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HENRY VAUGHAN AND THE METAPHYSICAL TRADITION

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Preface

This study begins by reviewing a number of theories of metaphysical poetry and, drawing upon these theories, settles upon a broad definition of metaphysical poetry which stresses the relationship between poetic technique and the metaphysicals' attempts to eliminate the dissociation and discord created in the seventeenth century by the challenges of the new thinkers to the older view of the universe as a network of hierarchical correspondences. It shows how these poets, associating discord with moral imperfection, attempted to recover a unified vision of the world as a manifestation of the Divine Mind and also how their use of poetic technique demonstrates this search for unity.

A series of comparative chapters then place Vaughan within this tradition. They acknowledge Vaughan's debts to Donne and Herbert and show, further, how Vaughan's belief in man's spiritual perfectibility is demonstrated in his dynamic imagery and is a major distinction between his poetry and that of Donne or Herbert, whose themes and techniques suggest that perfection can only be attained after the body's death. The chapter on Traherne shows that

he, like Vaughan, believed that unity could be recovered in this life and that this belief is demonstrated in the imagery and structure of his poems. A final chapter comparing Vaughan's poetry with that of Cowley and Cleveland, shows that despite their superficial similarities to Vaughan and the other metaphysicals, they have rejected metaphysical wit as a device for imaginatively transforming the world to perfect wholeness.

The purposes of the work have been twofold. The first, and most important, has been to show the extent of Henry Vaughan's individual poetic achievement. The longer I have worked with the poems, the more convinced I have become that this achievement was a substantial one. Secondly, I have tried to show how Vaughan's poetry is related to that of the other metaphysical poets both in theme and in poetic technique.

I would like to express my gratitude to Professor William P. Williams for not only helping me through numerous revisions of the work but also for giving me much needed encouragement throughout my preparation of the manuscript; to Professors Clifford Caruthers and Martin Kallich for offering me their most beneficial advice and criticism; and to Judy Hart and James Joyce for their help in putting the manuscript together. Finally, a special word of thanks must go to my family, whose patience and assistance were invaluable.

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An Overview of the Tradition

It has been fifty years since T. S. Eliot said in concluding his review of Sir Herbert Grierson's anthology, "It would be a fruitful work, and one requiring a substantial book, to break up the classification of Johnson (for there has been none since) and exhibit these poets in all their difference of kind and degree."[1] In the intervening years, numerous studies have taken up the task of defining the term "metaphysical" and applying the definition to the poets of the seventeenth century. A difficulty with many of these studies, however, has frequently arisen from the fact that once the critic has formulated a definition of metaphysical poetry, this definition begins to color his readings of various poets and, consequently, leads him to emphasize those aspects of the poet's work (conceits, emblems, strong lines) which give credence to the critic's definition.

The problem with this sort of study, then, is that if the terms in which the tradition is defined are too narrow and restrictive, certain poets will either have to be excluded from the tradition or will be misread by a critic who is attempting to force their work into conformity with

his preconception of metaphysical poetry. James Smith, for example, because he sees the conceit as the distinguishing characteristic of the metaphysical tradition, does not include Vaughan as a member of the tradition.[2]

J. B. Leishman reveals his awareness of the problem in the following passage:

> It is, indeed, easier to perceive certain obvious differences between the poetry of Donne and Jonson than to perceive certain important resemblances, just as it is easier to perceive certain superficial resemblances between, say, Donne and Crashaw than to become aware of their fundamental differences. The ultimate purpose of such generalizations, classifications, and distinctions is to increase awareness, to enable us, by analysis and comparison, to achieve a clearer recognition, a more intense appreciation, of the peculiar virtue, the essential thisness, of whatever literature we may be studying; this, though, is a strenuous task, and most of us, I fear, tend unconsciously to manipulate these generalizations, classifications, and distinctions, disregarding here, over-emphasizing there, until we have

> spread over everything a veil of custom and a film of familiarity which shall save us as much as possible from the insupportable fatigue of thought.[3]

It is, after all, the "thisness" of the poetry that is important. While showing some disdain for the term "Metaphysical School," Leishman does make an essential distinction between the "poetry of Donne and the so-called Metaphysical School and that of Jonson and the Classical or Horatian School." While the two schools are in many respects similar, he finds that the metaphysicals finally can be distinguished by their solitariness, privateness, and self-containedness, and by their "often dialectical and dramatic expression" of their essentially religious concerns.[4] Such an understanding is helpful, not only in separating the metaphysicals from the "Tribe of Ben," but also in linking them with later devotional poets and the neo-metaphysicals. While such a broad understanding of metaphysical poetry might appear to warrant Leishman's qualification, "so-called," it is nevertheless possible that other qualities of the poetry--the belief that the universe is a network of hierarchical correspondences, for example--can be used to distinguish metaphysical poetry from the modern poetry which it has influenced. Such other criteria as the relatively infrequent use of classical

allusions, meanwhile, distinguish them from a large group of Elizabethan poets, who shared the metaphysicals' belief in correspondence and hierarchy.

Something very much like this problem arises frequently in studies of the romantic poets.[5] We recognize a Romantic Period in English Literature at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and within this period we can observe certain important similarities in theme and in expression among the major poets. At the same time, we see that the term "Romantic" applies to men of temperaments as diverse as those of Wordsworth and Byron; and that the term can also be applied to Spenser and Shakespeare wtih some justification. Lest we throw up our hands in despair, we should remember Mr. Leishman's admonition that the objective of such a study is an understanding of the individual quality of a particular poetic achievement rather than the spreading of "a veil of custom." Thus, the recognition that Donne's lean, masculine lines are in some respects closer to Wyatt's,

> And with a beck ye shall me call,
> And if of one, that burns alway,
> Ye have pity or ruth,
> Answer hym fayer with yea, or nay.
> If it be yea: I shall be faine,
> Yf it be nay: frendes, as before.

You shall another man obtayn
And I mine owne, and yours no more.[6]

than to the quiet dignity of Herbert's,

Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridall of the earth and skie:
The dew shall weep thy fall to night;
For thou must die.[7]

or the rich imagery of Crashaw's,

I saw the curl'd drops, soft & slow,
Come hovering O're the place's head;
Offring their whitest sheets of snow
To furnish the fair Infant's bed
Forebear, said I; be not too bold.
Your fleece is white But t'is too cold.[8]

is a significant step toward the understanding of how Donne stands apart from two poets who are, in many other respects, very much like him.[9]

While the breaking up of a classification implies the existence of a classification, it also implies that the classification is composed of parts which can be isolated and observed. This isolation and observation is the

objective of the present work. The general term, "metaphysical poetry," has, like the term "romantic poetry," been established by critical convention, and there is no reason to balk at its use provided the term is used as a perspective from which to view an individual poet rather than as a shroud for his interment.

Despite the fact that since William Drummond of Hawthornden, the term "metaphysical" has been applied with varying degrees of precision to any number of poets and has been used historically to describe the writers who belong to the same poetic tradition as Donne, and also to account for conceits and paradoxes in Sydney's Astrophel and Stella or Milton's "Hobson poems," critics have, nonetheless, never quite been ready to abandon it.[10] Insofar as a tradition exists it is both as a general literary tradition and as a historical movement. Its characteristic poetic devices are the conceit, the strong line, the hieroglyph, and lyrical dialectic, to name only a few of the more striking. It has its historical roots in the challenges of the skeptical philosophers and the new scientists to the unified and hierarchical world vision of the middle ages and the renaissance. Understood in such a general sense, the term "metaphysical poetry," can offer a valuable frame for viewing Vaughan's poetry.

This is not to imply that Vaughan or any of the other poets studied here considered themselves metaphysical poets

either in the sense in which Dr. Johnson used the term in his Life of Cowley or in which the term has been used by any one of a number of critics from that time to the present. The term, nevertheless, is useful for describing a group of poets who seem to have more in common with each other than with their predecessors, the Elizabethans; their contemporaries, the cavaliers; or their successors, the Augustans. The difficulty, of course, arises when we try to determine exactly what qualities allow us to see these poets as a group, despite their individual differences.

Dr. Johnson speaks of the violent yoking together of heterogeneous ideas, the discordia concors, as characteristic of the metaphysicals; but certainly this was nothing new in English poetry. A conceit is different from a metaphor in degree rather than in kind, and the question of whether the tenor and vehicle are violently yoked or simply joined together is likely to be answered more in terms of what the reader of the poem expects to find than in terms of any actual incompatability between the objects of comparison. The famous compass metaphor in "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" is surely no more violently conceived than is the central metaphor of the sonnet by Sannazaro, translated by Wyatt, which appears in Tottel's Miscellany as "The Lovers Life Compared to the Alps":

Like unto these unmeasurable mountaines
So is my painfull life, the burden of yre;
For hye be they, and hye is my desire;
And I of teares, and they be full of fountaines;
Under craggy rockes they have full barren plaines,
Hard thoughtes in me my woefull minde doth tyre,
Small fruite and many leaves their toppes do attire,
With very small effect great trust in me remaines.
The boystrous windes oft their hye boughes do blast:
Hote sighes in me continually be shed.
Wild beastes in them, fierce love in me is fed.
Unmoveable am I: and they stedfast.
Of singing birds they have the tune and note:
And I alwaies plaintes passing through my throte.[11]

Few, however, would consider this poem metaphysical in spite of its strained comparisons, although Donne's lines,

Call her one, mee another flye,
We'are tapers too, and at our owne cost die,[12]

are not by any objective standards more shocking or more violent than Wyatt's metaphors. Nor is Wyatt an isolated example. Sixteenth century poetry abounds in paradox, conceit, and pun; but we accept them easily because they so obviously belong to an established convention. It is only

by questioning the convention itself, as Shakespeare does in "Sonnet 130" or Sir John Davies in his Gulling Sonnets, that the violent yoking together of roses and cheeks or cloak and sorrow becomes apparent.

It is not, then, the conceit which is the distinguishing characteristic of metaphysical poetry, although we may agree with Helen Gardner that the metaphysical poet uses the conceit differently than does the Petrarchan:

> It is the use which they make of the conceit and the vigorous nature of their conceits, springing from the use to which they are put, which is more important than their frequently learned content.
>
> .....
>
> The poem has something to say which the conceit explicates or something to urge which the conceit helps to forward.
>
> .....
>
> The metaphysical conceit aims at making us concede its justness while admiring its ingenuity.[13]

In this view, the metaphysical conceit is functional rather than decorative. It aims at "proof by analogy" rather than dramatization by comparison or amplification.[14] The process of invention is intellectual rather than fanciful.

Its validity is dependent, not upon convention, but upon the reader's acknowledgment of actual points of correspondence between seemingly unrelated objects or ideas. Thus, the poet's mind is always at the center of the poem forging new unities from the disparate elements of his experience.

Dryden's famous comment that Donne "perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softness of love"[15] reveals, if not an appreciation of, at least an important insight into the metaphysical sensibility. Some of the factors which caused this sensibility to fall out of favor will be dealt with later, but here we can ask why Donne should have written in a manner that seemed inappropriate, not only to Dryden, but would have seemed so, also, to the Petrarchan lyricists of the sixteenth century. The reason is not simply anti-Petrarchanism, and it is certainly not anti-Petrarchanism in the same sense as in Sir John Davies. Donne and the other metaphysicals go beyond mere reaction to and parody of the older tradition to create a positive aesthetic of their own. Dissatisfaction with Petrarchanism is apparent in Herbert's "Jordan I,"

> Who sayes that fictions onely and false hair
> Become a verse? Is there in truth no beautie? (1,2)

and Vaughan's "The World,"

> The doting Lover in his queintest strain
> Did there Complain,
> Neer him, his Lute, his fancy, and his flights,
> Wits sour delights,[16]

as well as in Donne, but it is seldom the major concern of the poet. Awareness of this fact led A. Alvarez to comment:

> But Donne and his coterie, though Anti-Petrarchan, were not in strict formal opposition to anyone else's aesthetics, for the good reason that their main interests were not in technical matters.[17]

While such a statement may hold true for Vaughan or Crashaw, Donne and Herbert were quite interested in technical matters. They seem, in spite of their rebellion, to owe a great deal to the Petrarchans.

Mario Praz, in fact, sees a good bit of the Petrarchan temper remaining in Donne:

> As we survey Donne's poetry after such a distance of time, we can hardly fail to notice how much this poet, who in a sense led the reaction against

> Petrarchism in England, was himself a Petrarchist, thanks to his medievally trained mind. Donne must have actually felt in opposition to the poetry of his day, and if he still remained a Petrarchist to some extent, this was due to the fact that, no matter how strong is one's personal reaction, one cannot avoid belonging to a definite historical climate.[18]

He shows, further, that Donne employs the conceit, not as Marino, or even Wyatt, employed it, primarily as a means of evoking surprize in the reader. In Donne, the conceit is always more than a device producing shock; it is a part of the dialectic or dramatic structure of the whole poem.[19] In Donne, the structure of the conceit is more closely involved with the poem's meaning than it had been for the Petrarchans. Technique, to a large extent, is content.

Yet, if Donne's use of metaphor reveals a debt to the Petrarchans, he owes them nothing for his conception of woman. His mistresses are creatures of flesh and bone, and as Theodore Spencer says:

> If one's relations with one's mistress were to be looked at realistically, and one were no longer to compare her cheeks to roses, her lips to coral, and her teeth to pearl,

> as the sonneteers at this time were doing; if one were to think of her as she was, and resist any temptation to embellish her into a romantic symbol, one would perhaps begin to question the validity of one's emotions, and would end by not being in love at all.[20]

Because he is constantly questioning the validity of his emotions, two things immediately happen to Donne's poetry. The poems become private expressions of individual concerns; and the automatic assumption of the Petrarchans that the woman is worthy of unqualified adoration disappears.

Joseph Mazzeo looks to Giordano Bruno for an answer to this problem of how the metaphysical conceit was related to the continental tradition:

> Giordano Bruno, the first critic to attempt a formulation of "concettismo," as the "metaphysical" style was known in Italy, began his argument to De gli eroici furori with an attack on the Petrarchan theory of inspiration. For the older notion of "amore" directed toward personal beauty, Bruno attempted to substitute the idea of "heroic

> love" directed toward the universe. The second kind of love he interprets as the gift which both the philosopher and the poet have for perceiving the unity of dissimilars or, in other terms, for making heterogeneous analogies. Thus, for Bruno, "metaphysical" poetry was essentially concerned with perceiving and expressing the universal correspondences in his universe.[21]

Yet the poems in De gli eroici furori look, in many respects, much like conventional Petrarchan love poems. The difference is that, for Bruno, the contemplation of earthly beauty always leads higher, toward the One, who is present in all physical reality:

> Amor, per cui tant'alto il ver discerno,
> ch'apre le porte di diamante e nere,
> per gli occhi entra il mio nume; e per vedere
> nasce, vive, si nutre, ha regno eterno.
> Fa scorger quanto ha 'l ciel, terra ed inferno,
> fa presenti d'absenti effigie vere,
> repliga forze, ecol trar dritto, fere
> e impiaga sempr' il cor, scuopre l' interno.[22]

Tommaso Campanella says in "Modo di filosofare" that the

world is a book, written in metaphor. The ways of God are revealed in conceits to those who know how to view nature.

> Il mondo è il libro dove il Senno eterno
> scrisse i propri concetti, e vivo tempio
> dove, pingendo i gesti e 'l proprio esempio,
> di statue vive orno l'imo e 'l superno;
> perch'ogni spirto qui l'arte e 'l governo
> leggere e contemplar, per non farsi empio,
> debba, e dir possa:--Io l'universo adempio,
> Dio contemplando a tutte cose interno.--[23]

And because God had written the book of nature in metaphor, it was possible for man, who was made in God's image, to further God's work by creating his own books composed of conceits, celebrating awareness of the One's presence in the many. The "nice speculations" with which Donne perplexed the minds of the fair sex result from this "heroic love." He is as concerned with defining the nature of his love as he is with praising the charms of his lover. Yet while this sort of philosophical wooing disturbed Dryden and caused C. S. Lewis to remark that "Donne never for long gets rid of a medieval sense of the sinfulness of sexuality,"[24] Joan Bennett points out that for Donne the physical beauty of a woman was a corporeal embodiment of divine beauty. Love for a particular woman was love for

the universe, partly because the woman was a microcosm, but more importantly because Donne felt that the physical world was a manifestation of the divine and that man's role was to live in both worlds and to see the analogies and correspondences between them. Miss Bennett shows this characteristic very clearly in her sensitive reading of "Aire and Angells." She points out that for Donne the "purity" of love was realized by the lover's reaching out beyond the particular physical embodiment of love and beauty into the pure, unchanging essences of these qualities.[25] To put it another way, Donne is not in love with the idea of love, but with a particular woman as the embodiment of the ideal.

For the metaphysical poet, nothing exists in isolation, and the characteristic devices of wit are used to force this recognition upon the reader. Professor Smith points out that "metaphysical problems rise out of pairs of opposites that behave almost exactly as do the elements of a metaphysical conceit."[26] This is true, and an understanding of how it is true is essential to the understanding of metaphysical poetry and of the difference between poets such as Donne, Herbert, and Vaughan, who take their metaphysics seriously and poets such as Cowley and Cleveland, who tend to affect the metaphysics. By partaking of both the many and the One, the conceit demonstrates as well as asserts unity. It acknowledges the

variety, but also the unity of the world and asserts the power of the intellect as a forger of unity. The correspondence takes shape in the poet's imagination, but it is not, therefore, less real, or at least the poet would not have us believe it less real because of its origin in the mind. The metaphysical conceit, symbol, analogy, pun, and hieroglyph all work toward this revelation of correspondence. Herbert's shaped poems are only the most obvious examples of the poetic demonstration of correspondence. For him, the hieroglyph served essentially the same function that the conceit had served for Donne. "The Hieroglyph represented to Herbert a fusion of the spiritual and material, of the rational and sensuous, in the essential terms of formal relationships."[27] The intellect is always at the center of the poem, drawing upon the two worlds and demonstrating analogy and correspondence. In "The Quidditie," Herbert reveals his conception of the poem's function:

> It is no office, art, or news,
> Nor the Exchange, or busie Hall;
> But it is that which while I use
> I am with thee, and most take all. (9-12)

The poetry, thus, represents an attempt to use the poet's creative faculties as a means of bringing the physical

world under the dominion of the ideal.

Even Crashaw, who at first seems to luxuriate in the sensual, finally moves beyond the physical realities, so that he would, as Austin Warren says, "boldly appropriate the whole range of sensuous experience as symbolic of the inner life." Warren says further that "his metaphors yet form a series of loosely defined analogies and antitheses and cross references, a system of motifs symbolically expressive of themes and emotions persistently his."[28] Thus, for Crashaw, also, the spiritual and the material are fused in poetry, as in this passage from his hymn "To the Name of Jesus":

Bring All the Powres of Praise
Your Provinces of well-united Worlds can raise;
Bring All your Lutes & Harps of Heavn & Earth;
What e're cooperates to The common mirthe
Vessells of vocall Joyes,
Or You, more noble Architects of Intellectual Noise,
Cymballs of Heav'n or Human sphears,
Solliciters of Soules or Eares;
And when you'are come, with All
That you can bring or we can call;
O may you fix
For ever here, & mix
Your selves into the long

And everlasting series of a deathlesse Song;
Mix all your many Worlds, Above,
And loose them into One of Love,
    Chear thee my Heart!
    For thou too hast thy Part
    And Place in the Great Throng
Of This unbounded All-imbracing Song.
    Powres of my Soul, be Proud!
    And speake lowd
To all the dear-bought Nations This Redeeming Name,
And in the Wealth of one Rich Word proclaim
New Similes to Nature. (72-96)

The "deathlesse Song" unites the worlds of "Heavn & Earth" mixing them into "One of Love," as the "one Rich Word," Jesus (the Word made flesh), proclaims "New Similes to Nature." Thus, for Crashaw, Christ becomes the perfect symbol of the union of the ideal and the physical, and through love of Christ man discovers that the world is full of simile, analogy, and correspondence.

For Traherne, likewise, the two worlds are properly seen as one. It is only man's clouded vision which causes him to separate the material from the ideal. His poem, "Hosanna" echoes the sentiments, even the language of the two passages from Herbert and Crashaw quoted above:

No more, No more shall Clouds eclyps my Treasures,
Nor vile Shades obscure my highest Pleasures;
No more shall earthen Husks confine
My Blessings which do shine
Within the Skies, or els abov:
Both Worlds one Heven made by Lov.[29]

Here are the two separate worlds, combined into "one Heven made by Lov," just as for Crashaw the pluralities are lost in the "One of Love." Again, in the same poem, Traherne seems to echo the passage quoted from Herbert's "The Quidditie," when after rejecting trunks, dishes, and ropes of pearl, he says:

My Thoughts on Things remain;
Or els like vital Beams
They reach to, shine on, quicken Things, and make
Them truly Usefull; while I All partake. (57-60)

This desire to "quicken Things" is the quintessential characteristic of the metaphysical poet. Because, like Herbert, he desires to "most take all," he constantly works toward assertion and demonstration of the unity of the temporal with the spiritual. It is only when the physical world is brought under the dominion of the right-thinking intellect that the clouds begin to disperse, the husks and

shells of objects are thrown away, and the true beauty and unity of nature's "un-bounded All-imbracing Song" is revealed.

Although he understood that insofar as they were spiritual, all objects had a common ground of being, the metaphysical poet also understood that insofar as these objects were material, they had husks or shells and were limited and separate. The common spiritual ground was apparent in the presence in dissimilar phenomenal objects of common forms--soft and hard, long and short, round and straight, for example. The limitation of the physical realm was apparent in the inescapable points of differentiation which gave objects their individual identities. It is from this tension between similarity and dissimilarity, or between the One and the many, that metaphysical poetry derives much of its characteristic intellectual and emotional intensity.

This concern is recognized by Smith, but because he centers his theory of metaphysical poetry around the conceit, he fails to show adequately how the philosophical problem of the One and the many is related to the poetic practices of the metaphysicals. While they may derive from different traditions, the emblems and hieroglyphs of Herbert and the baroque symbols of Crashaw are also poetic means of dealing with the problem of correspondence. In metaphysical poetry, then, wit becomes a means of creating

figures which explore the problem of unity and plurality; It centers upon tension between the plurality of the phenomenal world and the unity of the ideal world. The poetic imagination draws from both the phenomenal and the ideal in an attempt to forge an aesthetic unity between them and to recover a wholly unified vision of the world.

It is not surprising that such a poetic sensibility should emerge from the early seventeenth century, particularly among writers of Anglo-Catholic persuasion. So much has been written about the destruction of the Renaissance world vision and the resultant divided sensibility which has characterized man from the seventeenth century to the present that little need be repeated here, except as it relates directly to the purposes of this study.[30] The "clear and equal glass" through which Bacon advocated that man view his surroundings was, of course, the glass of induction. In his rejection of scholasticism, with all its superstitions and misconceptions about the nature of the physical world, he gave expression to the new patterns of thought against which the metaphysicals were rebelling. The whole scholastic conception of order, hierarchy, and correspondence had its roots in religious faith and was based upon the belief that understanding of the phenomenal world could be deduced from metaphysical premises. As Basil Willey points out: "It may be said, then, that for

the scholastics there was little or no distinction between a 'fact' and a theological 'truth'. For them the important consideration was not how things behave, or what their history might be, but how they were linked with Total Being, and what, in a word, was their metaphysical status."[31]

The general thrust of the new philosophy, however, was not only to expose the errors which had been accepted as "fact" by the schoolmen, but also, and more importantly, to separate natural science from theology. The earth was one thing; heaven was another. Man could deduce nothing significant about the physical world from his knowledge of the spiritual. Sir Francis Bacon says in Novum Organum:

> But I say that those foolish and apish images of worlds which the philosophies of men have created in philosophical systems, must be utterly scattered to the winds. Be it known then how vast a difference there is . . . between the idols of the human mind and the ideas of the divine. The former are nothing more than arbitrary abstractions; the latter are the Creator's own stamp upon creation, impressed and defined in matter by true and exquisite lines.[32]

Metaphysical poetry, in the sense that the term has been used here, is obviously incompatible with such a vision, and the decline of metaphysical poetry in Cowley and Cleveland is directly related to the triumph of the new science over the occult sciences and of reason and analysis over revelation and intuition. By its very nature, metaphysical poetry denies the skeptical claim of Montaigne, "The world is but variety and dissemblance."[33] It is a reassertion of correspondence between temporal and divine and of man's ability to discover and demonstrate the points of correspondence.

The occult sciences, therefore, serve as an important source of imagery for many of these poets who were so firmly opposed to the teachings of the new scientists. Although most obvious in Vaughan, Hermetic imagery is important also in Donne and in Herbert, whose poem "The Elixir" gives an indication of how the metaphysicals linked occult philosophy with their own concerns as poets:

A man that looks on glasse,
On it may stay his eye;
Or if he pleaseth, through it passe
And then the heav'n espy.
All may of thee partake;
Nothing can be so mean,
Which with his tincture (for thy sake)

Will not grow bright and clean. (9-16) - -

Man in general, but the poet especially, must pass beyond the physical nature of an object to discover how all phenomena partake of the ideal and are finally united in God. The parenthetic clause "for thy sake" is the elixir, or the philosopher's stone, which allows the right-thinking mind to alter the nature of the phenomenal world, eliminating the apparent conflict between the unity of the ideal and the plurality of the phenomenal--it "turneth all to gold." In the words of J. F., Agrippa's English translator:

> To have a bare notion of a Deity, to apprehend some notions of the Celestials, together with the common operations thereof, and to conceive of some Terrestrial productions, is but what is superficial and vulgar; But this is true, this is sublime, this Occult PHILOSOPHY; to understand the mysterious influence of the intellectual world upon the Celestial, and of both upon the Terrest[r]ial; and to know how to to dispose and fit our selves so, as to be capable of receiving those superior operations, whereby we may be able to operate wonderful things, which indeed seem impossible, or at least unlawfull, when as indeed they may be affected by a naturall power and without either

offence to God, or violation of Religion.[34]

The intellect, then, is the central force, dwelling between the terrestrial and the celestial, searching for unity, correspondence, and influence and using this knowledge as a means of interpreting and even controlling the physical world. The process is intuitive and perceptive rather than rational and analytical--thus Herbert's emphasis upon right reason as a precondition to the attainment of the secret of the philosopher's stone. So long as a man looks at the glass rather than through it, he must be contented with the merely physical, the fragmented and dissociated. The unified vision of the poet, however, acknowledges fragmentation and dissociation but contends that these qualities are not essential and that the intellect can bring them under the dominion of the ideal.

Mindful of the dissociation and fragmentation which appeared to be consequences of man's immorality, the metaphysicals sought to achieve a purity of spirit which would allow them to see the true unity of the world as it appeared in the mind of God. The phenomenal world needed to be transformed, but the transformation was to be imaginative, as the right-thinking poet sought to demonstrate that the discord of the world was merely an illusion of man's sin beclouded vision. The imagery became functional, therefore, in that it demonstrated within the

context of the poem, the poet's attempts to imaginatively transform his imperfect and fragmented world to a perfect unity.

The metaphysical poet, then, is concerned with reasserting and re-defining the links between the ideal and the phenomenal. A basic assumption of the poetry is not only that such links exist, but also that it is the poet's function to discover them and to demonstrate how they provide a harmony of correspondence and inter-relationship encompassing even the most apparently dissociated phenomena. The terms of this definition are admittedly general. I have tried to show that specific aspects of the metaphysical style: conceit, emblem, and paradox, for example, may appear in poets who are not properly considered metaphysical, but when the metaphysical poet uses them they are charged with a particular kind of philosophical significance. Such qualities as the strong line, the private voice, the recondite imagery are also shared with poets who do not belong to the same tradition. Therefore, while the metaphysical poets made use of all of these devices, they are common but not necessarily distinguishing characteristics of metaphysical poetry.

The degree of emphasis a particular poet places upon the need to transcend the phenomenal is a matter of individual temperament. It becomes apparent in the extent of his emphasis upon unity, harmony, and immutability, as

opposed to variety, discord, and decay; and also in the extent to which he finds his very physical existence a hindrance to total awareness. Thus, Herbert believes it is possible for man to so temper himself that God is present in every thought and action; Donne is less confident of man's ability to free himself from the bonds of sin and to realize God's presence; while Vaughan, acknowledging divine immanence, believes that total union with God demands that man finally transcend the material world through marriage to Christ. Seeing that a particular poet belongs to the metaphysical tradition, then, is only a first step toward the breaking up of Dr. Johnson's classification. We must finally try to move toward an understanding of the poet's individual accomplishment as well as of his relationship to other poets working within the same tradition.

For numerous reasons, this problem has particular importance for the student of Henry Vaughan. Most obviously, Vaughan's poetry is highly derivative, even to the extent of his being called a plagiarist and lacking in originality.[35] Secondly, Vaughan has very real similarities, not only to his contemporaries, but also to such later writers as Wordsworth, Emerson, and Beaudelaire; over-emphasis upon his similarity to these later writers obscures those aspects of his work which have firm roots in the seventeenth century. Finally, while critics of Vaughan have recognized the need to link him with a tradition, they

have chosen, generally, to deal with underlying philosophical or religious traditions rather than with poetic traditions which would reveal the manner in which Vaughan gives poetic expression to his ideas. This is not to minimize the importance of source studies; no one can fully appreciate Vaughan without some knowledge of Hermeticism or of Christian neo-Platonism. Nevertheless, if it is also true, as Professor Garner asserts, that Vaughan's poetry is the re-creation of experience; perhaps it is time to direct our attention toward an understanding of Vaughan's place in the tradition of metaphysical poetry.[36] While it is certainly true that Vaughan is highly derivative, drawing images and symbols from a variety of sources (the Bible, the Hermetic philosophers, contemporary poets, and the Welsh countryside), these sources are less important for this study than the manner in which Vaughan uses them.

Because some of the most perceptive criticism of Vaughan has been the result of the comparison with Herbert which most critics feel obliged to undertake, it would also seem profitable to undertake the same sort of comparative study with respect to the other poets who have been traditionally considered members of the same school. If the similarities between Vaughan and Donne are less obvious than the similarities between Vaughan and Herbert, an intensive comparison can, nevertheless, uncover the precise

nature of the differences and also can reveal any significant similarities which might explain why both men can be included in the same poetic school or tradition. Numerous general studies of the metaphysicals have demonstrated the value of breaking up Dr. Johnson's classification, while the work of Itrat-Husain and Louis Martz has shown the value of providing a constant perspective from which to view the various poets studied. By using the work of a single poet as the constant factor in a comparative study, we not only have an opportunity to get an overview of the tradition, but we have also an opportunity to see that poet's individual characteristics more clearly by observing his relationship to those with whom he is studied.

NOTES

1. Selected Essays 1917-1932 (London: Faber & Faber, 1934), p. 291.

2. "On Metaphysical Poetry," Scrutiny, 2, 3 (Dec., 1933), 223-39.

3. The Monarch of Wit: An Analytical and Comparative Study of the Poetry of John Donne (London: The Hutchinson Publishing Group, 1951), pp. 9, 10.

4. Leishman, The Monarch of Wit, p. 26.

5. Cf. Morse Peckham, "Toward a Theory of Romanticism," PMLA, 66 (1951), 5-23.

6. Tottel's Miscellany, rev.ed., ed. Hyder Edward Rollins (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), II, 40.

7. The Works of George Herbert, ed. F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1941), p. 87. All Herbert quotations are from this edition and will hereafter be

cited by line number in the text.

8. The Poems of Richard Crashaw, 2nd ed., ed. L. C. Martin (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 249. All Crashaw quotations are from this edition and will hereafter be cited by line number in the text.

9. Cf. George Williamson, "Strong Lines," Seventeenth Century Contexts (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 120-31. He points out, for example, that the term "strong lines" was used, at least initially, to distinguish the plain style of Jonson and Donne from the smoother style of the Spenserians. Later, largely through its association with Donne and his followers, it was linked with excesses of wit and with Clevelandizing.

10. For a summary of the use of the term, see George Williamson, Six Metaphysical Poets: A Reader's Guide (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1967), pp. 3-25. See also Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, "A Critique of Some Modern Theories of Metaphysical Poetry," Modern Philology, 50 (1952), 88-96.

11. Tottel's Miscellany, II, 68.

12. The Poems of John Donne, ed. Herbert J. C. Grierson (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1912), I, 15. All Donne quotations are from this edition and will hereafter be cited in the text.

13. The Metaphysical Poets (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. xxv, xxvi.

14. This view is advanced by Joseph Anthony Mazzeo in "Metaphysical Poetry and the Poetic of Correspondence," JHI, 14 (1953), 221-34. Mazzeo discusses the distinction made by the Italians between the "metaphor of ornament" and the "poetic of correspondences," contending that the latter was to become the basis of the metaphysical style in England.

15. Essays of John Dryden, ed. W. P. Ker (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1926), II, 19.

16. The Works of Henry Vaughan, 2nd. ed., ed. L. C. Martin (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1957) p. 466. All Vaughan quotations are from this edition and will hereafter be cited in the text.

17. The School of Donne (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), p. 41.

18. Mario Praz, "Donne's Relation to the Poetry of his Time," in A Garland for John Donne, ed. Theodore Spencer (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1958), p. 66.

19. Praz, p. 57.

20. "Donne and His Age," in A Garland for John Donne, p. 181.

21. Mazzeo, "A Critique," p. 88.

22. Opere di Giordano Bruno e di Tommaso Campanella Letteratora Italiana Storia e Testi, ed. Augusto Guzzo and Romano Americo, XXXIII (Milan: Riccardo Ricciardi, n.d.), p. 580. This prose translation is from George Kay, ed., The Penguin Book of Italian Verse (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 200: "Love, by whom I distinguish the truth so remote and high, who opens the black and admantine gates, enters my spirit through my eyes; and is born to see; lives, is fed, has eternal reign for this. He calls into being all that heaven, earth, and hell contain, he causes true copies of the absent to be present, summons up powers and, hurling straight, strikes, wounds the heart ever, and discovers every inward."

23. Opere, p. 791. Kay translates this passage as

follows: "The world is the book where eternal Wisdom wrote its own ideas, and the living temple where, depicting its own acts and likeness, it decorated the height and depth with living statues; so that every spirit, to guard against profanity, should read and contemplate here art and government, and each should say: 'I fill the universe, seeing God in all things'" pp. 203, 04.

24. "Donne and Love Poetry in the Seventeenth Century," Seventeenth Century Studies Presented to Sir Herbert Grierson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 74

25. "The Love Poetry of John Donne: A Reply to Mr. C. S. Lewis," Seventeenth Century Studies Presented to Sir Herbert Grierson, pp. 85-104.

26. Smith, p. 234.

27. Joseph Summers, George Herbert, His Religion and Art (London: Chatto & Windus, 1954), p. 145.

28. Richard Crashaw: A Study in Baroque Sensibility (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1939), p. 190.

29. Thomas Traherne: Poems Centuries and Three

Thanksgivings, ed. Anne Ridler (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) p. 137. All Traherne quotations are from this edition and will hereafter be cited in the text.

30. See especially: Marjorie Hope Nicolson, The Breaking of the Circle (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1950); S. L. Bethell, The Cultural Revolution of the Seventeenth Century (London: Dennis Dobson, 1951); Margaret L. Wiley, The Subtle Knot (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952). Hiram Hayden, The Counter-Renaissance (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950); and Basil Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935).

31. Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background, p.23.

32. Novum Organum, The Works of Francis Bacon , ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath, VIII (Boston: Brown and Taggard, 1863), p. 156.

33. The Essays of Montaigne, trans. John Florio, 1st series, The Tudor translations (New York: AMS Press, 1967), II, 2. See also III, 13, "Of Experience," for a fuller development of these ideas.

34. Cornelius Agrippa, Three Books of Occult

Philosophy, Trans. J. F. (London, 1651), p. xx.

35. Frank Kermode, "The Private Imagery of Henry Vaughan," RES, 1 (1950), 208.

36. Ross Garner, Henry Vaughan: Experience and the Tradition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 8.

Vaughan and Donne:
Transformation and Purgation

Probably no quality of the poetry of John Donne is more arresting, particularly to the reader who comes to him from the poetry of the sixteenth century, than its immediacy, its intense intellectual and emotional power. This is not to say that Donne was more sincere than his predecessors, but that in his poetry we sense a new kind of sincerity. The poet has allowed us to see through his persona more clearly than ever before in English poetry. We are allowed into the mind, even the heart, of the poet as he stands between two worlds trying to forge his experience into a unified whole. In Donne, especially, there are always two antithetical worlds: scholastic and skeptic, profane and sacred, finite and infinite, life and death, heaven and hell. But while Donne's world was composed of polarities, he took up the task of binding them together. Because learning and restless curiosity combined in him with intense honesty and powerful emotions, he had frequent difficulty reconciling the opposites which troubled him so greatly. The poetry itself is argumentative, dramatic, personal, and unadorned; and if there is a shift in

thematic emphasis in the divine poems, it reveals Donne's growing commitment to his God, a commitment which ended in the well-earned peace of death so eloquently described by Izaak Walton and by Donne himself.[1]

Vaughan's poetry also grew out of an awareness of opposites, although his reaction to them was not Donne's. While with Vaughan we are accustomed to speaking of "conversion" from amatory to religious verse, the once commonplace distinction between Jack Donne, man about London, and John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's, is not nearly so sharp as the distinction between the two stages of Vaughan's career. Perhaps because he was less sensually inclined to begin with or because he was by nature more inclined to meditation than to action, Vaughan seems to have escaped his past more easily and more thoroughly than Donne. His poems, particularly Poems (1646) and Olor Iscanus (completed in 1647, but not published until 1651) lack that dramatic immediacy which we associate with Donne. The voice in the earlier poems is decidedly public, and it is not until Silex Scintillans that Vaughan achieves anything like the kind of intimacy that runs throughout Donne's poetry. However, even in his later devotional works, one senses that despite their many similarities Vaughan is travelling over different ground than had Donne. In his brief chapter on Donne, Garner states:

> In comparison with a poetry like Donne's, which seems, as is typically said, hacked out of immediate physical experience and beaten wittily into expression from scholasticism, logic, science, and mathematics, Henry Vaughan's allegorical refinements of feeling seem to pale into tenuous and rarified gropings for the indefinable.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Moreover, the robustness of a religious poetry like Donne's and the inherent tensions which the rebellious faculties create in conflict with devotion have a particular appeal to our psychologically oriented culture and seem initally more virile than the unfullfilled longing for transcendence which washes over Vaughan.[2]

Vaughan is "longing for transcendence," groping for the indefinable, while Donne is wrestling with the rebellious faculties. If both men were travelling the same path, Vaughan would seem to have progressed a stage further, passing through the purgative stage more easily than Donne and moving on to the illuminative stage and to the dark night.

In fact, most of Vaughan's conflicts arise in the more advanced stages of the mystical journey; they are born of his longing for union with the One, while Donne works out

most of his conflicts at the purgative stage, attempting to account for the sensual and material. Vaughan is quite ready to admit that physical reality consists of mere masks and shadows which cloud his vision, but Donne will not cast off the world of the senses quite so easily. He constantly questions the relationship between the temporal and the spiritual and is less concerned with knowing the transcendence of God than he is with understanding the extent of God's immanence. Because Donne is concerned primarily with the lower levels of the mystical experience, it is somewhat misleading to use the term "mystical" with regard to his poetry. The term implies the existence of a quest upon which Donne seems never to have consciously embarked. He demands to know his relationship to God, but he does not demand to see God face to face. The fulfillment he seeks is one of certainty rather than of unity. He knows, although he does not much like it, that the unity will come only after death and resurrection. Helen White suggests much the same thing when, in enumerating the traits that kept Donne from the mystical path, she says: "That [which kept him from becoming a mystic] is his exquisite and thoroughgoing individuality, his gloriously full realization of his own entity and of the thousands of unique moments of consciousness that have piled up the store of his experience."[3] Both Donne and Vaughan share this concern for the relationship between

body and spirit, but in Vaughan the relationship between temporal and divine is clearer. He seems to have settled for himself the questions which caused Donne such anguish.

Whatever the merits of Vaughan's secular verse, it provides little insight into the devotional poetry of Silex Scintillans. Despite occasional echoes of Donne, as in "To Amoret gone from him" and "To Amoret, of the difference 'twixt him, and other lovers, and what true Love is," the poems share little of Donne's passion and intellectual toughness. The mixture of love, tavern, and occasional poems in Poems offers only the slightest foreshadowing of the later devotional verse in a chance image, as the "vast Ring,/amidst these golden glories" in "To Amoret, Walking in a Starry Evening," "This endless holy fire" in "A Song to Amoret," or the occasional Hermetic references in "To Amoret Weeping" and "In Amicum foeneratorem." Generally, however, the poems are more in the Jonsonian than in the Donnian manner.

Vaughan says, in the dedication to Poems:

> My more calme Ambition, amidst the common noise hath thus exposed me to the World: 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, and the Commotion, within these

limits, excludes Danger. (p. 2)

The opening verse speaks of his admiration for "Great BEN" and "Then Randolph," but while he speaks of souls "Freed from the tyranny of clay" the scene is "the Elysian fields" rather than a Christian heaven, and there is no attempt to explore the tension between body and soul. The amatory poems are generally complaints and blazons rather than seduction poems. Nor does Vaughan ever question the morality of his love. Amoret is idealized all too easily. Love is a tyrant, who alternately kills and revives the poet with glances and sighs. Vaughan does, like Donne, discriminate between caritas and cupiditas, but unlike Donne, his love is always perfect, constant, and Platonic.

Despite the obvious theft of a line from Donne's "A Valediction: forbidding mourning," Vaughan's "To Amoret gone from him" is one of the most promising poems of the early volume. A brief examination of it will do much to reveal the general character of these early works:

To Amoret gone from him.

Fancy, and I, last Evening walkt,
And, Amoret, of thee we talkt;
The West just then had stolne the Sun,
And his last blushes were begun:

We sate, and markt how everything
Did mourne his absence; How the Spring
That smil'd, and curl'd about his beames,
Whilst he was here now check'd her streames:
The wanton Eddies of her face
Were taught lesse noise, and smoother grace;
And in a slow, sad channell went,
Whisp'ring the banks their discontent:
The carelesse ranks of flowers that spread
Their perfum'd bosomes to his head,
And with an open, free Embrace,
Did entertaine his beamy face;
Like absent friends point to the West,
And on that weake reflection feast.
If Creatures then that have no sence,
But the loose tye of influence,
(Though fate, and time each day remove
Those things that element their love)
At such vast distance can agree,
Why, Amoret, why should not wee.

Like much of his later poetry, this poem makes considerable use of nature imagery. The world of man is compared with the non-human world, and Vaughan concludes that we would do well to imitate the flowers and streams which react from influence rather than from reason or passion. The

creatures "that have no sence," are in natural harmony with one another; but man's superior gifts are paradoxical since they give a conscious awareness of sense impressions which, while creating stronger ties than the ties of influence, also tends to give disproportionate significance to "those things that element their love," the sensory components of experience. Vaughan suggests not that the lovers should become independent of time and fate by forcing themselves into attitudes of indifference toward each other, but that they should use their superior faculties to build ties of love between themselves like the ties of influence between sub-sensate creatures. The lovers, however, will move above the level of sense, and in doing so will paradoxically become like the streams and flowers in that both are independent of the world of sense.

The poem, then, does make use of dialectic, but does not have the dramatic quality we associate so closely with Donne. As Professor Alvarez says:

> Carew and the others use their brilliant openings simply as a means of striking an attitude. From that position of security they debate, but move forward very little. It can be seen in their language which, even when colloquial, is always highly polished; they rarely risk Donne's metrical irregularities.[4]

The personifications of Fancy and the West, together with the conceit of the West blushing from having stolen the sun, are, perhaps, inventive and witty; but they are not central to the argument of the poem. The argument, in fact, does not begin until line five where we are told, "We sate and markt how every thing/Did mourne his absence." Here the personification combines with the concept of sympathy and influence in nature to point up the relationship between human love and the sympathy of sub-sensate creatures. Still, the tone is polished and smooth. The poetic voice is public. There is no suggestion of strain or uncertainty, and the tetrameter couplets work together with the lush nature imagery and the portrait of the persona's solitary reflection to create the kind of warm Platonic glow that Vaughan, in his dedication, claims to be presenting.

Donne's "A Valediction: forbidding mourning," on the other hand, builds its dialectic steadily from the first stanza, working slowly through arguments drawn from religion, astronomy, philosophy, metallurgy, and geometry. Each one refines and develops the preceding argument. Donne begins by contrasting the perfect calm with which a virtuous man faces death with the implied fear which would characterize the sinner's confrontation with death. He suggests that he and his lover should in this brief parting resemble the virtuous rather than the sinful. There is no

need to make a spectacle of themselves before their crass friends. Their love is ethereal, pure, and unchanging, while earth-bound lovers, who find their delight only in the senses, become distraught when they are separated from the objects of their delight, "Those things which elemented it."

The fifth stanza shifts the emphasis away from the comparisons of the first four stanzas to a description of the perfect love shared by Donne and his mistress. Because their souls can never be separated, they never completely part; nor can bodily separation destroy their love, because such separation only expands their souls "Like gold to ayery thinnesse beate." Consequently, the compass metaphor, perhaps violent out of context, fits perfectly into the argument of the poem. While it may be the most radical conceit in the poem, it is also the most palpable. Donne devotes three stanzas to its explanation, while none of the more abstract analogies are so fully realized. He seems to have known he was being audacious in taking the ideas so carefully worked out in the first six stanzas and contracting them into this one powerful conceit, but he has prepared his readers carefully for everything except the concretization of his concepts. He has said that the lovers were inseparable, that parting could only expand their love, and now like a teacher in the classroom, he brings in a visual aid to illustrate his

point. If we still don't fully understand, perhaps it is because we belong to the "layetie."

Unlike "To Amoret gone from him," then, "A Valediction: forbidding mourning" proceeds by carefully reasoned steps to a final statement that draws its force and validity from the argument which has preceded it. Donne works his argument out dramatically in the course of the poem, while the course that Vaughan's argument will take is immediately apparent in the lines, "We sate, and markt how everything/ Did mourne his absence." The voice in Donne's poem is private rather than public: "T'were prophanation of our joyes/ To tell the layetie our love." He is much more daring metrically, making frequent inversions and substitutions within the basic iambic tetrameter framework. Donne's imagery appeals primarily to the intellect, while Vaughan largely depends upon sensual imagery for the creation of a mood which is favorable to his argument. Vaughan's flowers, bending "their perfum'd bosomes" toward the West are doing no more than the fixed foot of Donne's compass: "It leans, and hearkens after it," but where Vaughan offers his conceit as a casual perception of his fancy, Donne offers his as a concrete demonstration of the essential unity of the physically separated lovers. The conceit, in Donne, intellectually demonstrates the validity of the truth which it asserts.

Alongside Donne, Vaughan's early poetry seems to suffer

from a lack of positive conviction. When he deals with sensuous experience, he seems to be affecting a style rather than working from any real moral or aesthetic position. Even in "A Rhapsodie," perhaps the earthiest of his poems, there is no tension, no alternative to the revelry except "two Chruchwardens, and Mortalitie." It is a lively poem with some fine descriptive passages of London street-life, but Vaughan does not fit well in the role of "the down-right Epicure," and one gets the feeling that his mirth is as forced as are the classical allusions. This is an inferior "L'Allegro," without "Il Penseroso." Only later was Vaughan to come to terms with this sort of experience, and when he did, he was to see it as low and corrupt. For him, a conversion was necessary before he could move beyond the fragmented vision of isolated experience to a more comprehensive vision which was capable of absorbing and giving meaning to the world of sensory experience. Whether a spiritual as well as a poetic conversion took place, we cannot know with certainty, but certainly his later poetry reveals a spiritual depth scarcely hinted at in these earlier works.

The very limited nature of any conversion Donne might have experienced can be readily discerned by comparing his poetic development with Vaughan's. Certainly, Donne's later poetry does contain a shift in emphasis from secular to devotional themes, but such a shift might be expected in

any man who, having spent the passions of his youth, tried to understand and place them in perspective. However, even his early poetry is characterized by that tension between the temporal and the eternal which is so unmistakably absent from Vaughan's early poetry. Even in 1931, T. S. Eliot felt that the distinction between Donne the rake and Donne the divine had been exaggerated:

> Nobody now, I suppose, divides Donne's life into two periods, one dissolute and irreligious, the other a revulsion to intense and austere piety, a division so complete as to suggest an alteration of personality. We agree that it is one and the same man in both early and later life.[5]

The view we take of his "conversion" does, indeed, depend upon our view of "the nature of his religious faith." Eliot is also quite right in asserting that it is just as easy to exaggerate Donne's mysticism as his dissipation. As Grierson says:

> The passion that burns in Donne's most outspoken elegies, and wantons in the "Epithalamia," is not cast out in "The Anniversarie" or "The Canonization," but absorbed. It is purified and enriched by being brought into harmony with his whole nature,

spiritual as well as physical.[6]

This harmony, which Donne sought so desperately and which he finally achieved, resulted, however, from his certainty that his sins had been forgiven, that he was one of the elect, and that while he could present to God nothing but sin and misery, God had, nevertheless, assured him of salvation. The torment was ended, and Donne, who had sought so desperately for some understanding of his relationship to God, had found the certainty which would at last allow him to whisper to his soul to go.[7]

Yet the quest for understanding and certainty of one's relationship to the Godhead is not the same thing as the quest for unity with the Godhead. Nor does the fact that the first sort of experience is a preliminary stage of the mystical experience imply that the man who aspires to the goal of certainty necessarily hopes to go any further. If it is necessary, in getting from point A to point C, to pass through point B, this does not mean that everyone who travels between points A and B intends to continue on to point C. The questions that trouble Donne are: How can I know whether God will forgive my sins? Is my love for a woman necessarily idolatrous or can it lead me to God? Why can't my spirit be released from bondage to my body? How much of my attention should I direct toward this world and how much toward the next? Had he a medieval mind, he would

have had no trouble answering these questions; were he a skeptic, he wouldn't have bothered to ask ask them.

Vaughan seems to have answered these questions more easily than Donne and to have gone on to seek another sort of religious experience. His "tenuous and rarefied gropings for the indefinable" afford him glimpses of the Godhead, and these glimpses increase his desire for total union, which Evelyn Underhill calls "the true goal of mystical growth."[8] Itrat-Husain, in his brilliant study of mysticism, says: "the true mark of the mystic is not to know but to be.[9] Vaughan's involvement with the occult sciences, partly through his brother, Thomas, and partly through his own work as a doctor, provided him with a comprehensive symbolic language well suited to the description of his experience. Thus, while the characteristic devices of Donne are logical argument, dramatic structure, and the conceit; Vaughan's most characteristic devices are religious allegory, nature imagery, and Hermetic symbols.

Vaughan's poetry, like Donne's, grows out of a concern for the problem of opposites, but Vaughan moves more easily than Donne out of the material plane of experience into the spiritual. The last three lines of "The Good Morrow" show Donne grappling with the problem of the unity of opposites. J. B. Leishman says of these lines:

> The fact that he and she are completely sufficient for one another suggests the image of two hemispheres, and this again suggests the thought that their ideal world is more complete and perfect than the real one--"Without sharpe North, without declining West." But even yet he is not satisfied, and he goes on to illustrate their ideal unity in terms of the philosophical notion of simple substance: their souls are so united that they form one simple substance, and simple substances, God, and the soul which originates from the breath of God, cannot perish.[10]

Professor Leishman's reading is good, insofar as Donne is talking about love as an ideal experience; however, the poem is an aubade, and Donne is not unconscious of the fact that love is a physical, as well as an ideal experience. The pun on the world "die" ironically undercuts the ideal union achieved by the lovers. Like the lovers in "A Valediction: forbidding mourning" the lovers are perfectly united on the ideal plane although they are separated, or in this case imperfectly united, on the physical plane. While the souls achieve a perfect, ideal unity, the bodies achieve only an imperfect, physical unity in the act of sexual intercourse. Thus, while the souls can become perfect and incorruptible, the bodies remain imperfect and

mortal. Yet, the poem may contain still another twist since Donne believed that the body as well as the soul would be resurrected "at the last busie day." Thus, the soul, perfected by love, finally draws the body, also, to its perfect life in God. Before it can be transformed, however, the body must die. In "Of the Progresse of the Soule" Donne makes this point very clear:

> All casuall joy doth loud and plainly say,
> Only by comming, that it can away.
> Only in Heaven joyes strength is never spent;
> And accidentall things are permanent.
> Joy of a soules arrival ne'r decaies;
> For that soule ever joyes and ever staies.
> Joy that their last great Consummation
> Approaches in the resurrection;
> When earthly bodies more celestiall
> Shall be, then Angels were, for they could fall;
> This kind of joy doth every day admit
> Degree of growth, but none of losing it. (485-96)

The resurrection is the "last great Consummation" when the body, totally purged of its imperfection, finally is at harmony with the soul.

While Donne does not make use of Hermetic imagery in "The Good-Morrow," the poem does indirectly reveal the

skeptical attitude toward Alchemy, developed more clearly in "Loves Alchymie." Carl Jung states in Psychology and Alchemy:

> The problem of opposites called up by the shadow plays a great--indeed the decisive--role in alchemy, since it leads in the ultimate phase of the work to the union of opposites in the archetypal form of the hierosgamos or "chymical wedding." Here the supreme opposites, male and female (as in the Chinese yang and yin), are melted into a unity purified of all opposition and therefore incorruptible.[11]

While Donne frequently uses this conception as a source for metaphor, he, nevertheless, does not accept the possibility of achieving transformations on the material level. His poetry probes, but seldom resolves, the problem of unity and plurality, and, just as his conceits are characterized by a tension between union and opposition, he senses that this same tension is characteristic of the relationship between body and soul, between man and woman. Death was, for Donne, a necessary precondition to transformation and purification. It is easy, therefore, to understand how Donne can frequently subject the alchemists to ridicule.

E. H. Duncan, for example, notes several of Donne's

references to alchemy saying:

> In each of them the opinion of alchemy is the same as that expressed in numerous contemporary popular satires: that alchemy is largely imposture or self deception, alchemists charlatans or self-gulling dupes, and that all attempts to get the elixer or philosopher's stone have failed.[12]

In "Loves Alchemie" Donne equates his search for the "centrique happinesse" of love with the chymique's quest for the elixir. Both quests, he tells us, are futile. Both the alchemist and the lover delude themselves into believing that they can bring about transformations, but both are foiled because, in spite of their efforts, the ideal cannot bring the material entirely under its control. Thus, "the marriage of true minds" is frustrated by the bodies, just as the music of the spheres is drowned out by the "dayes rude hoarse minstralsy." The cynicism becomes devastating in the poem's final two lines. The lover, glorifying his lady, is compared to the alchemist, glorifying his "pregnant pot." At their best, women are still subject to death, and the perfect union sought by the lover turns out in reality to be nothing more than the temporary possession of a mummy. It is important to note

here, however, that the lovers are no less objects of satire than the alchemists.

Donne often exploits the parallels between the alchemists' attempts to purify base metals and man's attempts to purify himself. In "An Anatomie of the World," for example, he says of Elizabeth Drury:

> She in whom vertue was so much refin'd
> That for Allay unto so pure a minde
> She tooke the weaker Sex; shee that could drive
> The poisonous tincture, and the staine of Eve,
> Out of her thoughts, and deeds; and purifie
> All, by a true religious Alchymie. (177-82)

Here, impurity is associated with "the staine of Eve," and the recovery of perfection is equated with "a true religious Alchymie." Later, he says of her:

> She, from whose influence all impressions came,
> But, by Receivers impotencies, lame,
> Who, though she could not transubstantiate
> All states to gold, yet guilded every state, (415-18)
> . . . . . .
> She that did thus much, and much more could doe,
> But that our age was Iron, and rustie too. (425-26)

The world, tainted and in its death throes, is so enveloped in sin that she can no longer work her alchemy to save it. She can gild it, but she cannot transform it to gold. Like the microcosm, man; the macrocosm is "Quite out of joynt, almost created lame" (190).

In "Of the Progress of the Soul," as Duncan points out, Donne again makes use of alchemical imagery to show the relationship of body to soul.[13]

> She, of whose soul, if we may say, 'twas Gold,
> Her body was th' Electrum, and did hold
> Many degrees of that. (241-43)

The body, then, is at best an alloy rather than a pure substance. While it contains many degrees of gold, its imperfection, nevertheless, is undeniable. It is the result of man's having fallen and consequently having to know death before he can be perfected. All of this seems at first glance to make Donne a dualist, asserting that the material is separate from the spiritual and is inherently corrupt.

> But 'tis not so: w'are not retir'd but dampt;
> And as our bodies, so our mindes are crampt:
> 'Tis shrinking, not close weaving that has thus,
> In minde, and body both bedwarfed us.
> ("Anatomie," 151-54)

In other words, our imperfections, like those of the macrocosm, are the result of our having shrunken from our prelapsarian states; we were not close-woven to begin with. Thus, man, initially gold, has been tainted with sin, has become impure, and cannot remove the stain of sin which prevents him from regaining his prelapsarian purity.

The verse letter "To Sir Edward Herbert. at Julyers," explicitly links alchemical imagery with the fall and then goes on to assert that the corruption of nature is not inherent, but is due rather to man's diminished condition after the fall:

> As Soules (they say) by our first touch, take in
> The poysonous tincture of Originall sinne,
> So, to the punishments which God doth fling,
> Our apprehension contributes the sting. (19-22)
> . . . . . .
> We do infuse to what he meant for meat
> Corrosivenesse, or intense cold or heat. (25-26)
> . . . . . .
> Since then our businesse is, to rectifie
> Nature, to what she was, Wee'are led awry
> By them, who man to us in little show;
> Greater then due, no forme we can bestow
> On him; for man into himselfe can draw
> All; All his faith can swallow, 'or reason chaw.
> (33-38)

In rectifying nature, we are removing the taint which has been cast upon her by the sin of Eve. We are restoring her to the golden state in which she existed before the fall. Before we restore her, however, we must restore ourselves to a condition of purity which will enable us to look on the world, not lustfully or covetously, but rather as a creation of God, an embodiment of the ideal, which, if viewed properly, can lead man back to God. Thus, the mind asserts its power over the phenomenal world and transforms nature from rusty iron back into the gold which she was before the fall.

Thus far, Vaughan and Donne are indeed very much alike in their conceptions of nature, God, and man. When in Silex Scintillans, Vaughan begins to deal with devotional rather than secular themes, he discovers the need for purgation:

> Go, go, queint follies, sugred sin,
> Shadow no more my door;
> I will no longer Cobwebs spin,
> I'm too much on the score.
> . . . . . .
> The Purles of youth full bloud, and bowles,
> Lust in the Robes of Love,
> The idle talk of feav'rish souls
> Sick with a scarf, or glove;
>
> ("Idle Verse," 1-4, 13-16)

But while Vaughan's casting off of lust is almost casual in comparison with Donne's struggles with his passions, nevertheless, like Donne, he associates both the corruption of man and the sickness of the world with the fall from paradise:

> 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.
> He saw Heaven o'r his head, and knew from whence
> He came (condemned,) hither,
> And, as first Love draws strongest, so from hence
> His mind sure progress'd thither.
> Things here were strange unto him: Swet and till
> All was a thorn, or weed,
> Nor did those last, but (like himself,) dyed still
> As soon as they did Seed,
> They seem'd to quarrel with him; for that Act
> That fel him, foyl'd them all,
> He drew the Curse upon the world, and Crakt
> The whole frame with his fall.
>
> ("Corruption," 1-16)

Through the fall, man has lost commerce with heaven and, consequently, with nature. The whole frame has been

cracked and cannot be put back together until man purges himself of sin and nourishes the divine seed which God has planted in him. This restoration of the world is at the heart of the alchemical process. The mind exists in a middle state between the celestial and the terrestrial. It receives the influence of the celestial and makes this influence operable on the terrestrial level, thus effecting the transformation of metals and the healing of the sick. Nollius says, for instance, in Hermetical Physick, which Vaughan translated:

> God hath discovered unto us certain secret-natural universals, of which some contain in them the nature of the whole Heaven, others of the whole Air, and some again of the whole earth, by whose help most Diseases are easily known and cured. Moreover specifical, appropriate medicines, when they are rightly refined and spiritualized, will emulate the virtue of the universal, by consuming radical impurities & strengthning the virtue of the innate humane Balsame. (p. 579)

In order for the mind to be able to receive the heavenly influence which leads to the procurement of the elixir or philosopher's stone, it must, itself, be refined or purified:

> For the innate naturall faculty of all productions of the earth, is, by the Chymical dexterity of these latter sort of Philosophers, vindicated from the drossie adherencies of the matter, and united with the firmamentall virtue, or occult quality, which is caused and communicated to them, by the influence of the Stars. This Art of refining, and uniting inferiours to their superiours, makes a compleat and a successful Physician. (p. 580)

The perfection of the material world can only be brought about by the man who has first perfected himself. As long as man is not receptive to divine influence, the frame of the world is cracked. He does not see the workings of the "One" in the many, and, consequently, the phenomena of the terrestrial world appear fragmented and dissociated. The connection between Vaughan's medicine and his poetic practice is apparent in "I walkt the other day (to spend my hour)":

> And yet, how few believe such doctrine springs
> From a poor root
> Which all the winter sleeps here under foot
> And hath no wings
> To raise it to the truth and light of things,
> But is stil trod

By ev'ry wandring clod. (36-42)

Vaughan sees the flower, covered with snow, cut off from the light, and trampled by the foot of man as emblematic of unregenerate nature. But the flower is not dead; it is merely sleeping before being reborn again in the spring. To the perceptive eye, it is an emblem of rebirth and a material embodiment of God's doctrine. It becomes a tangible proof of God's presence in the world. The mass of men are wandering clods who do not "believe such doctrine springs/From a poor root." Vaughan then speaks to God directly:

O thou! whose spirit did at first inflame
And warm the dead,
And by a sacred incubation fed
With life this frame
Which once had neither, being, forme, nor name
Grant that I may so
Thy steps track here below,

That in these Masques and shadows I may see
Thy sacred way,
And by those hid ascents climb to that day
Which breaks from thee
Who art in all things, though invisibly. (43-54)

Through God's influence, man discovers the quintessential harmony of the created world. The terrestrial world is redeemed from its apparent imperfection which was the result of the fall. The commerce between heaven and man is restored, and with it is restored the commerce between man and nature. Nature itself becomes a revelation of God's sacred way, and all things lead man to God. E. C. Pettet has some difficulty with the poem because he cannot reconcile what he supposes to be Vaughan's dualism with his love of nature.[14] But, as Garner points out, the evil lies not in nature herself, but in the apostate will of man.[15] The corruption of nature is due to the fact that man sees in her only the "skin and shell of things," that is, the many rather than the One. As man recovers his former purity, he is capable of restoring nature and seeing that the One is present in all things.

While the dualistic mode of thought did, indeed, flourish among the alchemists, the evidence for Vaughan's dualism is almost non-existent. As Evelyn Underhill says, "It [gold] had for them a value not sordid but ideal. Nature, they thought, is always trying to make gold; this incorruptible and perfect thing; and the other metals are merely the results of the frustration of her original design."[16] Here, of course, nature's imperfection is not the result of the apostate will, but rather the result of the Gnostic dualism which sees the physical world as

actually imperfect and as clearly separate from the ideal. If the terrestrial world is imperfect *in se*, perfection can be achieved only by escape from it or by transformation of it. This Gnostic or dualistic view of the world is, as Professor Garner points out, a basic current of alchemical thought. Yet, in accepting, as he seems to, Festugiere's statement that this dualistic current of Hermetism is the only one that can properly be called mystical, he is forced to minimize the importance of Hermetism in Vaughan's work.[17]

Vaughan is most assuredly not a dualist, and most critics have agreed that he is a mystic; nor is it reasonable to deny that Vaughan's poetry shows extensive Hermetic influence. Evelyn Underhill shows, in fact, that the quest for the philosopher's stone is in complete accord with the mystic's quest for divine realization only when the magical element is removed and the alchemy is of a spiritual rather than a physical nature. What the spiritual alchemist produces is "the spiritual and only valid tincture or Philosopher's Stone; the mystical seed of transcendental life which should invade, tinge, and wholly transmute the imperfect self into spiritual gold."[18]

As Underhill points out, both the spiritual and the physical alchemist seek to restore the world to purity:

> The art of the alchemist, whether spiritual or

> physical, consists in completing the work of perfection, bringing forth and making dominant, as it were, the "latent goldness" which "lies obscure" in metal or man. The ideal adept of alchemy was therefore an "auxiliary of the Eternal Goodness." By his search for the "Noble Tincture" which should restore an imperfect world, he became a partner in the business of creation, assisting the Cosmic Plan.[19]

If the world was imperfect *in se*, it would be necessary to actually alter the physical make up of an object before perfection could be achieved. If, on the other hand, the imperfection was only apparent it would be only necessary to purge the mind of impurity before the quintessential unity and purity of nature would be revealed. What the physical alchemist seeks is power over the many. "In this hard-earned aquirement of power over the many, he tends to forget the One."[20]

Admittedly it is not easy to discriminate between the physical and the spiritual alchemist, partly because of the inconsistent and sometimes intentionally confusing terminology which the alchemists employed, and partly, also, because it is difficult to determine when they are speaking metaphorically and when they are not. The spiritual and the material are so curiously intertwined

with the imaginative faculties, and the notion of moral imperfection is so thoroughly associated with physical imperfection that precise discriminations are, at best, difficult to make. Nollius says, for example in Hermetical Physick:

> Now though our life may be shortened and prolonged; yet because of the punishment for sinne, we must by the immutable decree of the eternal Law, unavoidably die: for a conjunction of different Natures, and things (suppose a Spirit and a Body) must necessarily induce a dissolution. (p. 584)

Because of sin, man is imperfect and must therefore die. This much is clear. It is also clear that corruption of the body can be restrained but not eliminated. Is this because the body is corrupt *in se* or because man can never be entirely free from sin? Unfortunately, Nollius does not supply the answer, ascribing the necessity of death simply to the "conjunction of different Natures." While these two natures can be brought into closer harmony, they can never be totally unified. The issue is confused even further in the sentence: "It is impious therefore to seek and impossible to find out such a Medicine, that will carry us alive beyond those bounds, which the very Father of life will not have us to transpasse." This is as much as to say,

"There is no elixir, and it is impious to look for one."

In "Affliction" Vaughan seems to have settled the problem by suggesting that the disease rather than the medicine is the true elixir:

> Peace, peace; it is not so. Thou doest miscall
> Thy Physick; Pils that change
> Thy sick Accessions into settled health,
> This is the great Elixir that turns gall
> To wine, and sweetness. (1-5)

The antecedent of "This" in line four can only be "affliction," as the perfect spirit transforms the apparent corruption of the body into a food which nourishes the seed of God in man. The transformation, then, is an imaginative one. The body, we might say, is perfect in its imperfection. Jung makes this point clear:

> Alchemy set itself the task of acquiring this "treasure hard to attain" and of producing it in visible form, as the physical gold or the panacea or the transforming tincture--in so far as the art still busied itself in the laboratory. But since the practical chemical work was never quite free from the unconscious contents of the operator which found expression in it, it was, at

> the same time a psychic activity which can best be compared to what we call the active imagination.[21]

Vaughan is answering the question posed by Nollius by shifting the effects of the elixir to the the intellectual rather than the physical plane. It is as though Vaughan, like Donne, understood that finally the turning of base metals into gold was as impossible as was the production of an elixir which would grant immortality.

The question of material transformation, thus, becomes ancillary to the question of spiritual transformation as the spiritual quest takes precedence over the quest for magical power, "as if the transcendental powers of man, once roused from sleep, cannot wholly ignore the true end for which they are made."[22] The transformation is Christianized by making man rather than the external world the object of transformation, and with man's tranformation, the illusion of the physical world's imperfection no longer exists.

What this amounts to is a recognition of the psychological commonplace that man's judgments about the external world are largely projections of his psyche. The consequence of the fall, then, is the divided self in which the celestial, masculine soul is at war with the chthonic, feminine body. Man sees himself as having a dual nature, and he projects this duality likewise upon the external

world. Because Christianity has associated God with the masculine principle, the feminine principle has been degraded and considered inferior. Thus, the soul is higher than the body; man is superior to woman; and the heavens are superior to the earth. The symbol of the unified self, quite naturally, becomes the hermaphrodite, Hermes, and with the reintegration of the self the conflict between body and soul ends, as does the projection of this duality onto the external world. Christ, also, because of his dual nature as God-man, represents a fusion of the celestial and chthonic. In the words of Carl Jung: "The original Gnostic myth has undergone a strange transformation: Nous and Physis are indistinguishably one in the prima materia and have become a natura abscondita."[23]

In this context, one thinks most immediately of Donne's lines from "The Relique,"

> Difference of sex no more wee knew,
> Then our Guardian Angells doe. (25, 26)

Or those from "The good-morrow,"

> Where can we finde two better hemispheares
> Without Sharp North, without declining West? (17, 18)

"The Canonization," however, develops this hermaphroditic

imagery most fully in connection with the problem of dualism:

> Call us what you will, wee are made such by love;
> Call her one, mee another flye,
> We'are Tapers too, and at our owne cost die,
> And wee in us finde the'Eagle and the Dove.
> The Phoenix ridle hath more wit
> By us, we two being one, are it.
> So to one neutrall thing both sexes fit,
> Wee dye and rise the same, and prove
> Mysterious by this love. (19-27)

Professor Duncan's reading of the stanza shows how readily it yields itself to an alchemical explanation. He quite rightly connects the phoenix with the philosopher's stone which purifies and reconciles opposites: "The mystical unity of the pair of lovers is emphasized by the common sex of the phoenix."[24] The phoenix-Christ parallels reinforce the reconciliation of Nous and Physis and place the reconciliation in a religious context. Because the masculine-feminine conflict is resolved and the body and soul are in perfect harmony, there is no projection of idolatry into the sex act. On the contrary, the whole thrust of the poem is that in their "mystical union" the lovers have attained a kind of purity which is beyond the

understanding of most men. Their love only appears sinful to those who, like Adam and Eve after the fall, see the body as sinful and as separate from the soul.

The symbolism of "the'Eagle and the Dove" must unfortunately remain more speculative. Duncan, associating the dove with whiteness says, "Important subservient operations, or substances preliminarily formed in the process, are referred to as the 'flying eagle' and as an emerging whiteness."[25] And Pierre Legouis says:

> Probably the metaphor of the birds was suggested by that of the insects and corrects it; in the erotic-mystical language of the time "eagle" stands for "strength" and "dove" for "tenderness and purity". . . but the metaphor of the Phoenix, which comes up in the next line and proceeds from that of the self-burning night-moth, makes it likely that the eagle and the dove also arise from fire. When Joan of Arc died, a dove was seen ascending to Heaven . . . and the Romans would let fly an eagle from near the pyre of their emperors.[26]

Both of these views are reinforced by alchemical illustrations provided by Jung depicting the liberation of the spirit, symbolized by the dove and the eagle, from its

bondage in the elements.[27] And in "The Exstasie" Donne says:

> So must pure lovers soules descend
> T'affections, and to faculties,
> Which sense may reach and apprehend,
> Else a great Prince in prison lies. (65-68)

So, the lovers become aware of the eagle and the dove within them, unite in the sex act, immolate themselves, release the prince from his prison in the flesh, and discover that they have become "one neutrall thing." Whether they become the phoenix or the "Phoenix ridle" may seem a trifling point, but the word "mysterious" in the last line of the stanza suggests that Donne wishes to place his emphasis upon the puzzling quality of the lovers' transformation and to suggest again that the secret of his love is, like the secret of the philosopher's stone, a riddle beyond the comprehension of the uninitiate. This is quite a distance from the mood of "Love's Alchymie," where he mocks those who believe that love can purify and transform man. The two moods carry over into the Divine Poems to suggest that while he may have found in Anne More a love which set his mind wholly on heavenly things and led him closer to God, he never entirely shook off the burden of guilt which he bore for the idolatry of his "profane

mistresses." We have now come full circle and are ready to consider again the problem of purgation. In doing so, we will have to concede at least a partial truth to C. S. Lewis's statement that "Donne never for long gets rid of a medieval sense of the sinfulness of sexuality."[28] That is, Donne knows that sex is not inherently sinful, but since the fall man has not been able to engage in sex without an element of sin. Just as Adam and Eve, in their fallen states, considered their nakedness indecent and sought to cover themselves, so man ever since has not been able to remove the taint which has been cast upon human sexuality. Thus, when Donne says,

> Our hands ne'r touched the seals
> Which nature, injur'd by late law, sets free,
> (29, 30)

he suggests that the sinfulness of sex is not inherent, but is rather the result of the fact that in his fallen state man cannot engage in sex without sinning. Thus, conscious of the inherent purity of love, he says:

> Here the admiring her my mind did whett
> To seeke thee God; so streames do show the head,
> ("Sonnet XVII," 5, 6)

but thinking of the conflicting forces within him he says:

> Oh, to vex me, contraryes meete in one:
> Inconstancy unnaturally hath begott
> A constant habit; that when I would not
> I change in vowes and in devotione.
> As humorous is my contritione
> As my prophane love, and as soone forgott.
>
> ("Sonnet XIX," 1-6)

He knows, on the one hand, that the body is not "drosse to us, but allay," and says in "Aire and Angells,"

> But since my soule, whose child love is,
> Takes limmes of flesh, and else could nothing doe,
> More subtile then the parent is,
> Love must not be, but take a body too, (7-10)

but in one of the Holy Sonnets, he says,

> I am a little world made cunningly
> Of Elements, and an Angelike spright,
> But black sinne hath betraid to endlesse night
> My worlds both parts, and (oh) both parts must die.
>
> ("Sonnet V," 1-4)

Neither of the parts is inherently evil, but "black sinne" has betrayed "My worlds both parts." Lewis's statement might, therefore, be revised to read: Donne never for long gets rid of a sense of his own sinful nature, and, therefore, never for long gets rid of a medieval sense of the sinfulness of sexuality.

To see the contrast with Vaughan, we need only compare two stanzas dealing with the problem of grace and salvation:

> I have a sinne of feare, that when I have spunne
> My last thred, I shall perish on the shore;
> Sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy Sunne
> Shall shine as it shines now, and heretofore;
> And having done that, Thou hast done,
> I have no more.
> ("A Hymne to God the Father," 13-18)

Even here, Donne is preoccupied with the problem of purgation and with a desire to know whether God's grace will extend to him. Yet Vaughan, while he acknowledges his sins, has no doubt of his final end:

> Oh God! I know and do confess
> My sins are great and still prevail
> Most heynous sins and numberless!

But thy Compassions cannot fall.
If thy sure mercies can be broken,
Then all is true, my foes have spoken.
("The Agreement," 43-48)

Even Itrat-Husain, who bases his case for Donne's mysticism largely on evidence from the sermons, states of Donne: "He holds that man can never altogether be free from sin and that the state of sanctification and purification which can be attained in this life can never be so perfect so as to enable us to comprehend the essence of God."[29] What Donne seeks from God are strength and certainty. He asks God to batter his heart, to purge his past sins, and to keep him from running into new ones:

Only Thou art above, and when towards Thee
By Thy leave I can look, I rise again;
But our old subtle foe so tempteth me
That not one hour myself I can sustain;
("Sonnet I," 9-12)

"Despair behind and death before," his "feebled flesh" wasted by sin, he can only rely upon God's grace to draw his "iron heart," and at the final judgment to forgive his sins.

Vaughan, on the other hand, while not unconcerned with

the need for purgation, gives primary importance to the struggle for union with God. Perhaps because he was less securely tied to the sensuous world in his early life, Vaughan's conversion appears more complete than Donne's. It must have been easy to give up something that never meant much to him anyway. Thus, while Donne struggles to gain the elusive purity which will allow him to transform himself and to unify his world, Vaughan seeks to penetrate the mists and clouds which prevent him from attaining union with his God. In Vaughan, the barrier between man and God is one of limitation of vision; in Donne, the barrier is man's burden of sin. In Donne the emphasis is always upon action; in Vaughan, upon vision. In Donne, man's life is a struggle; in Vaughan, it is a journey. Thus Donne says,

> So my devout fits come and go away
> Like a fantastic ague: save that here
> Those are my best days when I shake with fear.
>
> ("Sonnet XIX," 12-14)

while Vaughan says,

> Thou overcam'st my sinful strength,
> And having brought me home, didst there
> Shew me that pearl I sought elsewhere.
>
> ("To the Holy Bible," 24-26)

In one sense, Vaughan's journey leads him from the many to the One; in another sense, it leads him through the many to the One. He understands that the One is immanent in the many by virtue of the seed, ray, or divine spark implanted by God. Thus, all creation is united by influence and sympathy. All things move naturally toward their true being in God. Man, however, since the fall, has failed to nourish the seed within himself; he has come to see the world as a duality; it is a world of briars and thorns. By regenerating himself he recovers his own wholeness and transforms the world into a unity. The process is cumulative. The perception of analogy, sympathy, and hieroglyph in the macrocosm leads back to the perfection of the self, which leads, in turn, to the further unification of nature, as the husks and shells of things dissolve and reveal the presence of the One.

Yet, even this is not enough, for God is both transcendent and immanent. Final union depends upon man's transcending the many entirely. It is useful here to call to mind "Affliction" where Vaughan shows his awareness of human limitation but does not equate limitation with imperfection. Man must finally transcend the limitations both of external nature and of his own finite nature. To know God perfectly, he must either die physically or come to live in God "invisible and dim." The journey thus moves through the many and ultimately beyond the many to the One,

as the physical world dissolves first into mists and finally vanishes completely in the oneness of God. Thus, Vaughan says in "They are all gone into the world of light":

O Father of eternal life, and all
Created glories under thee!
Resume thy spirit from this world of thrall
Into true liberty.

Either disperse these mists, which blot and fill
My perspective (still) as they pass,
Or else remove me hence unto that hill,
Where I shall need no glass. (33-40)

The final union demands not only the recovery of pre-lapsarian purity, but concomitantly the death of the ego. Therefore, in "Ascension Hymn" he says:

And yet some
That know to die
Before death come,
Walk to the skie
Even in this life; but all such can
Leave behinde them the old Man. (7-12)

The wedding to Christ is a necessary precondition to union, because He alone can cleanse man of impurity:

> Hee alone
> And none else can
> Bring bone to bone
> And rebuild man,
> And by his all subduing might
> Make clay ascend more quick then light. (37-42)

The word "subduing" is important here because it again suggests the Christ-elixir parallel and clearly reveals that the transformation Vaughan seeks is one of the spirit, achieved through Christ, in which God works through the mind, subduing physical reality until all opposition and limitation are destroyed, and clay ascends "more quick then light."

Nature's final inadequacy is nowhere more apparent than in "Vanity of Spirit," of which Itrat-Husain says, "He does not despise the world, but he is eager to soar beyond the illusion of natural phenomena, and in this process he rejects reason and rationalism."[30] Thus, he tells us that he has "summon'd nature: pierc'd through all her store," until he came at last to search himself. Here he found "some drills,/With Echoes beaten from th' eternal hills." Searching for the final unity he discovered:

A peece of much antiquity,
With Hyeroglyphicks quite dismembered,
And broken letters scarce remembered.
I tooke them up, and (much Joy'd,) went about
T' unite those peeces, hoping to find out
The mystery. (22-27)

Here is the rhythm again--the self turns to nature, turns back to the self, turns back to nature, gradually eliminating opposition and discovering unity; but finally comes the recognition that nature is inadequate, that perfect wholeness cannot be regained short of death or the kind of purity which is the death of the self in Christ.

It might be helpful at this point to re-emphasize the Hermetic parallels by quoting some relevant passages from Agrippa Von Nettesheim's Three Books of Occult Philosophy. The translation is that of 1651 by J. F., for which Thomas Vaughan provided a dedicatory poem:

Therefore we being well disposed, and having for our sins, that divine good, which was in us, departed from us; all things work for evil: therefore the cause of all our evills is sinne, which is the disorder and distemper of our soul, from the which then, thus evilly governing, or falling down or declining from that which

> the celestial influences require, all things rebel, and are distempered for our destruction.[31]

He then goes on to show how the "divine character" imprinted on man is capable of effecting transformations to the extent that man recovers his prelapsarian purity.[32] "There is also a certain virtue in the minds of men of changing, attracting, hindering, and binding to that which they desire and all things obey them."[33] He contends further, "that it should be possible for us to ascend by the same degrees through each World, to the same very originall World itself, the maker of all things, and first Cause, from whence all things are, and proceed."[34]

The alchemical imagery thus becomes a kind of symbolic language, peculiarly adapted to the expression of man's hunger for unity and perfection. Like the emblem and the conceit, the alchemical symbol assumes a correspondent unity between the ideal and the material planes of experience. It assumes that the mind can discover the operation of the One in the many and further that the mind can bring the many under the control of the One. Implicit in the imagery, however, is the idea of an opus or a journey toward unity and the elimination of opposition, and the stages of the opus are analogous to the stages through which the mystic passes on his pilgrimage toward union with God.[35]

More conscious than Vaughan of his own sinful nature and of man's incapacity for perfection, Donne is less enthusiastic than Vaughan about the possibility of recovering unity. The most prevalent attitude is that of "Love's Alchymie" and "An Anatomie of the World"; yet in another mood, that of "The Canonization," Donne does seem to feel that man can perfect the self, recover wholeness, and transform his world. However, his rebellious senses would not be contained for long, and it is in the struggle to contain them rather than in the desire for mystical unity that the distinctions between the two poets become most apparent. Vaughan, too, knows the need for purgation, but he is always pushing upward from the senses to what he feels is his true being in the "sea of light."

The importance of alchemical imagery in both Vaughan and Donne can, of course, be exaggerated. In Donne, particularly, there is always the danger of making an "alchemical assumption" and forcing an alchemical reading onto a poem which does not, in itself, warrant such treatment, for example, "The Good-morrow" or "The Exstasie." Vaughan uses alchemical figures so frequently to illustrate his religious vision that we may be tempted to assume that the poems are "about" alchemy. As a matter of fact, I cannot think that any of his poems are "about" alchemy, but rather that the Hermetic symbols, like Donne's conceits or Herbert's emblems, reflect a particular way of apprehending

and communicating experience, a way of imaginatively transforming the apparent dissociation and fragmentation of the universe to a perfect unity.

NOTES

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2. Garner, Henry Vaughan, p. 3.

3. The Metaphysical Poets (New York: Macmillan, 1936), p. 118.

4. Alvarez, The School of Donne, p. 63.

5. "Donne in our Time," In A Garland for John Donne, p. 9.

6. Grierson, The Poems of John Donne, II, xlv.

7. Walton, p. 77.

8. Mysticism, 12th ed. (1911; rpt. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1961), p. 170.

9. The Mystical Element in the Metaphysical Poets of The Seventeenth Century (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1948), p. 244.

10. The Metaphysical Poets (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), p. 31.

11. Psychology and Alchemy, trans. R. C. F. Hull, 2nd ed., Bollingen Series, XX (Princeton: Princeton Unviersity Press, 1968), p. 37.

12. "Donne's Alchemical Figures," ELH, 9 (1942), 258.

13. Duncan, p. 265.

14. Of Paradise and Light (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. 77-80.

15. Garner, p. 46.

16. Underhill, p. 142.

17. Garner, p. 68.

18. Underhill, p. 143.

19. Underhill, p. 143.

20. Underhill, p. 162.

21. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, pp. 345-46.

22. Underhill, p. 162.

23. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p. 345.

24. Duncan, p. 271.

25. Duncan, pp. 270, 71.

26. Donne the Craftsman (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), p. 59.

27. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, figs. 178, 229. Although both illustrations come from the eighteenth century and cannot be considered sources of Donne's image, they do, nevertheless, reinforce the views of Duncan and Legouis.

28. Lewis, "Donne and Love Poetry," p. 74.

29. Itrat Husain, p. 111.

30. Itrat-Husain, pp. 209, 210.

31. Agrippa, Three Books of Occult Philosophy, p. 470.

32. Agrippa, pp. 471-73.

33. Agrippa, p. 150.

34. Agrippa, p. 2.

35. Underhill, pp. 143-48.

Vaughan and Herbert:
The Silurist and The Country Parson

Even if Henry Vaughan had not acknowledged his debt to George Herbert in the Preface to Silex Scintillans, the similarities between their poetry are so obvious and so extensive that they could not possibly have gone unnoticed. Nevertheless, although Vaughan borrows words, phrases, images, and sometimes even titles from Herbert, these borrowings are often so thoroughly assimilated into his poetry as to make the exact nature of Herbert's influence a question open to considerable disagreement. In the Preface to Silex Scintillans, Vaughan refers to himself as a "convert" of Herbert, but whether he means a religious or a literary convert is difficult to ascertain. While Vaughan does take up devotional poetry seriously for the first time in Silex Scintillans, the highly personal distillation of Hermeticism, Platonism, and Augustinian Christianity differs markedly from Herbert's pious Anglican orthodoxy. As poets, also, the two men have differences which are much more significant than any surface similarities. Lacking Herbert's quiet, meditative control, Vaughan is more rhapsodic and visionary than his predecessor.

Unlike Herbert, whose entire preserved poetic output in English was devotional, Vaughan's earliest poetry was secular, often amatory verse written in the fashion of the times and not particularly outstanding for its sincerity, its craftsmanship, or its originality. His secular Poems of 1646 and Olor Iscanus of 1647, are highly conventional imitations of Donne's secular love poetry, as well as of such minor figures as Habington, Randolph, Feltham, and Waller.[1] At some time prior to the publication of Silex Scintillans in 1650, however, Vaughan appears to have experienced some sort of conversion, either literary or spiritual, which prompted him to abandon secular verse and to begin writing devotional poetry. Critics generally agree that this conversion was the result of a combination of factors which became important parts of Vaughan's life between 1646 and 1650. Disillusionment with the violence and hatred of the Civil War, his strong Royalist sympathies, the death of his younger brother, William, and possibly a severe personal illness seem to have led the poet away from amatory verse toward more serious concerns. Here is where Herbert's influence is important. He appears to have served as an inspiration to Vaughan, showing him the possibilities of poetry as a vehicle for the expression of devotional meditations.

In this sense, the conversion Vaughan speaks of in the Preface was literary rather than spiritual. Vaughan was

already an Anglican, and the actual spiritual emphasis of his poetry is very different from the spiritual emphasis of Herbert, frequently even in poems having very strong superficial similarities in language, subject, and form. Because Vaughan borrowed so heavily from Herbert, he has sometimes been regarded as a mere imitator or mimic, who lacks originality of expression and control of poetic form. These charges have some weight if one considers only Vaughan's worst poetry, where he fails to free himself from Herbert's influence and to create poems whose structure and language reflect his own manner of thinking. At its best, however, Vaughan's poetry assimilates Herbert's language and form and makes them his own. He succeeds, when he does succeed, because he is going beyond Herbert's orthodox Anglicanism to describe his own intense and extremely complex spiritual sentiments.

Beginning with some general observations about the spiritual underpinnings of the poems of Vaughan and Herbert, one may move from there to an appreciation of the manner in which these similar but distinctly individual religious philosophies find expression in poetry. While the fact that Vaughan was a layman and Herbert an ordained Anglican priest is not in itself significant, that fact, nevertheless, illustrates in a very general way some of the most basic differences between the thinking of the two men. Frank Kermode notes that Vaughan was primarily a man of

literature and claims that the question of his doctrinal religious background is less important than his literary background, that his poems are not bound to a particular creed, but express a unique personal mode of thinking about God.[2] This private vision is the result of his having distilled from a number of sources those specific aspects which appealed to his individual psyche. On the other hand, the core of Herbert's religious thought can be much more readily discovered within the confines of the Anglican Church. And as Joan Bennett has pointed out, "To understand him demands no culture that is not shared by all his co-religionists, and by many more who are acquainted with the Bible and the teaching of the English church."[3] Likewise, writing of Herbert's mysticism Itrat-Hussain says, "To him the Anglican Church was not based on a convenient compromise; it essentially represented the Christian humanism, the spirit of moderation, tolerance and charity."[4]

A comparison of two poems on the Eucharist illustrates the manner in which this difference in conceptual background finds its way into the poetry. Herbert's "The Banquet" is securely founded in the sacramental framework of the Anglican Church, but Vaughan's "The Holy Communion," which begins with a reference to the "Sweet, and sacred feast," soon moves to a consideration of Christ as a historical personage and concludes with a passage based on

the Hermetic theory of correspondences. Both poets begin with essentially the same greeting, but while Herbert's next line is a plea to Christ, in the form of the bread and wine, to live and dwell in him, Vaughan moves to a praise of Christ as a life-force which animates and quickens a world which, except for Christ's presence, would be spiritually empty. He moves to consider Christ as a historical figure, whose death has dispelled ignorance and sin and who has himself thus become the light which leads to God. In His power of effecting transformation, he resembles the philosopher's stone. Without Christ "blackness sits/On the divinest wits," but in marrying both souls and bodies to Christ the great darkness is broken and the veil which separates man from God begins to disappear. The final two stanzas return to a consideration of the Eucharist as re-enactment of the actual sacrifice. They revolve around a paradox founded upon the Hermetic doctrines of correspondence and sympathetic interaction. The bread and wine correspond symbolically to the body and blood of Christ. They are the mementos by which we stay awake "when we would sleep." They become the "Shepheard" who must guide us out of the darkness, as Christ, through his death, has become the food which gives us spiritual life. Thus the food becomes a shepherd and the shepherd becomes food, but because the transformations are imaginative, each retains its identity. Finally, like the

food, which is broken, chewed, and digested, Christ is physically destroyed, but His loss increases the wealth of the world as food is digested and nourishes the body. Herbert's poem, on the other hand, uses the Anglican belief in the real presence as an underlying assumption. It does not distinguish between Christ as historical figure and Christ as Eucharist. As with Vaughan, the sacrament becomes a means of reaching God and a reminder of God's transcendence; but there is little in the poem that is not explained by orthodox liturgical thought.

Louis Martz has delineated in Vaughan's poetry three major fields of reference--the Bible, external nature, and the self.[5] These fields of reference can, with slight modification, be seen in Herbert's poetry also. With Herbert, however, it is necessary to combine the Bible with the church liturgy as together constituting one field of reference. An appreciation of the distinctly different ways in which the poets use these three areas of primary concern will reveal a great deal about their individual modes of thinking.

Herbert's, The Temple, suggests in its very title that the church, with its traditions, liturgy, and moral teachings, is to be a primary concern of the poet. For Herbert, the church offers within its confines everything necessary for man's salvation. He who rightly understands the church's teachings and has the strength of character to

put those teachings into practice in his daily life need have no fear for his soul. His reward is eternal life. This is not to suggest that the poetry of Herbert is without conflict, merely that the conflict and tension do not arise as the result of doubts about man's relation to God. The tension, however, arises in two other areas. The first of these regards the tempering or disciplining of the self to follow divine law and to put church teachings into practice in the natural world. Thus, Herbert's religion was, in a sense, outer-directed. Man must bring himself to understand church teaching and scripture, rid himself of the self-pride and vanity which prevent him from living according to church teachings, and finally, incorporate those teachings into the routines of his daily life.

The second kind of tension is related to the first but is primarily literary. It revolves around the attempt to make the language and structure of his poetry demonstrate the essential unity of religion, nature, and the self. "Trinity Sunday" is an excellent example of this second kind of tension. The three tercets, as well as the three triads of the final stanza all contribute to the unity of the poem around the Christian Trinity. Furthermore, the first triad, "heart, mouth, hands," refers to the self; the second, "faith, hope, charity," refers to the three conventional Christian virtues; and the third, "runne, rise, rest," ambiguously refers to both putting holy virtue

into practice in the natural world and also to the resurrection and eternal peace which await those who follow the teaching of the church. Nature exists, in Herbert's poetry, primarily as an arena for demonstrating the truth of traditional Christian teachings, and thus the natural world and the ecclesiastical world are brought into harmony through the tempering of the self.[6]

Unlike Herbert, Vaughan is inner-directed. Less concerned than Herbert with church ritual and right action, he creates a poetic tension which revolves around his attempts to tear away the veil which surrounds him and which obscures his vision of the divine presence. He is less concerned with tempering and discipline than he is with spiritual illumination. When he does concern himself with Christian virtue, he generally stresses the necessity of freeing oneself from temporal involvement in order to gain a more perfect knowledge of God. As long as one's attention is enslaved by the trivial concerns of the material world, he is incapable of knowing the spiritual. Thus, Itrat-Husain says, "Vaughan, like all true mystics, knew that purgation was a disciplining of the self for the bliss of mystical experience."[7] Vaughan found himself enveloped in sin and idolatry, and believed that if he was to come to know God, he must purge himself of sin. In "Mount of Olives" he shows his awareness of this need for purgation:

Sweet, sacred hill! on whose fair brow
My savior sate, shall I allow
Language to love
And idolize some shade, or grove,
Neglecting thee? such ill-plac'd wit,
Conceit, or call it what you please
Is the braines fit,
And meere disease. (1-8)

Vaughan sees idolatry as a disease of the brain which can be cured or purged by marriage to Christ. Only when the disease is cured can man view nature properly, illuminating the self by penetrating the veil of materialism which otherwise surrounds him. For Vaughan, then, the Bible is as much an agent of purgation as of revelation. As with Herbert, the scripture leads man to right action, but right action is in Vaughan only a further purgative step toward the mystical union with God in the here and now. Because Vaughan has taken this additional step inward, his poems become records of his quest for the unknown, in contrast with Herbert's poetry which reveals a struggle to bring the self into harmony with an established religion which offered everything necessary for man's ultimate salvation. In Vaughan's poetry, therefore, the tension of tempering the individual will to the will of God is subsidiary to the central conflict of a finite man searching out an infinite

God in the world of finite reality.

This inner-directedness also influences heavily Vaughan's poetic treatment of nature. Whereas Herbert uses nature to demonstrate the essential harmony of self, church, and the natural world; Vaughan uses nature as a representation of God's immanence. The Bible teaches man how to view nature in order to illuminate the self. The contrast can be plainly demonstrated by comparing three stanzas of Herbert's "Mans Medley" with the second stanza of Vaughan's "Vanity of Spirit":

Heark, how the birds do sing,
And woods do ring.
All creatures have their joy; and man hath his.
Yet if we rightly measure,
Mans joy and pleasure
Rather hereafter, then in present, is.

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. (1-12)

. . . . . .

Not that he may not here
Taste of the cheer,
But as birds drink, and straight lift up their head,
So he must sip and think
Of better drink
He may attain to, after he is dead. (19-24)

For Herbert the limits of the natural world and the spiritual world are clearly defined. Man stands between, linked by his spirit to the angels and by his flesh to the material world. He thus represents a union of temporal and divine, joining the heavens with the earth. Yet Herbert is careful to state that it is man "alone" who partakes of both the natural and the divine; all other things are purely spiritual or purely physical. It is man, through his powers of perception, devotion, and wit who can fuse the natural with the divine. Man may enjoy nature; but like the bird, he must look up from his drink thinking of the spiritual perfection of the after-life. The bird, therefore, functions as a didactic simile--a demonstration of divine principle realized through the self and expressed metaphorically.

Nature, however, does not prompt Vaughan to look upward and think of the after-life, but rather inward to think of illumination and unity in the here and now:

Quite spent with thoughts I left my Cell, and lay
Where a shrill spring tun'd to the early day.
I beg'd here long, and gron'd to know
Who gave the Clouds so brave a bow,
Who bent the spheres, and circled in
Corruption with this glorious Ring,
What is his name, and how I might
Descry some part of his great light.
I summoned nature: pierc'd through all her store,
Broke up some seales, which none had touch'd before,
Her womb, her bosome, and her head
Where all her secrets lay a bed
I rifled quite, and having past
Through all the Creatures, came at last
To search my selfe, where I did find
Traces, and sounds of a strange kind.
Here of this mighty spring, I found some drills,
With Ecchoes beaten from th' eternall hills.

("Vanity of Spirit," 1-18)

Filled with a restlessness of spirit, Vaughan looks to nature, which ultimately leads him inward to self-contemplation and the discovery of "Ecchoes beaten from th' eternall hills." Rightly viewed, nature is the key that unlocks the divinity within the self; and right action is the purgation which makes right thought possible.

Douglas Bush summarizes nicely this relationship between purgation and spiritual vision in Vaughan:

> Though imprisoned in the flesh, and in the darkness of earth, the soul "in its little inch of time in this life," may enter into the kingdom of heaven, in the true sense of Christ's words, by regaining the unsullied vision of "Angell-infancy," by recreating, in all things the "prolusions and strong proofs of our restoration laid out in nature, besides the promise of the God of Nature."[8]

The recovery of childhood purity is always, for Vaughan, linked with the recovery of prelapsarian purity in which man's vision of God was unobstructed, and in which man was truly one both with nature and with his creator. The microcosm is redeemed through marriage to Christ, and with the transformation of the microcosm, the macrocosm is also purified and redeemed.

This basic difference in the two poets' modes of religious thought is reflected in the manner of their poetic expression. Vaughan's extensive debt to Herbert for words, images, stanzaic patterns, and subject matter has inevitably led to the belief that Vaughan was an unsuccessful imitator of Herbert's technical mastery of form. The charge is made that Vaughan is a poet of

individual lines, while Herbert is a poet of complete poems. Vaughan's poems are "too long," or as Joan Bennett says, "His poems seem to fall apart, an elaborate image is followed by a lame conclusion."[9] On the other hand, she says of Herbert: "Herbert . . . comes to rest on a note of quiet acceptance, some sentence that would be mere matter of fact, were it not for what has preceeded."[10] T. S. Eliot, comparing the two, says, "In short, the emotion of Herbert is clear, definite, mature, and sustained; whereas the emotion of Vaughan is vague, adolescent, fitful, and retrogressive."[11] There is some truth in these general observations, of course, but it is important to recognize that because Vaughan moves in a different direction from Herbert does not demonstrate a fault in Vaughan. As has been shown, the two men had distinctly different conceptions of the nature of the religious experience, and Vaughan is most effective when he adapts the poetic form to suit his own highly individual mode of thinking. Vaughan is not at his best when he is most like Herbert, but when he allows his own thought to shape his poems. As the clouds which separate him from God alternately gather and disperse, Vaughan becomes despondent or ecstatic. The very intensity of his desire for union and his fears of failure are reflected in the fitful questioning, pleas, and exclamations which fill his poetry and which stand in sharp contrast to Herbert's humble bending of himself to the

collar of God. Even Joan Bennett is willing to admit, "Poets of more complex moods cannot deal so simply with the problem of relating sound to sense, their pattern cannot be determined with the same completeness."[12]

Complexity of thought, however, is only a partial solution. Even when Vaughan's treatment of a subject is fairly orthodox, as in his "Trinity Sunday," Vaughan lacks Herbert's sensitivity to form. Like Herbert's poem of the same name, Vaughan's consists of three tercets and even makes use of the triad; but unlike Herbert, Vaughan uses four, rather than three triads; nor does Vaughan put three triads in one stanza as suggestion of the unity of three in one. Vaughan puts two triads in the last stanza, one in the second, and one in the first. Although Herbert's poem begins with two metrical substitutions in the first line, Vaughan's is composed of perfectly regular iambic tetrameter; and Vaughan's poem ends with the word 'three,' which is a repetition of the last word of line one. Vaughan enjambs two lines, while all nine of Herbert's lines are end-stopped, emphasizing rhyme and tripartite structure. Vaughan is plainly imitating Herbert here without great success. He adopts Herbert's theme and metrical structure, but where Herbert's poem moves smoothly and naturally, Vaughan's is forced and artificial. Even here, he cannot resist making two separate exclamatory statements, exhibiting his passion where Herbert exhibits

control and reason. Where Herbert's form reflects his manner of thinking, Vaughan, in this case, has simply engrafted someone else's form onto his own very different manner of thinking. It is this sort of ineffectual, imitative writing that Frank Kermode has in mind when he says of Vaughan:

> Only occasionally does the necessary fusion of alien matter and the personal meditative continuum occur. When it does not, there is left only the shabbiness of plagiarism, the doubtful fascination of ideas unassimilated to poetry expressed in loose, uninteresting verse.[13]

In "The World" Vaughan also borrows from Herbert, but here Vaughan does not imitate him slavishly. He manages to free himself from the restrictions inherent in imitation and instead, drawing on three separate poems ("Dulnesse," "Confession," and "The Church Militant"), to use Herbert's language and imagery as complements to, rather than restrictions of his own poetic expression. The poem's echoes of Herbert are exactly that--echoes. While they suggest, perhaps, a lack of originality in Vaughan, they call to mind, for the reader who sees the parallels, other bodies of ideas which are relevant to Vaughan's poem in much the same way as the Biblical passage quoted at the

poem's conclusion or the Hermetic and Platonic ideas which appear in the poem. The question of Vaughan's intentions in borrowing is irrelevant. Whether he borrowed unconsciously, whether he plagiarized, or whether he consciously sought to use the borrowings as allusions to Herbert does not affect their function in the poem. "The World" is Vaughan's poem, not Herbert's, and one of the poem's chief strengths is the way in which it fuses literary and philosophical correspondences into a single, unified poetic vision.

The poem plays upon the contrast between the temporal world of flux and the timeless world of eternity. Those who are trapped in the world of flux have refused to accept Christ's ring, are consequently caught up in wrong action, and therefore cannot soar up into the "great Ring of pure and endless light." Significantly, the light is available to man during this life, as Vaughan makes clear in the poem's first line, but only to those who have purged themselves of material concerns.

Vaughan's lines, "The doting lover in his queintest strain,/ Did there complain," are only slightly changed from Herbert's poem, "Dulnesse," where they appear as "The wanton lover in curious strain/Can praise his fairest fair." In both poems, the lines have essentially similar functions. Both poets are condemning the foolish cupidity in which men indulge themselves, turning their backs on

divine radiance. Herbert, however, is speaking of his own dullness which keeps him from looking toward God, while Vaughan, who has not only looked toward God but has seen him, looks down on others who have failed to accept the ring Christ has offered them. Herbert's poem is about poetry. He asks God, in the final stanza, to purge his mind so that he may look toward Him "with a constant wit." Vaughan's mind, already purged of the dullness of material concerns, has experienced the vision of eternity and therefore, he has at least temporarily, eliminated in himself the personal conflict central to Herbert's poem. Thus, while Herbert acknowledges the possibility of temporal beauty in stanza four, the final stanza emphasizes that the beauty is realized through wit, through which the self brings the temporal under the dominion of the Divine. While there is a certain visionary quality to the poem, the poet's isolation from God is the primary theme of the poem. This isolation is emphasized particularly in the final two lines, which stress man's unworthiness to look on God. Vaughan, on the other hand, stresses union <u>with</u> rather than isolation <u>from</u> God.

Again in "Confession" the central tension derives from Herbert's need to temper his life to God. The poet is the central figure in the conflict, and the "moles within us" are the griefs and afflictions of the flesh, which can only be locked out by paradoxically opening one's

heart to God in the act of confession. Vaughan uses the mole in much the same sense as, and apparently with direct reference to, Herbert. After portraying the "darksome States-man" caught in the world's miseries, Vaughan describes the spiritual triumph of one who saw the mole working within him and turned away from politics to religion, where "Churches and altars fed him," as he accepted the blood and tears of Christ. The reference to the mole, coupled with the reference to churches and altars, suggests that Vaughan is here paying tribute to Herbert's piety in turning from the political ambitions of his youth to the holy life of a priest and a devotional poet.

In stanza three Vaughan, after cataloging a number of others who have not managed to purge themselves of material concerns, offers the image of "poor, despised truth" who sat counting their victories. The image, as Martin points out, is borrowed from "The Church Militant," in which Herbert says, "Where Truth sat by counting his victories." Herbert uses the line to juxtapose divine truth against the spiritual transgressions of the Roman Catholics, while Vaughan, typically less concerned than Herbert with organized religion uses it to juxtapose divine truth against the "fearfull miser" and the "down-right Epicure."

The fourth stanza, which contains no borrowings from

Herbert, returns to the spiritual vision of the poem's first three lines, making clear that the ring referred to in the second line of the poem is the ring which Christ offers to those who purge themselves of material concerns and marry themselves to the Lord. The vision is Vaughan's, and so is the visionary language. His earlier use of echoes from Herbert does not keep him from moving beyond Herbert's concern for the conflict between the flesh and the spirit to a vision of the spiritual beauty that awaits man once the material world has been transcended.

Itrat-Husain, who makes a good case for Herbert's mysticism, is careful to point out that Herbert never reveals in his poetry any participation in the higher stages of the mystical experience. The flashes of divine awareness are characteristic of the illuminative rather than the unitive stage of experience.[14] That is , Herbert moves from the stages of awakening and purgation to illumination or certitude of God's presence, but he does not experience the anguish of the soul's dark night or the all-encompassing bliss of union with the divine. He considers this union with God to be possible only after death; therefore, his spiritual conflict is the continual struggle for purgation and right action, which will lead not to transformation of the self, but to ultimate union with God after the death of the body.

Herbert's concern for unity and harmony of the self is

reflected in the structure of his poems. Most of them are tightly structured and are internally consistent in meter and rhyme. Thus, while his poems display a great variety of stanzaic forms, any one poem is not likely to contain more than one of these forms. Alicia Osteriker has pointed out that only nineteen of his 127 stanzaic works are isometrical, and she suggests a connection with Elizabethan song.[15] Herbert's affinity for music has been known since Walton's Life, and his use of musical images in his poems has been frequently noted, and just as the recurring musical images serve to demonstrate the importance Herbert attaches to harmony between church, self, and natural world; the intricate but consistent and unified stanzaic patterns reinforce this same concern. Herbert says in "The Temper":

> Yet take thy way; for sure thy way is best:
> Stretch or contract me, thy poore debter:
> This is but tuning of my breast,
> To make the music better. (21-24)

This tuning of the self to God's will is central to his poetry and is reflected in the polishing and tuning of verses, which serve as tangible demonstrations of the pious life of one who has disciplined the self and brought it into harmonious accord with the teachings of the church.

The emphasis upon music in the final line suggests further that right action is the final goal which Herbert seeks in this life, and that the writing of the poem is the action of the poet's well tuned breast.

Vaughan's quest to transcend or penetrate the finite limitations of his human existence makes symmetry and harmony somewhat less important. Therefore, even when Vaughan borrows one of Herbert's stanzaic patterns (as he frequently does)[16] or when he produces a tight, internally consistent poem, this regularity and discipline do not have the same significance that they have in Herbert's poetry. One need only compare the poems on Trinity Sunday to see that Vaughan's poetic form is not working to reinforce his content as Herbert's is. The two poems entitled "The Wreath" and "A Wreath" illustrate the same point.

Herbert's "A Wreath" is characterized by symmetry of form as well as by harmony of subject and structure. The wreath is an offering of the self to God. It is the tangible product of the individual, informed by right reason, engaged in right action for the benefit of God. The poem contains twelve lines of iambic pentameter with an intricate scheme of rhyme and word repetition which suggests the unity and the circularity of the wreath. Each line of the poem repeats at least one word from the preceding line. The final four lines of the poem repeat the last words of the first four lines ("praise," "give,"

"wayes," "live,") in reverse order ("live," "wayes," "give," "praise,"). Within this tight structure, Herbert notes the inadequacy of his offering and asks God to give him simplicity:

> Give me simplicitie that I may live,
> So live and like, that I may know, thy wayes
> Know them and practice them: then shall I give
> For this poore wreath, give thee a crown of praise.
> (9-12)

The poem becomes a concrete demonstration of Herbert's offering up of his life to God. The poet is, in writing the poem, giving praise to God by living according to God's ways. The poem is the fruit of his labor and is, itself, the wreath which he offers up to his creator. But the poem is an unworthy offering. Its "crooked winding wayes" too much resemble the poet's own ways which are not sufficiently freed from entanglements. The poet asks for greater knowledge of God's ways so that he can act in accordance with them and exchange the humble wreath for a "crown of praise" which would be a more worthy gift.

Vaughan's "The Wreath" does not have the same internal cohesion that Herbert's poem has, nor are form and content so integrally related. Vaughan begins with two quatrains and follows them with an eleven line conclusion which

roughly resembles Herbert's poem in form. His poem, unlike Herbert's, contains Vaughan's characteristic questions, exclamatory statements, and parenthetical expressions. Rather than the tangible offering of the product of a simple, spiritually dedicated life, Vaughan offers to God "a twin'd wreath of grief and praise." He dwells, not on his own works, but on Christ's sufferings. While, like Herbert, he conceives of his poem as an offering, he does not consider the actual constructive process a part of the offering. He is offering feelings and emotions rather than works and, consequently, the poem becomes a vehicle or container for the poet's emotions. With Herbert, the physical structure of the poem is more than a container; it is a tangible demonstration of his devotion and reverence.

Exactly what Vaughan meant when he wrote in the Preface to Silex Scintillans that he was one of George Herbert's converts is not easy to determine. Certainly Vaughan's own spiritual beliefs remained distinctly different from Herbert's orthodox Anglicanism. Somehow Vaughan never loses track of the highly individual and introspective nature of his religious experience. Perhaps the Welsh doctor could not force himself to become a subject of the English church, or perhaps his interest in the occult sciences and his pastoral mode of living made doctrine and ritual less meaningful for him than they were for Herbert. In any case, this difference in the two men's approaches to

the religious experience made it impossible for Vaughan to write the same sort of devotional poetry that Herbert wrote. For Herbert, the writing of a poem was a sacramental act which demonstrated the offering up of the poet's life to God. For Vaughan, on the other hand, the poems were primarily records of an inner quest for spiritual perfection and divine awareness, proceding from total transformation of the self.

Because Vaughan never entirely accepted Herbert's view of the nature of the religious experience, his conception of the function of the devotional poet remained at variance with Herbert's conception of that function. Thus, Vaughan appears to have experienced a literary conversion in the general sense that through his reading of Herbert he began to see the possibilities of devotional poetry and to consider himself a devotional poet. When Vaughan appears most to have adopted the external trappings of Herbert's style, as in "Trinity Sunday" or "The Wreath," this difference in spiritual vision becomes apparent. Here, Vaughan's natural emotion and intensity are at odds with Herbert's characteristic reason and control. When, as in "The World," Vaughan succeeds in synthesizing his borrowings to the extent that they enhance rather than restrict the poem, the echoes of Herbert fuse with the Hermetic and Biblical influences into a powerful record of Vaughan's quest for union with God.

NOTES

1. Alvarez, The School of Donne, p. 68.

2. Kermode, "The Private Imagery," p. 225.

3. Five Metaphysical Poets (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 63.

4. Itrat-Husain, The Mystical Element, p. 127.

5. The Paradise Within: Studies in Vaughan, Traherne, and Milton (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 12.

6. For a good discussion of Herbert's use of nature, see Alvarez, p. 69

7. Itrat-Husain, p. 213.

8. English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century 1600-1660, Oxford History of English Literature Series, ed. F. Wilson and Bonamy Dobree (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1945), p. 153.

9. Bennett, Five Metaphysical Poets, p. 71.

10. Bennett, Five Metaphysical Poets, p. 67.

11. "The Silurist," The Dial, 83 (1927), 163.

12. Bennett, Five Metaphysical Poets, p. 62.

13. Kermode, p. 208.

14. Itrat-Husain, p. 126.

15. "Song and Speech in the Metrics of George Herbert," PMLA, 80 (1965), 63.

16. For examples see Mary Ellen Rickey, "Vaughan, The Temple, and Poetic Form," SP, 59 (1962), 162-70.

Traherne and Vaughan:
The Fountain and the Sea of Light

In many respects, Vaughan and Traherne represent a culmination of the metaphysical tradition. Sharing the convictions of Donne and Herbert that the world was a manifestation of the mind of God and that all aspects of phenomenal reality were linked through the emblems and metaphors which God had provided, they followed their predecessors in attempting to develop a poetic which would reveal this quintessential unity.[1] For them, as for Donne and Herbert, the recovery of wholeness depended upon first achieving an unfettered freedom from the merely sensuous, and with this freedom they sought to recover imaginatively and to express poetically the perfectly unified vision enjoyed before the fall from Eden. For both poets the way forward to union becomes the way backward to childhood. The retreat to childhood is a retreat to wholeness of the self in God and the sole benefit of learning is the recovery of that which man has lost. The doctrine of the felix culpa, is present only insofar as man is fortunate in being allowed to recover consciously that which he had before enjoyed unconsciously and instinctively.

Yet, for all their similarity, Vaughan and Traherne differ sharply both in their conceptions of how unity may be found and in how the poem relates to the poet's quest for union. Although both poets would retreat, Vaughan is less confident of his ability to do so. There is little evidence in Traherne of the dark night of the soul when God withdraws from man and the soul feels cut off from divine radiance. There is less tension in Traherne between the finitude of man and the nature of his quest for union with an infinite reality. Consequently, Traherne's poems tend, like Herbert's, to become celebrations and demonstrations of harmony rather than records of the quest to eliminate opposition as do the poems of Donne and Vaughan. There is, of course, some overlapping. The unified vision is not achieved without effort, even in Herbert and Traherne; and conversely, Vaughan and Donne do occasionally recover a wholeness of vision in which all opposition disappears. Still, the emphasis upon physical death in Donne and upon ego death in Vaughan suggests the necessary preconditions to the final achievement of unity and the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of transforming the self. Herbert's tuning of the self and Traherne's retreat to childhood are also preconditions to right thinking, but these are states that can be achieved without the agonizing destruction of the self apparent in Vaughan and in Donne.

The unification of the self for the transformation of

the phenomenal world appears to be equivalent to the illuminative stage of the mystical quest. It depends upon the successful purgation of sin and results in the apprehension of divine presence in the phenomenal world. It suggests, also, the existence of a final cause in which all phenomena have their origin and true being. Yet, total union with the final cause is not necessarily the same as certainty of the presence and awareness of the operations of this cause. For Vaughan the One is a "sea of light," existing beyond time and space. It is there that he has his true home. He dwelt there before birth, and he will return there after death. He understands that if he could die before his death; that is, die into Christ, he could realize the One in this life. For Traherne, however, God is Act or process. He is potential becoming substance, and this, he believes, is love. Union for Traherne, then, demands that man conform to the rhythm of the Act; the self is not to be destroyed, but to be blended with God through total participation in the Act of Love.

For Traherne, as for Bruno and Campanella, love was a means of entering into the totality of the universe. The writing of a poem was an Act of Love, because the mind participated in the divine process by imitating God. Man, made in God's image, would thus tune himself to the divine rhythm of the universe and, seeing that all things were in their proper places, would repeat the Act of Love by

producing a creation of his own, a poem. As with Herbert, the poem was a celebration and an offering, but Traherne, unlike Herbert, seems to have invested the act of creation with a significance which can best be termed, mystical. That is, in Herbert the offering is always presented as humble and imperfect. It is an unworthy offering, but it is the best that he, as a mere mortal, can provide. Herbert clearly conceives of a unity with God beyond this act, but he does not believe such unity possible until after death. Traherne, because he sees God as potential becoming substance, conceives of the making of a poem as providing union of the self with God in the Act of Love.

> Thy Soul, O God, doth prize
> The Seas, the Earth, our Souls, the Skies,
> As we return the same to Thee;
> They more delight thine Eys
> And sweeter be,
> As unto Thee we Offer up the same.
> Then as to us, from Thee at first they came.
>
> ("Amendment," 36-42)

For Traherne, then, the journey from illumination to union is a journey from initial awareness to creative act. It is not union in the sense described by Miss Underhill, there being for Traherne no self-loss, but only the joy of

self-fulfillment.[2] Union is not, for Traherne, achieved by self-denial and withdrawal from the world, but rather by the life of active participation, by the performance of heroic acts.

The unique character of Traherne's spiritual vision has been well described by Itrat-Husain, who also points out the difficulties of trying to describe that vision in terms of the traditional stages of the mystical quest.[3] The definite progression of experience, so readily discernible in Vaughan, is not apparent in Traherne. Yet, for all his uniqueness, Traherne, as a poet, is very similar to Vaughan. In both poets, the radical conceits and the elaborately conceived hieroglyphs of Donne and Herbert give way to direct, urgent statement. The poetic voice is still private and intimate, perhaps more so, as artifice and ingenuity begin to give way to the direct outpouring of emotion which we associate with Romanticism. It is no accident that Traherne and Vaughan rather than Donne and Herbert are most frequently seen as seventeenth century prefigurations of Wordsworth and Coleridge. In Vaughan and Traherne the poetic imagery becomes more vague and suggestive. There is more awareness of light and darkness, more use of color and sound as sources of imagery. Yet, in both Traherne and Vaughan, the assertion of correspondence between the two planes is still central to the poetry.

In "An Infant-Ey" Traherne says that the vision of the

child sees all things in the light of heaven, and that all things, thus seen, lead to felicity:

> O that my Sight had ever simple been!
> And never faln into a grosser state!
> Then might I evry Object still have seen
> (As now I see a golden Plate)
> In such an hev'nly Light, as to descry
> In it, or by it, my Felicity. (19-24)

The ideas, as well as the style, are notably similar to Vaughan, who also makes frequent use of exclamation and parenthetical statements. Like Vaughan, Traherne also associates his own childhood with Eden and sees the recovery of the pure vision of the child as a necessary precondition to the recovery of felicity. Apostate man, rather than God, is responsible for the fragmentation and corruption of the world, and only through the recovery of innocence can the world be transformed. In Traherne, however, the language of transformation is almost entirely free from Hermetic allusions and symbols. There are, in Traherne, very few references to influence, tincture, elixirs, and balm. What he seeks rather than spiritual control over the phenomenal world is possession of the phenomenal.

This distinction is an important one. Vaughan never

for long stops thinking of himself as a magus, transforming and refining himself to a state of final purity. Traherne, like Vaughan, would transform the self, but while for Vaughan transformation of the self leads naturally to transformation of the phenomenal world, for Traherne it leads to possession--to union of the beholder and the beheld. Thus, in the second stanza of "My Spirit," Traherne shows how he conceives of the transforming work of the spirit as one which breaks down barriers:

> It Acts not from a Centre to
> Its Object as remote,
> But present is, when it doth view,
> Being with the Being it doth note.
> Whatever it doth do,
> It doth not by another Engine work,
> But by it self; which in the Act doth lurk,
> Its Essence is Tranformd into a true
> And perfect Act. (18-26)

The spirit is present in whatever it beholds, "Being with the Being it doth note." Because the boundaries between beholder and beheld disappear, Man's spiritual essence is "Transformd into a true/And perfect Act." In the third stanza, he pursues the implications of this conception:

This made me present evermore
With whatso ere I saw.
An object, If it were before
My Ey, was by Dame Natures Law,
Within my Soul. Her Store
Was all at once within me; all her Treasures
Were my Immediat and Internal Pleasures,
Substantial Joys, which did inform my Mind.
With all she wrought,
My soul was fraught,
And evry Object in my Soul a Thought
Begot, or was; I could not tell,
Whether the Things did there
Themselvs appear,
Which in my Spirit truly seemd to dwell;
Or whether my conforming Mind
Were not alone even all that shind. (35-51)

As a result of the tranformation, Traherne has become so thoroughly one with nature that he begins to question whether "the Things" have any real existence outside of his mind. Because they seem "truly" to dwell in his mind, he wonders how they can exist independent of it. In speaking of his "conforming Mind," he reminds us that the world is a manifestation of the Divine Mind and that before such a transformation of the phenomenal world can occur, man must

make his own mind conform to the mind of God. The implicit question then becomes whether since the created world is a manifestation of the Mind, and since all things dwell truly in the Mind, they dwell there only as abstractions or "forms" or whether they also dwell there as actual objects. Traherne does not answer this question directly, although he does speak of "Substantial Joys, which did inform my Mind." And in the first stanza he has said, "The Sence it self was I," and "My essence was Capacitie./ That felt all things,"[4] all of which suggest an unwillingness to reduce the transformation process to an excercise in intellectual abstraction.

In stanza four, Traherne tells us:

> It was so Quick and Pure,
> That all my Mind was wholy Evry where
> What ere it saw, twas ever wholy there;
> The Sun ten thousand Legions off, was nigh:
> The utmost Star,
> Tho seen from far,
> Was present in the Apple of my Eye.
> There was my Sight, my Life, my Sence,
> My Substance and my Mind
> My Spirit Shind
> Even there, not by a Transeunt Influence.
> The Act was Immanent, yet there.

The Thing remote, yet felt even here. (47-68)

Because all things are present in the mind, boundaries of time and space cease to exist. The remote and the near are equally present and equally pure. Because his mind is "wholy Evry where," all reality is "ever wholy there" in his mind. Again he affirms that his sense and substance, as well as his mind, are partakers of the unity. And he concludes the stanza by asserting that there is no difference between "here" and "there." It is, of course, a paradox; but perhaps such thoughts can best be expressed in paradox. Things remain where they are, yet they are wholly present within him; he remains where he is, yet he feels himself present within all things.

In stanza five Traherne makes the imprortant connection between his own vision of the world and God's vision. His soul is:

An Image of the Deitie!
A pure Substantiall Light! (72, 74)

And he says a few lines later:

To its Creator tis so near
In Lov and Excellence
In Life and Sence,

In greatness Worth and Nature; and so Dear;
In it, without Hyperbole,
The Son and friend of God we see. (80-85)

Because man was made in the image of God, it was possible for man to recover the Godlike vision in which all things were truly one. The mind of man could, like the mind of God, contain all the diversity of the world in a single vision. In stanza six, therefore, Traherne likens the process to the projection from his soul of an "Orb of Joy."

A Strange Extended Orb of Joy,
Proceeding from within,
Which did on evry side convey
It self, and being nigh of Kin
To God in evry Way
Dilate it self even in an Instant, and
Like an Indivisible Centre Stand
At once Surrounding all Eternitie. (86-93)

The soul becomes, then, both the indivisible center of experience and also the circumference of experience. Although it is the center of all things, it also surrounds and encloses all things. Yet he says:

Twas not a Sphere

Yet did appear
One Infinit. Twas somwhat evry where. (94-96)

The soul is a "Power Invisible," which can best be conceived of as an infinite orb of joy emanating from the mind and dilating throughout the universe, enclosing and unifying all experience. He compares it to an eye within, a "Living Orb of Sight":

Thou which within me art, yet Me! Thou Ey,
And Temple of his Whole Infinitie!
O what a World art Thou! a World within!
All Things appear,
All objects are
Alive in thee! Supersubstancial, Rare,
Above them selvs, and nigh of Kin
To those pure Things we find
In his Great Mind
Who made the World! tho now Ecclypsd by Sin. (108-117)

Thus, the mind of man, like the Great Mind, becomes a transforming force, exerting its power over the phenomenal and discovering that in the apparent fragmentation and dissociation of the world is a "Supersubstancial" unity. It is important to note here that Traherne sees this unity as "Supersubstancial" rather than as unsubstantial. Things

do not lose their substance, but they become more than mere substance.

This emphasis on substance and sense is referred to by K. W. Salter as a "mystical worldliness": "It is the power of enjoying to the full the apparently most trivial details of ordinary life because these details are all realized as part of the universal order."[5] He says further:

> The knowledge and assurance of a transcendent reality is the firm basis for enjoying the physical world. For then the physical world is known for what it is; its limitations are defined and we are not likely to be deceived by expecting more from it than it can possibly provide.[5]

Yet, if Traherne's emphasis upon sense is not idolatry, neither is it the sort of natural religion which was, in the eighteenth century, to see God as "the eternal fitness of things." There are, in his poetry, suggestions of the advent of deism, but Traherne's faith of reason, despite its emphasis upon order and the "truth of things," is never entirely grounded in rational observation and association of phenomena. For him, interior illumination and purity are, as for the other metaphysical poets, necessary preconditions to the unified vision of heaven and earth.

The road forward to knowledge of God is the road backward to prelapsarian wholeness which will allow the individual to transform the world:

> Which Purity is also a Deeper Thing then is commonly apprehended. For we must disrobe our selvs of all fals Colors, and unclothe our Souls of evil Habits; all our thoughts must be Infant-like and Clear: the Powers of our Soul free from the Leven of this World, and disentangled from mens conceits and customs. (Centuries III, 5)

Man must free himself "from the Leven of this World" because,

> They alienat men from the Life of GOD, and at last make them to live without GOD in the World. To liv the Life of GOD is to live to all the works of GOD, and to enjoy them in His Image, from which they are wholy Diverted that follow fashions. (Centuries III, 13)

To enjoy the world in the image of God, then, is Traherne's aim, and the goal is attained by recovering the purity of

the child and discovering through reason those truths that were before apparent through intuition.

Vaughan is much less inclined than Traherne to accept the sensual and substantial. Like Traherne he sees the mind as a nexus of transformation, but in his quest for unity, he moves quickly from object to abstraction. This seems, at first, paradoxical in a writer who was so heavily influenced by Hermetic thought, but if it is true, as I have suggested earlier, that Vaughan's Hermeticism was primarily spiritual and that he used the language of Hermeticism as a means of symbolic expression, the contradiction begins to disappear. In Vaughan the active imagination is a transforming power, but the transformation occurs in what Jung calls a third realm of subtle bodies, neither mind nor matter:

> The place or the medium of realization is neither mind nor matter, but that intermediate realm of subtle reality which can be adequately expressed only by the symbol.[6]

Because he is not concerned with physical tranformation, Vaughan's tendency is to find unity in the forms which transcend the limitations of physical objects and which are themselves finally united in the One. The movement is upward toward a sea of pure and infinite being beyond both

time and substance. Things remain as they are, but the poet sees in them "the masks and shadows of eternity." They are not infinite themselves, but through their limited participation in the infinite, they can lead man to the One. In the vision of the infinite, however, all limitation, and hence all physical reality, must be dissolved. The mists must finally disperse in the sea of pure light. Thus we find in "The Search" that Vaughan turns his back toward nature:

1

Leave, leave, thy gadding thoughts;
Who Pores
and spies
Still out of Doores
descries
Within them nought.

2

The skinne, and shell of things
Though faire,
are not
Thy wish, nor pray'r
but got
By meer Despair
of wings.

3

To rack old Elements,
or Dust
and say
Sure here he must
needs stay
Is not the way,
nor just.

Search well another world; who studies this,
Travels in Clouds, seeks Manna, where none is. (71-96)

The final statement of the poem is further illuminated by the quotation appended to the poem. Indeed, the lord is "not far off from every one of us," but although we live and move in him, we are cut off from him by our inability to recover the pure vision of the child, who sees God in all things. The flight imagery is characteristic of Vaughan, for whom it suggests the spirit transcending the finite phenomenal world to the ideal world. Yet the transcendence is not escape from an inherently impure world but rather the gradual movement of the mind from the fragmented vision of "The skinne and shell of things" to the unified vision of the divine light which radiates throughout the world and which, because it is infinite, must finally transcend the finite phenomenal world. The

transformation, then, begins with the purgation of sin and the gradual awakening of the sleeping spirit to the influence of God. This leads to apprehensions of divine presence, and the transformation of the phenomenal into forms and emblems, leading ultimately to a rebirth in Christ and to the total absorption of the phenomenal in the One.

For Traherne, however, the realization of the Absolute does not demand the transcendence of the phenomenal. Like Vaughan, Traherne is dissatisfied with the fragmented vision of the created universe, but unlike Vaughan, he does not see the universe as finite. The images of flight, so common in Vaughan, appear as frequently in Traherne, but in Traherne there is little evidence that flight imagery suggests the transcendence of the phenomenal. On the contrary, the flight imagery generally leads, as in "On Leaping over the Moon," to a greater awareness of God's immanence:

As much as others thought themselvs to ly
Beneath the Moon, so much more high
Himself he thought to fly
Above the starry Sky,
As that he spyd
Below the Tide.
Thus did he yield to me in the shady Night

A wondrous and Instructiv Light
Which taught me that under our Feet there is
As o'r our Heads, a Place of Bliss. (61-70)

For Traherne, there is no need to transcend the phenomenal because, in fully apprehending the created world, man participates fully in the Act of God. The flight is a flight of the imagination to a new level of comprehension in which all barriers of time and space disappear. Yet created objects do not, as they do in Vaughan, lose their palpability. The regenerated mind soars above the moon by adopting a celestial perspective from which to view the phenomenal world. Without this perspective, man would remain below the moon seeing only limitation; yet in seeing the world as God sees it, he recovers wholeness of vision without turning his back on the here and now.

Traherne's flight imagery frequently contains this implied paradox absent from Vaughan's flight imagery. In "Consummation" the paradox is quite explicit, as Traherne says that man's thoughts are:

Extended throu the Sky,
Tho here, beyond it far they fly:
Abiding in the Mind
An endless Liberty they find:
Throu-out all Spaces can extend,

Nor ever meet or know an End. (7-12)

The mind at once remains here on earth and flies beyond the sky, seeing the infinite in the phenomenal. He says in the Centuries: "The true exemplar of God's infinity is that of your understanding, which is a lively pattern and idea of it. It excludeth nothing, and contalneth all things, being a power that permitteth all objects to be, and is able to enjoy them" (II, 24). The essential difference in Vaughan is that perfect union with God demands that man totally transcend all objects. They must, for him, cease to be.

In "The Night" Vaughan associates darkness with communion with God. The darkness eclipses not God but the Earth. Darkness allows man to free himself from earthly entanglements and like "wise Nicodemus" realize the beauty of Christ's presence.[7] The night, then, paradoxically represents vision, but vision of God rather than the earth. It comes to represent the final death of the self, which Vaughan sees as a precondition to perfect union with God:

O for that night! where I in him
Might live invisible and dim. (53-54)

Self-fulfillment again is seen paradoxically as demanding self-destruction. The unitive life is a life "invisible and dim," because the finite is completely absorbed in the

vision of the infinite. Such total transcendence of the world, however, Vaughan found agonizingly difficult to achieve. He says in "Repentence":

> In all this Round of life and death
> Nothing's more vile than is my breath,
> Profanenes on my tongue doth rest,
> Defects and darknes in my brest,
> Pollutions all my body wed,
> And even my soul to thee is dead,
> Only in him, on whom I feast,
> Both soul, and body are well drest,
> His pure perfection quits all score,
> And fills the Boxes of his poor;
> He is the Center of long life, and light,
> I am but finite, He is infinite. (73-86)

The last line sums up the final source of Vaughan's anguish. Man's very existence becomes an obstacle to union, for although God is in all things, man can never be truly united with God until all of the limitations inherent in physical existence cease to be.

Traherne, like Vaughan, was conscious of the problem of realizing God's infinitude, but unlike Vaughan, he did not see the created world as limited. Union of the self with God did not require, for him, the agonizing death of the

self in the solitary night of the spirit, but rather the joyous participation in the endless process of creation. Thus, he says in "The Vision":

To see a Glorious Fountain and an End,
To see all Creatures tend
To thy advancement, and so sweetly close
In thy Repose: To see them shine
In Use, in Worth, in Service, and even Foes
Among the rest made thine:
To see all these unite at once in Thee
Is to behold Felicity.

To see the Fountain is a Blessed Thing,
It is to see the King
Of Glory face to face: But yet the End
The Glorius, Wondrous End is more;
And yet the Fountain there we Comprehend,
The Spring we there adore:
For in the End the Fountain best is Shewn,
As by Effects the Cause is Known. (33-48)

The effect reveals the cause; the end, the means. The creation reveals the creator. Where union, for Vaughan, requires the painful death of the self, for Traherne, it only requires the full awareness of the fountain which

flows through all creation. Union is attained by extending the limits of the self and by possessing in the mind the infinitude of the created world. The limitations of the phenomenal world are overcome with less difficulty because they are only apparent limitations created by false understanding. If man sees the world as God sees it, limitations disappear. The created world is possessed by the right-thinking mind and in this state is entirely transformed:

> Flight is but the Preparative: The Sight
> Is Deep and Infinite;
> Ah me! 'tis all the Glory, Love, Light, Space,
> Joy, Beauty and Variety,
> That doth adorn the Godheads Dwelling Place
> 'Tis all that Ey can see.
> Even Trades them selvs seen in Celestial Light,
> And Cares and Sins and Woes are Bright.
>
> ("The Vision," 1-8)

To see the created world as God sees it is to see infinitely, and the apparent limitations of the phenomenal world cease to exist. There is not, as there almost always is in Vaughan, a desire to transcend the phenomenal. On the contrary, the sight, itself, is infinite. The ambiguity of "sight," which seems to mean at once personal

vision and also the object of vision, heightens the intimacy between mental image and physical object. Traherne is not suggesting that the world is merely a product of his conscious imagination, but rather that in his imagination the world is both perfect and infinite. This psychic phenomenon is discussed by Carl Jung, who says:

> Without consciousness there would, practically speaking, be no world, for the world exists as such only in so far as it is consciously reflected and consciously expressed by a psyche. Consciousness is a precondition of being. Thus the psyche is endowed with the dignity of a cosmic principle which philosophically and in fact gives it a position coequal with physical being. The carrier of this consciousness is the individual, who does not produce the psyche on his own volition but is, on the contrary, preformed by it and nourished by the gradual awakening of consciousness during childhood.[8]

An appreciation of the extent to which the physical and psychic worlds are interdependent in Traherne is essential, because in his poetry the unified vision is a product of his consciousness, which achieves the dignity of cosmic principle by virtue of its participation in the divine Act.

Yet this quest for unity, while imaginative, does not reduce the phenomenal world to abstractions or demand that the physical world be reduced to mists. Instead, it requires that the individual realize consciously the divinity in which all things have their true ground of being. This is Traherne's "act of Understanding," of which he says: "These things shall never be seen with your bodily eyes, but in a more perfect manner, you shall be present with them in your Understanding. You shall be in them to the very centre and they in you. As light is in a piece of crystal, so shall you be with every part and excellency of them" (Centuries, II, 76). The individual thus becomes a part of the divine Act by exercizing his consciousness and by fully realizing the self in God. The human spirit, which is the image of the Divine Mind, is united with God in the act of Understanding.[9]

Traherne links the act of Undrestanding with the Hermetic opus or transformative process most explicitly in "Thoughts I":

O ye Conceptions of delight!
Ye that inform my Soul with Life and Sight!
Ye Representatives, and Springs
Of Inward Pleasure!
Ye joys! ye Ends of Outward Treasure!
Ye inward, and ye Living Things!

The Thought, or Joy Conceived is
The Inward Fabrick of my Standing Bliss.
It is the very Substance of my Mind
Transformd and with its Objects lind.
The Quintessence, Elixar, Spirit, Cream,
Tis Strange that Things unseen should be Supreme.
(48-60)

In the "Conceptions of Delight" both "Inward Pleasure" and "Outward Treasure" are simultaneously present. The thought itself is the elixir, the invisible fifth essence, in which all opposition is reconciled and all imperfection eliminated. Yet in Traherne, more than in any of the other poets considered here, the process is internalized and rational. The transformation is still dependent upon right thought and still relies upon the assumption that there is between the celestial and the terrestrial worlds a divine correspondence which the human mind can recover and thereby eliminate dissociation and fragmentation. Because he believed himself capable of completely internalizing phenomenal experience so that all nature was present in his mind, he was capable of effecting a total transformation of the phenomenal world without feeling a need finally to deny the phenomenal in favor of abstract forms.

What Vaughan and Traherne do seem to share is a tendency away from what Basil Willey calls "picture

thinking," toward conceptualization. Whereas both conceit and emblem suggest a static, mirror-like correspondence between the ideal and phenomenal worlds, the dynamic imagery of Traherne and Vaughan reflects an ongoing quest for unity with the divine and suggests the growing influence of the rational religion of the Cambridge Platonists. "Their whole emphasis was upon the power of of the individual to raise himself unceasingly toward perfection by living after the Spirit. Traditional teaching about Salvation evoked images of Heaven and the hereafter, of redemption and justification in its various forms; the Platonists (like the Quakers in this as in other ways) speak rather of 'here' and 'now.'" While Donne and Herbert placed salvation and total union in the hereafter, Vaughan and Traherne saw union as a goal to be sought in this life. Just as Donne's conceits demonstrate the tension he saw between the phenomenal and the ideal, Traherne's imagery, which frequently seems at first to suggest disorientation, reflects his ability to eliminate the apparent limitation and dissociation of the phenomenal world in the act of understanding. The fluid imagery of the poetry suggests the poet's free movement in the fountain of divinity and stands in contrast to both the static visual impact of the emblem and conceit and also to the implication of studied purification and refinement inherent in the dynamic, quest imagery of Vaughan.

Whereas Traherne, like Vaughan, may have sensed that the mind of man could not experience the totality of the One and still retain its identity, he did not consider this limitation an impediment to his union with the numinous. For him, it was enough to discover his identity in God and to find felicity through his total participation in the Act of Love. For Vaughan, the finitude of individual identity was a barrier to union with the One, which he conceived of as both immanent and transcendent. The same boundaries which create individuality create, for Vaughan, a tension with the One, in whom there are no boundaries. Only those who can "die before their death," can eliminate the tension between the One and the many and realize the perfect transformation of death and rebirth in Christ. While Vaughan believed such a death to be possible, the continuing struggle to die into Christ and to eliminate any barriers of individuality is the source of his poetry's greatest tension.

NOTES

1. Cf. A. L. Clements, The Mystical Poetry of Thomas Traherne (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 191-96.

2. Underhill, Mysticism, pp. 415-17.

3. Itrat-Husain, The Mystical Element, p. 292.

4. The Dobell edition punctuates these lines with a semicolon rather than a period, a version which provides a stronger link between "That" and its antecedent, "essence."

5. Thomas Traherne: Mystic and Poet (London: Edward Arnold, 1964), p. 71.

6. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p. 283.

7. See R. A. Durr, On The Mystical Poetry of Henry Vaughan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962) pp. 111-22, for an excellent reading of this poem which supports the view offered here.

8. The Undiscovered Self, trans. R. C. F. Hull, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1957), pp. 46, 47.

9. See Itrat-Husain, pp. 297-300, for a fuller discussion of the act of Understanding in relation to Traherne's mysticism.

10. Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background, p. 139.

11. Willey, p. 143.

Vaughan, Cowley, and Cleveland: The End of a Vision

I

By the second half of the seventeenth century the thought of Bacon and Montaigne had been developed and modified by Descartes and Hobbes. The new thinkers, who attached less importance to the fall, saw the mind as a gatherer and synthesizer of facts rather than as an agent of transformation. Men such as Sprat, Evelyn, and Cowley had little doubt that the world was governed by unity and order, but they felt that this order could only be discovered by the rational and impersonal observation of things as they were. If the order of the world was not apparent to man, it was not because man's vision had been clouded by sin, but because man's reason had been shackled by a system of thought which attempted to view the world as a manifestation of a Divine Intelligence, and which sought to deduce truths about the nature of the world from its knowledge of the Deity. The efforts of Donne, Herbert, Traherne, and Vaughan to show that dissemblance was the result of human apostasy and that unity could be recovered through self-discipline and purification depended upon the

acknowledgment of a correspondent unity between the divine and temporal worlds. However, as it became increasingly clear to seventeenth century thinkers that the temporal world did not correspond to the heirarchical, divine order of the schoolmen, the metaphysicals' search for unity demanded more and more the transformation of the temporal world, and wit was the instrument of transformation. Yet their vision was rapidly becoming anachronistic, as their horror at the chaotic dissolution of the old, ordered universe paled before the promising discoveries of the bright young men who were only too happy to cast off old superstitions and fears in their search for the "brave new world."

Robert B. Hinman points out how the melancholy of Donne and Bishop Goodman faded before the optimism of Sprat and Cowley:

> If fallen man was condemned to sink ever deeper into a morass of moral corruption, physical debility, and poverty as the earth's fertility diminished, if no human efforts could contribute to gradual improvement of the human condition, only stubborn obscurantism could keep faith in divine justice. But vigorous minds could not deny human progress in some areas. They refused to concede that all human activities are absolutely, rather than relatively, vain. They could

not treat man's vaunted freedom of will as an illusion imposed in cruel jest.[1]

The disease which Donne believed had locked the earth in its death throes appeared to Cowley to be little more than a sort of intellectual hypochondria, caused by the abandonment of reason. The metaphysicals, as apologists for the old order, were, he felt, proposing imaginary remedies for imaginary problems. Donne had said in the "First Anniversarie":

> There is no health; Physitians say that wee,
> At best, enjoy but a neutralitie.
> And can there bee worse sicknesse, then to know
> That we are never well, nor can be so? (91-94)

To which Cowley seems to reply directly when he says,

> O Notion false! O Appetite deprav'd.
> That has the nobler part of man enslav'd.
> Man born to Reason, does that Safety quit,
> To split upon the dangerous Rock of Wit.
> Physicians say, there's no such danger near,
> As when, though no signs manifest appear,
> Self-tir'd and dull, man knows not what he ails,
> And without toil his Strength and Vigor fails.[2]

Cowley, opposing reason and wit, suggests that the latter is responsible for the unwarranted disease of self-destructive brooding and melancholy. There are no manifest signs of the world's corruption and sickness, but man, "split upon the dangerous Rock of Wit," has deluded himself into creating a sickness which saps his "Strength and Vigor." Reason, for Cowley, clearly meant inductive thinking as opposed to the deductive thought of the metaphysicals, for whom the general axioms about the nature of the world were inextricably bound up with questions of theology and morality. Cowley's thought, however, moved to general truths from the observation of particulars, and, hence, the general axioms were always likely to be altered by the accumulation of new evidence. The syllogistic thought of the metaphysicals, however, did not lend itself to such easy modification. When the discoveries of Galileo, Kepler, Harvey, and others contradicted the scholastic world vision, based upon theological assumption and Aristotelian logic, the metaphysicals constructed, in an attempt to explain away the apparent inaccuracies of their arguments, new syllogisms which were based upon flawless logic and theological premises which they considered unquestionable.

These attempts to maintain the accuracy of the scholastic world vision in the face of growing challenges resulted in the phenomenon of metaphysical wit, which was,

as Professor Alvarez has brilliantly demonstrated, bound up with lyrical dialectic. The metaphysical poets equated wit with the right reason which would allow man to transform the world.

Yet for all his professed disdain for wit, it was Cowley who, along with Donne, was singled out by both Dryden and Doctor Johnson as an example of the abuse of wit in seventeenth century poetry. However, while he seems to have understood and even to have tried writing in the manner of Donne and Herbert, Cowley's poetry reveals considerably less inner-tension than even Traherne's. The poems in The Mistress, therefore, do seem to use wit in the manner of Donne's love poems, but one always feels that Cowley was affecting a style rather than trying to resolve his personal conflicts through wit. Because Cowley believed that the purpose of metaphysical wit was the curing of non-existent spiritual maladies in the microcosm and in the macrocosm, it is easy to understand why his "metaphysical" poems lack what we would today call an "objective correlative." Whereas the wit of Donne or of Vaughan always represents the attempt of a serious mind to put back together a sick and fragmented world, Cowley's wit is most characteristically merely clever. George Williamson quotes what he calls "a rather typical conceit" from Cowley's "Elegie upon Anacreon":

Love was with thy Life entwin'd
Close as Heat with Fire is joyn'd,
A powerful Brand prescribed the date
Of thine, like Meleagers Fate.
Th' Antiperistasis, of Age
More enflam'd thy amorous rage. (33-38)

of which he says: "This is ingenious, but somehow it lacks the intellectual vigor, the agitated mind of Donne, whose conceits can seldom be called merely ingenious. The contortions of Donne's mind were never so easy, so frictionless and therefore devoid of heat."[3] The Preface to the 1656 edition of Poems suggests that Cowley himself might have shared this opinion. He says of The Mistress, "For so it is, that Poets are scarce thought Free-men of their Company, without paying some duties, and obliging themselves to be true to Love."[4]

For all of this, however, there can be no doubt that Cowley did understand the metaphysicals' conception of wit. He says in his "Ode: of Wit":

In a true piece of Wit all things must be,
Yet all things there agree.
As in the Ark, joyn'd without force or strife,
All Creatures dwelt; all Creatures that had Life.
Or as the Primitive Forms of all

(If we compare great things with small)
Which without Discord or Confusion lie,
In that strange Mirror of the Deitie. (57-64)

Here, it is plain that Cowley sees true wit as the reconciliation of material opposites. Wit eliminates opposition--"All things there agree," by showing things as they appear "In that strange Mirror of the Deitie." The Ark metaphor demonstrates this unity of the many in the One. In "Platonick Love" Cowley uses the characteristic dialectic or lyrical argument of Donne to convince his mistress that she should yield her body to him:

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. (1-7)

The souls, because they are incorporeal, intermingle freely, but true love demands that this unity of souls be duplicated by the physical bodies. Just as the soul will only know half of its happiness until it is joined by the body in heaven, so the lovers can only know a partial

happiness until the union which has already taken place on the spiritual level is consummated on the physical level:

> In thy immortal part
> Man, as well as I, thou art.
> But something 'tis that differs Thee and Me;
> And we must one even in that difference be.
> I Thee, both as a man, and woman prize;
> For a perfect Love implies
> Love in all Capacities. (8-14)

Cowley makes further use of the dichotomy of body and soul by asserting that souls are all one sex and, therefore, do not need to be united, while bodies, because they are incomplete (containing only one sex) are continually striving for unity or the neutrality of both sexes achieved through the sex act. The soul knows unity and harmony naturally, and it is unreasonable to prevent the body from knowing that happiness also. The achievement of unity depends upon the elimination of "difference" by bringing the variety of the physical world under the dominion of the unified ideal world. This desire to transform the imperfect and dissociated phenomenal world to a perfect unity, purged of all opposition, was the <u>raison d'etre</u> of metaphysical wit. In formula, "Platonick Love" is a perfect example of that wit, as it advances its argument

deductively from conventional premises of scholastic theology, showing that the lovers, if they are to know divine perfection, must unite their bodies.

In the poetry of Cowley, however, intellectual agility and cleverness do not flow out of the same deep fountains of emotion as they do in Donne and Vaughan, for whom the problems of unity and transformation were of central importance. In "The Check" Vaughan emphasizes the high seriousness of his quest:

> View thy fore-runners: Creatures giv'n to be
> Thy youths Companions
> Take their leave and die: Birds, Beasts, each tree
> All that have a growth, or breath
> Have one large language, Death.
> 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. (25-36)

Vaughan is speaking to his body, referred to in line eleven as "humble dust." The "hideous night" of death is, or should be, the check upon the body's idleness and

frivolity. Consciousness of death should make the body desirous of transformation. The illusory "shades," "mists," and "damps" of the phenomenal world will be transformed to pure light as the radiance of the sun eliminates the misleading darkness and opacity of sensory experience. Even the body, associated with the heaviest of the four elements, will be transformed to pure spirit.

Associating fragmentation and decay with apostasy, the metaphysicals saw right reason as the only means of recovering unity. For Vaughan, as for Traherne, the innocence of childhood came to symbolize the Edenic experience of the life of the individual in perfect harmony with God. It is for this reason, rather than because of doubtful associations of childhood with pre-existence or reminiscence, that the childhood theme is central to Vaughan. Yet recognizing this, S. L. Bethell says: "Too much has been made of the childhood theme in Vaughan."[5] And while he makes the connection in Vaughan between childhood and Edenic vision, he says: "It seems to me that Vaughan shares the general seventeenth-century tendency to over-stress man's loss through the Fall."[6] For Vaughan, however, the importance of the Fall could not be over-stressed, as the whole object of his spiritual quest was the recovery, through marriage to Christ, of the prelapsarian purity in which apostasy and discord would no longer exist. The doctrine of the Fall provided the

explanation, not only for Vaughan but for Donne, Herbert, and Traherne as well, that the apparent afflictions of the world were the consequence of sin and wrong reason. It also provided at least a smattering of hope that harmony and order could be restored through the purgation of sin and the exercise of right reason.[7]

Like the metaphysicals, Cowley understood that order and harmony were essential to a world governed by God, but Cowley insisted that this order was to be discovered in rather than imposed upon the world. As Sprat tells us:

> He betook himself to its [nature's] Contemplation, as well furnished with sound Judgment, and diligent Observation, and good Method to discover its Mysteries, as with Abilities to set it forth in all its Ornaments.[8]

This concern for accurate observation and discovery of nature's order is reflected in the Plantarum, of which Hinman says,

> What the plants say represents the consequences of the poet's attentive observation of and reflection on nature. The poet learns of the medicinal properties of the herbs in his garden. As he does so, his knowledge of plants opens other areas of knowledge.

> The more aware he becomes of the curative virtues of plants, the more convinced he becomes that man's life figures in a grand design, even eptiomizes it, and that nature constantly provides means of restoring man's faculties, even when he himself has abused them.[9]

Like Vaughan, then, Cowley delighted in the grand design of nature, and like Vaughan also, he attached great importance to what Hinman here calls "responsiveness," the complex pattern of influence and interaction between various orders of being. Yet Cowley's awareness of influence is free from Hermetic associations, as Vaughan's seldom is. For Vaughan, purity of soul was a necessary precondition to the practice of medicine, because only the pure of soul could unlock the secrets of influence in the healing herbs. This is made clear, not only in Hermetical Physick and The Chymists Key, but also in "The Tempest":

> All things here shew him heaven; Waters that fall
> Chide, and fly up; Mists of corruptest fome
> Quit their first beds & mount; trees, herbs,
> flowers, all
> Strive upwards still, and point him the way home.
> (26-29)

All of nature is linked by influence, by the divine seeds or sparks of light which God has implanted throughout the world. Also, when Vaughan deals with nature, he does so abstractly. There is none of the botanists' careful observation and classification so characteristic of Cowley's Plantarum. On the contrary, Vaughan's nature passages are characteristically couched in the language of the Hermeticists. He speaks of refinement, of the casting off of grossness, and he conveniently overlooks obvious facts when they do not advance his argument, as in the passage above, when, after drawing a correspondence between the mists rising from falling water and the refinement of man, he ignores the fact that the mists will again fall into the flowing stream. Yet, while he felt that the world was framed to show man heaven, he also believed that man's corruption, his misuse of natural beauty, could make the world a snare rather than an aid to salvation:

> O foolish man! how hast thou lost thy sight?
> How is it that the Sun to thee alone
> Is grown thick darkness, and thy bread, a stone?
> Hath flesh no softness now? mid-day no light? (53-66)

Foolish ignorance springs from apostasy, from the failure to see the complex network of occult correspondences which reveal divine presence.

Cowley, however, must have seen the paradoxical situation in which the apologists for the old hierarchical, ordered universe were forced into ignoring scientific fact and offering labyrinthine explanations for the existence of the most readily explainable natural phenomenon. He must have felt that in attempting to make the natural world correspond to a preconceived scheme the metaphysicals were not only grossly distorting the true nature of the physical world, but that they were ignoring the very real order of nature which could be discovered inductively. In any case, after The Mistress, Cowley's poetry began more and more to reflect classical rather than contemporary English influences. He became interested in the Pindaric Ode and the Epic. His lines became more regular, and his conceits became fewer and less integral to his poetry. His emphasis upon reason and order stressed impersonal objectivity and dispassionate observation, foreshadowing the newer tastes of the Restoration.

Cowley's rejection of the Hermetic opus is most explicit in "Reason. The Use of It in Divine Matters."

Visions, and Inspirations some expect,
    Their course here to direct.
Like senseless Chymists their own wealth destroy,
    Imaginary Gold t'enjoy.
So Stars appear to drop to us from skie,

And gild the passage as they fly:
But when they fall, and meet the' opposing Ground,
What but a sordid Slime is found? (9-16)

Here, he chides the "senseless Chymists" for ruining the very real wealth which surrounded them in their vain attempts to produce gold. Just as the physical alchemists had failed to produce actual gold, so, he felt, the spiritual alchemists, in their attempts to imaginatively transform the world, had produced only "Imaginary Gold," which could not survive contact with the world of nature. The visions and inspirations received from the stars become only "a Sordid Slime" when they "meet the' opposing Ground." Or, as he says a few lines further:

So numberless the Stars, that to the Eye
It makes but all one Galaxie.
Yet Reason must assist too, for in Seas
So vast and dangerous as these,
Our course by Stars above we cannot know,
Without the Compass too below. (35-40)

It is important to note here that Cowley's rejection of alchemical transformation does not spring, as Donne's had, from consciousness of man's moral imperfection. On the contrary, he rejects the whole concept of transformation,

imaginative or material, as wrong-headed. His style is argumentative and conceited; the lines are rough and masculine; but here it is the content rather than the clothing of the argument which is important. Cowley is attacking the "sports of wanton Wit" with their own weapons, using the style of Donne to refute the very arguments which Donne had advanced.

In "To the Royal Society" Cowley explicitly refutes the views of those who see the world's apparent illness as a consequence of the fall. In fact he refers to philosophy as "the great and only Heir/Of all that Human Knowledge which has bin/Unforfeited by Man's rebellious Sin" (1-3). On the contrary, the captors of philosophy have been "Some negligent, and some ambitious men" (15), who "amus'd him with the sports of wanton Wit" (20). Had philosophy not been captive, "one would have thought,/To ripeness and perfection might have brought/A Science so well bred and nurst,/And of such hopeful parts too at the first" (10-14). After stating that philosophy has been lost in "the pleasant Labyrinths of ever-fresh Discourse" (24), and entertained "With painted Scenes, and Pageants of the Brain" (30), Cowley goes on to hail Bacon as philosophy's emancipator:

> From Words, which are but Pictures of the Thought,
> (Though we our Thoughts from them perversely drew)

To things, the Minds right Object, he it brought,
Like foolish Birds to painted Grapes we flew;
He sought and gathered for our use the True;
And when on heaps the chosen Bunches lay,
He prest them wisely the Mechanick way,
Till all their juyce did in one Vessel joyn,
Ferment into a Nourishment Divine,
The thirsty Souls refreshing Wine. (69-78)

"Things" were for Cowley "the Mind's right object," and man's "Nourishment Divine" was to be obtained not through the transformation of the world and the denial of sensory experience, but "wisely the Mechanick way," through empirical observation of "things."

We would be like the Deitie,
When Truth and Falshood, Good and Evil, we
Without the Sences aid within our selves would see;
For 'tis God only who can find
All Nature in his Mind. (64-68)

According to Cowley, then, it is inductive reason rather than metaphysical wit which will allow man to discover the workings of God in nature. The poet must not distort nature,

to make it like
Th' Ideas and the Images which lie
In his own Fancy, or his Memory,
No, he before his sight must place
The Natural and Living Face;
The real object must command
Each Judgment of his Eye, and Motion of his Hand.
(83-88)

However, if Cowley's materialism, in its anti-Platonic insistence upon the reality of the phenomenal world, appears to be the antagonist in the long drama of the English poetic tradition, it is well to remember that metaphysical poetry is largely a poetry of desperation. Donne sensed, and Vaughan seems sometimes to have sensed also, that their efforts to transform the world were in vain. Cowley's faith in empiricism foreshadows the conception of metaphysical wit which was bound to occur in the eighteenth century as men began to see feeling and emotion as inherently at odds with the rational thought demanded by the scientific method. Because metaphysical wit represents a failure or refusal of the poets to separate feeling from thought in their interactions with their external environments, any system of viewing nature which relied exclusively upon rational thought as a key to understanding the universe could not attach the same

metaphysical significance to chance parallels and analogies. This fact alone would be sufficient to account for Vaughan's poetic silence during the last years of his life.

Certainly Thalia Rediviva (1678) is an anti-climax in Vaughan's career. It is generally mediocre and is marked, on the whole, by a lack of poetic inspiration. Much of the material was composed before the augmented edition of Silex Scintillans appeared in 1655. The devotional poetry composes only one section of seventeen poems, and here the arduous struggle for unity with the One is seldom in evidence. The mood is one of resignation and retreat, as in "The Bee":

> Where state grasps more than plain Truth needs
> And wholesome Herbs are starv'd by Weeds:
> To the wild Woods I will be gone,
> And the course Meals of great Saint John. (3-6)

He still laments the disappearence of order and the discordance of the world, made manifest in the errors of the new science and the bloodshed of the Civil War:

> The truth, which once was plainly taught,
> With thorns and briars now is fraught.
> Some part is with bold Fables spotted,

Some by strange Comments wildly blotted:
And discord (old Corruption's Crest)
With blood and blame hath stain'd the rest.
So Snow, which in its first descents
A whiteness, like pure heav'n presents,
When touch'd by Man is quickly soil'd
And after trodden down, and spoil'd. (63-72)

Despairing of curing the world's infirmity, the poet asks only for the solitude and peace of a Hermit:

Then since corrupt man hath driv'n hence
Thy kind and saving influence,
And Balm is no more to be had
In all the Coasts of Gilead:
Go with me to the shade and cell,
Where thy best Servants once did dwell. (93-98)

II

If Cowley's poetry reveals the intellectual current in which metaphysical poetry was drowned, John Cleveland's poems could be compared to the last futile gasps for air by a man whose head was already under water. In Cleveland dialectic, radical metaphors, alchemical figures, and recondite images are almost wholly divorced from poetic meaning. The effect is sometimes amusing, sometimes

ludicrous in the poet who seems to be alternately burlesquing and aping the metaphysical style. Here, ingenuity becomes perversity; the unusual becomes the grotesque. Yet, with the exception of "The Authors Mock-Song to Mark Anthony," the overt indications of parody are seldom present. While "the metaphysical conceit aims at making us concede its justness while admiring its ingenuity,"[10] Cleveland's ingenuity in forming conceits was seldom accompanied by a desire for justness. While the sheer density and obscurity of his figures would seem to qualify him, at least for those who equate metaphysical poetry with strong lines and catachresis, as the most metaphysical of metaphysicals, there is actually little indication that in adopting many of the techniques of Donne, Cleveland was doing anything more than affecting a style. Notably missing from his poetry is the "high seriousness" of purpose which characterizes Donne in even so light a poem as "Goe and catch a falling star."

In "The Hecatomb to his Mistresse" Cleveland unleashes what might be supposed to be a tirade against the excesses of metaphysical wit:

> Be dumb ye beggers of the rhiming trade,
> Geld your loose wits, and let your Muse be splaid.
> Charge not the parish with your bastard phrase
> Of Balm, Elixar, both the Indias,

Of shrine, saint, sacrilledge, and such as these
Expressions, common as your Mistresses.[11]

Yet while Cleveland does condemn the alchemical figure and also, more specifically, Donne's famous image from "The Sunne Rising," he condemns them for being too common rather than too abstruse. He goes on then to describe his mistress, sometimes in a manner reminiscent of Donne's "Negative Love":

As then a purer substance is defin'd
But by an heap of Negatives conbin'd; (31-32)

or his "An Anatomie of the World":

All other forms seem in respect of thee
The Almanacks mishap'd Anatomie. (39-40)

and sometimes with an <u>ingegno</u> all his own:

can your eyes want nose,
When from each cheek buds forth a fragrant Rose?
(55-56)

But here, as in almost all of Cleveland's verse, wit exists primarily for amplification. It does not help to define

the experience which the poem communicates but rather provides a patchwork, and frequently ill-fitting, garment composed of what has been appropriately called "Clevelandism." The heroic love of Giordano Bruno, with its noble purpose and its delight in correspondence, has become a sort of narcissistic self-indulgence to which Doctor Johnson's comment on the metaphysicals might well be applied:

> Their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural; they are not obvious, but neither are they just; and the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found.[12]

But Cleveland, in spite of his fascination with conceit and paradox, is more at home in satire and panegyric than in meditative verse.

The distance between the sensibilities of Cleveland and the metaphysicals can readily be seen by comparing one of his images from "Upon Phillis walking in a morning before Sun-rising" with a similar one from Vaughan's "Faith":

> The Mary-gold whose Courtiers face
> Eccho's the sunne, and doth unlace

Her at his rise, at his full stop
Packs and shuts up her gaudy shop,
Mistakes her cue, and doth display.
Thus Phillis antidates the day. (27-32)

The "Mary-gold," mistaking Phillis for the sun, opens itself to her in courtier-like tribute. The conceit is, according to George Williamson, "one of excellent wit," and "is exactly what he intended it, a witty compliment to Phillis."[13] It may be both of these things, De gustibus non est disputandum, but, such is the extent of the poem's hyperbole, it may also be a satirical thrust at the Hermetic notion of influence as it was used by Vaughan in "To Amoret gone from him." In either case, the image serves to amplify the beauty and radiance of Phillis, compared to whom the morn is sluggish, rather than to define the poet's feelings or to explicate the poem's content. The implied correspondence between Phillis and the sun is little more than conventional flattery, and the doctrine of influence, if present at all, is never pursued.

In "Faith" Vaughan does seem to echo Cleveland, but the context in which the echo appears is so radically altered that there is little basis for claiming a direct borrowing:

The Law, and Ceremonies made
A glorious night,

Where Stars, and Clouds, both light, and shade
Had equal right;
But, as in nature, when the day
Breaks, night adjourns,
Stars shut up shop, mists pack away,
And the Moon mourns. (13-20)

Cleveland's "shuts up her gaudy shop" has become "stars shut up shop." Professor Williamson says, "that Vaughan's is a failure because he tries to fuse an essentially witty image into a highly imaginative context involving a serious emotion."[13] Vaughan's "stars shut up shop," while perhaps less than witty, is placed in a highly imaginative context; but if the image fails, it is for a different reason. Vaughan is attempting to dramatize the role of Christ in man's redemption. The "Law, and Ceremonies" are the rules and rituals of the Old Testament, which Vaughan likens to night. The night is characteristically ambiguous. It is glorious, but it is also dark. The stars, which emanate divine influence, have "equal right" with the clouds, which obstruct man's vision. It is a time of partial fulfillment. But the night disappears with the rising of the sun, and the ambivalence and partial fulfillment of the Old Testament vanish before the overwhelming light of faith which flows from Christ:

So when the Sun of righteousness
Did once appear,
That scene was chang'd, and a new dresse
Left for us here;
Veiles became useles, Alters fel,
Fires smoking die;
And all that sacred pomp, and shel
Of things did flie. (21-28)

Christ is the regenerative, transforming force both in the individual and in the history of man. He dispells darkness with an all-consuming power which transforms utterly all that it touches so that veils become useless and the shells of things disappear in his radiance. The emotion is serious, and it is conveyed by wit, but the wit is neither intended as humor nor as ornament. If the phrase "shut up shop" seems not to work, it is perhaps because the business metaphor appears out of place or even trite in this context. Some justification may be found in line ten, where Vaughan likens the covenant of the Old Testament to an apprenticeship served, presumably, beneath the stars and clouds which disappear with the coming of Christ, freeing man from his bondage so that "All may be now Co-heirs":

All may be now Co-heirs; no noise
Of Bond, or Free

Can Interdict us from those Joys
That wait on thee. (9-12)

In any case, the radically different context of Vaughan's passage does demonstrate an essential difference between the two poets. For Vaughan, wit revealed the deepest truths about the nature of the universe, while for Cleveland it was an exercise in cleverness, indulged in for its own sake.

Not only the conceit but also the alchemical figure loses much of its metaphysical significance in Cleveland's poetry. Whereas in Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, and Traherne alchemical language is most frequently associated with spiritual transformation and the quest for perfection, Cleveland's alchemical imagery seldom carries any metaphysical significance. In "On the Archbishop of Canterbury," his elegy for William Laud, for instance, Cleveland rejects the concept of poem as an alembic, or a vessel of transformation:

I need no Muse to give my passion vent,
He brews his tears that studies to lament.
Verse chymically weeps; that pious raine
Distill'd with Art, is but the sweat o' th' braine.
(1-4)

Cleveland, thus, opposes intellect with feeling suggesting that the poetic expression of grief should be natural rather than studied.[14] One thinks of Donne's "Anniversaries" as examples of these "common formall Elegies" in which the poet "mournes at distance, weeps aloof," and while it is true that in order to maintain an "objective correlative" for his excess of emotion and his immense intellectual effort Donne makes Elizabeth Drury into a symbol for the decay of the macrocosm; nevertheless, I cannot believe that Donne would have considered this hyperbole insincere. In fact, the alchemical imagery in "The Anniversaries" serves to place Donne's feelings for her in an intellectual context which provides solace by suggesting that her death is merely the refining and purification of her body. Vaughan, also, in the poems on the death of his younger brother William, always moves from an exclamation of grief at William's death to an intellectual reconciliation with death. He begins one untitled poem,

> Joy of my life! while left me here,
> And still my Love! (1-2)

but moves quickly to consider his brother as a star, providing a ray of light from above, and leading Vaughan through the darkness of his unregenerate life:

Stars are of mighty use: The night
Is dark, and long;
The rode foul, and where one goes right,
Six may go wrong.
One twinkling ray
Shot o'r some cloud,
May clear much way
And guide a crowd. (9-16)

Again the night suggests the ambivalent time before transformation, and the stars and clouds suggest the aids and obstacles to man in his quest. The stars shed their benign influence, nourishing the divine spark or seed implanted in man. This chymical weeping, however, is not insincere; it is rather a part of the general tendency of the metaphysicals to appropriate from their broad spectrum of thought and experience the raw material to be refined and transformed in their verse.

In "Fuscara; or The Bee Errant," Cleveland employs alchemical imagery, suggesting that the bee is the chymist who would transform Fuscara to gold, except that she is already perfect. And just as Elizabeth Drury's death had, for Donne, reflected the sickness and decay of the world, so Fuscara's perfection demonstrates, for Cleveland, the general health of the world:

Here he did sit, and Essence quaff,
Till her coy Pulse had beat him off;
That Pulse which, he that feels may know
Whether the World's long-liv'd or no. (15-18)

The image is cleverly conceived and well executed, but in its assertion that neither Fuscara nor the macrocosm needs the transformation offered by the alchemist, it reveals the truth of Professor Alvarez's statement about Cleveland: "Instead of being an individual power by which the poet discriminates and synthesizes his material, wit has become a simple mechanism for turning out novel and learned periphrases."[15] In short, Cleveland has adopted the characteristic literary devices of the metaphysicals, but he has rejected the intellectual context out of which metaphysical wit grew. "'Fuscara', in fact, is one of a number of Cleveland's pieces that are not at all serious poems which have misfired, but are, instead, merely strings of rather dapper jokes and epigrams."[16]

Just how little Cleveland shared the metaphysical sensibility is apparent in his "Upon an Hermophrodite." For Donne, of course, the union of the sexes was an act of completion--the joining of two hemispheres, but for Cleveland the hermaphrodite becomes symbolic of a grotesque desire for unnatural unity. He draws a parallel between the mythical union of Hermaphrodite, the Son of Hermes and

Aphrodite, with Salmacis and Adam's double nature before Eve was created from his side. This is interesting for several reasons. Because the soul, which contains both sexes, is neutral, Adam, as the first hermaphrodite, would have had the unity of his soul duplicated in his body; and his body would have been in harmony with his soul:

> Adam till his rib was lost,
> Had both Sexes thus ingrost: (9-10)

With the creation of Eve from his side, however, Adam sensed that he was no longer complete. His soul remained neutral, while his body contained only one sex:

> Then did man 'bout Wedlock treat
> To make his body up compleat. (13-14)

The completion of the self and the recovery of unity between body and soul are, of course, symbolized in "The Canonization" by the riddle of the Phoenix, or the philosopher's stone. The link becomes clear when we recall that the incorruptible "treasure hard to attain" was a quintessential substance, purified of all opposition and imbalance, equivalent to the recovery of prelapsarian wholeness, in this case through sexual union:

Thus Matrimony speakes but Thee
In a grave solemnity,
For man and wife make but one right
Canonicall Hermophrodite. (15-18)

However, Cleveland turns the symbol into an object of ridicule:

Thy breasts distinguish one another,
This the sister, that the brother,
When thou joyn'st hands, my eare still fancies
The Nuptiall sound, I John take Frances: (45-46)

Strangely enough, in this poem Cleveland's perverse metaphors are so outlandish that they work effectively if one considers them a parody of the metaphysicals' attempts to create a unity through metaphor. However, it is not always safe to assume that Cleveland's purposes were satirical. Certainly some of his couplets do, as Williamson notes, have the sharp edge of satire which was to be polished by Dryden and Pope,[17] but his satires are generally inspired by his intense political sympathies with the Royalists rather than by his rejection of metaphysical wit.

Unlike Traherne and Vaughan, who relied less heavily than Donne upon the radical metaphor as a basis for their

wit, Cleveland continued writing in the conceited style, borrowing images and concepts from Donne and developing them with much less precision to the point where they became absurd. In stanza three of "To the State of Love," for example, Cleveland takes the compass metaphor from Donne's "A Valediction: forbidding mourning" and expands it until it becomes absolutely ludicrous. There is no indication, however, that Cleveland intends a parody. His lack of control and purpose is sometimes humorous, as in "Fuscara"; sometimes it only leads to self-indulgent obscurity, as in "Parting with a Friend upon the Rode." Only in his "Mock-Song" is there concrete evidence that he understood that wit could be abused, and perhaps here he is merely recognizing the futility of his own efforts. Whatever his obscure purpose, Cleveland succeeds in demonstrating the exhaustion of a style. His wit is sometimes at odds with, sometimes irrelevant to his content, and whether the metaphysical style collapses in his work due to his lack of concern for unity and transformation or to sheer exhaustion, there can be no doubt of one thing--it does collapse.

NOTES

1. Abraham Cowley's World of Order (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 67.

2. From Plantarum, trans. Aphra Behn, in The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Abraham Cowley, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (1881; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1967), II, 244. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations of Cowley are from this edition and will hereafter be cited in the text.

3. George Williamson, The Donne Tradition (New York: The Noonday Press, 1930), p. 184.

4. "Preface to Poems, 1656," in Abraham Cowley: The Essays and other Prose Writing, ed. Alfred B. Gough (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915), p. 10.

5. The Cultural Revolution of the Seventeenth Century (London: Dennis Dobson, 1951), p. 155.

6. S. L. Bethell, p. 153.

7. See Lancelot Andrewes' Sermon XVI, "Of the Nativity,"

for a contemporary discussion of this doctrine of Unity through Recollection or Recapitulation.

8. Thomas Sprat, An Account of the Life and Writings of Mr. Abraham Cowley, In The Works of Abraham Cowley, 10th ed., (London, 1707), I, xxxviii.

9. Hinman, p. 271.

10. Helen Gardner, p. xxvi.

11. The Poems of John Cleveland, ed. Brian Morris and Eleanor Withington (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 50. All quotations of Cleveland are from this edition and will hereafter be cited in the text.

12. Cowley, In Lives of the English Poets, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), I, 20.

13. The Donne Tradition, p. 173. Williamson believes that Vaughan's lines were direct borrowings from Cleveland, but despite obvious similarities, the differences remain sufficient to leave room for doubt.

14. T. S. Eliot, of course, has insisted that for the metaphysical poet thought and feeling were not separable.

15. Alvarez, The School of Donne, p. 34.

16. Alvarez, p. 35.

17. Williamson, The Donne Tradition, p. 171.

Conclusion:
The Metaphysical Poetry of Henry Vaughan

Because Henry Vaughan was subject to many currents of intellectual influence, it is important to understand how these influences finally took shape in his poetry. Vaughan was writing in a poetic tradition which stressed correspondence and harmony, which insisted that the world was a manifestation of the mind of God. Yet he lived in a time when skepticism, scientific discovery, and civil war were undermining many of the premises upon which older conceptions of correspondence and unity had been based. Confronted with the disparity between his conception of the divine order of the universe and the chaos and fragmentation which he saw everywhere about him, Vaughan concluded that the dissociation was not essential to the world, but was due rather to man's alienation from God: an alienation which had resulted in a fragmented and, consequently, an imperfect vision. He saw his task as a poet to be that of recovering the unified vision and of demonstrating that fragmentation and discord were errors of understanding resulting from moral apostasy. The poetic imagination, then, became a means of reasserting the unity

of the phenomenal world by demonstrating correspondence and sympathy. Metaphysical wit sought to prove that the right thinking intellect could explain the apparent fragmentation of the world and recover the essential unity which had been obscured by man's growing alienation from God.

In his famous letter to Arthur Johnson, William Drummond of Hawthornden first used the term "Metaphysical" with reference to Donne and his followers:

> In vain have some Men of late (Transformers of every Thing) consulted upon her [poetry's] Reformation, and endeavoured to abstract her to Metaphysical ideas, and Scholastical Quiddities, denuding her of her own Habits, and those Ornaments with which she hath amused the whole World some Thousand Years.[1]

While Drummond's description of these poets as metaphysical has been frequently noted, his reference to them as "Transformers of every Thing" has not, so far as I know, been properly considered. The desire to imaginatively transform the phenomenal world, however, is at heart of the metaphysical tradition of English poetry. The intellectual tension of metaphysical wit derives largely from the attempt of the poet's mind to bring the phenomenal world under its control. That is, within the confines of the

poem, the poet can eliminate discord and fragmentation by transforming the apparently dissociated components of his experience into a perfectly unified whole. While the transformation is imaginative, it would be a mistake to think of it as merely imaginary, the whole point of the effort being, of course, to show that dissociation rather than unity is illusory. Because the illusion of dissociation results from moral apostasy (originally the fall from Eden) the illusion can only be eliminated by first purging the self, by recovering prelapsarian purity. Thus, the transformation of the world depends upon the transformation of the self to a state in which the individual sees the world from a divine perspective in which the husks and shells of things disappear entirely.

Childhood, then, is so important to Vaughan because it represents a stage in the microcosm which is equivalent to the golden age of the macrocosm. Only by recovering the purity of unfallen Adam can man hope to eliminate the dissociation and discord which envelop the unregenerate adult. The life of unregenerate man is analogous to the Old Testament covenant of Hebraic Law. Vaughan thinks of it as a dark time when the only illumination received by man came from stars, and even the stars were frequently obscured by mists and clouds. Christ is the regenerative force, which offers man a way out of the darkness. In Christ, man is offered the chance to be reborn and to live

again the life of the child, but first the old man must die. Marriage to Christ, thus, becomes symbolic of the regeneration and transformation of man, as individual will and divine will: individual vision and divine vision become one. Just as the transformation of the microcosm requires that the individual cease to exist as something apart from God, the transformation of the macrocosm demands that the particulars of experience be consumed by the all subduing might of God. That is, the individual must realize that the created world is a manifestation of the Divine Mind and see that in that Mind all things are one. Dissociation and fragmentation occur only when man fails to see the world from this divine perspective, when he introduces separation and opposition.

The quest for transformation, then, is equivalent to the quest for mystical union with God, and it is also analogous to the Hermetic opus which sought to produce the elixir or philosopher's stone. Vaughan's Hermetic imagery works in conjunction with his other quest imagery to lend a rich layer of secondary associations to his account of his own struggle for transformation. Christ becomes the <u>lapis</u> or the balm which transforms man to his original, incorruptible state and grants him eternal life. He is the transforming tincture which removes all grossness of matter, making man pure and incorruptible. He allows man to imaginatively transform the macrocosm, by eliminating

all opposition and discord. Because all alchemical figures represent stages in a process, the language of Hermeticism is well-suited to description of the mystic's quest. Thus, the Prima Materia, or primary matter, in which nous and physis are one is equivalent to the incorruptible unity of unfallen man. The separation of elements into secondary, corruptible matter is equivalent to the state of man after the fall. Here the seed, or the divine spark (in man, the soul), sleeps imprisoned in gross matter. This is the state of apostate man, whom Vaughan frequently describes as being a ward or in bondage. The chymist putrefies the gross matter, extracting the elixir, which allows him then to purge metals of their grossness or to heal the infirmities of his patients.[2] This, of course, is a simplification of a complex and obscure process, but it should be sufficient to show how Hermetic imagery operates in conjunction with the more conventional Christian imagery used by Vaughan to describe his quest for transformation and unity.

Since the effect of metaphysical imagery was both to demonstrate and to assert the ability of the mind to uncover a divine unity in the phenomenal world, it is Vaughan's conception of the poem as an alembic which most clearly places him in the metaphysical tradition. The images with which Vaughan describes his quest for spiritual transformation become actual evidences of his success or

failure in reaching his goal. His use of correspondence is not merely ornamental, but rather demonstrates his progress toward that final unity in which all of the limitations and illusions of the apostate man will vanish in the pure light of God. The poem, itself, becomes the alembic in which the fragmentation and limitation of gross, secondary matter are putrefied in the heat of the right thinking intellect and in which the transforming elixir is released from its imprisonment, wholly regenerating and perfecting both the microcosm and the macrocosm.

An examination of "Cock-crowing" reveals how Vaughan's choice of images demonstrates his quest for transformation. The poem is a beautifully wrought and surprisingly complex account of Vaughan's own quest for unity. At the same time it demonstrates through its complex interweaving of orthodox religious, natural, and Hermetic imagery how Vaughan sought to achieve his regeneration:

> 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. (1-4)

Beginning with an apostrophe to the "Father of lights," Vaughan immediately begins to develop two of the poem's central themes--influence and correspondence. The bird

contains a "Sunnie seed" or a "glance of day." This is the divine spark which creates influence and which accounts for the cock's peculiar sensitivity to dawn.[3] At the same time, the spark is "confin'd" or imprisoned within the bird. It functions as a magnet seeking out the greater light of God from whence it came:

> Their magnitisme works all night,
> And dreams of Paradise and light. (5,6)

Night suggests alienation from the light. The cock, longing for the sun, corresponds to Old Testament man awaiting the arrival of the Son of God, and also to Vaughan, himself, awaiting his transformation in Christ.[4] Thus, Vaughan sets up what is to be the pattern of the poem. The "glance of day," temporarily alienated from its source and imprisoned in gross matter, seeks liberation and unity. As M. M. Mahood says, speaking of the poem:

> We have already seen that when Thomas Vaughan writes about the Philosopher's Stone he means a transmutation of the soul; the highest alchemy is such a revelation of the First Matter as consists in freeing the heart from all material impurities, and thus preparing it for that secret incubation of the spirit of God whereby the

> spiritual elements of the mind are reunited with their heavenly counterparts.[5]

The poem represents precisely this process. But it would be a mistake to think of the cock as merely an allegorical figure. Vaughan is doing much more than merely using the cock to illustrate a point; he is using it to demonstrate the manner in which the right-thinking mind exerts its dominion over the phenomenal world by revealing order and eliminating apparent dissociation.

The poem's third stanza, as Don Cameron Allen points out, contrasts the sapentia of the cock with the intelligentia of man.[6] The image of God is capable of greater things than the cock, but at the same time, man can choose darkness over light. He can extinguish the divine spark and let the seed of divinity wither:

> To sleep without thee, is to die;
> Yea, 'tis a death partakes of hell:
> For where thou dost not close the eye
> It never opens, I can tell.
>
> In such a dark Aegyptian border,
> The shades of death dwell and disorder. (25-30)

Death and disorder are the consequences of man's failing to nurture his seed of divinity by refusing "To watch for thy

appearing hour." Death and disorder, then, are the results of man's abandonment of his proper role as a seeker after the transforming elixir. Vaughan's reference to the "dark Aegyptian border" is an allusion to the curse of darkness cast by Moses upon the Egyptians, who had refused to let Moses and his people leave. It is, thus, even a step beyond the darkness of the Israelites, who were the Lord's chosen people. It represents the curse upon those who reject the destiny of God and set themselves in opposition to His will.

Yet, conscious of the seed which abides in him, Vaughan rejects death and disorder for the "immortall light and heat" of God:

> Seeing thy seed abides in me,
> Dwell thou in it, and I in thee. (23-24)

The correspondences beautifully merge in the lines:

> Whose hand so shines through all this frame,
> That by the beauty of the seat,
> We plainly see, who made the same. (20-22)

The phrase, "this frame," refers most immediately to the macrocosm, but it also refers to the bird and to Vaughan, all of whom can be transformed by the pure light

of Christ, and all of whom, rightly seen, reveal the glory of God.

Still, sensing that the transformation is incomplete, Vaughan longs to move beyond the "gleams and fractions" of the illuminative stage. He senses that, despite his awareness of order and correspondence, he has not found the transforming elixir which would, as he tells us in "They are all gone into the world of light," "Resume thy spirit from the world of thrall/Into true liberty" (35-36). His final transformation is denied by the cloak of his own mortal imperfection, which obstructs his vision of God and imprisons his soul:

> 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. (37-41)

The veil has been rent by Christ, who redeemed the macrocosm from death and darkness, but Vaughan understands that the same process must take place in the microcosm. He must shake off the darkness of his own imperfection and liberate his soul from its bondage to the flesh:

O take it off! make no delay,
But brush me with thy light, that I
May shine unto a perfect day,
And warme me at thy glorious Eye!
O take it off! or till it flee,
Though with no Lilie, stay with me! (43-48)

Only when the soul is released from its confinement within the grossness of matter does it "shine unto a perfect day," eliminating all illusion of duality. In this state, when all apostasy has been purged and the mind of man is united with the mind of God, all dissociation and imperfection vanish. The individual spark is finally reunited with the sun, and, as man sees the world through the "glorious Eye" of God, the transformation is complete. In this poem, however, as in so many others, Vaughan's consciousness of his own shortcomings prevents the final union which he so ardently desired.

Nevertheless, despite his failures to achieve unity, his poetry remains a powerful and moving record of his quest. Lacking the sheer power and force of Donne's intellect and the careful control of Herbert's poetic craftsmanship, Vaughan's poems are filled with moments of enthusiasm, quiet reverence, and brooding melancholy. Yet always there is hope. If Vaughan sometimes lacks faith in man, he never loses faith in the redemptive power of

Christ. Perhaps it is in this personal sense that the twentieth century reader can most readily appreciate Vaughan, whose intellect is always at the center of the poem, struggling to bring a reluctant world under control. Certainly a full appreciation of all of the nuances of Vaughan's poetry requires an acquaintance with intellectual traditions which are not a part of the modern reader's general store of knowledge. Yet, while a full study of these sources is a task beyond the scope of this work, I hope that in showing how Vaughan's poetic technique is related to that of the other metaphysicals, I have managed to show how the imagery and structure of the poems works to reveal both a general vision of the world which Vaughan shared with many of his contemporaries, and a vision which, because it was so largely defined by the unique terms in which Vaughan expressed it, was at the same time extremely private.

NOTES

1. Familiar Epistles, No 24; The Works of Drummond of Hawthornden (Edinburgh, 1711), p. 143.

2. See Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, Renaissance and Seventeenth Century Studies (New York; Columbia University Press, 1964), pp. 77-79, for a brief and lucid explanation of how the transformative process was performed.

3. Elizabeth Holmes, Henry Vaughan and the Hermetic Philosophy (1932; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, 1967), p. 38.

4. For a passage which parallels this, see Vaughan's prayer, "When thou dost awake," Martin, pp. 143, 44.

5. Poetry and Humanism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 282.

6. Image and Meaning (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1960), p. 165.

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