the brain combines the images. The brain is the best stereoscope.

Stereoscope

Always again, as it must, this double vision
becoming one: children
playing in the dead groves;

and this one: soldiers who died
in Whitman's arms, the sap
of his songs, the blood;

and this one: those whose faces the land
furrowed, who learned
to live with the land, to love.

What Heyen is doing here is explaining his poetic credo, showing us as explicitly as he is able how he, as a poet, strives

to view the world. The world he sees is superimposed on another: "Is it too late to save it, our first earth?/I shift Wenzel, again, to another world"("Science Fiction" TCR 61). A stereoscope must be focused; the better the focus, the more depth and clarity. The brain must also be focused properly to function stereoscopically. To break down "Stereoscope" is to discover the key to Heyen's inward and outward perception, his attempts to see with the depth and clarity of Emerson's "Man Thinking."

In the first stanza he says "Always again ." with "again" telling us that he is once more experiencing double vision, attempting to align inner and outer senses and "see" with higher faculty. This is the "depth" of a stereoscope used in a poetic sense: as a stereoscope is to a two dimensional picture, giving it that third dimension of reality, so does the poet add to reality its fourth dimension, the ultimate reality, and the relationship to that universal centre that is All. "Children/playing in the dead groves": children, like chestnuts, have the potential to grow and bloom into adults of their species. These children are playing in dead groves, groves one assumes used to hold chestnut trees. The chestnut is dying of blight, poisoned by man's carelessness. The chestnut cannot develop properly, producing only sucker-growth. Likewise, man is dying of self-induced poisoning, and Heyen sees this in our "lost children"("Disco" TCR 8) who cannot "see" the havoc they wreak. In the second stanza, following the theme of the first, a dead man is like a dead chestnut tree: the sap of

songs is blood like the sap of a tree is blood. From this then we can assume that the chestnut is also representative of song, "the flow of words, or semen"(The Light" TCR 12) "within this eighteenth blossom[the poem]/ of the chestnut rain"("This Blossom" TCR 34). The third stanza is ironic in that the land furrowed the farmer's faces while the farmers furrowed the land. These furrows are like the lines in the palm of your hand. Heyen calls them the "light filling your palms' valleys, now, if you'll open them . . . ."("The Light" TCR 12). These furrows are also like the veins of a leaf, or a candled egg, or a chestnut tree's centre. Heyen's aligned senses, his stereoscopic vision, allow him to "see" the chestnut tree's centre like a candled egg. The centre of any tree, or person, is an analogue of the Absolute, for it is the soul, or spirit, that makes it alive.

The centre of a tree, a candled egg, spirit, soul, nature: all these things are prism-like and remind us of Emerson's Oversoul and the Eastern Absolute. Heyen refers to it as an undersong("American Time," "The Masters" TCR 93,96). Heyen, I feel, was also influenced by Stafford. His undersong is very similar to Stafford's legend, and where Stafford required bifocal vision to view his "legend," Heyen requires stereoscopic vision to "see" the ultimate reality of an object (I say "see," referring to vision as it perceives reality. I am using "see" as it relates to deeper understanding or perception). But Heyen gave the "legend" a centre, and instead of searching outward, like Stafford, he goes

inward, and back, back along the veincage, the DNA matrix "the dissolving chain . . . crawling from dawn along its own curled tail . . . ." ("The Light" TCR 16), to the first particle from which we all arose.

The opening four lines of "The Light"(TCR 12) are important.

> Be with me in the light of this prism,
> for this is our earthly body again,
> solar light broken down,
> rays of decomposition . . . .

The fact that the first stanza consists of four lines, and a prism consists of four sides, may not be coincidental. He asks us to be with him in the light that this prism refracts. That light is represented by the lines of the poem. The poem is an extensive listing of the positive and negative of existence, and he tells us that this is our earthly body, the physical side of life. He says "again" to show dualism as he used it in "Stereoscope"(TCR 7): "Always again, as it must, this double vision." In "The Light" he tells us what stereoscopic vision accomplishes, namely, "solar light broken down." Heyen traces life back to light, photons, the basic building blocks of Nature. Solar light in its pure form is light. It becomes disseminated as it travels to Earth and becomes part of the on-going life cycle: that of light fuelling life, becoming life. Breaking down solar light is another way of saying viewing life; "rays of decomposition" is the viewing of the independent components of life. It is the perception of the poet that is the prism, and the rays of decomposed, broken down solar light that are the life history of man and the subject of the poem.

The prism is found in many forms in Heyen's work. This dream-sequence from "Noise in the Trees"(LIL 125-6) is important as a prism once-removed.

> It is a trapezoid of glass. It is a small cowbell, not metal as is every other cowbell I have ever seen, but blown from blue glass, the pontil on its crown . . . it is marked 1940. The date stands out clearly. I hold the bell up to my eyes, and look through it, and the building's long lower hall is bathed in blue light . . . . I return to the woman and ask her if I can buy the bell now, please. No, she says, you can never buy it, but you can be the first on the list . . . . I cradle the glass bell in my hands. It holds my childhood, holds Long Island's light forever. All the way to morning I know that I will always have it with me when I need it.

The glass bell is prism-like in that it holds and filters memory, light and therefore history.

Heyen reaffirms this in "To Live in the World"(DoF 56) where "time still moves through a glass windbell." In "Anthem"(LIL 44) the bell tolls "syllables of madness."

> I descended once
> into madness where
> a bell does swing above its bell-rope
>
> the spinal column,
> a low lead reverberation,
> the struck sound spaced vertebrae apart.

This bell is his skull, and the sounds of madness are his skull hanging above his spinal column ringing his parent's anthem of "money, money, money." It is prism-like because it warps his perception, calls him to darkness. "All colour returned to the world" once Heyen had immersed himself in nature in a frenzy of "brush-slash and blood."

A skull is prism-like in "For the Year 2500"(LIL 61).

For the Year 2500

In Long Island's sand, my fingers
found this talisman,
this small tri-
angular deer skull
to hold to your eye.

Within its milky glow
against the sun, notice
the thin brainpan's curved
veins of whiter bone, the white
wheel spokes, the radiant

creation, the crystalline-based
star-pattern born
in the Word, in water, in sperm.
Every skull holds our sun's first fires.
Your dead lord lives at the wheel's hub.

The skull is described as a talisman, a thing of power, the "Word" of God. The word fragment "tri," meaning three sided, tells us this artifact is a prism. Its power is that of the prism: it is held to the eye and can be used to illumine "the radiant creation," the origin of existence. This is because it holds light and history: "our sun's first fires." The skull is white bone; white both reflects colour and has the potential for colour, just as a prism does. You can see this "star-pattern" creation in the Word, in water and in sperm.

In "Epilogue: The Ghost"(TCR 98) Heyen has put a chestnut seed in his mouth to germinate.

I stood there

wanting to hear that word again,
that bead of white tree-sperm on my tongue,
white of all colours, ghost light . . . .

Once again white is all colours, as in the prism. The seed, like

the prism, has the potential to use and filter light. So the prism can be seen as a bell, a skull, an eye, a seed or a poem. He germinates the seed in his mouth because words are the rays of decomposition that show the components of existence as they stand in relation to the Absolute.

Prism-like qualities are seen in life and also in death. Heyen lists the "rainbow mucus of earthworms"("Noise in the Trees" LIL 68), and a tree that "dripped prisms of rain from its leaves"("Noise in the Trees" LIL 90). Prisms are also found in the "dead light" of a cat's "dead eye"("Cat and Star" LIL 160) and "small skulls/alive in their own dead light"("Dusk" LIL 163). Death is light in a compost, for out of death comes more life. The luminescence derives from the potential for life out of death.

> when I touched the loam fill over the elm's stump,
> its cluster of tiny noctilucent mushrooms,
> I saw through them
> into the ground, into the elm's dead
> luminous roots . . . .
> ("The Elm's Home" LIL 197)

Another way to identify Heyen's prisms is to search for curved light. Prisms curve light by refraction, separating it into component colours. Likewise Heyen curves light into "rays of decomposition" that show the interdependent relationship of All that transcends time and space. "The Girl"(TCR 50) is a good example.

> . . . Inside each chestnut, she knew,
> was night--each was an eye
> in her fingers,
>
> and she, as she slept, could see, with those chestnut eyes,

rain in the dying trees a thousand years away,
the trees, too, on their way home

in a beam of light, in a curve of time to where
we and Li Po's girl resume
that autumn dream.

The seeds are eyes, and both are prisms that allow the girl to transcend time and space to touch the Word, the Absolute that makes up the cycle of life and death.

In "Witness"(LIL 142) Heyen dream-remembers the farmer Wenzel killing a ewe. In his revery he comes to the conclusion that death does not "break the curve" of existence. Death is not an ending but a continuation of life in a different form: "The struck ewe lives in this light,/in this curve of the only unbroken light."

In "The Ewe"(LIL 145) Heyen enters a dead ewe through her eyes and experiences its death.

I entered, and here,
in this cave of silence, at the poised

centre of being, in the ewe's skull,
I received her light, but the human
power of colour, the sunset lavenders,
the moon-silvered meadow,
the curved sledge burst with stars.

The "poised/centre of being" is the point where the angles of a prism send light to be refracted as a spectrum. This point is within her skull, for it is here that he "received her light," adding only the "human /power of color." Colour, we know, symbolizes the spectrum of life, and humans have power over life. The curved sledge is part of the cycle, part of the "curve of the only unbroken light"; the struck skull bursts with stars(one can

imagine a cartoon hammer striking), like the power of the dead cow in "Cow, Willow, Skull, Cowbell"(LIL 137): "poof,/she'd be gone." Man has this power in his hands. It is interesting that the ewe's skull is a "cave of silence" until he received her spirit. Heyen then says "**but** the human/power of colour," meaning that perhaps her spirit was absorbed, or marked, by the human spirit; it was definitely released by man because only he is aware of this death within her and of his connection to that death. That is the power of colour: the ability to distinguish the parts of the Cosmos and the interdependent relationship they represent.

This act of violence is not negative. Man's part in this death is shown to be part of the curve in "Witness"(LIL 142) where he reassures us that "The struck ewe's broken brainpan does not break the curve. / Wenzel nor this witness breaks the curve." The death, the act of killing, and the witnessing of that death have no effect on the whole picture because they are all natural parts of the cycle.

3

Vapour

William Heyen begins The Chestnut Rain with a quote from Walt Whitman's Specimen Days:

> The infinite dead (the land entire saturated, perfumed with their impalpable ashes' exhalation in Nature's chemistry distilled, and shall be so forever, in every future grain of wheat and ear of corn, and every flower that grows, and every breath we draw--)
>
> (1)

Why does Heyen begin with this quote? What makes it important? Closer examination reveals the image Whitman was striving for. "The infinite dead" reveals how many dead creatures there are in the world, "infinite" not just in number, but in quality, significance. Whitman intuited the laws of probability and dispersal when he saw "the infinite dead[s] . . ashes' exhalation in Nature's chemistry distilled in every breath we draw--." So the particles of the dead "saturate" everything; Whitman focuses on live examples--wheat, corn, people--to show the eternal cycle and the bond that joins every creature on earth. Notice also

the repetition of words pertaining to breathing: "perfumed," "exhalation," "breath." Breathing is an exercise in repetitive flow: in, out, in, out, etc. This rhythm holds well with Whitman's syntactic flow, his imagery, and his concept of the "float," to and from which souls come and go in an endless cycle. Emerson tells us "each particle is a microcosm, and faithfully renders the likeness of the world"(Selections 40).

Heyen has prefaced his collection with this quote because it applies also to his own beliefs.

In his poem "Invocation"(4) from the Long Island Light collection, Heyen meditates that "To lie awake is to live,/ to sleep is to die, I think, as I open and close my eyes." Shiva tells us "At the point of sleep when sleep has not yet come and external wakefulness vanishes, at this point **being** is revealed"(Zen Flesh, Zen Bones 167). In the phase between waking and sleeping we drift in and out of consciousness, and if to sleep is to die, then when we sleep we come closest to the cycle that encompasses life and death, come closest to those elements that make up dreams, the "float" of humanity. Shiva's **being** is this recognition of the cycle.

The cycle is an essential exchange in the symbology of Heyen; we see it again in the last stanza of the poem:

> I breathe your breath, deeply, slowly.
> I am drifting back, into your body, drifting
> back, into your body.

This time the exchange is more physical, but no less esoteric for

it. We see the Whitmanese flow, in/out, back/forth, the waves of motion, his breath exhaling while she inhales, and vice versa. It is important to note that it is he that drifts, his self, imbued by his breath, that enters her body. We can see how this movement relates to Whitman's concept of the dead being carried in every breath, but Heyen has taken it a touch further, showing the living in every breath as well. This is a very important step, for it shows the additional binding Heyen uses to link all life.

Heyen sees Whitman's float (which he calls "undersong") not as something above, but below, and here, among us all, and within each of us, bridging and mixing. For this reason drifting and cresting images are important symbols for Heyen.

In "The Woman"(TCR 31) this woman has performed fellatio upon him, and swallowed his seed. Heyen finishes the poem with what would seem an image of sexual intercourse.

> I have drifted, crested,
> am drifting back again
> into her body,
> drifting back,
> into her body . . . .

We know from "Invocation" that this image transcends sex, and is actually an exchange of souls, or a joining of the undersong, here only symbolized by a sexual act.

It is interesting that she swallows his seed rather than taking it within her womb as one might expect. Perhaps the answer is in "The Binding"(TCR 85): "this woman's body tendriling with semen" and "soldier's bodies passing by way of blossoms into our

bloodstreams." Both of these images deal with assimilating into one's body, or blood, the essence of people. This assimilation usually occurs when the dead have decomposed, re-entered life as part of the food-chain, and become particles that we breathe or eat. These particles are symbols of ourselves. Just as we breathe these particles in and out, so does the undersong integrate our souls, or free them to fire our bodies. Heyen's seed was assimilated by the woman--there is no diminishment, for it is a symbolic act, like burying the dead so that re-growth may occur.

> Each spring each body will break
> into radium blossoms we'll buy
> from our soldiers, particles
>
> of chestnut light in our bloodstreams,..
> ("The Bodies" TCR 40)

In "The Poem"(TCR 47) Heyen mentions "grain that seeds/ as it is eaten" -- meaning, I think, the exchange of essences with the past, the mingling that occurs because the dead inhabit every molecule of our existence. The grain "seeds" because it achieves new life within us. In this light, Heyen's seed was not lost, but gained by the woman, in much the same way that they exchange essences through breathing.

When scanning The Chestnut Rain, we see phrases such as "ammonia fume, vapor rising from manure"(6) that call for a closer examination. These elements, mundane and seemingly unnecessary details in his rural poems, take on added meaning when considered from the perspective of "breath." "The Snow Hen"(TCR 10) generates curiosity. We see the flux in "I keep seeing the vapour cloud

forming and rising," but this explains little. "I evening/ dream my way again into this cosmos/ of milk vapour . . ." explains much. Vapour, breath, is representative of the cosmos because it is actual visual proof of exhalation, exhaust that we breathe in and in turn breathe out for another to breathe in. It is a cosmos because each molecule holds our past, and collectively the millions of molecules that make up the cloud are actually representative of the cosmos up to a given moment. When we breathe, we breathe in the cosmos. Since we are all intrinsic parts of the cosmos, that which is all around us is also within us. This is why Heyen is usually dreaming when he contacts it; it is so deep within us and modern man has so lost his connections that he requires a medium to regain "oneness."

Heyen uses sleep and breath to reverse time in "At West Hills, Long Island"(TCR 22). This poem is very similar to "Heartwood," where Heyen goes back in time by travelling the rings of a chestnut tree to its centre. In "West Hills" Heyen enters the room where Whitman was born and sleeps to "enter the float forever." When he awakens, he is "breathing birth

odours . . . here in the scents . . . of this borning room, ever-/ returning, streaming, and staying." As in "Heartwood," Heyen has moved temporally, travelling to the past using a physical motif as a medium, in this case odour.

"The Amber"(TCR 24) is about a sugar maple, and the spring flow of amber. This tree "stood two hundred years between [the Heyen

family's] house and barn." In that time the tree would have drawn from the earth particles of their lives: "Our speech entered its living cells,/ and was preserved . . ." Once it has died and been cut into sections, the tree gives back their speech, their memories of particles and odour: "This is the tapped section now/ giving back its music, words rising from soil/ into our parents lungs . . . ." The breathing exchange of cells by plant and man reaffirms our interconnectiveness, shown as vapour in the form of both memories and odour. The cycle of particles from man to plant is indicative of the great cycle of life, Emerson's all encompassing Oversoul that links man, body and soul, to Nature.

From "The Amber" and "At West Hills, Long Island" we can see that the cycle transcends not only space, but time as well. Past, present, and future merge: for Heyen time is circular. This idea is seen in Heyen's representation of Wenzel, a sort of eternal farmer: "I have been here before, have always been here . . . "("The Psalm" TCR 61). Wenzel's "timeless farm" is the site of many of Heyen's trips into the past, a place "where Wenzel's sheep graze until world's end . ."("The Masters" TCR 96). One could even go so far as to see Heyen, when he is at one with the cosmos, as being "beyond measurements of time"("My Deer" LIL 58). (I will discuss Wenzel at length in section two of chapter three.)

Whitman had also envisioned temporal transcendence. He tells us "Past and present and future are not disjoined but

joined"(Whitman 718). He declares himself a cosmos in "Song of Myself." In "Kosmos"(Whitman 392) Whitman addresses the Kosmos as an individual: "Who includes diversity and is Nature?" Whitman addresses himself, the cosmos that each man mirrors, when he declaims that he is beyond time.

> Who, constructing the house of himself or herself, not for a day
> but for all time, sees races, eras, dates, generations,
> The past, the future, dwelling there, like space,
> inseparable together.
>
> (Whitman 392)

Heyen's "Foals"(TCR 28) encompasses time as circular by superimposing seasons: "yes, a male, and strong,/ but the farm's seasons circle until/ a just delivered foal, a female,/ lies still." In this poem Heyen has incorporated life and death into the cycle of time, emphasizing the vastness of the cycle.

He also has many static symbols for time, and they are also cyclic. The rings of a tree, the "light of the ocean nautilus swaying, its empty innermost chambers/ coiling back to their beginning,"("The Light" TCR 12), the loss of the passenger pigeon, their last vestiges seen in the "light bursting upward with sidewalk pigeons,/ the full spectrum of their circling ."(TCR 12), "the spiral light of the slave's hovel,"(TCR 15), "the light of the dissolving chain, entropic light/ crawling from dawn along its own curled tail,"(TCR 16). We can see from these passages that Heyen does indeed see time as a curved, curling, circular mechanism, but we also know that light

curves. We have seen evidence of this in "The Girl"(TCR 50), where Li Po's girl could see

> with those chestnut eyes,
> rain in the dying trees a thousand years away,
> the trees, too, on their way home
>
> in a beam of light, in a curve of time to where
> we and Li Po's girl resume
> that autumn dream.

Heyen again demonstrates this in "This River"(TCR 75) where light curves back from the boundaries of space:

> The chestnut
>
> washed by mountainsides into that cosmic light come for it
> from where space itself curves
> illogically back . . . .

So we know light also curves, for light, like time, like the cosmos, is cyclic. Light is time in the same way that breath is motion--in/out, back/forth, around and around. This is more than just duality--images and events go full circle to be superimposed: particles of light, particles of our dead, particles of the past, the present, and what will be the future are what make up the cosmos. He tells us in "The Chestnut Rain"(TCR 4) of a tree that "distilled the American earth for us," and how in spring bodies "break/into radium blossoms" which send "particles / of chestnut light in our bloodstreams"("The Bodies" TCR 41).

In "The Poem"(TCR 47-9) the phrase "grain that seeds/as it is eaten" is perhaps the best example of this cellular reabsorption. The grain is a symbol for the molecules we receive. Each is a seed from the past, carrying history in light and matter. These

molecules give us life, becoming absorbed by our life to be passed on to the next; in this way they become seed-like. Heyen prefaces this poem with a quote from E. L. Kirkpatrick:

> Since the outbreak of the present war, immense quantities of vegetables evaporated in the kiln plants of western New York State . . . have been shipped to France and England as an army ration.
>
> (TCR 47)

Given that we know "soldiers' bodies [pass] by way of blossoms into our bloodstreams"(TCR 85), and we enter vegetable matter in the reverse of that cycle, the sending of freeze dried vegetables to Allied soldiers was in fact a type of continuing connection to the homeland, and the Oversoul. The reabsorption of particles of American citizens and soil once again indicates the cyclic nature of the Cosmos. Nationalism aside, it was also symbolic of the dissemination of American culture and influence to Europe.

As I have previously shown, light, for Heyen, is what links the past, present and future, for light is made up of the smallest atomic particles: light is in the breath we draw, the food we eat and the cells we grow to live (and the cells that decompose when we die). Light is eternal, for it carries time across all boundaries except the last one, the limits of the universe, and then light must bring time back to us. However, Heyen also uses the simple motion of breathing to reinforce the motion of light, as vapor carries time, our history, and our future in and out of our lungs.

Chapter 3

1

Tree

Chapter two's discussion of light, prism, and vapour, some of Heyen's constant symbols, will be continued in this chapter on tree, Wenzel and machine. (A certain overlap is unavoidable in that Heyen's major transcendental symbols are so interrelated.)

In almost all the world's religions the tree appears as a major symbol. The "Tree of Life" is evident in Scandinavian mythology as

> the great Teutonic three-rooted Yggdrasil World-Tree of prodigious dimensions the branches of which reached to the heavens and covered the entire world, the roots running under the earth to support it.
>
> (James 159)

This tree encompassed all the worlds: its roots in the Underworld, its trunk, Earth, and its branches holding Heaven. The gods would hold council under this tree.

Heyen's "Legend of the Tree at the Centre of the World"(LIL 19) mirrors this Tree. The poem describes a great oak swept across

the ice of Lake Ronkonkoma (a palaeolithic lake) in a blizzard. The tree rested on the ice for a day, and "leaves appeared from Never" until the ice broke.

> All night the waters swirled. Gods
> battled beneath the ice. Moon
> plunged near and shook loose showers
> of arrows. That morning was the first Spring.

The poem echoes the creation myth of darkness, "Never," succeeded by spring, first life. This tree saw the first Spring of a world locked in primal darkness. It is the tree behind every Heyen poem utilizing tree images. The tree of Heyen's childhood uprooted by Hurricane Nancy "was . . . Yggdrasill, the evergreen ash rooted in Icelandic mythology . . "("Noise in the Trees: a Memoir" LIL 90).

Heyen's sources are not made explicit, but research shows that a parallel vocabulary is used by writers describing the Tree of Life.

The Christian allegorical "cosmic tree," seen both as the Cross and the Edenic "Tree of Life"

> was described poetically as growing to an immense height, its branches stretching out to encircle the whole world from its centre . . .
>
> (James 161-2)

The Norse mythology contains a tree as the centre of creation:

> Odin and his children set the sea in a ring about the earth, and the World Tree, the Ash Yggdrasil, grew up to hold it in place, to overshadow it with its mighty branches, and to support the sky, which was the ice-blue skull-top of Ymir.
>
> Then for the making of Mankind, The Allfather Odin took an ash tree and an elder upon the sea-shore and fashioned from them Ask and Embla, the first man and the first woman.
>
> (Green 12)

In India, the cosmic "Asvatha Tree" of the Vedic pantheon was

> regarded as the personification of life and of fecundity, inexhaustible in abundance in both the vegetable and animal worlds . . . springing from what was virtually the navel of the universe.
>
> (James 148)

The Eternal Fig-tree of The Bhagavad-gita has, like Brahman, no beginning.

> The Tree, like the Brahman . . . represents the whole process of samsara[1] which includes individual selves . . . those minute parts of God which are caught up and enmeshed in the cosmic process.
>
> (Zaehner 360)

In "The Elm's Home"(LIL 194-7) Heyen saw what must be Yggdrasil: "the elm's dead/luminous roots, the branches of heaven/under the earth ." The Asvatha Tree, the "personification of life and fecundity," is shown in Heyen's "Brahma"(TCR 30) as "the chestnut rain" with "the power of seed and humus" to heal.

The Hebrew belief that man is a "complete but unrealized Tree in miniature" is also evident in Heyen's work. He calls himself a "living tree"("This Blossom" TCR 34) and refers to his "own bark body"("The Bark" TCR 53-4). He identifies dead soldiers with dead chestnuts in "The Soldier"(TCR 5-6) and sap with blood in "Stereoscope"(TCR 7).

Emerson viewed Man, society, as one man. His description of man's problem is reminiscent of Heyen's description of present man's problem. Heyen calls man "lost children" and compares them

with chestnut sucker growth. Emerson likewise states:

> The state of society is one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking monsters -- a good finger, a neck . . . but never a man.
> (Selections 64)

and compares man with vegetable growth:

> The seed of a plant, -- to what affecting analogies in the nature of man, is that little fruit made use of, in all discourse, up to the voice of Paul, who calls the human corpse a seed, -- 'It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.'
> (Selections 33)

A family tree is a history of a particular group of related individuals. William Heyen's "Family Tree"(TCR 66) is that, except the particular group of individuals in this case is the whole human race. Heyen starts the poem "Our children, and theirs,/and theirs out to the blight-struck/chestnut branches," tracing three generations of people. Three generations ago rural life was much more common than it is now, and now, today's generation is the "blight-struck chestnut branches" of the human family tree. In "Chestnut Rain" we are told that of the once- thriving chestnut community "only a few sucker-growths remain." Today's generation are sucker-growths who "have suffered amputation from the trunk"(Selections 64).

> their children and children's children
> stepping from city curbs, swaying
> on straps in subways, selling
>
> fashions or gourmet fads in shops built on land where
> their parents, and theirs, and theirs brought forth food.
> They are gone now,
>
> their homes torn down, or falling, abandoned,
> their barns' weathered woods countryfying

> walls of city or suburban bars called **MacDonald's Farm**,
> or **The Dairy**, or **The Homestead**, where
> all the lost children strain to sing . . .
> (Heyen "Disco" TCR 8)

The chestnut blight is a loose symbol for the losses humanity has suffered in the advancement of technology. He sees humanity as the family tree, blighted by its social and technological blunders, whose "members strut about so many walking monsters ."(Selections 64). Our family tree, like the chestnut, has been "skidded" by man. A skidder is a tractor-like device used to rip, pull or slash anything within a cut-over. This "skidding" of the human tree is seen in sickly "radium children," their genetic codes mutilated and ravaged, like that of the chestnut, by man himself: "which is the light of the dissolving chain" because of "the seeping of atomic waste into our future . ." (Heyen TCR 14,16).

In "The American Scholar"(Selections 63) Emerson speaks of a fable regarding how God divided Man into men. The concept is "that there is One Man -- present to all particular men partially, or through one's faculty"(Selections 64). This Spirit of Man, this "oversoul," is the Absolute, the Soul and Nature, and Heyen's undersong. It is a force that transcends Time and Space and links all men.

> The Oversoul is both above man's comprehension and also within man--an `incarnate logos' in every human being-- though in most people it slumbers and is never awakened, in which case men are bestial . . . . It demands spiritual adventuring.
> (Cameron 9)

Because Man is an impaired tree, most humans are bestial.

This "radium skidding" is caused by man's ignorance, his separation from Emerson's "trunk" of humanity. Because he is bestial, man is not aware of the "incarnate logos" of the Oversoul within himself or of the Oversoul itself surrounding him always. This would require a dual perception, the capacity to see both internally and externally. If man possessed universal consciousness, he would not be bestial. In this ideal situation, Man's ethical and moral progress would match his technological advancement. So we can see how the spiritually ravaged state of man as One Man is reflected in Nature and ourselves as physical ravages. Both states are created by Man and each reinforces the other. Heyen strives to awaken Man's consciousness to Nature and his effect on it[2]; he demands spiritual adventuring. "Be with me" he demands again and again as he takes us through song into the dreams, history and day-to-day life of Man's growing family tree. Heyen names Emerson's Oversoul "undersong"; consciousness of this song is the adventure so many have ignored, thereby impairing the Tree and creating bestial men. Humanity, in light of the family tree, is both the blight and the sucker-growths.

As a "sucker-growth" man is a victim of society, cut off from Nature by an industrialized blade. He is less than whole, and therefore less than human --a beast, a "walking monster." In the uplifted state, he is "Man Thinking . . Him Nature solicits with all her placid, all her monetary pictures; him the past instructs; him the future invites"(Selections 65). In this state

of alignment, man experiences what Emerson calls "recognition": when the "God-within meets the God-without," "a beholding of the Infinite . . ."(Cameron 11).

Heyen's trees, symbols of life and fecundity, are his own interpretation of the "world tree" that grows at the world's "center." His interpretations of the tree show relationships to the many different mystic schools, but his strongest sources hie back to his childhood.

Heyen tells us in his essay, "Home" that "the most meaningful word in the language for me is home." Home is a place or person that makes Heyen feel "centred," meaning "grounded, at home"(Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series CAAS 32). He remembers "a white oak [that] grew beside our garage in Nesconset on Long Island when I was a boy"(American Poets in 1976 98), and a spruce "from our property in Nesconset . . . . When I see myself as a child it's in Nesconset, where I came to consciousness, to personality"(CAAS 35). Commenting on Stafford's rhyming of "elm" with "home" in "Temporary Facts," Heyen claims "this is the deepest, most poignant rhyme I know . . . "(CAAS 32).

The term "centred" is one we have encountered again and again in Heyen's work, usually in connection to a tree. In "The Deer"(TCR 3) Heyen remembers a field of his childhood

> where one weeping,
> blight-struck tree,
> held center . . . .

After entering a blue spruce in "Diary Entry: Nocturne"(TCR 87)

Heyen tells us

> I am speaking from the center
> of the power holding all
> together . . . .

"American Time"(Heyen TCR 93) shows an old woman as a girl climbing a tree to witness "the changing land's centre." This old woman is "reluctant ever/to travel back there to the tree," implying a reluctance to remember the past, the American time Whitman prophesied, and the timelessness of the tree.

Heyen's trees are timeless in the sense that they both encompass and transcend time. This is indeed a sad woman who realizes the power of the tree and yet rejects it as do our city's "lost children"(TCR 8). "The Soldier"(TCR 5-6) informs us that "light/from the tree's centre" is "from the beginning." This idea is further strengthened by "Heartwood"(TCR 19) where Heyen traces time through the rings of a chestnut to its centre, and by this route, to the past, where time is "like rust held/in memory by the tree."(TCR 41).

"The Tunnel"(TCR 55-7) is a most interesting poem for its use of tree images. Heyen is riding a train/dream past fields of chestnuts dead of blight and has a vision "of trees once alive." Towering over these trees is the tree:

> towering over
> the twig branches
> of the chestnuts:
> tree,

Heyen off-sets the word "tree," isolating it and its image for maximum impact. Heyen sees the tree as isolated, stark in his

memory, like the oak in "Oak Autumn": "Strict . . . oak of one windless instant spare branches sharp"(LIL 165). This chestnut, this tree, is very special, for it is "the world tree the first tree" that was grown "when living time began"(TCR 57). Heyen kneels as a worshipper before this tree.

Heyen's elevation of the tree to The Absolute, the original creative energy of the universe, is most obviously portrayed in "The Communion"(TCR 94) where we are told

> In time, chestnut bark colours rainwater red.
> We sip this here in continuing communion.
> The war dead enter our bodies in this blood.
> The war dead enter our bodies in this blood.

The Christian ritual of communion involves partaking of Christ's blood and body. The "continuing communion" is dual in nature: the dead soldiers, like the dead chestnuts, are "war dead," and have been martyred in the name of Humanity. We "sip" this blood in every day living because we are all connected through the undersong: "This is the force that loses nothing"("Brahma" TCR 30).

> this dreamed tree rising
>
> in communion, its trunk
> branchless for twenty feet.
> This is the stripped bark:
> take, eat;
>
> this is the body to break,
> chew, swallow.
> Knees, bend. Neck,
> bow. Know
>
> wholeness. Lips, kiss
> whatever made the chestnut rain--
> God of dung and broken stone . . .
> ("Praise" TCR 37).

In his dream Heyen is in communion with the tree. He tells us to eat of the bark body, "the body to break," implying the martyrdom of both Messiah and Chestnut. He tells us we will "know wholeness" if we bend a knee to his "God of dung and broken stone," which contains echoes of Whitman's "This Compost." The "broken stone" shows the power of his god, and the "God of dung" is not pejorative, but the highest compliment of a Transcendental worshipper. Dung, like compost, is life in death, creation out of waste. It shows the chestnut's dual nature, and is perhaps hope that out of death the chestnut will be reborn.

Heyen's deity is blight-struck, and the chestnut has all but disappeared, "only a few scattered/sucker growths remain"(TCR 4). Heyen is a "stereoscopic" visionary who sees the loss of the chestnut reflected in ourselves, in our loss of faith and respect for nature. We who have forgotten our connections to nature "feel/something missing, almost/past remembering, and now/putter in suburbs . . . ("Family Tree" TCR 66). So is the Tree doomed? Are we doomed?

Heyen tells us in "The Elm's Home"(LIL 194-6) that he can look up

> into the elm and hear each leaf
> whisper in my own breath, **welcome**
> **home, this is your home,**
> **welcome home.**

This is his advice to us, and indeed the Katha Upanishad that inspired Emerson's "Brahma" sees the Tree as a ladder to Heaven, and Revelation 22:2 tells us that "the leaves of the Tree were for

the healing of nations." Job 14:7 promises

> hope for a tree,
> When it is cut down, that it will sprout again,
> And its shoots will not fail.

The Icelandic Tree is an "Eternal Evergreen" which, when fallen, signals Ragnarok: the end of the world. But Mimir, the eye of wisdom, whispered to Odin a word of hope: Rebirth.

The Tree of Eastern myth, on the other hand, is seasonal. Its seasons are ages, and once felled by the hand of man it signals the birth of a new age and a new world. Heyen pleads that we return "home" to the tree. He wants a return of the spirituality that infused Man when he was forced to work closely with Nature. By asking that we return to the tree, he is asking for more than a return to Nature, but a return to awareness of Nature, one's self, and therefore, All, the Absolute.

The Hebrew "Cabalistic Tree of Life"

> is an analogue of the Absolute, the Universe and Man. I t s roots permeate deep into the earth below and its top branches touch the uppermost heaven.
>
> Man, meeting point between heaven and earth, is an image of his Creator. A complete but unrealized Tree in miniature, and lower than angels, his is to choose to rise higher by climbing the branches of himself, and so gain the ultimate fruit. (Halevi 11)

So the Hebrew view man as an image of his creator, and man is a complete **but** unrealized tree. So then God is a realized tree? Heyen, it appears, believes it is so, for his eating of the tree in "Praise" is analogous to the taking of the sacrament, and in "Communion"(TCR 94) we "sip" the chestnut "in continuing communion."

Heyen's desire to perceive the tree as an "analogue of the Absolute," or, in Christian terms, God, is best seen in "Images and Shadows"(TCR 46).

Images and Shadows

Images and shadows of divine things--
what is the chestnut, then, where is its Lord?

If we could see,
we could see it whole,

not as root, trunk, light-drinking leaf,
thorned bur, but whole,

this history of time,
waves of spore and fungus,

the chestnut sipped dead, but shoots suffering
the viral light again, but saplings dying,

but new shoots straining upward, but dying,
but poking from root-source into air again, until,

in the end, the chestnut is sibilance.
our lips forming its sounds,

and the murmuring of *r*, and the *d*
of *wood*, and *dead*, the vowels

born within when our bodies
first felt the world wants more than silent meaning,

if we could see its soul,
the whole tree candled,

if we could see,
if we could see it whole.

The first line is from American theologian and metaphysician Jonathan Edwards's Images and Shadows of Divine Things[3]. A powerful thinker and orator, Edwards dealt with a reconciliation of Nature and Scripture; this and his belief in the personal religious experience led to the Great Awakening. Heyen strives in a similar

way. Both Edwards and Heyen see existence as being all one substance. Mind, matter, spirit and time are all one. The tree is important here as a symbol of interconnective energy like Whitman's float and Emerson's oversoul. Heyen yearns to see the tree whole, and to comprehend the design of existence. Though he cannot see it whole, it is in the striving to see that Heyen produces his art. He must, and does, catalogue the tree's aspects, only images and shadows of something immense and beyond his scope.

Endnotes

1.The whole universe of transience

2.Emerson was overly hopeful regarding man's effects on Nature:

> Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul. Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this name, NATURE....*Nature*, in the common sense, refers to essences unchanged by man; space, the air, the river, the leaf. *Art* is applied to the mixture of his will with the same things, as in a house, a canal, a statue, a picture. But his operations taken together are so insignificant, a little chipping, baking, patching, and washing, that in an impression so grand as that of the world on the human mind, they do not vary the result.
> (Selections 22)

He was wrong, an idealist. Like Jefferson, he believed that "Once the machine [was] removed from the dark, crowded, grimy cities of Europe . . . it [would] blend harmoniously into the open countryside . . ."(Marx 150). Man has had an effect on nature -- Heyen likewise recognizes that effect on man's soul.

3.We know Edwards was an important link in the development of Transcendental thought from works such as "Freedom of the Will", "The Nature of the Soul", and the fact that Emerson had been accused of merely translating Jonathan Edwards into neo-Platonic terms.(Waggoner 96)

2

Wenzel

The character of Wenzel is seen and named primarily in The Chestnut Rain and Long Island Light. He is a farmer, like Wordsworth's common man. An article by professor Patrick Bizzaro says

> Wenzel is natural man, Wordsworth's rustic, who represents to Heyen, now through the filter of recollection, man most nearly perfect. Wenzel is elevated to magician . . . . he assumes the role of prophet . . . . And he is the symbolic last good man . . . . The world Heyen associates with Wenzel is a 'frail and perishable home'. Wenzel understood it and taught others its secrets . . . .
>
> (Bizzaro 19-20)

Wenzel is more than a man of soil and simple language -- he is an archetype for that type of man. "Wenzel believes, says to himself/*I have been here before/have always been here*"(Heyen TCR 61). The certainty of Wenzel's belief is centred about his life-work: working the land and caring for his livestock. He more than knows,

> he breathes, *I have been here*
> *before, have always*
> *been here.*
>
> (Heyen TCR 61).

Whitman recognized the centrality of the commonplace. In celebrating the democracy of the United States, he celebrates the men who made it. He tells us "Here are the roughs and beards and space and ruggedness and nonchalance that the soul loves"(Whitman 711). "The genius of the United States is . . . always most in the common people"(Whitman 712). Whitman believes that into this type of man "enter the essences of the real things and past and present events"(Whitman 713). We cannot help but see these points as related to Heyen's cellular and spiritual osmosis and to Wenzel's certainty that he has been here before, in fact, has always been here.

Heyen lists many times in The Chestnut Rain the "genius of . . . the common people," but "That Socket" shows Wenzel as almost mythical in his actions and knowledge.

> Wenzel sucked a fresh egg through a pinhole.
> This makes life, he said, and handed me the shell.
> I fill that hollow world on paper.
> I follow him from sleep, to shed, to stall.
>
> Wenzel smeared his chest with wet manure.
> This makes life, he said, and breathed deep.
> That light here glistens in his chest hair.
> I follow him from stall, to shed, to sleep.
>
> Wenzel bit a hen in her red comb.
> This makes life, he said, and licked her head.
> I taste that blood in any lip or blossom.
> I follow him from sleep, to stall, to shed.
>
> Wenzel lost an eye to the plucking drum.
> This makes life, he said, and winked
> that socket of clotted blood. I follow him
> across the darkening acres of his farm.
> (Heyen TCR 63)

The first three stanzas of this poem detail Wenzel's teaching

Heyen-child the wisdom of the pastoral experience. In each stanza there is something representative of Nature, Wenzel absorbing the essence of that symbol, and the presence of Heyen in the final refrain.

The egg of the first stanza is a well-known life symbol. Wenzel consumes the egg and informs Heyen that "This makes life." It is not the egg that makes life; the egg is the potential for life. This egg will not hatch into new life, but is eaten by Wenzel. Then Wenzel informs him it makes life. The natural destruction of life is life.

In the second stanza, the manure also has the potential for life as fertilizer. Wenzel breathed deep after smearing it over his chest, enacting Heyen's cellular osmosis. He again informs Heyen that "This makes life."

The third stanza depicts Wenzel biting a hen, telling Heyen "This makes life," and licking up the blood. As with the egg, Wenzel is showing the reality of life. Pain is part of it; the hen is bitten and bleeding, could potentially die, and this "makes life."

The fourth stanza is different in theme from the first three, but exactly the same in meaning. Wenzel sucks, breathes and licks life in the previous three stanzas, taking from Nature and making it a lesson for Heyen. In the fourth stanza it is Wenzel who is taken from, losing his eye to the plucking drum. "This makes life, he said, and winked/that socket of clotted blood . . . ." Wenzel

belongs in the cycle of Nature as do the egg, manure and chicken blood. As parts of the cycle, they are also representative of the cycle. This is Wenzel's lesson to Heyen-child.

The fluid refrain shows us that this Wenzel is part of the poet's dreams, a mystic guru who haunts his sleep with Nature's wisdom. In the first stanza Heyen follows him "from sleep, to shed, to stall," meaning once asleep, he dreamt of Wenzel's lesson. The refrain of the second stanza puts the stall first, and sleep last, perhaps meaning this was an actual event of which he later dreamed. He tells us "That light here glistens" to show us that the light of the event here glistens, here being the dream world, the other world Wenzel inhabits on paper. "I fill that hollow oval world on paper." The third refrain follows the pattern of the first, but the forth refrain is not the same at all. Heyen follows Wenzel "across the darkening acres of his farm." The acres are darkening to show both the fading of memory in conjunction with Wenzel's literally fading farm and Heyen's continued following of this mystic dream-figure as it leads him to still unlit parts of himself.

As an archetype, Wenzel fits nicely into the father-god mould. He holds within himself both the capriciousness of nature and the nurturing benefactor. Wenzel's loss of an eye makes him more than a little similar to the Norse Odin, or, out of respect for Heyen's Germanic heritage, Woden. Woden, known as the All-father, sought wisdom deep within the earth, at the fountain of life at the base

of the world tree Yggdrasil. Here he gave his eye in exchange for the wisdom needed to save heaven and earth from destruction. This is perhaps an exaggeration, for Wenzel is more of an archetypal man than god, but then, so are gods.

The fourth section of The Chestnut Rain, entitled "Wenzel," details who he is and what he represents. Wenzel is the eternal farmer, an iconized representative of that nineteenth century pastoral life which Heyen mourns. In "Family Tree"(Heyen TCR 72) Heyen lists extensively pastoral knowledge forgotten by most men. He also lists the knowledge of "the farmers Wenzel." The pluralization of "farmers" is to show he is representative of that type of man. He is used to show us how we used to live in and perceive the world.

Wenzel is he who lived close to nature's cycles, who nurtured and slaughtered the sheep, who planted and harvested crops, who was exposed to the extremes of nature's will. He is the wisdom of Nature's will. He is nature in miniature, both grower and destroyer. He is the tree of "To Live in the World"(Heyen DoF 54) that gave pleasure and life through its presence and robbed light from the poet's home and family. This tree was representative of Nature, "was yes and no, both words." Wenzel, like the tree, like Nature, is both positive and negative, life and death.

He is shown over and over graphically taking life.

The Heart

I saw Wenzel's left hand on the ram's poll, his right under its chin

I heard Wenzel talk to me to tell me.

I saw him twist the ram's head sharply upward.

I heard the ram's neck snap, saw its legs jerk and quiver.

I saw Wenzel lay the ram on a platform, hang its head over the end.

I saw myself look up into the grey autumn sky.

I saw him grasp the ram's chin in his left hand and slip a knife

I heard the ram's one gurgled and choked cry .
(Heyen TCR 77-80)

The next three sections of the poem detail Wenzel's skinning, gutting and sectioning of the ram, while in section five Heyen dreams of Wenzel and the ram:

I saw Wenzel reach into the ram's chest for its heart.

I saw the ram nuzzle Wenzel's left palm for grain
as Wenzel reached with his right hand for its heart.

I saw Wenzel's hand pass through the ram's ribcage.

I saw Wenzel holding the ram's heart as the ram faded from view . . . .

The ram is an innocent, killed by man for man. Yet the ram does not fear Wenzel; in fact, it nuzzles him for food. The farmer is both provider and taker, with power over life and death. However, this life-taking is not shown by Heyen to be wrong or cruel, for in the sixth section Heyen sees "a just-born lamb" with "two baby hearts beating" in its chest. The lamb calls to Wenzel "to take its second heart." The two hearts represent the physical and the spiritual elements of the lamb, its body and soul. It calls Wenzel to take its body, to use it as part of the natural

cycle. Its soul would be sent back to its source. The lamb knows, or is content with, its place in the cycle. This is why the ram fades from Heyen's dream-vision when Wenzel takes its body.

Wenzel, like Nature, is a great teacher. Heyen tells us at the end of "The Heart" that he heard both the lamb calling Wenzel, and Wenzel calling him to "tell" him something. The knowledge Wenzel imparts is shown as Heyen entering Wenzel's shadow, following Wenzel via that shadow to the "shed where the lamb sang . ." Wenzel is the guru who leads people to enlightenment. He is archetypal, like the tree. He too "is the light of which our daily light is shadow"(Heyen TCR 12).

When Heyen steps into Wenzel's shadow, he enters the light of the pastoral experience. Wenzel led Heyen to

> *the light of that language now for us of tongues:*
> *swale hay, corm, tarry blood, ringbone, blackspot*
> *apple canker, cherry slug, brown rot to stone fruit,*
> *strawberry weevil, bitter wood, hen bloom, iris worm*
> (Heyen TCR 72).

We know language is important to Heyen, symbolic of seeds and blood and perception. This language is "*of tongues*," meaning both that it is the word of God(Nature) and an unknown language. Wenzel teaches this language to the Heyen-child through his actions and his very existence.

Wenzel's lot is hard work, and sometimes hardship.

Blackberry Light

Old man Wenzel, try to forget the yellow manure
  seeping from under your sick ewes,
    the mucus and cheesy matter
coughed up by tubercular cows,

exhaustion of plantings four times washed lost or blown lost,
your Mrs. weeping softly
all the way to sleep,

rats to drown from their tunnels under the hen roosts,
blood-fat tics to singe from the dogs,
wood to split and carry, garbage to bury
back of the fields behind the lordly maples,

bushels of dead chicks when your stove failed them,
the ears of your rabbits infested with maggots,
the eyes of your sheep struck blind by your sledge,

and the vapor of birth smells, the tastes
of your own slaughtered lambs,
the hayloft's only window where you sometimes sat alone,
light streaming in past cobwebs hooked with flies . . . .

Old man Wenzel, try to forget the parting loam,
the spring morning's sun illuminating
your hunched-over, pale-green cotyledons . . . .

Up to the sixth stanza the images are bleak indeed, with Wenzel depicted as old, his livestock diseased and his land barren. These images are all that is negative in the agrarian lifestyle. They lead to the seemingly small reward of "hunched-over, pale-green cotyledons." This is the material reward, something which Heyen portrays as inconsequential next to the spiritual rewards:

and when, after rain, you leaned into dripping leaves,
filled your palm with blackberries, and ate them,
your whole farm vanishing for moments
of blackberry light behind your eyes,

the almost invisible, silvery tent-worms' rails
along the apple limbs, those tiny lives,
before you burned them, each evening returning

from branched world to central cocoon,
their frail and perishable home.
(Heyen TCR 42-3)

Blackberry light is not only the light of the plant's

existence, but the light of what the plant represents. Blackberry plants are thorns and berries. To simplify drastically, the negative images in "Blackberry Light" are the thorns, while the immersing of one's self in Nature, to the point of losing self but gaining cosmic insight, is the fruit. Wenzel "leaned into dripping leaves," an image rich in texture and life, and ate of the berries, leaving his self, "vanishing for moments," to "see" the maze-like world of the tent-worm.

This world is much like that of Whitman's "Noiseless Patient Spider"(Whitman 450). The "tiny lives" creating "silvery tent-worms' rails" is much like the spider throwing out filaments from itself. Whitman's spider was the soul, actively viewing the world, seeking connections "musing, venturing . . . . Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul." Wenzel sees the tent-worms "returning / from branched world to central cocoon,..." This is like sleep, returning to the safe snugness of the mind, the central cocoon, from the branched world: life. It is also like a lifetime, with the central cocoon the oversoul, and the branched world reminiscent of the "world tree" that is Heyen's metaphor for the universe and our part in it.

Wenzel is not the soul; he is a witness to the cycle of Nature as metaphor. The tent-worms are the souls of individuals, "part or particle of God." Indeed, Wenzel "burned them," showing Wenzel as that objective Natural force that is both life and death.

In the beginning of "Blackberry Light" he is mortal, and

witness to that force. He is Wenzel the farmer. By the end of the poem, the witnessing of life in both microscopic and macroscopic scale has identified or elevated Wenzel to an icon or avatar of the pastoral life, complete with misery and joy. The clarity of his vision is the mark of the visionary.

Sadly, Wenzel is no visionary himself. His vision is simply that of truth. It is a vision most men have lost through urbanization, and by contrast Wenzel becomes the teacher of making the connections between man, the soul, and everything else: the not-me.

Spiritual rewards are Wenzel's joy. In "The Whistle"(Heyen TCR 64) we see the passing of knowledge from Wenzel's father to Wenzel to Heyen to us. "Wenzel cut a section from a chestnut root/to make a whistle that he'd seen his father make" and when he used it, birds flocked to him. "They seemed tranced, charmed, unafraid." This is his power and his connection to Nature, shown in a chestnut root that he used to make music. The fact that he uses knowledge his father taught him is important, for it is this lack of knowledge, and so the lack of the passing of knowledge, that concerns Heyen.

Wenzel's joy stems from his self-awareness. He knows he is part of Nature. He is a predator, no doubt, but he is human, a higher intelligence. While he may not be Emerson's "Man Thinking," he is "man doing": "he who has put forth his total strength in fit actions has the richest return of wisdom"(Selections 70). The

creation of a whistle from his environment, and the response of the birds, show the whistle to be a metaphor of the spiritual rewards inherent in the lifestyle. There is also no doubt Wenzel fits into Nature as a power. Heyen speculates that his "whistle" was an unconscious "flocking note," the "gene-trail music of migration." He can tune into the unconscious mind of the birds, give and take life without fear or compromise, because farmers are closest to the cycles of nature, of life and death; they are closest to the undersong. They "know" life. Wenzel, the birds and sheep are a unity, and are aware of that unity.

In his article, Bizzarro grapples with Wenzel's place in Heyen's vision. He recognizes his place as representative of the pastoral life, but fails to see Wenzel's complete character. He rightly points out that "Among the perpetrators who violently manipulate nature are humans" and that Wenzel is one of those "perpetrators." But he also states that Wenzel

> is a character who acts out this violence almost mindlessly, with a stunning inability to recognize the impact of behaviour not only on an individual consciousness, but on the growing awareness of those around him.
> (12)

Bizzarro believes Wenzel "abused and treated <nature> as an "other"(Bizzarro 12) and wrongly equates Heyen's childhood experience of Wenzel slaughtering a lamb (Heyen LIL 136) with Heyen's killing of a cat. In fact, Wenzel's example of killing did have a strong affect on Heyen, but it was because Wenzel was not a mindless abuser, and did "recognize the impact" of his behaviour on

the individual consciousness. This lesson in the pastoral experience is why Heyen is haunted by his senseless murder of the cat.

Wenzel, as we have seen him so far, is an extraordinary ordinary man. Heyen most often portrays him in this guru-like fashion, likely because Heyen is a child in the poems. When Heyen speaks from his adult persona, we discover that "Wenzel died"(Heyen LIL 172) and could only be found "humming inside the tires" of the cars speeding through his farm on the new highways. His death is metaphorical, and explained in "Noise in the Trees: A Memoir"(Heyen LIL 81). This is Heyen's vision of loss within the culture of America.

> Men do not understand that this is a land that brings in topsoil by truck rather than time. Many, like Wenzel, grow strange. I cut back some weeds along his fence this morning. He watched me work then walked over. Wenzel had lived here ten years before we moved here. He once had thirty acres of woods, thousands of chickens and pheasants, dozens of sheep, but ended up as a salesman in J.C. Penney's.

This is a horrific image within the symbology of Heyen. Wenzel, icon of the common man, representative of a higher level of perception, is a salesman. It is sad and twisted and shocking in its banality.

> He had whistled as he worked his farm, the hair on his shoulders glistening. He would rub manure on his chest and tell my brothers and me that the earth cured everything from warts to Weltschmerz. Wenzel, who was the happiest, most self-sufficient man I had ever known, who years ago had made an egg run to New York City every Friday night, was now afraid of the traffic, the new neighbours, the spotlights in the sky announcing new shopping centres.
>
> Wenzel is dead. His life as a farmer is spoken of in the past

tense. Wenzel was Farmer. He is displaced, forced into the material mainstream of urban life, sold out and cut off.

> The state of society is one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking monsters--a good finger, a neck . . . but never a man. (Selections 64)

As we know, in this state, man's perception is warped from the norm, and he becomes one of Heyen's "lost children." Wenzel has become like Heyen's parents, but he knows what he knew, and knows it will never be the same again. Wenzel found God in all that surrounded him; his cathedral was the world, his minister Nature. Cut from this life, Wenzel changes.

The transformation of Wenzel is indicative of the transformation of Long Island, and much of the world, to an industrial based economy from an agricultural one. The real Wenzel, Heyen's childhood neighbour, made that unfortunate transformation. Heyen's Wenzel lives on in his memories, dreams and poems, however. This is the light of Wenzel's existence; he is purely symbolic, dressed in the clothes Heyen designs, based on the man who once was whole and strong. In "The Ewe's Song"(Heyen TCR 25)

> Wenzel said "Come," and I followed him
> through the gate of my childhood,
> where he is buried now, alive.

Heyen sees the loss of Wenzel in all of Man; we city-dwellers may feel a hint of Wenzel at times, and what we term nostalgia is that reconnection with our roots, with what Wenzel was.

The same stars still dome his acres,

now arranged with tracts of houses
whose dreamers sometimes awaken
smelling air of vanished coops, spring
appletrees and pastures, sheep sheds, feeling,
almost knowing they've heard the ewe's song.
(Heyen TCR 25)

In "Science Fiction"(Heyen TCR 62) Wenzel is tossed about like a favourite wrench, an excellent tool for the job. The "using" element is so strong that Heyen must be doing it purposefully to show either his, or man's, power to control his environment. We also see the transformation of the earth to ruin and Wenzel to space voyager.

Science Fiction

Is it too late to save it, our first earth?
I shift Wenzel, again, to another world.
Chestnut rain is with him, but as spirit
held for now unfallen in the mind.

You know how he arrived: within
prophecy in fiction of man's desire,
the home planet ruined, the grass here
on his timeless farm bluer and faster-growing.

This is the world to which his dead sheep died,
and when he stares into their all-seeing eyes
where stars drift in depthless pupils,
he knows he's in my dream, nearer to Virgo,

and what I've done. For some reason, he says no,
but can't resist me. I give him
four or five moons in the day sky alone,
pastures, woods, orchards, wife,

children: at the thought, myself
a child again, I stand in that same field
where this began. That tree rises.
My doe appears in the chestnut rain.

The title, "Science Fiction," tells us that this is what could be. Science fiction is based on possibilities. Heyen asks if it

is too late to save our first earth. From the title we can assume it is possible, through science, to save it. Perhaps Heyen does not think so, for Wenzel is "shifted" to another world. We know Wenzel is dead, so this Wenzel is the science fiction Wenzel, the could-have-been Wenzel. This other world, like all science fiction worlds, is internal, imagined or envisioned. Heyen tells us "Chestnut rain is with him, but as spirit/held for now unfallen in the mind." This chestnut rain is also envisioned, it is "unfallen spirit" held in the mind, the other world where Wenzel now lives.

The second stanza shows Wenzel as the iconized representative of man, the explorer "of man's desire," the "home planet ruined." Heyen obviously considers that destruction a possibility also, as we all do. Heyen plays to these fears, showing the "other world" as superior, with idealized vegetation "bluer and faster-growing."

As he was in "The Chestnut Rain"(Heyen TCR 42-3), Wenzel is aware within his idealized existence. He has the power to say "no" to Heyen's shifting; he "knows he's in my dream" "but can't resist me." Heyen tells us "This is the world to which his dead sheep died," meaning both Emerson's Oversoul and Heyen's imagination, linked as one to form this science fiction world. It is interesting that Wenzel holds some semblance of personal identity within this world. Perhaps it is Heyen's way of making Wenzel back into what he was, while realizing that the man is dead, and would resist, even fear, such revolutionary concepts as space colonization. Heyen, like Man, has the power to create just about

anything he can imagine. He gives Wenzel multiple moons in this science fiction world, plus all the necessary pastures, woods, and orchards to make his life a semblance of what it was.

Of course it is science fiction. It is false, wishful thinking. It is also sad that this is all that is left of Wenzel and the pastoral experience. That form of life is gone, and it only returns in our dreams and imagination. This is the fiction, the dream and the contradiction: if Man will ever return to the frontiersman-like existence we must continue on our destructive technological path until we reach the stars. It is indicative of Heyen's despair: he knows there is no going back, that we must in the name of progress continue to save the world we have ruined with progress. Another indication of that despair is the fact that the poem does not complete Wenzel's colonization. He is left in his new field with wife and livestock and children. It is the thought of children on this new world that sends Heyen back to the real world. These children will beget more children, and the whole cycle of technological blunders will begin anew. Heyen shies from this thought, and takes refuge at the beginning of the cycle, where he is "a child again" standing "in that same field/where this began." This field is first seen in the first poem of The Chestnut Rain: "The Deer"(3). It is "Wenzel's furthest field"(Heyen TCR 3) and it is seen many times in the many dreams he presents us. Whether or not he is mentioned directly in the poems, Wenzel is perhaps the most ever-present symbol of The Chestnut Rain.

The last poem of the section entitled "Wenzel" asks "Will Wenzel/and we return?" The answer is "perhaps," but the last section of The Chestnut Rain, coming right after the "Wenzel" section is called "The Ghost," and Wenzel does not appear in any of the poems directly. Heyen prefaces "Epilogue: The Ghost"(TCR 98) with quotes from nature writers that make it clear that the ghost is the Chestnut tree. But we know the chestnut symbolizes the transcendent experience, Emerson's Oversoul in perspective, through the medium of nature, or Nature's best known martyr, the Chestnut. The ghost is a symptom of the problem, not the problem. The problem is man's disunity, his lack of cohesive spirituality and therefore his break with his source and nurturer, Nature. Wenzel is the representative man, and more. He represents the pastoral experience, and the wisdom and truth of that age and lifestyle. Perhaps Wenzel is the ghost.

The last line of the prefatory Millard C. Davis quote holds a subconscious hint of the ghost of days past: "Old roots still send up suckers . . . but so far they are only ghosts"(Heyen TCR 99)

Epilogue: The Ghost

As this was growing,
the chestnut bur sent me by a friend split open.
One pearl, but natural, the tree's perfect seed, floated
inside.

For a few minutes, I wet the pale nut in my mouth--
it tasted like the smell of grass clogged under your mower,
the smell of old barns--

then potted it in loam,
watered it most weeks for two years,
gave up on it,

but a seedling broke surface,
unfolded. It is still so small,
little ghost, it cannot cast a shadow,

even its seed leaves are lobed smooth.
The storied teeth will have to bite
through soft gums to make their own edge.

Ten hours a day, a plant light shines down on it.
I want to care for it as though, one day,
if it lived, I could climb it to an afterlife,

and you with me. Modern books tell me we
and it and heaven are already dead, but last night,
believe me, when the light above it was out,

when I walked by on my way to sleep,
the seedling spoke one word, or was that word
without saying it. The clay pot I'd placed it in

shone like a silver chalice, the chestnut's
several leaves were gauze white
in light from nowhere. I stood there

wanting to hear that word again,
that bead of white tree-sperm on my tongue,
white of all colors, ghost light . . . .

Later, when I fell asleep deeper then I'd ever been, I--
no, I've told enough of mine, you
have that dream,

or my seedling will never flower that needs another
if it's ever going to shower
white blossom.
(Heyen TCR 98-100)

3

Machine

Man's rapid urbanization has been painful for Heyen. He sees the physical damage to our air, environment and genetic codes, and cannot help seeing spiritual damage as well. The cause of his pain is the machine, the effect it has had on his home, Long Island, and the world. Industrial and chemical poisons rain upon and poison soil. We chop and burn and consume everything around us. Like bacteria in an enclosed environment, we grow towards the boundaries of our earth's resources. Heyen fears we will consume ourselves like bacteria. We have seen this drama through the character of Wenzel, who retreated from life under the onslaught of industry and urbanization, eventually disappearing with his farm into the urban landscape.

> From all that I've seen, read, realized since my rural Long Island boyhood, I've come to believe that over the next 75-150 years we will draw close to the as yet unimagined end of our existence on this planet. We are fouling our habitat beyond redemption. Quickly and surely we are dying out. The evidence is all around us and within us, and is obvious to those few of us who can at least now and then shake ourselves out of the trance of habit that is our usual life.
> (Heyen "At the Gate" 12)

Unlike predecessors like Whitman and Hawthorne, Heyen knows the effects the machine has had on the environment. Whitman's celebratory "To a Locomotive in Winter" is idealistic, written at a time when Long Island was rural, and the train was potential only, the forerunner of industrialization.

> The dense and murky clouds out-belching from thy smoke-stack,
> Thy knitted frame, thy springs and valves, the tremulous twinkle of thy wheels,
> Thy train of cars behind, obedient, merrily following,
> Through gale or calm, now swift, now slack, yet steadily careering;
> Type of the modern -- emblem of motion and power -- pulse of the continent,
> For once come serve the Muse and merge in verse, even as here I see thee . . . .
> (Whitman 471)

Like Heyen, Whitman celebrates the energy and potential of the machine, spiritually synthesizing it with nature and the spirit.

> Burn high your fires, foundry chimneys! . .
> Thrive, cities -- bring your freight . . .
> Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more spiritual
> (Whitman 165)

But Whitman underestimated the machine's potential effects on man and the environment.

> The locomotive, associated with fire, smoke, speed, iron, and noise, is the leading symbol of the new industrial power. It appears in the woods, suddenly shattering the harmony of the green hollow, like a presentiment of history bearing down on American asylum. The noise of the train, as Hawthorne describes it, is a cause of alienation in the root sense of the word: it makes inaudible the pleasing sounds to which he had been attending, and so estranges him from the immediate source of meaning and value in Sleepy Hollow.
> (Marx 27)

We see Hawthorne's "alienation" best in Heyen's "Texts"(LIL 28) where he describes Mark Twain's rural America and its

predetermined industrialization.

Twain meant that as Huck drifted
toward Jackson's Island
he was already dead.
He'd killed a pig
and splashed its blood around
and stuck his hair to an ax . . . .

But Twain meant that by this time
Huck was already dead,
and this island, island of dream,
dark, heavy-timbered,
`like a steamboat,' he says . . .
this island that seemed,
like Fulton's ships on the Hudson,
to be driving upriver,
is prophecy, this
is the country, this has something
to do with sadness, this
is what he saw, this
is what he knew, this
dark island completes the story.

His beginning exists in his end,
his end in his beginning,
for Huck knew what was ahead:
the machine, a love
to accept and despair of.
In the beginning,
before he lived or chose to,
the machine rose up
from the fog, the steamboat
dividing the river, and the cities
were always there
under the dark water,
and where men settled
wheat waved golden in the sun,
threshers rose up from the soil,
and all the old sins

filled the sails of ships
that first drove homeward
to America. And Twain knew,
and Dreiser, and fated Hart Crane,
and Faulkner, whose Ike watched
the two-toed bear older
than legend, the great `locomotive-
like shape,' appear and disappear
like a whale in its swirl;

and Ben, the locomotive, slain,
the engine rounds the bend
of the wilderness again, where
it was born. In his beginning
and in his end, in his dream
and his dream's end,
the land smells of metal.

Heyen tells us Huck was already dead, meaning the rural complacency Huck stood for was dead. He depicts him "already dead" and drifting towards the island that was "driving upriver," like a ship that was "prophecy." The prophecy is that of urbanization -- the island was like "a steamboat" puffing its way into the twentieth century. It is Twain's perhaps unconscious, but true, prophecy of industrialization. "Huck knew what was ahead:/the machine, a love/to accept and despair of." The machine was love and despair, like the tree of "To Live in the World"(DoF 56): "fruited but snowhung and dense/with cold, was yes and no, both words." Perhaps this is Heyen's accepting the machine as part of our life, allowing it into the cycle that is both positive and negative. The last four lines of the poem seem to indicate that he may believe the machine was predestined, a natural evolution, a part of man. The words "beginning" and "end" appear numerous times in this poem in conjunction with machine images. The "land smells of metal" even before urbanization, foreshadowing that end.

The greatest machine is the city. Its many human and mechanical gears give it a dark pulsing life H e y e n f i n d s disturbing.

The City Parables

These tallow- and meat-
covered hooks roped to lamp posts:
some will take them

into themselves almost deeper
than their lives can bear,
and lunge, tearing themselves apart,

hearing their own retched snarls,
seeing their own blood smoking across the sidewalks,
these hooks on their breastbones,

their brainfires gusting
bright or black as this city
receives them, repels them.
(The City Parables 5)

The horrific images of this poem aptly reflect Heyen's spiritual view of a city. The lamp posts are hooked and baited. This combination of light and flesh, like a hunter's lure, attracts people to their destruction within the urban landscape. Here people "tear themselves apart," snared in the hooks the city sets. In the last three lines we see the life pulsing where the city is "bright or black" within this city and either "receiv[ing]" or "repel[ing]" the people who have taken its bait.

In "The City Parables" Heyen seems to warn us from the machine, yet in "Texts" he appears to be attempting to synthesize the machine into his vision of the Absolute. Indeed, even when he is warning us in "The City Parables," the city pulses positively and negatively -- "bright or black" -- receiving or repelling, cycling, like Emerson's Oversoul.

> *Unless poetry can absorb the machine, i.e.,* acclimatize *it as naturally and casually as trees, cattle, galleons, castles, and all other human associations of the past, then*

poetry has failed of its full contemporary function.
(Hart Crane -- as quoted by Heyen in DoF 44)

The spiritualization of the machine is what makes Heyen's transcendental vision modern. Despite his knowledge that the machine has had harmful effects on man and the environment, Heyen shares Whitman's and Crane's belief that poetry must "absorb the machine". His book Lord Dragonfly contains a section titled **Machines** that shows the machine's fanciful evolution to possible sentience. This section holds much irony, and it is difficult to discern whether Heyen is serious-minded in his acclimatization of the machine or poking fun at the whole concept. Regardless of his intentions, the machine is a permanent part of humanity's existence, and he does manage to fit it into his vision.

"Machines to kiss you Goodnight"(Lord Dragonfly (Lord) 59) is ironic. From the title one would assume this is some type of love machine, and there is sexual imagery within the poem. But these machines are nuclear missiles:

> Rockets hiss as though praying
> for release, for the long arc under the sun,
> then to tongue the earth again,
> to kiss you, to flame.

"The Machine that Kills Cats"(Lord 60) is written in an idealistic tone. Taking on the persona of an inventor for "the common good," Heyen, like Prometheus, gives "a first gift to men." His invention is a machine "whose one thought/is to track and kill the cat." The irony is that any machine as effective as the one Heyen describes would be easily applicable to taking any life.

This idealistic inventor may have created such a machine for the common good, but Heyen tells us at the beginning of the poem that

> In an advanced technological society
> the licensing of machinery
> is the sole province of the state,
> forever inviolate . . . .

An advanced technological state is a machine in itself, impersonal and amoral. This type of state would not hesitate to apply Heyen's idealistic invention to more malevolent uses.

"The Machine that Collects Butterflies"(Lord 61) is another machine apt at killing. It kills for man, and preserves the kill for years. Perhaps this machine is representative of all machines that perform services for man -- their marks remain longer, and are more nearly perfect, then man's.

Man is like a machine in "The Master"(Lord 62). His mind is a "steel trap." When he plays chess his mind works like a computer. Heyen tells us "this is the prose of iron," and it is unlike the normal mind, "the poetry of winds, / fluids, curves, breaks, bends,/accidents or passions." The point is, we associate machine-like qualities with great chess-players. We admire them for these qualities, and wish to acquire similar skills. Chess was originally associated with great warriors and military strategists. Today's master is a machine.

Heyen refers to the machine as master in "The Masters"(TCR 96). This poem was written ten years after "The Master"(Lord 62) and contains a much more pessimistic attitude concerning the machine's effect on man and his environment.

> Despite the masters, their musics once welcome
> but now hysteria's undersong, I dream
> that gate open one last time to paradisiacal fields
> where Wenzel's sheep graze until world's end . . . .

The masters, the machines, welcomed by the American people, are now "hysteria's undersong." This poem has the qualities of a post-cataclysmic science fiction novel. Heyen describes "paranoid sheep," "animals that remember nothing of seasons" and "dog packs." Wenzel is not in this world, "in fact, he may be dead." The world Heyen presents is our present world seen through the eyes of a nature poet standing in the remains of the archetypal farmer's fields.

> no matter that the masters
> stream over the black meadows of his farm--
>
> they'll leave us alone if we huddle on the median
> between lanes, but couldn't care less if they killed us,
> the masters, their musics once welcome
> but now hysteria's undersong.

The masters, the cars that race along the asphalt, are driven by people. Heyen depersonalizes the cars to machines, making them masters, putting the people "huddled on the median/between lanes."

"The Line"(Lord 63) almost elegiac, is quite different from "The Masters." Heyen describes an assembly line as a "goddess of hammers and shears" and "lovely mother." This maternal machine is not our mother; its children are "boys of piston" and "girls of gear." The tone of this poem is defeatist. Humanity compares poorly: "our lives are flesh, and short" and her "art is longer." Heyen's description of this goddess is not attractive; her fingers are knives, her kiss a laser, her breath fume and her embrace wire.

He calls her "lovely" because he has taken the perspective of the people driving the cars in "The Masters": worshipful and awed -- or perhaps a better word would be cowed.

The machine is benign in "The Machine that Mends Bird's Nests"(Lord 64), yet still "obsessed with perfection." This benign obsession is shown to be deadly in "The Machine that Air-Conditions the World"(Lord 65) where "M.I.T.'s machine/monitors the world . . [and] all our lives are lived/in the here and now, in one constant season." This machine is benign to the point of stagnation. It has abolished nature's seasons; it has abolished nature and therefore the cycle of Emerson's oversoul. Men live in the "here and now" like animals, unaware and unenlightened.

Heyen's evolution of the machine continues in "The Machine that Treats Other Machines"(Lord 66) where this machine is "most human," as "sure of itself as God" and self-directed: "no man told or tells it which" machine to treat. We know this machine was built by other machines because "no man told" or programmed it.

The machine of "One Machine's Perversity" is also self-directed, and much more human than any to date. It is unpredictable and contrary, and personified by Heyen as a warning. "Science is still lost/to know what told it what to do." This machine is beyond human ken and uncontrollable. Heyen tells us the machine ran free until "at last, history's greatest lemon/ran down."

Heyen's vision becomes more disturbing in "The Machine that

Balances your Mood"(Lord 68). The poem shows a sterile world where strong emotions are controlled by a machine. If one should have "a red mood" or say "the hell with it all" "the machine steps up and restores you/to a luke-warm world." This poem depicts machines making man machine-like without the romance of the chess master's skill. These men are automatons, controlled like the earth's environment in "The Machine that Air-Conditions the World"(65).

"The Companion Machine"(Lord 70) replaces man as lover and spouse. It does not care, but it does react to external factors, making sure its ward is fed and dry and never inconvenienced. It even speaks. But it is a machine, a master.

The final two stanzas of the poem have a sing-song quality that is faintly hysterical and somewhat chilling when the evolution of Heyen's machines are traced to this point.

The Companion Machine

It toasts and butters,
watches you scan the morning papers, asks:
What do you think of those damned Chinese?
Did you see the report on the blue robins?

Your answers etched on its inner ears,
it nods, checks the barometer back of its head,
gathers your hat, umbrella and rubbers,
washes the dishes and makes your bed,

tells you how well you look today, o-
pens your door and walks you out: O
smell the rainy air today,
and wipe your rainy eyes, O

and kiss your machine goodbye today,
and kiss your machine goodbye. O.

The rest of the machines in the "Machine" section seem to be truly benign. "The Machine as Jewish Mother"(Lord 71) is a soup dispenser that comforts the tired and hungry. The tone of the poem is genuinely thankful for this machine. "The Machine in your Field"(Lord 74) seems brutal, cutting off legs and arms or "anything old, or diseased." But this machine takes "your trunk, a cutting" and plants it.

> You'll stretch and grow, your shoulders
> will break earth. The machine will lift you,
> kiss your forehead, teach you to live again.

This machine dispenses rebirth. Heyen is attempting to absorb and spiritualize the machine as Hart Crane dictated. But Heyen knows more than Crane, has the advantage of seeing the machine at work. He knows the machine absorbs man as man absorbs the machine. Again, Heyen wishes man to see with exceptional clarity.

Heyen knows the machine, if properly used, can perform great good. Man created the machine to change the way he lived, and the machine has done just that. Now man must adapt to that change and control his creation before it consumes and changes the world. The machine has put us in environmental and spiritual danger, and only a properly harnessed machine can take us out of it.

Heyen knows man is much more machine-like than his ancestors. "The Machine in your Field" is like a machine Wenzel. Heyen knows the new man, the new American, will be a product of the machine.

Conclusion

In chapter one(pages 6-9) I presented Cameron's blueprint for transcendentalism in the form of five theories or outlooks. To summarize Cameron's components of transcendentalism, and show how Heyen has fulfilled these blueprints, we see that, for transcendentalists, "ultimate reality" is in fact wholly spiritual; it is the oversoul, or God. Matter is dead, man and nature are without value except in how the oversoul, or "Transcendent Spirit", resides within them. We have seen that Heyen's method of transcendence, like Emerson's, is through perception of mundane things(Waggoner 100). They become important and powerful when the poet reveals how the "Transcendent Spirit" resides within them.

We have seen Heyen do this in "Cow, Willow, Skull, Cowbell"(LIL 137) by linking the life of a willow and the death of a cow. The cow's death results in her reabsorption by the soil. Her bell is slung over a nearby oak sapling. Perhaps fifty years later when the bell is high in the oak's branches, it "will ring/with a silver tongue/when the dead break grass again. / The resurrection may begin/this windy autumn." Heyen enhances the

objects in this poem to seem more primal, representative of all their kind -- each is the "ultimate reality" of that thing. Each of these objects is part of the cyclic nature of existence. The hanging of the bell over the oak is symbolic of the oak's absorbtion of what was the cow, eventually including the skull. The bell rings every time it is windy, and this is appropriate, for the oak now holds the transcendent spirit of the cow.

The transcendental "view of man"(Cameron 9) is that he is a catalyst or channel between the oversoul and nature. His "true self" is a "fragment of God"; his goals should be to live his life through his intuition, with the final reward of releasing body and personality and "allowing the God-element in him to return to the Oversoul whence it came." Both the transcendental "view of man" and "ultimate reality" are reminiscent of Friedrich von Schelling's belief that the unconscious, as well as the absolute, are part of Nature, and that all existence is a unity. In "Prelude to an Epitaph"(DoF 57) Heyen contemplates death and wishes "to die beyond belief./To end like the visible world is enough, is enough." In "The Exhumation"(DoF 58) he tells us:

> I've dreamed gratefully of burial and hoped to hide,
> but know, if the time comes to a full moon,
> if he is more than intimation,
> if he has bathed the brilliant beasts of heaven,
> I'll have to suffer being washed clean.

Heyen is describing the process of decomposition in the last two lines, and the "he" is the personification of that process -- death, the cycle, and returning to the oversoul "whence [he] came."

Returning to the visible world "is enough" because it is the oversoul, or at least our best conduit to it.

The transcendental "view of nature"(Cameron 9) is that of a "mirage," a "plastic servant of God," created both **through** man and independently reflecting man's spiritual state as a learning tool. As mediator between man and the oversoul, nature is like the Jewish Torah or the Christian Christ. This view is seen in Kant's definition of transcendental, where cause and effect elements of thought are not products of experience but manifested **through** experience, or sensation, and Plato's distinction between the unknowable world of sense and the knowable world of Reality. We see this best in Heyen's "To Live in the World"(DoF 54) with the destruction of a magnificent tree. Once the tree had fallen, "the house lightened to fit/the sky . . . ." Heyen sees the dichotomy of light and dark in this memory as a riddle, as the "act of balancing memories." He ponders this riddle, and the pondering "is enough." He knows "Trees are of knowledge and of life." The life and death of the tree caused Heyen to ponder, to become Emerson's "Man Thinking." He sees that when the tree falls, the house seems to brighten to fill its place. The death of the tree refocuses Heyen on his home and family; it is the "balancing of memories." Heyen was forced to see differently after the tree's disappearance, and his realization that perception has many levels was his birth as a poet.

The transcendental "theory of knowledge" deals specifically

with how man receives the teachings of nature. Cameron uses the image of a battery's negative and positive poles to illustrate. "One sees sparks only when the two poles are brought together. When the God within and the God without meet . . ." the God-fragment that is our true self rises to "recognize" the God within nature. Man learns "spiritual meaning," spiritual "being," and will eventually experience actual union with God (Cameron 9). Likewise, the eighteenth century defined transcendentalism as any system designed to reveal absolute knowledge. In "The Soldier"(TCR 5) Heyen presents alternating stanzas of dream and memory that lead to his recognition of the power, the "spiritual meaning," inherent in a chestnut tree. When he and what the tree represents are brought together, it is like Cameron's battery poles connecting, with Heyen gushing wonder in the last stanza to show his epiphany.

> Dreamer, old woman, old man,
> I have curled up
> in chestnut shadow
> inside this hollow
> soldier beside you.
>
> Listen: his trunk curves
> rain around us. Now
> from the soldiers's shadow,
> from the curved rain's source,
> a light, a soft light:
>
> from the tree's center, from the beginning,
> from leaves glistening at summer's pitch,
> a light, unfolding, a veincage of light.

The transcendental "theory of art" is that man is a tool of God, that the oversoul is "the author of all genuine art." This of course is the God-within absorbing the beauty of the God-without

until it spontaneously flows forth as art. It incorporates the Romantic's contempt for form and rule, Wordsworth's "spontaneous overflow of emotion." We have just seen this spontaneous art in "The Soldier." Heyen's poetic form is more restrained than that of Whitman, though not as constrained as that of Emerson. For the most part, Heyen writes in free verse.

Heyen writes poems that celebrate, lament, and sometimes transcend existence. This seemingly paradoxical vision stems from his perception of the world through the twentieth century Zen eyes he inherited from his nineteenth century masters. Walt Whitman is undoubtedly Heyen's poetic progenitor, and Whitman was noted for his parallels to Eastern thought, though he denied any familiarity with the culture (Cowley 918).

Emerson wrote "Brahma," a poem about creation inspired by the Katha Upanishad, and likewise Heyen wrote a poem entitled "Brahma," a poem about the creative energy of the universe. Whitman's and Emerson's visions incorporated the Eastern concept of a "float" that holds the souls of humanity in suspension. Heyen has also inherited this "float," calling it undersong. He has given his undersong degrees, as in an individual undersong, and the undersong of creation from which all undersongs come, return to, and are ever part of. It is a gestalt, a universal principle with parts or particles interdependent. Trees, people, the earth -- all have undersong that make up the undersong. The undersong holds the past, all of history, and so all history is incorporated into every

living thing on earth. This is how one can have a "cosmos/of milk vapour and snow"("The Snow Hen" TCR 11). When Heyen wishes to "candle" a tree, it is because its rings hold history, a record of natural development, and therefore is an icon of the undersong. This is why Heyen calls it "a witness tree"("Heartwood" TCR 21). When the old woman of "American Time"(TCR 93) remembers, Heyen then "heard her undersong."

In "Heartwood"(TCR 19), Heyen descends in a dream through the layers of a chestnut. He sees "its trunk a blight-\scarred bell\of yellow skins. Part or particle of this tree have been marred, and likewise in "Family Tree"(TCR 66), part or particle of man, and therefore the undersong, "feel\something missing, almost\past remembering . . ."

In "The Masters"(TCR 96), Heyen anticipates "world's end," with "paranoid sheep," "dog packs" and "animals [that] remember nothing of seasons." In this sad time, the "music" of machines is "hysteria's undersong."

The undersong is Heyen's inheritance from Whitman and Emerson. In Eastern mysticism it would be labelled "the Absolute," or Brahma, while individual undersongs would be Atman, or Brahman, which make up the Absolute.

> And all the uses of nature admit of being summed into One, which yields the activity of man an infinite scope. Through all its kingdoms, to the suburbs and outskirts of things, it is faithful to the cause whence it had its origin.
> (Selections 49 -- as quoted by Heyen in Long Island Light IX)

The Eastern literary/philosophical motif of developing

paradoxical thought that falls in on itself -- for example from The Tao:

> The bright path seems dull.
> The path that leads forward seems to lead backward.
> The even path seems up and down.
> The greatest whiteness seems soiled
> (#41, 87)

is prevalent in The Chestnut Rain, and seen in the first stanza of the first poem.

> The first time there,
> though I was just a boy,
> I had been there before,
> ("The Deer" TCR 3)

This Eastern flavouring makes one assume Heyen is more than a Christian poet; in fact, his Transcendental roots demand that he be Universal. His trees are more than symbols of life; they are archetypes whose roots dig deep into humanity's foundations. Heyen lists his sources and foundation for us in "The Light"(TCR 12). The mysticism, and the frankly Eastern flavour, are unmistakable. He refers to "our third eye," the "Buddha's ear," St. "Francis' tongue-tip tuned to beasts," "Walt's **Leaves**," and "the **Ramayana**."

> Nature itself is the Zen master who sends us back day after day as long as we live to study perhaps one inexhaustible leaf or sound or angle of sunlight . . . . And nature sends us back, in our time, not only to God, but to ourselves.
> (Heyen American Poets in 1976 102)

In a book entitled Zen Flesh, Zen Bones, in the section under the heading "Centring," there is a dialogue between Shiva and Devi concerning "centring."

Shiva first chanted it to his consort Devi in a language

> of love we have yet to learn. It is about the immanent experience . . . .
>
> Machines, ledgers, dancers, athletes balance. Just as centering or balance augments various skills, so it may awareness . . . .
>
> Surely men as inspiriters, known and unknown to the world, have shared a common **uncommon** discovery. The **Tao** of Lao-tse, **Nirvana** of Buddha, **Jehovah** of Moses, the **Father** of Jesus, the **Allah** of Mohammed--all point to the experience.
>
> **No-thing-ness**, **spirit**--once touched, the whole life clears.
>
> (160)

In the perception of such a presence, Shiva's **immanent experience**, the poet must lose sense of self, enter **No-thing-ness**, become cognizant of Emerson's **NOT ME**.

Heyen, like Emerson and Whitman before him, is an American prophet, a "'namer' and a 'sayer'"(Waggoner xviii) in the Eastern tradition, a philosopher poet.

Heyen's use of "breath" is related to Whitman's concept of "Nature's exhalation." But "breath" and "centre" are also intrinsic parts of Zen. Breath is a symbol Heyen uses to show the interconnectivness of existence. What we breath in has been breathed out by all life on earth. In its simplest form, breathing shows that that which is all around us is also within us, making existence the universal being. Alive and respirating, dead and decomposing, we contribute and consume and distribute the cosmos.

In Zen Flesh, Zen Bones Shiva claims this experience "may dawn between two breaths"(161) and instructs us to "touch the energyless, energy-filled **center**" at the point when "inbreath and outbreath fuse . ."(162) by imagining "spirit simultaneously within and around you until the entire universe

spiritualizes"(164). The exercise in breathing will serve to focus the searcher, letting him feel "bones, flesh, blood, saturated with **cosmic essence**" so that he might "enter etheric **presence** pervading far above and below [his] form"(164).

Perhaps the most important instruction of Shiva is

> In truth forms are inseparate. Inseparate are omnipresent being and your own form. Realize each as made of this **consciousness**.
>
> (170)

This union is the Absolute, the joining of Emerson's NOT-ME and the Soul into Whitman's float, and Heyen's undersong. Heyen has taken on the guise of the guru. The Chestnut Rain is a poem that seeks to spiritually enlighten the reader. His poem is a seed he has planted in us in the hopes that it will germinate and flower into consciousness.

> no, I've told enough of mine, you
> have that dream,
>
> or my seedling will never flower that needs another
> if it's ever going to shower
> white blossom.
>
> ("Epilogue: The Ghost" TCR 100)

Works Cited

Cameron, Kenneth Walter. Young Emerson's Transcendental Vision. Hartford, Transcendental Books, 1971.

Boudreau, Gordon V. The Roots of Walden and the Tree of Life. Nashville: Vanderbuilt University Press, 1990.

The Portable Emerson, M.V. Doren, ed.
Canada The Viking Press, 1959.

Green, Roger Lancelyn. Myths of the Norsemen
London: The Bodley Head, 1965

Halevi, Z.S. The Tree of Life,
London: Rider and Company, 1972.

American Poets in 1976, W. Heyen, ed.
Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976.

Heyen, William. Brockport, New York: Beginning With "End"
Dallas: Northouse & Northouse, 1988.

_____. The Chestnut Rain,
New York: Ballantine Books, 1986.

_____. The City Parables,
Athens, Ohio: Croissant and Company, 1980.

_____. Depth of Field,
Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970.

_____. Erika,
New York: The Vanguard Press, Inc., 1984.

The Generation of 2000, W. Heyen ed.
Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1984.

_____. Long Island Light,

New York: The Vanguard Press, Inc., 1979.

_____. Lord Dragonfly,
New York: The Vanguard Press, Inc., 1981.

_____. The Swastika Poems,
New York: The Vanguard Press, Inc., 1977.

James, E.O. The Tree of Life,
Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966.

Kitto, H.D.F. The Greeks,
Ontario: Penguin Books, 1985.

Koster, Donald N. Transcendentalism in America,
Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975.

Jacob's Ladder and The Tree of Life, M.L. Kuntz ed.
New York: Peter Lang, 1988.

Marx, Leo. The Machine in the Garden,
New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.

The Tao The Sacred Way, T. McCarroll ed.
New York: Crossroad, 1982.

Apocalypse Culture, A. Parfrey ed.
New York: Amok Press 1987.

Plato. The Republic,
Great Britain: Penguin Books Inc., 1973.

Zen Flesh, Zen Bones, P. Reps ed.
New York: Anchor Press, 1983.

Waggoner, Hyatt H. American Poets,
Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984.

Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson, S.E. Whicher, ed.
Boston: Houghton Mifflen Co., 1960.

Whitman, Walt. Leaves of Grass, W. Blodget & S. Bradley eds.
New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1973.

_____. Leaves of Grass, 1855 Edition, M. Cowley ed.
New York: Penguin Books, 1988.

Zaehner, R.C. The Bhagavad-gita,
Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1969.

Articles

Bizzaro, Patrick. "William Heyen." in Critical Survey of Literature, Frank Magill, ed., Pasadina, California: Salem, 1992, 1500-1509.

Heyen, William. "Home." Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series Vol. 9, 31-48.

_____. "The Maple", "The Dome", "The Family." Bluefish Vol. II, #3/4, Autumn 84/Spring 85. 54-56.

_____. "Pickerel." Beneath a Single Moon: Buddism in Contemporary American Poetry Shambhala, Boston and London, 1991.

_____. "The Deer." The Madison Review Vol. 10, #2 Winter 1988, 45-7.

_____. "At the Gate." Chaminade Literary Review #7 (Fall 1990), 12-18.

_____. "The Green Gate: Memory, Extinction, and the Artist's Imagination". Unpublished manuscript, 1990.

_____. Letter to the Author. 12 March 1991.

_____. Letter to the Author. 02 May 1991.

Maclean, Kenneth. "Animate Mystique: The Dialectic of William Heyen's Poems." Manassas Review Vol. 1, Nos. 3 & 4, Summer-Fall 1978, 70-9.