



CRITICISM

VOLUME

174

Poetry Criticism

*Criticism of the Works
of the Most Significant and Widely
Studied Poets of World Literature*

Volume 174

Lawrence J. Trudeau
Editor

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Preface

Poetry Criticism (PC) presents significant criticism of the world's greatest poets and provides supplementary biographical and bibliographical material to guide the interested reader to a greater understanding of the genre and its creators. This series was developed in response to suggestions from librarians serving high school, college, and public library patrons, who had noted a considerable number of requests for critical material on poems and poets. Although major poets and literary movements are covered in such Gale Literary Criticism series as *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (CLC), *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC), *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* (NCLC), *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800* (LC), and *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism* (CMLC), librarians perceived the need for a series devoted solely to poets and poetry.

Scope of the Series

PC is designed to serve as an introduction to major poets of all eras and nationalities. Since these authors have inspired a great deal of relevant critical material, PC is necessarily selective, and the editors have chosen the most important published criticism to aid readers and students in their research.

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- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author and the critical debates surrounding his or her work.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The first section comprises poetry collections, book-length poems, and theoretical works by the author about poetry. The second section gives information on other major works by the author. In the case of authors who do not write in English, an English translation of the title is provided as an aid to the reader; the translation is either a published translated title or a free translation provided by the compiler of the entry. In the case of such authors whose works have been translated into English, the **Principal English Translations** focuses primarily on twentieth-century translations, selecting those works most commonly considered the best by critics.
- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. All individual titles of poems, poetry collections, and theoretical works about poetry by the

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Glen, Heather. "Blake's Criticism of Moral Thinking in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*." *Interpreting Blake*. Ed. Michael Phillips. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978. 32-69. Rpt. in *Poetry Criticism*. Ed. Michelle Lee. Vol. 63. Detroit: Gale, 2005. 34-51. Print.

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Thomas Traherne

1637?-1674

English poet and prose writer.

The following entry provides criticism of Traherne's life and works. For additional information about Traherne, see *PC*, Volume 70.

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Traherne, an ordained Anglican priest, focused much of his poetry on the themes of joy and divine immanence, or the presence of God in all things. Modern scholars have been especially interested in his conception of a fundamental childhood innocence that contrasts with the learned sins of adulthood, which challenged the notion of original sin that preoccupied Traherne's contemporaries. He was categorized by Samuel Johnson as one of the Metaphysicals, a group of poets known for employing elaborate, extended metaphors in their verses—often from other areas of study, such as science—to illustrate and explore complex subjects, such as divinity.

Although Traherne did not achieve fame as either a clergyman or a writer in his lifetime, some of his poems may have circulated among his friends and in his parish, with or without attribution. His poetry was rediscovered more than two hundred years after his death when book collector William T. Brooke purchased two unpublished manuscripts from a London bookstall that were initially misattributed to the seventeenth-century Welsh poet Henry Vaughan and bookseller/scholar Bertram Dobell later established Traherne's authorship of them. Traherne has since been identified as a major seventeenth-century British poet whose works reflect a wide array of influences and whose perspectives, in some respects, prefigured those of the Romantics, including William Blake and William Wordsworth.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

No official records of Traherne's birth, baptism, or early childhood exist. Anthony Wood included a brief entry on Traherne in *Athenæ Oxonienses* (1691-92), a biographical dictionary of the writers and bishops educated at Oxford University. Scholars dispute the year and place of his birth, whether or not he was an orphan, and the economic circumstances in which he was raised.

The most commonly proposed date of birth for Traherne is 1637, and many sources agree that he was most likely born in Herefordshire, a region in western England bordering

Wales. Traherne's later life is better documented than his early years. It is known that he entered Brasenose College, Oxford, in 1652; completed his BA in 1656; and was ordained in 1660. Following the completion of his MA in 1661, he was appointed parson in the rural parish of Credenhill in Herefordshire. After some time at Credenhill, Traherne became private chaplain to the politician Sir Orlando Bridgeman, Lord Keeper of the Seal, and served until Bridgeman's death in June 1674. In the following autumn, Traherne died of smallpox at Bridgeman's home and was buried on 10 October in Teddington. He left most of his few effects to his brother, and his several houses in Herefordshire became almshouses for the poor.

MAJOR POETIC WORKS

None of Traherne's poetry was published during his lifetime, and most of it was not identified until late in the nineteenth century. After the death in 1899 of Alexander Grosart, the Vaughan scholar who had bought Brooke's manuscripts, Dobell acquired them and questioned the attribution. Dobell identified one of the manuscripts as the work of Traherne based on its similarity to the posthumously published *Christian Ethicks* (1675), a mixture of prose and poetry that ascribes all ethics to a divine source. Dobell attributed the second manuscript on the basis of evidence provided by George Hickes, the publisher of *A Serious and Pathetical Contemplation of the Mercies of God, in Several Most Devout and Sublime Thanksgivings for the Same* (1699), better known simply as *Thanksgivings*. In his preface to the anonymous work, Hickes offers several clues to the author's identity, including that he had served as chaplain to the late Lord Keeper Bridgeman. From this information, Dobell deduced that Traherne must have been the author, and he matched a poem featured in the second manuscript, half of which was poetry and half was prose, with one in *Thanksgivings*, establishing Traherne's authorship. Dobell sparked a strong revival of critical interest in Traherne by publishing the manuscripts he had attributed as *The Poetical Works of Thomas Traherne, 1636?-1674* (1903) and *Centuries of Meditations* (1908), which comprises the contents of the second manuscript.

Intended as a guide for life's spiritual, social, and personal trials, *Centuries of Meditations* tracks Traherne's relationships with other people, nature, and God. Because of its seeming reliance on the author's experiences, some scholars have turned to it as a source of information on Traherne's

life, though others have cautioned that the speaker may be more of a literary than autobiographical representation of the author. *Centuries of Meditations* is also well known for its appreciation of childhood, particularly the child's innocence and curiosity. This collection includes Traherne's most frequently repeated sentiment, typically interpreted as a denial of original sin and a glorification of innate potential: "An empty book is like an infant's soul, in which anything may be written."

Childhood is also the focus of "Shadows in the Water," one of Traherne's most frequently discussed and anthologized poems. In 1910, the scholar and translator H. Idris Bell rediscovered the verse in the British Library in a manuscript titled "Divine Reflections on the Native Objects of an Infant-Ey," later identified as a collection of Traherne's poems that had been copied, arranged, and possibly edited by his brother, Philip. Bell subsequently published the series under the title *Traherne's Poems of Felicity* (1910). Like most of the poems in the collection, "Shadows in the Water" captures Traherne's fascination with perspectives that embrace a more than tangible reality. The speaker of the poem celebrates the way "unexperienc'd Infancy" can open one up to beatific, otherworldly reflections.

"Meditations on the Six Days of the Creation" is a *hexameron*, a devotional poem celebrating the six days of the Christian creation story. The last of Traherne's works believed to have been published before the twentieth century, the poem appeared without attribution in *A Collection of Meditations and Devotions, in Three Parts* (1717). Though Susanna Hopton was initially credited with having written it, scholars now largely agree that Traherne wrote the piece. Following the biblical account given in Genesis, the poem describes each day of creation in separate segments, all but one of which is prefaced by a verse from Psalm 49. Traherne modeled the poem itself on the tradition of the Psalms, which influenced much of his other work.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Because of the works by which Traherne was long known as an author, *Roman Forgeries* (1673) and *Christian Ethicks*, he was principally considered a theologian until the publication of his lost manuscripts, which featured poetry. Many early twentieth-century scholars of Traherne's poetry, including Elbert N. S. Thompson (1929), were struck by his proto-Romantic emphasis on childhood innocence and celebration of childlike perceptions. Such evaluations of Traherne predominated for fifty years, during which time, Denise Inge (2004) noted, he was called the "Poet of Felicity" not only because of his "view of early innocence" but also due to "his insistence that the world is good and that we are intended for happiness in it." More recently, scholars have begun to examine Traherne's life and works more fully and have discovered that, rather than having been disconnected from society, he was

steeped in the work of both his predecessors and contemporary theologians and poets. Critics such as Lynn Sauls (1971) investigated intertextuality, allusions, and wholesale borrowing from other authors in Traherne's works. Sauls concluded that Traherne owed a large debt to the Spanish Jesuit Luis de la Puente's *Meditations upon the Mysteries of Our Holie Faith* (1605), from which he borrowed extended passages in composing several of his own works.

Other scholars have focused on Traherne's emphasis on the importance of seeing beyond the mundane. Alvin Snider (1986; see Further Reading) analyzed the mirror imagery in Traherne's "Divine Reflections on the Native Objects of an Infant-Ey," showing how the sequence represents vision as "a circular process, an experience from which the seer takes precisely what he brings to it," be it a distorted perception or a pure reality. Snider argued that for Traherne, as for John Milton, a permeable self-identity and questioning way of looking at the world are central to one's "intellectual and spiritual development." In Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) and Traherne's "Shadows in the Water," he contended, the mirror represents "both discontinuity and identity" with the known and the unknown so that all are simultaneously at play. Gary Kuchar (2007) found that "self-conscious reflection" and introspective subjectivity are central to Traherne's understanding of what it is to be human and to his understanding of ethics and spirituality. He observed that in the poem "Walking," Traherne writes of "Dead Puppets" who fail to perceive the glories around them. Traherne referred to such imperceptive figures frequently, Kuchar determined, in order to accentuate "a state of living death" in contrast to the more authentic, self-aware existence that leads to a more purposeful and spiritual life. Susannah B. Mintz (2007) examined the significance of body imagery in his verses, observing that Traherne's "symbolic appropriation of deafness or muteness obscures the lived experience of those conditions." Yet, Mintz continued, "his enthusiastic celebration of the body as an object both marvelous and mechanically intricate requires the denigration of dysfunction to provide symbolic counterpoint."

Perception is also central to Rosalie L. Colie's 1957 conception of Traherne's "audacity." Colie found Traherne's comparison of God to absolute infinity "the most daring" of all his metaphors for the divine. Although this association came into vogue in the eighteenth century, she noted, good and evil were so balanced against one another in Traherne's time that an "infinite universe, with infinite space and infinite distance, could endanger the whole ethical structure of the century." According to Colie, Traherne maintained the metaphorical connection between God and infinite space because it was central to his theological schema. "Infinity of space was his image of the spiritual infinity of God's goodness," she asserted, maintaining that "only by understanding and accepting infinite space could

man approach ultimate union with the infinitely infinite God."

Katherine E. Bishop

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Poetry

Christian Ethicks; or, Divine Morality. Opening the Way to Blessedness, by the Rules of Vertue and Reason. London: Edwin, 1675. Print. (Poetry and prose)

**A Serious and Pathetical Contemplation of the Mercies of God, in Several Most Devout and Sublime Thanksgivings for the Same.* As Anonymous. London: Keble, 1699. Print.

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*Attributed to Traherne. This work is better known as *Thanksgivings*.

†Includes the poem "The Circulation."

‡Includes the poetic sequence "Divine Reflections on the Native Objects of an Infant-Ey," which includes the poem "Walking."

§Includes the poems "The World," "The Apostacy," and "Shadows in the Water."

||Includes the poem "Seeds of Eternity."

CRITICISM

Elbert N. S. Thompson (essay date 1929)

SOURCE: Thompson, Elbert N. S. "The Philosophy of Thomas Traherne." *Philological Quarterly* 8.2 (1929): 97-112. Print.

[In the following essay, Thompson argues that Traherne's emphases on divine immanence and childhood innocence were unusual for his time. He aligns these aspects of Traherne's writings with those of earlier philosophers and finds echoes of them in verses by the Romantic poets William Wordsworth and William Blake.]

When the manuscripts of the *Poems of Felicity* and the *Centuries of Meditations* were unearthed from their hiding place toward the close of the nineteenth century, some readers, not without warrant, at once attributed them to Henry Vaughan. Between the newly discovered pieces and the known work of Vaughan, certain important and interesting resemblances were undeniably to be found. Both revealed a genuine love of nature, a rare spiritual intensity, and a strongly mystical philosophy of life.

That one manuscript contained almost nothing but prose aroused no misgivings. The *Centuries of Meditations* in prose are clearly the work of a poet, while the *Poems of Felicity* are disfigured here and there by prose of the flattest sort. Nor was there any reason for supposing the poet, Vaughan, incapable of writing the *Meditations*, and certainly no known author of the seventeenth century could be so reasonably credited with these religious musings as he. So the case rested until some certain, ascertained facts revealed the hitherto unknown author, Thomas Traherne. One may fancy, however, that, even without this unexpected disclosure, his output would not long have been assigned to Vaughan. Dissimilarities inevitably would have been noticed, where before only the more obvious resemblances had attracted attention, and another pronounced mystical thinker, nameless though he might have remained, would have been fixed in his place among others of that time.

For many persons, the *Poems of Felicity* have had a peculiar fascination. They are interesting metrically; they stand related in a number of vital respects to the devotional verse of Traherne's contemporaries, notably Vaughan's; and the introductory poem addressed to the reader brings to mind the thoughts on true poetic style expressed in Wordsworth's far more celebrated Preface. The *Meditations*, also, are notable among the many that followed Bacon's, as the English essay matured. But apart from this, the philosophy of life presented in the poems and the prose alike is unusual and arresting and may well claim the reader's attention.

The corner stone of Traherne's concept of life is his unflinching belief in the immanence of God. It was a truth that he had unconsciously accepted before he had learned anything else of his environment. Consequently, like Wordsworth, he felt the innocence and sanctity of childhood and its peculiar, intuitive appreciation of the highest truths. In the early years of life God is especially near to one, since

He in our Childhood with us walks,
And with our Thoughts mysteriously He talks.

So the poet looked back to those days in his own life, in which

A learned & a happy Ignorance
Divided me
From all the Vanity,
From all the Sloth, Care, Sorrow, that advance
The Madness & the Misery
Of Men.¹

And like Wordsworth, who in his Ode apostrophized the child as "thou best Philosopher," "thou eye among the blind," and "mighty Prophet! seer blest," Traherne asserted, in the "Approach":

That Childhood might its self alone be said
My Tutor, Teacher, Guide to be;
Ev'n then instructed by the Deity.

This same high eulogy is repeated in Traherne's fine prose *Meditations*. "Those pure and virgin apprehensions I had from the womb," he exclaims, and "that divine light where-with I was born, are the best unto this day, wherein I can see the Universe."² In exactly the same spirit, Henry Vaughan, looking back to the early days when he shined in "Angell-infancy," asks:

Since all that age doth teach is ill,
Why should I not love childe-hood still?

This confidence in the innocence and sacredness of childhood brings the two poets together and places both as forerunners of Wordsworth. He, as we know, was familiar with Vaughan; and, although he never could have read Traherne, their beliefs regarding the child's nearness to God are exactly the same.

Traherne, however, fails to account for these spiritual powers of childhood as explicitly as does either Vaughan or Wordsworth. The explanation for them was the child's nearness to the life in the unseen world whence he came; the soul comes to this world trailing clouds of glory. But Traherne is less certain of pre-existence. He wrote in one poem:

How like an Angel came I down!
How bright are all things here!

Elsewhere he asserts:

From Dust I rise
And out of Nothing now awake;

and:

From Nothing taken first I was.³

Here is no such positive declaration as Wordsworth's:

The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.

Nevertheless, Traherne is just as sure of the child's superior insight. Calling himself in infancy a little stranger, he says: "My knowledge was Divine. I knew by intuition those things which since my Apostasy, I collected again by the highest reason," and asks: "Is it not strange, that an infant should be heir of the whole World?"⁴ This one thought fills the first thirty pages of Traherne's poems, and really underlies them all.

To all these mystical philosophers the ordinary, matter-of-fact person objects that a child has no such spiritual vision. When fine old Tom Fuller suggests that an infant's apparently uncaused smiles are prompted by its secret communications with the angels, the thought may pass as a fancy.⁵ Fuller is too genial a companion to be quarrelled with. But to rear a complete philosophy of life upon the idea seems preposterous.

Little objection, then, will be raised by these prosaic minds as both Wordsworth and Traherne trace the loss of this

supposed heavenly vision in the interests and duties of the busy world in which the child finds himself. Here the two poets agree precisely.⁶ But where Wordsworth acquiesced in the situation, finding ample recompense for the loss "in years that bring the philosophic mind," Traherne urged on man the recovery of his vanished gift. He himself seems to have achieved it;

For till His Works my Wealth became,
No Lov, or Peace, did me enflame:
But now I have a Deity.⁷

That recovery was for him a purely spiritual process, the realization that earthly values are false and that true happiness comes from what is "Hev'nly, Godlike, & Eternal."⁸ Such an attitude toward life, he believed, with the cultivation of man's faculty for quiet meditation, will restore all that a more active, greedily seeking life has destroyed. No part of this doctrine was at all new. Plato, St. Paul, Plotinus, the Stoic philosophers, and the mystics had all stressed it; and it would be impossible to tell whence Traherne derived the thought.

One finds, therefore, in these *Poems of Felicity* the strange mingling of reality and unreality. They are as filled as Vaughan's are with the objects of the material world; but over them all is the shimmer of unreality; Traherne's world is not quite ours. Vaughan mentions the flowers, the birds, the brooks, the stars repeatedly, and each to him is a symbol; but all are also very real. Traherne writes in a different way. The wonderful Meditation beginning, "The corn was orient and immortal wheat, which never should be reaped, nor was ever sown," and the poems, "**Desire**" and "**Wonder**," bring before us the simplest things of life, but under how strange a guise. In the former he wrote:

Where are the silent streams,
The living waters and the glorious beams,
The sweet reviving bowers,
The shady groves, the sweet and curious flowers,
The springs and trees, the heavenly days,
The flow'ry meads, and glorious rays,
The gold and silver towers?

The other poem has even a stranger touch:

The Streets seem'd paved with golden Stones,
The Boys & Girls all mine;
To me how did their lovely faces shine!
The Sons of Men all Holy ones,
In Joy & Beauty, then appear'd to me;
And evry Thing I found
(While like an Angel I did see)
Adorn'd the ground.

Only of Blake, in such pieces as the "Echoing Green" and the "Laughing Song," can one expect such complete transformation of reality as this. Traherne was widely separated from George Herbert, on the one hand, with his practical ethics of every-day life, and even from Henry Vaughan, on the other, with his truly sympathetic love for all objects of nature.

Unreal as Traherne's glimpses of this world may seem to us, they expressed for him the highest reality. He regarded the material universe as a direct revelation of God. "Now in this world I Him discern," he declared; for material objects, forms, and colors all appeared,

As if my God
From his Abode
By these intended to be seen.⁹

Right here, therefore, man finds the most instructive lesson he can ever have, if only he reads the text with some understanding. He must ever feel that

Ev'n here below
His Omnipresence we
Do pry into, that Copious Treasury.

And always for Traherne

The Hevens were an Oracle, & spake
Divinity; the Earth did undertake
The Office of a Priest; and I b'ing dumb,
(Nothing besides was so) All things did com
With Voices & Instructions.¹⁰

So God lives in all that he has created. "His greatness," according to Traherne, "is the presence of His soul with all objects in infinite spaces," and we have attained our full development only when "our Souls are present with all objects, and beautified with the ideas and figures of them all."¹¹ If this be so, and if man be especially animated with the presence of his creator, Traherne is really forced to ask, unless he would avoid the one obvious deduction:

Are men made Gods? And may they see
So wonderful a thing
As God in me?¹²

All this is good, orthodox neo-Platonic doctrine, with simply an unusual stress on the omnipresence of the spirit of the deity. Insisting on that as he did, Traherne made less than Plato and those English poets like Drummond and Vaughan who followed him of the need of rising above this world of fleeting sensations. Vaughan's poem, "The World," and the first lines of *Comus* present the poet's interpretation of Plato beautifully. But Traherne appreciated so keenly the significance of even the most common things, that he saw no revelation surer than this from our senses. He is occasionally led by this faith to enumerate, with a detail that borders on the ludicrous, some simple things that for him take on this deeper significance. Instead of looking on all sensory experiences as an impediment to the sound growth of the soul, Traherne, like the more modern philosophers, recognized the value of all in man's complex development. Summing up his own inner culture, he wrote:

And I
Perspicuously
Each way instructed am; by Sense,
Experience, Reason, & Intelligence;

while in another poem he boldly declared:

My Senses were Informers of my Heart.¹³

Traherne, however, clearly assigned two different meanings to the word sense. It designates first a merely physical experience; but it marks also a mental or spiritual power. So he explains that

To walk abroad is, not with Eys,
But Thoughts, the Fields to see & prize.

All material things, he holds, can be enjoyed thus, "both in a natural & transcendent way." But although each faculty has this higher mode of operation, the poet speaks most often of sight. Man has really three eyes;

Two Luminaries in my Flesh
Did me refresh;
But one did lurk within,
Beneath my Skin,
That was of greater Worth than both the other.

Of this he spoke elsewhere as

A meditating inward Ey
Gazing at Quiet did within me ly,

for the possession of which, chiefly, he could assert:

For simple Sense
Is Lord of all created Excellence.¹⁴

This inner, or spiritual, vision, by which even the most distant objects are made present to us, *virtually* if not *in bulk*, reveals the higher grades of truth. A mist clouds the eye while it is fixed on actual objects within its range; whereas

The highest things are easiest to be shewn,
And only capable of being known.

The true source, therefore, of sensory experience is an intuitive power,

A little Spark
That shining in the dark
Makes & encourages my Soul to rise.

It is a power that is not derived from experience; it is man's birthright and is strongest in childhood. At all events, it is the faculty

From whence those living Streams I do derive,
By which my thirsty Soul is kept alive.¹⁵

Placing this high value on intuition, Traherne naturally recommends a life of thought. He speaks of the "meditating, inward Ey gazing at Quiet" within him. He is sure that

Man was born to meditat on things,
And to contemplat the Eternal Springs
Of God & Nature, Glory, Bliss, & Pleasure;

and that

A quiet silent Person may possess
All that is Great or Good in Blessedness:
The Inward Work is the Supream.¹⁶

How similar this is to the words of Plotinus, the great source of all neo-Platonic mysticism: "The Soul's expres-

sion is not in action but in wisdom, in a contemplative operation within itself; and this, this alone, is Happiness." In this regard, Wordsworth was Traherne's unsuspecting follower. How greatly he would have appreciated the fine series of poems called "**Thoughts**" one can only surmise. They show that the soul may be pent in the body for the time being, but that it is not confined there. In thought it can range at will; it is "a sphere not shut up here but everywhere." "Thoughts are always free"; they are the bond between man and God; and, since "by thoughts alone the soul is made divine," the mind is "the only being that doth live." By thought man enters the spiritual world and shares truly in eternity.

Such, at least, was the eternity that Traherne dreamed of and craved. Most crudely, it may be, the ordinary man conceives of it simply as a series of moments with a beginning but without an end. Philosophers, however, of all schools have regarded it quite differently. Plato understood it to be a timeless existence above this changing world where spacial and temporal considerations are so momentous. Eternity to Plato meant also the condition of perfect blessedness. Boethius defined it as "the whole and perfect simultaneous possession of interminable life." Or, to put the thought in other words, eternity is "the self-activity of infinite intellectual will."¹⁷ In that sort of eternity, although only God is truly and properly eternal, man can participate, according to the teaching of Aquinas, and enjoy visions of glory there.¹⁸ Augustine, too, believed that the rational mind can discern by intuition forms of eternal truth. "We behold," he wrote, "by the sight of the mind, in that eternal truth from which all things temporal are made, the form according to which we are, and according to which we do anything by true and right reason."¹⁹ To share in eternity, these churchmen mean, is to rise by mental activity to that sphere of the ultimate reality above space and time and recognize truths as God does.

This concept of eternity was plainly expressed by some thinkers of the seventeenth century. Spinoza, who lived at the same time as Traherne and who was as much engrossed in thoughts of the absolute as he, adopted it. By eternity he means not an unending period of time, but the infinite completeness of God. The mind can become eternal through clear and adequate consciousness; for, as one of his elucidators expounds his view, "the mind, in its knowledge of God, is a part of God's complete knowledge of himself." Or, to quote from another passage, "the mind which thinks truly, is one with the reality which it thinks. What is true, is true independently of time; and the mind which *is* true thinking, is free from temporal and local conditions or is itself an 'eternal' mode."²⁰ If that be true, eternity denotes not a continuance of existence, but a manner or quality of existence. Spinoza simply gives to an old idea fuller statement and sums all up thus in the *Ethics*: "Things are conceived by us as actual in two ways; either as existing in relation to a given time or place, or as contained in God and following from the necessity of the