

# THE ALPHA AND OMEGA OF BRENNAN'S *THE WANDERER*

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## INTRODUCTION

The influence of Nietzsche's *Also Sprach Zarathustra* on Christopher Brennan's *The Wanderer* is far more extensive than has hitherto been appreciated. The identification of the quester of this poem with Nietzsche's hero is especially apparent in the epigraph, and in the poems (86 and 99) which open and close the sequence. Certain lines, particularly in the epigraph and poem 99, have led many to conclude that Brennan's *Wanderer* is no hero at all, and that his journey is a failure in conception and fact. The prevailing critical response to the quest for Lilith described in *The Forest of Night* is similar, with scholars arguing that its hero is *manqué*.<sup>1</sup> A demonstration of the success of the quests described in *The Forest of Night* and *The Wanderer* would be a significant step towards Brennan's achievement of the global reputation which many would argue he deserves.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this paper is to show that, in the case of the latter, this can convincingly be done.

Failure to attain its goal can be consistent with success in the journey: witness the mythic stature of the Anzacs, which some have unjustly called into question on the basis of their defeat. However, for a work to be counted as an authentic example of the Journey genre it is essential that its hero should meet certain criteria. Christopher Vogler counts amongst the most important of these growth, action, and self-sacrifice (36-8): and the imputation of irresolution to Brennan with respect to these by critics of *The Wanderer*, some of whose responses we shall note below—that he in fact shirked the hero's commitment to act in pursuit of the quest, and to self-sacrifice and personal growth—must fatally undermine the claim of *Poems 1913* to be ranked with other notable examples of the genre, including Joyce's *Ulysses* and Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, its two great contemporaries, in which there can be no question of the authentically heroic natures of Stephen Daedalus and Hans Castorp, for all their flaws and frailties.<sup>3,4</sup> The argument to come will demonstrate both the authenticity and the success of the quest of *The Wanderer*.

By focusing on the Nietzschean influence on Brennan, this paper will demonstrate the fundamental influence of Classicism in understanding the quest structure of *The Wanderer*. Randolph Hughes, Brennan's confidant and star protégé of the pre-war years at Sydney University, was the first to discuss this (148-59). I will argue that a consideration of the Greek influences in *The Wanderer* is important, given the recrudescence in 1901-2 of Brennan's Classical enthusiasms, after their eclipse during the years of his quest for Lilith. This is evidenced by the resumption of his purchasing and annotating of large numbers of Classical texts (Clark, 186).

Further, the concern of Greek culture was with, as Oswald Spengler memorably described it, 'the material, the optically definite, the comprehensible, the immediately present' (94-5); that is, with the phenomenal world, rather than the eternal. Peter Kirkpatrick, therefore, comes close to the truth in asserting that '...the *Wanderer* is also a version of the *flâneur* who seeks a

fugitive transcendence along the low road of the everyday.’<sup>5</sup> This tendency of Brennan’s is consistent with the Zoroastrian nature of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, the defining event of the Zoroastrian religion being the descent of the Sun God to infuse the material world with spirit. This is also consistent with the philosophy of F.C.S. Schiller, whose work *The Riddles of the Sphinx* deeply influenced Brennan at this time.

Never at any time did Brennan express the slightest interest in or approval of modern developments in art. The prevailing critical position that *The Wanderer* is written in a free rhythm, representing a severance from the formal metrical demands of his earlier poetry, and his first steps into modernism, is entirely inconsistent with everything he ever expressed about poetry, and the objective evidence of his lifelong artistic concerns. Nevertheless, in so far as the Greek and modern Western cultures are akin in key respects, including their concern for the material world—and Spengler argues at length for this kinship—*The Wanderer* may with some justice be described as being modern in its tenor.

There is strong evidence that as his Lilith phase drew to a close—and *The Burden of Tyre*, the conclusion of the writing of which dovetailed with the inception of *The Wanderer*, was its swan-song—Brennan found himself marooned in an Eastern nirvana, beset and isolated by abstractions, and longing to place his feet once more on the ground. He was explicit about his Oriental leanings at this time in a letter to F.S. Delmer dated 14 December 1900:<sup>6</sup>

I have been reading Blake’s prophecies & am now proceeding, along the track of the Gnostics, towards the East, to find a mysticism without personal God & personal immortality, wherein to forget the vain hubbub of the West with its parochial religions and no less parochial atheisms—Nietzsche is a parish brawler after all!—& its generally noisome worship of the demiurge.

The antipathy to Nietzsche expressed here is consistent with the anti-Classical tenor of his inner life during the Lilith years, when William Blake—for whom the Classics were the abominable Antichrist, to be deplored and excoriated for the whole of his creative life<sup>7</sup>—was such a potent influence, as strikingly evidenced for example by the very title ‘The Forest of Night’, which Brennan took from *Europe: a Prophecy*.

One of Brennan’s Gnostic mentors toward the end of this phase was Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite (sixth century CE), whose *Celestial Hierarchies* supplied the epigraph to *The Burden of Tyre*, that supreme expression of the Lilith wisdom. Dionysius was the principal conduit into the West of the teachings of the Buddha, whose system of celestial hierarchies he appropriated. The Rig Vedas also supplied the epigraph to the final section of *The Burden of Tyre*. The East was clearly a powerful influence in these last days before Brennan’s renewed engagement with the material world.

Trevor Ravenscroft is illuminating on the nature of this crucial point in Brennan’s life (20-21):

Only two basic attitudes are possible towards the working of this primal karma. It can be regarded as a curse to be avoided at all costs. Or it can be regarded as a blessing from the hand of God ..... The Ancient Indians attempted to soften the harsh

reality of fate by a preference for all things spiritual and by regarding contemptuously all earthly existence as worthless delusion. In short, they sought a spiritual emancipation from toil, pain and death by attempting to depart for ever from the wheel of fate ..... The Ancient Persians, on the other hand, regarded the primal karma as an expression of the earthly fidelity of the sun god. Zarathustra (Zoroaster), their great spiritual leader, regarded toil, pain and death as the means through which humanity was saved from the bottomless pit of evil—a kind of threefold bastion protecting man from harm.

This dichotomy is germane to the two threads of utopianism and vitalism in Australian literature, as discussed by Vincent Buckley;<sup>8</sup> and his placement of *The Wanderer* within the latter was correct, as the argument to come will show. Nietzsche strikingly expresses the earthward tendency of Zoroastrianism, in the Prologue (3) to *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, in Zarathustra's affirmation that:

Behold, my sermon is the Overman. The Overman is the meaning of the earth [Der Übermensch ist der Sinn der Erde]... Once the sin against God was the greatest sin, but God died, and with him also these sinners. To sin against the earth is now the most dreadful thing, and to esteem the entrails of the unknowable more highly than the meaning of the earth.<sup>9</sup>

Brennan would come to repudiate this Eastward tendency of his, and with this change of direction evidently would come a revaluation of Nietzsche. He was almost certainly thinking, for example, of the bewilderingly complex system of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, with its Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels, and Angels, in his paper 'Philosophy and Art' (1903): 'I know by experience what a temptation lies for the young student in some striking, fair-built system.' (*Prose* 41).

#### THE EPIGRAPH TO *THE WANDERER*

The Latin epigraph secretes a strikingly relevant Greek reference, which has hitherto gone unremarked:

*Quoniam cor secretum concupivi  
factus sum vagus inter stellas huius revelationis;  
Atque annus peregrinationis meae  
quasi annus ventorum invisibilium*

'Since I have desired after the hidden heart, I am become a wanderer among the stars of this revelation; and the round of my journeying is as that of the viewless winds.' The image is of a planet moving against the background of the fixed stars. The word *vagus* means 'wanderer'. But Brennan's conception of himself in this role was evidently primarily Greek in nature, for the Greek word πλανήτης, (*plánes*), whence 'planet', means 'wanderer'. Xenophon refers to the planets as *planetes asteres*, 'wandering stars'. To the observer from earth, the planets move (wander) against the background of the fixed stars; and they were of

course identified in Greek mythology, as the stars were not, with gods. So that it is suggested here, right at the very outset of the poem, that the Wanderer of the title may well be Greek, and also divine, in nature.

Further, new light is thrown on the word *annus*. When translated, it has usually assumed a quality of time, from the translation of *annus* as 'year'; and Brennan on his quest has, partly on this basis, widely been held to be a failure, roaming aimlessly like the winds, and without end.<sup>10</sup> However, *annus* derives from *annulus*, 'ring', and means primarily a cycle of time, whence 'year'. It is clearly in this sense that Brennan meant it, in reference to the orbit of a planet. The Wanderer's 'journeying afar' is not aimless, but centred. Strictly speaking, the planets orbit the sun, but they appear to the watcher to orbit the earth, and it is in this sense that Brennan took it.

Brennan's inspiration for the *annus peregrinationis meae* was evidently a passage in the 'Der Schatten' ('The Shadow') section of Part Four of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (Part Three of which opens with 'Der Wanderer'), which he then gave a specifically Greek inflection. We will come to analyse this passage in detail in the exegesis of poem 99, for which it was clearly also a source. Here are the relevant lines:

A wanderer I am, who by now has walked far at your heels: always on my way,  
but without a goal, also without a home [aber ohne Ziel, auch ohne Heim]: so that  
I am truly almost become an eternal Jew, except for this, that I am not eternal, and  
am not a Jew. What? Must I be always on the road? Whirled by every wind,  
restless, driven onward? O earth, you are become too round for me!

This is Zarathustra's Shadow speaking at a point of low morale. Here then may be a source (one among several) of the metaphor of the 'viewless winds' and the annular nature of the quest; except that the Wanderer is now no longer a farer of the roads, but a planet, which denotes, etymologically, a Greek wanderer.

The Shadows' apostrophisation ('O earth, you are become too round for me') is undoubtedly an expression of the notion of Eternal Return ('der Ewige-Wiederkunfts-Gedanke'), on which Nietzsche in *Ecce Homo* confessed *Also Sprach Zarathustra* to be founded. This notion holds that all created things are reborn in an identical form at some stage in the future, and are iterations of identical forms created in the past. The words of the dwarf in the 'vom Gesicht und Räthsel' ('On the Vision and the Riddle') section of Part Three is of particular interest here: 'All that is straight lies .... All truth is crooked; time itself is a circle.' This is also the circle of the Wanderer's *annus peregrinationis meae*. (It is also cognate with the 'vicus of recirculation' which forms the framework of *Finnegans Wake*. The Joyce-Brennan correspondences indeed deserve a study of their own).

Noel Macainsh's assertion anent Nietzsche and *The Wanderer* that 'with his main conception of "The Eternal Return of the Same", Nietzsche attempted to establish a view that was the antithesis of any romantic "wandering"',<sup>11</sup> is therefore correct in itself, but Macainsh is hoist with his own petard: for if the wandering described in Brennan's poem is anything it is classic, as we have seen, and further is perfectly of a kind with Zarathustra's. Macainsh's ship, bound for the refutation of the Brennan-Nietzsche connexion, founders on the hidden reef of Brennan's reversion to the Classics, and the Greek basis of *The Wanderer*. Thus

Esme Hadley's recollection of Brennan terming Nietzsche a 'Gegenromantik' ('Anti-romantic') in 1912 supports the scenario I have outlined here, rather than arguing against any Nietzschean influence, as Macainsh suggests.

The principal source for the metaphor of the 'viewless winds' is likely to have been this passage in the Vom Gesindel ('On the Rabble') section of Part Two:

And like strong winds we wish to live over them [the rabble], neighbours of eagles, of snow, of the sun: this is how the strong winds live. And like a wind I will blow among them one day, and with my spirit take the breath of their spirit: thus my destiny wills it. Truly, a strong wind is Zarathustra for all the lowlanders....

However, the precise words 'viewless winds' can only have come from these lines of Claudio's in *Measure for Measure*, which Brennan's friend Dr. Herbert M. ('Pap') Moran also took as the epigraph to his autobiography *Viewless Winds* (1939). Here again the earth-centred, annular nature of the winds' path is emphasised:

to be imprison'd in the viewless winds,  
and blown with restless violence round about  
the pendant world....

#### POEM 86

This opening scene, as the Wanderer leaves the town towards midnight, to follow a high ridge all night until the 'horrible dawn' with its revelation of the 'ever-restless, ever-complaining sea', was clearly also inspired by *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Here it is in full:

When window lamps had dwindled, then I rose  
and left the town behind me; and on my way  
passing a certain door I stopt, remembering  
how once I stood on its threshold, and my life  
was offer'd to me, a road how different  
from that of the years since one! and I had but  
to rejoin an olden path, once dear, since left.  
All night I have walk'd and my heart was deep awake,  
remembering ways I dream'd and that I chose,  
remembering lucidly, and was not sad,  
being brimm'd with all the liquid and clear dark  
of the night that was not stirr'd with any tide;  
for leaves were silent and the road gleamed pale,  
following the ridge, and I was alone with night.  
But now I am come among the rougher hills  
And grow aware of the sea that somewhere near  
is restless; and the flood of night is thinn'd  
and stars are whitening. O, what horrible dawn  
will bare me the way and crude lumps of the hills  
and the homeless concave of the day, and bare  
the ever-restless, ever-complaining sea?

Here are the first lines of the 'Der Wanderer' section of Part Three of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*:

It was midnight, when Zarathustra took up his journey over the ridge of the island, so that he might reach the opposite coast by early morning: for he wanted to take a ship from there. There was a good roadstead there, where ships from far away liked to anchor; and they often gave passage to men who wished to cross the sea from the Blessed Isles. As Zarathustra was now climbing the mountain, he thought about how many times since his youth he had climbed alone, and how many mountains and ridges and peaks he had already climbed....

He goes on to characterise himself as a lover of mountains, rather than plains. It is evident that these peaks represent the triumphs of the reflective-intellective spirit, in the way of the Mystery traditions and their systems of psychic transformation.

The Zarathustra influence is more extensive and precise than this, however. Given the dramatic change in direction of Brennan's inner life at this time, we might expect him to have begun his last great poetic endeavour with a reference to it: and this is in fact the case. Zarathustra quits his mountain retreat at midnight for his earthward journey; and just so does the Wanderer depart 'When window lamps had dwindled'. But there is one home in particular that he notices as he departs, where 'once I stood on its threshold, and my life/ was offer'd to me, a road how different/ from that of the years since gone!' The interpretation which is entirely consistent with the scenario I have outlined is that this home represents the Ordinary World of the Classical—specifically, the Greek—tradition, which he abandoned in Berlin, to take up instead the quest for Lilith. The meaning of the otherwise puzzling 'and I had but/ to rejoin an olden path, once dear, since left' becomes plain. These lines clearly imply that he did in fact take up again this path of old. Then what was its nature? His inner voice is urging him here to resume once again the path of Hellenism; and this was an offer he could not refuse.

Hence it is that the dawn which now breaks on the Wanderer is 'horrible': for to make this life decision is once again to face the horror of the Shadow, Apollonius-Urizen, his erstwhile tormentor.<sup>12</sup> This is the dawn to which Zarathustra awakes, as a prelude to his new communion with the Sun (in Brennan's story Apollo, symbol of the Classical tradition). The sea will take Zarathustra away from the Blessed Isles, in the Return of the Hero stage of the Journey. In Brennan's poem it bears a similar significance, and regarding it in the clear light of day only increases the Wanderer's horror. The sea bears here its immemorably ancient mythic-symbolic value of the unseen world of nature, which in the microcosm is the unconscious. Here is the relevant passage from the 'Der Wanderer' section of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*:

Ah, this black mournful sea under me! Ah, this pregnant nocturnal dismay! Ah, destiny and sea! To you must I now go down! Before my highest mountain I stand, and my longest wandering: and for that reason must I first go down deeper than I have ever climbed: down deeper into pain than I ever have, down into its blackest flood! Thus my destiny wills it: Well then! I am ready. From where do

the highest mountains come? So I once asked. Then I learned that they arise from the sea. The story is written in their rocks and the walls of their peaks.

There was indeed much pain in this region of Brennan's mind, for from here had surged the will-to-eros, herald of Lilith, to shatter the fragile idyll created by Apollonius-Urizen, the Shadow figure of *Poems*. The trauma of this irruption can be shown to be the subject of several poems (54, 56, 59, 61, 62, 63) of 'The Quest of Silence'.<sup>13</sup>

In Prologue (8) of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* the hero, after being overtaken by hunger in 'the woods and swamps and deepest night', comes to a cottage, where its occupant, an old man, gives him food and drink and moral succour. This passage may be read as telling a consistent story with regard to Brennan's Wanderer. The 'forest' and 'night' suggest *The Forest of Night*, where Brennan did in fact feel hungry—for the company of humankind. This yearning is expressed in the Prologue (9) section of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* in the words 'Gefährten brauche ich und lebendige' ('Companions I need, and living ones'). The old man's door would correspond in this scheme to the 'certain door'. His age would make him a suitable token of the Greek tradition. He offers Zarathustra succour, precisely as Hellenism now did to Brennan. The dead companion symbolises the lower or human self, killed off in the quest for transcendence, but in urgent bad need of revival, for the health of the Hero as a complete human being.

Let us return to the Prologue (1). After climbing down from the ridge Zarathustra encounters an old man of the forest. A hermit, he is evidently the very type of the transcendent Eastern guru, and is carefully to be distinguished from the anchorite whom we have just met in Prologue (8). He accosts Zarathustra:

'Zarathustra has changed, Zarathustra has become a child, an awakened one is Zarathustra: what business do you now have amongst the sleepers? As in a sea you lived in your solitude, and the sea tugged you about. Alas, and now you wish to alight on dry land? Alas, you now wish to drag around this corpse of a body behind you?' Zarathustra answered: 'I love Man'.

Brennan would come to echo Zarathustra's answer 'I love man' ('Ich liebe die Menschen') in poem 105 ('1908') in his sympathetic identification with 'the city's drift of pavement thralls'.

Here is another passage of relevance to the scenario I have outlined above, from the Prologue (1) section of Part One:

When Zarathustra was thirty years old, he left his home with its lake and went into the mountains. Here he exulted in his spirit and his solitude, nor for ten years did he tire of it. But finally a change came over his heart, so that one morning he rose with the dawn, and stood before the sun and addressed him as follows: 'O great star, what would your happiness be, had you not those for whom you shine?' .... 'See how I am weary of my wisdom, like a bee that has gathered too much honey. I need hands outstretched to take it. I would give it away and hand it around, until the wise rejoice again in their folly, the poor once again in their riches. To that end I must climb to the depths, just as you do in the evening, when

you go behind the sea and still shine even in the underworld, you overrich star!  
Like you, I must go under, as Man calls it, to whom I wish to go down.' ... 'See,  
how this beaker will become empty once again, and Zarathustra become Man.'

Here is the quitting of the home ('verliess er seine Heimat'), which is the Ordinary World of the Journey; the dramatic change of heart, and communion again with the Sun ('aber verwandelte sich sein Herz ... trat vor die Sonne hin') which he had abjured in the night-journey of 'Lilith'; the weariness of his accumulated wisdom ('Ich bin meiner Weisheit überdrüssig'); the new beginning ('Dieser Becher will wieder leer werden'); and the need once again to commune with men ('Zarathustra will wieder mensch werden').

#### POEM 99

And so we come to the crucial poem of *The Wanderer*, on the interpretation of which our assessment of the quality of Brennan's journey must largely depend. Axel Clark is categorical in this regard (117):

The end of *The Wanderer* provides an explanation for this decline in his production of poetry, for there he states—albeit equivocally—that his poetic attempt at the discovery of some transcendent absolute, the recovery of Eden, has ended in failure.... The simple statement that the Wanderer knows 'no ending of the way, no home, no goal' must mean an abandonment of all Brennan's earlier hopes and aspirations .... Brennan makes no attempt to reconcile these hints of a surviving hope with his confession that the quest for Eden has been abandoned.

Brennan scholars have widely concurred with this judgement. For James McAuley (27, 29):

the *dominant* note in *The Wanderer* however, is rather of one who knows 'no ending of the way, no home, no goal' .... One is therefore not convinced that the 'peace ... in the heart of the winds' and 'clear dusk' he experiences are genuinely a result of sheer acceptance of the time process.

While for Terry Sturm '*The Wanderer* represents a movement into the external world, a stoical acceptance of it after the failure of the self's attempt to create its own independent reality.'<sup>14</sup> G.A. Wilkes comes close to the truth of *The Wanderer*, but sounds a familiar note anent poem 99:<sup>15</sup>

The mood of confidence has not lasted. There is a disjunction here between the professions of 'Philosophy and Art' and the facts of the poetry. The peace that falls in the heart of the winds comes from the Wanderer's realization that there is 'no ending of the way, no home, no goal', that for him it is 'one to stay or hasten', that night and day alike withhold the consummation promised. The simple acceptance of this may still be in some way heroic. But there is also an acknowledgement that illusion is being displaced by clear-sightedness, and the note of resignation cannot be dispelled.

A recension of poem 99 under the Nietzschean light, incorporating a second look at the pivotal 'withhold', reveals however quite a different beast. Here is the poem in full:

The land I came thro' last was dumb with night,  
 a limbo of defeated glory, a ghost:  
 for wreck of constellations flicker'd perishing  
 scarce sustain'd in the mortuary air,  
 and on the ground and out of livid pools  
 wreck of swords and old crowns glimmer'd at whiles;  
 I seem'd at home in some old dream of kingship:  
 now it is clear grey day and the road is plain,  
 I am the wanderer of many years  
 who cannot tell if ever he was king  
 or if ever kingdoms were: I know I am  
 the wanderer of the ways of all the worlds,  
 to whom the sunshine and the rain are one  
 and one to stay or hasten, because he knows  
 no ending of the way, no home, no goal,  
 and phantom night and the grey day alike  
 withhold the heart where all my dreams and days  
 might faint in soft fire and delicious death:  
 and saying this to myself as a simple thing  
 I feel a peace fall in the heart of the winds  
 and a clear dusk settle, somewhere, far in me.

Firstly, let us examine the lines 'because he knows/ no ending of the way, no home, no goal'. Here are the relevant passages from the 'Der Schatten' ('The Shadow') section of Part Four of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*:

But as soon as the free-willing beggar had run away and Zarathustra was alone again, he heard a new voice behind him calling: 'Stop Zarathustra. It is I, O Zarathustra, I, your Shadow!' .... 'Forgive me', answered the Shadow, 'that it is I; and if I do not please you, well then O Zarathustra! in that I commend you for your good taste. A wanderer I am, who by now has walked far at your heels: always on my way, but without a goal, also without a home [immer unterwegs, aber ohne Ziel, auch ohne Heim]: so that I am truly almost become an eternal Jew, except for this, that I am not eternal, and am not a Jew. What? Must I be always on the road? Whirled by every wind, restless, driven onward? O earth, you are become too round for me! [Oh Erde, du wardst mir zu rund!]'

....Thus spoke the Shadow, and Zarathustra's face grew long at his words. 'You are my Shadow!' he said finally, in sadness, 'Your danger is not negligible, o free spirit and wanderer! You have had a bad day, see to it that your night is not worse. Evening is falling. To one so restless as you, even a prison would in the end seem blessed! Have you ever seen how imprisoned criminals sleep? They sleep restfully, enjoying their new security. Beware lest a narrow belief imprison you in the end, some harsh and austere delusion! For whatever is narrow and solid tempts and seduces you even now. You have lost the goal: alas, how would

you joke away and get over this loss? With that you have also lost the way. You poor wanderer, daydreamer, you weary butterfly! Will you this evening have a rest and a home? Then go up to my cave. Up there goes the path to my cave.'

There are two most important points to be made here. Firstly, there is indeed initially a sense of low morale, even hopelessness, on the part of the Shadow (who is of course an aspect of Zarathustra himself). He is flagging, dwelling fondly on the temptation to quit. But this is emphatically not the final note struck, as Zarathustra upbraids him and directs him for renewal toward his cave, where, so we learn, reside Zarathustra's eagle and serpent, 'the proudest beast under the sun and the wisest beast under the sun'. The dominant note is not of the Shadow's complaint, but of Zarathustra's reassurance; the boat does not cease in its quest for the finish line, though one rower therein be potentially corruptive: and it is in this sense that the same words in poem 99 clearly should be read.

Further, the Shadow's difficulty in keeping the goal in view is echoed in Brennan's words in 'Philosophy and Art' (*Prose* 42, 46):

Here we have the wandering given, and perhaps are struck with dismay: but, I think, if we look more closely we shall find the goal of the wandering given too ... A goal lies before us then—the state wherein man shall have taken up into himself the whole world that is outside him, and the whole world that is within: being intellectually above error, morally above the need for morality, and free from all discord: a state consequently of completed harmony.

It does indeed require a closer look, a refinement of spiritual insight, to keep the goal always in view. One recalls also the sense of ecstatic homelessness in the 'The Wanderers' of Arthur Symons, a number of whose poems in *Amoris Victima* (1897) and *Images of Good and Evil* (1899) clearly influenced *The Wanderer*:<sup>16</sup>

Wanderers, you have the sunrise and the stars;  
And we, beneath our comfortable roofs,  
Lamplight, and daily fire upon the hearth,  
And four walls of a prison, and sure food.  
But God has given you freedom, wanderers!

What then of 'withhold'? The prevailing interpretation is that it implies a refusal of nature to give up her *cor secretum* to the futilely questing Wanderer. But might it not have here a sense of simply 'holding within', to infer that the *cor secretum* is there to be known—with much striving perhaps, but known in the end? Certainly, this was its archaic sense in English. The *Oxford English Dictionary* among many instances quotes for example the following, from Gaston de la Tour: 'I wold ye couth and wel withheld the example of a knyght that had thre wyves'—where it bears the meaning of 'to hold in the memory'. Brennan of course used archaisms elsewhere, for example 'anhunger'd' in poem 95. And of the highest relevance is that in poem 68.ix of 'Lilith' ('O thou that achest, pulse o' the unwed vast') he deliberately reverted to an archaic style ('out of its blank the watcher's soul is stirr'd/ to take unto itself

some olden word'), when he wished to evoke the eternal from the night sky, just as he wishes in poem 99 to evoke it equally from the 'grey day'. Jung remarked on such regression:<sup>17</sup>

The anima is conservative and clings in the most exasperating fashion to the ways of earlier humanity. She likes to appear in historic dress, with a predilection for Greece and Egypt .... the Renaissance dream known as the *Hypnerotomachia* of Poliphilo, and Goethe's *Faust*, likewise reach deep into antiquity in order to find 'le vrai mot' for the situation.

That the quest for Lilith described in *The Forest of Night* is an anima quest is clear. As Macainsh observes: 'It appears as a general principle in Brennan's poetry that questing for, or service to, a female deity leads to a confrontation with one's self'.<sup>18</sup>

It remains only to show that the quest described in *The Wanderer* is also, as in *The Forest of Night*, for the self, albeit by a different means. The spiritual traditions of the world of course identify materiality—the milieu of the Wanderer's questing—with the feminine. Of relevance here is the word *concupivi* (in the epigraph), as the first person perfect tense of the Latin *concupiscere* ('to desire', 'to yearn for'), whence 'concupiscence' and 'cupidity', and in which 'Cupid' inheres. And several poems from Symons' *Amoris Victima* (1897) and *Images of Good and Evil* (1899), which are suffused with yearning for his lost love Lydia, were a profound influence on *The Wanderer*.<sup>19</sup> Brennan himself wrote in 'Philosophy and Art' (*Prose*, 45):<sup>20</sup>

We are turned out on the road, it is true, and our house and home is broken down: but we have received our stick and our crust and it would seem that the road does lead somewhere .... It does lead somewhere. Man the wanderer is on the way to himself.

The archaistic mode which was appropriate for the Lilith quest described in poem 68.x is therefore also appropriate here in poem 99, and for the same reason. And, just as Lilith is associated in *The Forest of Night* with the Godhead (the 'Name' of poem 68.x; the 'form undesecrate of all desire' of poem 85) as his female aspect, so He is present also in *The Wanderer*, as affirmed by F.C.S. Schiller, in these passages of the first importance for our understanding of the nature of the sea-change in Brennan's inner life at this time:

And so metaphysical systems have seemed like a succession of beauteous bubbles blown from the reflective pipe of genius, which delighted us for a season and then were dissipated into thin air .... The fatal flaw in almost all these metaphysics of the past was their abstractness .... To tell us that the spiritual is not natural, that soul is not body, that God is not man, that appearance is not reality, is to tell us nothing (155)... The separation of the physical and the metaphysical, the *χωρισμός* which the acute criticism of Plato's great disciple, Aristotle, detected as the central flaw of the Platonic system, has avenged itself by a fearful penalty (158)... For the truth is that *any* theory which puts forward an abstraction as the ultimate explanation of all things is false. It is no matter what we call it, whether

it is dubbed the Absolute, or the Unknowable, or the Idea, or the Will, or the Unconscious, or Matter, or Reason, the Good or the Infinite (160-1)... Our metaphysics must be *concrete*, and not abstract; they must be the inquiry into the ultimate nature of concrete realities, and not of thought-abstractions. In other words, they will proceed from the *phenomenally* real to the *ultimately* real, from science to metaphysics (163)... Thus, so far from dispensing with the need for a Divine First Cause, the theory of Evolution, if only we have the faith in science to carry it to its conclusion, and the courage to interpret it, proves irrefragably that no evolution was possible without a pre-existent Deity, and a Deity, moreover, transcendent, non-material and non-phenomenal.(198-9)

'Withhold' in its archaic sense is demonstrably *le vrai mot* for its context in poem 99. It is interesting also to note the resumption of its dual meanings in the Greek verb *εχω*, *echo*, namely 'I have', 'I possess', 'I have in my house', 'I involve', 'I imply', and so on; and 'I hold fast', 'I keep back', 'I stay', 'I hinder from' 'I hold in guard', and so on. This may have contributed to the ease with which the archaic sense of 'withhold' came to Brennan's hand.

## CONCLUSION

The journey of Brennan's Wanderer is therefore authentic and successful to approximately the same degree as that of Nietzsche's Zarathustra. Rather than the epigraph and poem 99 being viewed as a confession of failure, I have demonstrated how a reading of *The Wanderer* in light of Nietzsche supports the theory of the poem's essentially Greek nature, as celebratory of its hero's return to the material world.

Once one engages with the truths of materiality there can be no shortcuts, so ancient and varied and still secretive is the given world: the convenient flights of abstractionism are no longer available. The quest of Pragmatism for the divine through the material world is continued even now in Process philosophy, of which the Australian evolutionist, philosopher and theologian Charles Birch (1919-2009) was a world leader. The nature of this quest is such that its fulfilment can only come gradually. This is what Brennan meant in *The Wanderer*, and in the very last poem of *Poems 1913*:

Yes, Eden was my own, my bride...  
 but promis'd only, while the sun  
 must travel yet thro' times undone;  
 and life must guard the prize of youth,  
 and thought must steward into truth  
 the mines of magian ore divined  
 in rich Cipangos of the mind....

## ENDNOTES:

1. See for example James McAuley (26): 'But the Lilith section ends in defeat .... The next section, called "The Labour of Night", reiterates the themes of sterility, defeat, dissolution.' And A. R. Chisholm (*Forest* 106): 'the despairing, utterly negative poem [85] that puts an end to the poet's long wanderings in The Forest of Night and prepares the way for a still more hopeless wandering.'
- 2.... For example, the late Professor Frank Kermode: 'there is no preposterous degree of self-delusion in the highest claims of his countrymen ... that Brennan will claim a distinguished place among poets writing in English between 1890 and the first world war' (Dutton and Harris, 14).
3. See Joseph Campbell's *Creative Mythology* for a fine discussion of these two works as examples of the Journey of the Hero genre.
4. Sitting just outside the frame of this essay but impinging on it, is Brennan's own flawed personality, on the general question of which Vogler remarks (39): 'Weaknesses, imperfections, quirks and vices immediately make a Hero or any character more real and appealing .... Flaws are a starting point of imperfection or incompleteness from which a character can grow'.
5. Peter Kirkpatrick, 'The Wanderer and the Flâneur: Christopher Brennan as Modernist', *Southerly*, 63:2 (2003): 63-77
6. Christopher Brennan Collection, Fisher Library Rare Books, University of Sydney
7. See for example the preface to *Milton*: 'The Stolen and Perverted Writings of Homer & Ovid, of Plato & Cicero, which all men ought to condemn, are set up by artifice against the sublime of the Bible .... We do not want either Greek or Roman Models if we are but just & true to our own Imaginations....'
8. Vincent Buckley, 'Utopianism and Vitalism in Australian Literature', *Quadrant*, March 1959, 39-51
9. All translations are my own.
10. See for example A. R. Chisholm (*Forest* 108): 'and so he became ... an aimless wanderer'.
11. Noel Macainsh, 'Brennan and Nietzsche', *Southerly*, 26:4 (1966): 259-61
12. For a fuller discussion of the Shadow figure in *Poems 1913*, see (reference withheld for review purposes)
13. Reference withheld for review purposes
14. Terry Sturm, 'The Social Context of Brennan's Thought', *Southerly*, 28:4 (1968), 251-71
15. G.A. Wilkes, 'Brennan's *The Wanderer*: A Progressive Romanticism?', *Southerly*, 30:4 (1970), 252-63
16. Symons' 'The Wanderers' in relation to Brennan is discussed by Vivian Smith in 'Christopher Brennan and Arthur Symons', *Southerly*, 27:3 (1967) 219-22.
17. C. G. Jung, 'On the Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious.'
18. Noel Macainsh, 'Steps into the Forest: Christopher Brennan's Fatal Attraction', *AUMLA*, Nov 1989, 229-47.
19. Specifically, on the epigraph, and on poems 87, 91, 95, and 97; while a passage from *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* clearly influenced poem 93. For a full discussion see (reference withheld for review purposes).
20. Cf. F.C. S.Schiller (141): '[we may] accept the reality of the Self as the fundamental basis of all life, knowledge and proof. As the most certain of all things, it is the Alpha, the starting-point, and it would not be surprising if it turned out also the Omega, the goal of philosophy.'

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