

"Final Soliloquy of the Interior  
Paramour" (*CP*, p. 524)

The title character and speaker of "Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour" is the lover of reality within us, who, through the imagination, participates in "the intensest rendezvous" with the world. "Light the first light of evening" is an imperative that treats a common act as a ritualistic one in a ceremony in which the light is made to symbolize the power of the imagination which is, in turn, identified with God (l. 14). The light must be lit in a certain way ("as in a room") because its illumination signifies a belief, taken on faith ("for small reason"), that "The world imagined is the ultimate good." In that belief the lover of reality finds his "intensest rendezvous" with the world. Because of that idea we may find respite from all the things that are indifferent to us by passing into an imaginative state of mind, the one thing that is not indifferent, and to which we cling for exactly that reason ("Wrapped tightly round us, since we are poor"). Through the efficacy of this state of mind, its "miraculous influence," we can attain that "ultimate good" which is "The world imagined." This condition seems to be one of secular beatitude that occurs "Here, now." It is "miraculous," vital, illuminating, and efficacious (ll. 8-9). In it one loses consciousness of self and of others, and has a sense of an obscure order which is that of the imagination which determined the condition. Finally, the imagination is identified with God, without, however, asserting the reality of God. On the contrary, the reality of the experience is entirely psychological, since the power that caused it by making its presence felt, the imagination, operates only "Within its vital boundary, in the mind."<sup>62</sup> The point of the identification of God and the imagination is to give an idea of the magnitude of this experience by connecting it with a traditional one; the following line, "How high that highest candle lights the dark," testifies to the degree to which the imagination illuminates and orders an otherwise indifferent world. It is the power of the imagination, "this same light," as it is part of the collective mind of man ("the

central mind"), that makes life in a common secular reality sufficient.

"The Rock" (*CP*, p. 525)

I. SEVENTY YEARS LATER. From the point of view of age seventy, the poet's past seems an illusion. The merest freedom of physical motion seems unreal. The very air through which one moved one's body no longer exists. The houses in which one lived ("houses of mothers," l. 2) still exist, but they are fixed, dead ("rigid"), caught in the past of memory which is itself fixed, static, and therefore empty of life, of the shadows we and they cast in the passing moment. Even their memory ("The lives these lived in the mind") seems unreal. The past does not exist, and therefore it has no existence in the present, in memory ("Were not and are not"); it is meaningless, "Absurd." So also for the poetry one has written, "The sounds of the guitar," and the words one has spoken. A passionate encounter that once took place now seems mechanical and disconnected from one's present humanity, abstract ("A theorem")—one needs a theory to account for it: it is as if the two figures are part of that nature dependent on the sun, and acting out, through nature, the sun's own purposes. It is as if the emptiness, the meaninglessness of the past, had some purpose ("a *métier*"), an assumption which gave it life, made it vital rather than rigid, therefore changing and impermanent, rather than static. The past one recalls may have been illusion, but it was an illusion that was required by nature, that was in the nature of things, so much so that it produced the ongoing details of existence—as opposed to "nothingness"—that clothe the basic rock of reality, details that satisfy the "*métier*" of existence as objects seen satisfy the faculty of sight, and vividly so, as in one who has been blind. Considered in terms of the "vital assumption" of impermanence, the ongoing detail of the past is felt as life itself in its continuity, which in turn seems part of the "gross" (big, crude, total) totality of existence.