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THE IMAGERY
OF THE ENGLISH METAPHYSICAL POETS
STUDIED WITH REFERENCE TO
GERMAN AND CZECH BAROQUE POETRY

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INTRODUCTION

This is a study of five English Metaphysical poets - Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan, Cowley and Marvell - whose work, or rather one aspect of it, the imagery, will be examined in some detail. In the last two chapters of the study we shall discuss German and Czech baroque poetry: not to prove that baroque and Metaphysical poetry are one and the same, but to note certain parallels of thought and expression, interesting in themselves, and, what is more important to us, useful in underlining the distinguishing features of the English Metaphysical school.

It might not be amiss at this point to try to elucidate the terms "Metaphysical" and "baroque". In the study of English poetry the word "Metaphysical" has acquired a special meaning so that for us today "Metaphysical poets" are the poets of the seventeenth century who wrote in a fashion similar to or derived from the poetry of John Donne. Their work was on the whole not metaphysical in the general sense of the word, but, as Professor Grierson says in his Introduction to Metaphysical Lyrics & Poems of the Seventeenth Century (p. xv), "the word describes better what is the peculiar quality of their poetry than any other". They were concerned with the primary problems of life and death, of flesh and spirit, of man and God; and they expressed their thoughts and emotions in images in which the abstract and the concrete are inextricably mixed. These startling images, the concetti metafisici of the Italian Renaissance, are the most memorable characteristic
of the Metaphysical poets, expressing the immediacy of spiritual as well as physical reality, which existed in their minds. Their poetry has an argumentative tone, which together with the penchant for learned, recherché images and with the sincere, deep preoccupation with spiritual problems, make up the strange, unmistakable quality of Metaphysical poetry. It is interesting to note that there was a derogatory touch in the name at first: Dryden is full of disapproval when he says of Donne (in his Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire) that "he affects the metaphysics not only in his satires but in his amorous verses, where nature only ought to reign." Dr. Johnson in his Life of Cowley - where the term "Metaphysical" is for the first time used consistently - is anything but complimentary of the type of poetry to which he gives this name.

It is at least an amusing coincidence, then, to find that the word "baroque" was originally a derogatory nickname. Its etymology is a little doubtful. The word seems to have derived either from the Spanish "barocco", meaning an irregularly shaped pearl and hence in a general sense anything twisted, distorted; or, and this is even more interesting, from the Italian "barocco", a mnemonic word, representing by its vowels the fourth mood of the second figure of syllogism, in which the premises are a universal affirmative and a particular negative, and the conclusion a particular negative. This sort of reasoning came to represent to the neoclassic mind all the contortion of scholastic philosophy, and hence, applied generally, anything that is unnaturally twisted. The term "baroque" remained a vaguely pejorative one
for a long time. Indeed, it was only in the late nineteenth century that it ceased to be almost a term of abuse. Established first in art criticism, and later (by the German scholars Karl Borinski and Fritz Strich) as a term of literary criticism, it now denotes the type of art which appeared in the later sixteenth and in the seventeenth century as a reaction against the serene balance of the Renaissance.

Baroque art has been called the art of "movement in space"; it is indeed the art of movement, of passion, of expression rather than of representation. It is linked (exclusively, it is thought by some critics) with that Renaissance of Catholicism, the Counter-Reformation. It is true that the ecstasy of a religious revival found perfect expression in the passion-swept statues and canvasses, or in the swooning joy of the hymns to Christ and to the Virgin. But the baroque characteristics - the dramatic form, the extravagance of expression - are equally prominent in the work of Protestant artists, even if Protestant art as such is perhaps naturally overshadowed by the exuberant riches of Catholic religious art which could express itself in painting and sculpture as well as in words.

Like the Metaphysicals, the baroque poets were preoccupied with the relationship between man and God, with the mystery of life and death, with the horror of decay, the dichotomy of

1) by J. Isaacs in his broadcast on "Thornhill and the Baroque Age", reprinted in The Listener of 27 April 1950
flesh and spirit. They expressed their emotions in fantastic conceits which, though perhaps lacking in the subtlety and intellectual flavour of Metaphysical images, yoke together ideas from the concrete and abstract worlds just as extravagantly. There is less of the argumentative quality, of Mr. Eliot's "tough reasonableness" in European baroque poetry generally. One might surmise that here at any rate may be seen the influence of the Counter-Reformation which fed the emotions rather than the intellect.

As is to be expected in an art obsessed with the expression of emotions rather than with artistic representation, baroque art is often shapeless, sometimes erring in taste; we feel however the power of emotion behind the exaggerated gesture or conceit, and we cannot but be moved by it. Pace Benedetto Croce, baroque art can be, and indeed is, art. Contorted by the ecstasy of divine love, Bernini's St. Teresa remains a work of art.

When considering either Metaphysical or baroque poetry, we cannot fail to note the importance of the image. The conceit is in fact the first characteristic that springs to our minds; we remember the pair of compasses even when we have forgotten the argument of Donne's Valediction: Forbidding Mourning. The value of the image for this poetry may perhaps justify a study which

1) Benedetto Croce, Storia della età barocca in Italia, p. 37: "... quel che è veramente arte non è mai barocco, e quel che è barocco non è arte."
concentrates on the imagery.

This may seem like neglecting the substance for the mere form, for, as Coleridge says, "images, however beautiful ... do not of themselves characterise the poets"; they "become proofs of original genius only in so far as they are dominated by a predominant passion, or by associated thoughts and images awakened by that passion."

But if a poet's imagery is an important and characteristic expression of his genius, or rather of the predominant passion that awakens his genius, it is then justifiable to study a poet through his imagery, and even to attempt to arrive at some understanding of the underlying idea which had inspired the poetry.

In the light of Coleridge's remark the Metaphysical conceit takes upon itself a new and deeper significance. An examination of the imagery may help us to realise what was the predominant idea behind Metaphysical poetry, which was powerful enough to shape the imagery into a distinctive pattern, often resembling strangely that of contemporary baroque poetry.

The similarity of imagery employed by different poets argues for some "predominant passion" which they all shared, some intellectual and emotional mood deep enough to affect men of such different characters as Herbert and Crashaw, Vaughan and Marvell.

The fact that there is considerable similarity in the imagery

1) Biographia Literaria (ed. by George Sampson, Cambridge University Press 1920), p. 61
employed by the Metaphysicals and that employed by the European baroque poets, suggests that the "predominant passion" was one that was shared by men all over Europe.

Of the English poets to be discussed in this study, every one had a university education: Crashaw, Herbert, Cowley and Marvell were Cambridge men, Vaughan studied at Oxford. They had friends at court, among the nobility, the scholars and leading men of letters of their time. In short, they all belonged to the educated class, the only one that was aware of the cultural heritage of the Middle Ages, and was capable of grasping the significance of any political and ideological changes, and sensitive to the effect of such changes on the inherited tradition.

In Germany the medieval town culture had almost disappeared under the stress of long wars and political unrest, and poetry was now in the hands of the educated classes only. Poets of importance belonged to the clergy, to one of the universities, or to one of the courts. In Bohemia, owing to peculiar political circumstances of which more will be said later, baroque poetry had few intellectual ambitions. It became largely a propaganda weapon of the Counter-Reformation; but as it was mostly written by priests, monks, schoolmasters and men belonging to the lesser nobility, it still represented the intelligentsia of the country, such as it was in those tragic times.

We may say then that the poetry of this period, both in England and on the continent of Europe, was written for and by the class that could be expected to understand or at least to
sense the significance of the intellectual revolution that was taking place during the time. As this intellectual revolution, or rather evolution, was making its effect felt slowly and imperceptibly, it is to our advantage that the five poets in whose work we are chiefly interested, were not strictly contemporaries (Vaughan, for instance, died some sixty years later than Herbert), for we may thus trace in their work the changes of mood from the Jacobean violence of passion, be it carnal or spiritual, to the polite, restrained wit of the Restoration.

It should be noted here that while most of the English poetry to be discussed in this study, was written in the first half of the seventeenth century, the German and Czech baroque poetry which forms the subject of the last two chapters, dates mostly from the fifties of the seventeenth century onwards. In fact, we find Czech poems, distinctly baroque in character, published as late as 1715. But we must remember that ideas travelled more slowly then, and that we may speak only very generally of a contemporaneity of ideas in Western and Central Europe in the seventeenth century. Even today we find the "time-lag" still at work, and in the seventeenth century, when means of communication were still few and precarious (and rendered even more so by the political unrest), interchange of ideas was slow. Decades elapsed before a notion familiar to educated men in England arrived in Eastern Germany or in Bohemia. If we bear in mind the necessity of allowing for the "time-lag", we shall find much to rouse our interest when comparing the English poets of the forties and
fifties of the seventeenth century with their European counterparts of the second half of the century.

While attempting to identify the "predominant passion" of the seventeenth-century poets, however, we are fully justified in considering mainly the first half of the century, or going even further back. It was during these earlier years that the thoughts and emotions grew which were to find expression in poetry later.

What was then the intellectual climate of these years? First and foremost we must remember the curiously dual character of the period which made man the true great Amphibium. In the seventeenth century for the last time the scholastic philosophical system was still a reality to be felt, as well as thought out, and not merely a theory to be reconstructed. At the same time the intellectual stimulus of the Renaissance had begun to bear fruit. The medieval world picture was still a part of the educated man's mind. Although the universities had relaxed their strict scholastic discipline, they still taught enough of the "ragged notions and babblements" resented by Milton.

The great virtue of the medieval Ptolemaic system was its all-embracing compactness. It offered a consistent explanation of the working of the universe, physically geocentric, but theocentric in its full implications, and backed by the authority of the Church, as well as by the testimony of man's own senses.

In addition to a satisfactory theory of the physical universe, scholastic philosophy offered also a logical arrangement of all creation in the hierarchy of the great Chain of Being, which cor-
roborted the cosmic system in two important aspects. Firstly, it linked all forms of creation through man with the angels and with God. As in the Ptolemaic system, where the earth, and man with it, was the centre and at the same time the sublunary cesspool of the universe, so in the Chain of Being man's position was again paradoxical. He was the link with God, and at the same time the link with lower creation; he was, in Pope's words -

Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state,
A Being darkly wise, and rudely great;
.... He hangs between, in doubt to act, or rest;
In doubt to deem himself a God, or Beast;
.... Created half to rise, and half to fall;
Great Lord of all things, yet a prey to all;

Essay on Man

or, in E.M.W. Tillyard's less elegant but equally expressive phrase, the "Clapham Junction of the creation".

The second aspect in which these two theories met was in the importance of the Divine for them both. The coelum empyraeum where God with His angels dwelt, was a physical part of the cosmic system: in the Chain of Being God was the last link, the apex of the pyramid. Without God either of these theories was incomplete.

The hierarchy of creation in the Chain of Being comprised smaller hierarchies within itself, each class of creation being graded from the lowest to the highest, most perfect specimen. Thus the eagle was the king of birds, the lion of the animals, the dolphin of fish. Correspondencies and affinities were sought out

1) The Elizabethan World Picture, p. 60
between the various classes; the most popular parallel was between man, the microcosm, and the macrocosm of the universe, or between the universe and the body politic. The effect of this theory of correspondences was to emphasize further the orderliness of the universe, the sense of unity throughout all creation through God, and unity with God through the creation:

Man is all symmetrie,
Full of proportions, one limbe to another,
And all to all the world besides:
Each part may call the furthest, brother:
For head with foot hath private amitie,
And both with moons and tides.

George Herbert, Man

The reality of this link between man and the universe found expression in astrology, which held its sway till very late indeed. Alciati attacked it in his Diverse Impresse in 1531, but it is well known that the unhappy Wallenstein, for instance, followed the advice of the stars to his very death in 1634.

The important point to remember about the medieval picture of the world is how much it depended on God both in the physical construction of the universe and in the picture of the creation in the Chain of Being. In this lay the strength of the Ptolemaic system and of the other theories attached to it. They were fully consistent with the teaching of the Church, according to which God was revealed first through his word and then through his works, and was present in them.

One aspect of this conception of the universe was of particular importance to literature. This was the allegorical
habit of thinking and expression, closely connected with, and indeed originating from, the theory of correspondences, which was extended from the visible world to the invisible world of ideas. Objects, both animate and inanimate, were seen as allegories of moral, religious and metaphysical truths, while retaining their concrete forms. It was an excellent method of conveying instantly the most complex ideas even to an illiterate audience. The Church made full use of it, and it became popular in secular art as well. Hence the popularity of bestiaries, the ready transformation of classical myths into Christian moral tales; hence also, a late flowering of this allegorical habit, the emblem books, of which more will be said presently.

At the end of the sixteenth century this fully integrated medieval theory of the universe, so much more logical to the believer than the new philosophies, was still very much alive.

Copernicus had published his *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* in 1543, but for a long time his theory was regarded as a mere hypothesis in which even the author himself did not seriously believe. It was incomprehensible to the layman, and besides it lacked the weight of the tradition, of Aristotle, of the Church and of the evidence of one's own senses.

In 1588 appeared Tycho Brahe's *De Mundi Aetherei recentionibus Phaenomenis*, edited by his pupil Kepler. This work, in which a *via media* was sought between the Ptolemaic and Copernican systems, was found more acceptable. But although Brahe's work was not so directly opposed to the Ptolemaic theory as the Copernican system
(according to Brahe, earth remained the stationary centre of the orbits of the moon, the sun and of the sphere of fixed stars, but the other planets revolved round the sun), it played a considerable part in bringing about the eventual collapse of the geocentric theory. The very integration that was one of the chief virtues of the Ptolemaic system made any partial adaptation to the new scientific developments impossible. The network of correspondencies, so closely woven, was eminently non-elastic, and even slight adjustments eventually rent the fabric.

In addition to the cosmic theories of Copernicus, Brahe and Kepler, and independent of them, other theories began to make their impact on man's consciousness. The sharply defined picture of medieval cosmos was shattered by the realisation that possibly there were other planets inhabited by rational creatures, and indeed whole other worlds. Instead of a geocentric universe men found themselves faced with the possibility of a formless aggregate of worlds. If the fixed planets were to be proved to be suns with their own planetary systems attached to them, then the universe was no longer geocentric, nor heliocentric, but simply acentric.

None of these theories were directly dependent on the new astronomic theories, nor could they be proved scientifically, but their influence was considerable. The picture of an endless, amorphous universe was frightening (Pascal: "L'éternel silence de ces espaces infinis m'effraie."), and its impact on the Christian dogma, which presupposed one single inhabited world, one Paradise, one Fall and one Redeemer, self-evident.
There were important discoveries in other fields of human knowledge as well, but significant as they were, their impact on men's minds had not the force of the new cosmic theories, which were attacking the very foundations of the universe.

It may seem too easily possible to exaggerate the influence of the new philosophy on the intellectual climate of the time. For one thing it might be claimed that these theories penetrated very slowly into the public consciousness. The Catholic Church, for instance, admitted silently the general acceptance of the heliocentric theories only as late as 1757 when works dealing with this subject were removed from the Index librorum prohibitorum. In the earlier seventeenth century the man in the street, it might be said, was probably as little affected by the new discoveries as his modern counterpart would be by the non-military implications of the atomic theories. But we must remember that it is emphatically not the man in the street in whom we are interested. Seventeenth-century poetry was unashamedly highbrow, and aimed consciously at the select minority of the intelligentsia. It was this select minority who had the sensibility and the imagination to realise the far-reaching consequences of the new discoveries for the philosophical system which they inherited from the Middle Ages.

It is true, however, that part of the effect attributed to the arrival of the New Philosophy was actually due to a medieval belief - the belief in the gradual decay of the sublunary world since the Golden Age. The end of the world was to come with the
close of the third era, after two thousand years of the Christian dispensation. Coinciding with the beginning disintegration of the medieval system, this pessimism naturally increased the feeling of insecurity caused by the realisation that man was living in an unknown universe. Thus Donne in The First Anniversary (The Anatomy of the World) attributes to this belief in the decay of the old world the search for a new one:

And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,  
The Element of fire is quite put out;  
The Sun is lost, and th'earth, and no mans wit  
Can well direct him where to looke for it.  
And freely men confess that this world's spent,  
When in the Planets, and the Firmament  
They seeke so many new; ...  

(11. 205-11)

It might also be argued that acceptance of the new cosmic theories, which relegated the earth to a subordinate position in the universe, could hardly have caused a mood of dejection, when in the Ptolemaic theory the earth was the basest part of the universe. But in the Ptolemaic system the position of the earth, and of man himself, was, as we have seen, one of paradoxical elation and humiliation. The earth was the cesspool of the universe, but at the same time it was the centre of things, the pivot of the whole system. In the new theories, on the other hand, earth was no longer regarded as debased, but its significance and value for the whole system were much reduced.

Yet while accepting the destructive effect of these theories on the security of the medieval system, we must not forget the positive assets of the Renaissance whence the original intellect-
ual impetus had come. By the beginning of the seventeenth century Renaissance ideas had had time to penetrate into men's minds, and to become a part of their consciousness. The eagerness and the adventurous spirit of exploration and discovery both in the world of ideas and in the material world of unmapped new territories had by now become natural qualities. The thirst to know and to absorb new knowledge had spread to many fields. The adventurous spirit manifested itself in language as well; the earlier seventeenth century was as much a formative period for the English language as the Elizabethan years. The same may be said, perhaps with even more justification, of Europe. The language that Goethe was to use was coined in the courts, the universities and the linguistic societies of the seventeenth century. The Czech Protestant exiles wrote their poems and translations of the Bible in a language which was to be the model of purity and beauty to the patriots of the Enlightenment, and the Catholic poets in Bohemia by their linguistic experiments prepared the ground for the expansion of the language which was to become the first task of the Patriots.

This spirit of adventure in language, this bold experimentalism very naturally affected the poets' imagery in particular. They realised the possibilities of a changing language; we may quote Waller's lines as a testimony that they saw what was happening:

But who can hope his lines should long
Last in a daily changing tongue?

The poetic language became in their hands a plastic instrument for the expression of their tumultuous, labyrinthine thought.
The elation of the Renaissance discovery of man's intellectual powers gave emphasis to that which could be grasped by the human mind and senses. A new kind of realism was inaugurated in the arts, a new freshness of vision. This was a subtler kind of realism than, say, Chaucer's. Sensory appreciation was keen and sharp, but at the same time there was a desire to see beyond the physical appearances, to convey the inner meaning of things which touched them with a new light.

While there had been time enough for the Renaissance to colour man's thought and vision with a consciousness of his capacities and of the wonderful worlds open to him, there had been time enough also to realise the fundamental limitations of human power. This intellectual humiliation added to the decreasing importance of the earth and of man in the Copernican universe.

Furthermore, there was a conflict between the Renaissance idea of continuous progress and the still current medieval belief in the decay of the world. The medieval world picture, emotionally secure, but intellectually sterile, was set against the new, unchartered, inviting and terrifying universe, barely sketched by the astronomers.

The result of these conflicting ideas was tension and struggle, which became the keynotes of the period. This struggle, inevitable in a period of transition, left its mark on the arts. Hence the passionate, personal note in the poetry, often written in the form of a plea or a dramatic dialogue. Hence the antithetic, argumentative prose, with its paradigma par excellence in Sir Thomas
Browne. In the visual arts, particularly on the continent of Europe, where the Counter-Reformation permitted and encouraged a visual representation of the spiritual forces, movement was everything. The statues of baroque saints with their flying robes, upturned faces and dramatic gestures, the spectacular commotion of overcrowded canvasses, all electrify the spectator with the passionate power of their suspended emotion.

There was struggle in the world of ideas, and there was hard and bitter struggle in the world of men. The seventeenth century in England was marked by the last large-scale war fought on English soil—a war all the more terrible perhaps for being a civil war. On the Continent, the seventeenth century—the first fifty years of it at least—passed in the shadow of a war unparalleled in all the dark history of Europe, in length at any rate, even if the two world wars of the present century more than matched it in carnage.

It is now the practice to minimise the extent and effect of the Thirty Years’ War. Quite possibly contemporary reports were rather exaggerated, often for financial reasons (e.g. to evade a new, higher tax), or for other reasons of policy, but even if the population of Bohemia between the years 1618-1648 was not reduced to half its number, even if less than the recorded 24,000 people were killed or burnt to death during the sack of Magdeburg in 1631, the impact of such exaggerated reports on the minds of people living in constant terror of invading armies, must have been only too real. And, after all, we are primarily
interested in the minds of the people who lived during this period, not in the dry statistics of history.

Anyway, the very fact that these horrifying rumours did arise and could be accepted as truth tells us quite a lot about the actual state of affairs. Although the devastation of war was limited to certain areas only, the total area affected was by no means small. Moreover, certain regions particularly important from the strategic or political point of view, as for instance Bohemia, Saxony and Bavaria, were overrun several times. In these unhappy lands the destruction was of course complete, for what little life was left after the passing of the invading armies fell an easy prey to those grim camp-followers of a mercenary army, famine and the plague. Again the numerous cases of cannibalism recorded by contemporary chroniclers, may have been a part of the inevitable atrocity rumours, but the testimony of the Earl of Arundel, English ambassador to the Electoral meeting at Regensburg in 1636, is gruesome enough. According to William Crowne's account of the Ambassador's journey, "From Coln hither (to Frankfort) all the towns,

1) These present a dire enough picture, if we realise the suffering that lies behind the figures: the German Empire including Alsace and excluding Bohemia and the Netherlands, had in 1618 a population of roughly 21 millions, which by 1648 went down to 13½ millions (W. J. Elssas, Umriss einer Geschichte der Preise und Löhne in Deutschland vom ausgehenden Mittelalter bis zum Beginn des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, Vol. I, p.78, Leiden 1936. quoted by C. V. Wedgwood, The Thirty Years War, p. 516).

2) C. V. Wedgwood, op. cit., pp. 412-13
villages and castles be battered, pillaged and burnt"; at Neunkirchen they "found one house burning and not any body in the village." At Hilfkirchen they "dined with some reserved meat of (their) own for there was not anything to be found"; at Neustadt they saw "poor children sitting at their doors almost starved to death"; at Bacharach "the poor people (were) found dead with grass in their mouths"; at Rüdesheim "His Excellency gave some relief to the poor which were almost starved as it appeared by the violence they used to get it from one another"; at Mainz there were "divers poor people lying on the dunghills, ... being scarce able to crawl for to receive His Excellency's alms", etc. etc.

Although the educated classes on the whole suffered less than the helpless peasants, their distress was not negligible. The trade, and with it the whole town organisation, was ruined by the long wars, food was scarce, taxes high, the threat of plague and plunder ever near.

In England warfare was perhaps conducted with less cruelty, except in cases like that of Irish soldiers serving in the Royal army and taken prisoner by the Parliament army. The "butcherly, Erroneous, mutinous and unnatural" consequences of a civil war were not as heavy as might have been expected. The penalties were rather plunder and confiscation. Except for actual battle areas and besieged towns, the civil war hit more severely the gentry with their pronounced loyalties than the people, for both parties were actually trying to win them over to their side.
But even if the fear was perhaps more of poverty, homelessness, and possibly exile, than of murder, rape and arson, still it was a very real fear, particularly for the educated class in which we are primarily interested. Uncertainty is the Leitmotiv here, and with uncertainty of fate came fear and desire for peace and safety.

The feeling of the uncertainty of human fate was one that was shared by men all over Europe. Few centuries can offer so many sombre and splendid illustrations to the medieval theme of "Où sont les neiges d'antan". The royal favouritism, and the sudden radical political changes, together with the long mercenary wars, offered much wealth, power and fame to men of talent and courage. But it is not without significance that the image of the Wheel of Fortune recurs so often in the literature of the period. The seventeenth century is full of histories of the rise - and the fall - of princes: Carr, Buckingham, Strafford, Laud, Montrose, Wallenstein, Tilly, Torstensson, Baner. To the seventeenth-century men the life histories of these splendid figures, and the accounts of their tragic, and so often sordid and terrible deaths, were like tales out of a moral chronicle - Wallenstein's naked body rolled up in a carpet and dragged down the stairs of Eger castle, with the head that might have borne the crown of Bohemia knocking on the stones; Strafford's death on the scaffold; Montrose's ignoble end; Laud's; the Protector's decayed corpse hanging in chains, the sanctity of his grave broken; and, on the other hand, Tilly, Baner, Mansfeld, Torstens-
son, rising from common soldiers to generals, and leading their mercenary armies across Europe in search of wealth and fame.

England herself supplied the noblest name in the roll of fallen princes. The execution of Charles I had an effect on the people of England, and, indeed, of Europe, that can hardly be fully realised today. The Tudor doctrine of the divinity that doth hedge a king, strengthened by the medieval hierarchic conception of the world, and by the rising tendency towards absolute monarchy, had been accepted as natural and true. Like a thunder-stroke must have come the news of the execution which gave the lie to the belief that

Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm from an anointed king,
The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord.

Richard II, ii, 59

The violation of the conception of the divinity of the king must have seemed like the beginning of the end of all things to most of Charles's subjects, even to those who had expressed in no uncertain terms their dissatisfaction with the King's policy. The fall of the symbol of all accepted values naturally increased the feeling of uncertainty and the fear of death.

Death indeed was ever present; death by violence, on the scaffold, on the battlefield, death by plague, death under endless disguises, ever the same, ever near. This explains a little the strange preoccupation with death which was a frequent theme in contemporary art. The Dance of Death had of course been a
traditional theme of medieval art, but the Renaissance and post-
Renaissance artists introduced a new note into it. While in the
Middle Ages men's fears concentrated on the unknown beyond the
gbreadcrumb, and on the uncertainty of salvation, in the seventeenth
century (and indeed in the late sixteenth) the thought of the
graham itself, of the disintegration of the body, carried as much
terror. Perhaps there was some connection there with the Re-
nnaissance discovery of the human body as a source of delight,
to be contemplated with pleasure and explored like a new land.
Even for scientists the human body became an America, a new-
found-land, with all the fascination of the unknown. This
delighted interest in the body is reflected with particular
clarity in contemporary painting and sculpture. A very super-
ficial comparison of the emaciated, anatomically quite impossibly
twisted bodies of medieval saints, swathed in their stiff robes,
with the glowing, shameless, luxurious nudity of Rubens's women,
illustrates sufficiently the change of attitude to the human
body which had taken place since the Renaissance.

But with the delight in the beauty of the human body came fear
of its decay, and a morbid preoccupation with the fate that will
inevitably befall it. The thought of "the skull beneath the skin"
was always there, there was always the taste of wormwood in the
sweetness of the love-cup.

Permanent awareness of death transitorily enhanced the value
of life, and made each moment of pleasure more precious and more
desirable. Hence the Carpe diem type of poem, represented so perfectly by Marvell's *Coy Mistress* in English, and Martin Opitz's *Ach Liebste, lass uns eilen* in German.

Fear of death and decay, together with all the other terrors of human existence, became absorbed in the one quest that was to become the keynote of the period - for the last time perhaps in the spiritual history of Europe.

It was the quest for security in God. In Donne's sermon preached at St. Paul's Cross on 15 September 1622 we find the following words:

But then the other order is, not as man depends upon God, as upon his beginning, but as he is to be reduced and brought back to God as to his end: and that is done by means in this world.

"By means in this world ... " - and so it was done. In the baffling new world, changed to a shapeless infinity by the new discoveries, during a time when life was uncertain and violent death ever near, man looked for the Centrum Securitatis, as Comenius called it, in God. But peace in God could not now be found without struggle. The simple, unquestioning acceptance of a divine scheme of things which encompassed man and God in a natural, permanent relationship was gone, and faith could only be regained through search, struggle and agony. It is significant that the two great prose accounts of this century of a Christian 's search for God, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Comenius' *Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart*

were both allegories in the form of a pilgrimage beset by dangers and haunted by terror.

The new world stood in opposition to the old scheme of the universe, and so a new scheme had to be created, a new unity centred in God and encompassing, and indeed growing out of, the strange, half-unknown new universe. Hence the ardent desire to see God reflected in all things earthly, to find Him per speculum et vestigium on this earth. In the words of Giordano Bruno:

By the stars, we are moved to discover the infinite effect of an infinite cause, the true and living marks of infinite power, and to contemplate the Deity not as outside of, apart from, and distant from us, but as in ourselves and more within us than we are ourselves.

There is a note of pathos in the unending struggle to unite and reconcile the temporal and the eternal - the pathos of the appealing gesture of a baroque statue reaching out towards the distant heaven. This baroque pathos gives a curious dignity even to the most grotesque excesses of this striving after unity, such as some of the images of Crashaw, or of Friedrich von Spee.

The struggle to regain the certainty of faith was all the more passionate for coming at a time when the Churches were involved in political issues. The Thirty Years' War had started as a religious war - the Emperor Ferdinand of Austria regarded it as almost a new crusade - but during the fighting the rise of nationalism changed radically the character and purpose of the war. Characteristic of the change of fundamental issues was the change in the battle-cry of the Imperial army: it is a long journey from the "Santa Maria" of the battle of the White Mountain
in 1620 to the "Viva España" of Nördlingen in 1634, but the armies of Europe completed it in something like ten years.

It was only natural then to turn away from theological disputes and political issues in order to find the living God. It was a time of religious sects, of intensely personal relationships with God, and so devotional poetry came to predominate. The Protestant poets found in it an expression of their direct communion with God. To the Catholics, the Counter-Reformation gave a new zeal by emphasizing the mystical, dramatic elements of the Mass, which gave the worshippers the sensation of personal experience of God. The sensuousness of the Mass, the music, the colours, the incense, the splendour of the church decorations, all these were the expression of an almost sensual relationship with Christ, the Virgin and with the saints. For these believers even death lost its terror, for, translated into the terms of this relationship, it became the consummation of the desire for union with Christ. This ecstatic death-wish found its perfect expression in the mors angelorum, the martyr's death of unbearable love of Christ, celebrated by the best-loved of baroque saints, St. Teresa of Avila, of Crashaw's Flaming Heart.

This desire for a direct communion with the Divine - as personified by the living figures of Christ, the Virgin and the saints - was perhaps an aspect of the desire to reconcile the temporal and the eternal. The saints who were human beings and yet achieved the desired union with God, became a proof that the
reconciliation between heaven and earth was possible. Mary Magdalen, the repentant sinner, was a popular subject of baroque art - was it because in her the dual nature of the post-Renaissance period, sensuous and repentant, as cognisant of the passions of the body as of those of the soul, found the perfect expression?

The idea of the Divine present in the world of men pervaded contemporary secular thought as well. Descartes argued for the existence of God from the idea of the Divine in the human mind - from the human to the Divine. Spinoza, the "God-intoxicated man", asserting that there is only one reality in the universe, one substance which may be defined as God, was expressing the fundamental idea of the search for God per speculum et vestigium, on earth.

This idea is the recurrent theme of the first half of the seventeenth century, the predominant passion of the years before the worship of reason became more than just the fashionable lip-service it was during this period. The search for new certainty in religion permeates naturally that most personal of all arts, poetry, and gives it its peculiar, unmistakable character. We have quoted above Coleridge's remark about the predominant passion that gives the mark of genius to a poet's imagery. For the seventeenth century it was the longing for a faith that would shape the universe into an understandable pattern, give it a new unity, which left its stamp on the poetry. The search for a spiritual experience that would achieve this reshaping of the
worlds took the form of striving to find the reflection of the Divine on earth - naturally enough for the heirs of the Renaissance. The medieval belief in correspondencies was taken up and modified to support the new search for God on earth: thus in Hermetic philosophy all inanimate objects, in so far as they were a reflection of the Divinity, were in a close, almost emotional relationship with the celestial bodies.

The devotional themes are most natural to this poetry, but the intensity of religious feeling is often expressed in the language of human passion. So we find Donne imploring his God in the terms of a lover - in *Holy Sonnet XIV*:

> Take me to you, imprison me, for I
> Except you enthrall mee, never shall be free,
> Nor ever ch^st, except you ravish mee.

or in *Holy Sonnet XVII*:

> Betray kind husband thy spouse to our sights,
> And let myne amorous soule court thy mild Dove,
> Who is most trew, and pleasing to thee, then
> When she's is embrac'd and open to most men.

Donne is not alone in writing devotional poems and secular love poems in the same language. As all earthly things are aspects of the Divine, even a human relationship can be a reflection of divine love, and, vice versa, a spiritual experience can be expressed in terms of a sensual one. This interchangeability of erotic and spiritual imagery is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the numerous poems on Mary Magdalen: the language of earthly love applied to the love of Christ comes most naturally from the lips of the beautiful sinner. So for instance in Johann
Klaic's poem Maria Magdalena:

Ich sitze hier in deinem Garten /
O lieber Fuhle komm doch bald /
Wie lange soll ich deiner warten /
Du meines Lebens Auffenthalt?

Du wolgezierte Fürstenblut
Hast mir genommen Sinn und Mut;
Ach lass mich hören deine Stimme.
Dir ist mein Brautigam bewust /
Wie dass ich gantz vor Liebe glimme /
Dein Beyseyn ist mir mehr als Lust /

where except for the last line, the tone and expression are those of a passionate poem on unrequited love.

The intensified search for reassurance of faith, threatened by the new theories, can be traced very clearly in the language of poetry. The whole world of man was seen as a reflection of the Divine:

And, indeed, what are the Heavens, the Earth, nay every Creature, but Hierogliphicks and Emblems of his Glory? (Quarles, Emblemes, Introduction)

Every little thing was like a fragment of a mirror tilted upwards to catch a glimpse of the eternal, and every one of these fragments was important in the whole scheme. In this inarticulate theocentric philosophy all the things earthly became of equal importance and of equal value. In the hierarchy of creation there appeared a new emphasis on the divine presence in the humbler forms of creation, now no longer unworthy of being included in the language of poetry.

For poetry the important result of this revaluation of the universe was that there was no reason why seemingly incongruous objects should not be linked together in an image. This resulted
in what Dr. Johnson called yoking ideas together by violence, or, in other words, in the conceit. For the Metaphysical poet there was no violence in joining together a pair of lovers and a pair of compasses, or Christ's streaming blood and a red gown. Inasmuch as they were all parts of one universe, reflecting God, they could legitimately be joined. The element of surprise at the unexpectedness of the partnership was a pleasant additional effect. The purpose underlying the Metaphysicals' search to join seemingly distant things in a single image was an attempt, unconscious perhaps, to prove that all things are part of one unity, of the divine scheme of things, and of the same value in the sight of God. This explains, incidentally, the apparent determination to introduce into poetry all the new things - the newly chartered lands, and the discoveries and inventions of science - to show that they too were a part of the scheme and a reflection of the Divine.

We must not imagine, however, that this meant that all the medieval theories of hierarchies and correspondences had disappeared. Although the conception of the universe as the Middle Ages knew it was disappearing, these theories remained and reappeared with new vigour in the eighteenth-century optimistic theories of human progress "in the best of possible worlds". Pope in his Essay on Man still uses the image of the Chain of Being without the slightest trace of self-consciousness.

For Metaphysical poetry the Middle Ages were a definite and important influence. In fact it was just the curious mixture of medieval tradition, still sufficiently alive to be a part of
men's minds, and of the intellectual inquisitiveness and self-analysis, regarded by us now as typically modern, which gave Metaphysical poetry its character.

The seventeenth century saw the last blossoming of the medieval allegorical habit of thinking. The medieval allegory was linked with the theory of correspondencies, which gave animals, plants and inanimate objects a symbolic meaning, fixed firmly and unmistakably by tradition. The Middle Ages liked to express philosophical and moral ideas in these symbolic pictures. Needless to say, the allegorising habit played a very important part in poetry. The splendid pageant of virtues and vices in the Faerie Queene was a product of this allegorical tradition in poetry.

Pictorial representation of ideas naturally appealed to the strange spiritualised realism of the seventeenth century. The realistic garb of images endowed with an allegorical meaning gave ample scope to the sharp sensuous description of which the Metaphysical poets were masters. The impression of reality could be conveyed in a mere phrase, or a word evoking a distinct sensation, as in Herbert's lines

Then came brave Glorie, puffing by
In silke that whistled ... 

The Quip

At the same time these allegorical, or emblematic pictures carried an intellectual meaning evoking an idea. Thus both the aesthetic sensitivity and the intellect were employed and
satisfied.

Most of the popular traditional emblems had a liturgical meaning bestowed on them by Church tradition. This meant that here was a wealth of imaginative material ready to be exploited by a poetry that was predominantly religious. There was a fundamental dualism in the religious emblem, which appealed to the duality of the Metaphysical character. A part, and a very important one, of the effect of the religious emblem was the play on two levels of consciousness simultaneously, as, for instance, in the well-known emblem of Christ as the Lamb. There are two visual images evoked by it, that of a lamb, a young animal, which somehow brings to our minds white innocence and happiness; and then there is the sombre, tragic image of the Lamb who died on the cross for our sins. The poet can play on these two meanings at the same time, achieving a subtle emotional effect from the contrasting feelings evoked by the word. Similarly, in the image of Christ’s blood as wine, all the sweetness and intoxicating quality of the juice of grapes remains, and at the same time the reader can be made to feel and see the blood, dark, thick, heavy with pain. Both the concrete and the abstract meaning of the word are brought into play, and a new, almost liturgical meaning is created at the same time, the sensuous and intellectual associations of the concrete meaning being weakened and as it were refined by the abstract significance. In the seventeenth century, however, emblems did not remain confined to the well-known symbols.
The emblem became an esoteric medium of expressing personal experiences of the poet.

With a poet sensitive to the nuances of meaning of a word, this led to brilliant experimentalism, and to what might almost be termed a personal liturgy; certain words were used repeatedly and intentionally in order to create a certain desirable response. So in Crashaw's poems we find the word "nest" used with an effect comparable to the hypnotic repetition of words in the Catholic Ave Maria; for Marvell the word "green" has a similarly personal significance, and for Vaughan "white" (unless we accept the explanation that the symbolic meaning of holy innocence in this case is simply due to the influence of Welsh where the word gwyn means both "white" and "holy, blessed").

The medieval scholastic heritage affected not only the form and imagery, but the very structure of Metaphysical poetry as well. The training in scholastic philosophy, in logic and the use of syllogisms, which was a part of the university education, gave these poets their "tough reasonableness beneath a slender grace", as Mr Eliot described it, i.e. the logical, almost argumentative construction of their poetry. Marvell's Coy Mistress, in which Mr Eliot demonstrated this tough reasonableness, is of course a perfect example. One could almost write out the whole poem in the form of an orthodox syllogism with the two prescribed premises ("Had we but world enough ... " and "But at my back I

1) cf. F. E. Hutchinson, Henry Vaughan, p. 162
always hear '...') and with the lines "Now therefore, while the youthful hew ... " heavily underlined as the triumphant conclusion.

Metaphysical poetry owes to scholasticism, in addition to its name and something of its structure, yet another debt. When Dr. Johnson complained of Cowley's "pursuing his thoughts to their last ramifications" he was complaining of a quality that often makes - and sometimes mars - the true Metaphysical conceit, and that is considerably indebted to the scholastic training in logic. Mention was made above of the dual imagery of the Metaphysicals, with its associations with the allegorical habit of thinking and with the liturgical tradition of the old Church. In such "liturgical" images the logical method of pursuing a thought to its furthest conclusions was applied to a certain extent, as was natural with men trained in that way of thinking. In the conceit proper, however, this meant exploiting both meanings of a word, its real, concrete, and its metaphorical, abstract, significance, to the full logical consequence, or - to the last ramifications. Addison's remarks on Cowley's metaphors in his essay on mixed wit (Spectator No. 62) are very much to the point here, and may therefore perhaps be quoted more fully:

... there is another kind of wit, which consists partly in the resemblance of ideas and partly in the resemblance of words, which for distinction sake I shall call mixed wit. This kind of wit is that which abounds in Cowley more than in any other author that ever wrote ... 

... Cowley, observing the cold regard of his mistress's eyes, and at the same time their power of producing love in him, considers them as burning glasses made of ice ...

... The reader may observe in every one of these instances that the poet mixes the qualities of fire with those of love; and in
the same sentence, speaking of it both as a passion and as real fire, surprises the reader with these seeming resemblances or contradictions, that make up all the wit in this kind of writing...

... Its foundations are laid partly in falsehood and partly in truth; reason puts in her claim for one half of it, and extravagance for the other.

We may note here the emphasis on the rational aspect of the image. While in the "liturgical" image (in Crashaw, Vaughan, to some extent in Marvell, for instance) the effect is achieved mainly by the evocation of sensuous and emotional associations, in the conceit of this latter kind, abundant in Donne, Cowley, Herbert, and again to some extent in Marvell, the ratiocinative power of the metaphor is prominent, unduly so to Johnson's and Addison's eye. These two distinctly different types of image, grouped together under the name of conceit, would indicate perhaps that the "dissociation of sensibility" had begun earlier than Mr. Eliot suggests.

We have discussed the background of ideas and events of the earlier seventeenth century, and the influence of the complex intellectual climate on poetry. In the course of this discussion certain characteristics of Metaphysical and, to a lesser extent, baroque poetry emerged which we may now attempt to summarise:

1) The most striking characteristic quality of Metaphysical poetry is the wide range of its images, chosen deliberately for their variety and disparity. The link between them is a work of the intellect as often as of the imagination. The conceits
encompass the strangest and most remote, as well as the homely and everyday, things, and treat them as equally valuable material for poetry.

2) The medieval allegory, blossoming out for the last time in emblem books, deeply influenced the imagery. It inspired what we have termed the "liturgical" images, which utilised the sensuous and emotional associations of words traditionally endowed with symbolic meanings. Indirectly, this "liturgical" type of image led to experiments in the sensuous, vocal effects of words, in which the poet's personal preference for certain words naturally directed his choice.

3) The medieval method of scholastic disputation, transferred to the sphere of poetry, gave it its compactness, and argumentative form. In imagery, logic, applied to the dual meaning of a word in metaphor, and driven almost ad absurdum, led to the vogue of the conceit proper, where the concrete and abstract, the literal and metaphorical senses of a word were exploited simultaneously to the extremes of their logical consequences. Addison in his essay on mixed wit gave a very good description of this sort of conceit in Cowley's poetry.

4) Fundamentally, as we have said earlier, Metaphysical poetry at its most characteristic is devotional. It expresses most fully and most movingly not the bliss of the Christian's dwelling with God, but the pain and fear of the struggle necessary before reaching such bliss. Hence the passionately argumentative tone of the poems, hence the flights of sheer ecstasy and the moments
of heart-breaking despair, the never-ending doubt and the flashes of rebellion against this Jacob's struggle till the morning — these are the deep mark of this poetry.

From the uncertainty of faith and fate springs the morbid preoccupation with death and decay, and, the reverse of the coin, the frankly hedonic love poems: Post mortem nulla voluptas.

But beyond the fear of death and despair reaches the predominant passion of search for a new vision of the world, for a new unity, secure in God. This introductory chapter has attempted to trace the origins of the spiritual struggle and its effect on the matter and manner of poetry, in the work of Metaphysical poets in England. Some reference was made to their contemporaries - in spirit at least - in Germany and Bohemia. Now it remains for the ensuing chapters to test the truth of these grey theories against the green life of poetry.

In such a greatly admired family whose connection with the Herbert family was a very close one, one witness his poems written for George Herbert's mother, Mrs. Magdalen Herbert, and his request for a deal with "the figure of Christ, specified in an Anchor" to George Herbert himself. It was perhaps from Donne's poetry that Herbert learnt the dramatic effect of colloquial simplicity of language in poetry.

There is also a personal link, although an indirect one only, between Herbert and Crashaw. For Nicholas Ferrar, the head of Crashaw's Little Gidding, was a very close friend of Herbert's.
Chapter One

The Altar of the Heart

G E O R G E H E R B E R T

No study of the English Metaphysical poets would be complete without George Herbert. Indeed it is to some extent owing to him that we use the word "school" of this group of poets at all. Of course Donne was, if not the only begetter (as this study purports to show, Metaphysical poetry was much too much a part of a widespread European development to stand or fall with one man only), at least by far the strongest force behind English Metaphysical poetry; but Herbert's part as an intermediary was in its way just as important.

He knew and greatly admired Donne whose connection with the Herbert family was a very close one (as witness his poems written for George Herbert's mother, Mrs. Magdalen Herbert, and his bequest of a seal with "the figure of Christ crucified on an Anchor" to George Herbert himself). It was perhaps from Donne's poetry that Herbert learnt the dramatic effect of colloquial simplicity of language in poetry.

There is also a personal link, although an indirect one only, between Herbert and Crashaw, for Nicholas Ferrar, the head of Crashaw's Little Gidding, was a very close friend of Herbert's.

To Ferrar we owe The Temple, sent to him in manuscript by the dying poet with the request "to read it; and then, if he can think it may turn to the advantage of any dejected poor soul, let it be made public; if not, let him burn it." Crashaw expressed his admiration for Herbert in his poem "On Mr. G. Herbert's booke intituled the Temple of Sacred Poems, sent to a Gentlewoman", and, indirectly, in the title of his Steps to the Temple.

Lastly, Henry Vaughan carried his admiration for Herbert nearly to plagiarism: a considerable number of Herbert's phrases and even whole lines appear in his own poetry, almost without any alterations. In fact, as F. E. Hutchinson remarks in his edition of Herbert's poems, "There is no example in English literature of one poet adopting another poet's words so extensively" (Introduction, p. xliii).

Thus although the Metaphysicals probably never realised their affinities or saw themselves as the tribe of Donne, yet there was a link between them, and the inspiration of Donne's poetry was imparted through Herbert to Crashaw and Vaughan, as well as to Cowley, who often echoes Donne, however weakly, and to that

1) Walton, op. cit., p. 340

2) "The Preface to the Reader" speaks of the author as "Herbert's second but equall" (The Poems of Richard Crashaw, edited by L. C. Martin, p. 75).
solitary green star, Andrew Marvell.

But Herbert is important not merely as a link in the chain; he deserves every attention as a great poet, and one in whose hands poetry became a medium of investing the humblest of things with a meaning dramatic and terrible with God's will. In a study of imagery his place is a central one; his language is extremely simple at first glance, yet this simplicity is deceitful. Because his expression is almost stripped bare of the ornaments of poetic language, of the "quaint words, and trim inventions" of "Jordan (II)", and every word carries the full weight of meaning and emotion, the closest attention is needed to gauge fully the significance of the words of this poet of the understatement.

So deep are his lines rooted in his heart, with such care and anxiety did he choose them, in order to interpret shades of meaning, that he remains one of the most original poets of all time. Even his master Donne furnished him with but a few phrases, and it is typical that when Herbert borrowed a theme, "A Parodie", from either Donne or the Earl of Pembroke, he transformed the lament of the lonely lover into the soul's cry for God. So single-minded was Herbert in his devotion, so fully engrossed in his struggle for faith, that outside influences - except for the Bible - hardly touched him.

In this single-mindedness which could spare no time for secular verse, he resembles Crashaw. But although there was much similarity in their lives, short, filled with devotion, regardless of personal comfort and even of health, yet this very similarity emphasizes the fundamental difference. Briefly, of
course, Herbert was a poet of Anglicanism, of subdued emotion, of a very direct and personal relationship with God, which is the heart of Protestantism. His very saintliness was curiously human; the "holy Mr Herbert" of whom Walton speaks, retained to his last days something of the dandy he had been in his youth. He was fond of music and company; laughter was to him compatible with devotion. Unlike Crashaw, he had had secular ambitions earlier in his life, and his knowledge of "the way that takes the town" made him lenient and kind to his fellow-men. Crashaw the austere "poet and saint" remains a slightly forbidding figure in spite of his gentle nature praised by his friends.

Paradoxically, it was the ascetic Crashaw who expressed his love of Jesus and the saints in sensuous, even sensual terms. But it is to be noted that the relationship described is not that of the poet and his Lord, but of Jesus and his saints. The poet's personality does not enter the poem, except of course implicitly. He remains outside in his self-effacing devotion of a Catholic, at least as far as the theme of the poem is concerned, although in the ecstasy of his burning love he may be identifying himself with either of the protagonists of his poem.

Herbert wrote a few poems, such as "Dulnesse", in which he addressed his God in a manner somewhat similar to that adopted by Crashaw -

1) cf. As Priest to the Temple, Ch. XXVII, "The Parson in mirth" (The Works of George Herbert, ed. by F. E. Hutchinson, pp. 267-8)
Thou art my lovelinesse, my life, my light,
Beautie alone to me:
Thy bloody death and undeserv'd, makes thee
Pure red and white.

Here, however, the idea of Christ's sacrifice is as important as the concrete vision of the Crucifixion, and there are no indications of that absorption in the purely physical aspect of it, which we find in Crashaw's poem "On the wounds of our crucified Lord".

On the whole, Herbert sees his relation to God rather as that of child and father, in which love plays as great a part as in a lover's devotion, but is inextricably mixed with humility, gratitude and perhaps even fear and rebellion against the parental authority. In his rebellious moods Herbert comes nearer to Donne. Donne, passionate, ambitious, ever curious, a brilliant speaker, admired by the King himself, was drawn into the Holy Orders against his will, and not without struggle. Herbert too had struggled against his destiny, but he gave in earlier in life, and his renunciation of worldly ambitions was far more complete; the Bemerton parish work was a strange occupation for one of the Herbets, brother of Edward Herbert the ambassador and of Henry the Master of Revels. His resignation was complete, and in return he found peace such as was never known to Donne. It was not an unbroken peace, as is witnessed by poems like "The Collar" or that brief spiritual autobiography "Affliction (I)", but even in this bitter poem the last few lines reveal what is Herbert's deepest anguish: the fear that he is not worthy of his God's love, that he does not love Him enough.
Ah my deare God! though I am clean forgot,
Let me not love thee, if I love thee not.

There is a simple Christian humility in Herbert which
distinguishes him sharply from Donne, who never ceases to fight
for and with his faith. Even in that perhaps most moving of all
Donne's devotional poems, "A Hymne to God the Father", the tone
is almost one of agonised distrust; Donne appears to be driving
a hard bargain with God:

But sweare by thy selfe that at my death thy sonne
Shall shine as he shines now, and hereetofore;
And, having done that, Thou hast done,
I feare no more.

A note of uncertainty, almost of despair, can be heard in
Donne's entreaty, which will never be found in Herbert. Perhaps
Donne's unquiet intellect, too much occupied by the problems of
the progress of science, was responsible for his unending quest
for peace; perhaps his Catholic upbringing and his ancestry of
Catholic martyrs had also played their part in preventing the
Dean of St. Paul's from finding in the Anglican church the peace
that was granted, although at a price, to the parson of Bemerton.

George Herbert was born on the 3rd of April 1593, as the fifth
son of Richard and Magdalen Herbert. His family, Norman by origin,
was one of the most important on the Welsh Border, closely related
to the Earls of Pembroke. Richard Herbert, his father, died when
Herbert was only three years old, and so his mother, Magdalen
Herbert, became the leading influence in Herbert's life. She was
one of the most admired women of her time. Witty, devout, intelligent,
lavish in her hospitality and charity, she numbered among her friends some of the most illustrious men of her time, Donne in particular. It was only natural that she should exercise a considerable influence over her sons, especially over George who for reasons of health had to break the traditions of this family of soldiers and courtiers and become a parson.

Educated at first privately and then at Westminster School, in 1608 Herbert was elected as scholar to Trinity College, Cambridge. He matriculated at Trinity on 18 December 1609. The following New Year he sent to his mother as a New Year gift the famous sonnets (given as one by Walton) "My God, where is that ancient heat towards thee" and "Sure Lord, there is enough in thee to dry Oceans of Ink", together with a letter in which he declared his resolution that his "poor abilities in Poetry, shall be all, and ever consecrated to God's glory". This resolution he kept; except for a few occasional poems, the whole of his work is purely devotional. In the same accompanying letter he spoke of his "late Ague", the first mention of his poor health, to be followed by distressingly many more.

In 1612 he took his B.A. degree; in 1614 he was elected minor fellow and in 1615/6 major fellow of Trinity; in 1616 he received his Master's degree. For a few years he pursued his classical and theological studies, purchased a considerable number of books, indulged in his "gentile humour for Cloaths", played the lute and lived beyond his allowance, as witness his appeals for an increase in his annuity, addressed to his...
stepfather, Sir John Danvers. Magdalen Herbert had remarried in 1608, the year of Herbert's admittance to Trinity College, when presumably he did not need his mother's supervision any longer.

In 1618 Herbert was appointed Praelector or Reader in Rhetoric. His task was to lecture four or five times a week in English on the famous classical rhetoricians. Before his year's appointment as praelector was over, Herbert was aspiring to the office of Orator to the University, a post generally regarded as a useful stepping-stone to the Secretaryship of State, because it offered ample opportunity for drawing the King's attention to the Orator. Herbert made no direct mention of any intention to abandon his ecclesiastical career, but in a letter to his stepfather he described the office of Orator, significantly, as "the finest place in the University" because the Orator "takes place next the Doctors, is at all their Assemblies and Meetings, and sits above the Proctors, is Regent or non-regent at his pleasure, and such like Gaynesses, which will please a young man well." When Sir Francis Nethersole, then Orator, expressed his fear that "this place being civil may divert (him) too much from Divinity", Herbert replied that the office had "no such earthiness in it, but it may very well be joined with Heaven" - a pretty but unconvincing reply. So Herbert used all his family influence to secure the desired post, and he succeeded. On 21 January 1620 he was elected to

1) in a letter to Sir John Danvers, 6 October 1619 (Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 370)
the office of Orator which he was to hold for seven years.

For the first four years of his oratorship Cambridge did not see much of Herbert who was busily pursuing the opportunities his office offered for improving his acquaintance with the Court and his prospects there. But the year 1624 saw the end of all Herbert's hopes with the death, within a short time, of all his protectors - the Duke of Richmond, the Marquis of Hamilton and King James I himself. The disappointment was too cruel; Herbert perhaps saw in the collapse of his secular plans the working of God's will. He renounced all hopes of a courtly career, and went to stay for some time with an unknown "Friend in Kent" (Walton). Any resolutions he may have come to during this bitter time of revaluation were probably strengthened in the latter part of 1625 when he and Donne were staying at Sir John Danvers' house in Chelsea during the plague.

There is no record of Herbert's ordination as deacon, but he must have been ordained before July 1626 when he was instituted by proxy into the canonry and prebend of Leighton Ecclesia in Huntingdonshire. This appointment did not commit Herbert to the Holy Orders with any finality, but clearly by this time his mind was already made up. Any further action, however, had to be postponed, for at this time Herbert's health broke down. He went to live with his brother Sir Henry in Essex for a year; during this time his health improved enough to allow him to think of entering the priesthood, and of marriage. Walton's story of Herbert's "Platonick" courtship of his kinswoman, Jane
Danvers, is well known, and probably not entirely true, although the advice on the choice of a wife which Herbert gives in A Priest to the Temple implies a very rational attitude to marriage. The marriage took place in 1629. A year later Herbert was offered the living at Bemerton in Wiltshire, and ordained priest on 19 September 1630.

Walton cannot speak eloquently enough of Herbert's work at Bemerton, of his piety, charity, kindness and of the love and devotion with which his parishioners repaid him for his unending labours. His praise of the "holy Mr. Herbert" is borne out by the testimony of Lord Herbert of Cherbury who says of his brother that "His life was most holy and exemplary; insomuch that about Salisbury, where he lived, beneficed for many years, he was little less than sainted."

During this time at Bemerton, most of The Temple and the whole of A Priest to the Temple, or, the Country Parson were written, two oddly complementary pictures of Herbert as he was and as he wished to be. The Temple offers ample testimony that the Bemerton years were to Herbert not altogether the pastoral idyll described by Walton. Although the final resolution had been made, there still remained the cruel doubts and tortures of a mind uncertain of its strength. But there was happiness as well in those years, happiness recorded in the naive simplicity of A Priest to the Temple and in some of the poems. All the doubts, and all the happiness, were to be ended suddenly with

1) Autobiography, p. 11
Herbert's death on 1 March 1633. It is good to think that the last weeks of Herbert's life were filled with serenity and peace of the soul. As Walton says, "I wish (if God shall be so pleased) that I may be so happy as to die like him." 1)

For any student of Herbert's work a study of his life is most rewarding. Because his poetry is an intensely personal record of his struggles, it is valuable to know what factors made his decision to become ordained such a difficult one. His family background, the proud tradition of the aristocratic Herbergs, the brilliant careers of his brothers, all these influences worked in favour of a secular, courtly or scholarly career. On the other hand, there was Herbert's ailing disposition which might have ended the strenuous exertions of a Jacobean career-hunter even if the death of Herbert's protectors had not intervened. And of course there was Herbert's mother, Mrs. Magdalen Herbert, a woman of deep devotion, whose influence over her ailing son must have been particularly strong. Magdalen Herbert's piety we know; it is not at all surprising that she should have wished one of her sons to enter Holy Orders. Herbert loved his mother very much, and clearly feared her almost as much; indeed we may wonder how much of Herbert's attitude to God, loving, fearing, rebellious and repentant in turns, was identified with his attitude towards his mother, the noble, beautiful and awe-inspiring "severa parens". The family temperament of the "black Herbergs" of which 1)

op. cit., p. 345
George Herbert had his share was not an easy one to master, and if at times the wildly rebellious note of Herbert's poems seems out of keeping with the gentle shepherd of the Bemerton flock, it is well to remember Lord Herbert of Cherbury's words about his brother - "he was little less than sainted ... (but) He was not exempt from passion and choler, being infirmities, to which all our race is subject ... "

There is no doubt that Herbert was ambitious, and that he had the intellectual qualities which could have enabled him to satisfy his ambitions. His first letter as Orator to King James, thanking him for the gift to the University of the Opera Latina, attracted, according to Walton, the King's attention and drew his praise. Surely Herbert knew his ability, and it must have been a cruel mortification to him to find himself wrapped in a priest's gown instead of the courtier's silk and velvet. His "gentileH humour for Cloaths" of which mention was made above, i.e. the mild worldliness and vanity in which he indulged, would also have found considerable satisfaction in the pomp of the court as in the ceremony of University functions.

All these personal considerations enter Herbert's poetry. The bitterness of his rebellious moments is all the more understandable, if we know the ambitions which Herbert had renounced by entering the priesthood. And if the bitterness of these

1) Autobiography, p. 11
2) op. cit., p. 286
occasional moods is enlightened by our knowledge of Herbert's personal background, so are the sweetness and the true piety which he achieves in his serene poems of Christian humility, and which could never have been achieved by a lesser man.

Mr. Aldous Huxley in *Texts and Pretexts* speaks of Herbert as "the poet of the inner weather", of the variableness and instability of mind. There is much to quarrel with in this phrase. Far from variability, the quality that strikes the reader most in Herbert's poetry is his singleness of purpose, his whole-hearted devotion to the one quest that gave meaning to his life. Faith did not come lightly to Herbert, nor did he easily believe that he had the strength to live up to his faith. He wrestled with his doubts and fears, as he wrestled with his exacting Master, and the struggle was long and bitter, like Jacob's fight with the angel, and often fought in a like darkness. There is this changing cadence of a long fight in the poems of *The Temple*, but not the changeability implied by Mr. Huxley. This may perhaps be due to the fact that almost every one of Herbert's poems of doubt and struggle was written after the fight was over, and there was peace in his soul, even if only for a time. Where in Donne's "Holy Sonnets" we remember best the aggressive, dramatic openings, "Batter my heart, three person'd God ... ", "Death be not proud ... ", "What if this present were the worlds last night?", in Herbert's poetry most memorable are the quiet, simple, short sentences which close his most impassionate poems:
Me thoughts I heard one calling, Child!
And I reply'd, My Lord.

"The Collar"

You must sit down, sayses Love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.

"Love (III)"

A sick toss'd vessel, dashing on each thing;
May; his own shelf:
My God, I mean my self.

"Miserie"

... when I him espied,
Who straight, Your suit is granted, said, & died.

"Redemption"

The volume of Herbert's work is small. The Temple, his only work of truly lasting value, is a slender book. Yet it encompasses the vast theme of man and God. Nothing else counts; in the vast universe there are but two voices, of man and of God. Herbert does not attempt to identify himself with any other character, for he is intent on writing a record of his own "many spiritual Conflicts" only. Where Crashaw has the whole galaxy of saints to choose from, and all the hypnotic power of the Mass to utilise, Herbert deliberately isolates himself with his Lord. Yet there is hardly any repetition of theme in his poems. There are, however, many subtle variations of mood, while a whole gamut of spiritual experience is run from deepest doubt and despair to the quiet ecstasy of happiness which comes to a Christian who has accepted the will of God and found a meaning in his destiny. To express these complexities of feeling, Herbert employs a rich and varied imagery. He was very much a son of his time, and believed as
much as Donne, Crashaw or any other contemporary poet in England or on the Continent, in including the whole of God's universe, earth and the heavens, in the images of his poetry.

Herbert had not the luxurious, fanciful imagination of Crashaw. He liked to dwell on the homely things round him, in his house, his garden or in the village and the countryside. Walking with God, he could not but see these simple surroundings endowed with a deep prophetic significance. Yet he was no mystic: the things he saw about him spoke not of far-off mysteries, but rather spelled homely truths, pointed a moral, or foreshadowed the death and decay of earthly life. There was no unearthly light lingering on them, except the bright, blinding light of God's truth. Herbert did not see the earth shining with the miraculous beauty and joy of Traherne's vision, for he was not looking for beauty, but for a sign of God's will, of His mercy and His grace. Because of that, perhaps, because he went through life observing all that happened, but not delighting in it overmuch, passing on, still searching for a sign, Herbert's images although drawn closely from the life round him, present a picture strangely abstract and remote in spite of the clarity of detail. Like Donne's, his is a sensitivity of thought, of mood or emotion, rather than of colour, shape or scent. There may be a brilliantly vivid miniature sketch here and there, as of "Glory puffing by, In silks that whistled", but looking back we remember more the flood of light - the passion, the faith, the plea and the peace - than the coloured-glass window through
which the light had passed, only faintly touched by its colour.

Paradoxically, Herbert the devotional poet, whose mind dwelt so much with God, gave in his poetry an extraordinarily personal account of himself and of the little world in which he lived. Not only do we get a glimpse of the "passion and choler" of the Herberts in "The Collar" and in "Affliction (I)", but Herbert's interest in his work as a country parson and his views on a parson's duties, as expressed in A Priest to the Temple, his delight in fine clothes, his love of music, his tidiness and fastidiousness, his views of some of the pressing problems of his time, his personal history, all these, as we shall see later, are revealed directly or indirectly in his poetry, through the imagery.

Of course, a study of his poetry is always rewarding in itself, not only for the light it throws on his personality. He was an extremely careful writer, a meticulous and accomplished craftsman. There is a fastidiousness in Herbert's care of the structure and the compact form of his short lyrics. He may allow his verse to break into the irregular rhythm of an impassioned plea, and even neglect the rhyme, but any such irregularity is intentional, emphasizing the passion which the poet is expressing. And then, almost as a metrical emblem of the final reconciliation, will come the final line, with the verse flowing quietly and ending with the long expected rhyme. This technique which, needless to say, needs a master of the music of words, is best exemplified in "Deniall". Only the last two strophas are quoted here, but
even so the sudden change in the last line may be observed:

Therefore my soul lay out of sight,
Untun'd, unstrung:
My feeble spirit, unable to look right,
Like a nipt blossom, hung
Discontented.

O cheer and tune my heartlesse breast,
Defere no time;
That so thy favours granting my request,
They and my minde may chime,
And mend my rhyme.

Here both the rhythm and the rhymes carry a meaning. Similarly in "Sinnes Round" the vicious circle of sin begetting sin is symbolised by the device of using the last line of one stanza for the first line of the following stanza, and closing the poem with a repetition of the opening line "Sorrie I am, my God, sorrie I am." Or again, in "Paradise" the central symbol of God as gardener and man as a tree pruned by afflictions is emphasized by the device of gradually shortened final rhymes, "pruned" words:

I blesse thee, Lord, because I GROW
Among thy trees, which in a ROW
To thee both fruit and order OW

This careful attention to the form pure and simple of the poems accounts also partly for the typographical device of setting out the poems in symbolic shapes, of which more will be said later.

Herbert devoted the same care with which he perfected the form, structure and rhythm of his poems, to the words, to the imagery, which was chosen to emphasize the central theme. To quote F. E. Hutchinson, "Almost any poem of his has its object well defined; ... the imagery which runs through it (is)

1) The Works of George Herbert, Introduction, p. xlix
commonly helping to knit it together." Because for Herbert all
the world spelled God's message in words simple like a country
proverb, there is no lack of variety in his imagery. All things
had a right to be included in divine poetry. It is, of course,
this intentional working-in of the most "unpoetical" images,
this surprise element for the reader, which forms the most obvious
bond between Herbert and his fellow-poets of the Metaphysical
school. Herbert's imagery will now be discussed in some detail;
it will be interesting to see how far the types of imagery prevail-
ing in his poetry may be regarded as indicative of Herbert's
character and his conception of the world that surrounded him.

The most obvious characteristic of Herbert's imagery in general
is his preference for the things near him, for the simple, homely,
domestic things. Herbert has almost a terror of vast spaces; the
universe into which Milton and Crashaw soared with delight, is for
him an abstraction which fills him with fear because it emphasizes
the distance between himself and God. He seeks shelter with God,
like a child looking for the comfort of his parent's arms, but
he fears the endless spaces in which God dwells:

O rack me not to such a vast extent;
Those distances belong to thee:
The world's too little for thy tent,
A grave too big for me.

"The Temper (I)"

In the same poem he implores his Lord:

O let me, when thy roof my soul hath hid,
O let me roost and nestle there:
Then of a sinner thou art rid,
And I of hope and fear.
The vast sky in which Vaughan one night saw Eternity, is for Herbert but a dark backcloth for the sun of God. His poetry contains some thirty-two images of varying length and complexity, which have as their theme the sun, the moon or the stars, and of these images more than two thirds are based on the identification of God or Christ with the sun, or, more rarely, with the moon. They are mostly what might be termed verbal images; the sensuous aspect is quite neglected, and the qualities of the sun, for instance its heat or its brilliance, are hardly mentioned. At times, it is almost as if the pun Son - sun was the main raison d'être:

But much more blest be God above,
Who gave me sight alone,
Which to himself he did deny:
For when he sees my waies, I dy:
But I have got his sonne, and he hath none.

"Even-song"

The heavenly bodies were clearly too far away to set Herbert's imagination alight, and so, although he saw the inevitable parallel between the sun and God or Christ, or the Church moving westwards across continents, he never seems to see the actual sun in the sky.

It was nearer to him in the abstract conception of the astronomers' theories. The parson at Bemerton had been a brilliant scholar in his Cambridge days, and naturally knew both the old and the new cosmic theories. Thus we find in "Coloss. 3. 3. Our life is hid with Christ in God":
My words & thoughts do both express this notion, that Life hath with the sun a double motion. The first is straight, and our diurnall friend, the other hid and doth obliquely bend, etc.

Characteristically, the Ptolemaic theory is here used to convey the hidden motto "My Life Is Hid In Him That Is My Treasure", which runs from line to line. The message of devotion was far more important to Herbert than the Copernican controversy. He will use either the Old or the New Philosophy in order to bring home the message he wishes to impart, and if need be, he will twist and turn the scientific theories to suit his purpose, as in "The Sinner" in whose mind there are -

... shreds of holinesse, that dare not venture
To shew their face, since crosse to thy decrees:
There the circumference earth is, heav'n the centre.

The medieval beliefs held perhaps more attraction for him, as for most poets of his time. The dramatic element in the conception of man as a link between the lower creation and the Creator himself appealed to Herbert because it defined firmly man's place in the vast universe. Thus in "Employment (I)":

I am a link of thy great chain ...

or in "Mans medley":

To this life things of sense
Make their pretence:
In th' other Angels have a right by birth:
Man ties them both alone,
And makes them one,
With th' one hand touching heav'n, with th' other earth.

In "Providence" there is a detailed description of the Chain of Being, again with emphasis on the divine will ordaining the order of things:
Thy creatures leap not, but express a feast,
Where all the guests sit close, and nothing wants.
Frogs marry fish and flesh; bats, birds and beast;
Sponges, non-sense and sense; mines, th' earth & plants.

Similarly there were dramatic and poetical possibilities in
the theory of parallels between the macrocosm of the universe and
the microcosm of man. Also, these theories had of course the
effect of reducing the vastness of space through the feeling of
affinity with man. There is almost a touch of warm friendliness
in the relationship as Herbert presents it:

Man is all symmetric,

Full of proportions, one limbe to another,
And all to all the world besides:

Each part may call the furthest, brother:

For head with foot hath private amitie,

And both with moons and tides.

...

(Man) is in little all the sphere.
Herbs gladly cure our flesh; because that they
Finde their acquaintance there.

"Man"

The theory of humours, to which Herbert refers directly or
indirectly most often of all the medieval beliefs current in
literature of the time, interested him probably because of his
knowledge of medicine, of which more will be said later.

In connection with the observations already made on Herbert's
lack of interest in the heavenly bodies we may note that the
Platonic theory of the dance of the spheres, otherwise a
favourite with English poets, is mentioned only twice in the
whole of Herbert's work, once in "Artillerie":

I, who had heard of musicke in the spheres,
But not of speech in starres ...
and once in "Vanitie (I)"

The fleet Astronomer can bore,
And thred the spheres with his quick-piercing minde:
He views their stations, walks from doore to doore,
Surveys, as if he had design'd.
To make a purchase there: he sees their dances,
And knoweth long before
Both their full-ey'd aspects, and secret glances.

On the whole then the sciences and scientific theories old
and new did not interest Herbert much; he thought them unimportant
in the face of God, wasting the time that should be given to
Christian devotion:

Then burn thy Epicycles, foolish man;
break all thy spheres, and save thy head.

"Divinitie"

It is not surprising then that classical allusions, so plentiful
otherwise in the age that saw Christ as Pan, should also be almost
absent in Herbert's work, except in the "Church Militant" where
in the survey of the development of the Christian church references
to classical Greece and Rome and to their literatures were in-
evitable.

In marked contrast to this absence of classical ornaments is
Herbert's use of biblical quotations or of obvious echoes of
phrases and whole passages from the Scriptures. In A Priest to
the Temple Herbert emphasizes the importance of knowledge of the
Bible to the parson: "Put the chief and top of his knowledge
consists in the book of books, the storehouse and magazene of
Life and comfort, the holy Scriptures." Obviously he saw it as

1) Ch.III, "The Parsons Knowledge", Hutchinson, p. 228
his duty to know the Bible thoroughly; with his sharp ear for verbal rhythms it was only too easy for him to imitate, unconsciously perhaps, both the turn of the phrase and the ring of the intonation of the scriptural text. References to the Bible are often too subtle and indefinable to be included in a list of biblical borrowings, but even manifest adaptations and direct quotations of scriptural phrases are by no means few; in F. E. Hutchinson's commentary on Herbert's poems and prose works some 110 instances are given where a metaphor, a phrase or a particular usage of a word can be traced to the Bible, as in these two examples:

O do not blinde me!
I have deserv'd that an Egyptian night
Should thicken all my powers; because my lust
Hath still sow'd fig-leaves to exclude thy light:

"Sighs and Crones"

... That, if I chance to hold my peace,
These stones to praise thee may not cease.

"The Altar"

(cf. Luke xix, 40: I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.)

This was a debt which Herbert did more than amply repay, for there are few poets in the English language who can use a simple phrase with such weight of meaning and beauty as Herbert can. The Scriptures were for him the "storehouse and magazine of Life and comfort", but obviously he delighted in the language of the Bible as much as in the wisdom which it imparted.

Somewhat similar is his liking for proverbs. His authorship
of Outlandish Proverbs, a collection of proverbs both English and foreign, is established beyond any doubt. The pithy emphatic expression, the homely simile of the country proverb were near to his heart. Again, as with the diction of the Scriptures, the rhythm of the proverb, the juxtaposition of the example and the lesson became a part of Herbert's own poetic diction. Often we are at a loss to decide whether he is quoting a proverb not preserved to us, or coining his own phrase, so natural is the cadence of his line, and so right the example he chooses to drive home the moral:

Pick out of tales the mirth, but not the sinne.
He pares his apple, that will cleanly feed.

"The Church-Porch", 11. 64-5

(Also quoted in prose in A Priest to the Temple: "If there be any ill in the custome, that may be severed from the good, he pares the apple and gives them the clean to feed on.")

God chains the dog till night: wilt loose the chain,
And wake thy sorrow?

"The Discharge"

To thee help appertains.
Hast thou left all things to their course,
And laid the reins
Upon the horse?
Is all lockt? hath a sinners plea
No key?

"Longing"

Of Herbert's general reading his imagery tells us little.
F. E. Hutchinson quotes a reference to Bacon's "Speech against Duells" in "The Church-Porch", 11. 223-6, and an allusion in
"Content" to a story about the fumes rising from the dead body of William the Conqueror, told by Ordericus Vitalis, and a few others: altogether a meagre harvest for a man of Herbert's learning.

One branch of literature, popular in the seventeenth century, influenced Herbert's work very strongly: the emblem books. The very plan of The Temple is an emblem in itself. The didactic, moralising opening of "The Church-Porch" with its final inscription

Thou, whom the former precepts have
Sprinkled and taught, how to behave
Thy self in church; approach, and taste
The churches mysticall repast.

Avoid, Profanesse; come not here;
Nothing but holy, pure and clearse,
Or that which groeneth to be so,
May at his peril further go.

leads on to "The Church", where the practical code of everyday Christian behaviour is left behind, and the human soul stands face to face with God.

The first poem of "The Church" is fully in the emblem tradition; its subject - the identification of the poet's heart with an altar - is indicated by the typographical device of the layout of the poem in the shape of an altar. A similar device is used even more subtly in the poem "Easter-wings" where the theme of the soul rising on the wings of Christ's sacrifice is further emphasized by the swelling and sinking of the lengthening and shortening lines in accordance with the shape of the poem. The employment of changing rhythm (in "Deniall") and shortening of the rhyming words (in "Paradise") for the same purpose, viz.
to underline the central theme, have already been noted.

In poems like "Sepulchre", "The Collar", "Church-lock and key", "Jordan" and "The Pulley", the emblematic tradition is used in a different fashion again. All these poems belong to the group of what Dr. Mario Praz calls "mute emblems". The title of the poem stands here for the customary accompanying picture and the text of the poem explains the title (as in "The Pulley", "The Collar" and "Jordan", where the explanation of the title is given implicitly, and no direct mention of it appears in the poem itself), or in reverse, the title of the poem explains the poem which would not be easily intelligible without it (as in "Sepulchre" - again there is no direct mention of the title in the poem).

Lastly there are poems which use the emblematic tradition in the imagery although they may not depend on it for the main theme. In poems like "Love unknown" or "Hope" a number of emblems are introduced, each of which helps to build up the central theme of the poem, which may or may not be explained in the last lines. The emblems introduced by Herbert in "Hope" are of the traditional kind: an anchor for patience and hope, a watch for the approaching time of fulfilment, a vial of tears, etc. In "Love unknown" the emblems are Herbert's own, but the scene described, the rocks streaming with blood, the boiling cauldron of affliction and the bed of thorns are strongly reminiscent of the emblem landscape of, say, Herman Hugo's Pia Desideria or of Francis Quarles' 1)

Emblemes. Similarly the action, the poet (or Anima) watching Christ (or Amor) and his servants torturing his heart has the traditional sequence of an emblem scene, and was perhaps inspired by one. "Love unknown" is one of the few poems in which Herbert conforms to the traditional pattern of emblem poetry, with the symbolism explained in the last few lines, by that stage-confidant of Herbert's, the "friend" or "One standing by":

... Truly, Friend,
For ought I heare, your Master shows to you
More favour then you wot of. Mark the end.
The Font did onely, what was old, renew:
The Caldron suppld, what was growen too hard:
The Thorns did quicken, what was growen too dull:
All did but strive to mend, what you had marr'd.
Wherefore be cheer'd, and praise him to the full
Each day, each houre, each moment of the week,
Who fain would have you be new, tender, quick.

That Herbert knew the current emblem books is further shown by some of his images, which can easily be traced back to the best-known emblem collections. So for instance in "The Church-Porch", 11. 265-8 we find:

When basenesse is exalted, do not bate
The place its honour, for the persons sake.
The shrine is that which thou dost venerate,
And not the beast, that bears it on his back.

The reference here is to a well-known emblem (which appears for instance in Alciati's Diverse Impresse) of the donkey carrying the shrine on his back and thinking himself the subject of the worship.

In "The Pearl" the image of God leading man through the labyrinth of the world:
Yet through these labyrinths, not my grovelling wit,  
But thy silk twist let down from heav'n to me,  
Did both conduct and teach me, how by it  
To clime to thee.

is strongly reminiscent not so much of the classical tale of  
Ariadne's thread as of its adaptation by the emblem writers and  
engravers in a picture of Amor letting fown the thread from a  
tower above the maze to the unfortunate Anima. In "Mans medley"  
man's equivocal position in the Chain of Being is summed up in  
the line "With th' one hand touching heav'n, with th' other  
earth." Again we are reminded of a current emblem of a man with  
one hand winged, the other weighed down by a stone. This emblem  
was probably best known in England from Geoffrey Whitney's Choice  
of Emblems (1586) where it figures as a symbol of poverty and  
ambition, with the legend Paupertatem summis ingenuis obesse ne  
provehantur.

Frequently we find images in Herbert's poetry which although  
not generally known emblems, yet are treated as such by Herbert,  
and endowed with a religious or moral significance, which is care-  
fully explained. In "The Size" the emblem appears in the form of  
a dream, a traditional device going back to the Middle Ages:

... Call to minde thy dream,  
An earthly globe,  
On whose meridian was engraven,  
These seas are tears, and heav'n the haven.

In "The Church-floore" we find a detailed account of the like-  
ness which establishes the parallel with the human heart:

Mark you the floore? that square & speckled stone,  
Which looks so firm and strong,  
Is Patience:

1) cf. Quarles' Emblemes, Book IV, Emblem II.
And th' other black and grave, wherewith each one
Is checker'd all along,
Humilitie.

The gentle rising, which on either hand
Leads to the Quire above,
Is Confidence:

But the sweet cement, which in one sure band
Ties the whole frame, is Love
And Charitie.

The homeliness of this last image is characteristic, and is of
course not limited to Herbert's emblematic images alone.

In this context it is interesting to turn our attention to
Herbert's imagery of the animal world. Oddly but perhaps under-
standably in a non-Catholic, the image of the divine Dove, which
appears so frequently in Crashaw for instance, is comparatively
rare in Herbert's work. We find it for instance in "Whitsunday":

Listen sweet Dove unto my song,
And spread thy golden wings in me;
Hatching my tender heart so long,
Till it get wing, and flie away with thee.

In "The Invitation" the Dove is the symbol not of God him-
self, but of man's love for Him, an image quite outside the
liturgical tradition:

Come ye hither All, whose love
Is your dove,
And exalts you to the skie:
Here is love, which having breath
Ev'n in death,
After death can never die.

Rather more surprising is the absence in Herbert's poetry of the
symbolical lamb, Agnus Dei. On the other hand, Crashaw's private
symbol of the nest as shelter and source of love, also appears
in Herbert's work, although less often:
There lay thy sonne: and must he leave that nest,
That hive of sweetnesse, ...

"Home"

Possibly there is a link here with Herbert's fear of vast spaces, with his need for a small shelter where he could rest with God. So for instance in "The Temper (I)":

O let me, when thy roof my soul hath hid
O let me roost and nestle there:

A few of Herbert's images remind us of the bestiary, as in "Giddinesse";

O what a sight were Man, if his attires
Did alter with his minde;
And like a Dolphins skinne, his clothes combin'd
With his desires!

or in "Sinnes round":

My thoughts are working like a busie flame,
Untill their cockatrice they hatch and bring:

On the whole, however, these fabulous beasts are rare in Herbert's poetry. Most of his images are of beasts of the field or farm, or of insects in the garden: man is a fly, a bee, death or affliction work in him like a mole under ground, unstable worldly friends are like "Flyes of estates and sunne-shine".

Identification of the soul with a bird is a common enough Metaphysical conceit, found in almost every devotional poet. Herbert's own, however, is the image of human bodies after death as "The shells of fledge souls, left behinde "("Death")

We find here that although Herbert was very strongly influenced by emblem literature in many ways, in the construction of a number of his poems and in the method of conveying the moral idea behind
the image (in this sense a very considerable part of his images are emblems, belonging to a private emblem book), yet he preferred images of his own, drawn from his immediate surroundings. Where he makes direct use of the emblem tradition, as in the instance noted above (p. 63) from "The Pearl", we see that the borrowings are emblem situations rather than individual emblems.

Herbert's images of plants are somewhat similar to his images of animals, but perhaps even more typical of him. The emblematic rose and lily, which play a very important part in contemporary imagery, Crashaw's for instance, are missing in Herbert's poetry, except for a contemptuous reference to the traditional use of these images in love lyrics:

Roses and Lillies speak thee; and to make
A pair of Cheaks of them, is thy abuse.

(Sonnets in Walton's Life)

Poets like Crashaw also knew the traditional use of such images in love poetry, and made use of it in their devotional poems. Not so Herbert; for him the plants, especially the trees for which he appears to have had a much greater affection than for flowers, had first and foremost a moral significance. A plant may stand to him for a symbol of fulfilment, contrasted with man's barren uselessness in spite of the love which God had lavished on him. So in "Employment (I)" where this theme runs throughout the poem, colouring the imagery:

All things are busie, onely I
Neither bring honny with the bees,
Nor flowrs to make that, nor the husbandrie
To water these.
I am no link of thy great chain,
But all my companie is a weed.
Lorde place me in thy consort; give one strain
To my poore reed.

In "Employment (II)" there are the lines of which Courthope had disapproved so strongly:

Oh that I were an Orenge-tree,
    That busie plant!
Then should I ever laden be,
    And never want
Some fruit for him that dressed me.

The same idea recurs in "Affliction (I)"

Oh that I were an Orenge-tree,
That busie plant!
Then should I ever laden be,
And never want
Some fruit for him that dressed me.

Another recurring image is that of man as a wayward plant and God as the Gardener, an image with biblical associations:

Lord, what is man to thee,
That thou shouldst make a rotten tree?

"Obedience"

In "Paradise" the central theme is that of God's hand pruning man by affliction:

I blesse thee, Lord, because I GROW
Among thy trees, which in a ROW
To thee both fruit and order OW.

When thou dost greater judgements SPARE,
And with thy knife but prune and PARE,
Ev'n fruitfull trees more fruitfull ARE.

Such sharpnes shows the sweetest PREND:
Such cuttings rather heal then REND:
And such beginnings touch their END.

In "The Flower" the whole poem is based upon the theme of God's miraculous power to revive the "shrivel'd heart" of man;
Who would have thought my shrivel'd heart
Could have recover'd greenness? It was gone
Quite under ground; as flowers depart
To see their mother-root, when they have blown;
Where they together
All the hard weather
Dead to the world, keep house unknown.

A frequent image, again with strong moral implications, is that of the flower rotting secretly at root, a symbol of latent decay, as in this lament on the corruption of the Church:

Brave rose, (alas!) where art thou? in the chair
Where thou didst lately so triumph and shine
A worm doth sit, whose many feet and hair
Are the more foul, the more thou wert divine.

"Church-rents and schisms"
or in "Peace":

Then went I to a garden, and did spy
A gallant flower,
The Crown Imperial: Sure, said I,
Peace at the root must dwell.
But when I digg'd, I saw a worm devour
What show'd so well.

The traditional parallel of the short blossom-time of a flower and the brief span of man's life also recurs quite often, for instance in "Repentance":

... Oh! gently treat
With thy quick flow'r, thy momentarie bloom;
Whose life still pressing
Is one undressing,
A steadie aiming at a tombe.
or in "Vertue":

Sweet rose, whose hue angrie and brave
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye:
Thy root is ever in its grave,
And thou must die.

The moral symbolism of these images is apparent.
If Herbert neglects the traditional rose and lily, he is fully in keeping with the contemporary tradition of religious poetry in his imagery of light and fire. The fire for him is the "ancient heat" of the martyrs' faith, and the "greater flame" of divine love:

Immortal Heat, O let thy greater flame
Attract the lesser to it: let those fires,
Which shall consume the world, first make it tame;
And kindle in our hearts such true desires,
As may consume our lusts, and make thee way.

"Love (II)"

Why doth that fire, which by thy power and might
Each breast does feel, no braver fuel choose
Than that, which one day Worms may chance refuse?

(Sonnets in Walton's Life)

In the opposite sense, but still within a current tradition, the fire is the torment of reproach and sorrow, or the consuming flame of sin:

Look on my sorrows round!
Mark well my furnace! O what flames,
What heats abound!
What griefs, what shames!
Consider, Lord; Lord, bow thine ear,
And heare!

"Longing"

My thoughts are working like a busy flame,
Untill their cockatrice they hatch and bring:
And when they once have perfected their draughts,
My words take fire from my inflamed thoughts.

My words take fire from my inflamed thoughts,
Which spit it forth like the Sicilian Hill.

"Sinnes round"

Similarly in the imagery of food and drink Herbert also resorts to the tradition. The wine-into-blood image is used by
Herbert as much as by the other devotional poets of his time.

We find it in "The Agonie":

Who knows not Love, let him assay
And taste that juice, which on the crosse a pike
Did set again abreash; then let him say
If ever he did taste the like.
Love is that liquour sweet and most divine,
Which my God feels as bloud; but I, as wine.

or in "The Bunch of Grapes":

But can he want the grape, who hath the wine?
I have their fruit and more.
Blessed be God, who prosper'd Noahs vine,
And made it bring forth grapes good store.
But much more him I must adore,
Who of the Laws sovre juice sweet wine did make,
Ev'n God himself being pressed for my sake.

The solemn and terrible symbolism of blood and wine is often softened by a simple touch as in "The Banquet":

O what sweetnesse from the bowl
Fills my soul,
Such as is, and makes divine!
Is some starre (fled from the sphere)
Melted there,
As we sugar melt in wine?

A number of images employ the symbolism of the Host, either directly or in the guise of an everyday meal, as in Herbert's best-known poem, "Love (III)":

You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.

In some images we may perceive faint memories of the country fare Herbert must have known well:

Wherefore with my utmost art
I will sing thee,
And the cream of all my heart
I will bring thee.

"Praise(II)"
With these all day I do perfume my minde,
My minde ev'n thrust into them both:
That I might finde
What cordials make this curious broth,
This broth of smells, that feeds and fats my minde.

"The Odour. 2. Cor. 2. 15."

But they are very faint memories indeed: Herbert's sensory perceptions are usually visual. Perfumes, or "sweets" as he calls them, are mostly referred to in a general way; there is one poem only in which scents are evoked sharply and distinctly. This is the poem just quoted, "The Odour", the theme of which is the perfume enveloping the name My Master, and the ecstasy which follows submission to God. Perhaps there is some connection here between this hypnotic state of ecstasy and the sensuous images which appear in the poem, images like these:

How sweetly doth My Master sound! My Master!  
As Amber-grease leaves a rich sent    
Unto the taster:  
So these words a sweet content,  
An orientall fragrancie, My Master.  

That these two words might creep & grow  
To some degree of spicinesse to thee!  
Then should the Pomander, which was before  
A speaking sweet, mnd by reflection,  
And tell me more:  
For pardon of my imperfection  
Would warm and work it sweeter then before.

Perhaps it is no mere fancy to think that the words "speaking sweet" indicate that Herbert realised how sharply the words My Master made him experience sensations such as the scents which had been mere words before.

A curious comment on Herbert's visual imagination, possibly connected with the lack of certain sensory perceptions which we
have just discussed, is the absence of colour in his poetry. Not only had he no favourite colour, as Crashaw had red in any shade, from blushing pink to the deep red of wine or gore, or as Marvell had his amorous green and Vaughan his white, but there is hardly any mention of colours as such. Herbert's is a curiously pale world, not colourless perhaps, but with all the colours softened by the light of the spirit.

Not interested in colours, he naturally makes little use of the images of jewelry. Mostly he refers to gold, precious stones, diamonds and jewels by these general names, not in words evocative of colour. Against the rubies and pearls of his contemporaries Herbert's is a lack-lustre collection. Yet there are touches of detail about these images which suggest that Herbert's powers of observation were by no means negligible even if he was too much preoccupied with the spiritual meaning of things to dwell on their appearance. So in "Confession" we find the lines:

"For since confession pardon winnes,
I challenge here the brightest day,
The clearest diamond: let them do their best,
They shall be thick and cloudie to my breast."

or in "Jesu":

"JESU is in my heart, his sacred name
Is deeply craved there: but th' other week
A great affliction broke the little frame,
Ev'n all to pieces: ..."

Although the brilliance and splendour of precious stones seem almost forgotten here, the quality and setting of them did not escape Herbert's eye.

In images of royalty he significantly does not dwell on the magnificence of a king's presence, but on the power, the majesty
and ultimately the terror. These qualities are emphasized in Herbert's metaphors of God or Christ as the King of men, which lack the secular splendour of baroque divinity. Where Crashaw, for instance, sings of:

Larg' throne of Love! Royally spred
With purple of too Rich a red -

"Sancta Maria Dolorum"

Herbert invokes the majesty of God to find guidance for his soul:

O fix thy chair of grace, that all my powers
May also fix their reverence:
For when thou dost depart from hence,
They grow unruly, and sit in thy bowers.

"The Temper (II)"

With his ability to see a hidden meaning even in the smallest, simplest things, it is no surprise perhaps that Herbert chooses his images most often from the domestic surroundings of his house and village.

The landscape of his eye includes a towering church or mansion; Herbert with his liking for solid structure, and possibly with the memories of the restoration work on the Church of St. Mary's at Leighton Ecclesia in his mind, uses metaphors of building and construction very often. The creations of God's hands, man and the world, are presented in the parable of the building of a house:

Love built a stately house; where Fortune came,
And spinning phantasies, she was heard to say,
That her fine cobwebs did support the frame,
Whereas they were supported by the same:
But Wisdome quickly swept them all away. etc. etc.

"The World"
My God, I heard this day,
That none doth build a stately habitation,
But he that means to dwell therein.
What house more stately hath there been,
Or can be, then is Man? to whose creation
All things are in decay.

"Man"

There are a number of images derived from the work of the stonemason and the bricklayer:

A broken ALTAR, Lord, thy servant reares,
Made of a heart, and cemented with teares:
Whose parts are as thy hand did frame;
No workmans tool hath touch'd the same.

"The Altar"

My hands do joyn to finish the inventions:
And so my sinnes ascend three stories high,
As Babel grew, before there were dissensions.

"Sinnes round"

From the domestic sphere come Herbert's most extravagant and fantastic images. At least they are fantastic to us who have long ceased to see the world as a whole, with all its parts equally illuminated by the divine light; but not fantastic to Herbert: his choice of symbols is unlimited, and the divine theme ennobles them all. Thus we find Christ looking for lodgings in man's heart ("Sepulchre", "Good Friday", "The Starre", "Christmas"), the sinner filling a featherbed for his sloth to lie on, with the feathers of his winged soul ("The Church-Porch", 11. 83-4), alms holding the gate of heaven open for man to pass ("The Church-Porch", 11. 383-4), a heart dropping blood to measure words like an hourglass ("The Sacrifice"), the word of God coming to earth through the apostles as through golden pipes ("Whitsunday").
man's body as an hourglass full of dust and crumbling into dust ("Church-monuments"), Justice drawing buckets of tears to heaven ("Justice (II)"), death as a chair to rest on ("The Pilgrimage"), etc. etc. Some of these images admittedly are almost grotesque in their everyday domesticity when used to express a relationship such as that between God and man, yet very rarely, if at all, does Herbert stumble across the border-line between the startling and the merely ridiculous. Again an interesting comparison offers itself with Crashaw, especially when we find in Herbert's "Praise (III)" a similarity of image with the famous stanza in Crashaw's "Weeper". Crashaw's lines -

... Angels, with their Bottles come
And draw from these full Eyes of thine,
Their Masters water, their owne Wine.

share the central image with Herbert's:

I have not lost one single tear:
But when mine eyes
Did weep to heav'n, they found a bottle there
(As we have boxes for the poore)
Readie to take them in; yet of a size
That would contain much more.

Images like this one or like the picture of Christ who

... left his grave-clothes, that we might, when grief
Draws tears, or bloud, not want a handkerchief.

"The Dawning"

emphasize Herbert's kinship with the other poets of his period, a kinship easily forgotten because of the intensity of thought in Herbert's poetry which makes us oblivious of individual images in an effort to comprehend the meaning behind them. Also, although in Herbert's images a word or a phrase will clearly show that
Herbert saw in his mind the picture from which he drew his metaphor, there is very rarely that dwelling on detail, that inventory of parallels, which underlines the absurdity of the more grotesque Metaphysical images. But even if the emphasis on the meaning behind the image blurs the outline of the image, its character remains the same, uncontestably Metaphysical, yoking together with seeming violence the everyday business of man and the eternal struggle of the soul.

Just as he was observant of the things round him, Herbert had an eye for the people as well. In his imagery of human types and classes of people his skilful evocation of a complex picture by a mere hint is shown very clearly. So in "The Church-Porch", ll. 249-50 we find the amusing lines:

The gigler is a milk-maid whom infection or a fir'd beacon frighteth from his ditties.

The image of the servant of God is a frequent one in Herbert's poetry, and he succeeds in transforming a mere turn of phrase into a concrete picture of the relationship, for instance in "Affliction (I)"

When first thou didst entice to thee my heart,  
I thought the service brave:  
So many joyes I writ down for my part,  
Besides what I might have  
Out of my stock of naturall delights,  
Augmented with thy gracious benefits.  

...  
Such starres I counted mine: both heav'n and earth  
Payd me my wages in a world of mirth.

To give human life to inanimate objects and to abstractions is a favourite device of Herbert's. In such images his mastery of
the vivid, enlivening detail stands him in good stead. Thus in "Perseverance" we find the moving picture of the desperate soul, here endowed with a face and hands:

Onely my soule hangs on thy promises
With face and hands clinging unto thy brest,
Clinging and crying, crying without cease,
Thou art my rock, thou art my rest.

This vision of the soul or the heart as an individual separate from man himself is typical of Herbert, and there are numerous examples of it in his work:

Busie enquiring heart, what wouldst thou know?
Why dost thou prie,
And turn, and leer, and with a licorous eye
Look high and low;
And in thy lookings stretch and grow?

"The Discharge"

My joy, my life, my crown!
My heart was meaning all the day,
Somewhat it fain would say:
And still it runneth muttering up and down
With onely this, My joy, my life, my crown.

"A true Hymne"

Just as the soul and the heart are given a separate existence, so parallels are often drawn between actions of the body and those of the soul, as for instance in "Church-lock and key":

But as cold hands are angrie with the fire
And mend it still;
So I do lay the want of my desire,
Not on my sinnes, or coldnesse, but thy will.

Herbert's personifications proper are very far removed from the eighteenth-century Hopes and Despairs whose only claim to the name of personification was the initial capital letter. He saw quite clearly the abstract figures of his dance of life and death.
In "The Church-floore" there are the sketches of Sin and Death:

Hither sometimes Sinne Steals, and stains
The marbles neat and curious veins:
But all is cleansed when the marble weeps.
Sometimes Death, puffing at the doore,
Blows all the dust about the floore:
But while he thinks to spoil the room, he sweeps.

Poems like "The World" and "The Quip" are full of these thumb-nail personifications, each of them alive:

Then Money came, and chinking still,
What tune is this, poore man? said he:
I heard in Musick you had skill.
But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

Then came brave Glorie puffing by
In silks that whistled, who but he?
He scarce allow'd me half an eie.
But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

"The Quip"

Herbert expresses also in human terms the relationship of God and man. There his Protestantism and even more the particular nature of his faith are made very clear. Where the Catholic poets, including even the Protestant convert Donne, see the relationship of man and Christ in terms of almost a love affair, Herbert is the rebellious and repentant child:

O let me still
Write thee great God, and me a child:
Let me be soft and supple to thy will,
Small to my self, to others mild,
Behither ill.

"H. Baptisme (II)"

The unusual image of body and soul as brother and sister is perhaps indicative of Herbert's untroubled mind which had solved the basic dilemma of his age:

Although by stealth
My flesh get on, yet let her sister
My soul bid nothing, but preserve her wealth:
The growth of flesh is but a blister;
Childhood is health.

"H. Baptisme (II)"

Nevertheless the wooing of man by God or of God by man is expressed by Herbert, although indirectly, in terms of war, as in the tradition of the War of Venus. So in "Discipline" man's sighs become arrows sent out to seek God; in "Artillerie" the combat of God and man forms the central motif of the poem. In "Prayer (I)" prayer becomes "Engine against th' Almighty, sinner's towre", thus moving the image from the usual sphere of single combat to war by siege.

Through discussion of Herbert's imagery we have so far perhaps learnt something about Herbert the poet and thinker, about his conception of the universe and of man's place in it, about his imagination and about his manner of expressing his thought. There are certain images, however, which although they perhaps do not tell us anything new about Herbert the poet, yet they are interesting for the light they throw on Herbert's life, if only by way of confirmation of known facts.

There are, for instance, the numerous images of clothing and fashion which will soon remind us of Herbert's one weakness. A picture of the Jacobean dandy in absurdly wide hose, quickly sketched in two lines of "The Church-porch" (ll. 179-80) is significantly convincing:

The curious unthrift makes his clothes too wide,
and spares himself, but would his taylor chide.
Similarly the admonitions to the vain in the same poem (ll. 407-8) sound a little as if the poet were chiding himself:

Kneeling ne're spoil'd silk stockings; quit thy state.
All equall are within the churches gate.

In "Mans medley" there is the strange image of flesh and spirit as coarse cloth trimmed with lace:

In soul he mounts and flies,
In flesh he dies.
He wears a stuffe whose thread is course and round,
But trimm'd with curious lace,
And should take place
After the trimming, not the stuffe and ground.

In "Peace" the rainbow is the lace of Peace's petticoat; in "The Forerunners" man's soul is a "bróder'd coat" not to be soiled; in all these images there is a faint memory of the pleasure in handsome clothes and dainty frills which had marked Herbert's youth.

Herbert the young man of fashion and breeding also comes to the fore in images of sports and games, such as fencing:

Calmnesse is great advantage: he that lest Another chafe, may warm him at his fire,
Mark all his wandrings, and enjoy his frets;
As cunning fencers suffer heat to tire.

"The Church-Porch", ll. 313-16

archery:

... Youth may make
Ev'm with the yeare: but age, if it will hit,
Shoots a bow short, and lessens still his stake,
As the day lessens, and his life with it.

ibid., ll. 156-60
boling:

Poore heart, lament.
For since thy God refuseth still,
There is some rub, some discontent ...

"The Method"

falconry:

With thee
Let me combine
And feel this day thy victorie:
For, if I imp my wing on thine,
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

"Easter-wings"

shooting:

But what shall issue, whither these my words
Shall help another, but my judgment bee,
As a burst fouling-peace doth save the birds
But kill the man, is seald with thee.

"Perseverance"

His interest in music is also reflected in his imagery; it is pleasant to think that his own skill on the lute, and not merely the current poetical vogue for it, made Herbert use this particular instrument so often in his musical metaphors:

Awake, my lute, and struggle for thy part
With all thy art.
The cross taught all wood to resound his name,
Who bore the same.
His stretched sinews taught all strings, what key
Is best to celebrate this most high day.

"Easter"

Yet take thy way; for sure thy way is best:
Stretch or contract me, thy poor debtor:
This is but tuning of my breast,
To make the musick better.

"The Temper (I)"
But Herbert's imagery bears the traces not only of his early secular ambitions; the later Herbert of A Priest to the Temple is just as prominent. The imagery connected with diseases and ailments forms a very considerable group. Possibly Herbert's own sickliness added to his interest in this branch of human knowledge, but the images he uses suggest far more the wise parson skilled in medical lore, than the patient:

... then with equall care
Ballance each dramme of reason, like a potion.

"The Church-Porch", 11.321-2

A grain of glorie mixt with humblenesse
Cures both a fever and lethargicknesse.

ibid., 11. 335-6

These drops being temper'd with a sinners tears
A Balsome are for both the Hemispheres:
Curing all wounds, but mine: all, but my fears:

"The Sacrifice", 11. 25-7

What is fairer then a rose?
What is sweeter? yet it purgeth.
Purgings emmitie disclose,
Emmitie forbearance urgeth.

"The Rose"

Balsams, purges, herbal cures, all these suggest Herbert's parson who knows "what herbs may be used in stead of drugs of the same nature."

The parson should also be a lawyer: Herbert shows considerable knowledge of civil rather than criminal law in his images of financial and legal matters. The laws of tenancy, wills, tithes,

1) A Priest to the Temple, Ch. XXIII, "The Parson's Completeness", Hutchinson, p. 261
buying and selling, all these were matters on which the parson
would be expected to give advice:

Having been tenant long to a rich Lord,
    Not thriving, I resolved to be bold,
    And make a suit unto him, to afford
A new small-rented lease, and cancell th' old.
In heaven at his manour I him sought:
    They told me there, that he was lately gone
    About some land which he had dearly bought
Long since on earth, to take possession. etc. etc.

"Redemption"

My God, if writings may
    Convey a Lordship any way
Whither the buyer and the seller please;
    Let it not thee displease,
If this poore paper do as much as they. etc. etc.

"Obedience"

    Kill me not ev'ry day,
Thou Lord of life; since thy one death for me
    Is more than all my deaths can be,
    Though I in broken pay
Die over each hours of Methusalems stay.

"Affliction (II)"

The relation between the soul. and God is here expressed in
terms of tenancy, of debt, much more often than in the parable
of judge and sinner which one might expect. Christ as the "rich
Lord" who grants his tenant his suit while dying on the cross,
and God accepting payment for the debt of salvation by instal-
ment, may seem to us metaphors unworthy of the noble theme, but
Herbert had no more preconceived ideas about what should be the
proper images for a devotional poem than any of his contemporaries.
They had truly sought their God in "cities, theatres, gardens,
parks and courts" of the world they were living in, and not only
in the dark seclusion of the church.
We have analysed Herbert's poetry in some detail, and have seen the wealth and variety of the images which he employs. We may remember best his homely images, perhaps because he uses them more consistently and naturally than any other poet of his time. But he uses with equal skill images drawn from the various learned theories or from country proverbs, from the Bible or from the emblem books, from court life and from the everyday routine of his parish work. In spite of their variety, there is a consistency in his images. They seem to reflect a complete vision of the world, in which all the parts, high or humble, are united in testifying to the Lord's glory. Herbert's personality is revealed with extraordinary clarity in his poems, and yet he remains overshadowed by the passionate faith to which he gave expression.

Similarly, his images, even if in themselves they are conceits every bit as extravagant as those of any other Metaphysical poet, remain only a part of the whole poem, never allowed to exceed the limits of their proper purpose. It is as if a divine light flooded his poetry, strangely softening the colours and shapes of his God-made and God-ruled world. It is the light of an experience which had not been granted to many, and which was not granted easily or for long. Throughout the long struggle for his faith, Herbert achieved at times the rare peace of a soul confident in his God and in the world created by Him. And it is this peace of the soul which gives Herbert's poetry its calm power, and his imagery its depth and clarity of meaning: to him, all his images, like all the world, spell the word GOD.
Chapter Two

Language for Angels

RICHARD CRASHAW

We know very little about Richard Crashaw the man; only the barest facts and dates of his life are recorded, and there is no room for personal revelations in his poetry.

His father, William Crashaw, was at the time of Crashaw's birth a preacher at the Temple in London, a man well respected and feared for his earnestness of faith and almost fanatical devotion to the Protestant creed. His was a militant faith, and its ardour was directed against the iniquities of Popery, especially against the Jesuits, with whom he waged a long-lasting controversial war. He collected Catholic, particularly Jesuit, literature, which provided him with material for his denunciations.

It remains open to conjecture whether the father's rabid Protestantism and his violent abuse of the Pope had not played their part in leading the son towards the church of Rome. Before accepting any such hypothetical conjecture, however, it would be well to remember that in Crashaw's earlier poems, written while his father's influence, positive or negative, was presumably still strong, loyal Protestant sentiments were expressed with gusto.

Moreover, William Crashaw's writings are echoed quite unmistakably

1) Sir Kenelm Digby's memorandum to the Pope, dated 20 November 1647, speaks of Richard Crashaw as "il dotto figliolo del famoso heretico dell' istesso nome."
in his son's earlier epigrams. 1)

Richard Crashaw was born in London in 1612 or 1613. His mother died probably while he was quite small, for the memoir of his stepmother, Elizabeth Skinner, which speaks eloquently of her loving care for her stepson, is dated 1620. William Crashaw himself died in 1626. Again we can only speculate on the effect of this early acquaintance with death on a nature as gentle as Crashaw's appears to have been according to the testimony of his friends.

In 1629 Crashaw entered the Charterhouse as a "gown-boy". There can be no doubt about the importance for his career of Crashaw's schooling at such a school as the Charterhouse. In compliance with the wishes of the founder of the school, Greek, Latin and rhetoric formed a substantial part of the syllabus; classical poets, historians and orators were not only read, studied and analysed, but imitated as well. Under his master, Robert Brooke (to whom he paid a warm tribute both in his Latin and English verse), Crashaw thus learnt to write Greek and Latin verse easily. Still more important for him was the practice in writing Greek and Latin epigrams on scriptural subjects which was the Sunday duty of the "gown-boys" in the highest form. It is indeed more than probable that in these Sunday exercises is to be found the origin, and possibly some of the actual texts, of Crashaw's first-fruits, his Epigrammata Sacra.

In July 1631 Crashaw entered Pembroke College, Cambridge.

Pembroke at this time was decisively royalist in politics, High Church in ritual and Arminian in theology (since the mastership of Launcelot Andrewes). It is not surprising then to find that during his stay at Pembroke Crashaw began to turn towards the High Church. In his Epigrammatum Sacrorum Liber, published in 1634, the year he took his degree of B.A., these leanings are clearly manifested, both in the choice of churchmen to whom the volume was dedicated, and in the actual sentiments expressed. There is no indication of any Roman sympathies in this volume, although the extreme anti-Papist Protestantism of the early poems (such as "Upon the gunpowder treason") has been modified considerably.

In 1635 or 1636 Crashaw was elected Fellow of Peterhouse, then an important centre of the supporters of Archbishop Laud, and in 1636 he took up his residence there. While at Peterhouse, Crashaw was probably ordained formally. There is no record of the ceremony, but from 1639 he held the curacy in Little St. Mary's, adjoining Peterhouse.

We know very little about Crashaw's life at Cambridge up to his loss of the Fellowship in 1643. What little information we possess, emphasizes the importance for Crashaw's career and character of the religious community at Little Gidding. Founded by Nicholas Ferrar, a Laudian divine, in 1626, Little Gidding was a family "religious house", the first in England since the dissolution of the monasteries. Life there was based on rigid monastic rules, to which all the members of the Ferrar family
subscribed voluntarily. Work, hourly prayers, hymns, hours of silent meditation filled the day, and at the suggestion of George Herbert, who was a friend of Nicholas Ferrar's, nightly vigils were added. Naturally enough, this "Arminian Nunnery", as its enemies called it, aroused much interest. Apart from the hostile, and the merely inquisitive, many of the clergy came there, as Isaac Walton tells us, who "were more inclined to practical piety and devotion, than to doubtful and needless disputations." The King himself honoured his loyal subjects at Little Gidding with two visits.

Crashaw was among the most frequent visitors. He might actually have been acquainted with the Ferrar family before his arrival in Cambridge, but certainly by the time he entered Peterhouse he was among the intimate friends of the Little Gidding community. Frequently he stayed there as in a "retreat", and took part in the nightly vigils. Ferrar Collet, Nicholas Ferrar's nephew and one of Crashaw's few pupils at Peterhouse, was perhaps a strengthening link in Crashaw's relations with

1) op. cit., p. 337

2) In her book, Richard Crashaw. A Study in Style and Poetic Development Miss Ruth Wallerstein argues that William Crashaw, who in 1609 preached a sermon to Lord Lawane and a company setting out for Virginia, and kept in contact with them, might have become acquainted with Nicholas Ferrar who was deeply concerned with Virginia affairs, and that after William Crashaw's death Ferrar might have interested himself in his orphan son. This, of course, is yet another of the fascinating hypotheses in which any student of Crashaw is much tempted to indulge.
the Ferrar family. Of the deep impression this community made on the gentle, ascetic scholar from Peterhouse, we have several indirect testimonies, the most eloquent of which is his poem "Description of a Religious House", a free translation of Barclay's Argenis, obviously based on Crashaw's memories of Little Gidding.

So Crashaw lived at Cambridge in quiet happiness; dividing his time among Peterhouse, Little Gidding, and Little St. Mary's. He had few friends and no diversions, and he left no record of his activities, not even of his sermons - a sad loss for anyone interested in the poet. In 1643, however, the Cambridge idyll came to an abrupt end when Cromwell's army seized and occupied Cambridge. In December of this year a Parliamentary commission was set up under the Earl of Manchester to abolish all "Monuments of Supersition or Idolatry" in Cambridge. In January 1644, shortly after the Commission had visited Peterhouse, Crashaw left Cambridge without waiting for the formal ejection.

By February of the same year he had left England and was living in Leyden. At this time he must have begun, under the stress of exile and poverty, and the uncertainty of the fate of Anglicanism in England, to entertain thoughts of conversion to Roman Catholicism. Writing to one of the Ferrar family, he mentions his

1) D. Lloyd in his Memoires of the Lives, Actions, Sufferings & Deaths of those Noble, Reverend, and Excellent Personages, That Suffered ... for the Protestant Religion .... (1668) says that Crashaw "seeing Atheism prevailing in England, embraced Popery in Italy, chusing rather to live in the Communion of that corrupt Church ... than to stay here, where was hardly the face of any Church ..." (quoted by L. C. Martin, op. cit., p. 416)
estrangement from Mary Collet, his "Mother" of the Little Gidding community, who was apparently also living in Leyden at the time. It may be surmised that his Roman sympathies were the cause of this estrangement, for the Ferrars, High Church as they were, remained loyal to the Protestant faith. Although Crashaw's personal ties with Anglicanism were strong, his craving for the peace that, especially after his flight from Cambridge, seemed to him lost forever, was even stronger. For the next two years we have no reliable information about Crashaw's movements. It is quite possible that he returned to England and joined the Court at Oxford. He may even have been received into the Roman Catholic church there.

By 1645 at any rate he had departed from England, and was at Queen Henrietta Maria's court in Paris. He found friends there, Abraham Cowley and Thomas Carre in particular. Crashaw's life in Paris was one of misery and starvation, and Cowley's help and the introduction to the Queen came none too soon. The Queen, herself a devout Catholic, apparently understood Crashaw's passionate devotion, and his desire to go to Italy in order to live there a life of ascetism and piety. Using her declining influence with Rome, she wrote in September 1646 to the Pope, recommending Crashaw to his attention. Crashaw probably left for Rome almost immediately, but more than a year elapsed before the Queen's letter produced any material result, and that only after a renewed appeal from Sir Kenelm Digby who was then acting as the Queen's representative in Rome. By this time Crashaw's health was already affected by the miserable conditions in which he lived, like "Fleckno at Rome" of
Marvell's cruel satire.

At last help came in the offer of a post in the suite of Cardinal Palotto. There is a brief account of Crashaw's life in the Cardinal's household in Dr. John Bargrave's *Pope Alexander the Seventh and the College of Cardinals* (1662). Bargrave saw Crashaw during his visit to Rome in 1647, and he recorded Crashaw's complaint of the wickedness of the Cardinal's retinue, "of which he (Crashaw), having the Cardinal's ear, complained to him." We may well imagine both the indignation which the worldliness of the Cardinal's suite, common enough among contemporary clergy in Italy, must have roused in the idealist Crashaw, and also the hatred which the members of the Cardinal's retinue felt against the tale-bearing foreigner. The tension in the Cardinal's household increased until the Cardinal, apparently fearing for Crashaw's life, intervened on his behalf to obtain for him a minor post of "beneficiatus" at the Loretto shrine. Crashaw came to Loretto in April 1649, a sick man, to spend the last months of his short life at the shrine of his beloved Virgin. He died on 22nd August 1649, and was buried at Loretto, in tumulo sacerdotum. Bargrave records the rumour that Crashaw died of poisoning, but we may take it that the cause of his early death was a natural one, the result of starvation, sometimes deliberate and sometimes enforced, of privation and vigils, of sorrow and isolation, of a life lived at a high pitch of spiritual tension and ecstasy.

Such was, in a brief outline, the life of Richard Crashaw. We have no portrait of him, only one letter and a brief line of dedi-
cation in his handwriting, and a handful of biographical material together with a few poetical tributes by his friends. Yet even such scanty material is sufficient to enable us to realise the character of the man who lived this short, sad life of a single devotion. For Crashaw, as for so many of the English devotional poets of the seventeenth century, faith was the most powerful factor in his life, which made - and, from the secular point of view, marred - his career. The religion he chose was filled with the overwhelming sweetness of the love of Jesus and his saints, which embraced the believer as if in a cloud of incense, and yet he lived for it a life of pain and misery: a paradox as inherent in the Christian religion as the miracle of the roses of St. Dorothea, and her bloody end on the scaffold of martyrdom. The soft, sensuous side of Crashaw's character, his fondness for colour and sweet melody of words, are perhaps better known to poetry readers, but the harshness and cruelty of a fanatic devotion are sharply enough reflected in those of his poems which dwell almost with pleasure on the physical aspect of Christ's sacrifice. "Poet and Saint" Cowley called him, and indeed he combines a poet's aesthetic delight in beauty with the burning, unheeding devotion of a saint. While the biographical evidence we possess testifies to his gentle and loving nature, the decision with which he cut himself off uncompromisingly from all that he loved, in order to follow the true religion he was seeking, speaks eloquently enough of the fanatic and ascetic in him.

The volume of Crashaw's poetry consists mainly of devotional
verse. In this he is in no way different from the other English Metaphysical poets who are the subject of this study, but he stands apart from them as the only Catholic (Cowley's alleged conversion was much too much tied up with his political and court activities, and could hardly be said to have had the spiritual importance of Crashaw's conversion). Crashaw's Catholicism is an integral part of his poetry, indeed of the whole of his existence. The fact that he was a convert, and the son of a "famous heretic" at that, is important too, for a convert's fresh enthusiasm has a touch of fever in it, which is absent in the devotion of a man safely following a long family tradition. Not merely a neophyte's anxiety to prove himself as worthy as the others, a convert's faith is the more intense because it has to conquer the pangs of latent doubt and, deeper still, the antagonistic heritage to which his religion is alien or even hostile. The fantastic hyperboles, the hypnotic repetitions imploring "the name above every name" and the Virgin, the very passion of the feelings expressed, all these are the marks of Crashaw the convert. The freshness of his reception into the Catholic faith and his early intimacy with Protestantism both contribute to the sharpness of his vision and to the clarity of his comprehension of the fundamental characteristics of his new creed. (So, in a different period and in a different artistic medium, Mr Graham Greene, also a convert, is the chief exponent of the problems of English Catholicism today.)

Far from influencing the mood of his poetry only, Crashaw's
Catholicism affects deeply the very matter, structure and expression of his verse in several ways. The impact of the Catholic tradition with its wealth of hagiology was natural and inevitable. It is important, however, to note which saints came to occupy a special niche of honour in the sanctuary of Crashaw's heart. In his choice he proved himself a worthy and faithful pupil of contemporary Catholic tradition on the Continent, and a true poet of the baroque.

St. Mary Magdalen, the Weeper, was his first choice. Her beauty had the touch of earthly corruption which appealed to the baroque imagination just as much as the pathos of her dramatic contrition. Her temporal life of sin and her eternal life of salvation seemed to form a connecting link between heaven and earth. Crashaw's Magdalen, lost in her tears, appears washed clean to a frailty and purity that had lost all the fascination of the carnal in a silvery flood of tears. The imagery he chooses is important: her tears are silver springs, crystals, thawing snow, stars, dew, jewels, pearls, drops of balsam, of amber, the hour-glass of Time, a cadence of music - all images beautiful, brilliant, lucent, flowing, but cool, as lacking in warmth as the light of the moon; in short, in no way reminiscent of the passionate repentant sinner of the tradition. Interspersed, however, among the remote, beautiful images are conceits that brought Crashaw his reputation of a sensuous, even sensual poet, grotesquely extravagant images such as these:

Vpwards thou dost wepe,  
Heavens bosome drinks the gentle streame.  
Where th' milky rivers meet,  
Thine Crawles above and is the Creame.  
Heaven, of such faire floods as this,  
Heaven the Christall Ocean is.
Every morn from hence
A briske Cherub something sips
Whose soft influence
Adds sweetnesse to his sweetest lips.
Then to his Musick, and his song
Tastes of his breakfast all day long.

When some new bright guest
Takes up among the stars a roome,
And Heaven will make a feast,
Angels with their Bottles come;
And draw from these full Eyes of thine,
Their Masters water, their owne Wine.

Say watry Brothers
Yee simpering sons of those faire eyes,
Your fertile Mothers.
What hath our world that can entice
You to be borne? what is't can borrow
You from her eyes swolne wombes of sorrow.

(1652 version only:)

And now where're he strays,
Among the Galilean mountaines,
Or more vnwellcome waves,
He's follow'd by two faithfull fountaines;
Two walking baths; two weeping motions;
Portable, & compendious oceans.

The imagery is concrete and sensuous enough in itself, but by its very concreteness, when used in such an abstract context, it evokes impressions not of reality, but of a startling incongruity, almost of grotesqueness, which offer of course exquisite relief to the lovely "remote" abstracted imagery of the type mentioned earlier. This characteristic of Crashaw's will be discussed at some length later (pp.112 ff.) For the time being be it sufficient to say that the great baroque saint, Mary Magdalen, although she appealed to Crashaw's imagination as much as to the imagination of her other devotees, yet she became in
his conception a figure transformed from the luxurious beauty of contemporary painting; there is little trace of the lover-and-mistress relationship in her devotion to Jesus.

The other saint of Crashaw's poetry, equally a product of the baroque era, was one of a type diametrically opposed to the Fair Penitent, if we may compare a legendary figure based on two episodes in the Scriptures with a historical character. St. Teresa of Avila, the Spanish mystic, was a woman of great practical intelligence, an excellent organiser, a born leader, and a warm human being. The Flaming Hart, allegedly her autobiography, translated into English in 1642 by M.T. (Sir Toby Matthew?), which Crashaw in all probability knew well, either in the English translation or in the original, gives a very clear picture of this remarkable woman. But if the intellectual and practical side of St. Teresa's character was hardly likely to inspire a poet of Crashaw's type, she had, like the Church to which she belonged, another side to her nature. She was a mystic of the kind which 1)

Mr Austin Warren calls "imagistical", given to trances and visions which she expressed in symbols drawn from human love and marriage. In The Flaming Hart her trances or "rapts", as she calls them, are described as "this torment; which yet, withall, is so delicious a kind of thing, and the Soule perceaues it to be of so high value, that now, she delights in it more, then in all those other Regallo's which she was ever wont to posesse." In his

1) Richard Crashaw. A Study in Baroque Sensibility, p. 147
"Hymn to the Name and Honor of the Admirable Sainte Teresa"

Crashaw gave an inspired description of these "raps" -

O how oft shalt thou complain
Of a sweet & subtle PAIN.
Of intolerable TOYES;
Of a DEATH, in which who dyes
Loues his death, and dyes again.
And would for ever so be slain.
And liues, & dyes; and knowes not why
To liue, But that he thus may never leaue to DY.

While blind to the carnal beauty of the Magdalen (indeed he sa nothing but hereyes and tears), Crashaw was apparently quite deaf to the voice of discipline and intellect which was as much St. Teresa's as her ecstatic cries of half-pleasure, half-pain. The imagery of his Hymn is characteristically governed by the overruling theme of a love relationship between Teresa and her Lord. From the opening "Love, thou art Absolute sole lord OF LIFE & DEATH" to the triumphant climax of

... put on (hee'l say) put on
(My rosy loue) That thy rich zone
Sparkling with the sacred flames
Of thousand soules, whose happy names
Heau'n keeps upon thy score... 

the imagery is that of a love poem, with all the traditional symbols of the pangs of love: the sword, the dart, the fire, the "delicious Wounds" of love. The emphasis throughout is on the sensory aspect of mysticism. While St. Teresa herself speaks of the "high value" of her visions, Crashaw soars in a cloud of incense, and, inspired by the rather matter-of-fact account of the saint's trances, attempts with masterful audacity to recreate the swooning atmosphere of mystical ecstasy in a waterfall of dazzling, magical images. In this treatment of
St. Teresa's vision Crashaw was more in accord with the contemporary Catholic tradition than in his "weeper". To give the most obvious example only, Bernini's St. Teresa, swooning in the ecstasy of her pain, with the serenely smiling seraph above her, ready to pierce her heart with his dart, breathes the same spirit, speaks mutely of the same "sweet & subtle Pain."

Poems based on incidents from the life of Jesus, and poems celebrating his love and sacrifice, were equally in keeping with the contemporary tradition. Among the Anglican poets, Donne and Herbert also found inspiration in the glory of Jesus. Yet there is a characteristic difference in Crashaw's treatment of the subject, in the emphasis which he places upon the physical aspect of Christ's suffering. We may find isolated poems in Herbert's work, like "The Bag" (where the wound in Christ's side becomes a receptacle for communications with God) in which the wounds of Christ play an important part, but we shall not find any such poems in the austere passion of Donne, and even in Herbert's poetry the details of the Passion are not dwelt upon with the fascinated minute attention Crashaw bestows upon them. The lines in the poem "On the wounds of our crucified Lord":

This foot hath got a Mouth and lippes,
To pay the sweet summe of thy kisses:
To pay thy Teares, and Eye that weeps
In stead of Teares such Gems as this is.

have been quoted against Crashaw as an example of his bad taste, of his sadistic dwelling on Christ's torture. If this is a lapse of taste, a mark of cruelty, it is one which Crashaw shared with
and indeed received from, European Catholic art of this time. To give a brief example of a similar treatment of the theme of the Passion, Johann Scheffler (Angelus Silesius), the German baroque poet, in his "Die Psyche begehrt ein Bienelein auff den Wunden Jesu zu seyn", identifying himself with the Soul, begs to be allowed to feed like a bee on the rose of Christ's wounds:

Lass mich doch stets ein Bienelein
Auff diesen Rosen-Wunden seyn.

The crudely painted statues of the Pieta, which were still to be seen in village churches of Central Europe but a few years ago, offering the bleeding wounds of Christ to be kissed by silent worshippers in Good Fridays, were the product of the same tradition as Crashaw's image of the red-lipped wounds; a tradition that sought to bring about the realisation of Christ's suffering, and thereby of the magnitude of his sacrifice, by all possible and available means, including the shock treatment. In the eyes of those who accepted this tradition the wounds of Christ became beautiful through the sacrifice which they represented, and so it was fit and seemly to describe them in a language usually reserved for the traditional objects of admiration - women and flowers.

In concentrating on the Passion, the Nativity and the Circumcision, i.e. on the physical events of Christ's life, Crashaw was at one with the Catholic tradition which treated the story of the Saviour concretely, in details of the biblical and apocryphal episodes, in preference to contemplation of the abstract relationship of Christ and the individual, which was the primary concern of the Protestant poets.
This concrete conception of the Divinity enters also the treatment of the theme of the Virgin, the last of Crashaw's great devotional subjects. Be it in the vivid paradox of the sucking baby and the man on the cross who quenched men's thirst for God with his own blood ("Luke 11. Blessed be the paps which Thou hast sucked") or in the half-mystical, half-amorous relationship of Jesus and his heavenly spouse, this theme is treated concretely, translated into terms of familiar human relationships. Even in the tragic group of the Pietà, in the "Sancta Maria Dolorum", there is an echo of the mystical love of the "Assumption":

O costly intercourse
Of deaths, & worse,
Divided loves. While son & mother
Discourse alternate wounds to one another.

Cf. "In the Glorious Assumption of our Blessed Lady":

She's calld. Hark, how the dear immortall dowe
Sighes to his syluer mate rise vp, my loue!
Rise vp, my fair, my spottesse one!

As we have seen, Crashaw's choice and treatment of his major devotional subjects was within the frame of contemporary Catholic tradition. As the Catholic dogma and church ritual suited his temperament, so the Counter-Reformation art, predominantly visual, dramatic, designed to shock or hypnotise the spectator or reader into acceptance, suited Crashaw's imagination, and whatever his human fate, as an artist he found himself in the Catholic Church.

Catholicism provided or at least suggested to Crashaw his subjects, and it also provided him with models and examples of treatment. The most international of all creeds, it offered him
a wealth not only of traditional themes, but also of examples, parallels and contrasts of treatment of these themes in a number of languages. Crashaw is often regarded as un-English on account of these foreign links and models. His mastery of the music, rhythm and subtleties of expression in the English language suffice to refute this accusation, but the question of his foreign borrowings and examples remains an interesting one.

His first poetical models, before he came to know contemporary European Catholic poetry, were the classics, Greek and Latin. Mention was made earlier of the practice, current at the Charterhouse, of compulsory exercises in Latin and Greek verse, mostly in epigrammatic form. The influence of this training in short succinct epigrams, with their natural tendency towards paradox and punning, is evident not only in Crashaw's Epigrammatum Sacrorum Liber, but in his English verse as well. The paradox and the oxymoron, with their obvious philosophical parallel in the very nature of Christian religion where death is life and life in sin is death, are characteristic of the seventeenth century which, while still retaining the faith that made the paradox possible, was beginning to withdraw from the centre of security, and was by then sufficiently distant from it to realise man's paradoxical position. The aptness of the epigram for religious matters, especially for the Church that wished rather to realise than to solve the fundamental paradox of Christianity, is emphasized by the popularity of

1) cf. Crashaw's Latin epigram on the text from Matth. 16. 25:

I Vita; I, perdam, mihi mors tua, Christe, reperta est:
(Mors tua vita mihi est: mors tibi, vita mea) ...
this poetical genre among Jesuit poets (Bettinus, Bidermann, Bauhusius and Remond, for instance).

Most of Crashaw's paradoxes appear in his Latin and English epigrams, but the capability to perceive the paradoxical remained with him throughout, and found its highest form of expression in the poems on St. Teresa. In these the mystery of the saint's rapture could not be expressed except in the paradox of life and death, of pleasure and pain, mingling and becoming one:

O how oft shalt thou complain
Of a sweet & subtle PAIN.
Of intolerable TOYES;
Of a DEATH, in which who dyes
Loves his death, and dyes again.
And would for ever be so slain.
And lives, & dyes; and knowes not why
To live, But that he thus may never leaue to DY.

... walk with HIM those waves of light
Which who in death would live to see,
Must learn in life to die like thee.

"A Hymn to the Name and Honor of the admirable Sainte Teresa"

By all the heau'ns thou hast in him
(Fair sister of the SERAPHIM!
By all of HIM we have in THEE;
Leave nothing of my SELF in me.
Let me so read thy life, that I
Vnto all life of mine may dy.

"The Flaming Heart"

Though still I dy, I liue again;
Still longing so to be still slain,
So gainfull is such losse of breath,
I dy even in desire of death.
Still liue in me this loving strife
Of living DEATH & dying LIFE.
For while thou sweetly slayest me
Dead to my selfe, I liue in Thee.

"The Flaming Heart. A Song"
The mastery of the paradox, and of the epigram itself, acquired in his Greek and Latin exercises, and probably perfected later on the neo-Latin epigrams of the Jesuit poets, is the only direct and obvious result of Crashaw's classical schooling. Of course, like all educated men of his time, he was familiar with classical mythology, and, like his other contemporaries, found no incongruity in applying pagan metaphors to devotional themes. For instance, in the "Epiphany" Jesus is addressed as the world's Hyperion, and in the hymn "To the Name of Jesus" there is an elaborate conceit of the Earth lying open to the golden showers of Jesus, an obvious allusion to the Danae myth.

But the classical rhetoric with its restraint and perfection of economy, although certainly familiar to Crashaw from his studies at the Charterhouse and at Cambridge, was alien to his genius, and indeed, as we see in his best work, directly opposed to it.

His gradual emancipation from classical training is best illustrated by Crashaw's translations from the classics. From the early, almost literal translations from Virgil's Georgics and from Heliodorus, his style of translation develops and acquires gradually a rhythm of its own, and a poetical idiom, distinct from the original. Crashaw expands the text to find room for his own conceits. Thus when translating Catullus' famous Carmen V, he expands the lines

Nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux
Nox est perpetua una dormienda.
to: Put if we darke sons of sorrow
Set; o then, how long a Night
Shuts the Eyes of our short light!

"Out of Catullus"

The phrase "we darke sons of sorrow", repeated in the hymn
"To the Name of Jesus" ("We, dark Sons of Dust & Sorrow"), is entirely Crashaw's own.

Although he continued the practice of translating from the Latin, Crashaw's later choice indicated clearly in which direction his inclination turned: the emblematist Hermannus Hugo's epigram "In amorem divinum", the Jesuit Strada's Latin poem, extended to the "Musicks Duell", nearly four times its original length;
Remond's "Elegiae", freely translated as "Alexias; the Complaint of the Forsaken Wife".

Probably during his undergraduate years Crashaw had read the Italians, Marinc in particular, who proved to be a most decisive influence. The Marinist school of poetry, with its exuberance of expression, its exotic, fantastic and often grotesque "concetti", appealed to that part of Crashaw's nature which finally predominated and brought him to rest in the Church of Rome.

Crashaw's admiration for Marino is best documented in his undertaking to translate Marinc's sacred epic in four books, La Strage degli Innocenti, published in 1610. This task Crashaw never completed. His translation of the first canto, "Sospetto d'Herode", however, shows his treatment of Marinc sufficiently well. Although the Italian poem was very well suited to his temperament both in style and in subject - the slaughter of the
Innocents with its drama of passive martyrdom - yet even here Crashaw's treatment is as free as in his translations of the classics. Again he heightens and adorns the language, adds paradoxes, oxymorons and conceits of his own. The effect of these conceits upon conceits is not very fortunate; in fact, this long poem - which to a poet of Crashaw's impulsive, purely lyrical genius was probably a hard labour of love - is peculiarly lacking in conviction. Most of the conceits ring false, the pictures evoked by the surfeit of uncoordinated, stiff images, are unconvincing and vague. But often enough there is a sudden brilliance of a perfect line in all the confusion of conceits:

... three Wise men went
Westward to find the worlds true Orient.

The superimposing of Crashaw upon Marino, with conceits taken over and elaborated further, but not resulting from Crashaw's own poetical experience, was not very successful. Yet Crashaw learnt from Marino, and very probably through his translation of the "Sospetto" and through the close study of the original which this involved, the concettist method of elaborating a given theme by accumulation of analogies from other, affiliated or entirely different, fields, by juxtaposition of images and by increasing the distance between the two images compared as often as emphasizing the similarity. This method suited Crashaw well. His love of verbal music, well attested to by the rhythms of his verse, rejoiced in the rapture of a chain of euphonious words, flowing like a song, unhampered by the need for a logical structure. At the same time his exquisite imagination could delight in the stream of beautiful, exciting images, vaguely and
lightly joined together by the theme of the poem. Crashaw's masterpiece in the concettist manner is of course his "Weeper", an eulogy of the tears of the Magdalen.

It is characteristic of the nature of this poem that although the order of stanzas in the 1648 and 1652 versions differs quite considerably from that of the first version of 1646, it is quite impossible to decide whether the alterations improve or damage the poem. We may guess at the various reasons which led Crashaw to change the order, and insert a new stanza from "The Teare", but we cannot commend or condemn these changes. They make no difference to the poem as a whole, which consists of a number of independent and interchangeable small units, like the beads on a rosary, or like the incantations of the Ave.

In spite of the musical perfection of his lines, Crashaw will be remembered for his images first and foremost. Paradoxically, although it is the imagery of his poetry which links him both with the Continental baroque poetry and with his Anglican fellow-countrymen of the Metaphysical school, yet his images are very much his own, and a product of his original genius. He created his own imagery, pregnant with meaning and beauty, to express both the aesthetic sensation and the emotion he was trying to recapture. His earliest biographer, Lloyd, seems to have recognised this peculiar quality of Crashaw's verse when he wrote:

This Divine Poet, that had set a Language (made up of the Quintessence of Fancy and Reason) for the Angels (as the Schoolmen state their way of discourse) to converse in...

1) _op. cit._, quoted by L. C. Martin, p. 416
The distinctive character of Crashaw's language is emphasized by comparison with the other Metaphysical poets. There is a conspicuous lack of the Donne-esque imagery from the newly discovered world of science, which even the unworldly George Herbert used in lines like these:

(Prayer is) The Christian plummet sounding
Heav'n and earth;
Engine against th' Almighty ...  
"Prayer (I)"

or in "The Search":

Thy will such a strange distance is
As that to it,
East and West touch, the poles do kiss,
And parallels meet.

The cosmos for Crashaw, with the possible exception of the 1) lines in "The Glorious Epiphany", is that of the Ptolemaic system, in complete accord with the teaching of the Catholic church. For him Satan can threaten in "Sospetto d'Herode" to "crush the world till his wide corners meet", and the stars still move for him in their stately dance to the music of the spheres. All the poets of this time use the medieval cosmic theories to illustrate their thought or feeling, just like Crashaw; but there are few who make so little use of the new discoveries. Possibly it was his Catholicism that prevented him from prying into the secrets of the Index Librorum Prohibitorum; but it is equally possible to think that

1)  O little all! in thy embrace
The world lieth warm, & likes his place.
Nor does his full Globe fail to be
Hist on both his cheeks by Thee.
the ascetic "Poet & Saint" simply failed to realise the world of science, because its precision and abstraction did not attract him. Similarly there is not a hint in his work of the troubled world in which he lived; although the religious storm in England affected his material circumstances considerably, it seems to have left his soul, tossed by spiritual storms, unperturbed.

Crashaw appears to accept the medieval conception of the earth as unclean, unworthy; in his "Epiphany" the medieval contrast of heaven and earth is elaborated, projected into the contrast of the two suns, the true Sun dawning with the birth of the Son of God, and the unclean, pagan sun of idolatry.

Just as Crashaw was indifferent to the discoveries of science, he took no interest in the travels and voyages that were the pride of his time. Bent on finding the Kingdom of Heaven, he had no time to spare for America and the Indies. His images of distant lands are limited to a few vague pictures of the East as the traditional symbol of fabulous riches, as for instance in "An Himne for the Circumcision day of our Lord":

Let him make poore the purple East,
Rob the rich store her Cabinets keep, ...

While the other Metaphysical poets often based their conceits on a similarity of purpose and action, on abstract, rational connections, Crashaw's conceits, and indeed his imagery generally, are predominantly sensory. Surely there is a connection here

1) cf. also "the false smiles of a sublunary sun" in "To the same party concerning her choice".
between his rich, sensuous, delightfully cloudy imagery, and his High Church leanings and his eventual conversion to Catholicism.

Without questioning the sincerity of his devotion, it is possible to imagine the aesthetic satisfaction, the very banquet of senses, which the Mass offered to a man of Crashaw's capacity for sensuous appreciation and of his musical sensibility. It may seem incongruous to us that anyone of his ascetic, saintly habits could delight so openly in feasting his eye and ear, while worshipping God. But the baroque maxim that in his flesh man shall see God, condoned and encouraged the worship of God with all the senses He had given man. Nevertheless there is a curious abstract, verbal element in Crashaw's sensuous imagery. The sensory image directly associated with a word seems less important to him than the emotional reaction it evokes.

This links Crashaw closely with the emblem literature. Still close to the dying medieval tradition of allegory, the emblem writers created allegories of their own by imposing a moral or religious interpretation on chosen pictures. As their emblems came mostly from the same original sources - the Church liturgy and the classical fables - there was a definite similarity of subject and treatment in all the emblem books, especially in the earlier ones, which aim at ridiculing the traditional vices of medieval moralities, and of course praising the virtues.

When, however, the emblem became an instrument of expressing individual, personal feelings, the emphasis moved from the picture (which had been all-important in the earlier emblem books,
and received considerably more care than the text, often cumbrous-
antly bilingual), less capable of expressing nuances of feeling, to the text. Of this "second generation" of emblematists in England, Francis Quarles is perhaps the best poet, while for prose the laurels go without doubt to the author of Partheneia Sacra (Henry Hawkins?), a work equally moving in the sincerity of devotion to the cult of the Virgin, and in the wealth of ornamental, intricate, very beautiful language. Both Quarles and the author of Partheneia Sacra, while making full use of the emblematic tradition and its conventions (for instance in Quarles' Emblem IV of the fifth book of Emblemes the traditional conceit of a pair of compasses represents the unity of the soul with Jesus), treat their subject in an individual way. To quote another example, in Quarles' Emblem VII of the same book, the symbol of the skeleton imprisoning the soul is not new, but the lines

... shall his hollow arms
Hug thy soft sides? Shall these coarse hands untie
The sacred zone of thy virginity?

are quite startlingly vivid in their erotic imagery, echoed in Crashaw's Hymn to St. Teresa.

In the Partheneia Sacra the well-known traditional symbols mingle with symbols unfamiliar or even newly created by the author to enrich his garden (for instance, the image of the Virgin as dew, as rainbow). He speaks in a language familiar to us, near to Crashaw's language "for angel's to converse in", emphasizing thus the obvious connection between Crashaw and the emblem writers. Of course, in Crashaw the firm structure of a work conceived in
the frame of an elaborate emblem (like the Garden of Parthenicia Sacra) is missing, and the emblems are scattered. In addition, the personal element of aesthetic choice enters the selection of emblems to a much larger extent, and mixes with the heritage of tradition.

The emblem tradition gave the key to the emotional appeal through familiar symbols, connected with the Church liturgy, but Crashaw goes beyond the familiar, expressing his sensations in a language of "personal emblems" as we might call them. From the emblem comes their predominating appeal to the visual sense, and also the peculiar remoteness, the "abstract realism", which we note in Crashaw particularly. The image is drawn quite accurately, as in the emblematic picture with its painstaking detail, but it is in a setting of ideas and emotions, not of reality, not even of that reality which the imagination can create. Set against an alien background, unrelated to its concrete content, the image loses something of its accepted meaning.

Where the emblem presents a pictorial symbol against the background of ideas and emotions which release a store of traditional emotions attached to the symbol, Crashaw often offers a symbol endowed with a significance known only to himself. The appeal is not to conscious emotions roused by the meaning of a traditional symbol, but to the more vague, but nevertheless real emotions and sensations which we are to some extent permitted to share with the poet, although we probably do not feel them so intensely, nor realise their significance quite so fully. This may of course be said to a large extent of all imagery, but in
Crashaw the significance of these "personal emblems" is brought home to us more forcibly by the intermixture of such traditional liturgical symbols as the Lamb and the Dove. It is further emphasized by repetition, conspicuous in such a narrow range of imagery as Crashaw's. The intermixture of established religious symbols with personal ones of equal importance is a link between Crashaw's work and the *Partheneia Sacra*, although there the traditional symbols predominate. Sometimes the resemblance is quite remarkable; for instance in *Partheneia Sacra* the dew is seen as tears of Nature and then later as "the Milk of Nature, where with she is disposed to suckle creatures at her owne breaste." The parallel with "The Weeper", where the Penitent's tears become milk for angels, is clear. Naturally, the author of the *Partheneia* shares also with Crashaw the whole range of traditional symbols of the Virgin as the Moon (cf. "The Moon of maiden starrs", thy white Mistresse" of Crashaw's "Hymn to the Name and Honor of the admirable Sainte Teresa"), the Dove, Pearl, Lily, Star, Nightingale, Fountain, Phoenix, Violet; such images appear also frequently in Crashaw.

The parallels between Crashaw's poetry and the *Partheneia Sacra* serve to emphasize the resemblance of Crashaw's work to emblem literature, a resemblance never so clear as in Herbert's poetry, but more subtle and pervading his whole work, not so much in individual themes and symbols, as in the whole nature of his imagery.

The traditional symbolism of the Church and of the medieval bestiary
naturally predominates in certain categories of imagery which may be regarded as their own demesne. Thus Crashaw's images from the animal world have little connection with living animals, but much with church symbols and with the bestiary. The dove, one of his favourite images, is the Dove of Christian liturgy, although Crashaw's symbolic meaning of the word is less fixed than that of the tradition; his Dove is not the Holy Ghost, as represented in church paintings of the Trinity, but the Virgin or even Christ, as in the hymn "In the Glorious Assumption":

She's call'd. Hark, how the dear immortall dove
Sighes to his syluer mate rise vp, my loue!

However, although the traditional meaning of the symbol is not employed, the value of the tradition is fully exploited, enhancing the atmosphere of solemn mystical devotion. In other instances Crashaw adheres to the accepted liturgical symbolism, as in the apostrophe of Christ as the

... soft self-wounding Pelican!
Whose brest weepes Balm for wounded man.

"The Hymn of Sainte Thomas in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament"

Equally orthodox is the mythical Phoenix as a symbol of the Resurrection, a religious variant of the ancient legend. The neat paradox of life in death pleased well the seventeenth century.

In all these instances the object is not so much to draw a visual picture of the image employed as to remind the reader of its spiritual significance, or to create a certain mood of spiritual elation.

Crashaw always touches the real world very lightly. Instead
of fully developed metaphors of birds and beasts, to give examples from the world of animals which has just been discussed, he only hints at the image he has in the back of his mind, by using a word, habitually used of the animal. Thus he speaks of the Lord calming man's soul in phrases reminiscent of falconry:

When my waiward breath is flying,
He calls home my soul from dying,
Strokes and tames my rabid Grief.

"Psalme 23"

In "Musicks Duell" we find the lines:

Till the fledg'd Notes at length forsake their Nest;
Fluttering in wanton shoales, and to the sky
Winged with their own wild Echo's pratling fly.

In such lines Crashaw actually came near to a vivid realistic picture, although but sketchedly drawn.

Not all the words or phrases, usually applied to the animal world, have, however, the purpose of recalling the live world. We have spoken earlier of Crashaw's "personal emblems". Some words seem to have had a very definite, almost hypnotic value for him. The most frequent, and best known of these is "nest", which recurs in Crashaw's poetry with quite remarkable frequency (some twenty-seven times in all), usually without any obvious logical reason for its appearance. The "nest of loves" is the key phrase, which appears most often. It offers perhaps a reason for Crashaw's affection for this humble word, which seems to have meant for him all that he was seeking in the Catholic church - security, love, sweetness, fragrance and warmth. It is interesting to note that out of all the instances of his use of this word, only once,
and that in his translation of Marino's "Sospetto d'Herode", is it used in conjunction with things unpleasant ("the Nest of poison'd and unnaturall loves, Earth-nurs'd"). In all the other instances it is used to denote the shelter found in God, the seat of the soul, of love; usually with adjectives like "sugared", "balmy", "sparkling", etc.

In a lesser measure the word "dove" has the same value for Crashaw and seems to be used purely in order to create a particular atmosphere, as for instance in "The Weeper":

Eyes! Nests of milky doves ...

(1648 version)

or in the poem "On a prayer booke":

O happy and thrice happy shee
Deare silver breasted dove
Who ere shee be ...

Just as his images from the animal world belong more to the book of liturgy and the bestiary, so Crashaw's images of plants have their source in the traditional symbolism. The rose and the lily had been the conventional metaphors for the description of the poet's mistress and had become a traditional part of the eulogy of Christ; Crashaw uses these two images in the conventional sense in his poem "On the birth of Princess Elizabeth", but in his poems on Christ's martyrdom, and on the Circumcision, he exploits the liturgical associations. For instance, Christ's wounds are roses, and, in a lightning conjunction of the traditional conceit with the new, the rose-red wounds become lips, thus creating a vivid picture which is almost horrifying in its evocative power.
The cross as a tree heavy with the fruit of martyrdom is also a traditional symbol, emphasized by the legend of the origin of the Holy Rood from the Tree of Knowledge.

Lastly, in the elegies, on Mr. Herrys and others, the untimely death of a young man, compared to a broken plant, is again much less an image seen than thought or felt. This seems a common denominator of Crashaw's images, in their origin at any rate, that they were conceived not in order to break away from a familiar metaphor, but in order to make full use of its emotional contents, multiplied by familiarity. Sometimes, and indeed very often, Crashaw creates an image startling in its originality and audacity (as the image of Christ's wounds quoted above), but even there the image can be traced back to a desire to employ the emotional associations of living European traditions. This is a characteristic of Crashaw's poetry; his imagery is of a kind which would have created fundamentally the same reaction everywhere in Europe where the Christian, i.e. Catholic and humanist, tradition was alive.

It would seem from what has just been said about Crashaw's constant employment of traditional images (which of necessity made a stronger appeal to emotions and thoughts than to senses) that the sensuousness of Crashaw is merely a fabric of imagination. But his sensuousness, a capacity for enjoyment through the senses is undeniable. It is, however, subtler than the sensuousness of, say, Swinburne, for it needed only the lightest touch, a word merely vaguely connected with the sensuous image, to
satisfy it. It was not necessary that the theme of the poem, and the image expressing it, should be of the same kind, appealing to the same sense. The image was used not so much to depict the theme, as to rouse sensations and emotions which would, as it were, wrap themselves round the theme like decorative veils, beautifying and concealing at the same time. They are functional decorations, and therefore they must be chosen with care so as to create a feeling of pleasure, either by an impression of colour, of a beautiful shape, or by the music of their sound, or by their association by traditional use, with ennobling, lovely things. The eye is a sensitive recipient of sensuous pleasures, and one that retains the pleasures of the past, and can recall them easily. Hence the predominance, in Crashaw's work, of images which owed their origin to a visual experience. It is immaterial that often it was a second-hand experience, for sharpness of vision was less important than the general mood of the impressions. Other images suggest that he was equally sensitive to touch, and to scent.

Compared to the other Metaphysical poets, Crashaw was lacking in learned images, as was pointed out above. The world of science and discovery, of books, had little to offer to him. From literature he took, apart from the emblems which we have discussed above, only classical allusions, which to him, as to most educated men of his time, were merely turns of speech, and came tripping to his tongue. Even so it is interesting to note that most of his classical allusions appear in translations (from Marino, from the
classics and from Italian lyrics), and in the occasional poems addressed to the royal family, in which a certain amount of elegant classicism was expected.

The quality of immediate aesthetic appeal is characteristic of most of his images. Where he speaks of the celestial bodies, for instance, it is only the visual appearance of the cosmos, never the mystery of it, that appealed to him. Except in the poem "In the glorious Epiphanie of our Lord", which is altogether rather exceptional in its deeper symbolism of the true and the false sun, the cosmos remained for Crashaw a fair background on which to project

... that rich flame,
Which writes thy spouses radiant name.

Images of brilliance, like jewels or the pomp of royalty, played an important part in Crashaw's poetry; naturally enough, for the mere sound of a word like "ruby", or "pearl", "diamond", or a phrase like "a sparkling crown", have their effect on every reader. The range of these words is limited, but their effect is the stronger for their being traditionally, through folk song and folk tale, as well as through the courtly lyric, associated with the glitter and sparkle of beauty.

Crashaw's sensitivity to colours is also reflected in his imagery, but in an indirect fashion, reminiscent of those images touching on the animal world, of which we spoke above (p. 115).

The word "blush" is a favourite with him:

Scarse has she Blood enough to make
A guilty sword blush for her sake;

"A Hymn to the Name and Honor of St. Teresa"
Such the maiden gemme  
By the purpling vine put on,  
Peeps from her parent stemme  
And blushes at the bridegrome sun.

"The Weeper"

Even the red colour of blood is referred to indirectly:

Lo! a mouth, whose full-bloom'd lips  
At too deare a rate are roses.

"On the wounds of our crucified Lord"

The effect of these indirect descriptions is of course again  
a softening of the realistic image.

The hypnotic atmosphere of the Mass in which Crashaw steeped  
himself since the time of his vigils in the soft, silent dark-  
ness of Little St. Mary's at Cambridge, gave him the memory of  
the intoxicating scent of incense, which he recalled so often in  
his imagery, and which he seemed to identify with devotion:

When These thy DEATHS, so numerous,  
Shall all at last dy into one,  
And melt thy Soul's sweet mansion;  
Like a soft lump of incense, hasted  
By too hott a fire, & wasted  
Into perfuming clouds ...

"A Hymn to the Name and Honor of the  
Admirable Sainte Teresa"

Does thy sweet-breath'd praire  
Vp in clouds of incense climb?

"The Weeper"

This seems to have been his one overpowering sensation evoked  
by the Mass, for his direct references to church rites remain  
confined to general and conventional allusions to the classical  
and biblical sacrifices at the altar.
The indirect influence of the Mass and of the Transubstantiation is obvious in the numerous images of blood and wine, or blood and tears. The mystical food of angels exercised his imagination in curious contrast with the sudden realism of his "angells-imps that swill their throats In creame of Morning Helicon" in "Musicks Duell", or in the notorious image of the angels collecting into bottles their heavenly breakfast of the Magdalen's tears. Crashaw liked images of slowly, softly flowing liquids; be it the rich garment of Christ's blood, or the never-ending tears of the Magdalen, or the cream of the Milky Way. Somehow, even in the naturalism of the image of Christ's blood as wine, or of Mary Magdalen's tears as milk that "crawles above and is the cream", the soft flow softens the harshness of an over-realistic, or grotesque image, and veils the absurdity of upwards-streaming tears, or of the "two walking baths". Death, time, all things cruel and tragic, flow for him in a stream, softened and made acceptable:

... when weake Time shall be pour'd out
Into Eternity ... "Upon the Death of Mr. Herrys"

But o thy side! thy deepd dig'd side
That hath a double Nilus going,
Nor ever was the Pharian tide
Halfe so fruitfull, Halfe so flowing.

"On the bleeding wounds of our crucified Lord"

Flow, tardy founts! & into decent showres
Dissolve my Days & Howres.

"Sancta Maria Dolorum"
Thus dost thou melt the yeare
Into a weeping motion, ...

"The Weeper" (1646)

To this preference for slow, soft movement, for verbs like "flow", "melt", "crawl", which give Crashaw's poetry its air of luxurious slowness, is perhaps partly due the reputation of sensuousness, even sensuality, which his work has acquired. But the main force of this accusation, for as such is the allegation usually worded, is directed against Crashaw's "erotic" imagery, and this will require some qualification.

In the poems on St. Teresa and in the poem "On a prayer booke", of course, the erotic imagery is necessary, because functional. The relationship of the saint, or of the devout soul, with Christ, is conceived in extremely personal terms, of the allegory of the Church and her bridegroom Christ, as interpreted from the Canticles. The terminology of a love poem becomes natural within this accepted frame of allegory, and was not confined to Crashaw. Thus we find in Donne's Holy Sonnet XVIII:

Betray kind husband thy spouse to our sights,
And let myne amorous soule court thy mild Dove,

or in the lyrics of German poets of the baroque period, Johann Klaj for instance:

Die Jungfrau hört den Thon / und fühlt die süßen Schmerzen /
Den schönen Bräutigam den unter ihren Hertzen / ...

"Weyhachts-Liedt"

However, there is a difference in Crashaw's use of the love symbolism, as compared to most of the other poets similarly
inspired by the mystical consummation of Christian devotion. In Crashaw's work the ecstasy and pain of this relationship are far more sharply drawn, far more realised as an actual experience both of the mind and of the senses. Although the conception of the revelation of faith as equal to the consummation of a love relationship, is the same as in the other devotional poems based on this allegory, Crashaw expresses it far more poignantly. We may only guess at the cause of this. T. S. Eliot speaks of Crashaw's religion as a substitute for 1) human passion. While not doubting the sincerity of the religious experience of his fellow-poets, we may, perhaps, assume that in Crashaw's life faith was not only a moving force, but the only force, experienced the more violently because it was a "substitute for human passion". Crashaw's senses were not deadened by the intensity of his spiritual experience, they participated in it. This again is characteristic of baroque Catholicism; the flesh was not mortified but transformed, almost sublimated, and the spiritual experience expressed easily and naturally in terms of the flesh. What to us may seem a profanation, was sanctioned by the conception of faith as all-embracing. So, in "Prayer, an Ode, which was Praefixed to a little Prayer-book giuen to a Gentle-woman", the description of the true conversion of a soul to Christ is described in terms fit for a love affair:

Effectuall wispers, whose still voice
The soul it seife more feeles then heares;

1) For Lancelot Andrewes, p. 125
Amorous languishments; luminous trances;
SIGHTS which are not seen with eyes;
Spiritual & soul-piercing glances
Whose pure & subtil lightning flyes
Home to the heart, & setts the house on fire
And melts it down in sweet desire ... 

or in the "Hymn to the Name and Honor of the Admirable Sainte Teresa":

... Sons of thy vowes
The virgin-births with which thy soueraign spouse
Made fruitfull thy fair soul, goe now
And with them all about thee bow
To Him, put on (hee'll say) put on
(My rosy lous) That thy rich zone
Sparkling with the sacred flames ... 

The allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs explains
the existence of such devotional love poems, but it does not
explain the sensuous appeal of lines like these:

The deaw no more will weep
The primrose's pale cheek to deck,
The deaw no more will sleep
Nuzzel'd in the lilly's neck;

"The Weeper"

Such a Pearle as this is,
(Slipt from Aurora's dewy Prest)
The Rose buds sweet lip kisses;
And such the Rose its selfe when vext
With ungentle flames, does shed,
Sweating in too warme a Bed.

"The Teare"

Clearly the sensuous imagery here is not functional to the
degree to which the "erotic" imagery of the St. Teresa hymn is,
i.e. it is not directly related to a central allegorical theme.

With more justice perhaps Crashaw should be labelled a
sensuous poet for lines like these rather than for the ecstatic
outpourings of the mystical love of Jesus, the "Jesusminne" of
the German baroque poetry.

In all these images, whether directly related to a central allegorical theme or not, one quality emerges which is typical of Crashaw: the ability to draw from an image its fullest emotional and sensuous content, even when employing it in a new, unfamiliar setting. Crashaw remains here in the domain of human pleasures and loves, and from their symbols creates his vision of heavenly bliss. In this he resembles his favourite saint, St. Teresa of Avila, who also expresses her spiritual ecstasy in symbols of human love and marriage. Although most of Crashaw's images, his honeys, dews, lilies, roses, kisses and caresses, are in fact emblems, non-naturalistic symbols, yet they retain their sensuous flavour. In one poem only, perhaps, Crashaw succeeds fully in fusing the carnal symbols and the eternal joys of which they are meant to be the emblems, in a passage dazzling with beauty and light:

O thou unainted daughter of desires!
By all thy dovr of LIGHTS & FIRES;
By all the eagle in thee, all the dowe;
By all thy lines & deaths of loue;
By thy larg draughts of intellectuall day,
And by thy thirsts of loue more large then they;
By all thy brim-fill'd Bowles of feirce desire
By thy last Morning's draught of liquid fire;
By the full kingdome of that finall kisse
That seiz'd thy parting Soul, & seal'd thee his;
By all the heau'ns thou hast in him
(Pair sister of the SERAPHIM!
By all of HIM we haue in THEE;
Leaue nothing of my SELF in me.
Let me so read thy life, that I
Unto all life of mine may dy.

"The Flaming Heart"
In this passage the soft sensuous element is almost absent; the "language for angels" has been coined and rings true and pure. From a beauty that gave pleasure to the heart and the senses, Crashaw has arrived at a beauty that moves the heart and soul, and makes the words and symbols of human intercourse sound as if they had never been spoken before.

Just as, he said, 'Sublimes Iaures haertis
Val or lote rumpens dohtis'.

In Crashaw, one can see the great love of Donne, but their relations, they are not so grand. In Crashaw, the related lines:

"What! I by powfual love, so much soved,
Not love, but love doth the same in,
Proving, in all, all, in all."

But in Crashaw, the elements of love and nature:

"In a behaw, thow hast the same in,
In a behaw, thow hast the same in,
And a behaw, thow hast the same in,
In a behaw, thow hast the same in,"

with Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Wandering", II. 13-14
Chapter Three

The Glimmering Ray

HENRY VAUGHAN

The poetry of Henry Vaughan marks the beginning of a new phase in Metaphysical poetry. It had by then become an established mode of poetical expression, with a tradition of its own, which imposed a pattern on Vaughan's work, on the form of his poems and on the formulation of his thought and feeling.

Vaughan made free use of this tradition that offered itself to him. In his earlier secular poems the influence of Donne coupled with that of Ben Jonson is easy to trace. Themes, conceits, titles of poems and whole phrases remind us of Donne's love poems and Elegies. Compare for instance Vaughan's "To Amoret, of the difference 'twixt him, and other Lovers, and what true Love is"; 11. 15-28:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Just so base, Sublunarie Lovers hearts} \\
\text{Fed on loose prophane desires,} \\
\text{May for an Eye,} \\
\text{Or face comply:} \\
\text{But those removed, they will as soone depart,} \\
\text{And shew their Art,} \\
\text{And painted fires.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Whilst I by pow'rfull Love, so much refin'd,} \\
\text{That my absent soule the same is,} \\
\text{Carelesse to misse,} \\
\text{A glaunce or kisse,} \\
\text{Can with those Elements of lust and sence,} \\
\text{Freely dispence,} \\
\text{And court the mind.}
\end{align*}
\]

with Donne's "A Valediction: forbidding mourning", 11. 13-20:
Dull sublunary lovers love
(Whose soule is sense) cannot admit
Absence because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love, so much refin'd,
That our selves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care lesse, eyes, lips, and hands to misse.

In "An Elegy" ('Tis true I am undone; Yet e're I dye, Ile leave these sighes, and teares a legacye To after-Lovers) surely there is an echo both of Donne's "Will" and of his "Legacie".

In "Ausonii Cupido, Edyl. 6", ll. 89-92:

... As a thiefè at Bar
Left to the Law, and mercy of his Star,
Hath Hills heap'd on him, and is question'd there
By all the men that have been rob'd that year, ...

the resemblance to Donne's Elegie IV, "The Perfume", ll. 3-5, is remarkable:

And as a thiefè at barre, is question'd there
By all the men, that have been rob'd that yeare,
So am I, ...

Later on, when Vaughan turned to devotional poetry, George Herbert became his master. Herbert's influence on the matter and manner of Vaughan's poetry, unparalleled elsewhere in English poetry, is all the more astonishing because Vaughan, in spite of his extensive borrowings, preserves his individuality unimpaired. Indeed one might almost hazard the assertion that no single line of Vaughan's poetry, however much it may owe to Herbert, can be mistaken for the work of anybody else but Vaughan. Nevertheless Herbert's influence was considerable, and will be dealt with more fully later on in this chapter.

The form of Vaughan's poems, the casual, intimate openings,
the parenthetic explanations, the dramatic appeals, the tone of someone relating a private experience to a friend, all these are equally characteristic of the poetry of Donne and Herbert. But there is a difference, for in Vaughan's work the dramatic appeal, the casual, arresting opening, soon lead on to a wider, more diffused scene, to "milde, clear visions, without a frown", static, peaceful, without the argumentative conciseness of Donne or Herbert - or the soaring passion of Crashaw.

Mr George Williamson in *The Donne Tradition* speculates on "the fate that might have overtaken (Vaughan's) feeling without the discipline of the Metaphysical tradition." There is no doubt that Vaughan benefited by this tradition, particularly as represented in Herbert, because it gave him the initial impetus, the inspiration, none the less valid for having been based on reading more than on personal experience. But there is equally little doubt that Vaughan was trying, unconsciously perhaps, to escape the discipline imposed upon him by the pattern of Metaphysical poetry, by its dramatic tension which found expression in the terseness of the short lyric, and in the startling, even violent conceit.

And yet Vaughan chose the Metaphysical tradition quite deliberately, turning his back on the present and the future. By the time he was writing his best poetry, Metaphysical poetry in England was already beginning to recede into the past. The

1) p. 132
doubts and uncertainties of the Elizabethan aftermath, although not forgotten, were being overshadowed by the pressing problems of the political situation, and by the need for readjustment following the acceptance of new thought. The background from which Donne, and to a lesser extent Herbert and Crashaw, drew the images to illustrate their feelings, had changed; and Vaughan himself demonstrated the change in his own work.

His best work, *Silex Scintillans*, is still devotional in character as is most of the best Metaphysical poetry. But there is a difference. The central theme is not the suffering of Christ and his glory, as in Crashaw, nor the dramatic relationship of man pitted against God, as in Donne, and, in more subdued terms, in Herbert. Although the themes in *Silex Scintillans* are often similar to, or even identical with, Herbert's themes, in Vaughan a change of emphasis takes place, and the passionate plea becomes a silent vision of unity with God, in which the individual is submerged in the universe. The drama of Christ is of secondary importance, and there is little dwelling on the physical side of the Passion. The poem, "The Incarnation, and Passion" is typical of Vaughan's attitude, especially if contrasted with, say, Crashaw's "On the wounds of our crucified Lord":

Lo! a mouth, whose full-bloom'd lips
At too dear a rate are roses.
Lo! a blood-shot eye; that weepes
And many a cruel teare discloses.

This foot hath got a Mouth and lippes,
To pay the sweet summe of thy kisses,
To pay thy Teares, an Eye that weepes
In stead of Teares such Gems as this is.
In comparison with this terribly vivid picture of the red gaping wounds, Vaughan's poem, avowedly on the same theme, makes surprisingly little of the bodily sufferings of Christ, and passes on to the humiliation and sacrifice of a God consenting to become man:

Ah, my dear Lord! what couldst thou save
In this impure, rebellious clay,
That made thee thus resolve to dye
For those that kill thee every day?

O what strange wonders could thee move
To slight thy precious blood, and breath!
Sure it was Love, my Lord; for Love
Is only stronger far than death.

In "The Passion" where Vaughan comes nearest to the contemporary treatment of Christ's suffering, again a spiritual pain, that of the knowledge of the sins of mankind, is dwelt on as much as the tortures of Christ's crucified body:

How did the weight
Of all our sinnes,
And death unite
To wrench, and Rack thy blessed limbes!

Clearly Vaughan was not attracted to the dramatic visual representation of the Christian faith, nor to the human tragedy of Christ. With his whole mind he turns to the mystery of divinity, not to its drama, and in the problem of union with God he finds his highest and purest inspirations. This union he sees as a return to the purity of simple things, of childhood, of nature, which to him is the best guide; and the way by which he may return to this ideal purity is through the narrow gate of death.

Vaughan's vision of death again differentiates him from the
other poets, Metaphysical and baroque. True, some of them had
defeated the last enemy, and come to see in death the means of
attaining peace. Even so, although death was no longer an enemy,
it remained to them "an uncouth, hideous thing, Nothing but
bones", inseparable from the ugliness of corruption and decay,
from worms and skulls. Herbert himself came nearer to Vaughan's
conception of death, when he contrasted the "hideous thing" of
pagan times with the death that had grown fair "since our
Saviour's death did put some blood into (his) face". But although
he no longer abhors death, his acceptance of it is far removed
from Vaughan's joyful welcome of "Dear, beauteous death! the
Jewel of the Just". This turning away from life to death, this
withdrawing from those aspects of Christianity which bring the
faith nearer to earth and men, and building up of a more abstract,
static conception of Christianity are the most significant traits
of Vaughan's character as a devotional poet.

If Vaughan's devotional poetry in Silex Scintillans reveals
an attitude to life removed from that of his predecessors, yet his
life, as far as we know, followed roughly the familiar pattern
of secular ambition, conversion, repentance and acquiescence.

He and his twin brother Thomas were born on 17 April 1622
at Newton-by-Uck in Brecknockshire, as sons of an ancient Welsh
family with records going back as far as Agincourt. At the age of
seventeen, they went to Oxford. Henry left Oxford without a
degree probably in 1640 and went to London to study law, apparently
following in this his father's wishes. The outbreak of the civil
war put an end to this plan. What happened then, is a matter for conjecture. Vaughan may have taken active part in the civil war on the Royalist side, as would appear from his poems "Upon a Cloke lent him by Mr. J. Ridsley" and "An Elegie on the death of Mr. R. Hall, slain at Pontefract, 1648", but there is no documentary evidence of it.

All we know is that by 1647, the year in which he wrote, or at any rate dated, the preface to Olor Iscanus, Vaughan had completed his medical training, we do not know where or how, was married and had retired into the quiet of his native Brecknockshire, to Newton St. Bridget on the Usk. Significantly, he appears on the title-page of Olor Iscanus as "Henry Vaughan, Silurist", indicating thus the permanence of his decision to settle down in his native district.

The next three years, 1647-50 are the most important in Vaughan's poetical career, for during these years probably the greater part of Silex Scintillans was written.

During these years an estrangement between Henry and Thomas (who died in 1668) seems to have taken place. How complete was this estrangement between the twin brothers, is indicated by the fact that in reply to John Aubrey's inquiry for Wood's Athenae Oxonienses Vaughan could not even give to him the name of the village where his brother lay buried. Of the cause of this alienation, the more inexplicable because of the close relationship that usually exists between twins, we know nothing.

Vaughan's religious conversion, which appears to have inspired
Silex Scintillans, is another matter for conjecture. Possibly there had been several influences at work. In the preface to Silex Vaughan refers to the influence of George Herbert "whose holy life and verse gained many pious Converts". The reading of the Bible must have been another powerful factor in Vaughan's life; the style of the Scriptures influenced his poetical language, and he often drew inspiration from the contemplation of the Bible.

In the Mount of Olives Vaughan speaks with bitter emphasis of the troubled times in which he was living:

We have seen such vicissitudes and examples of human frailty, as the former world (had they happened in those ages) would have judged prodigies. We have seen Princes brought to their graves in a new way, and the highest order of humane honour trampled upon by the lowest.

A Royalist, he must have felt the death of Charles I and the subsequent events very keenly, and it is possible that the uncertainty of the times helped to turn his mind to the peace of the world beyond. Also, the depression following his sickness during these sad years - of which we have a record in the title-page of Flores Solitudinis, "Collected in his Sickness and Retirement" - may have had a similar effect.

Finally the death of a brother (of whom we know nothing), which was the direct inspiration of some of Vaughan's best poems ("They are all gone into the world of light ...", "As time one day ...") was probably yet another factor in Vaughan's conversion.

It has been suggested (by Frank Kermode in his article "The Private Imagery of Henry Vaughan, Review of English Studies, July 1950), that Vaughan's conversion was poetic rather than
religious. Although there is a very obvious change of tone and especially of quality in Vaughan's poems in *Silex Scintillans*, if compared to his earlier, secular work, it remains a very debatable point whether this new quality of his poetry had not been the result of a deep and sincere emotional experience, even if, naturally perhaps in a poet of strong literary inspirations, this experience had been brought about, or at least strongly assisted by his reading. In the preface to *Silex Scintillans* at any rate, Vaughan speaks of himself as "a pious convert", words certainly not indicative of a poetic development as much as of a personal, spiritual experience.

Of Vaughan's life from 1647 onwards nothing is known. From his letter to Aubrey of 15 June 1673 we gather that his life at Newton St. Bridget was the quiet, busy one of a country doctor, apparently, as Vaughan modestly admits, of good professional reputation and successful in the district. He died on 23 April 1696.

We know very little about Vaughan's life, and what little we know, throws no light on those aspects of his life which the students of Vaughan the poet are most interested in: his relationship with his brother Thomas the Hermetic philosopher from whom Henry Vaughan had presumably learnt the principles of Hermetic thought; and his conversion, whether real or imagined.

The bibliography of his works, on the other hand, is curiously illuminating. His first published work was *Poems, with the tenth Satyre of Juvenal Englished*, in 1646, a volume lacking in distinction apart from the evidence of Jonson's influence mixed with
that of Donne. The difference between Vaughan's love poems and those of most of his fellow poets of the period is stated very clearly by the author himself in the preface to the Poems:

You have here a Flame, bright only in its own Innocence, that kindles nothing but a generous Thought; which though it may warme the Bloud, the fire at highest is but Platonick.

A curious declaration this, and one that, being true to the letter, hardly seems to justify Vaughan's repentance later, at any rate in comparison with the uninhibited frankness of so many of Vaughan's contemporaries.

In 1647, according to the date of the Dedication, Vaughan finished his Olor Iscanus, which however was not published until 1651. 1650 was the publication year of Vaughan's most important volume, Silex Scintillans, reprinted in 1655 with a second part added, and with a preface containing an apology for the author's earlier secular work.

In 1651 appeared Olor Iscanus, apparently published against the author's wish, "by a Friend", at least if we are to believe the publisher who claims to have rescued the poems from "Obscuritie, and the Consumption of that Further Fate, which attends it."

Included in this volume are four prose translations of tracts of a religious or philosophical nature, the most interesting being Don Antonio de Guevara's "The Praise and Happinesse of the Countrie-Life."

In 1652 followed The Mount of Olives: or, Solitary Devotions, together with "Man in Darkness, or, A discourse of Death" and the translation of St. Anselm of Canterbury's "Man in Glory".
In 1654 Vaughan published his *Flores Solitudinis*, a collection of translations, again of philosophical and religious interest, and in 1655, the year of the re-issue of *Silex Scintillans* in a new enlarged version, *Hermetick Physick*, a translation of Henry Nollius' treatise *Systema Medicinae Hermeticae Generale*. This translation is mainly interesting as the only direct testimony to Vaughan's professional interests, not unmixed with his private philosophical inclinations.

The last original work Vaughan published was his *Thalia Rediviva*: The Pastimes and Diversions of a Countrey-Muse, in Choice Poems on Several Occasions (1678), which, surprisingly enough, at least in view of Vaughan's renunciation of secular poetry in the Preface to *Silex Scintillans*, and of the publisher's statement in *Olor Iscanus*, contains love poems in a conventional manner if anything rather closer to the general run of love poems of the day than the Poems of 1646. In the same volume appeared verse translations of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, and, under a subtitle of "Pious Thoughts and Ejaculations", some twenty devotional poems in the style of *Silex Scintillans*. It is more than probable that the secular poems in *Thalia* were in actual fact poems originally discarded from *Olor Iscanus*, and now included in order to increase the slender volume of the poet's last book: a practice not unknown among writers today.

In 1679 appeared the last publication during Vaughan's life, a re-issue of *Olor Iscanus*, which seems to indicate, like the inclusion of secular poems in *Thalia Rediviva*, a definite
relaxation in Vaughan's stern views on the moral value of secular poetry.

The scanty information about Vaughan's life, available to us from contemporary records, a few letters and from the indirect evidence of the bibliography of his work, indicates roughly the familiar pattern of the lives of the other great devotional poets of his time, but with a difference. Vaughan's conversion seems to be lacking in the dramatic element that marks Donne's life, or Crashaw's, or, in more subdued tones, Herbert's. This may be so because we know so very little about Vaughan's life, particularly about those years that mattered most. The little that we do know, however, seems to indicate a conversion less dramatic, because there is no startling difference between the years that preceded the conversion, and the quiet life of a country doctor which followed it. The renunciation seems never to have been bitter, and in later years appears to have turned to a tolerant acceptance of the past, as indicated by the mixture of themes in Thalia Rediviva, and by the re-issue of Olor Iscanus.

The difference between Vaughan and his predecessors in the Metaphysical school, apparent during a first reading of his poetry, becomes even clearer in a detailed study of his work, and of his imagery, particularly in the one-volume on which his claim to immortality rests, Silex Scintillans.

The first characteristic trait that emerges is the lack of dramatic tension in Vaughan's poetry, his attitude which might be termed "philosophical" in the popular sense of "passive", 

serene with the certainty of some final transcending vision. This characteristic is emphasized by Vaughan's affinity with Herbert, by his use of Herbert's themes and of Herbert's favourite form of the soul's monologue addressed to God. While in Herbert's work we almost hear the silent words of God answering his child, in Vaughan's poetry the soul, immersed in his vision, never seems to raise his voice in the passionate cry that must have an answer.

The God of Vaughan's poetry is not the visible, bleeding or smiling, Christ of Crashaw's or Herbert's faith; He is more a presence, a "dazzling darkness" to be felt but not seen. This abstract conception of the Divine is in keeping with the Hermetic theory of a universe in which God's presence is felt throughout, his divine seed is hidden in man as much as in the cock crowing in the morning, and in which the stones and herbs, less corrupted by the Fall than man, have a better knowledge of their true home. Although Vaughan adheres to the theme of Christ the Saviour in his few poems on the Passion, in his heart of hearts he sees salvation in Nature, and his words,

I would I were a starr, or tree,
Or flowre by pedigree

"And would they so? ...", Silex,
mean more than Herbert's desire to fulfil some purpose in the world and grow.

To fruit or shade; at least some bird would trust Her household to me, and I should be just.

"Affliction (I)"
As he believed in the relatively uncorrupted state of nature, it is only natural that Vaughan should have come to see salvation in the one period of man's life during which he approaches nature — in childhood. But it is significant that hand in hand with his longing to return to the innocence of childhood goes the desire to reach the happiness of the world beyond through death. Life in itself is of less importance to him, for he is passing through the world as on a journey — outward-bound, and yet returning. This attitude to earthly life is reflected in his relationship with the world round him; although called a poet of Nature and compared with Wordsworth on that score as much as for his yearning for childhood, Vaughan sees the things that surround him, chiefly as pointers on his way. Not for him the corn that was orient and immortal wheat; not for him Traherne's brilliant vision of an enchanted childhood and of the sharp ecstasy of first perceptions; Vaughan is interested only in retracing the vestiges of heavenly innocence in his childhood.

This lack of interest in the real world in which he was living explains perhaps the absence of the "Metaphysical tension" in his poetry. There was no dichotomy of heaven and earth for him because earth had little attraction (at least, during the important years during which Silex Scintillans was written: it is the state of his mind during those years that interests us).

As far as the actual world enters his poetry at all, it is mostly as symbols. Here again a literary influence may be traced, that of the emblems, although with Vaughan, unlike Herbert, the significance of individual emblems recedes in the light of the
universal significance of all nature as bearers of the divine seed. The importance with which Vaughan endows a cock, for instance, or a stone, a piece of timber, is a new, untraditional one, yet they have the impersonal, abstract quality of a liturgical symbol, such as we do not find in Herbert's "orange tree, that busie plant". Where Herbert drew parallels and found moral precepts, Vaughan saw direct communication with the Divine, the same all round him, all symbols spelling the same message. It is this overwhelming unity of all nature in striving towards the dawn of meeting with God, that invests the world of Henry Vaughan with the dignity of symbols, and yet leaves the vast domain of traditional symbols and liturgical emblems almost untouched.

In contrast with the strange landscape of Vaughan's everyday world where stones turn mutely to stars, and where men flash past in a whirl below the white ring of Eternity, is the bright country of the Bible, where "Angels lay Liger", and where the poet saw

... in each shade that there growes
An Angell talking with a man.
Under a Juniper, some house,
Or the coole Mirtles canopie,
Others beneath an Oakes greene boughs,
Or at some Fountaines bubling Eye;

"Religion", Silex

Paradoxically, the biblical landscape which Vaughan saw in his imagination seems drawn far more vividly than the Welsh countryside of which he grants us occasional glimpses in his poems.

The influence of Herbert's poetry is obvious even at a cursory
glance through Silex Scintillans, for the very titles of Vaughan's poems echo those of The Temple in their simplicity. Some of them were actually taken from Herbert's work unaltered, but the development of the theme given by the title is usually along lines which were Vaughan's own.

Vaughan strove to imitate the structure of the best of Herbert's poetry, and its economy of expression. His own genius, however, was ill suited by this exacting, severe form, and we find Vaughan at his best in the rambling, diffuse poems of half visionary, half reminiscing nature. Even if the form of Herbert's poems was not the model of Vaughan's best work, the force of Herbert's devotion fired him, and the echo of Herbert's words, which were impressed deeply on Vaughan's mind, rings throughout Silex Scintillans. L. C. Martin in his edition of Vaughan's works lists some fifty-five borrowings from Herbert in this volume; yet Vaughan's fundamental independence from Herbert is manifested in his choice of imagery which is quite distinct in character from Herbert's, as we shall see presently.

A very important factor in Vaughan's work is the Hermetic philosophy which he came to know probably through his brother Thomas. The Hermetic philosophy emphasized and enlarged the medieval theory of correspondences into a belief in the inter-relationship between sublunary creation and the celestial bodies:

There is not an herb here below, but he hath a star in Heaven above, and the star strikes him with her Beame, and sayes to him, "Grow."

Thomas Vaughan, Lumen de Lumine: or A new magickall Light discovered, and communicated to the World (1651)
From the resemblance of pattern between the microcosm and the macrocosm the Hermetic thinkers went further to a theory of the active influence of the stars, and through them, of God, on all creation, an influence reviving and fructifying with the spiritual seed of grace, the "grain" of Vaughan's "Cock-crowing".

Vaughan accepts this Hermetic theory and with it the inevitable conclusion that the unthinking nature which follows blindly the pre-ordained road, is thus superior to man, and should be his guide. His thoughts on childhood can of course be traced to the same notion of natural wisdom and faith which exist in nature, as contrasted with the ignorance and corruption of man.

The peculiar character of Vaughan's poetry, inspired by thought and reading rather than by direct sensuous experience in the external world, and yet using largely symbols based on phenomena of this external world, is clearly shown in his imagery.

Significantly, the largest group are images of celestial bodies. The identification of God with the sun, or of the revelation of faith with the dawn, are metaphors current enough in all devotional poetry, and there are a number of them in Vaughan's work, e.g. in "Faith", Silax:

Bright, and blest beame! whose strong projection
Equal to all,
Reacheth as well things of dejection
As th' high, and tall;

... But, as in nature, when the day
Breaks, night adjourns,
stars shut up shop, mists pack away,
And the Moon mourns;  
So when the Sun of righteousness  
Did once appear,  
That Scene was chang'd, and a new dresse  
Left for us here;  
Or, in a slightly different metaphor, the true sun of the revelation is contrasted with the false earthly sun, as in "L'Envoy", Silex:

O the new worlds new, quickning Sun!  
Ever the same, and never done!  
The seers of whose sacred light  
Shall all be drest in shining white,  
And made conformable to his  
Immortal shape, who wrought their bliss,  
Arise, Arise!

The contrast of this greater Sun is usually not night or darkness, as might perhaps be expected, but clouds, "damps" and mists, which are the veils hiding the face of God from man who senses dimly the divine presence:

... The Pious soul by night  
Is like a clouded starre, whose beams though sed  
To shed their light  
Under some Cloud  
Yet are above,  
And shine, and move  
Beyond that mistic shrowd.

"The Morning-watch", Silex

O then play not! but strive to him, who Can  
Make these sad shades pure Sun,  
Turning their mists to beams, their damps to day,  
Whose pow'r doth so excell  
As to make Clay  
A spirit, and true glory dwell  
In dust, and stones.

"The Check", Silex

The image of God as the sun is connected with the Hermetic belief in the divine seed in man, quickened by the touch of
divine ray, the belief that lies behind images like this one from "Cock-crowing", Silex:

Father of lights! what Sunnie seed
What glance of day hast thou confin'd
Into this bird? To all the breed
This busie Ray thou hast assign'd;

Their eyes watch for the morning hue,
Their little grain expelling night
So shines and sings, as if it knew
The path unto the house of light.
It seems their candle, how'r done,
Was tinn'd and lighted at the sunne.

The Hermetic philosophy influences Vaughan's view of the other celestial bodies. The Moon, adored by so many poets, has no charm for Vaughan; he regards her indifferently at the best, for the sphere of the moon separates him, along with the rest of the "base sublunary" creation from the "brave translunary" things and is yet another veil between himself and God.

The stars, although mere reflections of the divine sun, play their part by mirroring its glory, and man should do likewise:

... Though then the Sun be far
Do thou the work of Day, and rise a Star.

"Rules and Lessons", Silex

For each inclosed Spirit is a star
Inlightning his own little sphaere,
Whose light, though fetcht and borrowed from far,
Both mornings makes, and evenings there.

"The Bird", Silex

But in Hermetic philosophy stars play a more important part than to reflect divine glory. They are communication channels between sublunary creation and the divine, and the humblest
herbs or birds let themselves be guided by the stars above. Only man resists. This is a favourite notion of Vaughan's which we find for instance in "The Favour", Silex:

Some kinde herbs here, though low & far,
Watch for, and know their loving star.
O let no star compare with thee!
Nor any herb out-duty me!
So shall my nights and mornings be
Thy time to shine, and mine to see.

There is a foretaste of this Hermetic belief in a pretty conceit in Poems:

But, Amoret, such is my fate
That if thy face a Starre
Had shin'd from farre,
I am perswaded in that state
'Twixt thee, and me,
Of some predestin'd sympathie.

"To Amoret, Walking in a Starry Evening"

The image of God as the divine light is closely connected with another one which Vaughan uses very often, that of the divine fire extinguished and re-lighted in man. Here he alludes perhaps to the scriptural theme of the "cloven tongues" of fire over the heads of the Apostles. This is how he sees the saints in "Joy of my life!":

1) There is a modern parallel of this idea in Francis Thompson's poem "The Mistress of Vision":

When to the new eyes of thee
All things by immortal power,
Near or far,
Hiddenly,
To each other linked are,
That thou canst not stir a flower
Without trembling of a star.
Gods Saints are shining lights: who stays
Here long must passe
O're dark hills, swift streams, and steep ways
As smooth as glass;
But these all night
Like Candles, shed
Their beams, and light
Us into Bed!

They are (indeed,) our Pillar - fires
Seen as we go,
They are that Cities shining spires
We travel: too;
A swordlike gleame
Kept man for sin
First Cut; This beame
Will guide him In.

"White Sunday" in Silex was written directly on the theme of the
Pentecost:

Wellcome white Day: a thousand Suns,
Though seen at once, were black to thee;
For after their light, darkness comes,
But thine shines to eternity.

Those flames which on the Apostles rush'd.
At this great feast, and in a tyre
Of cloven Tongues their heads all brush'd,
And crown'd them with Prophetic fire:

The divine fire in man is nearly extinguished now, but it had
not always been so, before the Fall:

Sure, It was so. Man in those early days
Was not all stone, and Earth,
He shin'd a little, and by those weak Rays
Had some glimpse of his birth.

"Corruption", Silex

The alternative symbolical meaning of fire as the punishing,
chastising force, the flaming sword that drove man out of paradise,
although often used for instance by Crashaw and Herbert, is
comparatively rare in Vaughan's poetry, and occurs mostly in poems
directly dependent on Herbert for their inspiration, e.g.:
Refining fire, O then refine my heart,  
My foul, foul heart!

"Love-sick", Silex

The origin of images of light and fire is of course traditional and religious - God as the _lux in tenabris_ - and we find similar images throughout devotional poetry not only of the seventeenth century. What makes these images of light and fire, of the sun and the stars, so important in Vaughan is their frequent appearance in this particular symbolic meaning of a light opening darkness, which underlines Vaughan's conception of human life as a waiting for the deliverance of death, expressed most poignantly in "They are all gone into the world of light!", Silex:

They are all gone into the world of light!  
And I alone sit lingering here;  
Their very memory is fair and bright,  
And my sad thoughts doth clear.

***

I see them walking in an air of glory,  
Whose light doth trample on my days:  
My days, which are at best but dull and hoary,  
Meer glimmering and decays.

***

Dear, beauteous death! the Jewel of the Just,  
Shining no where, but in the dark;  
What mysteries do lie beyond thy dust;  
Could man ouclock that mark!

In apparent discrepancy with this vision of light is the theme of one of Vaughan's best poems, "The Night":

But living where the Sun  
Doth all things wake, and where all mix and tyre  
Themselves and others, I consent and run  
To ev'ry myre,  
And by this worlds ill-guiding light,  
Erre more then I can do by night.
There is in God (some say)
A deep, but dazzling darkness; As men here
Say it is late and dusky, because they
See not all clear;
O for that night! where I in him
Might live invisible and dim.

But the "ill-guiding light" here is the light of the false, secular sun, contrasted with the dazzling darkness of a light that transcends man's faculties of vision, just as divine love and wisdom are such that they cannot be expressed in human language. The same idea was expressed by Dionysius the Areopagite in De Mystica Theologia:

The Divine Dark is naught else but that inaccessible light wherein the Lord is said to dwell. Although it is invisible because of its dazzling splendour and unsearchable because of the abundance of its supernatural brightness, nevertheless, whosoever deserves to see and know God rests therein; and by the very fact that he neither sees nor knows, is truly in that which surpasses all truth and all knowledge.

St. John of the Cross in The Dark Night of the Soul repeats the same idea: "Divine Wisdom is so nigh that it transcends the faculty of the Soul, and therefore is, in that respect, darkness."

The same basic conformity of his imagery to his philosophy of life is manifest in Vaughan's imagery of plants, which forms the second largest group. Like Herbert, Vaughan saw in herbs and trees parallels to human existence. For him, however, the relationship between man and plants is a deeper, closer one. In Herbert's eyes the "orange tree" although a moral example of industry and humility, remained an inferior form of creation, and he drove home the force of his parable by emphasizing this fundamental inferiority of the plants which nevertheless fulfilled their task so much better than man.
For Vaughan, who believed in the Hermetic theory of the interrelations between stars and all sublunary creation, man and herb alike, the gulf had lessened considerably. It is significant that in most of Vaughan’s images of this kind Man is identified with a plant, rotten or withered and barren, and revived by God’s mercy. So for instance in Mount of Olives, in the prayer "When thou dost arise":

... sanctifie and supple my heart with the dew of thy divine Spirit, refresh it with the streams of thy grace, that I may bring forth fruit in due season, and not cumber the ground, not be cut off in thy anger.

or in the Dedication to Silex:

Some drops of thy all-quickning blood
Fell on my heart; those made it bud
And put forth thus, though Lord, before
The ground was curst, and void of store.

or in "Disorder and frailty", Silex:

Let not perverse
And foolish thoughts add to my ill
Of forward sins, and ill
That seed, which thou
In me didst sow;
But dresse, and water with thy grace
Together with the seed, the place;

This last instance shows with particular clarity the basic idea of all these images, that of the divine seed quickening in man, an idea which is of course linked with the images of light discussed above. There is the same relationship between the stars and man, as between the stars and the plants, because there is a grain of the divine seed in both men and plants, which responds to the motions of the stars. Far from being superior to the rest of the creation, man in his blind folly disregards
the directions of the stars, and must first return to his natural state of simplicity before he may regain his faculty of understanding divine orders conveyed through the stars. In the light of this, Vaughan's lines in "Rom. Cap. 8, ver. 9" ("And do they so?...") acquire the deeper significance of a striving for faith:

I would I were a stone, or tree,
Or flow're by pedigree,
Or some poor high-way herb, or Spring,
To flow, or bird to sing!
Then should I (tyed to one sure state,)
All day expect my date;
But I am sadly loose, and stray
A giddy blast each way;
O let me not thus range!
Thou canst not change.

Closely related to the images in which the link between man and plants is emphasized, are images of climatic changes. The good and evil influences battling for man's soul are expressed in terms of changes of weather, at times contrasting the "inner weather" of the soul with the outer world, as in "Regeneration", Silex:

... It was high-spring, and all the way
Primros'd, and hung with shade;
Yet, was it frost within,
And surly winds
Blasted my infant buds, and sinne
Like Clouds eclips'd my mind.

or in "The Storm", Silex:

... Thus the Enlarg'd, inraged air
Uncalmes these to a floud,
But still the weather that's most fair
Breeds tempests in my bloud;

Lord, then round me with weeping Clouds,
And let my mind
In quick blasts sigh beneath those shrouds
A spirit-wind,
So shall that storms purge this Recluse
Which sinfull ease made foul,
And wind, and water to thy use
Both wash, and wing my soul.

A favourite image of Vaughan's is the dew of God's grace,
as in the lovely "Morning-watch" in Silex:

All the long hours
Of night, and Rest
Through the still shrouds
Of sleep, and Clouds,
This Dew fell on my Breast;
O how it Clouds,
And Spirits all my Earth!
or in "The Night", Silex:

God's silent, searching flight:
When my Lords head is fill'd with dew, and all
His locks are wet with the clear drops of night;

The affinity of man to beasts and herbs is the source of
images in which human actions and motives are attributed to lower
creation. So in "The Bird", Silex:

So hills and valleys into singing break,
And though poor stones have neither speech nor
tongue,
While active winds and streams both run and speak,
Yet stones are deep in admiration.
or in "The Night", Silex:

Where trees and herbs did watch and peep
And wonder, while the Jews did sleep.

On the whole however such images are rare, for although
Vaughan brings man into close affinity with the rest of the
creation, his is emphatically not an anthropomorphic universe.
Similarly there is no recurring image of the relationship between
man and God in terms of human contacts. Vaughan's God is a
presence, a "dazzling darkness", not to be visualised. So even if he, like Crashaw, uses the metaphor of the bridegroom about Christ, as in "The Dawning":

Ah! what time wilt thou come? when shall that cry
The Bridegroom's coming! fill the sky?

or in the closing lines of "The World":

But as I did their madness so discusse
One whisper'd thus,
This Ring the Bride-rooms did for none provide
But for his bride.

or the lines, particularly reminiscent of Crashaw, in "To the Holy Bible":

The secret favors of the Dove,
Her quickning kindness, smiles and kisses,
Exalted pleasures, crowning blisses,
Fruition, union, glory, life,
Thou didst lead to, and still all strife.

and although there are echoes of Herbert's conception of God as the father of love, as in "Admission":

We are thy Infants, and suck thee; If thou
But hide, or turn thy face,
Because where thou art, yet, we cannot go,
We send tears to the place,

yet the comparative rarity of such images, and their close resemblance to original models underline Vaughan's reluctance to confine the mystery of divine love to the terms of flesh-and-blood relationships.

The sense of the distance between God and man, of the gulf that opened with the Fall, and of man's ever increasing guilt of sin is as strong with Vaughan as his conviction of the affinity between man and the rest of the creation. The longing to return to innocence and faith through childhood, which
inspired the lovely poems "The Retreat" and "Childhood", made Vaughan's vision of childhood very different from Traherne's to which it is often compared. The fundamental difference is at once apparent: Vaughan is not interested in the pleasures of childhood at all, because it is to him a state desirable not in itself but as a means of attaining the innocence of faith for which he yearns. To Traherne, on the other hand, childhood is a pleasure in itself, a pleasure of senses keenly alive to the outer world perceived for the first time.

Vaughan's vision of life as a transitory state preliminary to salvation, and of "beauteous death" as a short sleep from which we awake to eternity, is of course most clearly reflected in his images of death and sleep, which are remarkably frequent in his poetry, and are almost interchangeable. Human life is to him a state of death of the soul, and death is life, as in "Distraction", Silex:

Yet, hadst thou clipt my wings, when Coffin'd in This quicken'd masse of sinne, ...

or in "Buriall", Silex:

... When I am cast into that deep And senseless sleep The wages of my sinne, ...

or in "The Morning-watch", Silex:

... So in my Bed That Curtain'd grave, though sleep, like ashes, hide My lamp, and life, both shall in thee abide.

The passive conception of life as a circular journey between birth and death, beginning and ending in the country beyond the
stars, is expressed in the equally characteristic images of
a journey, particularly in one of Vaughan's best-known poems,
"The Retreate":

... When yet I had not walkt above
A mile, or two, from my first love,
And looking back (at that short space,)
Could see a glimpse of his bright-face;

... 0 how I long to travell back
And tread again that ancient track!
That I might once more reach that plaine,
Where first I left my glorious traine,
From whence th' Inlightned spirit sees
That shady City of Palme trees;

or in "Death":

To thy dark land these heedless go:
    But there was one,
Who search'd it quite through and fro,
And then returning, like the Sun,
Discover'd all, that there is done.

And since his death, we throughly see
    All thy dark way; ...

Indifference to the world round him is typical of Vaughan's
imagery throughout. Domestic images, which play such an important
part in Vaughan's main model, The Temple, form a much smaller
group in Vaughan's own poetry, and are mostly conventional ones,
such as we find in abundance in the work of all poets of this
period. Such is for instance the metaphor of the grave as a
bed in "Les Amours", in Poems:

If when I'm gone, you chance to see
That cold bed where I lodged bee: ...

or in "As time one day ...", Silex:
O calm and sacred bed where lies
In deaths dark mysteries
A beauty far more bright
Then the moons cloudless light ...

This domestic image, the most frequent in Vaughan's work incidentally, again illustrates, like most of his characteristic images, his belief in death as a mere preliminary to the life of salvation.

A similarly well-known image with a special meaning for Vaughan is that of death as the gate to freedom, as in "Repentance", Silex:

... That little gate
And narrow way, by which to thee
The Passage is, He (the flesh)term'd a grate
And Entrance to Captivitie;

In the rare images recording a glimpse of the everyday world, the direct inspiration from Herbert is quite noticeable, as for instance in "Son-dayes", Silex:

... the steps by which
We Climb above all ages; Lamps that light
Man through his heap of dark days; and the rich,
And full redemption of the whole weeks flight.

The Pulleys unto headlong man; ... 

The influence of Herbert's work both on the style (reminiscent of Herbert's "Sunday") and on individual images, that of the pulley in particular, is obvious. Similarly in "Affliction":

Sickness is wholesome, and Crosses are but curbs
To check the mule, unruly man,
They are heavens husbandry, the famous fan
Purging the floor which Chaff disturbs.

The last two lines will remind the reader of Herbert's "Church-floore":
... Death, puffing at the doore,
Blows all the dust about the floore:
But while he thinks to spoil the room, he sweeps.

Herbert had probably inspired also the images and the style of "The dwelling-place" with the colloquial close:

But I am sure, thou dost now come
Oft to a narrow, homely room,
Where thou too hast but the least part,
My God, I mean my sinful heart.

On the whole then, Vaughan's sources for domestic images are either conventional metaphors of contemporary poetry, or images used by Herbert.

It is interesting to note the difference in imagery referring to classes and types of people in Vaughan's earlier secular poems, and in Silex Scintillans. In the earlier poems we find brief thumb-nail sketches testifying to a gift of close observation which became much less noticeable in Vaughan's devotional poetry. So in "Upon a Cloke lent him by Mr. J. Ridsley" in Olor:

Just so Jogg'd I, while my dull horse did trudge
Like a Circuit-beast plagu'd with a goutie Judge.

or in "Upon Mr. Fletchers Playes, published, 1647", Olor:

So neasted in some Hospitable shore
The Hermit-angler, when the mid-Seas roare
Packs up his lines, and (ere the tempest raves,) Retyres, and leaves his station to the waves.

In his devotional poems Vaughan's range of images of this kind is much narrower, and instead of the lively sketches of his earlier years we find images based on an idea rather than on a picture, as that of man as a beggar, begging from God, which appears in "Admission":
No quiet couldst thou have; nor didst thou wink,
And let thy Beggar lie,
But e'r my eies could overflow their brink
Didst to each drop reply;
Bowels of Love! at what low rate,
And slight a price
Dost thou relieve us at thy gate,
And still our Cries?

Other images of the same conventionalised type, but less frequent, are those of man as the Lord's servant, as in "Pro-
vidence":

If I thy servant be
(Whose service makes ev'n captives free,) ...
or as the Lord's prisoner, as in "Misery":

Lord, bind me up, and let me lye
A Pris'n'er to my libertie,
If such a state at all can be
As an Impris'ment serving thee;

The unusual metaphor of man as the Lord's tenant in the
Dedication to Silex Scintillans -

Indeed I had some here to hire
Which long resisted thy desire, ...
But Lord, I have expell'd them, and so bent,
Beg, thou wouldst take thy Tennants Rent.

and in "The Match (II)" -

Two Lives I hold, from thee, my gracious Lord,
Both cost thee dear,
For one, I am thy Tenant here;
The other, the true life, in the next world ...

may easily be traced back to Herbert's "Redemption".

Following Herbert's example Vaughan makes use of legal and
financial terms to describe the relationship with God. The
fundamental difference between the two poets is at once apparent;
except in the poems written in deliberate imitation of the
manner of Herbert, all Vaughan's metaphors based on legal and
financial matters remain vague, limited to a few general conceptions: the judgment upon man, the price paid for salvation, man's legacy of sin or grace. Thus in "The Stone":

Hence sand and dust
Are shak'd for witnesses, and stones
Which some think dead, shall all at once
With one attesting voice detect
Those secret sins we least suspect.

or in "The Relapse":

But he that with his bloud, (a price too dear,)
My scores did pay,
Bid me, by vertue from him, challenge here
The brightest day;

The subservience of Vaughan's images to his vision of human life is to be seen very clearly in his images of clothing and fashions. In the early poems there are jocular or contemptuous references to the finery of the young men about town, to the "riotous sinful plush, and tell-tale spurs" in the manner of Herbert's "silks that whistled". In the later poems, however, in Silex Scintillans in particular, two related images command the reader's attention: the image of the veil which separates man from God, and the image of the clumsy garment of the flesh binding man. Both these images, of which the former is perhaps more characteristically Vaughan's own, share the fundamental idea of the remoteness of man from God, and of the impossibility of approaching God before death. The image of the veil with its associations with the theories of the universe (in the Ptolemaic system the sphere of the moon divides the base sublunary creation and the coelum empyreum) and with the biblical echo of the rending of the veil, appears in some of Vaughan's best poems:
Onely this Veyle which thou hast broke,
And must be broken yet in me,
This veyle, I say, is all the cloke
And cloud which shadows thee from me.
This veyle thy full-ey'd love denies,
And onely gleams and fractions spies.

"Cock-crowing"

Arise! Arise!
And like old cloaths fold up these skies,
This long worn veyl: ...

"L'Envoy"

The image of the garment of flesh, which is to be found
also in Crashaw and Herbert, is joined to the image of the veil
most explicitly in "Vanity of Spirit":

Since in these veyle my Ecoclips'd Eye
May not approach thee, (for at night
Who can have commerce with the light?)
I'lle disapparell, and to buy
But one half glaunce, most gladly dye.

The contrast is emphasized throughout Vaughan's poetry between
God or Christ, "with true light ... Clad", and man who in his
childhood had "felt through all this fleshly dress Bright shootes
of everlastingnesse", but who has to remain fettered by his flesh,
"Dust and clay, Mans antient wear", until his death, for "Who will
ascent, must be undrest".

The connection with Vaughan's view of human existence and
particularly of death is only too clear, as is his indifference
to the sensory experiences, it is with no great surprise there-fore
that we note the absence of images of jewelry in Vaughan's
poetry. Apart from the conventional amorous compliments in the
earlier secular poems, there are very few images of this kind
in Vaughan's work. One single recurring metaphor is that of
faith as a treasured pearl:

Yet I have one Pearle by whose light
All things I see,
And in the heart of Earth, and night
Find Heaven, and thee.

"Silence and stealth of dayes!..."

or in "To the Holy Bible":

... Thou overcam'st my sinful strength,
And having brought me home, didst there
Shew me that pearl I sought elsewhere.

There are equally few images exploiting the splendour of royalty, except again the love poems addressing his mistress as his queen.

For one who seems so indifferent to visual pleasures Vaughan was strangely interested in colours. White is the colour he uses most often, as in "Isaacs Marriage":

... and happy those
White dayes, that durst no impious mirth expose!

or in "The Retreate":

... Or taught my soul to fancy ought
But a white, Celestiall thought,...

or in "The Throne":

... The great and white throne I shall see
Of my dread Lord:

1) It has been suggested that Vaughan, who certainly knew, and possibly thought in, Welsh, uses here the word "white" in the sense of its Welsh equivalent (gwyn) which means "holy", "blessed" as well. Though this interpretation would not apply to all the

1) by F. E. Hutchinson in Henry Vaughan. A Life and Interpretation, p. 162
images in which Vaughan uses the word, it seems indisputable that to him "white" had a symbolic meaning to which he attached considerable importance. Although in "Affliction" he disparages "Whites that rest (and) Something of sickness would disclose" and on the other hand in "The Seed growing secretly" praises the "Dear, secret Greenness", white was to him clearly a colour rich in poetic associations, almost an emblem in itself.

Another word that seems to have a particular meaning for Vaughan is "spicy". He longs to be

Where freed souls dwell by living fountains
On everlasting, spicy mountains!

"Fair and young light! ..."

In "Psalme 104" he says:

Ile spice my thoughts with thee, and from thy word
Gather true comforts; ...

The word is used mostly in its usual sensory context, but with a liberality that indicates richness of associations, certainly with the Song of Songs, e.g. in "The British Church":

... And hast thee so?
As a young Roe
Upon the mounts of spices.

The liturgy provides the basis and inspiration of the great majority of Vaughan's images of food and drink, in which the Eucharist symbolising the flesh and blood of the Lord, and the spiritual food of God's mercy are inextricably mixed, as for instance in "The Request", Thalia:

O give me still those secret meals,
Those rare Repasts, which thy love deals!
or in "A Prayer when thou art upon going to the Lords Table" in Mount of Olives:

... be unto me the bread of life to strengthen me in my pilgrimage towards heaven! grant that I may suck salvation from thy heart, that spring of the blood of God which flowes into all believers. Thy flesh is meat indeed, and thy blood is drink indeed.

or in "The Law, and the Gospel":

Let me not spil, but drink thy bloud,
Not break thy fence, and by a black Excess
Force down a Just Curse, when thy hands would bless;
Let me not scatter, and despise my food, ...

or in "Dressing":

Give me, my God! thy grace,
The beams, and brightness of thy face,
That never like a beast
I take thy sacred feast,
Or, the dread mysteries of thy blast bloud
Use, with like Custome, as my Kitchin food.
Some sit to thee, and eat
Thy body as their Common meat,
O let me not do so!

This last example is particularly interesting with its emphasis on the mystery of the Transubstantiation, and with what almost seems to be a criticism of Herbert's attitude to the Sacrament, expressed in "Love". Clearly to Vaughan the Transubstantiation, as a fleeting approach to God, was a matter of supreme importance, all the more perhaps because during the years in which Silex Scintillans was written, Anglican services could not be held, and to all devout churchmen the thought of it had to be a substitute of the actual ritual. This deprivation seems if anything to have stimulated Vaughan's imagination, as as some of the lines given above show in their almost Crashavian fervour.
In this connection it is also interesting to note how often Vaughan refers to incense and to church ritual generally, as for instance in "Isaacs Marriage":

... And in her piercing flight perfum'd the ayer Scatt'ring the Myrrhe, and incense of thy pray'r.

or in "Praise":

Yet to thy name  
(As not the same  
With thy bright Essence,)  
Our foul, Clay hands  
At thy Commands  
Bring praise, and incense;

In images of animals the influence of the liturgy, though less prominent than, say, in Crashaw, nevertheless is undeniable:

Thou art lifes Charter, The Doves spotless neast  
Where souls are hatch'd unto Eternitie.  

"H. Scriptures"

... When the bright Dove  
Which now these many, many Springs  
Hath kept above,  
Shall with spread wings  
Descend, and living waters flow  
To make drie dust, and dead trees grow;

"The Jews"

O blessed Lamb!  
That took'st my sinne,  
That took'st my shame ...  

"The Passion"

Linked with the image of the Dove of the Holy Ghost are images in which man's soul is identified with a bird. In "Cock-crowing" and "The Bird" Vaughan grants to birds a faith and humility, the same qualities as those which distinguished the plants above man. The bird then comes to symbolise a soul freed from
sin, at liberty to follow its destiny ordained by God:

Yet, hadst thou clipt my Wings, When Coffin'd in
This quicken'd masse of sinne, ...

"Distraction"

O is! but give wings to my fire,
And hatch my soul, untill it fly
Up where thou art, amongst thy tire
Of stars, above Infirmity;

"Disorder and frailty"

Other animal images, more varied in the secular poems, include the badger (a scholar poring over his books - "To his retired friend"), the leopard (the fierceness of men's hearts - "Upon the Poems and Plays of the ever memorable Mr Wm Cartwright"), the silk worm and the Phoenix as symbols of resurrection ("Resurrection and Immortality"), the worms of hell and corruption, the mole (the Statesman in "The World"), all occurring singly, and not characteristic in any way. The only recurring image apart from those of the lamb and the dove, and the bird, is an emblematic one, that of Christ as the Hive of sweetness, of light, "The Hive of beamy, living lights" ("The Agreement") and of man as the bee -

... Till from them, like a laden Bee,
I may fly home, and hive with thee.

"The Bee"

We may assume that Vaughan knew the emblem books of the time, especially as his translations of the poems of the Pole Casimir show that he was acquainted with contemporary European literature. He makes use of the traditional emblems, such as that of Fortune on her Wheel:
Know'st not that \underline{Fortune} on a Globe doth stand,
Whose \underline{upper} slipprie part without command
Turns \underline{lowest} still? the sportive leafes and wind
Are but dull \underline{Emblems} of her fickle mind,
In the whole world there's nothing I can see
Will thoroughly parallel her wayes, but thee.

"To his Inconstant friend ..."
(translated from Ovid's De Ponto,
lib. 4o. Eleg.3a.

the scales, in scenes reminiscent of Herbert's emblematic poems:

... I reach'd the pinnacle, where plaç'd
I found a paire of scales,
I tooke them up and layd
in th'one late paines,
The other smoake, and pleasures weigh'd
But prov'd the heavier graines;

"Regeneration"

A spring ran by, I told her tears,
But when these came unto the scale,
My sins alone outweigh'd them all.

"Repentance"

the sunflower:

And man is such a Marygold, these fled,
That shuts, and hangs the head.

"Chearfulness"

the skull:

(Joy is) ... a Deathes-head crown'd with Roses.

"Joy"

with roses?

"Man in Darkness", \underline{Mount of Olives}

Vaughan creates also his own original emblems and labels them

as such:

... And on each leafe by Heavens command,
These Emblemes to the life shall stand:
Two Hearts, the first a shaft withstood;  
The second, shot, and wounded in blood;  
And on this heart a dew shall stay,  
Which no heats can court away;  
But fixt forever witnesses beares,  
That hearty sorrow feeds on teares.

"Les Amours", Poems

These newly created emblems occur mostly in the early secular poems. In the devotional poems Vaughan adheres to the traditional emblems; the title of *Silex Scintillans* is an emblem in itself, that of the stony heart struck by God's lightning into fire.

Of course, emblems are a literary inspiration, for although they are visual representations of ideas, the idea remains the most important part of the complex effect. Vaughan's literary inspirations are manifold, and vital to his work. Apart from the less significant borrowings from Donne, Felltham, Randolph, which occur in the earlier poems, Vaughan's main source was Herbert's *The Temple*.

Vaughan's numerous debts to Herbert had been mentioned earlier in this chapter, and indeed must of necessity be referred to throughout the discussion of Vaughan's imagery. As an example of the different use to which Vaughan puts these borrowings, we may quote Vaughan's "Providence", a profession of trust in God's mysterious ways of providing for his servant:

If I thy servant be  
(Whose service makes ev'n captives free,)  
A fish shall all my tribute pay,  
The swift-wing'd Raven shall bring me meat,  
And I, like Flowers shall still go neat,  
As if I knew no moneth but May.

This is a very different mood from that of Herbert's "Afflic-
tion (I)" in which the original of the last line of Vaughan's verse had appeared. There the tone is one of bitter reproach and dissatisfaction with the service to the Lord:

... My dayes were straw'd with flow'rs and happinesse;
There was no moneth but May.
But with my years sorrow did twist and grow,
And made a partie unawares for wo.

The rich and free imagination which could take a line ringing with bitterness and transform it into an expression of faith and happy trustfulness, is at work also in Vaughan's borrowings from the Bible. The above lines from "Providence" contain two allusions, to the miracle of the fishes and to the prophet Elijah's sojourn in the desert. Both these references are expressed with a flowing ease that manifests clearly how much at home Vaughan was in the biblical world, which he seemed to see more vividly than the Welsh landscape which surrounded him; thus in "Religion", Silex:

My God, when I walke in those groves,
And leaves thy spirit doth still fan,
I see in each shade that there growes
An Angell talking with a man,

Under a Juniper, some house,
Or the coole Mirtles canopie,
Others beneathe an Oakes greene boughs,
Or at some fountaines bubling Eys;

or in "White Sunday":

Yet thou the great eternal Rock
Whose height above all ages shines,
Art still the same, and canst unlock
Thy waters to a soul that pines.

A comparison with, say, the poem "Upon the Priorie Grove, his usuall Retyrement", with the opening -
Haile sacred shades: coole, leavie House!
Chaste Treasurer of all my vowes,
And wealth! ...

will emphasize the paradoxical difference in the degree of truth and reality of vision.

There are numerous images of the sea and of springs in Vaughan's poetry, but again, significantly, they almost invariably symbolise a spiritual state. The sea of blood is a favourite image of Vaughan's, as in "The Storm":

I see the use: and know my bloud
Is not a Sea,
But a shallow, bounded floud
Though red as he;
Yet have I flows, as strong as his,
And boyling stremes that rave
With the same curling force, and hisse,
As doth the mountain'd wave.

or, more dramatically, in "Abels blood":

What thunders shall those men arraign
Who cannot count those they have slain,
Who bath not in a shallow flodd,
But in a deep, wide sea of blood?
A sea, whose lowd waves cannot sleep,
But Deep still calleth upon deep;

A recurrent image is the purification through Christ's blood:

For all designs meant against thee,
And ev'ry publish'd vanity
Which thou did nely hast forgiven,
While thy blood wash'd me white as heaven;

"Dedication", II

Characteristic of all these images, with a few exceptions, is their intellectual, non-visual inspiration. So the sea of blood has associations with the Red Sea of the Bible, and with the theory of the ebb and flow of blood and of the sea according to
the changes of the moon (which was a part of the system of correspondences between the microcosm of man and the macrocosm of the universe). The spring of Christ's blood is a common image of European baroque poetry, an image expressed visually in the paintings of the Sacred Heart.

Like Herbert, Vaughan has little use for classical mythology, except for a few metaphors in his occasional poems, in which he was bound by contemporary convention.

The influence of Hermetic theories on Vaughan's poetry has already been mentioned in the discussion of his images of celestial bodies, plants and animals. The Platonic theory of archetypes seems to have captured Vaughan's imagination, possibly because it also assumes a link between the earth and the celestial regions. So we find in "Jacobs Pillow, and Pillar":

> ... Thy pillow was but type and shade at best,
> But we the substance have, and on him rest.

or in "The Nativity", Thalia:

> Great Type of passions: come what will, Thy grief exceeds all copies still.

The beautiful opening vision of "The World" owes perhaps something to Plato's Timaeus where the idea of a moving image of eternity is elaborated ("... while eternity itself remained unmoved, the image thereof had a motion according to number; and this image we call time."  

The Ptolemaic system gave Vaughan the inspiration for the following lines in "Rules and Lessons":

1) quoted from J. E. Leishman's *The Metaphysical Poets*, p. 158
Observe God in his works; here fountains flow,
Birds sing, Beasts feed, Fish leap, and th'Earth stands fast;
Above are restless motions, running lights;
Vast circling Azure, giddy Clouds, days, nights.

In "Affliction" he alludes to the theory of sublunary mutability which was a part of the medieval conception of the universe:

Vicissitude plaies all the game,
Nothing that stirrs,
Or hath a name,
But waits upon this wheel, ...

In "The Tempest" some mention is made of the theory of the four elements:

How do they cast off grossness? only Earth,
And Man (like Issachar) in lodes delight,
Water's refin'd to Motion, Aire to Light,
Fire to all three, but man hath no such mirth.

and of the music of the spheres:

Heaven hath less beauty than the dust he spies,
And Money better musick than the Spheres.

It is worth noting that there are no references to the theory of humours, particularly in the light of the following extract from Vaughan's translation of Henry Nollius' Hermetical Physick, Chap. 5, I:

... These Salts (believe me) doe better expresse and discover unto us the essences and distinctions of Tartareous or saltish diseases, than those four humours which are commonly termed the Sanguine, the Phlegmatic, the Bilious, and the Melancholy, both because that these latter terms, signify nothing unto us of the essence or matter of the Disease, and also because that those Dogmatists themselves, Hallucinate and stagger very much both in the formation or aptness, and in the application of their said terms.

In contemporary science, apart from a few references to alchemy, particularly to the Elixir, Vaughan's main interest appears to have been in magnetism. Here it is perhaps permissible
to speculate on the connection with the Hermetic theory of a magnetic attraction between the stars and the sublunary creation, although in the early love poems at any rate Donne's poetry is probably the main source of images like the following:

Thus to the North the Leadstones move,  
And thus to them th' enamoured steel aspires:
    Thus, Amoret,  
    I doe affect;
And thus by winged beames, and mutuall fire,  
    Spirits and Stars conspire,  
    And this is LOVE.

"To Amoret, of the difference 'twixt him,  
and other Lovers, and what true Love is."

In the last three lines, even so, there seems to be a reference to the Hermetic theory of influences of stars, the theory that had inspired "The Starre":

These desire and longing are the Magnets which so strongly move  
And work all night upon thy light and love,  
As beauteous shapes, we know not why,  
Command and guide the eye.

Unlike Herbert, Vaughan betrays very little of his everyday interests in his imagery. Although he was a practising doctor, his imagery of medicine and sickness is about half the volume of Herbert's, and on the whole shows very little special knowledge; the ailments and remedies are mentioned in very general terms, for instance:

To shew what strange love he had to our good  
He gave his sacred bloud  
By wil our sap, and Cordial; now in this  
Lies such a heav'n of bliss,  
That, who but truly tastes it, no decay  
Can touch him any way, ...

"The Sap", Silex
... As poisons by
Corrections are made Antidotes, so thy
Just Soul did turn ev'n hurtful things to Good;
Us'd bad Laws so, they drew not Tears, nor Blood.

"To the pious memoria of C.W.
Esquire", Thalia

Similarly, if the conjectures about Vaughan's active service in the Royalist army are correct, this experience left no trace in his poetry. The references to military matters are equally vague and stereotyped, whether they refer to the war of Venus in the earlier secular poems, or to the war of good and evil in man, in his later devotional work. The lovely lines in "Peace" ring true, but it is with a truth of vision, not of experience:

My Soul, there is a Countrie
Far beyond the stars,
Where stands a winged Centrie
All skilfull in the wars, ...

This absence of a personal note is characteristic of the whole of Vaughan's poetry. Although retaining the form of an intimate outpouring to the living God, his poems express an universal predicament, not only of man, but of the whole creation, in the face of a distant, invisible Divinity. Where Herbert looks round his small world and finds everywhere precepts and examples pointing the right way to salvation, Vaughan sees the vast world (of which for him stars are as much a part as stones and herbs) only in the light of symbols of the whole pattern of existence.

His symbols very rarely have the extravagant brilliance of the true conceit (for some of his daringly fresh phrases,
such as the light "trampling on his days", or the divine dew
spiriting and bleeding the earth, his Welsh origin is probably
responsible; sometimes he uses the English language with the
audacity of a foreigner).

Functional, non-sensuous, like most symbols, Vaughan's
images often lack the warmth of live things experienced with
interest and enjoyment. He is looking past the surrounding world
towards the shining vision of Paradise. Because of this concen-
tration on a vision beyond life, Vaughan has little of the
"sanctified worldliness" of Donne, and even of Herbert, of their
reminiscent affection for the secular, renounced but not forgotten
in the quest for the spiritual. He is far more single-minded than
any of his fellow-poets, as if he had known himself that (as we
have reason to believe from the scanty evidence available) the
revelation of faith granted to him in the momentous years
1647-50 was to fade soon, and, except for brief glimpses, irre-
trievably. Like his "conversion", if we may use the term, his
poetical inspiration was short-lived, and lightning-like, truly
a Silex Scintillans. At its height it gave us poems unsurpassed
in beauty, but the very transitoriness of this inspiration
speaks of loyalty to a mode of thinking and feeling which was of
the past. Unconsciously and involuntarily Vaughan is the
harbinger of the eclipse of Metaphysical poetry.
Chapter Four

A Perverseness of Industry

ABRAHAM COWLEY

In the work of Henry Vaughan we have found a certain uncertainty, a loosening of the tautly dramatic form characteristic of the school of Donne, which seemed to foreshadow the decline of the Metaphysical tradition. Abraham Cowley, who has been called "the last of the Metaphysical race", uses the Metaphysical manner with readiness and ease, and yet in his work we can read clearly the end of the Donne tradition, and its cause.

The very ease with which Cowley employs the technique of Donne, is the primary cause of his artistic failure, and its main symptom. (Lest it should seem that we are judging Cowley too harshly, it must be emphasized that in the nature of things any study of Metaphysical poetry is bound to deal unfairly with Cowley. His real accomplishments, his essays for instance, are outside the scope of our inquiry.) He wrote at a time when the technique of Metaphysical poetry was established, and its popularity high. His successful imitation of the approved models, of Donne in particular, gained him fame, for, selecting what were the most obvious characteristics of Metaphysical poetry, and avoiding its more disturbing traits, he delighted the taste of his contemporaries.
But while serving the popular taste, he probably did a great disservice to himself. Cowley was temperamentally quite unsuited to the genre of poetry which he chose to imitate. Metaphysical poetry was primarily a poetry of passion. The finest poems written in the Metaphysical manner were devotional, and even in the frankest love lyrics there was a note of anguish, of the outcry of the mortal flesh, of the despair of the impossibility of recapturing the flash of the Divine, which was manifest in the passion of the body as well as of the spirit.

This passion, this tension of body and soul, of flesh and spirit, was self-destroying in its intensity, and when the moment came, as it had to, when the passion had spent itself, and given way to reasoning, the tension relaxed, and the raison d'être of Metaphysical poetry disappeared. Without the inspiring passion the taut form of Metaphysical poetry with its extravagant, all-embracing conceits became a meaningless mechanism, which could perhaps startle, but never move or convince. Such was the Metaphysical poetry of Cowley.

A sensitive reader of poetry, and a clever versifier, although but rarely a poet, Cowley found it easy to imitate the Metaphysicals, Donne in particular. His imitations are interesting because they unconsciously emphasize the essential qualities of Metaphysical poetry, not only by what they copy successfully, but also by what they fail to recapture. While reading Cowley's poems, *The Mistress* especially, we realise quite clearly how
much it was the spirit behind the words - the urgent, tortured, passionate desire to discover and ultimately to reach the haven of peace, be it in human love or in divine ecstasy - which gave the poetry of Donne and the other Metaphysicals its unmistakable, electrifying quality. We are reminded again of Coleridge's dictum about the "predominating passion" which gives poetry its shape.

The absence of passion is perhaps the most striking quality of Cowley's verse. Although in the *Davideis* he attempted to compose a religious epic on an Old Testament theme because

Too long the Muses-Land have Heathen bin;  
Their Gods too long were Dev'ilis, and Vertues Sin;

*Davideis* I, 4

Cowley was not a religious man. The ecstasies of Crashaw and Vaughan, the misery and devotion of Donne and Herbert, were alien to him; his was a faith compatible with the new, analytical reason:

...Reason within's our onely Guide.  
Reason, which (God be prais'd!) still Walks, for all  
It's old Original Fall. 
And since it self the boundless Godhead joyn'd  
With a Reasonable Mind,  
It plainly shows that Mysteries Divine  
May with our Reason joyn.

"Reason. The use of it in Divine Matters."  
*Miscellanies*

He felt more at home in the world of science than among the vague, terrifying speculations of the mystics. "Christs passion", his only poem approaching in theme and treatment the devotional lyrics of his fellow-poets, appears to be an adaptation of "a Greek
Ode, written by Mr. Masters of New College in Oxford. In the Davideis the theme is Hebrew history with all its cruelty and vindictive passion, and the prophetic passage in Book II, which looks ahead to the birth of Christ, is as anachronistic as the traditional devices of the heroic epic of which Cowley made use.

His love poems, although they profess no deliberate rationality, are similarly lacking in passion. Dr. Johnson described The Mistress as "compositions... such as might have been written for penance by a hermit, or for hire by a philosophical rhymer, who had only heard of another sex; for they turn the mind only on the writer, whom, without thinking on a woman but as a subject for his talk, we sometimes esteem as learned, and sometimes despise as trifling, always admire as ingenious, and always condemn as unnatural". Severe as these strictures are, we cannot but see the truth of them, particularly when Cowley provokes a comparison with Donne's Songs and Sonnets through echoes, imitations and borrowings. The passion which inspired Donne might not always have been so deep as the passion that inspired "The good-morrow" and "The Exstasie", but he was true to it. Cowley never quite succeeds in convincing us that he is not magnifying some rather ignoble episode into a grande passion just because such was the fashion of the time. It is not the truth of the incident described that we doubt (after all, according to some critics, Donne himself was sometimes imploring or abusing an imaginary mistress), but the genuineness of the emotional experience to which Cowley pretends.
It is significant and characteristic that the most interesting of all Cowley's poetry are the Pindaric odes, clearly a work of the brain rather than of the heart (witness the careful explanations in the Notes, drawing the reader's attention to this expression, or defending that phrase, always on rational grounds, with quotations from the classics). By nature and inclination Cowley belonged to the new generation of men of reason rather than passion.

It seems fair to say that Cowley had not been cut out for either of the roles for which he aspired; he was by temperament neither a love poet nor a writer of religious epic poetry. He tried consciously to imitate the dramatic, colloquial form of lyric, especially the startling, recherché conceit in the manner of Donne, but here particularly he failed. The conceit could only be accepted if it was the expression of a genuine poetic experience, of a fusion of thought and feeling which found release in the apparent incongruity and basic logical connection of the images. Cowley seemed only to see the characteristic apparent incongruity, not the underlying truth, as logical as the law of the fairy tale, and as inevitable. He rang the changes on the paradox, which is perhaps too facile an effect to be the truest expression of the Metaphysical dilemma. His skill in the play on words, where the literal and the metaphorical meanings of a word are interchanged, was noted by Addison in his essay on "mixed wit" in the Spectator (No. 62). Addison said that this kind of wit "which consists partly in the resemblance of ideas, and partly in the resemblance of words ..."
abounds in Cowley more than in any other author that ever wrote", Of such playing with words Cowley was easily the master; but conceits that were telescoped thoughts and poetic visions, such as Vaughan's "quickness which my God hath kist" ("Quickness") or Donne's "At the round earth's imagined corners" are rare in Cowley's poetry. He remained on the surface, gliding along gracefully, a little aimlessly, occasionally floundering, a little too near the shallow waters.

There is a lack of any predominating passion in his poetry, and also in his life. In Cowley's career there is not a trace of the by now almost familiar pattern of ambition, conversion, renunciation and contrition, which can be found running through the lives of so many of his fellow-poets of that period.

Abraham Cowley was born in 1618, the posthumous child of a respectable grocer and stationer in Cheapside. A precocious child (he tells us in his essay "Of Myself"), he became acquainted at a very early age with Spenser's Faerie Queene and resolved immediately to become a poet. In a year or so he wrote his first work, the lengthy poem "Pyramus and Thisbe". By this time he was already a scholar of St. Peter's College, Westminster; where he remained until 1636. Obviously one of the most brilliant Westminster scholars of his time (his poem "Constantia and Philetus" was written about 1630, and in 1633, or even earlier, his Poetical Blossomes was published), it is curious, and in a way characteristic of Cowley's career, that nevertheless he failed to
secure the university scholarship to Cambridge for which he was one of the candidates.

The disappointment, however cruel, was not a lasting one, for in the same year we find Cowley an undergraduate of Trinity College, Cambridge. There he formed two friendships that proved of importance to him in later life: with Richard Crashaw, the "Poet and Saint" whom he met again later in Paris, and William Hervey, cousin to Henry Jernyn, later Earl of St. Albans, Queen Henrietta Maria's chamberlain in the years of exile, and Cowley's employer during that period.

It was here at Cambridge, and perhaps under the influence of Crashaw's projected translation of Marino's *La Strage degli Innocenti*, that Cowley's own contribution to epic poetry, the *Davideis*, was begun. By the spring of 1643/4, when the political situation deteriorated, Cowley, then apparently a fellow of Trinity, was formally dismissed from his appointment by the Parliamentarian commission under the Earl of Manchester, and left for Oxford. There he began his career as a courtier. He became the secretary of Baron Jermyn, cousin of his friend William Hervey, and when Jermyn accompanied the Queen to France, Cowley found himself in her employment. By 1646 he was in Paris in Jermyn's household, and was in a position to intervene with the Queen on Crashaw's behalf to help him to find employment with the Curia.

Cowley's work was by no means unimportant; as Jermyn's secretary he conducted his master's secret correspondence on the Queen's behalf first with Charles I and after 1649 with
the leading Royalists still in England. From this sort of work it was an easy step to employment as the Queen's secret agent and messenger. This dangerous activity Cowley carried on until April 1655, when, according to the Parliamentarian press, he was arrested in London together with several other Royalists, and put into prison.

The circumstances of his arrest are obscure, but there are strong indications that Cowley had done what many men find advantageous to do in uncertain times: with more regard to practical considerations than to ethics he attempted to serve both sides as well as himself, and, as so often happens, he failed. On his release Cowley withdrew from politics. In 1656 he announced his dissociation from Royalist inclinations in his introduction to the first edition of his works, in an inconspicuous passage advocating a conciliatory attitude to the new situation and an earnest endeavour to forget the old grievances still cherished by the Royalists. It was a mild recantation, very cautiously worded, yet it was to cost Cowley the coveted Royal favour after the Restoration. For the time being, however, the publication of his poetical works brought him fame for which he had longed. He now devoted himself to the study of science, and after two years only he was given the degree of doctor of physics by Oxford University. He became the centre of the literary coteries of the period, particularly of that of the "matchless Orinda", Mrs Katherine Philips, and he enjoyed the fruits of his glory.
But in 1658 Cromwell died, and the return of the Stuarts seemed no longer an impossibility. Cowley reacted to the change of atmosphere by revising his comedy The Guardian, which he had written in the old Cambridge days, for Charles II. The choice was significant in itself, and Cowley made his hopes even clearer by the obvious, however cautious, anti-Puritan bias of his revision. The revised play appeared under the title of Cutter of Coleman-street, but it failed to re-establish Cowley's credit with Charles II, and so we find him back in France in 1659, possibly on Jermyn's advice. Although the royal pardon was slow in coming, at last, in spring 1660, shortly before Charles's return to England, Cowley was allowed to resume his old post with Jermyn, in time to celebrate Charles's return with an ode.

In 1661 on the King's orders Cowley was given his old fellowship at Trinity which he had lost in 1643, but in spite of his petitions no other favour seemed to be forthcoming. If the King was slow in accepting Cowley's professions of loyalty, the Queen Mother had not forgotten the services he had rendered to her in France. In January 1661/2 she gave Cowley the lease of a large estate at Oldcourt near Greenwich, on very generous terms.

Disappointed in his ambitions, Cowley turned to the solace of learning. In 1660/1 he had been elected a member of the Royal Society, formerly the "Invisible College" at Gresham, and to the Royal Society he presented his "Proposition for the Advancement of Experimental Philosophy", apparently written some years earlier.
He was also writing poetry, but the only published work of this period is in Latin, the *Couleii Plantarum Libri Duo*, which appeared in 1662. The choice shows well Cowley's taste for elegant rusticity, for what the eighteenth century called the retreat. He showed his preference by deed as well, when in 1663 he moved to Barn Elms, a quiet place in Surrey near the Thames, attractive but rather damp and unhealthy.

In 1664 Cowley fell seriously ill. Not until 1665, however, did he leave Barn Elms, and then he moved only twenty miles up the river, to Chertsey, where, probably with the help of the Earl of St. Albans, he established himself as gentleman farmer. His health improved, and he was able to enjoy his new position and the company of visiting friends, but not for long. In 1667 he fell ill again, complications set in, and on 28 July 1667 he died. He was buried with great pomp in Westminster Abbey, and a memorial was erected to him there by the Duke of Buckingham, praising Cowley as "Anglorum Pindarus, Placcus, Maro, Deliciae Decus, Desiderium Aevi Sui".

Today this eulogy seems an ironical comment on a life of early brilliance and subsequent mediocrity, of unfulfilled promises and half-completed plans. Cowley's poem "Against Hope" ("Sire of Repentance, Child of fond Desire") is nowhere more aptly illustrated than in the author's own life. The infant prodigy, the precocious poet and dramatist, the resolved "Muse's Hannibal" who was to write the English Christian epic, became so engrossed in his political activities that he never found the leisure to achieve any of his ambitions.
Cowley's tragedy was that in an age of passionate partisanship which regarded political issues and matters of religion with the same intense seriousness, he tried to put into practice a pragmatic philosophy of rational compromise, of reconciliation. After a life of big disappointments and small amends he found perhaps the happiness and leisure he had been dreaming about. In his rural retirement he lived for a short time a life of quiet civilised pleasures worthy of the man of taste and refinement. There is an odd eighteenth-century air about this idyll of Cowley's latter years. The thought persists that here perhaps was a man born out of his time, a man born some fifty years too early.

What may be said about his life, may be said equally well about his work. T. S. Eliot called him "an early Augustan", and indeed nowhere do we find Cowley more at ease than in the free translations from classical poetry, extolling the virtues of rural happiness, and deploiring the immorality of urban society, and in the half-personal, half-critical and philosophical essays, both genres practised with perfection and enjoyment in the eighteenth century.

In the prose essays especially Cowley found an admirable medium for his particular gifts: the polished, well-turned phrase, the elaborate simile, the unostentatious display of classical learning and knowledge of contemporary affairs, the air of unemotional, civilised detachment suited the essay far better than the short lyric. Paradoxically, it is in the essays that we find Cowley speaking in an intimate, personal even if
detached tone, such as he never succeeded in employing successfully and convincingly in his poetry which was intended to be a personal confession of emotions and passions.

Dr. Johnson selected Cowley of all the Metaphysicals to demonstrate on his work the characteristics of the school of Donne. This may seem strange, but after all Johnson's aim, unprofessed but nevertheless obvious, was to demonstrate the failings of Metaphysical poetry. And what better material could he find than the poetry of Cowley, written in imitation of Donne in a medium that ill-suited him? Striving to recapitulate the excitement, the tense emotion, the flashes of surprise as one finds two distant images linked in a new affinity, Cowley employed the Donne manner writ large, in the mechanised fashion of an imitator. It is a manner peculiarly unsuited for successful imitation. Its characteristics are grotesquely emphasized in the work of a secondary poet who, unconsciously perhaps, takes care to include in his poems all that is recognised as the trade mark of the master.

For this reason mainly a study of Cowley's work is interesting, especially of his imagery. There we find the reflection of the tradition which he took it upon himself to follow, a tradition more exacting intellectually and emotionally, and less kind to any shortcomings, than most. In his work this tradition is conventionalised, and so is the imagery inherited with it, stereotyped to suit a temperament which inclined towards the pleasantly acceptable, the classicist.
There is no outstanding group of images in Cowley's work which would reflect a definite conception of life, such as the domestic images of Herbert, or the images of light, of celestial bodies and of plants in Vaughan. Cowley's images, apart from those betraying his personal interests, display if anything his tendency towards the conventional; to us they are a mirror of what his contemporaries saw as most striking in Metaphysical poetry. Personal experience, real or imaginative, counts for little.

So for instance his images of animals. The preference there is for images with a literary tradition, particularly for the elaborate rhetoric of the simile, approved by the classic masters. Thus in the picture of Saul's wrath in the *Davideis*, I, 45:

So when the pride and terror of the Wood,
A Lyon prick't with rage and want of food,
Espies out from afar some well-fed beast,
And bristles up preparing for his feast;
If that by swiftness swerve his gaping jaws;
His bloody eyes he hurls round, his sharp paws
Tear up the ground; then runs he wild about,
Lashing his angry tail, and roaring out.
Beasts creep into their dens, and tremble there;
Trees, though no wind stirring, shake with fear;
Silence and horror fill the place around.
Eccho it self dares scarce repeat the sound.

or, in the *Davideis* again, Book III, 47-8 (on Goliath):

So when a Scythian Tyger gazing round,
An Herd of Kine in some fair Plain has found
Lowing secure, he swells with angry pride,
And calls forth all his spots on ev'ry side.
Then stops, and hurls his haughty eyes at all,
In choice of some strong neck on which to fall.
Almost he scorns, so weak, so cheap a prey,
And grieves to see them trembling hast away.

Such similes recur, naturally enough, most frequently in the *Davideis*. 
The Metaphysical tradition asserts itself in images based on emblems. Cowley's favourite emblem is that of the Phoenix, "the Phoenix Truth" ("The Tree of Knowledge", Miscellanies) or in "The Praise of Pindar", Odes:

Pindar is imitable by none;
The Phoenix Pindar is a vast Species alone.

Other curious beasts beloved of the emblem writers, also make their appearance, although but rarely, as in "The Gazers", The Mistress:

I would not, Salamander-like,
In scorching heats always to Live desire,
But like a Martyr, pass to Heav'n through Fire.

or in "The Usurpation", The Mistress:

Nay every Grief and every Fear,
Thou dost devour, unless thy stamp it bear.
Thy presence, like the crowned Basilisks breath,
All other Serpents puts to death.

The serpent is a recurring image, usually of betrayal, as in "Love given over", The Mistress:

But Death and Love are never found
To give a Second Wound,
We're by those Serpents bit, but we're devour'd by these.

There is considerably more originality in Cowley's images of heavenly bodies. They reflect his matter-of-fact interest in, and knowledge of, the celestial system in a noticeable fashion. Far from symbolising the divine, as in Crashaw and Vaughan, the stars remind Cowley of the folly of believing them to be more than "sordid slime". He is particularly interested in comets and meteors, as in the "Ode of Wit", Miscellanies:

... And sometimes if the Object be too far,
We take a Falling Meteor for a Star.
or in "Reason", Miscellanies:

So Stars appear to drop to us from skie,
And gild the passage as they fly:
But when they fall, and meet th' opposing ground,
What but a sordid Slime is found?

He displays his knowledge of the motions of celestial bodies in a number of images such as the following:

They who above do various Circles finde,
Say, like a Ring th' Aequator Heav'n does bind,
When Heaven shall be adorn'd by thee
(Which then more Heav'n then 'tis will be)
'Tis thou must write the Posie there,
For it wanteth one as yet,
Though the Sun pass through't twice a year,
The Sun who is esteem'd the God of Wit.

"To a Lady who made Posies for Rings", The Mistress

Yet Love, alas, and Life in Me,
Are not two several things, but purely one,
At once how can there in it be
A double different Motion?
O yes, there may: for so the self same Sun,
At once does slow and swiftly run.

Swiftly his daily journey he goes,
But treads his Annual with a statelier pace,
And does three hundred Rounds enclose
Within one yearly Circles space.
At once with double course in the same Sphaere
He runs the Day, and Walks the year.

Instead of the identification of God and sun, or of the contrast between the true and the false sun, there are laudatory references to the King in occasional poems like the Prologue to The Guardian:

When you appear, Great Prince, our Night is done;
You are our Morning Star, and shall be our Sun.

or in "On His Majesties Restoration and Return", Verses:

The flames of one triumphant day,
Which like an Anti-Comet here
Did fatally to that appear,
For ever frighted it away;
Then did th' allotted hour of dawning Right
First strike our ravisht sight ...

Even in the Davideis it is Saul or David who are represented by such symbols rather than the Divinity to whose glory Cowley had composed his poem.

Similarly in the images of light and fire it is the flame of secular love which burns in the poet's heart, not Crashaw's "lightes & firres". Cowley makes extensive use of this traditional metaphor of the flame of passion, and achieves excellent results by playing with the literal and the metaphorical use of the word, as in "The vain love", The Mistress:

What new-found Witchcraft was in thee,
With thine own Cold to Kindle Me?
Strange art! like him that should devise
To make a Burning-Glass of Ice;

or in "The Request", The Mistress:

Strike deep thy burning arrows in:
Lukewarmness I account a sin,
As great in Love, as in Religion.
Come arm'd with flames, for I would prove
All the extremities of mighty Love.
Th' excess of heat is but a fable;
We know the torrid Zone is now found habitable.

There are other metaphors employing the images of fire and light, e.g. the light of Reason in "Of Solitude", Several Discourses, or the fire of genius, as in "To Mr. Hobs", Odes, but by far the largest number are amorous metaphors of the kind exemplified above. In these Cowley's precise wit is shown to advantage, employed in paying compliments which in their nicely calculated effect somewhat belie the fervour of the passions professed.
Courtly gallantry inspired also the large majority of Cowley's images of war and armour. It is amusing too to see the conceit in the manner of Donne, who had revolted against the lingering conventions of the *amour courtois*, used so skilfully in the complaints of the unsuccessful lover engaged in playing the courtly game. Like so many of the German baroque poets, more interested in the *Venuskrieg* of the polite society than in the holocaust of the Thirty Years War, Cowley, so close to the developments in England, turns away resolutely to besiege a lady's virtue. Occasionally a conceit more realistic than is customary in these records of the wars of Cupid, shows that the poet had not entirely succeeded in escaping reality. So in "The Heart-breaking", *The Mistress*:

And now (alas) each little broken part
Feels the whole pain of all my Heart:
And every smallest corner still Lives
With that torment which the Whole did kill.

Even so rude Armies when the field they quit;
And into several Quarters get;
Each Troop does spoil and ruine moore,
Then all joyn'd in one Body did before.

or in "Love given over", *The Mistress*:

Alas, what comfort is't that I am grown Secure of being again o'rethrown?

1) In this context the following passage from Cowley's Preface to his Works is of some interest:

I have cast away all such pieces as I wrote during the time of the late troubles, with any relation to the differences that caused them; as among others, three Books of the Civil War it self, reaching as far as the first Battel of Newbury ...

(quoted by Waller, p. 9 of his edition of *The English Writings of Abraham Cowley*)
Since such an Enemy needs not fear
Lest any else should quarter there,
Who has not only Sack't, but quite burnt down the Town.

But such conceits are infrequent. Most of Cowley's images of warfare remain on the purely conventional plane, in decorous distance from reality, engaged in the pretty play of paradox of which Cowley was so fond:

Who can, alas, their strength express,
Arm'd, when they (women) themselves undress,
Cap-a-pe with Nakedness?

Anacreontiques III, "Beauty", Miscellanies

In vain a Breastplate now I wear,
Since in my Breast the Foe I bear.
In vain my Feet their swiftness try;
For from the Body can they fly?

Anacreontiques IV, "The Duel", Miscellanies

or in Davideis II, 7:

Thy Darts of healthful Gold, and downwards fall
Soft as the Feathers that they're fletch'd withal.
Such, and no other, were those secret Darts,
Which sweetly toucht this noblest pair of Hearts.

The images based on religious matters and on worship show the same acceptance of the conventional. The poet's mistress is his cruel goddess, whom he fears and worships in the customary ritual. Cowley, however, goes sometimes one step further than most of the writers of love poems of his period. The language of theology in which some of his compliments are expressed, is too exact and unmistakable not to give an impression that he identifies his mistress not with the pagan goddess of the poetic convention, but with the Christian God. So in "The Thief",


The Mistress:

What do I seek, alas, or why do I
Attempt in vain from thee to fly?
For making thee my Deity,
I gave thee then Ubiquity.
My pains resemble Hell in this;
The Divine presence there too is,
But to torment Men, not to give them bliss.

or in "The given Love", The Mistress:

Bestow thy Beauty then on me,
Freely, as Nature gav 't to Thee;
'Tis an exploded Popish thought
To think that Heaven may be bought.
Pray'rs, Hymns, and Praises are the way;
And those my thankful muse shall pay;
Thy Body in my verse enshrin'd,
Shall grow immortal as thy Mind.

There are, of course, other images in which the convention
of pagan worship is fully observed, even if faintly tinged with
Catholic ritual:

The Min'string Angels none can see;
'Tis not their beauty ' or face,
For which by men they worshipt be;
But their high office and their place.
Thou art my Goddess, my Saint, She;
I pray to Her, only to pray to Thee.

"The Waiting-Maid", The Mistress

That truly you my Idol might appear,
Whilst all the People smell and see
The odorous flames, I offer thee,
Thou sit' st, and dost not see, nor smell, nor hear,
Thy constant zealous worshipper.

"Her Unbelief", The Mistress

The images of royalty, although conventional in the adulatory
conception of the mistress as a queen, are not without interest,
containing as they do some allusions, even if admittedly vague,
to parliamentary issues. So in "Loves Ingratitude", The Mistress:
But now all's gone, I now, alas, complain,
Declare, protest, and threat in vain.
Since by my own unforc'd consent,
The Traitor has my Government,
And is so settled in the Throne,
That 'twere Rebellion now to claim mine own.

or in "The Waiting-Maid", The Mistress:

Three hours each morn in dressing Thee,
Maliciously are spent;
And make that Beauty Tyranny,
That's else a Civil Government.

The rational character of Cowley's poetry is further underlined by the marked influence of his reading, As Dr. Johnson remarked, "without any encomiastick fervour", Cowley "brought to his poetick labour a mind replete with learning, and ... his pages are embellished with all the ornaments which books could supply."

Donne's influence can be followed only too clearly throughout The Mistress. The very titles of the poems remind us of Donne's Songs and Sonnets in their briefness, unusual in Cowley's other works. Echoes of Donne recur, but there is a change. "La manière de Donne perd, dans les mains de Cowley, sa qualité rare, elle se vulgarise, s'embourgeoise." Examples speak for themselves:

Cowley, "Platonick Love", The Mistress:

Indeed I must confess,
When Souls mix 'tis an Happiness;
But not compleat till Bodies too combine,
And closely as our minds together join;
But half of Heaven the Souls in glory tast,
'Till by Love in Heaven at last,
Their Bodies too are plac't.

1) Jean Loiseau, Abraham Cowley. Sa vie, ses oeuvres. p. 383
Donne, "The Exstasie", Songs and Sonnets:

As our blood labours to beget
Spirits, as like soules as it can,
Because such fingers need to knit
That subtile knot, which makes us man:
So must pure lovers soules descend
T' affections, and to faculties,
Which sense may reach and apprehend,
Else a great Prince in prison lies.

Cowley, "My Heart discovered", The Mistress:

Her body is so gently bright,
Clear and transparent to the sight,
(Clear as fair Christal to the view,
Yet soft as that, e're Stone it grew,)
That through her flesh, methinks, is seen
The brighter Soul that dwells within:

Donne, "The Second Anniversarie", ll. 244 ff.:

Her pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,
That one might almost say, her body thought.

Cowley imitates also the colloquial openings of poems like
Donne's "Canonization", in his "Resolved to be beloved. The Same",
The Mistress, for instance:

For Heavens sake, what d' you mean to do?
Keep me, or let me go, one of the two;

Crashaw's work, which Cowley must have known well, left very little impression on his poetry, not surprisingly if we remember the deeply religious, ecstatic character of Crashaw's poems, so entirely alien to Cowley's nature. If Cowley could only admire but not imitate Crashaw's lyrical poems, the translation of Marino's La Strage degli Innocenti was a different matter. It is an interesting coincidence that the plan of the first book of the Davideis follows exactly that of Crashaw's Sospetto even
to the scene in Hell, the visit of Envy in the guise of the king's father to the palace, and her false warning. The resemblance between the two works is all the more conspicuous because the whole scene is very much out of keeping with the biblical setting.

For one so well versed in the Scriptures, Cowley appears remarkably uninfluenced by the dramatic simplicity of Biblical language. The Bible was the source of a large number of his images, but rarely the model for the language in which they were expressed. In vain should we look in Cowley's poetry for such echoes of scriptural phrases as we have found in Herbert and Vaughan. Indeed they would be quite out of place in such poems as for instance "The Welcome", The *Mistress*:

Go, let the fatted Calf be kill'd;
My *Prodigal*'s come home at last;
With noble resolutions fill'd,
And fill'd with sorrow for the past,
No more will burn with *Love or Wine*:
But quite has left his *Women* and his *Swine*.

or "The Despair", The *Mistress*:

In tears I'll waste these eyes
By Love so vainly fed
So *Lust* of old the *Deluge* punished.

Likewise in the occasional poems a more ornate diction seems suitable than one modelled too closely on the Scriptures:

... Hail the sacred Ark
Where all the World of Science do's imbarque!
Which ever shall withstand, and hast so long withstood,
*Insatiate Times* devouring *Flood*.
Hail Tree of *Knowledge*, thy leaves *Fruit*! which well
Dost in the midst of *Paradise* arise,
*Oxford* the *Muses* *Paradise*,
From which may never Sword the blest expell.

"Ode. Mr. Cowley's Book presenting itself ... " *Verses*
Long did the Muses banisht Slaves abide,
And built vain Pyramids to mortal pride;
Like Moses Thou (though Spells and Charms withstand)
Hast brought them nobly back to their Holy Land.

"On the Death of Mr. Crashaw",

It is interesting to note that nearly all Cowley's scriptural references are to the Old Testament, to the Genesis in particular. The New Testament and the tragic mystery of Christ, as we have had occasion to note before, seem to have been outside Cowley's imaginative experience altogether.

He turns to classical mythology for his images as often as to the Scriptures. It is not surprising that a large part of his classical allusions should occur in the occasional, laudatory poems where they were expected. So in "Ode. Upon Dr. Harvey",

Verses:

Coy Nature (which remain'd, though aged grown,
A Beauteous Virgin still, injoy'd by none,
Nor seen unveil'd by any one)
When Harvey's violent passion she did see,
Began to tremble, and to flee,
Took Sanctuary like Daphne in a tree:
There Daphnes lover stopt, and thought it much
The very Leaves of her to touch,
But Harvey our Apollo, stopt not so,
Into the Bark, and root after her did goe:
No smallest Fibres of a Plant,
For which the elebeams Point doth sharpness want,
His passage after her withstood.

In this poem perhaps Cowley was not well served by the fashionable demand for classical references at any cost; the conceit is forced and unnatural to the point of being ridiculous. But there are other, more successful examples of Cowley's use of his classical reading. So in "Platonick Love", The Mistress:
... For he, whose soul nought but a soul can move,
   Does a new Narcissus prove
   And his own Image love.

or in "The Thief", The Mistress:

   From Books I strive some remedy to take,
   But thy Name all the Letters make;
   What e're 'tis writ, I find that there,
   Like Points and Comma's every where;
   Me blest for this let no man hold;
   For I, as Midas did of old,
   Perish by turning ev'ry thing to Gold.

Cowley was not only a classical scholar a man of letters, but
also a member of the Royal Society and a student of the sciences.
In the images drawn from this field, however, he rarely shows
his knowledge, relying mostly on those scientific facts which
had been popularised by other poets, by Donne in particular.
So for instance in "Resolved to be beloved", The Mistress:

   The Needle trembles so, and turns about
      Till it the Northern Point find out:
      But constant then and fixt does prove,
      Fixt, that his dearest Pole as soon may move.

or in "The Soul," Mistress:

   If all my senses Objects be
   Not contracted into Thee,
   And so through Thee more pow'rful pass,
   As Beams do through a Burning-Glass.

or in "Reason. The use of it in Divine Matters", Miscellanies:

   Visions and Inspirations some expect
   Their course here to direct,
   Like senseless Chymists their own wealth destroy,
   Imaginary Gold t' enjoy.

In the matter of cosmic theories too Cowley chooses images
familiar to his readers. Thus we find images based on the Ptole-
maic universe, as in "Reason, " Miscellanies:

   The Holy Book, like the eighth Sphere, does shine
   With thousand Lights of Truth Divine.
on the medieval theory of atoms:

Let Nature if she pleases disperse
My Atoms over all the Universe,
At the last they easily shall
Themselves know, and together call;
For thy Love, like a Mark, is stamp'd on all.

"All-over, Love", The Mistress

on the medieval hypotheses about angels:

But Angels in their full enlightened state,
Angels who Live, and know what 'tis to Be,
Who all the nonsense of our Language see,
Who speak Things, and our Words, their ill-drawn Pictures scorn,
When we by ' a foolish Figure say,
Behold an old man Dead! then they
Speak properly, and cry, Behold a man-child born.

"Life", Pindarique Odes

on the music of the spheres:

He spoke; the Heavens seem'd decently to bow,
With all their bright Inhabitants; and now
The jocond Sphaeres began again to play,
Again each Spirit sung Halleluia.

Davideis, I, 30

But although Cowley's images, in deference to the Metaphysical tradition, are drawn freely from the medieval sphere of beliefs, there are one or two passages which indicate clearly that his own private sympathies lay on the side of scientific progress:

His Wisdom, Justice, and his Piety,
His Courage both to suffer and to die,
His Virtues and his Lady too
Were things Celestial. And we see
In spight of quarrelling Philosophie,
How in this case 'tis certain found,
That Heav'n stands still, and only Earth goes round.

"Upon the Death of the Earl of Balcarres", Verses
So did this noble Empire (of the Stagirite) wast,
Sunk by degrees from glories past,
And in the School-men's hands it perisht quite at last.
Then nought but Words it grew,
And those all Barb'arous too.
It perisht, and it vanisht there,
The Life and Soul breath't out, became but empty Air.

"To Mr. Hobs", Pindarique Odes

In all the Cobwebs of the Schoolmen's trade,
We no such nice Distinction woven see,
As 'tis To be, or Not to Be.

"Life and Fame", Pindarique Odes

In images based on legal matters again Cowley adheres to the conventional — the torture of love, the legacy of Hope. Conventionality prevails also in his images of financial matters. He shows a curious liking for the idiom of trade, of bargaining, in his love poems — a significant comment perhaps on the true nature of those passions. "The Bargain" is the most outspoken of these poems:

Take heed, take heed, thou lovely Maid,
Nor be by glittering ills betray'd;
Thy self for Money? oh, let no man know
The Price of Beauty fain so low! etc. etc.

or "The Given Love", The Mistress:

If thou, my Dear, Thy self shouldst prize,
Alas, what value would suffice?
The Spaniard could not do't, though he
Should to both Indies joyniture thee.
Thy beauties therefore wrong will take,
If thou shouldst any bargain make;
To give All will befit thee well;
But not at Under-Rates to sell.

Conventionality is again the characteristic of Cowley's images of sickness and medicine — the only sickness he knows is that of love:
Perhaps the Physick's good you give,
But ne're to me can useful prove;
Med'cines may Cure, but not Revive;
And I 'am not Sick, but Dead in Love.
In Loves Hell, not his World, am I;
At once I Live, am Dead, and Dye.

"Counsel", The Mistress

Come, Doctor, use thy roughest art
Thou canst not cruel prove;
Cut, burn, and torture every part,
To heal me of my Love.

There is no danger, if the pain
Should me to 'a Fever bring;
Compared with Heats I now sustain,
A Fever is so Cool a thing,
(like drink which feaverish men desire)
That I should hope 'twould almost quench my Fire.

"The Cure", The Mistress

The idea is conventional, and so is the development of it;
obviously Cowley was not interested in the medical science, although
he numbered some of the most famous medical men of his time among
his friends.

His own interests and hobbies left a definite, if not very
deep impression on his imagery. He is one of the few poets of his
period who make any mention at all of the visual arts, as in the
Davideis, IV, 25:

These Virtues too the rich unusual dress
Of Modesty adorn'd and Humbleness.
Like a clear Varnish o're fair Pictures laid,
More fresh and Lasting they the Colours made.

or in "To the Royal Society", Verses:

Who to the life an exact Piece would make,
Must not from others Work a Copy take;
No, not from Rubens or Vandike;
Much less content himself to make it like
Th' Idaeas and the Images which lie
In his own Fancy, or his Memory.
He seems to have been interested also in architecture, ancient as well as modern. Although the references are mostly general, there are quite a number of them:

Here Nature does a House for me erect:
    Nature, the fairest Architect,
    Who those fond Artists does despise,
    That can the fair and living Trees neglect,
    Yet the dead Timber prize.

"Of Solitude", Several Discourses

Houses and Towns may rise again,
    And ten times easier it is
To rebuild Pauls, than any work of his.

"Ode. Upon Dr. Harvey", Verses

There are surprisingly few references to the theatre, for a dramatic writer at least:

The Evil Spirits that delight
    To dance and revel in the Mask of Night,
The Moon and Stars, their sole Spectators shall affright.

"The 34. Chapter of the Prophet Isaiah", Pindarique Odes

Foreign travel, particularly the voyages of discovery, had a great charm for Cowley. (At this point it is interesting to remember his preoccupation with Sir William Davenant's projected voyage to America.) He had read a good deal about the newly discovered or explored lands, which was of use to him in his poetry:

When once or twice you chanc'd to view
    A rich, well-govern'd Heart,
Like China, it admitted You
    But to the Frontier-part.

"The Welcome", The Mistress
"Tis I who Love's Columbus am; 'tis I,  
Who must new Worlds in it descry:  
Rich Worlds, that yield of Treasure more,  
Than all that has bin known before.

"The Prophet", The Mistress

Cowley the courtier was probably interested in fine clothes. Unfortunately perhaps, this interest accounts for the somewhat too sartorial bias of the following passage in the Davides, II, 95:

He took for skin a cloud most soft and bright,  
That e're the midday Sun pierc'd through with light:  
Upon his cheeks a lively blush he spread;  
Washt from the morning beauties deepest red.  
An harmless flaming Meteor shone for haire,  
And fell adown his shoulders with loose care.  
He cuts out a silk Mantle from the skies,  
Where the most sprightly azure pleas'd the eyes.  
This he with starry vapours spangles all,  
Took in their prime e're they grow ripe and fall.  
Of a new Rainbow e're it fad or fade,  
The choicest piece took out, a Scarf is made.

or in "To Mr. Hobs", Pindarique Odes:

I little thought before, ...  
That all the Wardrobe of rich Eloquence,  
Could have afforded half enuff,  
Of bright, of new, and lasting stuff,  
To cloath the mighty Limbs of thy Gigantique Sense.

In his later years Cowley was a keen gardener and gentleman-farmer. Yet his imagery of plants and of natural features is very conventional indeed, and expressed in the most general terms:

Ev'n so in the same Land,  
Poor Weeds, rich Corn, gay Flow'rs together stand,  
Alas, Death mows down all with an impartial Hand.

"Horace. L.3, Ode 1", Several Discourses

What cursed weed's this Love! but one grain sow,  
And the whole field 'twill overgrow;  
Strait will it chock up and devour  
Each wholesome herb and beauteous flour!
Nay unless something soon I do, 'Twill kill my very laurel too.

"Loves Ingratitude", The Mistress

'Tis not the linen shew so fair: Her skin shines through, and makes it bright; So clouds themselves like suns appear When the sun pierces them with light: So lilies in a glass enclose, The glass will seem as white as those.

"Clad all in white", The Mistress

The liturgical emblems of the rose and the lily would appear as much out of place in Cowley's imagery of plants, as the symbolic Lamb and Dove in his images of animals.

Cowley's inclination to turn from the particular to the general, from first-hand observation to the poetic convention, which we have had occasion to note before, is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in those images from which some of the most characteristic Metaphysical conceits had been chosen by other poets - the images drawn from the domestic surroundings, from the trades and their tools.

The images based on domestic surroundings are quite remarkably few, compared with the other Metaphysical poets, Donne, Herbert and Crashaw in particular. They are very general in character, dealing with things which had become properties of poetic convention, with little power to evoke a concrete sensory picture, such as the image of the stars as lamps:

... Above those petty lamps that guild the night; There is a place o'reflown with hallowed light;

Davideis, I, 24
or of the morning sky as the Sun's bed:

When, Goddess, thou liftst up thy wakened Head,
Cut of the Mornings purple bed, ...

"Hymn. To light," Verses

All these are images frequent in poetry of the period, with little claim to distinction.

The same may be said of Cowley's images of food and drink, which are largely poetic clichés - the food of love, of hope:

No bound nor rule my pleasures shall endure,
In Love there's none too much an Epicure.

"Coldness", The Mistress

Hope, thou bold Taster of Delight,
Who whilst thou shouldst but tast, devour'st it quare!

"Against Hope", The Mistress

Variety I ask not; give me One
To live perpetually upon.
The person Love does to us fit,
Like Manna, has the Tast of all in it.

"Resolved to be beloved", The Mistress

It is not surprising that we should look in vain for liturgical images of the Bread and Wine; Cowley is fundamentally, in spite of his thorough knowledge of the Old Testament, not a devotional poet at all, and the Transubstantiation offered no inspiration to him.

Cowley's preference for the general, non-descriptive word is obvious; he has no interest in colours, and in his images of jewels the visual effect is neglected. It is "jewels", not "rubies" or "emeralds" and "pearls" which he mentions by name, aiming at the idea, the conception of wealth rather than at the
picture of splendour and colour. It is interesting to note that the only time he mentions a precious stone by name, the ruby, it is in verses on Christ's blood where the metaphor of the drops of blood as rubies is traditional:

... that Head
Which once the blushing Thorns environed,
Till crimson drops of precious blood hung down
Like Rubies to enrich thine humble Crown.)

_Davideis, I, 1-2_

Images which attribute human motives and actions to inanimate nature form a large group in Cowley's poetry. There nature is seen reflecting the poet's changing moods or voicing God's will or, most often, imitating man's ways. Perhaps here again Cowley was trying to escape from reality to the world of poetical convention where

... never yet did pry
The busie Mornings curious Ry:

"The Muse", _Pindarique Odes_

The amo'rous Waves would fain about her stay,
But still new amo'rous waves drive them away,
And with swift current to those joys they haste,
That do as swiftly waste, ...

"Eating in the River",
_The Mistress_

Close to these images are the personifications, "Phansie, wild Dame" (Davideis, II, 38) and Grief, Fear and "Lust the Master of a hardned Face" ("Hymn. To Light", _Verses_), which are nearer to the eighteenth-century abstractions than any we have encountered yet.

Cowley was indeed, in T. S. Eliot's phrase, an early
Augustan, as well as a late Elizabethan. The Elizabethan tradition, as preserved and developed in Donne and his followers, offered to Cowley the conceit, that tense, dramatically condensed metaphor with the immediate sensory appeal of the emblem, and with its intellectual demands. The cleverness of the conceit, the trick of the unexpected, of the paradox appealed to Cowley's quick, but not over-deep intellect, and although he was ill at ease in the world from which the Metaphysical poets drew their inspiration, yet he followed the Donne tradition in the choice of his images as much as was possible to him. The learned, recherché conceits drawn from the various scientific theories old and new suited him well; he was on his own ground there. However, while ready to consider the cosmic theories, he hesitated before the vision of the vast, endless universe of God. We have remarked above on the absence in Cowley's poetry of images expressing the greatness and mystery of God, be it in symbols of the celestial bodies, or of light and fire. We have also noted the absence of "liturgical" images of plants, animals and of food. The truth is, of course, that Cowley, the would-be author of the English divine epic, was not a religious man by nature.

As he was not torn by the desire to reach from the earth to heaven, he did not feel the urgent need to dramatise the dichotomy of these two worlds, or to emphasize the humility of things earthly in order to enhance their importance as symbols either of man's humble status (as in Herbert) or of the hidden presence of God (as in Vaughan). This tendency to invest the humdrum
things of everyday life with a symbolic value - which is just as typical of Metaphysical poetry as its partiality for the learned conceits - is also absent in Cowley's poetry.

He employs the Metaphysical technique in poems on stereotyped subjects, of interest to a polite urban society, such as a love affair, a philosophical or moral observation, or a notable public occasion. He uses images which would be universally known and accepted, including such typical conceits of Metaphysical poetry as had by then become a part of the stock-in-trade of poetry. In the hands of poets like Donne, Herbert, Crashaw or Vaughan these conceits were shaped and coloured by a spiritual passion which inspired their vision of the whole world. In Cowley's hands, without this unifying vision of a God-governed universe, the conceits and paradoxes become just clever tricks, jumbled together in an exhibition of wit.

His own instinct was in the opposite direction, away from the awe-inspiring vision of a universe filled with God's presence, towards the small, limited, but safe world of man, or rather of polite society, which would approve of generally accepted sentiments expressed in a generally understood convention.

He is at his best in poems intended for such a society, in the flippant love lyrics in which love is just a game, decorative if indecorous, and in the polished eulogies of public figures. At his best - or is it his second-best? - Cowley, the Augustan manqué, the Metaphysical malgré lui, is, as we have said earlier, always at a disadvantage in a study of Metaphysical poetry. Even
his most successfully turned lyrics seem to bring in an alien, jarring note. To the prejudiced eye, Cowley's poetry is nothing but a burlesque of the tradition he attempted to follow; and even to the most impartial reader it is largely a curiosity, for what it retains of an outworn poetical formula as much as for what it foreshadows for the more distant future.

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Andrew Marvell. Although Vaughan outlived him, Marvell is to rank the "last of the Metaphysicals," certainly from the bibliographer's point of view, as the first edition of his poems appeared in 1661, after his death. In the last of the Metaphysicals he had the advantage of inheriting a fully developed poetical tradition. In his poetry there are numerous echoes of his predecessors from Donne to Cowley, including, surprisingly enough if we consider their political and religious loyalties, Crashaw. Yet there is no more individually independent poet than Marvell. His poetry, including of course the political satire which were of necessity explicit, is charmingly and deceptively simple on the surface, and at the same time far more deeply ecstatic than Crashaw's. Catholic symbolism or Vaughan's Seraphic symbolism, the world of Marvell's imagination is his own, a lovely, curious, unfamiliar land, to be visited in a passing glance, but never to be entered and explored at will.

His individualism is too powerful to be contained by a tradition, even by one as strong as the Metaphysical. In his best poems Marvell transcends the tortured, dreamlike world of Metaphysical poetry to rise into a calm, rare atmosphere in which the tension is resolved in happy solitude. This is not to say that
Chapter Five

The Easy Philosopher

ANDREW MARVELL

The last of the Metaphysical poets to be discussed in this study is Andrew Marvell. Although Vaughan outlived him, Marvell is in truth the "last of the Metaphysical race", certainly from the bibliographer's point of view, as the first edition of his Poems appeared in 1681, after his death. As the last of the Metaphysicals he had the advantage of inheriting a fully developed poetical tradition. In his poetry there are numerous echoes of his predecessors from Donne to Cowley, including, surprisingly enough if we consider their political and religious loyalties, Crashaw. Yet there is no more individual, independent poet than Marvell. His poetry, excluding of course the political satires which were of necessity explicit, is charmingly and deceptively simple on the surface, and at the same time far more truly esoteric than Crashaw's Catholic symbolism or Vaughan's Hermetic mysticism. The world of Marvell's imagination is his own only, a lovely, curious, unfamiliar land, to be sighted in a passing glance, but never to be entered and explored at will.

His individualism is too powerful to be contained by a tradition, even by one as strong as the Metaphysical. In his best poems Marvell transcends the tortured, dramatic world of Metaphysical poetry to rise into a calm, rare atmosphere in which the tension is resolved in happy solitude. This is not to say that
Marvell assumes and throws off the Metaphysical habit of thinking like a convenient cloak; but of his strange personality the Metaphysical dualism of flesh and spirit is merely one aspect, even if by no means an unimportant one.

This fierce individualist was a public figure, a busy man of affairs who did not hesitate to use his practical gifts in the service of political controversy, and who turned on the political scene of the Restoration the same detached, curious, interested gaze with which he regarded the half-real world of his dreams.

In his paradox-loving age Marvell provided yet another example of a dual personality, writing poems of an almost unbelievable frailty and tenderness, and some of the most vicious and foul-spoken satires. As if to express his own awareness of this duality in his character, Marvell chooses often the form of a dialogue, alternating two points of view, as for instance in "Dialogue between the Resolved Soul, and Created Pleasure" or in "A Dialogue between the Soul and the Body".

This effortless capacity for seeing simultaneously the two worlds, that of the spirit and that of the flesh, is Marvell's carte d'identité as a Metaphysical poet just as much as his brilliant conceits and his occasional echoes from his predecessors. It is perhaps emphasized by the detachment, so characteristic of Marvell, and so new in Metaphysical poetry, with which he notes and records the two sides.

In his poems a nice balance of emotion and reason is maintained, and the structure remains firmly in his hands. The
perfect development of the central argument in the poem "To his Coy Mistress" has been commented upon, but how well Marvell had mastered the more difficult form of his "Horatian Ode" and even of that queer, amorphous poem "Upon Appleton House". There the leisurely progress from a description of the house, its master and its history to a walk round the gardens, to the meadow and to the wood, the return to the meadow in the evening, neatly introducing a meeting with Maria Fairfax, and then the abrupt, yet so natural ending, sudden like the dusk falling, all seem deliberately joined so loosely, so casually to express the lazy pleasurable atmosphere of a summer's day.

The strength of his intellect makes itself felt throughout Marvell's poetry, not only in the well-planned structure of the poems, but in the intellectual quality of the matter itself. The "Coy Mistress" is a close-knit argument, skilfully disguised in the exquisiteness of the lovers' eternity. "The Garden", or at any rate its best-known lines, attempts to describe through the medium of poetry the effect of solitude on the mind. In "Upon Appleton House" the poet is an "easie philosopher", but philosophise he does; the happiness is of the mind as much as of the body at ease. The title of "The Definition of Love" (which incidentally records the earliest use of the word "definition" in its modern sense) speaks for itself; this is an analysis of love, expressed in terms of the sciences, of geometry:

As Lines so Loves oblique may well
Themselves in every Angle greet:
But ours so truly Parallel,
Though infinite can never meet.
of astronomy:

And therefore her Decrees of Steel
Us as the distant Poles have plac'd,
(Though Loves whole World on us doth wheel)
Not by themselves to be embrac'd.

Unless the giddy Heaven fall,
And Earth some new Convulsion tear;
And, us to joyn, the World should all
Be cramp'd into a Planisphere.

and astrology:

Therefore the Love which us doth bind,
But Fate so enviously debarrs,
Is the Conjunction of the Mind,
And Opposition of the Stars.

The persistent use of such images from the field of the sciences emphasizes the rational, analytic treatment of the subject; it is a supreme triumph of Marvell's art that his poetry of the detached mind moves the heart deeply.

The intellectual, dispassionate quality of Marvell's poetry is set off by his delight in the fantastic, nowhere perhaps more agreeably than in the rambling stanzas of "Upon Appleton House". There Marvell's love of the paradoxical, and the seventeenth-century interest in rediscovering the poetical value of the familiar world combine to present a picture of a delightful topsy-turvydom, in which grasshoppers look down from the tall grass upon men, laughing in their squeaky voices; flowers discharge their perfumes in volleys as Fairfax passes. It is in fact a world of the conceit come true and living alongside reality, a world that, however fantastic, is real to the reader, perhaps because it is described with that detachment which characterizes Marvell's thoughts and emotions alike.
It may be a fantastic world, but it is a real one, not an abstraction of liturgical symbols and mystical messages such as was the world of Herbert's, and, to a lesser degree, Vaughan's poetry. It is significant of this change of attitude towards nature that Marvell wrote some of his best poems on actual places: the famous Appleton House stood in Yorkshire, not far from Bilborough Hill.

Yet Marvell is not a nature poet in the Wordsworthian sense. He enjoyed his escapes into the wild luxuriance of a meadow, or a wood, but the world of man remained with him. It was with a sophisticated eye that he saw the meadow green as "Silks but newly washt" and polished as a looking-glass, or viewed the tall trees standing like a guard of honour. The picture of the garden at Appleton House, with its insistence on order, is characteristic, and oddly prophetic of eighteenth-century landscape gardening. Although "The Mower against Gardens" is a protest against the taming of nature, in "Upon Appleton House" the result of this taming is contemplated with delight.

There is a sophisticated, recherché air about Marvell's poetry, and about the images in which he expresses himself. We are aware of the deliberation with which he considers an image offered by imagination and emotion. Even the most fantastic conceits, the most grotesque fancies have been selected with care and polished for presentation; the resulting emphasis on their strangeness might well have been intentional.

In spite of his urban sophistication, of course, Marvell still
is that rara avis of his period, a poet of nature for her own sake, even if of nature in a pastoral guise. It is a mysterious green world, and the solution is not salvation. Behind the frailty of Dresden china there is a questioning, a challenge to the mind, not to the faith. In "The Garden" and "Upon Appleton House" in particular we are aware of the almost terrifying indifference of Marvell's nature towards man. He is set upon, ensnared, cosseted or ridiculed, but he is against his will always an intruder in a world that lives independently. There is a fear in Marvell's love of the wood, a fear as old and pagan as the ancient panic fear, and equally ignorant of the divine Omnipresence which gave strength to Herbert's and Vaughan's poetry.

Marvell is of course the author of some very moving devotional poems. There are only a few of them, however, and, as far as we can judge, they all belong to his earlier work. As he grew older, his mind seems to have turned more and more to secular matters. In his dissatisfaction with the contemporary state of affairs he did not try to escape to the world of faith or imagination, but, leaving this world behind, perhaps forever, he turned resolutely to reality, and to political satire. It is tempting to see in this journey from the spiritual world to the world of affairs a foreshadowing of the eighteenth-century turning from the spiritual doubts and perplexities to the tangible world of man.

There is no dramatic break in Marvell's life, no sudden acceptance or loss of faith. His career remains consistently that of a highly intelligent and capable man, remarkable for his freedom from the religious and political passions and prejudices of
the period.

Andrew Marvell was born on 3 March 1621 in Winestead-in-Holderness in Yorkshire, where his father was a clergyman. In 1624 the family moved to Hull where Marvell's father became "Lecturer" at the Holy Trinity church. In 1633 or thereabout Marvell entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where he remained until 1640. He took his B.A., but left before taking his M.A., possibly owing to his father's death. Of the years that followed we know very little. All that we can be certain of is that at the outbreak of the Civil War Marvell left England for his grand tour of the Continent. He visited Holland, France, Italy and Spain; all these travels are touched upon in one way or another in his work. He expressed his dislike of the Dutch in the highly uncomplimentary but obviously well-informed poem "The Character of Holland". The visit to France inspired the short Latin poem on the Louvre, "Inscribenda Luparae", and a real or imaginary incident in Rome is the subject of his satire "Fleckno, an English Priest in Rome". The visit to Spain is recalled only fleetingly, in the lines in "Upon Appleton House":

The World when first created sure
Was such a Table rase and pure.
Or rather such is the Toril,
Ere the Bulls enter at Madril.

Contemporary records tell us that Marvell was a talented and accomplished linguist; certainly he came back to England in 1646 a well-travelled and educated young man. For the four years following his return he was probably living in London. At this time his political views were probably mildly Royalist, as witness
his poem (published in Lovelace's "Lucasta" in 1649) addressed to Richard Lovelace, a Royalist, and also the poem "Upon the Death of Lord Hastings" who was also of the Royalist party (died 1649).

By 1650, however, there had been a change in Marvell's political views, and he seems to have come to regard Cromwell as England's one hope of regaining her strength. Marvell's admiration for Cromwell's character, and at the same time his just appreciation of the King's tragic stature found expression in "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland", an eulogy on Cromwell, in which Charles nevertheless steals the best lines:

... That thence the Royal Actor born
The Tragick Scaffold might adorn:
While round the armed Bands
Did clap their bloody hands.
He nothing common did or mean
Upon that memorable Scene:
But with his keener Eye
The Axes edge did try:
Nor call'd the Gods with vulgar spight
To vindicate his helpless Right,
But bow'd his comely Head,
Down as upon a Bed.

This discrepancy is perhaps symbolical; while Marvell's sympathies were with the tragic figure of Charles I, rationally he was inclining towards Cromwell. We must also remember that Marvell appears to have been remarkably free from the religious passions which rocked England at that time; Grosart records him as saying, somewhat cynically perhaps, that "the Cause was too good to have been fought for". The poem on the death of Tom May, also written in 1650, is definitely Royalist.

1) quoted by Hugh Macdonald in his introduction to The Poems of Andrew Marvell, p. xxix
As he became convinced that Cromwell was the right man for the job of governing England, Marvell identified himself more and more with Cromwell's party. In 1650 or shortly after he took up the post of tutor in foreign languages to Maria, daughter of the Parliamentarian general Fairfax. It is interesting to note, however, that by then Fairfax, who had refused to give his backing to the King's execution and to the unprovoked attack on Scotland, had resigned his command, and was living in retirement at Nun Appleton in Yorkshire. Marvell's respect for Fairfax, expressed in his poems, is indisputable and natural if we remember that an ideal of moral integrity, regardless of personal ambition, was Marvell's criterion by which he was to judge men and politics all his life.

In 1652 or early in 1653 Marvell left the Fairfax household and returned to London to seek a post under the Commonwealth government. Not long after his arrival in London, Marvell succeeded in obtaining the post of tutor to a ward of Cromwell's, William Dutton, who was then living in the house of John Oxenbridge at Eton. Oxenbridge and Marvell became friends, and it was possibly on hearing from Oxenbridge the details of his voyage to the Bermudas that Marvell wrote his lovely little poem on these islands.

By this time Marvell was obviously a persona grata with the government, and it is no surprise to find that his linguistic abilities secured him the post of assistant in the office of Foreign Secretary. After Cromwell's death in 1658 Marvell retained his post for another two years, and at the same time he entered
Parliament as the Member for Hull. Surprisingly enough from the twentieth-century point of view, Marvell kept his seat in the House after the Restoration, until his death. He even used his influence as a Member of Parliament to obtain Milton's release from prison. Moreover, the new government seems to have had no scruples about employing Cromwell's Assistant Secretary on diplomatic missions in 1662, first to Holland and then as secretary to the King's ambassador extraordinary to Moscow. From these travels Marvell returned in 1664/5 and resumed his seat in the House. During the years that followed he wrote his political satires, the first verse he wrote, as far as we know, since the "Poem upon the Death of O.C." in 1658.

In these satirical poems we see that side of Marvell's character which was probably best known to his contemporaries except those few close friends he kept all his life: the fearless, ruthlessly clever, often coarse-spoken enemy of the vice and corruption of the King's court, and sometimes, in spite of professions to the contrary, of the King himself. Yet we note that it is the moral issue, not the political, which occupied Marvell's mind. He remained true to his ideal of political honesty, of moral integrity in public affairs, whichever government he was serving.

Marvell died in 1678. Three years later, in 1681, his Miscellaneous Poems was published. The volume of his political satires, Poems on Affairs of State (probably circulated in manuscript during Marvell's life, and in part published anonymously) was published in 1689, and reprinted several times, but there was no reprint of
the Miscellaneous Poems until 1726. Clearly the contemporary reading public knew and valued Marvell as a political satirist, not as a lyrical poet, perhaps the finest of his time.

His "saeva indignatio" directed against the corruption of the Court has been compared with Swift's whose work Marvell's political pamphlets do indeed resemble. Moral indignation is the key to the whole of Marvell's life, to his pursuit of a civic ideal in the face of catastrophic political changes. Into his efforts to purify the government of England and re-establish her good name abroad Marvell put all his passion, which might, if led into spiritual channels, have made of him a devotional poet comparable to Donne or Herbert.

Although he chose to devote himself fully to his political activities, he seems to have found no difficulty in moving from the world of action and strife to quiet contemplation of beauty. Even if the two worlds are kept in balance by his detached intellect, the very fact that they existed, that Marvell found equal need for both, brings back the old duality of flesh and spirit, of knowledge of the harshness and cruelty of man's life, and of the longing for a beauty so perfect that man might lose himself in it forever, whether it be the beauty of God's invisible presence, or, as in Marvell's case, the tangible yet mysterious beauty of nature.

This strange nature worship seems to have taken the place of Christianity in Marvell's later work. In his fundamental paganism Marvell appears to stand apart from his fellow-poets. It is not
the occasional gay masquerade of the Cavalier poets, but something much deeper, related perhaps to Marvell's devotion to moral rather than spiritual values. There is an emotional as well as intellectual affinity between Marvell and the Latin poets, an affinity emphasized by the polished form and the urbane wit of his verses, which are associated with the classical masters as well as, significantly, with their eighteenth-century neoclassical disciples.

Yet Marvell is a child of his time, even if he seems to have been left unmoved by the turbulent religious passions of the period. The Metaphysical tension, it might perhaps be asserted, lies deeper even than the roots of Christianity; the anguish of the mortal flesh crying Nox est perpetua una dormienda, echoes in Marvell's "But at my back I alwaies hear ..." as much as in Donne's "I have sinned a sin of fear". Brought into consciousness by different trends of thought, the agony of man, mortal like the rest of the creation, but cursed with a memory of deaths and knowledge of his own approaching annihilation, remains equally bitter and acute.

Marvell shares with the other poets of the seventeenth century the extraordinarily sharp realisation of this dualism of the ambitious soul, and of the vulnerable, failing body with its pleasures, and he seeks to express this knowledge by the same means. His vivid sense of the paradoxical, his extravagant, almost grotesque conceits, the flights of his fancy, the taut balance of passion and thought, all these are characteristic features which
we have become accustomed to call Metaphysical. The polished wit, the formal perfection of his verse, the attitude of slightly amused detachment, the increasing partiality for the decoratively artificial, for man-made nature, and, in contrast, for nature as a world of its own making, on the other hand, are characteristic perhaps not so much of Marvell's predecessors as of the eighteenth-century neoclassicists.

Marvell is the strange creature of a changing world, and his poetry bears the marks of the transition. His imagery has the same transitional character. Although he draws on the traditional images familiar to us from the conceits of Donne and others, it is obvious that Marvell prefers less known, more exotic images. When he uses the traditional image, it is often with an untraditional twist which changes entirely the complexion of the image.

So for instance in his images of animals. The traditional image of the lamb is used indirectly in "The Nymph complaining for the death of her Faun", where, as M.C. Bradbrook and M.G. Lloyd-Thomas pointed out in their study of Marvell, the recurring echoes of the Canticles and the emphasis on the lily-like whiteness of the fawn recall the liturgical symbolism of the Agnus Dei:

Among the beds of Lillyes, I
Have sought it oft, where it should lye;
Yet could not, till it self would rise,
Find it, although before mine Eys.
For, in the flaxen Lillies shade,
It, like a bank of Lillies laid.

1) Andrew Marvell, pp. 47-50
Upon the Roses it would feed,
Until its lips ev'n seem'd to bleed:

... But all its chief delight was still
On Roses thus its self to fill:
And its pure virgin Limbs to fold
In whitest sheets of Lillies cold.

We are familiar with the role of the rose and the lily in poems on the wounds of Christ: through them the symbolic identification of the Lamb and the fawn is emphasized even further. The clean-washing fountain of Christ's blood is another stock image of seventeenth-century Passion poetry, and here we find it in a new setting:

Though they should wash their guilty hands
In this warm life-blood, which doth part
From thine, and wound me to the Heart,
Yet would they not be clean; their Stain
Is dy'd in such a Purple Grain.
There is not such another in
The World, to offer for their Sin.

The allusion to Christ's sacrifice in the last two lines is obvious; later on in the poem the sensuous luxuriance of the lines -

O help! O help! I see it faint;
And dye as calmly as a Saint.
See how it weeps. The Tears do come
Sad, slowly dropping like a Gumme,
So weeps the wounded Falsome: so
The holy Frankincense doth flow.
The brotherless Heliades
Melt in such Amber Tears as these.
I in a golden Vial will
Keep these two crystal Tears; ...

is curiously but unmistakably reminiscent of Crashaw's Weeper. Altogether there is a richness of liturgical symbolism in this poem, which seems out of keeping with its subject, at least
if taken at its surface meaning. If the poem is not a rather obscure parable of the love of the Christian Church for Jesus, one may perhaps wonder whether it was not Marvell’s delight in the incongruous and the curious which made him charge this poem with the heavy luxuriance of the Catholic Mass; the same delight that made him expand the lover’s witty speech to his Coy Mistress into a grim reminder of the bleakness of Eternity.

In "Fleckno, an English Priest at Rome" the comparison between Flecknoe taking his manuscript poems out of his bosom, and ... The Pelican at his door hung (which) Picks out the tender bosome to its young.

seems a cruelly ironical use of the emblematic pelican in a satire on a Catholic. But Marvell was fond of the beasts of the emblem book, of the fable and of mythology, which appealed probably to his fantastic imagination. Thus in "Last Instructions to a Painter", Poems on Affairs of State:

And to each other helpless couple moan,
As the sad Tortoise for the Sea does groan.

or in "Clarindon's House-Warming", Poems on Affairs of State:

... While he the Betrayer of England and Flander
Like the King-fisher chuseth to build in the Broom,
And nestles in flames like the Salamander.

or in "Upon Appleton House", LXXXIV:

So when the Shadows laid asleep
From underneath these Banks do creep,
And on the River as it flows
With Eben Shuts begin to close;
The modest Halcyon somes in sight,
Flying betwixt the Day and Night;
And such an horror calm and dumb,
Admiring Nature does benum.
Besides these traditional images of symbolic, emblematic animals, Marvell creates new images of his own, based on his own observations. Yet often in these the grotesque element is just as strong, if not stronger. Marvell seems to view the world of nature round him with the freshness of vision and extravagance of perspective of a young, if rather sophisticated, child. The cows in the meadow seem to him

Such (as) Fleas, ere they approach the Eye,
In Multiplying Glasses Iye.

"Upon Appleton House", LVIII

In the same poem we find the well-known and charming picture of men walking in the tall grass:

And now to the Abyss I pass
Of that unfathomable Grass,
Where Men like Grasshoppers appear,
But Grasshoppers are Gyants there:
They, in their squeaking Laugh, contemn
Us, as we walk more low than them:
And, from the Precipices tall
Of the green spir's, to us do call.

Like Herbert and Vaughan, Marvell identifies himself with nature -

Thus I, easie Philosopher,
Among the Birds and Trees confer:
And little now to make me, wants
Or of the Fowles, or of the Plants.
Give me but Wings as they, and I
Straight floting on the Air shall fly:
Or turn me but, and you shall see
I was but an inverted Tree.

"Upon Appleton House", LXXI

But for Marvell, the easy philosopher, this identification with nature is not an emblem of the Christian's humble approach to God; he enjoys losing himself in the green world. As his eye follows a bird upon the bough, his spirit experiences not an absorption
in the Divine presence, but a liberation. He rejoices in the freedom of the mind roaming at will:

Casting the Bodies Vest aside,
My Soul into the boughs does glide:
There like a Bird it sits, and sings,
Then whets, and combs its silver Wings;
And, till prepar'd for longer flight,
Waves in its Plumes the various Light.

"The Garden", VII

In images of plants the emblematic element is again noticeable. The implications of the recurring images of the lily and the rose in "The Nymph complaining for the death of her Faun" have been mentioned above. Throughout the "Elegy on the Death of Francis Villiers" we find images of plants, both as symbols of mourning and as symbols of a broken life:

But until then, let us young Francis praise:
And plant upon his hearse the bloody bayes,
Which we will water with our welling eyes.

... 

Never was any humane plant that grew
More faire then this, and acceptably new.

Similarly in "A Poem upon the Death of O.C."

So the Flowr with'ring which the Garden crown'd,
The sad Root pines in secret under ground.

... 

So have I seen a Vine, whose lasting Age
Of many a Winter hath surviv'd the rage.
Under whose shady tent Men ev'ry year
At its rich bloods expence their Sorrows cheer,
If some dear branch where it extends its life
Chance to be prun'd by an untimely knife,
The Parent-Tree unto the Grief succeeds,
And through the Wound its vital humours bleeds;

In these lines Cromwell and his daughter are lamented in the symbols of the parent tree and the young branch. In the poem
"Upon the Death of the Lord Hastings" Lord Hastings and his bride are similarly represented:

How Sweet and Verdant would these Lawrels be,  
Had they been planted on that Balsam-tree!

These are of course quite conventional images, however skilfully presented. In "The Coronet" the image of the poet's deeds and thoughts offered to Christ as a garland of flowers is Herbert's rather than Marvell's both in thought and in execution, even in the typical asides:

Through every Garden, every Mead  
I gather flow'rs (my fruits are only flow'rs)  
Dismantling all the fragrant Towers  
That once adorn'd my Shepherdesses head.  
And now when I have summ'd up all my store,  
Thinking (so I my self deceive)  
So rich a Chaplet thence to weave  
As never yet the king of Glory wore:

There are other images in which the simplicity and originality of the thought are matched by the beauty of the expression, as for instance in "Daphnis and Chloe":

Gentler times for Love are ment:  
Who for parting pleasure strain  
Gather Roses in the rain,  
Wet themselves and spoil their Sent.

or in "The Mower's Song":

But these, while I with Sorrow pine,  
Grew more luxurious still and fine;  
That not one Blade of Grass you spy'd,  
But had a Flower on either side;  
When Juliana came, and She  
What I do to the Grass, does to my Thoughts and Me.

The striking quality of these images is their simplicity which is a part of their charm; there are other images in which the sophisticated strain in Marvell's complex nature prevails.
There nature parades in strange and fantastic disguises which please the poet in spite of his protestations against man's interference with nature. He declares that

'Tis all enforc'd; the Fountain and the Grot;
While the sweet Fields do lye forgot:
Where willing Nature does to all dispence
A wild and fragrant Innocence:
And Fauns and Faryes do the Meadows till,
More by their presence than their skill.

"The Mower against Gardens"

Yet the Mower is as little of a countryman as Damon, Thyrsis, Ametas or Daphnis of the other pastoral poems. The "Fauns and Faryes" who till the meadows are creatures of man's imagination. When Marvell exclaims

... turn me but, and you shall see
I was but an inverted Tree.

"Upon Appleton House", LXXI

he is indulging the same fancy, in reverse, as when he was mustering his flowers as a guard of Switzers. In his wanderings in the wood he assumes a number of different amusing disguises. He is a prophet, reading nature's "mystick Book"; covered with ivy and oak-leaves, he moves under "this antick Cope" like "some Great Prelate of the Grove"; he encamps himself behind the trees to fight off the darts of a conquering beauty. Whatever the disguise, he never loses his self, annihilating it in the green shade; his spirit remains his own, roaming freely as his mood takes him.

In this light it is interesting to examine the images of inanimate nature which he employs, endowing them with human thoughts, feelings, actions and relationships, and to realise how many images
of plants and natural features there are among them:

Unthankful Medows, could you so
A fellowship so true forego,
And on your gawdy May-games meet,
While I lay trodden under feet?

"The Mower's Song"

Onely sometimes a flutt'ring Breez
Discourses with the breathing Trees;
Which in their modest Whispers name
Those Acts that swell'd the Cheek of Fame.

"Upon the Hill and Grove at Bill-borow"

He grafts upon the Wild the Tame:
That the uncertain and adul'trate fruit
Might put the Palate in dispute.
His green Seraglio has its Eunuchs too;
Lest any Tyrant him out-doe.
And in the Cherry he does Nature vex,
To procreate without a Sex.

"The Mower against Gardens"

Bind me ye Woodbines in your 'twines,
Curle me about ye gadding Vines,
And Oh so close your Circles lace,
That I may never leave this Place:
But, lest your Fetters prove too weak,
Ere I your Silken Bondage break,
Do you, O Brambles, chain me too,
And courteous Briars nail me through.

"Upon Appleton House" LXXVII

The behaviour of the plants and of the countryside is human,
very often directed towards or against man. Marvell, like his
Nature, "dislikes emptiness" and remains always the centre,
visible or invisible of his little world.

Besides such living images of inanimate nature, Marvell
employs occasionally the eighteenth-century device of personifica-
tion; with startling effect in "The Definition of Love":
My Love is of a birth as rare
As 'tis for object strange and high:
It was begotten by despair
Upon Impossibility.

Magnanimous Despair alone
Could show me so divine a thing,
Where feeble Hope could ne'er have flown
But vainly flapt its Tinsel Wing.

and more conventionally in "The Garden":

Fair quiet, have I found thee here,
And Innocence thy Sister dear:
Mistaken long, I sought you then
In busie Companies of Men.

and in the figures of the Thames and the Medway in "Last Instructions to a Painter", Poems on Affairs of State.

Marvell's images of celestial bodies also show a typical change from the kind employed by his predecessors. There are no images symbolising God or Christ as the true sun; in the occasional poems we find instead the conventional identification of the subject of the eulogy with the sun or the moon. The sun image recurs in "The First Anniversary of the Government of O. C.", e.g.:

Cromwell alone with greater Vigour runs,
(Sun-like) the Stages of succeeding Suns:
And still the Day which he doth next restore,
Is the just Wonder of the Day before.
Cromwell alone doth with new Lustre spring,
And shines the Jewel of the yearly Ring.

As if to emphasize his interest in man against the background of nature, Marvell uses surprisingly often images of stars influencing the fate of mankind, as for instance in "Mourning":

You, that decipher out the Fate
Of humane Off-spring from the Skies,
What mean these Infants which of late
Spring from the Starrs of Chlora's Eyes?
or in "The Definition of Love":

Therefore the Love which us doth bind,
But Fate so enviously debarrs,
Is the Conjunction of the Mind,
And Opposition of the Stars.

or in "A Poem upon the Death of O.C."

He without noise still travell'd to his End,
As silent Suns to meet the Night descend.
The Stars that for him fought had only pow'r
Left to determine now his fatal Hour;
Which, since they might not hinder, yet they cast
To chuse it worthy of his Glories past.

He is also interested in those ill-boding stars that touch the earth and scourge mankind:

Ye Country Comets, that portend
No War, nor Princes funeral,
Shining unto no higher end
Then to presage the Grasses fall;

"The Mower to the Glo-Worms"

Maria such, and so doth hush
The World, and through the Ev'ning rush.
No new-born Comet such a Train
Draws through the Skie, nor Star new-slain.
For Straight those giddy Rockets fail,
Which from the putrid Earth exhale,
But by her Flames, in Heaven try'd,
Nature is wholly vitrifi'd.

"Upon Appleton House", LXXXVI

It is, perhaps, not entirely fanciful to think that through such images the closeness of the relationship of the universe and the earth is emphasized.

In images of weather showers are tears, dew is youth or early innocence, winds and storm the anguish of love, and thunder and lightning the Protector's ire or the storm of battle; all these are images frequently used by contemporary poets. Again in images of the sea its changes and storms are conventional symbols
of the upheavals of emotion, used with peculiar force in that strange poem "The Unfortunate Lover", which is almost an emblem picture painted in words, of the unhappy lover tossed on the sea of his passions:

'Twas in a Shipwrack, when the Seas Rul'd, and the Winds did what they please,
That my poor Lover floting lay,
And, e're brought forth, was cast away:
Till at last the master-Wave
Upon the Rock his Mother drave;
And there she split against the Stone,
In a Cesarian Section.

In "The Character of Holland" and in "The First Anniversary of the Government under O.C.", in a similar way, though on a larger scale, he pictures the upheavals and changes of state:

The Common wealth doth by its losses grow;
And, like its own Seas, only Ebbs to flow.

"The Character of Holland"

So have I seen at Sea, when whirling Winds,
Hurry the Bark, but more the Seamens minds,
Who with mistaken Course salute the Sand,
And threatening Rocks misapprehend for Land;
While baleful Tritons to the shipwreck guide;
And Corspoms along the Tacklings slide.
The Passengers all wearyed out before,
Giddy, and wishing for the fatal Shore;
Some lusty Mates, who, with more careful Eye
Counted the Hours, and evry Star did spy,
The Helm does from the artless Steersman strain,
And doubles back unto the safer Main.
What though a while they grumble discontent,
Saving himself he does their loss prevent.

"The First Anniversary"

Not all of Marvell's images of the sea, however, preserve this earnest conventional symbolism; in a number of very delightful images in "Upon Appleton House" Marvell's affection for the absurd once more wins. The green meadow becomes a deep sea of grass, and
the courage of the diving mowers is described with an amusing mock seriousness:

To see Men through this Meadow Dive,
We wonder how they rise alive.
As, under Water, none does know
Whether he fall through it or go.
But, as the Marriners that sound,
And show upon their Lead the Ground,
They bring up Flow'rs to be seen,
And prove they've at the Bottom been.

"Upon Appleton House", XLVII

When after this 'tis pil'd in Cocks,
Like a calm Sea it shews the Rocks:
We wondring in the River near
How Boats among them safely steer.

"Upon Appleton House", LV

Images of domestic surroundings had been characteristic of Metaphysical poetry. In Marvell's work, although not so frequent as, say, the images of plants, these domestic images form an interesting group. He employs largely the most conventional images only, perhaps not entirely typical of Metaphysical poetry: the bed, the lamp, the door, the bell, the mirror. Not as startlingly original in themselves as Herbert's sink or the pulley, or Crashaw's walking baths, Marvell's images of domestic objects are characteristic of an accomplished urban poet. The mirror is, typically, a favourite image of his:

They (the cattle) seem within the polisht Grass
A Landskip drawen in Looking-Glass,
And shrunk in the huge Pasture show
As Spots, so shap'd, on Faces do.

"Upon Appleton House", LVIII

See in what wanton harmless folds
It (the river Denton) ev'ry where the Meadow holds;
And its yet muddy back doth lick,
Till as a Chrystal Mirrour slick;
Where all things gaze themselves, and doubt
If they be in it or without.

"Upon Appleton House", LXXX

Like polish'd Mirrors, so his steely Brest
Had ev'ry figure of her woes exprest;
And with the damp of her last Gasp's obscur'd,
Had drawn such stains as were not to be cur'd.
Fate could not either reach with single stroke,
But the dear Image fled the Mirrour broke.

"A Poem upon the Death of O.C."

Marvell uses also the symbol of the bed for the sleep of death:

... But bow'd his comely Head,
Down as upon a Bed.

"An Horatian Ode"

... And, on the flaming Plank, so rests his Head,
As one, that's warm'd himself and gone to Bed.

"Last Instructions to a Painter"

The traditional image of the narrow door to heaven also appears:

... But all things are composed here
Like Nature, orderly and near:
In which we the Dimensions find
Of that more sober Age and Mind,
When larger sized Men did stoop
To enter at a narrow loop;
As practising, in doors so strait,
To strain themselves through Heavens Gate.

"Upon Appleton House", IV

To Fairfax's daughter the meadows and gardens are a drawing-room:

Therefore what first She on them spent,
They gratefully again present.
The Meadows Carpets where to tread;
The Garden Flow'rs to Crown Her Head;
And for a Glass the limpid Brook,
Where She may all her Beautyes look;
But, since She would not have them seen,
The Wood about Her draws a Screen.

"Upon Appleton House", LXXXVIII
The Lord decorates the Bermudas like a festive room for his faithful:

He hangs in shades the Orange bright,
Like golden Lamps in a green Night.

"Bermudas"

The glow-worms serve as lamps to the nightingale:

Ye living Lamps, by whose dear light
The Nightingale does sit so late,
And studying all the Summer-night,
Her matchless Songs does meditate;

"The Mower to the Glo-Worms"

The fountain sings like a glass bell:

Near this, a Fountaines liquid Bell
Tinkles within the concave Shell.

"Clorinda and Damon"

In these latter examples of a mild urban invasion of nature Marvell's charm is epitomised; the startling character of the conceit is softened yet underlined by the gentle, almost humorous fantasy. Possibly all these images of an urban domesticity are less unusual in Marvell's poems about people than they would be in Crashaw's, Vaughan's or Herbert's devotional poetry.

In the images of food and drink we miss the traditional symbols of Christ's blood as the wine and his body as the bread; the feast of divine love, so frequently the theme of Marvell's predecessors, occurs but once, in an early poem, "A Dialogue between the Resolved Soul, and Created Pleasure", where it is contrasted with earthly sensuous pleasures:

Pleasure.
Welcome the Creations Guest,
Lord of Earth, and Heavens Heir.
Lay aside that Warlike Crest,
And of Nature's banquet share:
Where the Souls of fruits and flow'rs
Stand prepar'd to heighten yours.

Soul.
I sup above, and cannot stay
To bait so long upon the way.

In "The Unfortunate Lover" the passions in the shape of
cormorants feed upon their victim like the mythical eagle on
Prometheus:

They fed him up with Hopes and Air,
Which soon digested to Despair.
And as one Corm'rant fed him, still
Another on his Heart did bill.
Thus while they famish him, and feast,
He both consumed, and increast:

But this dramatic image is later in the same poem commented
upon in an almost satirical manner, which is typical of Marvell:

And all he saies, a Lover drest
In his own Blood does relish best.

The feast of love, a traditional image of love poetry, is
hinted at mockingly in "Daphnis and Chloe", that clever satire
on pastoral poems:

Rather I away will pine
In a manly stubbornness
Than be fatted up express
For the Canibal to dine.

In the Poems on Affairs of State the images of food are,
naturally enough, more full-blooded and coarse-grained:

Straight Judges, Priests, Bishops, true sons of the
Seal,
Sinners, Governors, Farmers, Banquers, Patentees,
Bring in the whole Milk of a year at a meal,
As all Cheddar Dairys club to the incorporate Cheese.

"Clarindon's House-Warming"
In Chair, he (the Speaker) smoking sits like Master-Cook,
And a Poll-Bill does like his Apron look.
Well was he skill'd to season any question,
And make a sauce fit for Whitehall's digestion;
Whence ev'ry day, the Palat more to tickle;
Court-mushrumps ready are sent in pickle.

"Last Instructions to a Painter"

In images of clothes and fashions we find Marvell at his ease, displaying with pleasure his knowledge of a familiar world:

With strange perfumes he did the Roses taint.
And Flow'rs themselves were taught to paint.
The Tulip, white, did for complexion seek;
And learn'd to interline its cheek.

"The Mower against Gardens"

For now the Waves are fal'n and dry'd,
And now the Meadows fresher dy'd;
Whose Grass, with moist colour dasht,
Seems as green Silks but newly washt.

"Upon Appleton House", LXXIX

Yet your own Face shall at you grin,
Thorough the Black-bag (mask) of your skin.

"Upon Appleton House", LXXXII

Their Fancies like our bushy Points appear,
The Poets tag them, we for fashion wear.

"On Mr. Milton's Paradise Lost"

Images based on financial matters are very few, and of a
genral, conventional nature, such as the price paid for joy, the
riches of love, the debt of love, of life, as for instance in

"Eyes and Tears":

Two Tears, which Sorrow long did weigh
Within the Scales of either Eye,
And then paid out in equal Poise,
Are the true price of all my Joyes.

or in "The Match":

...
So we alone the happy rest,  
Whilst all the World is poor,  
And have within our Selves possesst  
All Love's and Nature's store.

Such images occur more frequently in what are presumably Marvell's early poems, in which he depended more on the current conventions of love poetry.

Some of his legal images, on the other hand, display in casual references a knowledge of the English law, not surprising perhaps in a Member of Parliament and a high government official. Thus in "The Nymph complaining for the death of her Faun" Marvell refers to the old Anglo-Saxon law of deodand:

    Ev'n Beasts must be with justice slain;  
    Else Men are made their Deodands.

There are also more conventional images, as that of the legacy of love in "The Unfortunate Lover":

    A num'rous fleet of Corm'rants black,  
    That sail'd insulting o're the Wrack,  
    Receiv'd into their cruel Care,  
    Th' unfortunate and abject Heir:  
    Guardians most fit to entertain  
    The Orphan of the Hurricane.

or in "Daphnis and Chloe":

    Till Love in her Language breath'd  
    Words she never spake before;  
    But then Legacies no more  
    To a dying Man bequeath'd.

The imprisonment of the soul in the body, a favourite image of seventeenth-century poetry (still echoing in Pope's "Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady") is the central motif in "A Dialogue between the Soul and the Body":

    O who shall, from this Dungeon, raise  
    A Soul inslav'd so many ways?
With Bolts of Bones, that fetter'd stands
In Feet; and manacled in Hands.
Here blinded with an Eye; and there
Deaf with the drumming of an Ear.
A Soul hung up, as 'twere, in Chains
Of Nerves, and Arteries, and Veins.
Tortur'd, besides each other part,
In a vain Head, and double heart.

Marvell, however, reverses the image, and lets the body speak as well:

O who shall me deliver whole
From bonds of this Tyrannic Soul?
Which, stretcht upright, impales me so,
That mine own Precipice I go;
And warms and moves this needless Frame:
(A Fever could but do the same.)
And, wanting where its spight to try,
Has made me live to let me dye.
A Body that could never rest,
Since this ill Spirit it possesst.

The images of war fall roughly into two groups. On the one hand there are the images of warfare as traditional symbols of the struggle of the spirit and the flesh, for instance in "A Dialogue between the Resolved Spirit, and Created Pleasure", with echoes from St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, Vi, 1617:

Courage, my Soul, now learn to wield
The weight of thine immortal Shield.
Close on thy Head thy Helmet bright.
Ballance thy Sword against the Fight.
See where an Army, strong as fair,
With silken Banners spreads the air.
Now, if thou be'st that thing Divine,
In this day's Combat let it shine:
And shew that Nature wants an Art
To conquer one resolved Heart.

or as symbols of the war of love:

And Tyrant Love his brest does ply
With all his wing'd Artillery.
Whilst he, betwixt the Flames and Waves,
Like Ajax, the mad Tempest braves.

"The Unfortunate Lover"
The war is fought with all the formality of a medieval combat:

This in the only Banneret
That ever Love created yet:
Who though, by the Malignant Starrs,
Forced to live in Storms and Warrs:
Yet dying leaves a Perfume here,
And Musick within every Ear:

"The Unfortunate Lover"

O let me in time compound,
And parly with those conquering Eyes;
Ere they have try'd their force to wound,
Ere, with their glancing wheels, they drive
In Triumph over Hearts that strive,
And them that yield but more despise.

"The Picture of little T.C. in a Prospect of Flowers"

In the second group are martial images in which Marvell gives full play to his fancy. Such images occur particularly in "Upon Appleton House" where the pastoral scene of the garden and meadow is transformed in the poet's imagination into a military parade ground or a grassy battlefield, both delightfully fanciful and unreal:

XXXVII
When in the East the Morning Ray
Hangs out the Colours of the Day,
The Bee through these known Allies hums,
Beating the Dian with its Drumms.
Then Flow'rs their drowsie Ey'lids raise,
Their Silken Ensings each displayes,
And dries its Pan yet dank with Dew,
And fills its Flask with Odours new.

XXXVIII
These, as their Governour goes by,
In fragrant Vollyes they let fly:
And to salute their Governess
Again as great a charge they press:
None for the Virgin Nymph; for She
Seems with the Flow'rs a Flow'r to be.
And think so still! though not compare
With Breath so sweet, or Cheek so faire.
XXXIX
Well Shot ye Firemen! Oh how sweet,
And round your equal Fires do meet;
Whose shrill report no Ear can tell,
But Echoes to the Eye and smell.
See how the Flow'rs, as at Parade,
Under their Colours stand displayed:
Each Regiment in order grows,
That of the Tulip Pinke and Rose.

XLII
Unhappy! shall we never more
That sweet Militia restore,
When Gardens only had their Towrs,
And all the Garrisons were Flowrs,
When Roses only Arms might bear,
And Men did rosi e Garlands wear?
Tulips, in several Colours barr'd,
Were then Switzers of our Guard.

It is a somewhat escapist world, with the paraphernalia of war turned into ornamental toys. But in the massacre of the haymaking the same fancy is twisted more cruelly:

LIII
The Mower now commands the Field;
In whose new Traverse seemeth wrought
A Camp of Battail newly fought:
Where, as the Meads with Hay, the Plain
Eyes quilted ore with Bodies slain:
The Women that with forks it fling,
Do represent the Pil laging.

LIV
And now the careless Victors play,
Dancing the Triumphs of the Hay;
Where every T'owers wholesome Heat
Smells like an Alexanders sweat.

Most light-hearted of all there is the mock-heroic battle of Sir William Fairfax with the nuns:

Some to the Breach against their Foes
Their Wooden Saints in vain oppose.
Another bolder stands at push
With their old Holy-Water Brush.
While the disjointed Abess threads
The gingling Chain-shot of her Beads.
But their lowd'st Cannon were their Lungs;
And sharpest Weapons were their Tongues.

"Upon Appleton House", XXXII

Marvell was abroad during most of the civil war; yet the glamour of army discipline and the sad prospect of a battlefield seem to have kept a strong grip on his imagination, even if in his wilful fancy he saw them represented, and perhaps a little ridiculed, in the innocent pictures of the garden and the field.

Images of royalty are very few in his poetry, even in the love poems where they might well be expected to occur frequently. Clearly Marvell's imagination was not attracted by the images of kingship, not even by its visual splendour, for in the few images of royalty which he uses there is very little detail:

Thus as Kingdoms, frustrating
Other Titles to their Crown,
In the cradle drown their King,
So all Forraign Claims to drowm,

So, to make all Rivals vain,
Now I crown thee with my Love:
Crown me with thy Love again,
And we shall both Monarchs prove.

"Young Love"

For Fate with jealous Eye does see
Two perfect Loves; nor lets them close:
Their union would her ruine be,
And her Tyrannick pow'r depose.

"The Definition of Love"

Similarly the images of religion and rites play but a small part in Marvell's imagery, and appear mostly in the love poems where Love's shrine and Love's sacrifice are part of the traditional pattern, for instance in "Young Love":

Love as much the snowy Lamb
Or the wanton Kid does prize,
As the lusty Bull or Ram,
For his morning Sacrifice.

or in "Clorinda and Damon":

C. Seest thou that unfrequented Cave?

Fire, and light, too, are not of the divine, but of the profane devotion:

The sparkling Glance that shoots Desire,
Drench'd in these Waves, does lose its fire.

"Eyes and Tears"

And while thy willing Soul transpires
At every pore with instant Fires,
Now let us sport us while we may;

"To his Coy Mistress"

Thus all his fewel did unite
To make one fire high:
None ever burn'd so hot, so bright;
And Celia that am I.

"The Match"

Marvell, who in so many ways breaks away from the Metaphysical convention, seems to be turning back to it in his use of images based on medieval beliefs and the learned theories of his day; we find in his work allusions to the microcosm and macrocosm:

'Tis not, what once it was, the World;
But a rude heap together hurl'd;
All negligently overthrown,
Gulfes, Deserts, Precipices, Stone.
Your lesser World contains the same.
But in a more decent Order tame;
Your Heaven's Center, Nature's Lap,
And Paradise's only Map.

"Upon Appleton House", LXXXVI
to the music of the spheres:
While indefatigable Cromwell hyes,
And cuts his way still nearer to the Skyes,
Learning a Musique in the Region clear,
To tune this lower to that higher Sphere.

"The First Anniversary of the Government under O.C."

to the four elements:

... Where still the Earth is moist, the Air still dry;
The jarring Elements no discord know,
Fewel and Rain together kindly grow;
And coolness there, with heat doth never fight,
This only rules by day, and that by Night.

"On the Victory obtained by Blake"

to the theory of atoms:

... While into a fabrick the Presents would muster;
As by hook and by crook the world cluster'd of Atome.

"Clarindon's House-Warming",
Poems on Affairs of State

or to the "Vulgar Error" mentioned by Sir Thomas Browne, "That all Animals of the Land, are in their kind in the Sea":

The Mind, that Ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find;
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other Worlds, and other Seas;

"The Garden"

Here it would seem that Marvell makes use of beliefs which
must have become somewhat old-fashioned in his day. But if we
examine these images, particularly those based more on popular
superstitions than on medieval philosophical beliefs, we realise
that Marvell chooses them for their poetical value, or even for
their fantastic, grotesque character which appeals to his imagi-
nation. Hence the reference to the magical fern seed that makes
men invisible:
Or the Witch that midnight wakes
For the Fern, whose magick Weed
In once minute casts the Seed,
And invisible him makes.

"Daphnis and Chloe"

to the strange belief that eels breed from horses' hair:

"Upon Appleton House", LX

Let others tell the Paradox,
How Eels now bellow in the Ox;

"Upon Appleton House", LXVII

to the tradition according to which the stork leaves one of his young behind as a gift to the owner of the house that had sheltered his nest:

The Heron from the Ashes top,
The eldest of its young lets drop,
As if it Stork-like did pretend
That Tribute to its Lord to send.

"Upon Appleton House", LXXXVII

The antipodes wear their shoes upon their heads:

But now the Salmon-Fisher's moist
Their Leathern Boats begin to hoist;
And, like Antipodes in Shoes,
Have shod their Heads in their Canoos.

"Upon Appleton House", LXVII

How Tortoise-like, but not so slow,
These rational Amphibii go?
Let's in: for the dark Hemisphere
Does now like one of them appear.

"An Horatian Ode upon Cromwel's Return from Ireland"
In images of sickness and medicine, although still attracted by the strange, even the horrible -like leprosy- Marvell shows also a surprising knowledge of the practical prescriptions even of those of the country herbalist:

While, going home, the Ev'ning sweet
In cowslip-water bathes my feet.

... 

Alas! said He, these hurts are slight
To those that dye by Loves despight.
With Shepherds-purse, and Clowns-all-heal,
The Blood I stanch, and Wound I seal.
Only for him no Cure is found,
Whom Juliana's Eyes do wound.

"Damon the Mower"

Translators learn of her: but stay I slide
Down into Error with the Vulgar tide;
Women must not teach here: the Doctor doth
Stint them to Cawdles, Almond-milk and Broth.

"To his Worthy Friend Doctor Witty"

Possibly it was its quaint, out-of-the-way quality, too, that attracted Marvell to heraldry, but surely the visual value of this highly formalised code was as much an attraction as the ancient terms. There is a faint tinge of irony in Marvell's use of heraldic imagery:

This is the only Banneret
That ever Love created yet;

... 

And he in Story only rules,
In a Field Sable a Lover Gules.

"The Unfortunate Lover"

I have a grassy Scutcheon spy'd,
Where Flora blazons all her pride.

"Clorinda and Damon"
And thus, ye Meadows, which have been
Companions of my thoughts more green,
Shall now the Heraldry become
With which I shall adorn my Tomb;

"The Mower's Song"

At times Marvell goes back to the emblem books, again to
borrow a visual effect - to recall the genealogical tree:

The double Wood of ancient Stocks
Link'd in so thick, an Union locks,
It like two Pedigrees appears,
On one hand Fairfax, th' other Veres:
Of whom though many fell in War,
Yet more to Heaven shooting are:
And, as they Natures Cradle deckt,
Will in green Age her Hearse expect.

"Upon Appleton House", LXII
to poke fun at the elaborate symbolism of the emblem book itself:

I sought his Lodging; which is at the Sign
Of the sad Pelican; Subject divine
For Poetry: There three Stair-Cases high,
Which signifies his triple property, ...

"Fleckno, an English Priest at Rome"
to sketch in a short phrase the picture of Fame blowing her
trumpet:

Paint her with Oyster Lip, and breath of Fame, ...

"Last Instructions to a Painter",
Poems on Affairs of State

While a consummate artist of the word, Marvell was obviously
very sensitive to visual images. Hence his interest in colours.
His love of the "amorous green" is well known, but although
green predominates in his colour scheme, it is by no means the
only colour he notices. In the elegy "Upon the Death of Lord
Hastings" there is the brilliantly coloured picture of the
mourning Hymeneus "Who for sad Purple, tears his Saffron Coat."
From the "Bermudas" we remember the glowing lines:

He hangs in shades the Orange bright,
Like golden Lamps in a green Night.

Nevertheless green remains the colour which had a hypnotic quality for Marvell, and seemed to epitomise for him an enveloping peace, and happiness and youth, as in the following lines:

Alas, how pleasant are their dayes
With whom the Infant Love yet playes!
Sorted by pairs, they still are seen
By Fountains cool, and Shadows green.

"The Unfortunate Lover"

My Mind was once the true survey
Of all these Meadows fresh and gay;
And in the greenness of the Grass
Did see its Hopes as in a Glass;

... And thus, ye Meadows, which have been
Companions of my thoughts more green, ...

"The Mower's Song"

and, most famous of all:

No white nor red was ever seen
So am'rous as this lovely green.

...

... Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other Worlds, and other Seas;
Annihilating all that's made
To a green Thought in a green Shade.

"The Garden"

His images of jewels, on the other hand, although not entirely lacking in detail, have very rarely any colour in them, almost as if Marvell, while sensitive to the brilliance and splendour of jewels, failed to appreciate any colours except those that surrounded him in the garden:
... And does in the Pomgranates close,
Jewels more rich than Ormus show's.

"Bermudas"

The brotherless Heliades
Melt in such Amber Tears as these.
I in a golden Vial will
Keep these two crystal Tears; and fill
It till it do o'reflow with mine.

"The Nymph complaining for the
death of her Faun"

The stupid Fishes hang, as plain
As Flies in Chrystal overt'ane.

"Upon Appleton House", LXXXV

Round the transparent Fire about him glows,
As the clear Amber on the Bee does close:

"Last Instructions to a Painter",
Poems on Affairs of State

Images of music, although not outstanding either in number or
in originality, offer nevertheless some good examples of the
conceit, perhaps with a touch of satire at times, as in the
following lines from "Fleckno, an English Priest at Rome":

Now as two Instruments, to the same key
Being tun'd by Art, if the one touched be,
The other opposite as soon replies,
Mov'd by the Air and hidden Sympathies;
So while he with his gouty Fingers craules
Over the Lute, his murmuring Belly calls,
Whose hungry Guts to the same straightness twin'd
In Echo to the trembling Strings repin'd.

or in "Upon Appleton House", LII:

And now your Orphan Parents Call
Sounds your untimely Funeral.
Death-Trumpets creak in such a Note,
And 'tis the Sourdine in their Throat.

As with most Metaphysical poets, except perhaps Vaughan, in
Marvell's images of perfumes the heavy scent of incense predominates.
It is interesting to note that Marvell usually translates the sensation into visual terms:

So weeps the wounded Balsome: so
The Holy Frankincense doth flow.

"The Nymph complaing for the
death of her Faun"

The Incense was to Heaven dear,
Not as a Perfume, but a Tear.

"Eyes and Tears"

While the sweet Fields do lye forgot:
Where willing Nature does to all dispence
A wild and fragrant Innocence:

"The Mower against Gardens"

Sensitive to visual pleasures, Marvell naturally shows an interest in the arts. In "Musicks Empire" music is compared to mosaic:

Then Musick, the Mosaque of the Air,
Did of all these a solemn noise prepare:

The mown meadow becomes Sir Peter Lely's canvass:

... A levell'd space, as smooth and plain,
As Clothes for Lilly stretcht to stain.

"Upon Appleton House", LVI

The Mexican paintings in feathers seem to have caught Marvell's fancy, as he refers to them twice:

Out of these scatter'd Sibyls Leaves
Strange Prophecies my Phancy weaves:
And in one History consumes,
Like Mexique Paintings, all the Plumes.
What Rome, Greece, Palestine, ere said
I in this light Mosaick read.

"Upon Appleton House", LXXIII

But if to match our Crimes thy skill presumes,
As th' Indians, draw our Luxury in Plumes.

"Last Instructions to a Painter"
Marvell is interested in sculpture as well:

... This Basso Relievo of a Man, ...

"Fleckno, an English Priest at Rome"

His shape exact, which the bright flames infold,
Like the Sun's Statue stands of burnish'd Gold.

"Last Instructions to a Painter",
Poems on Affairs of State

Architecture, too, had a great attraction for him, particularly the business of planning and designing, which appealed perhaps to his sense of form and proportion. Images based on the architect's work are surprisingly numerous, and show Marvell's sympathetic insight:

Within this sober Frame expect
Work of no Forrain Architect;
That unto Caves the Quarries drew,
And Forrests did to Pastures hew;
Who of his great Design in pain
Did for a Model vault his Brain,
Whose Columnes should so high be rais'd
To arch the Brows that on them gaz'd.

"Upon Appleton House", I

'Twas Heav'n would not that his Pow'r should cease,
But walk still middle betwixt War and Peace;
Choosing each Stone, and poysing every weight,
Trying the Measures of the Bredth and Height;
Here pulling down, and there erecting New,
Founding a firm State by Proportions true.

"The First Anniversary of the Government under O.C."

The theatre is also represented in Marvell's imagery, far more fully than in any other Metaphysical poet, introducing a deliberate elegant artificiality. There is a variety of images ranging from the masque:
While Nature to his Birth presents
This masque of quarelling Elements;
...

And now, when angry Heaven would
Behold a spectacle of Blood,
Fortune and He are call'd to play
At sharp before it all the day:

"The Unfortunate Lover"

or the revolving stage:

No Scene that turns with Engines strange
Does oftner then these Meadows change.

"Upon Appolton House", XLIX

the performance of a tragedy:

That thence the Royal Actor born
The Tragick Scaffold might adorn:
While round the armed Bands
Did clap their bloody hands.

"An Horatian Ode upon
Cromwel's Return from Ireland"

to the puppet-show:

What can be the Mistery why Charing Cross
This five moneths continues still blinded with board?
Dear Wheeler impart, for wee're all at a loss
Unless Puchinello be to be restor'd.
'Twere to Scaramuchio too great disrespect
To Limitt his troop to this Theatre small,
Besides the injustice it were to eject
The Mimick so legally seiz'd of Whitehall.

"The Statue at Charing Cross",
Poems on Affairs of State

Naturally, his reading gave Marvell the material for a number
of images. His thorough knowledge of the Scriptures was recognised
by his contemporaries, and he employed the imagery, if not the
diction, of the Bible in his secular poetry as well:
Such did the Manna's sacred Dew destil;
White, and intire, though congeal'd and chill.
Congeal'd on Earth, but does, dissolving, run
Into the Glories of th' Almighty Sun.

"On a Drop of Dew"

The tawny Mowers enter next;
Who seem like Israelites to be,
Walking on foot through a green Sea.
To them the Grassy Deeps divide,
And crowd a Lane on either Side.

"Upon Appleton House", XLIX

But I, retiring from the Flood,
Take Sanctuary in the Wood;
And, while it lasts, my self immark
In this yet green, yet growing Ark;
Where the first Carpenter might best
Fit Timber for his Keel have Prest.
And where all Creatures might have shares,
Although in Armies, not in Paires.

"Upon Appleton House", LIX

This Basso Relievo of a Man,
Who as a Camel tall, yet easly can
The Needles Eye thread without any stich,
(His only impossible to be rich) ...

"Fleckno, an English Priest at Rome"

The comic discrepancy between the solemnity of the biblical images and the slightness of the subject in most of these images is too clever to be accidental, and illuminates Marvell's essential secularity. Equally illuminating is Marvell's use of classical references. He employs classical mythology with lightness and grace, and shows a knowledge of Greek institutions as well, a knowledge less often encountered in contemporary poetry:

Therefore the Democratick Stars did rise,
And all that Worth from hence did Ostracize.

"Upon the Death of Lord Hastings"
The Gods, that mortal Beauty chase,
Still in a Tree did end their race.
Apollo hunted Daphne so,
Only that She might Laurel grow.
And Pan did after Syrinx speed,
Not as a nymph, but for a Reed.

"The Garden"

... Then our Amphion issues out and sings,
And once he struck, and twice, the pow'rfu1 Strings.
The Commonwealth then first together came,
And each one enter'd in the willing Frame;

"The First Anniversary of the Government under O.C."

Just Heav'n Thee, like Tiresias, to requite,
Rewards with Prophesie thy loss of Sight.

"On Mr. Milton's Paradise Lost"

But his affinity with the classical poets manifests itself
most clearly and fully in his pastoral poetry where even if the
sentiment is Christian (as in "Clorinda and Damon" and "Thyris
and Dorinda") it is expressed in a convention which is faultlessly
classicist. In these poems, too, Marvell's art is linked with
the Latinising tradition of the school of Johnson and Herrick,
and, by-passing Dryden who did not relish Marvell much, with the
eighteenth-century pastorals.

A characteristic Marvellian trick is his punning, the
literary man's joke. It appealed to his sense of humour, and to
his sensitivity to words, the trained sensitivity of a professional
linguist. The puns are scattered throughout his poems, serious and
light-hearted alike.

... Our Civill Wars have lost the Civick crowne.

"To his noble friend Mr. Richard Lovelace"
Cease Tempter. None can chain a mind
Whom this sweet Chordage cannot bind.

"A Dialogue between the Resolved Soul,
and Created Pleasure"

... And though within one Cell so narrow pent,
He'd Stanza's enough for a whole Appartement.

(stanza in Italian = room)

"Fleckno, an English Priest at Rome"

That Bay they enter, which unto them owes,
The noblest wreaths, that Victory bestows.

"On the Victory obtained by Blake"

The puns, Marvell's verbal jokes, are as characteristic of
him as his fantastic conceits, and are chosen with equal delibe-
ration.

Even his most extravagant conceits impress us as a deliberate
artistic choice. Marvell uses his images as if to emphasize man's
position in the world, strange, grotesque, almost comical. He
sees the human existence, not softened by the light of a beyond,
but lightened by the philosopher's wry amusement, sometimes by
outright laughter. Herbert, Vaughan and Crashaw carry us away
by the strength and passion of their faith; Marvell by the
brilliance of his art and by his intellect. He sees the joke
of human existence and he laughs, creating out of this strange
tragedy of body and soul an enchanting fantastic comedy in
which thought and feeling in one moment meet. His sense of
humour is perhaps the most distinctive characteristic which sets
him apart from the other Metaphysical poets. It often manifests
itself in a way more subtle than the clever punning; we have had
occasion before to note Marvell's use of some of the extrav- 
vagant conceits which in his hands become a delicate parody 
of themselves.

It is fitting that Marvell should be best remembered by 
his "Coy Mistress". Its jewel-like perfection with the logical 
transition from a witty play to a passionate statement of the 
plight of human existence is the best formulation of Marvell's 
credo of the glory of life, and of the determination to assert 
himself as an individual and as the master of his fate even at 
the cost of self-destruction:

Thus, though we cannot make our Sun 
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

His answer to the riddle of human existence which had never 
ceased to haunt Metaphysical poetry, neglects the Christian 
solution, preferring, significantly, a human relationship and 
the consummation of experience.

He still uses the form perfected by the Metaphysicals, the 
argumentative dramatic structure, often in the form of a dia-
logue, and the bold, startling conceit. But for Marvell who 
chose the secular, there was no need to seek to establish the 
link between high and low, between heaven and earth. His aim 
was to present and to emphasize the beauty of this our world 
of wonders, the entrancing fantasy of reality and the strange 
affinities and friendships between man and nature.

We have noted Marvell's preoccupation with the grotesque, 
the amusing and the fanciful, and his lack of interest in those 
homely images used so well by Herbert and others. Marvell sees
his paradise on earth, and instead of singing the Lord's praise
he seeks to extoll the greatness of the individual man: the
characters of Fairfax, Cromwell, and, somewhat against his will,
Charles I, fire his imagination to create poems far above the
usual level of occasional laudatory poems. If the Metaphysical
tension was the *raison d'être* of Metaphysical poetry, and without
the dichotomy of heaven and earth collapse was inevitable,
Marvell saved his poetry from the degeneration of a soulless
imitation by boldly abandoning the quest and turning to the
joys of temporal life, of human thoughts and relationships. His
proper study is man, even if viewed with amused detachment
against the background of nature. He may see the world somewhat
as the eighteenth century came to see it, but for him the vision
was fresh and new and full of wonders, experienced with a sensi-
tivity that was his own precious heritage.

The Metaphysical school could ask for no better epilogue
than Marvell's proud credo of human intellect, expressed in a
language of poetry which is almost unparalleled in its crystal-
clear beauty.
Chapter Six

The Rose of Wounds

THE POETRY OF THE GERMAN BAROQUE

In the preceding chapters English Metaphysical poets had been discussed, and some attempt was made to show that, allowing for inevitable differences of background and temperament, there were certain affinities among them. There were affinities of mood, of a way of thinking and feeling, and there were also similarities of expression, of the shape which these men chose to give to their thoughts and emotions.

The suggestion was put forward, which it has been the purpose of this study to justify, that, broadly speaking, these poets wrote in the way they did - in the way that enables us to recognise and identify them as "Metaphysicals" - because they all wrote under the influence of a "predominating passion" of their time. This was the passionate desire to recreate, through intellect as well as through emotion, a unified vision of the world secure in God, which they felt, consciously or unconsciously (and we only now know how rightly), to be collapsing under the impact of new discoveries, both physical and intellectual.

But if this predominating passion was one involving issues of deep and universal significance, released by that European intellectual revolution which we call somewhat inaccurately but conveniently the Renaissance, then surely it could not
have been confined to England only. And if this predominating passion was shared by the whole of Europe, or at least by that class of its population which matters to us here, then there should be affinities of theme and expression among poets anywhere in Europe. There would, of course, be differences of national temperament, of cultural and political background, but nevertheless the basic tone and colouring of poetry should be characteristically and undeniably similar.

It is the purpose of this and the following chapter to examine German and Czech poetry of the time corresponding to the period of English Metaphysical poetry to see if such similarities can be established, even in a rather summary examination, necessary in the frame of this study. We may find similarities, but we shall naturally also find definite dissimilarities of temperament, religious and historical background and of cultural heritage, which again may help us, by contrast, to realise more fully the qualities which are most characteristic of, and valuable in, English Metaphysical poetry.

The name given to German poetry of the seventeenth century is illuminating and significant in itself. Earlier, we find, seventeenth-century poetry in Germany was known to literary historians as Gelehrtenpoesie - learned poetry - a name that does perhaps affect the metaphysics a little.

Today, following the example of F. Strich in his Der lyrische Stil des 17. Jahrhunderts (published in 1916), we apply to German poetry of the seventeenth century the adjective used
originally of architecture and the visual arts only - baroque. Benedetto Croce said that "Art is not baroque, baroque is not art". We may not subscribe to this view, but the question remains: what is baroque? The etymology of the word is interesting, and the analogy with the slightly derogatory use of the term "Meta-physical" is obvious.

The present-day meaning of the word, as employed by the leading German literary historians interested in German baroque poetry, still retains something of the qualities implied by the earlier, narrower conception. It means the poetry of the witty paradox, of the extravagant metaphor - in short of the conceit which can be so grotesquely overloaded with meaning. Like their English contemporaries, the German baroque poets like a "material" (stofflich) metaphor, one which establishes a relationship between a concrete, sensory image and an abstract emotional or intellectual concept. An overall similarity is of less importance than the successful linking of small coincident points, even if less relevant to the total picture. Hence the painstakingly elaborated metaphors with their wealth of detail, in which these poets take such delight.

The importance of the intellectual element in these conceits cannot be overemphasized. The reader, instead of visualising the image offered by the conceit, is expected to realise with his

1) see above, p. 2

2) The German word Schwulst indicates that the conceit was not always viewed with approval!
intellect rather than with his imagination, what exactly is
the link of resemblance connecting the two parts of the meta-
phor. Indeed sometimes any attempt to visualise the metaphor
would result in a grotesque picture. So for instance in the
anonymous poet 'C.H.'s lines:

Dein Ende stellt sich dir in einem Bilde dar;
Der Leinwand ist ein Zeug zum allerletzten Kleide,
Der Räume schwarzes Holz ist eine Totenbahr,
Der Schatten bleibt die Welt, das Licht die Seelenfreude.

(Thy end is represented to thee as a picture; the canvas is the
material for the last garment of all, the black wood of the frame
is a bier, the shadow is the world, the light the Soul's joy.)

A different type of conceit, more frequent perhaps in
Catholic poetry, is the "liturgical" which we have met for instance
in Crashaw's work. Such is the image presented in Scheffler's
lines:

Laß meine Seele ein Bienlein
Auff deinen Rosen-Wunden seyn

"Die Psyche begehrt ein Bienlein
auf den Wunden Jesu zu seyn"

(Let my soul be a little bee in the rose of thy wounds. - "Psyche
desires to be a little bee in the wounds of Jesus")

Visualised concretely, this image is unpleasant to say the
least, but seen in its traditional setting it becomes a variation,
startlingly new perhaps, but not unnatural, on the symbol of the
mystical rose representing Christ's wounds and, ultimately,
Christ. In such a conceit the emotions evoked by certain words
are at least equally important as the intellectual reactions.

The ability to employ any part of human consciousness in the
service of poetry is typical of the period, and it is perhaps
this quality as much as the conscious, intentional wit of the pun and of the quick response, which gave baroque poetry the epithet "learned", and its reputation for being esoteric. The reader had to be "in", to be one of the initiated men of learning to realise fully the importance of the indirect, veiled allusions and quotations.

Part of the Gelehrsamkeit was the vogue for antiquarianism, widespread in Germany at the time. It was perhaps a result of the rising nationalism which again came into being, paradoxically, on the fall of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation, during the fanatical religious wars that split Germany into endless hostile fractions. It was an antiquarianism of the make-believe, recapturing a dream of fair German women and brave Germanic heroes, often with little accurate historical knowledge to support it.

Another, equally important, aspect of the new national awareness was the increasing interest in the German language, especially in its literary form. Opitz's *Buch von der teutschen Poeterey* (1634) which laid down the laws of prosody; the linguistic societies (Sprachgesellschaften) which played an important role in German literary life; linguistic studies like J. G. Schottelius' *Opus de lingua Germanica* (1663); all these bear testimony to the growing interest in the technicalities of language. Possibly this interest was further fostered by the realisation that the language as it was was hardly an adequate medium in which to express complex emotions and thoughts.
In contemporary opinion it was the main function of poetry to be learned, serious. Martin Opitz, the acknowledged father of seventeenth-century German poetry, believed that poetry began as *verbogene Theologie*, hidden theology, with the most serious purpose imaginable. The emphasis was on the moral and intellectual quality of poetry, on its informative value. Its purpose was serious, and so was its nature. Its highest achievements were in the sphere of devotional lyric, but even in secular poetry there was an implicit admission of the fundamental dilemma of man.

The seventeenth century in a curious throw-back to the Middle Ages reopens the question that lay behind the medieval dialogues of the body and the soul, behind the morality plays and the Dance of Death - the problem of the dualism of eternal spirit and mortal body. The Renaissance saw the solution of this dilemma in a glorification of the transcendent human spirit, in the magnificence of its power. The Reformation, in Luther's *Fröhliche Botschaft*, found its own solution in the expectant joy of the resurrection, in which body and soul will be one forever. The baroque spirit, throwing aside both the brave self-sufficiency of the Renaissance and the devout, trusting submission of the Reformation, joins hands with the Middle Ages in the quest for an answer to the riddle of human existence. But where the Middle Ages asked in the name of humanity, the baroque poet stands alone in his newly found individualism, that fatal gift of the Renaissance.
The realisation of the dualism of the body and the soul carries with it the terror of death, the more acute in the plague-ridden, battle-scarred Germany of the Thirty Years' War; the Totentanz of Abraham a Santa Clara and Nathanael Schlott's Lübeckischer Todten-Tanz, for instance, are expressions of a living fear.

Death of the body and death of the soul are the twin terrors of the seventeenth century. The devotional poets find their solution of the problem in mysticism where Jakob Boehme had found a reconciliation of the world and God: so von Spee, Scheffler, Czepko, Kuhlmann. The other way over which is written the motto Carpe diem, leads towards the feverish, determined hedonism of Hofmannswaldau and von Lohenstein. Those who do not fight, find resignation: in the despair of the grave and in its horrible fascination, as Gryphius, or in the sweet and decorous melancholy of pastoral poetry, that escapist literature of the seventeenth century.

The realisation of this antithesis of body and soul is peculiarly acute in Germany, and is accompanied by an excess of emotion such as we do not find in contemporary English poetry. It might be that the Thirty Years' War had forced the realisation with such brutal impact that the anguish had to find relief in an excess of repulsion, despair or lust. Or perhaps the retarded Renaissance, following on the heels of the Reformation, brought with it the bitter fruits of its own failure as well as the flowers of promise. Whatever the cause, the seventeenth century
in German poetry is a time of almost hysterical emotional storms, of violent contradictory trends, a period dramatic both in theme and expression.

Wit is the first demand; poetry must be new, startling, unexpected, "Capricioso, bizarro, nuovo", expressing in its paradoxes the antithesis that had inspired it. The age found its best expression in Catholic art; possibly because the Catholic church had accepted and utilised the contradiction of the body and the soul. In the overflowing sensuous richness of her churches with their dancing statues, gesturing towards the distant heaven, with the crowded, luxuriant pageant of the altarpieces, there is a tacit admission of the weakness of the flesh and its dependence on the yearning spirit. Catholicism of the Counter-Reformation is the fullest embodiment of the baroque spirit. The Protestant poets made their own important contribution in their passionate, heart-searching individualism, but even they often use the Catholic formula for the outpourings of their souls. A single instance may suffice, a few lines from Gottfried Arnold:

So spielen die lieblichen Buhlen zusammen,  
Und mehren im Spielen die himmlischen Flammen,  
Das eine vermehret des anderen Lust  
Und beiden ist nichts als die Liebe bewußt. etc. etc.  
"Die Seele erquicket sich an Jesu"

(Thus play together the delightful lovers, and in playing multiply the heavenly flames, one's passion increases the other's and both know of nothing but love. - "The Soul refreshes Herself in Jesus".)

It is interesting in this context to note that while there
had been converts to Catholicism (the Dutchman Vondel, Crashaw, the Germans Scheffler and Grimmelshausen), no converts to Protestantism are recorded, unless one puts Donne into such a category.

But the early baroque poetry of Opitz and his immediate followers shows little of the riches and the extravagance of form and emotion which were to become the foremost characteristics of German baroque poetry proper. Martin Opitz himself (1597-1639), the legislator of German poetry of the seventeenth century, is a typical, if a little belated humanist, a student of Petrarch and Ronsard, although a contemporary of Marino and Gongora. His *Buch von der teutschen Poeterey* (1624) set down the law of German prosody; in his lyrics, especially in his sonnets, Opitz furnished models of what he regarded as the best poetry. Compared with his followers who admired him, but yet somehow gradually broke away from his dictatorship, Opitz displays a curious temperamental affinity with the eighteenth century. The humanist’s admiration of the classics is strengthened in him by something of the analytic objectivity of the neoclassicist. In this respect he reminds us of Marvell a little; both poets have the same regard for the economy of words and for their power. But of course where Opitz is experimenting with an unused, unpolished medium, Marvell employs a language at the height of its development, and uses it with a passion, however restrained, which was not in Opitz’s range of emotions at all. A pleasant, though perhaps fanciful, coincidence is the similarity of theme and treatment in Opitz’s best-known lyric and Marvell’s chef-d’oeuvre, “The Coy Mistress”.
This is Opitz's version of the Vivamus theme:

Ach Liebste, laß uns eilen,
Wir haben Zeit:
Es schadet das Verweilen
Uns beiderzeit.

Der schönen Schönheit Gaben
Fliehn Fuß für Fuß,
Daß alles, was wir haben,
Verschwinden muß.

Der Wangen Zier verbleicht,
Das Haar wird greis,
Der Augen Feuer weicht,
Die Brunst wird Eis.

Das Mündlein von Korallen
Wird ungestalt,
Die Händ', als Schnee, verfallen,
Und du wirst alt.

Wo du dich selber liebest,
So liebe mich,
Gib mir, daß, wann du gibest,
Verlier auch ich.

"Lied / Im Ton: Ma belle je vous prie"

(Ah dearest, let us hurry, we have (only) time (i.e. the present moment): delay will harm us both. Beauty's beautiful gifts fly step by step, and all that we have must disappear. The ornament of the cheeks will grow pale, the hair will turn grey, the fire of the eyes will die down, the passion turn to ice. The coral lips will sag, the snow-white hands will decay, and you will grow old. Therefore let us now enjoy the fruit of youth, before we have to follow the flight of years. If you love yourself, then love me, give me that which, if you give it, I shall also lose. - "Song / On the Note: Ma belle je vous prie")

In spite of the similarity of theme and its development, however, Opitz does not share Marvell's obsession with time to the same extent. While in Marvell's poem the final clinching argument is the momentary defeat of time, Opitz closes with a jocular paradox on virginity, which brings his poem abruptly back to

1) I owe the explanation of this line to Professor Leonard Forster's The Temper of Seventeenth Century German Literature, p.13
Another parallel could of course be drawn - with Ben Jonson who, like Opitz, had stood at the beginning of a poetical movement which owed much of its wit and verbal polish to him, and which yet managed somehow to break free from the Master, and even to overshadow him. And again like Opitz's, Jonson's affinity with the enlightened eighteenth century is manifest.

Even in the work of those nearest to Opitz in time and place, of his pupils of the "First Silesian School" - Paul Fleming (1609-1640), Daniel von Czepko (1605-1665), Andreas Gryphius (1616-1664) and Friedrich von Logau (1611-1659) - we find indications of the new developments. The simplicity of Paul Fleming's verse is matched by the warmth of his emotions; Friedrich von Logau's dry wit and his love of the epigram point to the moralising poets of the turn of the century rather than to his master Opitz. In Daniel von Czepko's work a new tendency towards mysticism is clearly seen. In his pastoral poems, in "Coridon und Phyllis", for instance, and in his epigrams (Monodisticha sapientium), while using the favourite pastoral disguises of the neoclassicists, he puts forward a strange mysticism. The epigrammatic form as well as the mystical contents link his work with that of the Catholic convert, the Cherubinischer Wandersmann, Scheffler. Czepko's poetry displays already quite clearly what we have come to regard as baroque characteristics, the paradox for instance:

Die Ewigkeit durch Zeit, das Leben durch den Tod,
Durch Nacht das Licht, und durch den Menschen seh ich Gott.

"Jedes durchs andere", Monodisticha
(I see eternity through time, life through death, light through the night, and God through man. - "Everything through another thing."
)

or the verbal wit:

Mensch, das Wort Mensch sagt dir, was vor ein Mensch du bist; Im Wort, in dir ist MENS, ist ENS - was mehr? ein Christ.

"Mensch", Monodisticha

(Man the word "man" tells you what kind of man you are: in one word, in you is MENS, is ENS - what more? a Christ. - "Man")

The most important and least orthodox figure of the First Silesian School is Andreas Gryphius, the master of the Metaphysical shudder. The thought of death, of the vanitas vanitatum was always with him; it is typical that for the subject of one of his tragedies he selected the execution of Charles I (Ermorderte Majestät). His long poem "Gedancken / Über den Kirch-Hof und Ruhe-Städte der Verstorbenen" ("Thoughts on the Churchyard and the Resting-place of the Dead") is a Websterian catalogue of horrors:

Der Därmer Wust reist durch die Haut / So von den Maden gantz durchbissen; Ich schau die Därmer (ach mir graut!) In Eiter / Blut und Wasser flissen! Das Fleisch / daß nicht die Zeit verletzt Wird unter Schlangen-blauem Schimmel Von unersättlichem Gewimmel Vielfalter Würmer abgefraßt.

(The mass of guts comes out through the skin / so eaten up by maggots; I see the guts (oh, I shudder!) swimming in pus, blood and water! The flesh undamaged by time is being eaten up under the serpent-blue mildew by the insatiable swarm of multitudinous worms.)

The Grand-Guignol culminates in the apocalyptic vision of the Day of Judgment:

Ich werd euch sehn / mehr denn das Licht / Von zehnmal tausend Sonnen schimmern;
Ich werde euch sehn und mein Gesicht Verbergen vor dem Jammers-wimmern.
Ich werde euch sehn / mehr schön als schön / Euch mehr / denn häßlich und elend.
Euch zu dem Trost; euch in die Brände Gespenster - schwerer Nächte gehn.

(I shall see you, shining brighter than the light of ten thousand suns; I shall see you and cover my face before your piteous moans. I shall see you, more beautiful than beauty, and you, more than loathsome and miserable! You, going to be comforted; you, on your way into the flames of spectre-heavy nights.)

From the despair of the terror of death Gryphius turns to God; this is the way chosen by the mystics, both Protestant and Catholic. Among the latter the bitter enemy of the witch-hunts, author of the Trutznachtigall, the Jesuit Friedrich von Spee (1591-1635) and the convert Johannes Scheffler, or Angelus Silesius (1624-1677), author of Cherubinischer Wandersmann, are the most important figures. Christ's love and his sacrifice are the theme of Protestant and Catholic mystics alike, but Spee and Scheffler sing of their love of Christ in the terms of a love poem. The Jesusminne, the mystical love of Christ expressed in the passionate diction of the Song of Songs, is the Catholic answer to the dilemma of flesh and spirit, a sublimation of it, a perfect escape into the world of liturgical symbols. Even when the Protestant poet employs the symbolism of the soul and Christ as the bride and bridegroom -

Wann endlich ich sol treten ein
In deines Reiches Freuden /
So sol dis Blut mein Purpur seyn /
Ich wil mich darinn kleiden /
Es sol seyn meines Hauptes Kron /
In welcher ich wil vor dem Trohn /
Des höchsten Vaters gehen:
Und dir / dem er mich anvertraut /
Als eine wohlgemäckte Braut /  
An deiner Seiten stehen.

"Passion-Lied",  
Paul Gerhardt

(When at last I enter the joys of thy kingdom, this blood shall be my purple robe which I shall put on, it will be the crown on my head, in which I shall step before the throne of the highest Father: and stand by thy side to whom he has entrusted me, like a welladorned bride.)

- there is no trace in his lines of the sensuous ecstasy of the "mors angelorum" as in Scheffler's "Sie begehrt verwundet zu seyn von jhrem Geliebten" ("The soul desires to be wounded by her beloved"):  

Jesu du mächtiger Liebes-Gott  
Nah dich zu mir:  
Denn ich verschmachte fast bis in Tod  
Für Liebs-Begiehr:  
Ergreiff die Waffen / und in Eil  
Durchstich mein Hertz mit deinem Pfeil /  
Verwunde mich : /

(Jesus, thou powerful god of love, come near to me: For I am fainting nearly to death with the desire of love: Seize thy weapons and in haste pierce my heart with thy arrow, wound me.)  

A figure apart is Quirinus Kuhlmann (1651-1689), a mystical dreamer, burnt at the stake in Moscow. His poetry of the "Kühlpsalter", broken at times almost into incoherent sobs, conveys forcibly the delirium of the mystical faith of which he was the sole prophet and martyr:

Ach Jesus ach! Las mich zur linken Brust!  
Dein Geist und Milch muß ewigst mich durchsüssen!  
Mich dürstet sehr! Entzeuch ni solche Kost!  
Getrost mein Geist! Flih hin zu Jesus Füssen!  
Find ich Genad! Steht alles hergestellt!  
Es ist der Herr! Er machs, wi ihm gefaellt!  

"Der 7. Gesang"

(Oh, Jesus, oh! Let me come to thy left breast! Thy spirit and
milk must sweeten me through and through forever! My thirst is
great! Do not withhold such fare from me! My spirit be comforted!
Fly to Jesus' feet. Do I find mercy! All stands as it had been!
He is the lord! He acts as it pleases him! - "The Seventh Song"

This is a far cry indeed from the sober rhetoric of Martin
Opitz. So far we have been following those of Opitz's followers
who took their refuge in God, and solitude. But there had been
others, closer to Opitz in their formal approach to poetry, who
chose the other way, to the courtly, pastoral land of love-making
and make-believe.

To this group belonged the poets of the Königsberg circle,
Simon Dach (1605-1659) and Robert Roberthin (1600-1648). Their
poetry, of which Dach's "Mailiedchen" ("Komm, Dorinda, laß uns
eilen ... "), an imitation of Opitz's "Ach, liebste, ... ", is
a good example, was simple, written in an unsophisticated pastoral
vein, sometimes in the dialect. The fashion for poems in dialect
(the best example of which is "Anke van Tharaw", attributed to
Dach), incidentally, might be regarded as yet another aspect of
the seventeenth-century nationalism and the consequent interest
in the German language in all its forms.

Opitz's linguistic interests, as well as his inclination
towards the pastoral were followed by the Nuremberg poets, "Clajus" -
Johann Klaj (1616-1656), "Strefon" - Georg Philipp Harsdörfer
(1607-1658), "Floridan" - Sigmund von Birken (1626-1681) and later
the purist Philipp von Zesen (1619-1689), all of whom were
prominent members of one of the then fashionable literary societies,
"Pegnesischer Blumenorden". Their world was a dream, and they
sang about it in dancing, tripping rhythms, conscious of the
newly discovered magic of words:

Es lispeln und wispeln die schlüpfrigen Brunnen,
Von ihnen ist diese Begründung gerunnen.
Sie schauren, betrauren und fürchten bereit
Die schneeichte Zeit.

Sigmund v. Birken (? Johann Klaj), "Sonnet /
Vom Wolfsbrunnen bei Heidelberg"

(The slippery wells lisp and whisper, from them curdled this greenery. They shiver, mourn and fear already the coming of the snow.)

This is no direct observation of nature, no impressionist sketch, but a stylised picture. There is the same air of stylisation in the devotional poems of Johann Klaj, but if the stage had been set carefully for the song, the decorative background makes the emotion sound no less moving and sincere:

Wir holen Violen in blühmichten Auen /
Narzissen entspriessen von perleñen Tauen /
Es grünet und grunet das fruchtige Land /
Es glänzet im Lentzen der wassrige Stand.
Jesu wie bistu gemutet?
Händ und Beine sind zerrissen /
Deine Schultern wundgeschmissen /
Und der gantze Leib sehr blutet.

"Eingangsgedicht des 'Leidenden Christus'"

(We gather violets in flowery meadows, narcissi sprung up from pearly dew; the fruitful land is green and joyful, the watery shore shines in the spring. Jesus, how dost thou feel? Thy hands and feet are torn, thy shoulders sore with wounds, and thy whole body bleeds much. - Introductory poem to "Suffering Christ")

The poetry of Philip von Zesen, a later member of the Order, shows the same interest in the decorative aspects of poetry, and and exquisite mastery of form. He experiments in the Pindaric ode, and, like George Herbert, writes poems of the kind which Dr. Praz calls "mute emblems", with an elaborate typographical layout, for instance the "Palm-baum der höchst-loblichen Frucht-bringenden
Gesellschaft zuehren aufgerichtet" - "A Palm Tree Raised in Honour of the Praiseworthy Fruit-bearing Society" (one of the fashionable literary societies) - which is printed in the shape of a tree.

A society similar to the Blumenorden was the Elbschwanen-Ordem of Johannes Rist of Lübeck (1607-1667), one-time member of the Nuremberg circle. Rist shared the desire of the Nuremberg poets to preserve the decorum of form and matter, as dictated by Opitz. Although in his pastoral poems he took a firm stand against the baroque extravagance which was beginning to take hold of German poetry, yet in his "Charfreytagagesang" (Song on Good Friday) he gave way to the urge to express emotions too deep and turbulent for the decorous form of Opitz's school, in a language that matched any poem of the high baroque in extravagance of invention:

Dünff Keller blicken hie herfür /  
Die stehen gantz voll Weins vor dir /  

... Dünff Tische stehen wolbesetzt  
Mit allem was die Seel' ergetzt /  
Mit außerlesnen Speisen /  

... O Jesu / liebster Bräutigam /  
Dein Leib / der aus der Kelter kam /  
Der hat mir angezogen  
Den rohten Schmuck / den Perlen Pracht /  
Der meinen Geist so fröhlich macht /  
Das Er wird gantz bewogen /  
Jetzt fühlt Ich / O mein süßser Mund /  
Du liebest mich aus Hertzens Grund.

(Five cellars shine here, which stand full of wine before thee... Five tables stand laden with all that the soul desires, with choice dishes ... O Jesus, dearest bridegroom, thy body which came out of the wine press, has put on me the red jewel, the splendour of pearls, which make my soul so joyful that it is deeply moved. Now I feel, o my sweet lips, that thou lovest me from the bottom of thy heart.)
The school of Opitz with its emphasis on decorum, and on social graces, with its light lyricism and its stylised loveliness had seen its day. Perhaps in reaction against it, perhaps in reaction against the never-ceasing terror of sudden death, a new kind of poetry came into being. As if to ascertain the claim of life against death, the sensual pleasures were dwelt upon with deliberation and expressed in the most far-fetched and astounding conceits with the cool virtuosity of accomplished performance. The masters of this new poetry which affected to despise all the virtues of the bourgeois, were Christian Hofmann von Hofmannswaldau (1617-1679) and Daniel Caspar von Lohenstein (1635-1683). Their poetry, influenced by Marino and Gongora, bears witness to the victory of the cosmopolitan Hapsburg courtly absolutism over the rest of the German-speaking world. In spite of the lapses of taste, committed in a reckless search for new and startling conceits, there is beauty as well in this poetry. So for instance in Hofmannswaldau's "Vergänglichkeit der Schönheit" (Transitoriness of Beauty):

Es wird der bleiche Tod mit seiner kalten Hand
Dir endlich mit der Zeit um deine Brüste streichen,
Der liebliche Corall der Lippen wird verbleichen;
Der Schultern warmer Schnee wird werden kalter Sand, ...

(In time pale death will caress your breasts with his cold hand, the lovely coral of your lips will fade; the warm snow of your shoulders will turn to cold sand ...)

The final conceit of this poem has all the artificial glitter of Cowley's poems in The Mistress:

Dies und noch mehr als dies müß endlich untergehen.
Dein Herze kann allein zu aller Zeit bestehen,
Dieweil es die Natur aus Diamant gemacht.
(All this and more than this must perish in the end. Your heart alone can last forever, because Nature had made it of diamond.)

With the school of Hofmannswalda and Lohenstein (the "Second Silesian School", as it was called), however, the end of the poetry of the conceit, of audacious mood and expression, is approaching, and the sober rationalism of the Aufklärung, the tender sensitivity of the pietism, and the eighteenth-century deism slowly begin to take the field. The moralising of Christian Weise (1642-1708) and the pietism of Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714), while still influenced by Scheffler, are of the coming century. The nature poems of Barthold Heinrich Brockes (1680-1747), Wordsworthian in their loving observation of minute detail (e.g. in "Die Trauben-Hyacinth", an amazing piece of exact botanising in verse), emphasize the change of atmosphere by the message which they seek to impart: that the Divine presence is to be seen in things, not, as the earlier seventeenth century had felt it, to be deduced from them.

But if the baroque epoch was destined to change slowly and quietly into the sobriety of eighteenth-century pietism, it did not go without one last brilliant and disturbing flash of individualism, that individualism which was its very own contribution to the world of letters, in the personality of Johann Christian Günther (1695-1723). Günther, acclaimed as the first "modern" poet in Germany, is a poet of passionate sincerity. Writing his bitter lyrics of despair in the face of death, he reopens the wound without the anaesthetic of mystical incense; that is perhaps why his naked cry ex tenebris has such power.
to move:

Der Menschen Leben heißt ein Traum,
O wenn doch meins ein solcher wäre!

"Leben"

(They call the life of man a dream, Oh would that mine were one! - "Life")

Without Gryphius' preoccupation with the mechanics of decay,
Günther is more than half in love with easeful death, which to him is peace:

Erschrick nicht vor dem Liebeszeichen,
Es träget unser künftig Bild,
Vor dem nur die allein verbleichen,
Bei welchen die Vernunft nichts gilt.

"Als er der Phillis einen Ring
mit einem Totenkopf überreichte"

(Shrink not from the love-token, it depicts our future likeness, before which only those grow pale, to whom reason means nothing. - "As he gave Phillis a Ring with a skull on it")

Seht, Brüder, wie es geht!
Weint, daß es mit uns Menschen
So gar verdrießlich steht;
Ach betet doch noch heute,
Und wünscht mit mir,
Daß uns die Glocke läute
Von hier!

"Die Eitelkeit des menschlichen Lebens"

(See, brethren, how it goes! Weep that our human condition is so disagreeable: oh, pray this very day, and wish with me that the bell may toll us away from this place! - "The Vanity of Human Life")

With Günther this brief, and necessarily rather superficial survey closes. Only a few names have been given out of the vast number of poets who were writing during this period, but even from such a short and general survey a certain pattern emerges. From the belated humanist enthusiasm of Opitz and even earlier
from the cosmopolitan Weckherlin, from their mild patriotism and their determination to introduce all the new forms and new subjects into German poetry, the development was by no means in one direction only.

Some poets succeeded in preserving the decorum and the light pleasantry of Opitz's verses in the face of a complex and perplexing world, by retreating into the never-never-land of the pastoral. But for most poets there was to be no escape as light as this. The uncertainty of fate, the futility of human existence, the uncertainty of the here and of the hereafter had to be faced in a Germany where the political structure had broken down and where foreign armies advanced and retreated in a horrifying game of fire and devastation. Some men found the solution in God, losing themselves in mystical contemplation which left the mind free to roam the universe, but set the spirit at rest. For others there was the mental shrug of the shoulders, the dance over the precipice to the old tune of Vivemus, mea Lesbia. There was a touch of hysteria in the dance, and the cynicism was somewhat forced at times, but the sophisticated conceit, even if occasionally in bad taste, was clever and occupied the intellect.

The salvation from the despair of annihilation, which was the seventeenth century's mal du siècle, was no mean achievement, and the passionate struggle is reflected in the form of the poetry, not only in the disjointed passionate cry to God (Kuhlmann's for instance), but equally well in the taut balance
of the clever, polished poems of Hofmannswaldau. The charming pastoral are a triumph of the intellect, of a determined, deliberate disregard of the ugly reality in favour of a kingdom, however small, of the mind.

The rational element in German baroque poetry is never entirely absent; there are excesses of verbal extravagance, but never a touch of fantasy, and never a trace of humour. There is passion in it, but it is nearly always inspired, or at least directed, by the intellect. It is a "Gelehrtenpoesie", written for the clique of litterati, and it speaks in symbols understood by that clique, almost in esoteric clichés that were common property, yet were quite detached from reality. It is in this that the German baroque poetry differs from English Metaphysical poetry: the method is the same - the yoking together by violence - but the German poet hardly ever reaches to the things that are all round him, when he is looking for an image. It is to be remembered here that German poetry was for the most part in the hands of the "nobilitas literaria", of the class of poets who stood apart. As a "Standeskultur" it had no need to be understood outside the literary circle.

The domestic images, for instance, are typical. There is little variety in these images of the door or the window to man's heart, to heaven:

Fünff Thüren sind allhie zu seh'n  
Durch welche man hinein kan gehn  
Recht in des Himmels Garten  
Es öffnet sich die schmaehle Pfort'  
Und bringt uns an den edlen Ohrt /
(Five doors are to be seen here through which one can go right into the heavenly garden; the narrow gate opens and lets us in to the noble place where we await the joys. - "Song on Good Friday")

(How splendidly adorned is the house of the soul! Love flashes out of both windows. - "Strefon and Klajus, on the Occasion of a shepherds' double Wedding")

Only very rarely do we find any unusual images of the things about the house, images which Herbert and Crashaw used with such startling effect. It is typical of German baroque poetry that we find such images either in poems on homely subjects, with not a trace of serious thought in them, as in Gabriel Voigtländer's "Die Frau ein gut Ding" ("The Woman is a Good Thing"):

Sie ist sein ander Bein im Stuhl / sie ist nichts minder
Sein einge Spahrbüchs / und sein Fewer in dem Winter / ...

(She is the other leg in his chair, she is nothing less, his own money-box, and his fire in the winter ...) or in poems satirising the conceit, as in the anonymous "Allegorisch Sonnet":

Amanda liebestes kind, du brustlatz kalter hertzen,
Der liebe feuerzeug, goldschachtel edler zier,
Der seuffzer blasebalg, des traurens lösch-papier, ...

(Amanda, dearest child, thou stomacher of cold hearts, love's tinder-box, golden box of noble grace, bellows of sighs, blotting-paper of mourning ...) or finally in didactic or devotional poems in which there is more than a trace of talking down:
Ein Stoß zerbricht das Glas, der Mensch zerfällt im Sterben; 
Was findet man hernach von beyden? Nichts, als Scherben.

Nathanael Schlott, "Der Lübeckische Todten-Tanz"

(A blow breaks a glass, man crumbles in dying; what is left of 
either? Nothing but broken fragments. - "The Lübeck Dance of 
Death")

In images of food and drink the most frequent images are those 
of the bread and wine as symbols of Christ's sacrifice and mercy, 
used equally by popular and mystical writers, by Catholics and 
Protestants:

Lasse deinen theuren Leib meiner Seelein Hunger stillen! 
Las dein Blut als einen Tranck meines Hertzens Durst 
erfüllen!

Benjamin Schmolck, "Gebet vor dem H. Abendmahl"

(Let thy dear body appease the hunger of my soul! Let thy blood 
like a drink quell the thirst of my heart! - "Prayer before the 
Holy Communion")

Führ mich ab in die Kellerey 
und bringe mir den Trostwein bey.

Mich hungert / gib mir einzubinden 
Von den Granaten deiner Frucht /
Gewürze / Saffran / Zimmetrinden / und was mein mattes Hertze sucht / Kläj, "Maria Magdalena führet diese Klage an einem besonderen Ort im Garten", Die Aufferstehung Christi (Lead me to the cellar and bring me comforting wine. I am hungry, offer me fruit of your pomegranates, spices, saffron, cinnamon bark, and what else my languid heart seeks. - "Mary Magdalen makes this lament in a certain place in the garden", Christ's Resurrection)

The conventional compliment on the honeyed sweetness of the lady's lips, current in amorous poetry, is curiously repeated in passionate devotional lyrics - an affinity which emphasizes that in spite of its learned air German baroque poetry aimed at presenting religion as a living experience of the senses as much as of the spirit. So Gottfried Arnold in the fourth chapter of his Poetische Lob- und Liebes-Sprüche (Poetical Pieces of Praise and Love):

Hier schmeck ich deine Süßigkeit
Wenn sich der Mund anleget /
Daß deiner Gnaden Lauterkeit
Dem Geist sein Theil zutrage.

(Here I taste thy sweetness when thy mouth approaches, that the purity of thy mercy brings its due to the spirit.)

and Johann Kläj:

Ach daß ich seinen Mund möcht hertzen
und kosten seinen Lippentau /

"Maria Magdalena führet diese Klage ..."

(O that I might caress his mouth and taste the dew of his lips. - "Mary Magdalen makes this lament ...")

and on the other hand the philandering gallant, Hofmannswaldau, in what might be an audacious direct reference to devotional poetry:
Mund! der viel süßer ist als starcker himmels-wein,...

"Auf den mund"

(Mouth! which is sweeter than strong heavenly wine,... - "On the mouth")

(Die brüste) ... Ein kräftig himmelbrod, das die verliebten schmecken, ...

"Lob-rede an das liebwertheste Frauenzimmer"

(The breasts ... a nourishing heavenly bread which the lovers enjoy. - "Praise of the most lovable Lady")

The erotic element potentially present in such images which could equally well appear in passionate love poems, is implied in poems both on the Holy Virgin and on Christ:

Die Himmels-Wöchnerin entblöst die weisse Brust /
    Dir zu schenken
    Von Getränken
    Die durchsässen
    Und geniessen
    Auß den Schalen
    Mit Nectar angfüllt / die Götter auff den mahlen.

Klap, "Weyhnacht-Lied"

(The heavenly young mother bares her white breast to give thee a beverage that sweetens and refreshes, from bowls filled with nectar, on which the gods do feast. - "Christmas Song")

Ach Jesus ach! Las mich zur linken Brust!
    Dein Geist und Milch muß ewigst mich durchsüssen!

Kuhlmann, "Der 7. Gesang", Kölhpsalter

(Oh, Jesus, oh! Let me come to thy left breast! Thy spirit and milk must sweeten me through and through forever! - "The Seventh Song")

An unusually homely image, perhaps based on an emblem picture of the tortures of the Soul, and somewhat reminiscent of Herbert’s "Love Unknown", occurs in Scheffler’s "Der Cherubinische Wandermann":

...
Wie kocht man Gott das Hertz? Es muß gestossen seyn / 
Geprest / und stark verguldet: Sonst geht es ihm nicht ein.

"Wie Gott das Hertz wil zubereitet haben"

(How does one cook the heart for God? It should be pounded, 
squeezed, and heavily gilt: otherwise he does not like it. - "How 
God wishes the heart to be prepared")

Images of crafts and of human types again show little interest 
in reality. Traditional images prevail - of man as servant of 
the evils of the world:

O böse Welt, was soll ich von dir singen? 
dei dienst ist süß, bitter aber dein lohn.

Daniel Sudermann, "Ein kläglich Gesang"

(O evil world, what should I sing about you? Your service is sweet, 
but your wages bitter. - "A Song of Complaint")

- of the spirit as prisoner of the flesh (an image reminiscent 
of Marvell's "Dialogue of the Soul and the Body", and Quarles' 
Emblem viii, of the Fifth book of Emblemes):

Hier lieg ich gefangen 
In irdischer Gruft / 
Schier tod für Verlangen 
Nach besserer Luft.
Ich kan mich kaum regen von Fessel und Band; 
Mein Fleisch ist die Kette: die Welt ist die 
Wand; 
Der Satan ist Scherze / der sperrt mir die 
Hand.

C.A.P. Knorr von Rosenroth, "Unglückselige 
Gefängnis der Leidenschaften"

(Here lie I imprisoned in the earthly vault, almost dead with 
longing for better air. I can hardly move for fetters and bonds; 
my flesh is the chain; the world is the wall; Satan is the keeper 
who chains my hands. - "The Luckless Prison of Passions")

- or the biblical image of Christ as a shepherd (neatly employed 
by Spee in his "Ecloga, oder Hirtengesang"); all these are
literary images, stamped by tradition.

Similarly images of clothes and fashions, and of jewels. In the former, the symbolic white dress of innocence and the fleshly dress of sin, which remind us of Vaughan, are stock images of the devotional poet:

Meine Fehler sind bedeckt
Durch des reinen Lammes Kleid /

Hans Aßmann von Abschatz, "Abend-Lied"
(My transgressions are hidden under the robe of the pure Lamb. - "Evensong")

Die Blöse ziert Ihn auß: Der Glantz besteht zum Kleide/
Doch trägt Er gleichsowol ein kostliches Geschmeide /
Der Unschuld weissen Rock:

Andreas Scultetus, "Oesterliche Triumph-Posaune"
(His nakedness bedecks Him: His glory is His dress, and yet He wears a costly jewel, the white robe of innocence. - "The Triumphant Easter Trumpet")

Scheide dann, geliebte Seele, traure nicht des Görpers wegen,
Denn er war ja nur dein Kleid. Laß uns uns nunmehr bemühen,
Mit nicht wenigem Vergnügen unsern Görper auszuziehen
Als des Abends unsre Kleider, darum weil man schlafen soll, Werden wir nun auch entkleidet.

Barthold Heinrich Brookes, "Schwanen-Gesang"
(Depart then, beloved soul, mourn not for the body, for it was but thy dress. Let us now endeavour, with not a little pleasure, to take off our bodies, like our clothes in the evening, since when we wish to sleep, we also get undressed. - "Swan Song")

There are other, purely baroque images of the blood of Christ as a red robe, reminiscent of Crashaw's poem "On our crucified Lord Naked, and bloody":
Wann endlich ich sol treten ein
In deines Reiches Freuden /
So sol diß Blut mein Purpur seyn /
Ich wil mich darinn kleiden /

Paul Gerhardt, "Passion-Lied"

(When at last I enter the joys of thy kingdom, thy blood shall be my purple, I shall dress myself in it. - "Passion Song")

C.A.P. Knorr von Rosenroth's image in "Abends-Andacht" (Evening Prayer):

Den bunten Rock der Welt; der alten Adams Schuh /
Deß Fleisches Camisole als unbeständig zur Ruh /
Die hab ich abgelegt, die laß ich auch mit Freuden
Und Christi Grabe-Tuch soll mich zu Bette kleiden.

(I have put aside the many-coloured robe of the world, the shoes of old Adam, the camisole of flesh, as uncomfortable for resting, I left them behind with pleasure, and Christ's grave-clothes shall dress me for bed.)

- has a touch of the practical naiveté of Herbert who saw no impropriety in using Christ's grave-clothes for handkerchiefs

("The Dawning").

The literary element in images of jewels is quite obvious; all the stock images of the conventional love poems are here: the coral or ruby lips, the pearly teeth, the ivory or alabaster skin:

Corallen Lippelein!
O Perlen Zeenelein!

... 0 Perlemuter Ohrelein!
O Helffenbeinen Hälselein!

Johanna Hermann Schein, "Waldliederlein"

(Coral lips! O pearly teeth! ... O mother-of-pearl ears! O ivory throat! - "Wood Song")

Mund! welchem kein Rubin kann gleich und ähnlich seyn, ...
Mund! Ach corallen-mund, mein eintziges ergetzen!

Hofmannswaldau, "Auf den Mund"
(Mouth! to which no ruby can be equal and alike ... Mouth! Oh coral mouth, my only delight! - "On the Mouth")

Examples of such images in love poems are far too numerous and far too similar, to be quoted profitably, but it is interesting to find exactly the same images in poems on the Passion; the erotic feeling of such poems is not entirely limited to Catholic poems of the high baroque:

O Jesu / liebster Bräutigam /
Dein Leib / der aus der Kelter kam /
Der hat mir angezogen
Den rohten Schmuck / den Perlen Pracht /
Der meinen Geist so fröhlich macht /
Daß Er wird gantz bewogen.

Rist, "Ein Charfreytagsgesang"

(O Jesus, dearest bridegroom, thy body which came out of the wine-press, put on me the red jewel, the splendour of pearls, which make my soul so joyful that it is deeply moved. - "Song on Good Friday")

Daphnis dopple thränen leidet /
Weisse perl / corallen roth.
Perlen jhm von augen schiessen /
Schiessen hin ins grüne gras:
Von dem leib corallen flissen
Flissen in den boden bas.

Spec, "Ein Ecloga oder Hirtengesang"

(Daphnis (Christ) weeps twin tears, white pearls, red corals. Pearls drop from his eyes, drop into the green grass; from his body flow corals, flow down to the ground. - "An Eclogue or Shepherds' Song")

In Scheffler's "Sie lobet seine Schönheit" (She praises his beauty) the tone, inspired by the Song of Songs, is wholly that of a passionate love poem:

Deine Lippen seynd Corallen /
Seynd zwey Pfosten von Rubin /
Die den Göttern wolgefallen;

(Thy lips are corals, are two ruby pillars which please the gods well.)
That these images are used for their sound or feeling, rather than for their actual meaning, is nowhere better illustrated than in Rist's "Charfreytagagesang" (Song on Good Friday) where the five wounds of Our Lord are compared to five pearls:

Fünff Perlen trefflich hoch von Schatz' 
Erzeigen sich auff diesem Platz' 
Ihr Glantz verjagt die Sonne / 
Ihr Wert ist auβzusprechen nicht /

(Five pearls of choice splendour are here displayed, their brilliance chases the sun away, they are of untold value.)

In a similar fashion the mistress is worshipped like a queen, and the glory of the King of Kings is sung in the same terms. In the following two quotations the exact parallel is apparently intentional:

Ach mein Schätzlein! erwehlt Cron! 
mein Perlein und Genaden-Thron! 

"Hilarius Lustig", Liederbüchlein

(O my darling; my chosen crown; my pearl and throne of mercy! - A Little Book of Songs)

Ey mein Perle, du werthe Kron, 
Wahr Gottes und Marien Sohn, 

Philippus Nicolai, "Ein Geistlich Braut-Lied"

(O my pearl, you precious crown, true son of God and Mary. - "A Spiritual Marriage Song")

In images of worship, also, incense is burning in honour of the lady as well as in honour of the Lord:

Diß ist mein Andachts-Feur / mein Hertz ist dein Altar / 
Ich bin das Opffer selbst / hier brenn ich gantz und gar: 
Wenn Sonn' / und Abendroth / Nacht / Schlaff/ Kleid/ 
Glied / vergehen / 
So laß mein feurig Hertz dort wie die Sonne stehen.

C.A.P. Knorr v. Rosenroth, "Abends-Andacht"
(This is my sacrificial fire, my heart is thy altar, I myself am the sacrifice, here I burn through and through; When the sun, the sunset glow, night, dress, limbs vanish, then let my fiery heart stand there as the sun. - "Evening Prayer")

(die Bräste) ... Ein überirdisch' Bild, dem alle opfern müssen.

Ein ausgeputzt altar, für den die welt sich beugt.

Hofmannswaldau, "Lob-rede an das liebwerthest Frauenzimmer"

(The breasts ... A divine image to which all must offer sacrifice. An adorned altar to which the world bows. - "Praise of the most lovable lady")

The same interchangeability of expressions of profane and sacred love is to be noted in images of fire and light. Images of fire prevail; in its concreteness the fire of the love for Christ which burns in the poet's heart seems perhaps a better representation of the relationship between man and God than the remoter image of the divine light. In Spee and Scheffler we find images the impact of which is first and foremost a physical one:

Das Flämlein daß ich meine /
   Ist Jesu süßer nam;
   Eß zehret Marck und Beine /
   Frißt ein gar wundersam.
   O süsüigkeit im schmertzen;
   O schmertz in süsüigkeit!
   Ach bleibe doch im Hertzen /
   Bleib doch in Ewigkeit.

F. von Spee, "Die gespö Jesu klaget jhren hertzen brand"

(The flame which I mean is the sweet name of Jesus; it devours bone and marrow, it eats in most wondrously. O sweetness in pain! O pain in sweetness! O stay in my heart, stay there forever. - "The bride of Jesus complains of the fire in her heart")

O allersüsste Seaen Freunst
   Durch-glüh mich gantz;
Und über form mich aus Gnad und Gunst
   In deinem Glantz;
Blaß an das Feuer ohne Verdruss /  
Daß dir mein Hertz mit schnellstem Fluß  
Vereinigt sey: / :  

Scheffler, "Sie begehret verwundet zu seyn von threm Geliebten"

(O sweetest ardour of the soul, inflame me throughout; and in thy mercy and kindness transform me in thy glory; blow up the fire without reluctance so that my heart may be united with thine in a swift fusion. - "The soul desires to be wounded by her Beloved"

In secular poems the same image seems almost lifeless in comparison, perhaps because there it lacks the vivid appeal of the unexpected:

Nun brand so ungeheuër  
Sein hertz vor Liebesfewr.  
Hinzu er kam  
Zu leschen seine flamm /  
Nams gläslein /  
Tranck aus den gefroren Wein:  
Von solchem Biß sich mehrt  
Sein flamm gantz unerhört.  

J. H. Schein, "Waldliederlein"

(Now his heart burns quite terribly with the fire of love. He came near to extinguish the flame, took a glass, drank from it the frozen wine: from such ice his flame grows in a manner quite unheard of. - "Wood Song"

Er lag in heisser flammen /  
Die Sprache ließ schon nach /  
Die Hitze kam zusammen /  
Der Puls schlug sehr gemach;  

Opitz, "Das Fieberliedlein"

(He lay in hot flames, the speech had left him, his temperature rose, his pulse went very slowly. - "Fever Song"

In the image of the burning heart the emblematic nature of it is manifest. So also in the image of man's heart pierced by divine love:

Die pfeil die kamen löfflen  
von seinen Auglein thewjen/
So mir daß hertz getroffen / 
Mit bitter-süssem fewr.

Spee, "Die gesponß Jesu sucht jhren 
Bräutigam und findet jhn auff dem 
Creutzweg"

(The arrows flew out of his dear eyes, which placed my heart 
with a bitter-sweet fire. - "The bride of Jesus seeks her bride- 
groom and finds him at the crossroads")

Es gehen auf mich ohne Ruh 
Des Allerhöchsten Pfeile zu:

Christoph Kaldenbach, "Magdalena die 
Sünderin"

(The arrows of the Highest reach me incessantly. - "Magdalen the 
Sinner")

Such images remind us of Crashaw's ecstatic poem "The Hymne 
to the Name and Honor of St. Teresa", and also of Bernini's 
statue which is perhaps the perfect sculptural expression of 
Crashaw's theme.

The conceit in the above quotations is almost paralleled in 
a love lyric by J. C. Günther, "Der Abriss seiner Liebsten" 
(A Sketch of his Beloved):

In dieser Festung liegt der blind und nackte Schütze, 
Spielt drauf auf meine Brust.
Das Freuden feuß seiner Siege, 
So daß auch ich, jedoch zu meiner Lust, 
Jhm endlich unterliege.

(In this fortress (her eyes) lies the blind and naked marksman, 
fires off from there into my breast the joyful fire of his 
victories so that I too, yet to my pleasure, finally surrender 
myself to him.)

Such images in love poems are equally natural, inspired by 
the traditional picture of Cupid with his bow.

The literary origin of these images either in profane or in 
sacred poetry is obvious. In war-racked Germany of the seventeenth
century most poets seem determined to turn away from the gruesome reality to the world of their imagination. There are, of course, poets like Gryphius or the hymn-writer Johann Heermann for instance, who draw their inspiration from the holocaust of the war (in prose we have the *Simplex Simplicissimus*, Grimmelshausen's great record of the wars). Nevertheless the "Venuskrieg" is popular, and so is Christ's war on sin. It is perhaps an indirect indication of the stormy political background that such themes were so remarkably popular. They presented as it were a disembodied, bloodless war, like an elaborate pageant. So for instance Diederich von dem Werder's *Krieg und Sieg Christi* (Christ's War and Victory), Gabriel Voigtländer's *Er wünscht den Krieg der Liebe zu führen* (He wishes to wage Love's war), Johann Rist's *Militat omnis amans*, Johann Klaj's *Der Engel- und Drachen-Streit* (The Fight of the Angels and the Dragon).

In images of celestial bodies again there is a similarity of images in profane and sacred poetry; the poet's mistress is his sun, moon or star:

Mein gestirntes Paradeis/
mein Licht / mein Mohn / meine Sonne /
mein gantz Himmelreich voll Wonne /
und von was ein Gott sonst weiß/
Das ist Philyrille mir /
mir / der Erden unter ihr.

Paul Fleming, *Oden*

(My starry paradise, my light, my moon, my sun, my whole heavenly kingdom full of bliss and of God knows what else, that is Philyrille to me who am the earth below her.)

In devotional poems, echoing the Song of Songs and perhaps also the Revelation, the Virgin is the moon and Christ the sun,
the true sun triumphantly contrasted with the earthly sun of pagan worship:

Schön als der Mon uns fürgestellt / ...
und wie die Sonn von Gott erwählt / ...

"Unser lieben Frawen Litany", Konstanzer Gesangbüchlein 1613

(Set before us, beautiful like the moon, and like the sun chosen by God. - "Litany of our dear Lady", Constance Song Book)

Die Morgenröth erbleichert /
Und scheinet gleich dem koth /
So nur man sie vergleicht
Gen seine wänglein roth.

Spee, "Die gesponß Jesu suchet jhren Bräutigam / vmd findet jhn auff dem Creutzweg"

(The dawn grows pale and seems like mud when one only compares it with his red cheeks. - "The bride of Jesus seeks her bridegroom and finds him at the crossroads")

In Gottfried Arnold's "Uber etliche brennende lichter die auff einem gemeinen grund stehen" (On some burning lights which stand together in a place) -

O Glantz der herrlichkeit / du unsre sonne /
Der du der lichter brunn und ursprung bist :
Schick uns dein feur aus deines reiches wonne / ...
... Gott / den brunquell alles guten / kan man ohne nich schauen /

Christe / o du licht der warheit / meines lebens sichre bahn:

(O splendour of majesty, our sun, who art the well and spring of lights: send us thy fire out of the bliss of thy kingdom ... We cannot see God, the well-head of all goodness, without thee, Christ, o thou light of truth, the safe path of my life :)

- Christ is the sun without which we could not see God; this is a new idea as far as it is fully formulated, but possibly it has always been implied in the noticeable predominance of the image of Christ as the sun over that of God as the sun. Here again
a parallel could be drawn with English Metaphysical poetry, for example with Crashaw's "Glorious Epiphanie" with its central motif of Christ the true sun.

In the images of plants, we may surmise, it is the influence of the Song of Songs both in its secular and in its religious interpretation, which accounts for the similarity of such images in profane and sacred poetry. The rose and the lily are equally often used for praising the beauty of a mistress and for expressing the glory and beauty of Christ:

Mein Hertz heist dich ein Lilium /

darzu ein wolrischende Blium /

"Hilarius Lustig", Liederbäcchlein

(My heart calls thee a lily and a flower with a pleasant scent. - The Little Book of Songs)

Cf. its intentional spiritual counterpart:

Mein Hertz heißt dich ein lilium,
dein süßes Evangelium
ist lauter Milch und Honig:

Philippus Nicolai, "Ein Geistlich Braut-Lied"

(My heart calls thee a lily, thy sweet gospel is pure milk and honey. - "A Spiritual Marriage Song")

Schnee- und Lilgen weisse Wangen
Die von rother Rosen hangen.

Georg Greflinger, "An eine vortreffliche schöne von Tugend begabte Jungfrau"

(Snow- and lily-white cheeks full of red roses. - "On an excellent beautiful and virtuous maiden")

Die Wangen sind ein Feld, wo Rosen und Jasmin
Einander zur Verhöhnung blüh'n
Und wo viel Gratien und ... Amoretten
Theils ihren Schlaf ... betten,
Theils wie ein Bienenschwarm, wenn er den Klee
beraubt,
... begierig sind, den Honigseim zu lecken,
Den nur die Götter schmecken,
Weil ihn die Kostbarkeit dem Menschen nicht erlaubt.

J. C. Günther, "Der Abriss seiner Liebsten"

(The cheeks are a field where roses and jasmine blossom together in proud mockery of one another, and where many graces and ... amoretti at times ... make their beds to sleep, at times, like a swarm of bees, when they rob the clover, crave to sip the honey which the gods only taste, for it is too costly for men. - "A Sketch of his Beloved")

A similar image forms the subject of a devotional poem by Scheffler; "Die Psyche begehrt ein Bienelän auff den Wunden Jesu zu seyn" (Psyche desires to be a bee in the wounds of Jesus):

Ach ach wie süß' ist dieser Thau /
Wie lieblich meiner Seele !
Wie gutt ists auff solcher Au /
Und solcher Blumen-Höle!
Laß mich doch stets ein Bienelän
Auff diesen Rosen-Wunden seyn.

(Oh, oh, how sweet is this dew, how delightful to my soul! How good it is to be on such a meadow and dell of flowers! Let me then be a bee in this rose of wounds.)

Here the rose is the rose of Christ's wounds, a typical baroque image popular with the mystics, perhaps because it unites not only the pleasant aesthetic memories of the flower and the equally pleasant literary associations of the Song of Songs and of the whole secular tradition, but also, in a startling contrast, the vivid physical realisation of the red bleeding wounds:

Die stirn hat er bestecket
Mit rothen Bliimelein /
In händen außgestrecket
Er trug zweo Rosen fein.

Den ruch als ich empfande
Von beyden Rosen roth
Im eylen mir geschwande
Bay viel zu süisser noth.

Spee, "Die gesponß Jesu suchet jhren Erbütigam /vnd findet jhn auff dem Creutzweg"
(His forehead is adorned with small red flowers, in his outstretched hands he carries two lovely roses. When I perceived the perfume of both roses, suddenly I felt faint through over-sweet anguish. — "The bride of Jesus seeks her bridgroom and finds him at the crossroads."

In a contemplative mood the short-lived plants symbolise the life of man:

Das Leben ist
Ein Laub / das grunt und falt geschwind.
... Die Blum so nach der Blüt verfällt.
... Ein Gras / das leichtlich wird verdrücket.

Georg Philipp Harsdörffer, "Das Leben des Menschen"

(Life is a leaf that grows green and fades quickly ... The flower that decays so after its blossoming time ... a blade of grass that is easily crushed. — "The Life of Man"

But such images are less typical, and lack perhaps the impact on the imagination, of images charged with such emotional significance as the lily and the rose, which became the cherished property of baroque poetry.

In images of animals, too, the emotional value is of first importance. The images of the dove and the lamb appear in love lyrics —

Glaubet, daß die ich erkiest,
Zärter als ein Lämmlein ist,
Das man wil der Mutter rauben:
Als ein Täublein, das man eest,
Das da kis iht, und lernt im Nest
An der Alten Schnabel klauben.

Czepko, "Coridon und Phyllis"

(Believe me that the one I have chosen, is softer than a little lamb stolen from its mother; than a little dove which we eat, which here coos and learns in its nest to eat from the old ones' beaks.)

The poet compares his mistress to a white swan:
Weisses Hälblein / gleich den Schwanen /

Georg Grefflinger, "An eine vortreffliche schöne und Tugend begabte Jungfrau"

(White neck like the swans' ... - "On an excellent beautiful and virtuous maiden")

- or, in a less idealistic mood, to a decoy-bird:

(Bräste) ... Lockvogel, derer thon ein freyes Hertz bind.

Hofmannswaldau, "Lob-rede an das liebwertheste Frauenzimmer"

(Breasts ... Decoy-birds whose voice binds a free heart. - "Praise of the most lovable Lady")

The medieval bestiary provides the image of the lover relishing the flame of his passion like a salamander:

... Und itzund muß ich, mir zur pein,
    Ein salamander seyn,
    Der in der strahlen glut, so Daphnens augen
    Verschmachtet, und doch auch sein schmachtend
    hertze nährt.

Gottlieb Stolle, "Die verliebte verwandelung"

(And now I must be to my sorrow a salamander who faints in the heat of the rays which Daphne's eyes nourish, and yet feeds his fainting hearttherein. - "The Lover's Transformation")

The traditional emblems of the liturgy (Christ as the Dove, the Lamb and the Pelican) are of course quite frequent in devotional poetry:

Ein Lämmlein geht und trägt die schuld
    Der Welt und ihrer Kinder /
    Es geht / und trägt in Geduld
    Die Sünden aller Sünder:

Paul Gerhardt, "Passion-Lied"

(A lamb goes carrying the guilt of the world and of its children, it goes carrying patiently the sins of all sinners. - "Passion Song")
Wo ist mein Täublein iahr Gefieder?
Wo ist mein treuer Pelican
Der mich lebendig machen kan?
Ach daß ich jhn doch finde wieder!

Scheffler, "Sie fraget bey den Creaturen nach ihrem Allerliebsten"

Where is my dove, ye feathered tribes? Where is my faithful pelican who can revive me? O would that I found him again! - "The Soul asks all creatures about her Best-beloved"

(Fuch beschwer ich /ihr Gefieder / Zeigt mir meinen Pelican ; Lasset meinen Adler nieder / Daß er mich bedecken kan.

Benjamin Schmolck, "Sulamith"

(I charge you, ye feathered tribes, show me my pelican; let my eagle alight so that he may shelter me.)

An eagle as the symbol of Christ is a frequent image of obvious origin - the King of Kings represented by the king of birds:

Lob den Herren/der alles so herrlich regiert /
Der dich auff Adelers Pittichen sicher geführet /

Joachim Neander, "Der Lobende"

(Praise the Lord who directs everything so wonderfully, who leads you safely on an eagle's wings. - "The Singer of Praise")

Worth mentioning is the curious conceit of man swimming like a fish in God:

Du schwebst, als wie ein Fisch im Wasser gantz in Gott,
Gantz in dir, gantz umb dich ist er. Halt sein Geboth.

Czepko, "Ueberall", Monodisticha

(You swim, like a fish in water, in God, he is entirely in you, all round you. Keep his commandments. - "Everywhere")

A similar conceit is to be found in Daniel Sudermann's "Ein
(I am to find you a device, Sybaris, but what should I suggest? But wait, I have an idea: a hard rock should be seen in the sea, on which the powerful waves beat as if in vain, and as the cornelian has much softness in it, so take, hard-hearted girl, your heart instead.)

or J. C. Günther's "An seine Leonore die immer grünende Hoffnung"

(To his Leonore, evergreen Hope):

Hier will ich kriegen,
Hier will ich siegen;
Ein grunes Feld
Dient meinem Schilde
Zum Wappenbilde,
Bey dem ein Palmenbaum zwey Ancker halt.

(Here shall I wage war, here shall I win; a green field by which a palm-tree bears two anchors, will be the heraldic figure for my shield.)

- all these poems are in fact "mute emblems", they are poems written as it were as an accompaniment to an imaginary emblem picture. A slightly more subtle version of this type of poem is Spee's introductory poem to his Trutznachtigall (Better than the Nightingale), explaining the curious title as if it were a verbal emblem:

Trutz-Nachtigall mans nennet /
Ist wund vom süssem Pfeil:
Die lieb es lieblich brennet /
Wird nie der Wunden heil.

(It is called Better-than-Nightingale, it carries a wound from a sweet arrow: it burns sweetly with love, its wounds will never heal.)

Of emblematic origin are also the numerous poems on the significance of colours, of which Opitz's "Bedeutung der Farben" (The Meaning of Colours) is a good example:

Weiss / ist gantz keusche Reinigkeit /
Leibfarbe / weh und Schmertzen leiden /
Meergrüne / vom einander scheiden /
Schwartz / ist Betrübnuß / Angst / und Leid /
Roth, innigliche Liebesbrunst / Vnd Himmelblo / sehr hohe sinnen / etc. etc.

(White means chaste purity, flesh-colour sorrow and pain, sea-green - you will part, black is grief, anguish and pain, red, heartfelt ardour of love, and sky-blue, high-mindedness ...)

A similar interpretation of colours is repeated in all such poems. Only Justus Sieber's "Lob der grünen Farbe" ("Praise of green colour"), a Marvellian eulogy, breaks away from this convention a little:

... Weg Roth / weg Blau: das Grün ist mein /
Weil grüne Büsche' und Wiesen seyn /
Weil diß an Hoffnung reiches Blut /
Dem Leibe seine Pflege thut.

(Away, red, away, blue! the green is mine, because bushes and meadows are green, because this blood rich in hope tends the body.)

There is a strong emblematic element in the images of natural features and of water; the Bible has obviously also played its part. Christ is the rock, and the well, the spring of living water. The image of the well in particular returns with curious insistence:

Wo ist mein Brunn jhr kühlen brünne?
Jhr Bache wo ist mein Bach?
Mein Ursprung dem ich gehe mach?
Mein Quall auff den ich immer sinne?

Scheffler, "Sie fraget bey den Creaturen nach jhrem Allerliebstem"

(Where is my well, ye cool wells? Ye brooks, where is my brook? My spring which I am following? My fountain of which I think all the time? - "The Soul asks the creatures about her Beloved")

Frische Brunnen / helle Quellen /
Ist mein Jacobs-Brunn nicht hier?
Stellet doch ihr blanken Wellen
Meinen Lebens-Bach mir für, ...

Benjamin Schmolck, "Sulamith"
(Fresh wells, light fountains, is my Jacob's well not here? Bring me my life-brook, ye shining waves.)

The following image of the Moor washed white in Christ's blood was universally known (it appears for instance in Crashaw's divine epigram, "On the Baptised Aethiopian"):  

Wasch, Jesus, wasch mich kohlen schwäertszern Mohr! Das Jesus blutt kan Blutt mit Schnee anweissen!  

Kuhlmann, "Der 7. Gesang"

(Wash, Jesus, wash me, a coa1-black Moor; The blood of Jesus can whiten blood with snow! - "The Seventh Song")

Reminiscent of Crashaw's "Weeper" is the image of the welling tears of the Magdalen:

Ich / die ich vor lag Tag von Nacht  
Im Sünden-Schlamm / gleich einem Meere /  
Wit auff der heilgen Füsse Bad /  
Das Simon selbst geweigert hat /  
Ein Buß-gewässer hin zu flössen /  
Der Thränen Brunnquell gantz entblössen.  

Christoph Kaldenbach, "Magdalena die Sünderin"

(I who ere this lay day and night in the mire of sin as in a sea, shall open the fountain of tears to let flow the penitential flood for a bath for the holy feet, which Simon himself had refused to do. - "Magdalen the Sinner")

The recurring parable of the stormy sea of human life, usually elaborated in detail, has also the quality of an emblem, its universal appeal and its didacticism:

Mein Schiff ist entzwey. Mein Güt ist weggeschwommen. Nichts mehr das ist mein Rest; das macht kurze Summen.  

Paul Fleming, "Zur Zeit seiner Verstossung"

(My ship is wrecked. My goods have been washed away. The balance is none, which makes short reckoning. - "At the Time of his Having Been Rejected")
Die Welt ist wie ein Meer; ihr Leben ist gar bitter; 
Der Teufel macht Sturm; die Sünden / Ungewitter; 
Drauff ist die Kirch / ein Schiff; vnd Christus Steuer-Mann; 
Sein Segel / ist die Rew; das Creutze / seine Fahn; 
Der Wind / ist Gottes Geist; der Ancker / das Vertrauen / 
Dadurch man hier kann stehn vnd dort im Port sich schauen.

Friedrich von Logau, "Die Welt"

(The world is like a sea; your life is quite bitter; the devil 
causes the gale; the sins, the storm; on this sea the Church is 
a ship; and Christ her pilot; her sail is repentance; the cross 
her flag; the wind is Holy Ghost; the anchor is faith, through 
which we can stand here and see ourselves in port there. - "The 
World")

The influence of the Bible, naturally strong, frequently 
shows itself indirectly, in such images for instance as those 
which we have quoted above, where a symbol can be traced back 
to the Scriptures, or at least its meaning can be seen as 
coloured by scriptural associations.

Direct echoes of the Bible come most often from the Song of 
Songs whose sensual symbolism of spiritual experience spoke a 
language familiar to the seventeenth century. Bible images 
are used with dramatic effect; a favourite device is a conceit 
of two biblical references, as in Rompler von Löwenhalt's "Zu 
einer Leich" (To a Corpse) where Christ's blood becomes the blood 
on the doorposts of Jewish houses in Egypt, or in Paul Fleming's 
"An meinen Erlöser" (To my Redeemer) where it is the blood 
reddening the door to the sinner's heart. In Gryphius' "Auf den 
Sonntag des liebreichen Samariten" (On the Sunday of the 
Loving Samaritan) Christ is identified with the Good Samaritan:

... Ach Samarite komm 
Und geuß mir Öl und Wein / dein Blut- und Wasserstrom 
Aus deiner Seiten ein!
(O Samaritan, come and pour oil and wine, the stream of thy blood and water out of thy side!)

Of classical allusions by far the most interesting are those used in poems on Christian themes. Wenzel Scherffer von Scherffenstein in his "Lobspruch deß Krippleins Christi" (Praise of Christ's Manger) calls Christ "der starke Schlangenzwinger" (the strong conqueror of serpents) and "der Sünden Mithridat" (Mithridates of sins); in August Augspurger's "Der verzweiflende Verräter Judas" (The despairing Traitor Judas), Judas complains:

O aller Lasten Last! Kein Atlas kan ertragen
Das was ich ertragen muß.

(O burden of burdens! No Atlas can bear what I must.)

and in Simon Dach's "Vor-Jahrs Liedchen" (The Song of Early Spring) the Holy Word is compared to Jove's golden rain. Mostly the classical allusions are of the conventional kind; of topical interest is Rist's elaborate parallel between the fall of Troy and the sacking of Magdeburg ("Die Alte / vortreffliche vnd weitberühmte Stadt Magdeburg" - The old, splendid and world-famous city of Magdeburg).

Rather surprisingly in this "learned" poetry there is very little indication of knowledge of, and interest in, either the medieval system of the universe or the New Philosophy. There are one or two references to the music of the spheres:

Wan moregenröth sich zieret
Mit zartem rosen glantz /
Vnd sitzam sich verliehret
Der nächtlich Sternen-tanz:

Spee, "Eingang zu diesem Büchlein"

(When the dawn adorns itself with soft rosy glow, and the nightly dance of stars disappears modestly. - "Introduction to this little book")
Ja fürwar die gantze Welt
Ist ein Music wolbestellt /
   Die gar nie mag schweigen /
Himmels-Kreyß und Firmament /
Wie auch die vier Element
Seyn all voller Geigen /

Procopius von Templin, "Gott lobende Welt-Music"

(Yes, truly the whole world is a well-appointed music which can never fall silent, the heavenly sphere and firmament, as well as the four elements are full of violins ... - "The World Music, Praising God")

- or to the old superstitions:

   (Die Brüste) ... Ein bezoar, der auch entseelten giebt das leben;

Hofmannswaldau, "Lobrede an das liebwertheste Frauenzimmer"

(The breasts ... A bezoar which gives life even to the lifeless; - "Praise of the most lovable Lady")

- but they are exceptional. Of all the wonders of science only the magnet, that favourite of the English Metaphysical poets, is mentioned. The image of the compass, popular with the emblem writers, is used by Catharina Regina von Greiffenberg in a religious poem, "Auf meinen Vorsatz / die Heilige Schrift zu lesen" (On my Resolution to read the Holy Scriptures):

   O Geist / mein Steuermann! Herr Christ / mein Nordesstern!
   lenk' und erleucht mich stät's / daß sich mein Zünglein wende /
   mit deinem Blut geschmiert / nach dir / ob ich noch fern /
   und an dem Hafen bald der Seeligkeit anlände.

   (O Holy Ghost my pilot! Lord Jesus, my polar star: Lead and enlighten me ever so that my needle, smeared with thy blood, turns always to thee, if I am still far, and I am soon in the port of bliss.)

Rist and Hofmannswaldau use this image in love poems; Hofmannswaldau's "Abriß eines verliebten" (Sketch of a Man in Love)
contains a typical example:

... Das Hertze, so er führet,
Vergleichet sich dem metall, das ein magnet geführet.

(The heart, in such a way he behaves, resembles a metal which had been touched by a magnet.)

The absence of any truly learned images is difficult to explain, unless we account for it by the political situation in Germany, not propitious by any means to the propagation of new knowledge. Yet Gryphius' poem "Über Nicolai Copernici Bild" shows that he, for one, was very well aware of the new cosmic theories, and, judging by the lines quoted below, as well as by such relevant biographical facts as we possess, sympathised with them:

... Dem nicht der herbe Neid die Sinnen hat gebunden,
Die Sinnen, die den Lauf der Erden neu gefunden;
Der du der Alten Träum und Dünkel widerlegt ...

(Thou ... Whose mind bitter envy did not bind, the mind that re-discovered the course of the earth; Thou who hast refuted the dreams and the conceit of the ancients ...)

There is a similar indifference to the heritage of medieval beliefs. Was it still the belated Opitzian humanism, scorning the "Dark Ages"? Whatever the cause for this indifference to medieval learning, there is more interest shown in the practical aspects of knowledge. Images of sickness and medicine are plentiful both in sacred and in profane poetry. Christ (or his blood) is the all-healing physician, an image natural to any reader of the New Testament, but here employed with a slightly erotic colouring. The image of the love-sick and his healer was of

1) cf. Hugh Powell, "Andreas Gryphius and the 'New Philosophy'", German Life & Letters, July 1952
course one of the stock-in-trade images of the courtly love poet:

Nach dir ist mir, gratiosa coeli rosa, kranck, und glümet mein Hertz, durch Liebe verwundet.

Philippus Nicolai, "Ein Geistlich Braut-Lied"

(I am sick with longing for thee, gratiosa coeli rosa, and my heart burns, wounded by love. - "A Spiritual Marriage Song")

Thu mich mitt Schmertz anfällen / Doch sey sein trew mein Pfand: Dann Wen du thust Verwunden / Der würt gewiß Gesund:

Johann Valentin Andrea, "Das bitter sweet Creutz"

(Fill me with pain, yet His faith will be my pledge: for whom Thou dost wound, he will certainly recover. - "The bitter-sweet Cross")

The similarity with the love poems is obvious, for instance with Hofmannswaldau's "Auf den mund" (On the Mouth):

Mund! dessen balsam uns kan stärcken und verletzen.
(Mouth! whose balsam can strengthen and wound us.)

The maladies are always referred to in general terms; indeed a poem like Christoph Führer von Haimendorf's "Unrecht Guth" ("Ill-gotten Gain"), in which injustice is compared to various diseases, is rather an exception.

A serious moral tone prevails in images of travel, with their recurring motif of the journey through life to death:

Du thust sie über sich die rechte Strasse weisen Zum wahren Vaterlandt:

Christian Cunrad, "Ein Hirten-Gespräch"
(Thou dost direct them to the right road towards their true home. - "A Shepherds' Dialogue")

In images of the theatre, too, the moral is the thing; Rist's poem on the murder of Wallenstein, "Als die wunderbare / oder vielmehr ohnverhoffte Zeitung erschallete / daß der Hertzog von Friedland zu Eger wehre ermordet werden" (As the wonderful, or rather unhoped-for news was heard that the Duke of Friedland had been murdered at Eger) is a typical example:

Was ist dieß Leben doch? Ein Trauerspiel ists zu nennen / Da ist der Anfang gut / auch wie wirs wünschen können / Das Mittel voller Angst / das End' ist Hertzeleid / Ja wol der bitte Todt ...

(What then is life? It should be called a tragedy, for the beginning is as good as we could wish it to be, the middle is full of anguish, and the end is deep sorrow, indeed bitter death ...)

Verbally inspired images, dependent on literary conventions and traditions, are characteristic of much of German baroque poetry, as we have had occasion to observe. It is in this respect particularly that we feel the difference between the German poetry of the seventeenth century and contemporary English poetry. But in images which depend for their effect on the reader's knowledge of the cultural background, and in the wit which seized on any opportunity to elaborate a relationship between incongruous ideas or images, German baroque and English Metaphysical poetry were at one. If there was a similarity in their characteristic mode of expression - the conceit - there was also an affinity of mood, of the strange seriousness which underlined both baroque and Metaphysical poetry. Vanitas vanitatum, the mutability of
human fate, and especially the last change of all, death and decay, are the favourite themes of seventeenth-century poetry. Constant awareness of this shadow over human fate gives to devotional poetry of the period its passionate intensity, and accounts for its general popularity at the time. The same apprehension may be detected even in the most abandoned love lyrics. It is surely no coincidence that in the seventeenth century variations on Ronsard's *Cuillez dès aujourd'hui les roses de la vie,* and Catullus' *Vivamus, mea Lesbia* are the most popular themes of love poetry, in which lightness of wit and frivolity of amour courtois mix in a startling contrast with meditations on the transitoriness of life.

J. C. Günther's short poem "Als er der Phillis einen Ring mit einem Totenkopf überreichte" (As he gave to Phillis a ring with a skull), quoted below, seems to epitomise what is most characteristic of the baroque era: in matter, the preoccupation with death and with the fleeting instant of pleasure; in form, the delight in linking together with every appearance of logic the most heterogenous images. Günther is of course almost outside the frame of this study (he died in 1723), but the "last Silesian" seems oddly to embody all the passions and terrors of his predecessors of the baroque period. This surely is a fitting

1) As Mr W.J. Milch points out in his study "Metaphysical Poetry and the German 'Barocklyrik'*, Comparative Literature Studies, XXIII-XXIV, 1946, it is characteristic of the history of German baroque, as distinct from English Metaphysical poetry, that it ends rather than begins, with a poet of major literary importance.
epilogue:

Herschrick nicht vor dem Liebeszeichen,
Es trägt unser künftig Bild.
Vor dem nur die allein erbleichen,
Bei welchen die Vernunft nichts gält.
Wie schickt sich aber Eis und Flammen?
Es schickt und reimt sich gar zu schön,
Denn beide sind von gleicher Stärke
Und spielen ihre Wunderwerke
Mit allen, die auf Erden gehn.

Ich gebe dir dies Pfand zur Lehre:
Das Gold bedeutet feste Treu,
Der Ring, daß uns die Zeit verehre,
Die Täubchen, wie vergnügt man sei,
Der Kopf erinnert dich des Lebens;
Im Grab ist aller Wunsch vergebens,
Drum lieb und lebe, weil man kann,
Wer weiß, wie bald wir wandern müssen!
Das Leben steckt in treuen Küssen,
Ach! fang den Augenblick noch an!

(Shrink not from the love-token, it bears our future effigy, before which only those grow pale, to whom reason means nothing. But how do ice and flames fit together? How do love and death rhyme? They fit and rhyme far too well, for they both are equally strong, and work their wonders with all those who walk the earth. I give you this pledge to teach you; the gold means true faith, the ring, that Time is propitious to us, the doves, how happy we are, the skull reminds you of life: in the grave all wishes are in vain, therefore love and live, while you may, who knows how soon we shall have to go! Life is contained in true kisses, oh! do begin this moment!)

The twin themes of the poem are love and death, symbolised by the ring with the skull. The poet establishes a link between them in a conceit strangely reminiscent of the medieval syllogism. In the second stanza the symbolism of the individual features of the ring is explained in a series of miniature emblems: gold stands for constancy, the ring for Time's favour, the doves for happiness - and the skull stands for life with its constant reminder of death. From this philosophy the poet turns abruptly to his wooing, ending with the plea to begin the momentary
happiness.

To us it may seem a strange wooing, surrounded by the paraphernalia of death, but the robust sensibility of the seventeenth century appreciated the symbolism of the skull in a ring meant as a lover's pledge, as a witty conceit expressing a universally accepted thought.

The intellectual element in this love poem is self-evident, and so is the mirthless vision of life and death which had inspired it. It is not a particularly good poem, but it illustrates well an attitude to life which was typical of the period: the fear of death, the acceptance of death as a reality, and the determined emphasis, often crudely expressed, on the short-lived pleasures of life. This attitude is equally typical of contemporary English poetry, and underlines the similarity, notwithstanding the considerable differences in scope and accomplishment. The hedonism of the sentiments expressed in some love poems is but the reverse of the coin to the deep devotion which marks many other poems, and we often find poets speaking with equal ease and sincerity in the language of angels and that of men. This phenomenon is in fact one of the characteristics of the seventeenth century, and should perhaps be regarded as yet another aspect of the desire to unite flesh and spirit.

To sum up then, German poetry of the seventeenth century was lacking in subtlety of thought and expression; there was a certain coarseness there, natural perhaps, for the German tongue had to wait longer for its Shakespeare and Milton. The seventeenth-century German poet was something of a pioneer still, trying to express
the modern complexities of feeling in a language not pliable and fine enough yet. Hence the verbal conglomerations, the experimentalism, the verbosity, and of course the inevitable lapses of taste. But although coarsely drawn, the pattern of thought and feeling, reflected in the imagery, was similar to that of the English Metaphysicals. In many instances throughout this chapter this similarity has been pointed out, but apart from particular coincidences the affinity of atmosphere, of feeling and of the mode of expression - in other words, of imagery - is quite remarkable.

The first aim of this chapter has been to emphasize further the characteristic qualities of the imagery of the English Metaphysicals indirectly, by establishing points of resemblance - and difference - in German baroque poetry. But although the quality of German baroque poetry per se was therefore of secondary importance in this study, yet it is hoped that its value has been established. It has been said (The Times Literary Supplement, 11 June 1938), that "Whether or not it is baroque, the German lyric in the seventeenth century is no great shakes"; on the whole probably, compared with the phenomenal brilliance of contemporary England, it was not. But some of the poets of the German baroque - Opitz perhaps, Gryphius, Günther and a few others - surely have

1) Mr. W.J. Milch's study (noted above, p. 309) offers an interesting parallel not only of mood and expression between English Metaphysical and German baroque poetry, but also - allowing for differences in contemporary background and especially in literary heritage - of the development of both these poetical movements.
won a place of honour for all times by their work, transforming the individual's elation and agony into lasting poetry. In these poets, even if they are but few, the Rosen-Wunde, the Rose of Wounds, still flowers.
In the preceding chapters we have considered to what extent the political, intellectual and religious developments in a country could influence its "climate of opinion" and so, indirectly, its poetry. The suggestion has been put forward that there was a connection between the sense of insecurity, both spiritual and material, of the seventeenth century, and the passionate search for security in God, which characterized the poetry of the time. But political background, however distressing, has so far been only an indirect factor to which it would have been difficult to trace with any certainty a particular trait in the poetry written during this period in England or Germany.

In Bohemia, however, the position is entirely and tragically different. There the violent political changes of 1620 and after worked with a decisive clarity. The Protestant party which had refused to accept Ferdinand II, an ardent Catholic, as the King of Bohemia, and had elected the Elector Palatine, Frederick, in his stead, was defeated in the battle of the White Mountain on 8 November 1620. Frederick and his court escaped, Prague capitulated, and with it the whole kingdom. The leaders of the Protestant party tried too late to negotiate
for amnesty and religious tolerance; as Ferdinand II believed that it was his sacred duty to rescue Bohemia from heresy and restore her to the true Church, the rebels had to be punished in an exemplary fashion, not at once, but half a year later, when the Imperial power was safely installed in Bohemia.

Then, on 21 June 1621, twenty-six rebels were executed publicly in the Old Town Square in Prague: twenty-six leading men of Czech public life, among them the brilliant soldier and traveller Kristof Harant z Polzic, the politician Václav Budovec z Budova, Count Šlik and the famous surgeon Jan Jesenius. Those of the Protestant leaders who escaped the scaffold had two roads open to them - one to the Catholic church, the other across the frontier, to Germany, Poland, Slovakia, or even farther afield. Among those who chose exile were not only noblemen, clergy, politicians, in short the intelligentsia, but burghers and peasants as well, true to their Protestant faith, and afraid of life under Catholic masters. These new masters, the nouveaux riches of the Hapsburg régime in Bohemia, the Buquoys, Marradases, Trauttmansdorfs, Clary de Rivas, de Huertas, were soldiers of fortune, rewarded for their prowess, foreigners with no love for the land or her people. They were loyal sons of the Church that had helped them to their rich estates, and there was no room for Protestant heresy on their land.

Between 1620-26 the stream of refugees never ceased. It is difficult to estimate how many people left Bohemia in this way; contemporary accounts put the figure at about 30,000 families, but the total appears to have been considerably higher. Intellectually at any rate, the exiles form a formidable group, which
included Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius), one of the greatest men Bohemia ever had, the historians Pavel Stránský and Pavel Skála ze Zhoře, the artist Václav Hollar. They went, pathetically hopeful of their return, of help from the Protestant League which would restore to the kingdom of Bohemia its ancient freedom. They had their faith, their precious Bible of the Czech Brethren, and to these they clung throughout the long agony of their hopes.

To realise the full extent of this tragedy, we have to recall the great and promising heritage of a living cultural tradition in Bohemia before the catastrophic developments of 1620 and after. It is true, the fourteenth-century early blossoming of humanism under Charles IV, when Petrarck and Cola di Rienzi found it profitable to stay in Prague at the Emperor's court, came to an abrupt end with the outbreak of the Hussite war. But although for the next hundred years Bohemia was a land of heretics, with whom their western and southern neighbours would have no truck except in the field of battle, yet during this cultural isolation out of the seemingly arid ground of fierce Protestantism there grew a truly national culture, religious in character and nationalist in outlook. Independent of foreign models, it produced a literature of its own, of which the hymn "Kdož jste Boží bojovníci" (Ye who are the Lord's warriors) is perhaps the most typical, and most beautiful, expression. A late fruit of this Hussite culture was in the nineties of the sixteenth century the Czech translation of the Bible, executed by the Unity of Brethren of
Kralice. The importance of the Kralice Bible can hardly be expressed; its influence on the language equals that of the Authorised Version on the formation of literary English, but the Kralice Bible, by the force of historical developments, became more than a model of the purest and most beautiful Czech; it became the symbol of the national heritage, independence and of the past glory of a nation that used to have a culture of its own, and a continuous literary tradition.

The late sixteenth century was the Golden Age of this literary tradition. A belated synthesis of the vigorous native Hussite spirit with the learned grace of the European humanist tradition produced men like the lawyer Viktorin Kornel ze Všehrd, and Ctibor Tovačovský z Cimburka, historians like Daniel Adam z Veleslavín, Bartoš the Scribe, Václav Hájek z Libočan, philologists like Veleslavín and Jan Blahoslav, or Vavřinec Benedikti z Nudožer. The outstanding figure of this period is Jan Blahoslav, Poet, translator of the Bible, musician, grammarian, rhetorician, he remains to us the symbol of an unfulfilled promise of a richer and more liberal culture, with its roots firmly in the Hussite faith and its nationalism. But with the political unrest, the riots, and finally with the catastrophe of the White Mountain, came the end of all hopes for a Protestant humanist culture such as Blahoslav was working for, and instead we see the exiles with their Bible as a last link with their native country.

The importance of the Czech Bible for these men is inestimable; it was not only their spiritual solace, but their treasury of
the mother tongue, the only link with the language which they were destined to forget, if not in the first generation, then in the second or third (as witness the Diary of Jan Jiří Harant z Polžic where the number of German words used throughout will strike even a casual reader). Naturally, they wrote in a language full of echoes of the Bible, deliberately archaic in style. Development was impossible in this literature which either died with the first generation of emigrants, or (as in the case of refugees to Slovakia) under new conditions changed its character and identified itself with the literature of the country of adoption.

In comparison with Catholic literature in Bohemia, the poetry of the exiles is even more religious in character, small in volume, largely written in the form of hymns, and preoccupied with the personal relationship of the individual with his God, and with man's suffering on earth and the ultimate peace to be found in God. Deeply moving in its sincerity, resignation and faith, the literature of the Czech exiles remains the tragic last word of a dying community.

In Bohemia, meanwhile, literature of a different character was in the process of being created under the auspices of the Catholic Church. Its first and foremost aim was, to put it bluntly, religious propaganda, aiming at the mass of the common people. This purpose dictated naturally the choice of subject and the form of presentation. The literature had to attract attention and hold interest, and there was no hesitation about using sensational methods in order to succeed. Hagiology offered
a wide choice of legends in which the splendour of pagan courts was matched by the colours of bloody martyrdom. Miracles performed by the saints appealed with equal force to the popular imagination. The cult of saints, particularly of the Virgin Mary, of St. John Nepomuk the martyr (who was to oust from popular imagination the memory of Jan Hus, the martyr of the Reformation), St. Wenceslas, the ancient patron of Bohemia, together with a host of other saints, began to gain ground.

The poetry written in support of this missionary work among the Bohemian heretics is of course of a kind suited to the taste of a simple audience on which the long wars and the consequent collapse of the educational system of the old kingdom had left their mark. The crude simplicity of this propaganda literature is all the more conspicuous in comparison with the visual arts where a considerably higher standard was achieved and maintained. But painters like Karel Škréta or Petr Brandl and sculptors like Matyáš Braun could hope for interest and support from the new foreign nobility who had no understanding of, and interest in, literature written in the language of Czech peasants. There was no interest in Czech literature among the educated classes, and the "písmák", the village Bible reader and scholar, belonged to the past. Instead of the Bible and the theological and moral treatises of the Brethren, burnt by the Jesuits, popular literature in Bohemia in the fifties of the seventeenth century consists of versified epics describing the miracles and martyrdoms of the saints, of songs and prayers addressed to Christ, to the Virgin or to individual patron saints. A moral is hardly ever
lacking, but the main emphasis is on the story or picture, told simply, with plenty of concrete detail.

These poems are crude, naive, often unwittingly comic, sometimes lacking in taste, yet they have a charm of their own. The Fathers, for most of this writing was done by priests, particularly by Jesuits, in their anxiety to form a link with the pre-Reformation past, went back to the native song tradition. Only later in the century, when the new Catholic literature found a firm footing in the country, do we find any aspiration to more sophisticated poetry, often in the form of translations (e.g. of Spee's *Trutzachtigall*, translated by Felix Kadlinský, 1613-1675, Bedřich Bridel, 1619-1680 and Jan Ignác Dlouhoveský, 1638-1701). Even in the work of more sophisticated poets like Adam Michna z Otradovic (? - 1676) or Bedřich Bridel there remains something of the rhythm and vocabulary of the folk song; the literature written in Bohemia in the seventeenth century is inexorably circumscribed by its humble and unambitious character. In Bridel's work only do we find any attempt at a poetical expression of the fundamental questions of human existence, particularly in his long poem "Co Bůh? co člověk" (What God? what man?), which in its more sophisticated style, rich in oxymorons, bears traces of the influence of the Spanish mystic St. John of the Cross. Interesting echoes of Bridel's verse may be discerned in the greatest Czech Romantic poem, K. H. Mácha's "Maj" (May), which would suggest that the humble fruits of the Czech baroque were not entirely without use to the poets of the Revival.

The new emotional, subjective poetry introduced in translations
from the German required a new kind of language in which to express the complexity of emotion, unknown in the simple folk tradition. The formal literary language with its echoes of the Scriptures had been broken up, and attempts were made to create a new language. As in contemporary Germany, neologisms - often quite alien to the spirit of the language - were coined in an effort to enrich the Czech tongue and put it on an equal footing with the languages of Western Europe. As the literature of this period was popular in character, and written by men belonging largely to the humbler classes, the language absorbed more and more dialect words and forms. Frequent use of the diminutive is a symptom of this popularisation of the literary language; a more alarming characteristic is the increasing use of colloquialisms and indeed of grammatical lapses in form and syntax. Clearly a need was felt for enlarging the poetical vocabulary, but there were no men of letters, no philologists of any standing to watch over the purity of the language. In such circumstances, with the Germanisation progressing rapidly, the language in which Hus, Chelčický and Komenský wrote, became in the course of the eighteenth century nothing more than a debased country dialect, only saved in the last moment by the men of the Revival.

In the seventeenth century patriotism was still a strong factor in Czech, as in German or English poetry. Czech patriotism of this period, the Jesuit historian Balbín's for example, spoke with an urgent voice, implying that even among the most devout Catholics the dangers of Germanisation which went hand in
hand with the Counter-Reformation, were not unrealised. All antiquarian zeal concentrated on the time before the Hussite troubles, particularly on the ancient days when Bohemia first became a Christian country and when she found her first Christian martyrs and saints - St. Wenceslas, St. Ludmila, St. Prokop the Hermit, St. Ivan.

Patriotism with religious zeal helped to create a new conception of the Czech nation as a "chosen people", selected by God and punished by Him for having departed from the right path. This belief was familiar to the Protestant exiles as well, who found in it a reason for their suffering and a hope for the future.

With this new interest in the history of the country, which was inspired by a desire to rehabilitate Bohemia in the eyes of the Catholic world, came an interest in foreign lands, both in those of the far-flung empire of which Bohemia had now become a part, and in lands oversea. It was not a new interest, as witness the travel books of the sixteenth century, as numerous in Bohemia as anywhere else, but during the gradual return to normal after the long wars it was only natural that interrupted contact with foreign countries should be revived with greater zeal. In accord with the prevailing tone of Czech literature of the later seventeenth century, the greater part of these travel books describe the journeys of missionaries.

Thus we see that, directly or indirectly, most of the literature in Bohemia after 1620 is concerned with the Catholic faith. In lyrical poetry, we find carols, some of them among the loveliest
ever written, Easter hymns, hymns to Jesus, to the Virgin, to the saints. Love lyrics become more frequent only in the later part of the century when the vogue for the pastoral has reached Bohemia (as for instance J.V. Rosa's Oratio Lipirona, 1651). In the years immediately following the wars, secular lyric poetry is represented not by love poems, but by the "laments", such as, for instance, the "Psalm of lamenting Mother Prague", or the bitter peasants' Paternoster, the "Lamentatio Rusticana" of Václav Kozmanecius (1647), modelled intentionally and ironically on the Lord's Prayer. Similarly in epic poetry, legends of the life of Christ, of the Virgin and the saints are the most popular subject, apart from epic descriptions of battles of not so long ago, distributed in broadsheets. A genre apart is didactic poetry written by peasants, by the shepherd Lukáš Volný for instance, who seems to carry the old Hussite tradition of the Bible-reading peasant into the new Catholic world.

In prose the sermon takes the first place as the most powerful instrument of the Faith. Although Bohemia boasted no Abraham a Santa Clara, she had preachers of remarkable ability, such as Jan Ignác Dlouhovský or Bohumír Hynak Bílovský (1659-1725). Next to the collections of sermons, homilies and meditations, chronicles of the Czech nation, are most important; they were written to prove the Czech nation truly Catholic at heart, in spite of her two hundred years' aberration, and the Czech tongue to be of noble antiquity, equal to the languages of the more sophisticated West. Bohuslav Balbín (1621-1688), Tomáš Pežina z Čehorodu (1629-1680) and Jan Fr. Beckovský (1658-1725), the chief historians of this
period, speak of their country and language with a love and
devotion increased perhaps by their awareness of dangers past
and present.

Travel literature, too, as was mentioned above, had a distinct-
ly religious flavour; the oversea missions of the various religious
orders, of the Society of Jesus in particular, form the subject
of the great majority of these writings.

An outstanding feature of the literary scene in Bohemia was
the drama, a new addition, new at any rate in scope and importance.
It was the Society of Jesus which introduced lavishly produced
theatrical performances in their schools, in choirs and churches.
The vogue for drama spread to the palaces and country houses of
the nobility and from there by and by among the people. Religious
themes again prevailed, even in the anonymous plays acted by
village children, which became an annual event in the life of the
village community (so for instance the play on the martyrdom of
St. Dorothea, recorded as still alive in the early nineteenth
century). Yet although the drama played such an important part
in the Counter-Reformation work in Bohemia, it never rose above
the level of worthless mechanical versification and coarse farce.
Perhaps the lack of a native dramatic tradition was to blame;
or perhaps the very nature of the popular success of the drama
as a means of persuasion and conversion made any artistic achieve-
ment impossible and indeed undesirable.

In many ways the drama in Bohemia of the seventeenth century
may be said to epitomise the whole character and purpose of
Czech baroque literature which was largely written for a practical,
even if sacred, purpose: to rescue from heresy those who had erred, to strengthen in their Catholic faith those who were wavering, and to deepen the joy of those secure in the Faith. The public at which this literature aimed was an uneducated, unsophisticated one; there was not much need to appeal to the nobility or intelligentsia, for any members of these classes resident in Bohemia after 1626, or so, were sure to be faithful Catholics, and, as like as not, German-speaking, or at least capable of understanding German easily.

While preserving its religious character, the literature of the Counter-Reformation in Bohemia employed all the devices of secular writing to succeed in its purpose. This was of course in keeping with the favourite Jesuit maxim of the purpose sanctifying the means, and also, incidentally, with the seventeenth-century discovery of the presence of God in all things on earth. There appeared to be no incongruity in using the style and imagery of the folk love song in a devotional poem addressed to Christ or the Virgin, or in putting colloquial speech into the mouth of a martyred saint. Both heaven and hell were painted with naïveté and simplicity such as are to be found in the church paintings of anonymous country painters; the flames of hell had the homely glow of a kitchen fire, and the golden gates and diamond windows of the Heavenly City shone with the splendour of a fairy-tale castle.

Legends of the saints were a particularly popular theme, for not only did they offer a variety of strange and wonderful happenings which fired the simple imagination, but these miracles
of Divine power happened on earth, among people, thus proving the truth of Divine presence among men. The emphasis was on action, on concrete pictures or events; hence the popularity of drama and dramatic monologue which enabled the Church to make the most direct appeal.

There was a noticeable absence of contemplative lyric (Bridel's "Co Bůh? Co člověk?", a poetical variation on the meditations of St. Ignatius of Loyola, was something of an exception), even of contemplative lyric of a religious character. Perhaps there was no room for analysis of the relationship of man and God in the convert’s zeal. Indeed the very abstract conception of God himself receded before, and was overshadowed by, the more concrete figures of Christ, the Virgin and the saints. It is noticeable, however, that in Czech baroque poetry the more sophisticated symbolic representation of Christ and the soul as a pair of lovers appears only later, largely through the translations of poems by Spee. In the popular poems man turns to Christ or the Virgin as a child turns to his parent, seeking shelter and protective love in time of trouble.

The contemplative element, we have noted, is almost non-existent in this poetry, and there is no direct expression of the "baroque tension", such as we found in the German of e.g. Hofmannswaldau or Gryphius. But although Czech baroque poetry does not affect the metaphysics, yet there is perhaps an implicit admission of the existence of the dichotomy of flesh and spirit in the passionate emphasis on divine manifestation on earth, on miracles, on those parts of Christ’s life in which he identified himself
with the common lot of humanity - his birth and death.

The typical baroque, or Metaphysical, image, expressing the abstract in concrete terms, has hence of course a new practical purpose, that of bringing the abstract home to the untrained imagination of the people. But this additional purpose does not alter the basic character of the image. The imagery of Czech baroque poetry displays - within the limits imposed by its character and purpose, which will be noted from time to time in the course of this study - the main characteristics of baroque and Metaphysical imagery as we have learnt to recognise them in the preceding chapters.

It should be noted here that although we shall concentrate on the Catholic poetry written in Bohemia, the work of the Protestant exiles will be touched upon from time to time, if only to observe that even this poetry, necessarily rooted, in spirit as well as in form, in the past, did not remain entirely uninfluenced by the current developments.

As the poetry in Bohemia was addressed largely to a village, or small-town public (for even Prague became little more than a small town in the course of time), it is hardly surprising to find a predominance of images of plants of the field and garden. The rose and the lily are the two most frequent images, and they are used in the same way as in contemporary German poetry, or in Crashaw's hymns: as symbols of Christ's beauty and of his bloody sacrifice:

\[ \text{Vonný kvítku, růžičko má,} \\
\text{přelíbezná zahradko má,} \]
kde travička, kde tvá líčka,
ztratila se krása všecka.

Kde jsou liliové líce,
ach, uplyňe velice,
růžové rtové zoznaly,
když tebe přes ústa prali.

Jan Ignác Blouhovský, Píseň o Ukřižovaném

(Sweet-scented flower, my little rose, my lovely little garden, where is the grass, where are thy cheeks, lost is all the beauty. Where are the lily cheeks, alas, covered with spittle; the rosy lips turned black when they struck Thee on the mouth. - Song on the Crucified One.)

Když dyše líčka rozvažuji,
dvě růže spatřuji,
jež se nad krey červenají,
nad sníh bělejí.
Ne tak malíří maluji,
ne tak růže v poli stojí,
voní ty růže chutněji,
mileji, liběji.

Bedřich Bridel, Jesličky.

(When I contemplate the two cheeks, I see two roses, redder than blood, whiter than snow. Painters do not paint it so, the roses in the field are not like this, the scent of these roses is more tempting, dearer, lovelier. - The Manger.)

Although the roses and lilies in these images are the emblematic flowers of liturgy, we feel that the poet had dwelt with pleasure on the picture of the real flower: even the roses of Christ's cheeks and of his wounds blossom in a little garden or in a field. Other images representing Christ break away from the emblematic tradition altogether. Christ is lovingly called a rosemary, a violet, a lily of the valley, a ripe apricot, a sugar rosemary, a golden marigold: all terms strange perhaps to foreign ears, but in fact familiar endearments of the folk love song.

Religious experience is often described in a dream parable of a walk through a garden. This is a traditional setting of love
songs, combined here with memories of the Agony in the Garden, and of a medieval miracle play representing Christ after Resurrection as the Good Gardener. The two influences, of the Agony in the Garden and of the folk song tradition, are clearly discernible, for instance, in the anonymous poem from Božan's collection Slavíček rajs ký (The Nightingale of Paradise):

Na procházku z kratochvíle
pujdu do zahrady;
kvítky vonné a spánilé
budu tam trhati:
Růže bílé i červené
fialy a rozmarné
rozkřeším hledat

Ach, rozech v velký zářmtek
mne se obracuje,
když kryj zbarvený kvítek
srdece me-spatruje:
způsobem nepřirozeným
rostě kvítek, vyskutku vidím,
klečíc se skloňuje.

(For a pastime I shall take a walk in the garden, to gather sweet-smelling, lovely flowers: seek the joy of roses, both red and white, violets and rosemary. Alas, my joy turns to great sorrow, when my heart beholds the blood-coloured flower: the little flower is growing in a supernatural fashion, indeed I see, it bends down kneeling.)

The Virgin Mary, centre of the growing Marian cult, is addressed in similar terms:

Vítej to lilium bílý,
aneb bílou růžičku
chovaj, miluj roztomile
tuto svou Mařencíčku.

Adam Michna z Otradovic, Panenské narození

(Welcome this white lily or white rose, caress, love her dearly, this little Mary. - The Birth of the Virgin.)

Tré bílé kvíti miluji,
růži červenou schvaluji.
pod stínem tvých ratolestí
odpočivat chci s radostí.

Adam Michna z Otradovic, Mariánské Ave
(I love thy white flowers, praise thy red rose, in the shade of thy branches I would rest with pleasure. - Ave Maria)

The close affinity of these images with the folk song tradition as well as with the liturgical symbolism explains their popularity. Names of flowers of the field and garden were the warmest endearments a lover could think of for his sweetheart, and it was only natural that devotional poetry which linked itself closely to the folk tradition, should employ these same terms to express the love of Jesus and his saints.

The folk tradition, that of the proverb, inspires yet another image recurrent in this poetry: the image of the human life passing away like a flower:

Člověk na svět narozen
jako kvítek vychází,
jen spátný větríček
smápně jeho zarazí:
krása, síla, spanilost
jako listí opadne,
prvě než se nadeje
co polní kvítek zvadne.

Jan Ignác Dlouhoveský, Dychovní recipe, Písen třetí
(Man born into the world grows like a flower, one adverse breeze blights him easily: beauty, strength, loveliness fall away like leaves, before he realises it, he fades like a flower of the field. - Spiritual Recipe, Third Song)

Život naš tento vezdejší,
jest k řůži nejpodobnější,
ktoráťo rano rozkvétá,
k večeru se na zem meta.

Simon Valecius, Podobenství o řůži
(This life of ours is most like a rose, which blossoms out in the morning, towards the evening drops to the ground. - Parable of a Rose.)
In images of animals too we find the homely, familiar words of the folk song side by side with the liturgical symbols. The emblematic Lamb represents Christ, e.g.

... ráčte mne přichránit,
at nejsem na levici:
ytrž jako ovčička
našedlí Beranka
tam kdež bydlí Pán Ježíš,
Maria Boží Matka.

Jan Ignác Dlouhovský, Duchovní recipe, Třetí píseň

(May it please you to protect me so that I may not stand on the left hand; but like a little sheep follow the Lamb to where Jesus dwells, and Mary the Mother of God. - Spiritual Recipe, Third Song)

... má stráž nad ním beránek,
który se pase v zahradě
mezi kytič a růží,
duši všech pobožných vnadě,
po němž ma duše touží.

Jan Ignác Dlouhovský, Píseň o Panně Marii, svatých a andelích

(The Lamb stands guard over him, who grazes in the garden among flowers and roses, calling to Himself the souls of all devout men, for Him my soul is yearning. - The Song of the Virgin Mary, the saints and angels.)

But the dove, with a few exceptions, symbolises usually the Virgin Mary:

Holubičko má, o ptáčku můj,
ach, holubičko, když jsem tvůj:
abych s tebou prozněval,
Syna tvého vychvaloval.

Adam Michna z Otradovic, Mariánské Ave

(My little dove, o my little bird, oh little dove, would that I might be Thine to sing with Thee, praise Thy son. - Ave Maria)

On the whole, however, the greater number of such images turn away from the liturgical symbols, and seek to express the devotion to Christ in new terms, in naive endearments full of warm emotion. In carols, particularly plentiful during this period, we find the
poet lavishing his affection for the Holy Child in images like these:

Adam Michna z Otradovic, Chtíc, aby spal

(... O my swan, my nightingale! - Lulling Him to sleep.)

Skonévám píseň, čížíčku,
malíčky kralíčku,
mnohobarevný stehlíčku,
zavíram písníčku.
Hledíš ty na tvou rodíčku,
a osamělou hrdličku,
novou ji zpívas písníčku,
nebesky slavičku.

Bedřich Bridel, Jesličky

(I am coming to the end of my song, o little siskin, little wren, many-coloured little goldfinch, I close my song. You look at your mother, the lonely turtle-dove, sing her a new song, heavenly nightingale. - The Manger)

The image of Christ as the nightingale is a very frequent one, perhaps under the influence of Spec's Trutznachtigall translated into Czech by Bedřich Bridel, Felix Kadlinsky and Jan Ignác Dlouhovsky:

(From The Cross, the tree, the beautiful branch held the holy body of my Nightingale, where Christ's body was stretched out. - Of the Tree of the Cross)

... Dvanácté vrchů ten strom má,
na kterémž slaviček sedě,
hlas liby vydáva.

Ten slaviček nejkrásnější,
on kterémž já zpívám,
jest Krystus Pan nejmiléjší,
jehožto hlas slyšet žadam.

Václav Svorec, Vím t já jeden stromeček
(Twelve tops has that tree on which the nightingale sits and sings in a sweet voice. That most beautiful nightingale of which I sing is dearest Lord Jesus, whose voice I long to hear. - I know of a tree.)

A certain similarity with Scheffler's poem "Die Psyche begehrt ein Bienelein auf den Wunden Jesu zu seyn" may be traced in Bedřich Brádel's poem Řebříček do nebe:

Když budu lásky boží
z kvitku soubě med sbírati,
jak jen uhlidám růží,
hned začnu k nebi litati.

(When I am collecting from flowers the honey of divine love, as soon as I see a rose, I shall fly to heaven. - Ladder to Heaven)

In the lovely poem Mariánská myslivost (Marian Hunting Lore) by Adam Michna z Otradovic the image of the Virgin as a doe flying from the hunters, evokes the Song of Songs, as well as the love songs identifying the loved one with hunted deer:

Mariáňští milovníci,
Matky boží služebníci,
muže střely se uchopí
da tomu lovu se chytí;
lovit budem Matku boží,
srdce matky, vaše zboží.

(Lovers of Mary, servants of the Mother of God, now then, grasp your arrows, make ready for the hunt; we shall hunt the Mother of God, the mother's heart will be your prize.)

These latter are more sophisticated images, closer to the contemporary European tradition, based however still on familiar scenes, and easily understood by a simple reader.

Images of celestial bodies are of a similar simplicity. Christ and the Virgin Mary are frequently represented as the sun, the star, the moon, but only rarely - and that in Protestant poetry - do we find any allusion to the idea of the true and the false sun,
of Christianity and pagan worship. In Protestant poetry only
God is the spiritual light, the sun of justice:

Ó dejž i to z své milosti,
at nam slunce spravedlnosti
vzejde y srdcích a v nich svítí
a tak nas pravdou osvítí, ...

Jiří Třanovský, Citara Sanctorum

(O grant us in thy mercy that the sun of justice may rise in our
hearts and shine there, and so light us with the truth ...)

In Catholic poetry the sun and the moon are rather terms of
endearment, as in the carol "Prstýnku můj" (My Ring) in M.V.
Šteyer's Kancionál český (Czech Hymn Book), written possibly by
Šteyer himself:

... Zlatohlavý měsíčku!
Nynej, nynej, nynej, slunečíčko!

(... little golden-haired moon! Sleep, sleep, sleep, little sun!)

Ty jsi nad hvězdy silnější,
nad měsíc mnohem světlejší,
ty jsi nad sluncem jasnější,
nad svatost svatých světější,
o Maria, o orodovnice, Panno nejmilejší!

Jan Ignác Dlouhovský, Pátá píseň
skrivankova

(Thou art more splendid than the stars, much lighter than the
moon, thou art brighter than the sun, holier than the holiness of
saints, o Mary, o intercessor, dearest Virgin! - The Skylark's
Fifth Song)

Zdravas odená slunce
nevěsto jasnosti,

Jiří Hlohovský, Sluncem odena nevěsta

(Hail, bride of light, clothed with the sun ... - The Bride
Clothed with the Sun)

Most of these images are used more for their emotional,
aesthetic power than for any deeper symbolic meaning. Images of
fire and light, on the other hand, are purely symbolic, the
symbolism of the fire of love being strengthened by the language of the love song as well as by the religious emblem of the burning heart of Love:

Láska ve mně žízdycky horí,  
víc mysl rozpěnuje,  
živí mne, než neumoří,  
všecky kosti podpaluje.

Bedřich Bridel, Rozjímaní svatého Ignacia

(Love is always burning in me, inflaming the mind more and more, it feeds me, does not kill me, burns all the bones. - St. Ignatius' Meditation)

Ještě jsi pak ohniček božský,  
jenž dusí lidský  
podnětem lásy  
zapaluješ, ej mé srdce  
troudem bude, spal je vbrzce.

Adam Michea z Otradovic, Vítání svatého Ducha do srdce

(If thou art the divine fire which sets human souls on fire with the flame of love, lo, my heart will be tinder, burn it soon. - Welcome to the Holy Ghost in the Heart)

The fire of profane passion is described in the same terms, as for instance in V.J. Rosa's curious poem of pastoral gallantry, Oratio Lipiona:

Flamen mohou uhasiti,  
Kdož můž lasku zastaviti?  
Oheň pali, když jej čopíš,  
aneb jestli nán co vložís,  
láska pak ř. daleka pali  
napřístoupíš, an té boli.

(Flame may be extinguished, but who can stop love? Fire burns you when you touch it or lay anything on it, but love burns from afar, it hurts you even if you do not come near it.)

Love of Jesus is expressed in terms of human relationships; this, of course, is a symbolism common to all European literatures, inspired by the Church's interpretation of the Song of Songs,
although it may express itself in images independent of it:

Rozťah ruce k objímání,  
hlavu sklonil k milovaní,  
dal si otevriti srdce,  
abych ja nezhynul více.

Jan Ignác Dlouhoveský, Píseň o Ukřižovaném  
(He stretched out his hands to embrace, bent down his head to love, let his heart be opened up in order that I might not die. - The Song of the Crucified One)

From the original conception of Christ and the Church as lovers, this symbolism extends to include the Virgin:

Vonnou květku já v zahradě  
uvijí me milence,  
nazbíram květ v te době  
obětovat Panně.

Jan Ignác Dlouhoveský, Píseň k Panně  
Svatojakubské  
(In the garden I shall make a sweet-smelling posy for my sweetheart, I shall then gather flowers to offer them to the Virgin. - Song to the Virgin of St.James')

Dual purpose of images, to express secular as well as spiritual experiences, is of course a typical baroque characteristic. We find it also in images of war and weapons, in which the arrow of divine love wounds as sweetly as Amor’s missile:

Tvou láskou, o mé Bože,  
jes raňen, omlivám, ...

Felix Kadlinský, Chvála včel  
(O my God, wounded by Thy love, I swoon ... In Praise of Bees)

and, on the other hand:

Jdižiž, prosím, jdižiž hbitě,  
omocný pane v celém světě,  
vezmi střelu, nižto mírne,  
oheň, niž podpalíš silně,  
raní krásné damě srdce,  
at v něm dá me místo lasce.

J. V. Rosa, Oratio Lipirona
(Go, please, go quickly, powerful lord of all the world, take an
arrow with which you inflame mildly, the fire with which you set
fire violently, wound the beautiful lady's heart so that she may
find place for my love there!)

Except for popular ballads describing the great battles of the
Thirty Years' War, and the peasants' laments, the only wars
pictured in this poetry are Christ's war on death and the devil,
described in epic detail by Adam Michna z Otradovic. and V.K. Holan
Rovenský, and Amor's war, the Venuskrieg of contemporary German
poetry, alluded to by one of the few predominantly secular poets
of the Czech baroque, J. V. Rosa. The struggle between the spirit
and the flesh, between good and evil is expressed in terms of
martial conflict, for instance in J. A. Komenský's vivid image,
reminiscent in its concrete quality of Herbert's "The Bag":

Kdyžs ale, zvítězil již,
čeho se báti mám?
čím dal já svaté smrti, tím blíž
vítězství tvé seznam.

Seznám, jen mne do svého
zavři, Pane, boku:
Tak pic nědám vzetého
nepřatel útoku.

J. A. Komenský, Žehnání se duše
verne se svetem

(Since you have won, what have I to fear? the farther I go towards
death, the closer I shall know your victory. I shall know it closer,
only enclose me, Lord, in your side: thus I take no heed of the
enemies' fierce attack. - The Faithful Soul's parting with the
World)

The terror of death, that heritage of long wars and plagues,
is often symbolised in the sudden lethal swiftness of the arrow:

Ukratná smrt ke mně kráčí
s ohnivými štěrlemi;
kopím proti mně zatačí,
zahubit chce ranami.

Anon., Loučení umírajícího
(Cruel death is striding towards me with fiery arrows, he turns his spear against me, ready to kill me with his strokes. - The Dying Man's Farewell)

Ukrutná smrt, přehrozňá smrt
střely své natahuje.
Měří mírňe, spouští silně
a s žadným nezertuje.

Anon., Píseň o nestalosti, bída a marnosti života lidského

(Cruel death, terrible death prepares his arrows. He takes aim slowly, releases the arrow with force, and jokes with no-one. - Song of the Inconstancy, Misery and Vanity of Human Life)

Yet although these poets felt acutely the terror of death, they appear to have been remarkably free of the nightmare of the grave and its horrors of decay. Possibly this preoccupation with decay was a disease of sophistication, not to be found in deliberately popular poetry. The public for which these poems were written, was of course an ever-present consideration, affecting the choice of both themes and imagery.

Images of domestic objects are used frequently and with ease. In the Christmas carols in particular we find images full of naive charm. The Holy Child is offered hospitality in man's house; the stars are his candles, man's heart his candle, his bed is covered with an embroidered featherbed. The image of the door to heaven is also used frequently; sometimes death is that door and the sword

1) Bridel's "Co Bůh? co Člověk?" is something of an exception; cf. the lines:

... já jsem červův snídaní,
v rubáš mpe brzy obalí,
ja jsem sám červ níčemý,
co zem přec někam odlož, ...

(... I am the worms' breakfast, soon I shall be wrapped up in a shroud, I myself am a miserable worm, which the earth will put away somewhere ... )
is the key:

(Jiří Třanovský, Proč tak truchlíš)

(Let us take our humiliations for glories, the fire for Elijah's chariot, the sword then for a key opening the door for the soul to future glory, the glory of eternal life, very joyful! - Why dost thou mourn so.)

In a string of images reminiscent of Vaughan's Hermetic beliefs the flowers are compared to a mirror of the deity, to a ladder leading to heaven:

Ach, kvítkové šlepéje,
vy jste to boží zrcadlo,
až se mě srdce, směje,
když vidím boží divadlo.

Vy jste mně za ŘEBŘÍČEK,
po nemž do nebe vstupuji,
vy jstě mně za vozejček,
voj míj k nebi obracuji.

Bedřich Bridel, Řebříček do nebe

(O flowers-footsteps, you are the divine mirror, my heart leaps when I see the divine spectacle. You are to me the ladder by which I ascend to heaven, you are to me a carriage, turning its shaft heavenwards. - The Heavenly Ladder)

The intimate character of these images taken from the village life is further emphasized by frequent use of diminutives.

Similarly in images of food and drink; in the Christmas carols we find whole lists of offerings to the Holy Child, which contain all the delicacies of a peasant's festive table - cottage cheese, sausages, fresh-laid eggs, boiled fowl - all offered in complete earnestness and sincerity. The rewards of eternal life and of
Christ's mercy are represented as a flow of honey — surely a memory of the legendary land of Cockayne where the brooks ran full of honey:

O kašičku není peče,
krmíš-li chvěje, člověče,
sladkou kaši krmíš Krista,
čeká tě odplata jísta,
večnýt med v nebi poteče.

Adam Michna z Otradovic, Hle, přijde pán Spasitel nas

(There is no lack of sweet pudding, if you feed the poor, man, you are feeding Christ with sweet pudding, sure reward awaits you, for in heaven there flows eternal honey. — Lo, our Lord Saviour will come)

The abstract vision of God and his saints was made concrete and invested with the splendour of a king's court, as for instance in Bedřich Bridel's Vítačí rustin i hor (The Welcome of desolate Fields and Mountains):

Pán můj velký mocnář,
všeho světa císař,
jeho komorníkem
budu, služebníkem.

Bydu i knížetem,
pánem neb hradbětem,
budu dvořaninem,
nejvyšším knížetiřem.

Neb jemy sloužiti
jest království mít,
Každy člověk svaty
ma jeho klic zlaty.

(My master is a powerful monarch, the emperor of all the world, I shall be his chamberlain, his servant. I shall be even a prince, a lord or a count, I shall be a courtier, the Lord High Chancellor. For to serve Him is to possess a kingdom. Every holy man holds his golden key.)

The imagery here is completely secular: the rewards of the world represent the rewards of the kingdom of the spirit.

Images of jewels testify to a vivid imagination, particularly
in the descriptions of Heavenly City which read like something out of a fairy tale, depicted with a naive admiration of wealth:

... dvanácte bran
  z dvanácti stran
  perlových právě byť:
  zdi, ulice,
  rynk, skřidlice,
  od zlata jen se trpyť.

Anon., Divadlo rajského města

(... twelve gates of pearl there are, it is said, from twelve sides; the walls, the streets, the market-place, the roof-tiles glitter with gold. - The Spectacle of the Heavenly City)

Frequently we find images of jewels used in poems addressed to Christ and the saints. There they are employed as much for their emotional value as for their visual evocative power; in other words, in the same way as for instance Crashaw had used them ("On the Wounds of our Crucified Lord"):

Dvě perličky, dvě hvězdičky,
  zlatem trpyticí očičky,
  ach zčernaly, ach zsinaly,
  podivnou proměnu vzaly.

Jan Ignác Dlouhoveský, Píseň o Ukřižovaném

(Two pearls, two stars, eyes glittering with gold, alas, they turned black, alas, they turned pale, a strange change came over them. - Song of the Crucified One)

Oděv tvůj někdy ozdobný
  od šarlatu byl červený,
  nyní se sňklí rubínami,
  krve svate krupějemi.

(?) V. K. Holan Rovenský, Kaple královská

(Thy garment used to be a splendid one, red with royal purple, now it glitters with rubies, drops of holy blood (on St. Wenceslas). - The Royal Chapel of Song)

In the first quotation in particular where nearly all the
noun appear in the diminutive, the emotional rather than sensory value of the images is obvious.

Images of colour are also used in this way. In the anonymous poem Píseň barevná osudučení (A Colourful Song of the Crucifixion), attributed to an anonymous "Tistín schoolmaster", the different colours all have their dramatic, emotional value, symbolising the different stages of the Calvary; e.g.:

... Travnou mi barvy dejte,  
půjdu do zahrady;  
Zajat jest Pan, nastojte,  
z Jidášovy zrady.

...  
Modrou mi barvu dejte,  
tvar Páne zmudrál;  
nevinnym udesením  
krví se zalila.

(Give mi the colour of grass, I shall go to the garden: behold, the Lord is captured, through Judas' betrayal. ... Give me blue colour, the Lord's face has turned blue, is streaming with blood from an undeserved blow.)

In Petr Benický's poem Barvy (The Colours) the various colours are given a general symbolic meaning (white for modesty, green for constancy, gold for sadness of heart, etc.); the colours stand here for emblems of the various qualities, according to the fashion of the time, of which ample evidence can be found in German poetry of the same period.

Emblems proper are comparatively rare in Czech baroque poetry; only liturgical emblems are used: the Lamb, the Dove, the chalice with blood. Apart from these symbols which had become so general as to lose the completely esoteric quality characteristic of some
types of emblem we find only a few isolated instances:

Pelikan nám toho
příklad ukazuje,
ten sýc ptáčky zhynulé
svým srdcem obžívuje,
take nas milý Kristus Paň,
dal se, jest umučiti sam,
chtě všecky obživiti.

Pavel Vorličný Aquilinas, Píseň o vzkříšení Kristova

(The pelican gives us an example of that, he revives his dying fledglings with his own heart, so our dear Lord Christ gave himself to be tortured wishing to bring us all back to life. - Song of Christ's Resurrection)

Přeslávný svatý Antoníně!
Slunecný květe božské pobožnosti ...

Samuel Greifenfels z Pilzenburku, Nověna k svatemu Antonínu Paduanskému

(Glorious St. Anthony! Sunflower of Divine devotion ... - Novena to St. Anthony of Padua)

It is perhaps not surprising to find so little evidence of knowledge of the emblem books which were, after all, intended for a far more sophisticated reading public. Nevertheless there are certain symbolic images, the stock-in-trade of European literature of the time, which appear with equal frequency, even if perhaps in a less subtle form, in Czech baroque poetry. There is for instance

1) Dr. Mario Praz in his Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery, Vol. I, p. 155, admits to "a contrast in tendencies in the use of the emblem. On one side emblematics, following in the tracks of hieroglyphics, aims at establishing a mode of expression which only a few may understand; in a word, an esoteric language. On the other hand, it aims at being a way of making ethical and religious truths accessible to all, even to the illiterate, and to children, through the lure of pictures."
the image of the body as a prison of the soul, which had such fascination for Marvell:

\[\text{O, bych žalal mého těla mohl hned opustit,}
\text{aby duse ma vesela,}
\text{mohla do nebe jít, ...}\]

V. Kleych (?), Evangelicky kancionál

(0 that I might leave the jail of my body at once so that my merry soul might go to heaven ... - Evangelical Hymn Book)

\[\text{O kdy, o kdy svazky, strhnu,}
\text{nimž jsou oudy svázany?}
\text{O, kdy pouta z těla svrlnu!}
\text{Jaka budou radování!}
\]

\[\text{Ach, proc zde má duše vězi?}
\text{proc tak dlouho prodlivam?}
\text{Jsa okovany řetězy,}
\text{zarmutkem temer omálivam.}
\]

\[\text{Oudové jsou ty řetězy}
\text{a ty mně žily vazi,}
\text{v nichž můj duch jak smutné vězi,}
\text{telo mně k nebi překáží.}
\]

Bedřich Bridel, Rozjímání svatého Ignacia

(0 when, when shall I tear off the bonds which tie my limbs!

0 when shall I throw away the fetters on my body! What rejoicing will there be! Oh why does my soul linger here? Why do I stay so long? In chains, I am almost fainting with sorrow. My limbs are the chains and they tie my veins in which my soul is imprisoned, my body keeps me from heaven. - Meditation of St. Ignatius)

Another is the image of life as a pilgrimage, or as a stormy sea voyage. There is perhaps a sad significance in the fact that the former is most frequent in the work of Protestant exiles, e.g. in Komenský's Život nás v světě jen pout (Our life in the world only a pilgrimage):

\[\text{Všechn život nás, všech lidi}
\text{jest pout, jakž sam každy vidí}
\text{v přecházení strasti, dny,}
\text{dnu nemnohých, ale bídnych.}\]
(All the life of all us men is a pilgrimage as everybody can see, when surmounting strange troubles, of a few but miserable days.)

The image of the sea voyage is equally frequent in Catholic poetry:

More syet jest boujrlijke,
v kterym se my plavime,
pomoz vybrednouti:
bychom neutronuli,
v nem skrz hrich nezhynuli,
Maria, bud s nami!

Jan Ignac Dlouhovsky, Pani nad vodou

(The world is a stormy sea on which we are sailing, help us to reach the shore so that we may not drown, perish through sin, Mary, stay with us! - The Lady above the Water)

We shall find little reference to the discoveries of contemporary science or to the philosophical beliefs of the Middle Ages, except possibly in images of music as the following:

Sedm hvézd, jenž tam hrají,
 jako sedmerého hlasu,
Bohu pěkně zpívají,
 jeho chvalí vždycky krásu.

Bedrich Bridel, Verše o nebeském paláci

(Seven stars that play there, like seven voices, sing sweetly to God, praise always his beauty. - Verses on the Heavenly Palace)

Hvězdy na nebi tancují,
 sobě poskakují,
 sve harfy, housle štymují,
nebesa hodují.

Bedrich Bridel, Zavitej k nám, dite milé

(The stars in heaven dance, skip about, tune their harps, fiddles, praise the skies. - Welcome to us, dear Child)

In these instances there may be seen a memory of the Platonic theory of the music of the spheres which was a part of the medieval conception of the universe.

Images from the sphere of medicine, characteristically, derive
rather from the herbalist's lore than from the physician's vocabulary, e.g. in Jiří Zábojník's *Paciencia jest bylina* (Patience is a Herb):

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Paciencia, jest bylina
hojiteľná
všem nemocným spasiteľná,
kdo chce svůj něduh žhovit,
musí tu zelinku piti,
chce-li zdravý byťi.
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(Patience is a healing herb, salutary to all the ailing, who wants to be cured of his diseases, must have that plant if he wishes to be well.)

Particularly interesting is the poem *O rozkoší rajské* (Of the pleasure of Paradise) by Michal Vojtěch Kruzyus z Krausenburku, which lists twenty-six flowers symbolising twenty-six virtues, describing them and in several cases adding some practical information about their healing qualities.

But although the public for which this poetry was written was a simple, uneducated one, yet obviously the love of the Holy Word remained alive among the people. The language of the Scriptures exercised a powerful influence on the poetical language of this period. Examples of this influence are far too numerous throughout Czech poetry of the seventeenth century to be mentioned in full. They occur not only in the poetry of Protestant exiles, but in Catholic writings as well. For instance in the manuscript collection of Father Ev. J. Košetický, in the *Psalm of Lamenting Mother Prague* we find constant echoes of the Psalms, of the Book of Job. References to well-known incidents from the Scriptures occur frequently, as for instance in Jan Táborský's *Píšeň v čas suchá.*
Uslyš hlas naše
jako Eliáše
proroka když uslyšel,
hned z nebe, děst přišel.
Pane, Bože, naše!

(Hear our voices like Thou didst hear the voice of the prophet Elijah, and at once the rain came down from thy sky, Lord, our God! - Song in the Time of Drought)

Particularly popular are images combining the Old and the New Testaments, as for instance when the victorious Christ is hailed as Samson, David, Gideon, etc. Václav Švorec's Vím já jeden stromček (I Know of a Tree) links skilfully various incidents in the New Testament in the frame of a nightingale's (Christ's) song, e.g.:

S Samaritánkou v poledne
půjdu naslouchat,
u studnici Jakupove
tam slyším zpívati
tož slavicka nebeského
jezy Krista, Pana mého,
coz mam vic žadati.

(With the Samaritan woman I shall go at noon to listen at Jacob's well, there I shall hear the heavenly nightingale singing, which is Jesus Christ, my Lord, what more can I wish for.)

The Song of Songs interpreted as a symbol of the relationship of the Church and Christ offered a wealth of inspiration for hymns to Jesus, and also to the Virgin, e.g. Jiří Hlohovský's Sluncem oděná nevěsta (The Bride Clothed with the Sun):

O věže upevněné,
z nížto zlatých štítů
tisíc visí ... 

(O fortified tower from which hang a hundred golden shields ...)

or Adam Michna's poem Magdalena u hrobu (Magdalen at the Tomb):

Proč ž budu tě hledatí
po vysích i cudolích,
po lesích budu běhati,
po lukách take polich,
abych našla tebe,
o má lásko z nebe.
(Therefore I shall seek thee upon the mountains and in the valleys, I shall run through the woods, meadows and fields, to find thee, o my love from heaven.)

In the former poem, Sluncem oděná nevěsta images from the Book of Revelation are also used, but the rhythm is new, reminiscent more of the Ave:

Zdrávás oděná sluncem nevěsto jasnosti,
Svatýms dychem počala,
všech papa z výsosti:
take nam bidným vydala,
slunce spravedlnosti,
zmenilas stáre Evy
pretěžke bolesti.

Mesić mą pod nohami,
krasnejši nad nebe, ...

Korunu jahou neseš,
na tve svate hlave,
s dvanaesti přejasnymi
hvězdamz ozdobne:

(Hail, thou clothed with the sun, bride of Light, thou didst conceive in the Holy Ghost the Lord of all on high, thou didst thus give the sun of justice to us wretches, change the deep pain of old Eve. Thou hast the moon under thy feet, thou more beautiful than the skies ... Thou carriest a precious crown on thy sacred head, ornamented with twelve bright stars.)

Classical references, on the other hand, are comparatively few, and they occur mostly in poems on the "Ubi sunt" theme, where lists of dead and gone kings and heroes of the past are recited. We do, however, find occasional classical references in devotional poems as for instance in Jan Ignác Blouhovský's Plápol lásky k Panně Staroboleslavské (The Flame of Love for the Holy Virgin of Stará

1) Cf. the Book of Revelation, Ch. 12, vv. 1-2: And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.
Boleslav):

Ej toť pravá Dyána
mezi lesy jest Panna, ...

(Lo, this is the true Diana, the Virgin of the woods ...) or in Adam Michna's Svaté lásky labyrint (The Labyrinth of Sacred Love):

... právě jsem v labyrintu,
  v zmatebním labyrintu,
  má lásko, o Kriste můj.

Kdož mne z něho vyvede
a ku Kristu přivede?
  má lásko, o Kriste můj?
  bud lásko Ariadna,
  s příchogou Ariadna;
  má lásko, o Kriste můj.

(... even now I am in a labyrinth, in the chaotic labyrinth, my love, O my Christ. Who will guide me out of it and bring me to Christ? Be thou, love, Ariadne, Ariadne with the thread, my love, O my Christ.)

The image of the labyrinth of the world is a common one, often represented pictorially in a popular emblem, but Michna clarifies the connection between the religious emblem and the ancient legend by direct reference. There is a certain degree of sophistication in this image, not entirely characteristic of Czech baroque poetry as we have had occasion to realise.

Czech baroque poetry, generally speaking, is simple, unsophisticated, seemingly free from the Metaphysical tension of the flesh and the spirit. But even if, for reasons mentioned above, this poetry seems unaware or oblivious of the complex emotions that found expression in what we now call the European baroque style, Czech poetry of the seventeenth century displays the chief traits of the baroque. It is mainly devotional in its content, striving
to represent God, His love, His power and His wisdom, through His creation. Like the bold Metaphysicals, these humble poets are trying to clarify the abstract conception of Divinity through concrete images, even if they do so with the practical purpose of reaching the understanding of a very simple public. They bring the Lord to earth, and surround Him with the everyday things of a Bohemian farmhouse; the Deity is made human with a wealth of homely detail.

Concrete demonstration of the divine will had been the preoccupation of seventeenth-century poets as one means of bringing together the seemingly irreconcilable opposites of heaven and earth, and thus re-creating the lost unity of the universe. In Czech baroque poetry, with a very few exceptions like Kridel's Co Bůh? co člověk?, there is no mention made of this dilemma which was the mainspring of baroque poetry elsewhere. But the carols and hymns which sing of Christ as a human being, born and dying like other men, the popularity of legends of saints and miracles (in which the divine and the human surely do meet, even if only fleetingly), all these characteristic creations of the Czech baroque may perhaps be regarded as unconscious admissions of the "Metaphysical tension" expressed more fully and more subtly in baroque poetry elsewhere. In Czech baroque poetry, we can trace the features of the baroque, even if simplified and coarsened as in a wooden statue in a country church. The crudity of colours, the lack of skill speak of cultural collapse, but the enraptured pose and the upward-pointing finger testify mutely to the spiritual storm that had swept Europe.
CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this study has been an examination - by analysis of imagery - of the work of five poets representative of English Metaphysical poetry after Donne. It was hoped that such analysis would serve to reveal a distinctive pattern in Metaphysical imagery, and so help us to define the nature of Metaphysical poetry.

That this poetry has a character of its own, which is stamped on every poem, almost every line, is by now perhaps indisputably clear. There is an intensity of thought and emotion in it, an awareness of the presence of God in man's world. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, there is in Metaphysical poetry a desire for unity: unity with God and, through Him, a renewed unity of the universe. These characteristics of Metaphysical poetry are mirrored in the imagery through which it expresses itself, giving it the individuality which we have come to recognize as "the Metaphysical manner".

Yet the work of each of these poets remains the expression of his personality: Metaphysical poetry is the poetry of the individual. In profane verse, particularly in love poems, this personal element is to be expected, but we find it equally in sacred verse, which reflects a personal relationship with God. This relationship is expressed by the Protestant poets directly, by the Catholics indirectly, by praising God and particularly
Christ and the saints in terms of sensual allegory. Whatever the form of expression, Metaphysical poetry remains a realisation of the individual as a personality apart. Naturally perhaps, the imagery often betrays the character of the poet, his private interests or even something of his personal history (so for instance the imagery of Herbert, Vaughan, Donne).

More importantly, the imagery reflects the widened intellectual horizon of the seventeenth century, in images drawn from the abstract sciences, from philosophy, theology, from the new geographical discoveries, from medicine, chemistry, physics, and so on. But it carries as well a reminder of the Janus-like face of the century, looking back to the Middle Ages as well as forward to the modern age. We have had frequent occasion to note throughout this study the fascinations which the notions of medieval philosophy, and the old superstitions, exercised on a poet's imagination at this time.

The Old and New philosophies had influenced Metaphysical poetry in an even deeper sense, bringing to the poets' minds the urgent necessity for a new spiritual unity encompassing the newly enlarged world of man and the world of God, the realm of matter and the realm of the spirit. Mr Martin Turnell in his study "John Donne and the Quest for Unity" points out in Donne's imagery his preoccupation with the notion of unity, of the whole. But any conceit may be regarded as an expression of this quest, of the effort to re-create through poetry a universe

1) The Nineteenth Century and After, April 1950
which would embrace the new intellectual developments and the
old faith, the new discoveries and the unchanging world of
man's immediate surroundings. There is surely an element of
deliberation in choosing to bring together in a metaphor images
from such totally different spheres, and it is this deliberation
that makes the conceit, the seventeenth century's contribution
to poetics. In the work of minor poets, of Cleveland, say, or
even Cowley, the conceit can be merely a clever affectation,
but in the poetry of Herbert or Vaughan where there is no question
of affectation, the conceit still retains its quality of a planned,
deliberate surprise, as if the poet's aim had been to shock the
reader into acceptance of the metaphor, and with it, of the
assumption of equality in the two widely different parts of the
conceit. The conceit brings together, with unmistakable emphasis,
two distant parts of a vast universe which reflect equally God
who is speaking through them.

Often it is the abstract and the concrete which are linked
together in a conceit, intentionally perhaps, as if to reconcile
these two worlds. The emblem which achieved such significant
popularity in the seventeenth century and influenced the imagery
to a considerable degree, is an expression of this close
affinity between the abstract and the concrete.

Yet another aspect of the "quest for unity", to borrow
Mr Turnell's phrase, is the characteristic interchange of images
from sacred and profane poetry. The lilies and roses, the jewels,
the suns and moons, the fires and flames of love, the wounds,
the wars and sieges, the food of love, the thirst for love, the worship and the royal homage, all these are equally a part of sacred and of profane imagery, again as if to reconcile the flesh and the spirit.

Such images, as much as the paradox, the popular device of seventeenth-century poets, express an acute realisation of the dichotomies inherent in the very core of human existence, of which the seventeenth century was more conscious perhaps than any other period before or since.

The characteristic qualities of Metaphysical poetry are to be found, all or some of them at least, in the work of every one of the five poets who have been under discussion in this study. The imagery which they employed has been analysed in some detail. If the pattern of this analysis seemed monotonously repetitive, it is hoped that, in recompense for this tediousness, a certain similarity of thought and expression, in spite of the individuality of poetic genius, emerged quite clearly in the work of all these men.

The similarity argues for a "predominant passion" shared by all these poets: a passion which took the form of intellectual as well as emotional realisation of human existence, deeper still, of inquiry into man's relations with God in a changing world, and finally, of the quest for unity which we have seen taking several forms and finding expression indirectly in the very shape and structure of Metaphysical poetry.

Finally, a few words about the last two chapters of this
study, the subjects of which are, respectively, the baroque poetry of Germany and Bohemia. As was mentioned before and should be emphasized once more, the reason for including these two chapters was not so much to study the two literary movements for their own sakes, as to attempt in this oblique fashion to clarify further the characteristics of English Metaphysical poetry, through discussion of two movements sufficiently akin to Metaphysical poetry to make any parallel valid, and yet quite distinct and thus preventing us from drawing too many unprofitable and far-fetched comparisons.

The first and obvious difference between Metaphysical poetry on the one hand, and German and Czech baroque poetry on the other, is one of degree of perfection of poetic language. In view of the historical and cultural background, this difference is natural and hardly surprising.

Less apparent at a first glance is the scarcity of that intellectual element, so typical of Metaphysical poetry, in the work of German and Czech baroque poets. Images from the sphere of intellectual inquiry are rare not only in Czech poetry, deliberately popular as was explained before, but in German poetry as well. The reason might conceivably be that in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries England, outside the sphere of influence of the Roman Catholic church, stood pitted against the Catholic conservatism of Spain (and with it of the Austrian Hapsburg empire) as a champion of progress. In Germany and in Bohemia, as in other parts of Europe, it was perhaps inadvisable to betray too much interest in and knowledge of the New Philosophies.
At the other end of the scale, there are few images and themes in German baroque poetry, drawn from the humble sphere of everyday life. One might be tempted to surmise the cause to be the snobbism of the intelligentsia, not quite sure of itself in a world of changing values. The case is different in Czech poetry - naturally, if we consider its aims and methods against the contemporary political background.

We may note also a more rigid adherence to accepted poetical models in German and Czech poetry, less of the individualism which is yet another feature of English Metaphysical poetry, a part of its Elizabethan heritage. This is noticeable not only in love lyrics and occasional poems, where acceptance of an established convention is hardly surprising, but in sacred poetry as well; there the influence of the church hymn, which postulated compliance with fixed rules on subject and treatment, on the Protestant poets, both Czech and German, should perhaps be borne in mind. This lack of individualism, more apparent in the earlier part of the century, might of course again be attributed to the inadequacy of the poetical medium of expression.

But within these limitations, we have found both in German and in Czech baroque poetry echoes of those feelings and thoughts which are familiar to us from Metaphysical poetry: the fear of death, the heightened love of life, the recognition of God through earthly life, and ultimately, overshadowing all other emotions in its intensity, the desire for unity with God and through God. These emotions we have found expressed in a form
which, again allowing for the differences and limitations mentioned before, is reminiscent of the Metaphysical manner; at times, it is true, like a bad burlesque of the brilliance which we have been accustomed to expect in the best of Metaphysical poetry, but at other times sustaining comparison on level terms.

Good or bad in itself, the work of German and Czech baroque poets has served us here to illuminate the character of English Metaphysical poetry, as reflected in the imagery. We have noted the characteristics common to both: the extravagant conceit, the interchangeability of sacred and profane in the images, the emblem-like quality of many of the images, the exploitation of their emotional value. The absence of other qualities in German and Czech baroque poetry emphasized the value of their presence in Metaphysical poetry: the images and ideas drawn from the intellectual spheres, from contemporary life, the strong personal element which is a part of the Metaphysical tradition from its very beginning, and the images taken from the humblest things of everyday life, and used with assurance and without condescension.

From the analysis of imagery, seen beside that of contemporary German and Czech baroque poetry, a composite picture of Metaphysical poetry emerges - complex, full of paradoxes and contradictions, yet reflecting in its various aspects the quest of the soul to which it had given voice.
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