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### The relationship of seventeenth century and twentieth century metaphysical poetry.

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UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

THE RELATIONSHIP OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY AND TWENTIETH CENTURY METAPHYSICAL

POETRY

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty

Of the Graduate School of the University of Louisville

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Of Master of Arts

Department of English

By

Joseph E. Duncan

1946

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The importance of seventeenth century and modern metaphysical poetry in the English literary tradition is very seldom disputed by the twentieth century critic and scholar. This poetic style, which was generally ignored without study fifty years ago, is today a center of attention in the world of letters. The enormous volume of criticism and scholarship devoted to both early and modern metaphysical verse testifies to its popularity with modern students and critics, while many of the best American and British poets are writing today in an essentially metaphysical tradition. In fact in both the seventeenth and twentieth centuries almost the whole field of poetry has seemed to reflect metaphysical practice in some measure.

The tremendous impact of the metaphysical style upon the modern mind is suggested in the best available bibliographical guides to this field, Studies in Metaphysical Poetry, by Theodore Spencer and Mark Van Doren. In the introduction to this work Professor Spencer points out that a list of titles of works dealing with the entire nineteenth century would be only half as long as a similar list of works treating the seventeenth century metaphysical poets alone.

This abundance of material, he continues, reflects "not merely an antiquarian curiosity, but a real excitement about a type of poetry which recent poets have much admired, and which was the expression of a generation faced by many problems similar to our own."<sup>1</sup> Indeed this much-discussed similarity between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries is at

1. Spencer, Theodore; Van Doren, Mark, Studies in Metaphysical Poetry, P.3

the crux of the problem of the wide attention given metaphysical verse today.

It is very difficult to say precisely when this new interest began, but a glance through the poetic works of Emily Dickinson will indicate that she was thoroughly familiar with the seventeenth century metaphysical poets about three score years ago, and found their thought and technique very congenial to her own verse writing and psychological make-up. In England, the lively intellectual workplay of Gerald Manley Hopkins and the complexity and irony in the verse of George Meredith also suggests a renaissance of the metaphysical way of thinking. Probably the first landmark in the movement was the publication in 1912 of Herbert Grierson's definitive edition of the poetry of John Donne, the most famous of the seventeenth century metaphysicals. Examining the place of Donne and the seventeenth metaphysicals in the world literary tradition, Grierson set a model for scholarship in his exhaustive efforts to arrive at the correct poetic texts and to determine the dates and authenticity of the poems usually attributed to Donne. Since that time popular editions of the works of Abraham Cowley, Andrew Marvell, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan and others have been published, and metaphysical verse--early and modern--has remained in high favor. A growing interest was also indicated by the appearance of carefully edited editions of such comparatively minor poets as John Cleveland and Henry King.

Not to mention the appearance of an influential group of modern metaphysical poets, the enthusiastic studies of many contemporary critics, a number of them metaphysical poets in their own right, have probably done much to stimulate an interest in metaphysical verse. A group of essays written by T. S. Eliot in the 1920's for instance, is

probably among the most important of the interpretative and critical works dealing with the seventeenth century metaphysical poets and their general cultural environment, and certainly Eliot's thesis concerning the "unified sensibility" of the seventeenth century man as opposed to the "divided sensibility" of the average nineteenth and twentieth century man has come to be accepted almost as a truism.

Another indication of the widespread twentieth century affinity for the metaphysical spirit is seen in the publication in 1945 of "Critical Remarks on the Metaphysical Poets," which contains twelve line drawings by Kurt Roesch. The new accent on metaphysical poetry in the United States has come in a large measure through the efforts of Southerners. John Crowe Ransom and Allen Tate have created a new interest in this kind of verse through both their own poetry and their critical essays. Probably the boldest and most complete attempt, however, to relate seventeenth and twentieth century verse is found in Cleanth Brooks' Modern Poetry and the Tradition. Explaining that there is a mixture of wit, irony and "high seriousness" in the metaphysical verse of both these periods such as is seldom found in romantic and classic poetry, Brooks emphasizes that "the significant relationship between the modernist poets and the seventeenth century poets of wit lies here--in their common conception of the use of metaphor....The significant relationship is indicated by the fact that the metaphysical poets and the modernists stand opposed to both the neo-classic and Romantic poets on the issue of metaphor." 1

As Eliot has remarked in his essay on "The Metaphysical Poets," it is exceedingly difficult to determine a clear-out line of demarcation between "metaphysical poets" and a number of other poets writing at the same time.

1. Brooks, Cleanth, Modern Poetry and the Tradition, p. 11.



The distinction perhaps rests in the degree to which various poets may employ a metaphysical technique. Past scholarship, however, has tended to single out a group of seventeenth century poets who have been labelled and accepted as the "metaphysical poets." There has been a little less scholarly agreement concerning the twentieth century metaphysical poets.

Metaphysical elements may be found in Italian Renaissance verse and in the work of many English poets from Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey until the last quarter of the seventeenth century. The metaphysical style had its origin in secular verse, but in the seventeenth century it became a medium for a group of secular poets and a group of religious poets, both of which apparently found their greatest inspiration in the verse of Donne. It should be stressed, however, that metaphysical expression is not necessarily either secular or religious, but a way of thinking and writing probably equally suited to both types of verse. The mystical tendencies of some of these poets became merged with the metaphysical technique to produce on many occasions some of the finest poetry in our language, but this mysticism should not be considered as a characteristic attribute of metaphysical poetry. As the seventeenth century proceeded, the work of such poets as Marvell and Abraham Cowley tended to merge with the incipient neo-classic tradition, while such metaphysical poets as Henry Vaughan and Thomas Traherne anticipated Wordsworthian romanticism in their thought and style.

Despite the interest today in this religious metaphysical poetry, particularly since the publication in 1936 of Helen White's The Metaphysical Poets, A Study in Religious Experience, the twentieth century metaphysicals are much more closely related to the secular group.

Aligned with the religious group were some of the best known seventeenth century metaphysical poets: John Donne (1573-1631), George Herbert (1593-1633), Richard Crashaw (1612-1649), Henry Vaughan (1622-1695), and Thomas Traherne (1636-1674), but the metaphysical elements in the verse of both Vaughan and Traherne, especially that of the latter, tend to become secondary to the mysticism. The secular metaphysical tradition is represented by Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618), in several of his best poems; William Shakespeare (1564-1616), particularly in a number of his sonnets, Donne, Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648), who was George Herbert's younger brother; Henry King (1592-1669), John Cleveland, (1613-1658), Abraham Cowley (1618-1667), Andrew Marvell (1621-1678), and a number of other poets in whose verse the metaphysical elements are less conspicuous or less skillfully handled.

The twentieth century metaphysical tradition is almost entirely secular and literary. The seventeenth century poets were usually men of action or men of God before they were poets, but the twentieth century metaphysical poets are on the whole exclusively poets and critics. Although Eliot's religionism has played an increasingly important part in his work, his verse has proved to be the most metaphysical when it was the least religious. Among British and American poets the chief metaphysicals are William Butler Yeats (1865-1938), Elinor Wylie (1885-1928), T. S. Eliot (1888- ), John Crowe Ransom (188- ), Allen Tate (1899- ), Robert Penn Warren (1905- ), and Wystan Hugh Auden (1907- )

To examine this relationship between the poetry of the seventeenth and twentieth centuries it is of course necessary to understand what are the distinctive characteristics of metaphysical poetry, and more specifically what are the distinctive characteristics of the seventeenth and

twentieth century varieties. I shall attempt to point out and illustrate the chief similarities and dissimilarities in the metaphysical verse of both periods, and to show that modern metaphysical poetry contains elements of seventeenth century metaphysical and nineteenth century romantic technique as well as distinctly modern characteristics. In this chapter I hope to clarify and point up my findings in the examination of a series of four comparable poems indicating the relation of seventeenth and twentieth century metaphysical verse to other literary styles. In examining this series of poems and in studying the characteristic similarities and dissimilarities in seventeenth and twentieth century metaphysical poetry, I shall consider three main aspects of the poetry: organization and methods of progression within the poem (Chapter II) and the use of metaphor and other structural devices (Chapter III); the interpretation of human experience, with special attention to the wit, irony and general complexity typical of metaphysical poetry (Chapter IV), and the poet's point of view--his attitudes toward himself and his social and intellectual world (Chapter V). My approach to these problems will be as objective and analytical as possible.

\*\*\*\*\*

The four-poem series, dealing with love poems in which the possible death of one of the lovers is considered, will consist of Shakespeare's 71st sonnet, ("No longer mourn for me when I am dead"), Elizabethan; Donne's "A Valediction: To My Name in the Window," seventeenth century metaphysical; Christina Rossetti's "Remember," nineteenth century romantic, and Yeats' "Broken Dreams," twentieth century metaphysical.

I quote the Shakespeare sonnet:

No longer mourn for me when I am dead  
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell  
Give warning to the world that I am fled  
From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell:  
Nay, if you read this line, remember not  
The hand that writ it; for I love you so  
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot  
If thinking on me then should make you woe.  
O, if, I say, you look upon this verse  
When I perhaps compounded am with clay,  
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse,  
But let your love even with my life decay,  
Lest the wise world should look into your moan  
And mock you with me after I am gone.

The poem is basically an elaboration of a relatively simple argument--or "structure," as Ransom would say. The poet asks in substance that his mistress forget him after his death because he loves her very much and does not wish to bring her grief from his passing or mockery from the "wide world." There is really no suggestion in the poem of a knotty human problem or of an actual experience.

The sonnet, completely lucid and in no way involved, progresses in a quite logical manner. The progression is simple and repetitious, however, as the three quatrains develop virtually the same idea with very little variation, while the closing couplet merely gives another reason why the mistress should not "moan" for her poet-lover. This easy, smooth progression also depends heavily upon the regular rhythmic and lilting quality of the verse which suggests a much closer alliance between music and poetry than is found in the more rugged, conversational rhythms of Donne.

The sonnet shows principally a successful attempt to develop a rather conventional literary idea with a pleasing textural elaboration.

The poem does not suggest that the poet is grappling with a real problem--as Donne often does--or seeking to express and communicate a complex human experience--as the modern metaphysicals frequently do. The reader is delighted by the way in which the poet has developed his material, rather than moved emotionally by the poetic situation presented. The poet is not concerned with defining his relationship with his mistress, but rather with his own thoughts and the literary tradition in which he is writing. This well balanced sonnet style, with its accentuated musical metrics and its appealing development of a conventional literary theme, in many ways typifies the Elizabethan lyric tradition.

In Donne's seventeenth century metaphysical style there is a new emphasis on some of these Elizabethan characteristics--the logical method of progression, for example--and a revolt against others, such as the lilting measures and an adherence to a literary convention.

I quote Donne's "A Valediction: To My Name in the Window:"

I

My name engrav'd herein,  
 Doth contribute my firmnesse to this glasse,  
 Which, ever since that charme, hath beene  
 As hard, as that which grav'd it, was;  
 Thine eye will give it price enough, to mock  
 The Diamonds of either rock.

II

'Tis much that glasse should bee  
 As all confessing, and through-shine as I,  
 'Tis more, that it shewes thee to thee,  
 And cleare reflects thee to thine eye.  
 But all such rules, loves magique can undo,  
 Here you see mee, and I am you.

III

As no one point nor dash,  
 Which are but accessories to this name,  
 The showers and tempests can outwash,  
 So shall all times find thee the same;  
 You this intireness better may fulfill,  
 Who have the patterne with you still.

IV

Or if too hard and deepe  
This learning be, for a scratch'd name to teach,  
It, as a given deaths head keepe,  
Lovers mortalitie to preach,  
Or think this ragged bony name to bee  
My ruinous Anatomie.

V

Then, as all my soules bee,  
Emparadis'd in you, (in whom alone  
I understand, and grow and see,)  
The rafters of my body, bone  
Being still with you, the Muscle, Sinew, and Veine,  
Which tile this house, will come againe.

VI

Till my returne repaie  
And recompact my scattered body so.  
As all the vertuous powers which are  
Fix'd in the starres, are said to flow  
Into such characters, as grav'd bee  
When these starres have supremacie:

VII

So since this name was cut  
When love and grieffe their exaltation had,  
No door 'gainst this names influence shut;  
As much more loving, as more sed,  
'Twill make thee; and thou shouldst, till I returne,  
Since I die daily, daily mourne.

VIII

When thy inconsiderate hand  
Flings ope this casement, with my trembling name,  
To looke on one, whose wit or land  
New battery to thy heart may frame,  
Then thinke this name alive, and that thou thus  
In it offendst my Genius.

IX

And when thy melted maid,  
Corrupted by the Lover's gold and peege,  
His letter at thy pillow 'Hath laid,  
Disputed it, and tam'd thy rage,  
And thou begin'st to thaw toward him, for this  
May my name step in, and hide his.

X

And if this treason goe  
To an overt act, and thou write againe;  
In superscribing, this name flow  
Into thy fancy, from the pane  
So, in forgetting thou remembrest right,  
And unaware to mee shalt write.

XI

But glasse, and lines must bee,  
No meanes our firme substantiall love to keepe;  
Near death inflicts this legarthie,  
And this I murmure in my sleepe;  
Impute this idle talke, to that I goe,  
For dying men talk often so.

In this poem, one of several valedictions, or farewells, that Donne wrote to his wife, one finds a fusion of concrete figures, intellectual abstractions, and quiet, soul-felt emotion. This piece, unlike the Shakespeare sonnet and much romantic verse, has no simple, clear-cut argument extending throughout the poem, but consists chiefly of a textual superstructure in which the poet seems to treat a genuine personal problem with rich detail and sharp particularity.

The refined logic of the valediction is evident in the rather involved extension of a basic metaphor and in the fact that the poem may be understood on two levels. The whole poem is built around the metaphorical identification of Donne and the window in which his name is engraved. Molding his thinking around this device, the poet, always preoccupied with death, is chiefly examining the question of how faithful his wife will remain to him after his death, but finally discards as idle fancy this desire to maintain a death hold on his wife's affections and decides that, despite a feeling of loneliness, he will face death alone. The emphasis, however, on a personal problem, or mental conflict, is characteristic of a great deal of seventeenth century metaphysical

poetry. The second level on which the piece may be understood is perhaps the more obvious, as Donne speaks to his wife of a worldly journey--perhaps the real occasion for the poem--and asks her to be ever mindful of his name in the window, and to remain faithful, as his true essence and being is left with her. The two levels are developed almost simultaneously in the first sections of the poem, but in the closing stanzas Donne is concerned almost entirely with his feeling of impending death.

The method of progression in the poem is basically logical, but it is a far more refined and involved logic than was found in Shakespeare's 71st sonnet, as is seen in the two related levels of meaning and in the developmental, rather than repetitious, nature of the logic. There is also evident in Donne's verse a marked revolt against the even, polished Shakespearean metrics and the somewhat sing-song rhythm and an equally marked interest in metaphors used as pictorial and organizational devices. For the musical lyricism of Shakespeare, Donne substitutes a harsher, more conversational style, characterized by abrupt metrical breaks and a complicated grammatical construction rather than the smooth, sweetly flowing song of Elizabethan verse.

Donne's heavy dependence on metaphor and similar devices is seen in the way visual images clothing complex abstractions become an essential element in the poem's progression as they catch the reader's attention and convey logical subtleties in vivid, concrete figures. The basic metaphor, identifying the poet with the window in which his name is inscribed, is stated indirectly in the first stanza. The inscription gives to the glass his strength so that the window, because of the inscription, may become a lasting symbol. But even this idea is developed paradoxically, for the glass has become as hard as the tool which engraved it. The poet, like the transparent window, is all-confession to his wife. Developing



the metaphor logically, Donne refers to the reflective powers of the glass to show that "loves magique" has made the two lovers one. The miracle of love suspends the natural laws by which she would see only her own image in the glass, the poet says, so that,

Here you see mee, and I am you.

His wife shall find him always as constant as the indestructable name, for indeed she has the original pattern of both the window inscription and his love. Continuing to extend and develop the metaphor, the poet thinks that the letters are to the window like the bones to the body and elaborates upon several aspects of this idea. If identification in love is too difficult a lesson for a "scratch'd name" to keep, Donne tells his wife, regard this name as a death's head which suggests love's mortality as a skull makes us mindful of human mortality. By a logical association of ideas characteristic of much metaphysical verse the reference to the death's head leads to the poet's conceptions of the "bony name" as his "ruinous Anatomie" and of his body as a house of which the rafters are his bones.

In stanzas V and VI there is a complex of striking, concrete metaphor and finely-spun abstractions finely illustrative of the manner in which these rather contrasting elements are fused in seventeenth century verse. The reader finds his progress through this tangled logic more pleasant and easy because of the sharply visual images of the bony skeleton, the raftered house and the engraved window. The metaphor in which the wife is instructed to keep and cherish his bones, the rafters of his body, until he can return with the muscle, sinew and veins seems apt and moving despite the unattractiveness of the literal meaning. The illusions to the bone are also of course associated with the chiseled name, emblematic of the lovers' identification and of the

pattern of the poet's love mentioned in stanza III. Done means that his soul, his frame--his very essence--remains with his wife, and he bids her recompact his scattered body from the bony name.

The logic grows somewhat more complicated as Donne uses a figure based on his astrological learning to further expand the basic metaphor of the inscribed name. The poet complains to his wife with tenderness that, since the name was cut under the ascendancy of their love and grief, she should always be guided by its influence, and as he "dies" daily without her, she should daily mourn for his absence and perhaps for his death. There are a number of other deft touches built around the logic of the metaphor. Transcending the laws of science, the firmly engraved name trembles at his wife's inconstancy. Again, the idea of his name flowing into her "fancy" from the pane is interesting, and provides another indication of Donne's observance of the subtle workings of the mind.

In this poem the logical propulsion of the piece and the use of metaphor are closely related; yet it is important to examine the metaphor for its own sake. It is clearly evident that the metaphor is of the elaborate, extended variety typical of the seventeenth century and that it serves chiefly as a logical and pictorial device, making the subtle relationship between the lovers more vivid and understandable. It is important to note that it is almost impossible to conceive of the poem without the metaphor.

There are of course a few smaller metaphorical effects in the poem. Illicit passion perhaps seemed to Donne like a great fire, for the maid is "melted" and his wife "began'st to thaw." Again in stanza VIII the

poet thinks of an unlawful lover's wit and riches as presenting a "new battery" to his wife's heart. Other metaphysical devices, such as the play on "write" and "right" in stanza X, are also found.

As in most metaphysical poetry, however, the logical complications of the poem are more than equaled by the mature expression of deep emotion, wit and self-inclusive satire found in the piece. A high, concentrated emotional tension is maintained throughout the poem as the poet seeks to commit this mental conflict completely to the metaphorical framework rather than merely to suggest it through a less rigid form. Because of the metaphor the piece assumes a greater intensity and broader scope as though another dimension had been added to the poet's thought.

Having just spoken of love's transcendent miracle, in stanza IV Donne becomes gently satirical in his attitude toward himself and his wife as he remarks on "loves mortalitie." It would almost seem that he anticipated Dryden's oft-quoted objection in his "Essay on Satire" that Donne in his amorous verse "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," as he wrote:

Or if too hard and deepe  
This learning be, for a scratch'd name to teach,  
It, as a given deaths head keepe,  
Lovers mortalitie to preach.

Donne here appears to be self-conscious of the apparent incongruities inherent in the metaphysical technique, and perhaps a little amused at himself. But there is a deeper implication. Enduring love is not really "hard and deepe," but perhaps it is a lesson that the lady addressed cannot--or will not--learn.

From this changed viewpoint the inscribed name, although a symbol of love's magic, becomes a death's head, an allusion that is the first indication that the poet's departure may also be his death. This touch of the macabre is typical of the metaphysical style of Donne. Although the closing stanzas of the poem are the most highly serious as a definite suggestion of infidelity is merged with a moving tenderness, there is at the same time a rich vein of playful wit as the poet indulges in word-play and in an amusing fashion treats the engraved name as a living entity.

With an allusion to death again in the concluding stanza, the poetic tension mounts:

Near death inflicts this lethargie,  
And this I murmure in my sleepe;  
Impute this idle talke, to that I goe,  
For dying men talke often so.

The poet's mental conflict is resolved, and the central problem of the poem solved, as Donne declares that he does not wish to dominate his wife's affections after death, although dying men often indulge in such idle talk. He will undertake his last journey alone. A feeling of self-pity is implied, but mastered by the poet.

The point of view of the poet and the tone and mood of the poem are also characteristic of the seventeenth century metaphysical style. Although the poem is addressed to a loved one in accordance with the Elizabethan-Jacobean convention, the poet is concerned chiefly with himself and his own thoughts. Despite the change from a musical to a spoken style the poem is more rhetorical than conversational, and Donne fails to convey the illusion that he is actually conversing with his wife at a particular moment. The poem is deeply emotional because the poet is concerned with his personal problems as an individual, as

opposed to Shakespeare's apparently more narrowly literary concerns in his 71st sonnet. This rather straightforward attitude is reflected as the poet shows no consciousness of addressing an audience or literary clique. Mood does not play a large role in the piece, perhaps because Donne does not develop the scene or background of the poem nor treat a specific incident. The emphasis is always on clear logic rather than vague connotation. A brief recollection of the poem will reveal that it possesses most of the hall-marks of seventeenth century metaphysical poetry at its best in its bold metaphorical use of the name, skeleton and astrology, the web of abstract logic, the psychological realism of the problem examined by the poet, and the mixture of playful wit and deep emotion.

Nineteenth century romantic verse<sup>1</sup> loses most of the wit, logic and complexity of seventeenth century metaphysical poetry, but in turn anticipates a greater emphasis on musical and connotative values in twentieth century metaphysical poetry. I quote Christina Rossetti's "Remember," 1862:

Remember me when I am gone away  
Gone far away into the silent land;  
When you can no more hold me by the hand,  
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.  
Remember me when no more, day by day,  
You tell me of your future that you planned:  
Only remember me; you understand  
It will be late to counsel then or pray.  
Yet if you should forget me for a while  
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:  
For if the darkness and corruption leave  
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  
Better by far you should forget and smile  
Than that you should remember and be sad.

---

1. The neo-classic period is not important in the line of development of seventeenth and twentieth century metaphysical verse while, on the other hand, romantic poetry is an important influence on modern metaphysical work. Nor does the neo-classic period offer many serious contributions to the theme under discussion as the only thematically appropriate poem found in an examination of neo-classic verse was Dryden's "Rondelay," in which both death and love are treated with complete frivolity.

In its basic argument the poem is very similar to the Shakespeare sonnet as the poet neither poses a serious problem nor projects an experience, but simply asks her lover not to grieve for her when she is "gone away." In the former, however, the poet is chiefly trying to please through his skillful and clever handling of a theme in the Renaissance "court of love" tradition, while Miss Rossetti, treating a very similar theme more emotionally, is more concerned with expressing the feelings imaginatively associated with this theme and in evoking moving sentiments in the reader. Its sweet lyricism is opposed to the tortuous mental conflict, the intricate logic and abrupt rhetoric of "A Valediction: To My Name in the Window."

Although the organization of the poem is essentially logical in the symmetry attained in the two quatrains and sestet of the sonnet, the method of propulsion in the poem depends heavily upon the psychological connotations of the phrases and ideas in the piece. Such expressions, for instance, as "gone away," "silent land," "no more hold me by the hand," "late to counsel" and others seem to belong to a common associational cluster suggesting poignantly the tenderness and sorrow of parting. They not only help maintain a unified mood throughout the poem, but also function in the reader's mind to suggest one another and similar emotive ideas belonging to the same cluster. This technique is developed in a more extreme form in nineteenth century symbolist poetry, and is found in a great deal of twentieth century metaphysical poetry and other modern verse.

This process of connotative progression is rendered more effective

by the musical quality and accentuated rhythm of the metrics. In this respect Miss Rossetti tends to hark back to the lilt of such a piece as Shakespeare's 71st sonnet, and to register a dislike for the irregular, more conversational style of Donne. The visual images in the poem are vague and connotative, as in "silent land," while seventeenth century metaphysical figures have no place in the poem.

Although there is a greater feeling of actual experience conveyed in this poem than in the Shakespeare sonnet, only the margins of the experience, so to speak, are treated. There is no great depth of emotion, such as is found at some points in the Donne piece, but rather a small-scale emotive diffuseness, for the poet apparently does not wish to formulate her experience frankly and completely within the poetic structure. She avoids all metaphysical complexity in treating only one aspect of an experience, introducing no wit, irony or ratiocination into her attitudes. It is partly for this reason that the sonnet approaches sentimentality.

The same nineteenth century romantic approach is reflected in the poet's point of view. Despite the similarity in theme, distinctly different viewpoints are represented in the Shakespeare and Rossetti poems. While Shakespeare utilizes the theme to pay homage to his mistress quite in the Elizabethan love sonnet convention, Miss Rossetti, as a Victorian woman, demonstrates a house-wifely concern for her lover's welfare after her death. While in the Rossetti piece a poet's interest in a lover seems to play a more important role than in the Shakespeare and Donne poems, she does not convey the notion of a distinct relationship or of a definite moment in time--ideas which the twentieth century

metaphysical poet frequently does convey. Like most of the modern metaphysicals, she is a self-conscious artist, but her approach is personal and individual rather than philosophical or social, as is often the case today. Like Donne and unlike most of the modern metaphysicals, she does not make her relationship with her audience, or readers rather, an essential part of the poem.

In a modern poem such as Yeats's "Broken Dreams," published in 1919 in "The Wild Swans at Coole," much of the complexity, the self-inclusive satire and the psychological realism of the seventeenth century metaphysicals is found combined with the psychological progression and emphasis on mood and tone of the romantics:

There is gray in your hair,  
Young men no longer suddenly catch their breath  
When you are passing;  
But maybe some old gaffer mutters a blessing  
Because it was your prayer  
Recovered him upon the bed of death.  
For your sole sake--that all heart's ache have known,  
And given to others all heart's ache,  
From meagre girlhood's putting on  
Burdensome beauty--for your sole sake  
Heaven has put away the stroke of her doom,  
So great her portion in that peace you make  
By merely walking in a room.

Your beauty can but leave among us  
Vague memories, nothing but memories.  
A young man when the old men are done talking  
Will say to an old man, "Tell me of that lady  
The poet stubborn with his passion sang us  
When age might well have chilled his blood.

Vague memories, nothing but memories,  
But in the grave all, all, shall be renewed.  
The certainty that I shall see that lady  
Leaning or standing or walking  
In the first loveliness of womanhood,  
And with the fervour of my youthful eyes,  
Has set me muttering like a fool.



You are more beautiful than anyone,  
And yet your body had a flaw:  
Your small hands were not beautiful,  
And I am afraid that you will run  
And paddle to the wrist  
In the mysterious, always brimming lake  
Where those that obeyed the holy law  
Paddle and are perfect. Leave unchanged  
The hands that I have kissed  
For old sake's sake.  
The last stroke of midnight dies.  
All day in the one chair  
From dream to dream and rhyme to rhyme I have ranged  
In rambling talk with an image of air:  
Vague memories, nothing but memories.

I am sure that the twentieth century reader with a taste for poetry, even before making a careful analysis, would know that Yeats's "Broken Dreams" is in many ways quite similar to Donne's "A Valediction: To My Name in the Window," and that it is both like and unlike Miss Rossetti's "Remember". Its mature viewpoint and its deep emotion combined with a rather satiric attitude toward both the poet and one beloved is reminiscent of Donne, but the poem's essential simplicity, its dreamy, connotative quality, and its smooth metrics are part of Yeats's heritage from the romantic, particularly the French symbolists.

As with Donne, Yeats is not nearly so interested in presenting a clear-out argument that can be easily paraphrased as he is in examining the various facets of his experience as he considers the problem of his relationship with this lady and his attitude toward her death. The poet is day-dreaming of Maude Gonne, whom he loved and watched as she grew old and embittered fighting for the Irish revolutionist cause, and he glows with anticipation at the thought of seeing her again in the full beauty of her youth, but he hopes that in death she will not strive to lose those little flaws in her beauty which he loved.

"Broken Dreams" in its organization is sharply opposed to Donne's valediction. In place of the logical unity of "A Valediction: To My Name in the Window," the Yeats poem has a psychological unity. While the Donne piece is held together by an intricate network of abstract ratiocination, Yeats's poem is built around the modulations and quick changes of his rambling thought. Although a poem such as this should be considered as a vital process rather than as a static structure, it is possible to think of it as blocked off into about five main sections which treat varying trains of thought and evoke changing emotional reactions. In the first stanza Yeats thinks with both nostalgia and bitterness of Miss Gonne's loss of beauty, and then is led to consider her life and his rather tempestuous relations with her over a period of years. In the second and third stanzas he thinks of his own approaching old age with a certain whimsy. In the last stanza he considers Miss Gonne's possible rebirth, and concludes by returning to the theme of his own old age. These subjects are of course related, but they are not linked by any objective logic exterior to the poet's mind. As in a number of nineteenth century English romantic poems and German Lieder, there is an alternation of what might be thought of as major and minor moods.

The method of progression, then, in "Broken Dreams" is psychological, a kind of "stream of consciousness" dynamism that is a more extreme development of the connotative method found in Miss Rossetti's "Remember". Again, as in French Symbolist verse and the German art song, there is a constant modulation between major and minor tones and varying degrees of intensity, an emphasis on connotative visual imagery, and a fundamentally musical structure.

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As in many of Donne's poems, the piece begins quite abruptly with a telling touch of realism:

There is gray in your hair,  
Young men no longer suddenly catch their breath  
When you are passing.

This suggests the fundamental antithesis in the poem between the uncompromising reality of the present and a remembered past of dreams and beauty. The scene of the poem is set, but it is set in the poet's roving mind rather in the kind of physical milieu of the type suggested by the engraved name in the Donne poem.

After the opening lines the poet recalls that although his lady's physical beauty is fading, many remember her kindness. But he turns back again to her past beauty and his life with her, and is convinced that for him her grace and charm will never pass away. But remembrances of things long past bring him to thoughts of his own approaching old age and these lead to considerations of death and the hereafter. The myth of the "always brimming lake" comes into his mind, and with amusement he imagines this beloved lady bathing in the lake to restore her beauty and to make forever lovely her hands, which are not beautiful. But thinking of her hands, he remembers that he has kissed them often in his youth and he feels again his deep affection for this woman. His youthful thoughts again remind him of his age, and it is only here at the conclusion of the poem that the actual physical scene of the poem is set--the old poet day-dreaming in his chair at midnight.

As I noted previously, there is a rise and fall, an emotional crescendo and decrescendo, in the poem, as in much romantic music. An emotional intensity is marked as Yeats thinks of the beauty and peace

Miss Gonne can bring about,

By merely walking in a room.

This feeling dies down as he thinks of his age, but rises more strongly as he envisions her, .

Leaning or standing or walking  
In the first loveliness of womanhood.

Again the tension lessens somewhat as he thinks a little ironically of death, then climbs to the point of highest emotion in the poem as the old poet asks:

Leave unchanged  
The hands that I have kissed  
For old sakes' sake.

The deep feeling fades away in a kind of dying glow as the poet thinks of himself dreaming alone in his chair at midnight. It is also interesting to note the force of the poem's pictorial imagery, despite its dreamy, twilight character. The visions of Miss Gonne suggested in the piece are impressionistic, rather than sharply particularized, but even in their vagueness they are grasped readily by the reader's mind. In general they have a rich connotative value suggesting the poet's nostalgia. An examination of the poem will show a correspondence between the sharpness of the visual imagery and the intensity of the emotion.

There is also in this poem a sharp change in the way in which the meter affects the method of progression. As in the Donne valediction, the metrical structure becomes irregular and conversational as it is subordinated to the meaning of the piece. The poem is then opposed to the Shakespeare and Rossetti verses where, if the poet makes any sacrifice, he seeks to improve the metrical music of his verse rather than its sense. In Yeats's work we find Donne's harshness softened by the more melodic romantic metrics.

But where Donne tended to be rhetorical in the Renaissance tradition, Yeats is informal, almost prosaically conversational. Although the poem has no regular repeated refrain, there is a remarkable rhythmic smoothness that seems almost to be music as it sweeps unbroken through a number of lines--seven at the conclusion of the first stanza. These metrics are all-important in giving the effect of a continuing, uninterrupted stream of thought.

In its rich complexity the poem is similar to "A Valediction: To My Name in the Window," and is characteristic of the twentieth century metaphysical style. It brings into clear perspective the breadth and maturity, the everpresent irony and humor found in Yeats's verse as his dreamy romanticism and frank realism play upon one another. He succeeds in merging the glow of imagination with the plainness of reality as he considers himself as an aging poet and thinks of the bodily and spiritual perfections and blemishes of Miss Gonne, whom he loved. In the first section of the poem, with the mention in Yeats's homely idiom of the "old gaffer," as opposed to the "young men," his description assumes a somewhat pejorative tone, but becomes deeply sympathetic in referring to Miss Gonne's welfare work with the poor and her service as a nurse in France during World War I.

Another antithesis develops in the next few lines as the poet draws upon his deep understanding of this woman. She has not only endured "all heart's ache," but because of her beauty and proud, passionate nature she has brought heart's ache to Yeats and others. Nevertheless she brings great peace by "merely walking in a room."

There is a mixture here of a simple, abiding tenderness and a softened bitterness that is reminiscent of the closing stanzas of Donne's valediction as the seventeenth century poet warns his wife against infidelity after his departure or death. Yeats's approach here is far more subtle and complex than his stabs at Miss Gonne's "intellectual hatred" and "opinionated mind" in "A Prayer for My Daughter."

The fine blending of realism and idealism in Yeats's view of this lady is revealed again at the opening of the last section of the poem. To him she is more beautiful than anyone, but yet he is conscious of an imperfection of her beauty. And there seems to be an insistent emphasis in the next few lines--as though he were anticipating a protest:

And yet your body had a flaw:  
Your small hands were not beautiful.

Her vanity, by which Yeats is rather tolerantly amused, is suggested as he fears she will "run" to the lake and "paddle to the wrist." His free-roving imagination is tempered with a satiric humor as he conceives of a physical rebirth. In his use of such a homely word as "paddle", as it is juxtaposed with the "holy law" and the "mysterious, always brimming lake", the poet infers that there is something childish about this great woman and her devotion to her beliefs. This whimsical, rather satiric mood is followed by an expression of sincere affection--an affection deeply rooted in reality--which I have previously noted as the peak of emotional intensity in the poem:

Leave unchanged  
The hands that I have kissed  
For old sakes' sake.

Yeats's matches this mixed attitude toward one beloved by him with

a similarly deprecating attitude toward himself. Despite his humor the poet is painfully aware that he is an aging man with nothing left but "vague memories" of her beauty. There is a barbed, self-inclusive irony as Yeats refers to himself as "the poet stubborn," recalling his long suit for the hand of Miss Gonne, who repeatedly rejected his offers of marriage. At the conclusion of the poem his romantic declaration is immediately qualified by a note of poignant realism. He is merely an old man sitting "all day in the same chair," indulging in rambling day dreams of an "image of air."

This self-irony which sometimes, as in much of the early work of Eliot, amounts to self-pity, has come to be a hall-mark of much twentieth century metaphysical verse. This element is found also in some measure in seventeenth century poem as "A Valediction: To My Name in the Window" as Donne forsakes his role as metaphysical poet as though a little amused at his own rhetoric and speaks to his wife more seriously--out of character, as it were. In general, however, the so-called self-irony of seventeenth century metaphysical poetry is a playful, satiric wit more often than the type of nineteenth and twentieth century romantic irony that reveals the poet dissatisfied with himself and usually, more particularly, with the inadequacies of the modern age.

Yeats's point of view as expressed in "Broken Dreams" is considerably more modern than that found in any of the pieces so far discussed, for it is here that we find the poet most concerned with the varying aspects of relationships between two lovers. In the course of the poem Yeats and Miss Gonne are each etched clearly and the history of their relationship is sketched in broad terms. There is no need for any suspension of belief in the poem because the figures seem to have a past, to exist in an actual

time and place environment, while in the valediction, Donne is concerned almost entirely with his own ideas and conflicts. Donne's wife is really not presented in the poem as either a psychological or physical reality, and the present of the poem seems almost wholly isolated from any past.

Yeats's attitude toward his poetic material, including himself, is also altogether modern with its tinge of amused irony, but at the same time he does not share the propensity of a number of twentieth century metaphysicals to conceal personal feelings behind a mask of impersonal, more social writing. In this connection it is interesting to note that, although he is finished artist, he does not seem to write self-consciously for a theoretical third person assumed to be representative of a certain literary or intellectual group.

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The most important and most interesting idea arrived at through this study is the thesis that twentieth century metaphysical poetry is basically very similar to seventeenth century verse, but that it has been affected by both English and French nineteenth century romantic poetry.

In seventeenth and twentieth century metaphysical verse there is a thoughtful rummaging through ideas in an attempt to throw light upon some problems or experience, while in a great deal of romantic verse the poem is provided with a simple, appealing argument, and often there is virtually no problem at all. In the verse of both the seventeenth and twentieth centuries there are more contradictions of thought and emotion, making for complex, mature writing.



Although there is virtually no use of metaphor in the particular Yeats poem analyzed, on the whole Yeats and other modern metaphysicals make frequent use of metaphor, and use many seventeenth century logical devices.

The pictorial, visual character of most seventeenth century metaphysical verse is also found in most modern metaphysical poetry.

The influence of romanticism is seen in the psychological progression of the Yeats piece, its rather impressionistic painting of persons and visions, the connotative quality of its imagery, the subtle changes from a major to a minor key, its emotional modulations, and its more musical metrics. The romantic irony found in "Broken Dreams" has its roots in the nineteenth century, but this tendency toward self-pity and self-deprecation has become typical of the twentieth century.

A twentieth century contribution is seen in Yeats's more familiar style, his more precise examination of a human relationship, and his sense of an actual past and present impinging on life, as in his brief allusion to World War I and Miss Gonne's service as a nurse.

In the next chapter I shall discuss more completely and specifically the relation of twentieth century metaphysical poetry to its heritage of seventeenth century metaphysicals and nineteenth century romantic verse.

CHAPTER II

POETIC PROGRESSION

## CHAPTER II: POETIC PROGRESSION

Changing modes of poetic progression in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries will be considered in this chapter. An examination of metaphysical verse shows that the seventeenth century work depended upon a poetic organization and propulsive methods that were fundamentally logical, while modern methods of poetic progression are essentially psychological.

To study the organization of a poem and its method of progression is to look at virtually the same characteristics in two different ways, statically and dynamically. When we consider the organization of a poem, we think of how it is blocked off in space, of the various planes on which it might be understood, and of the symmetry and relation of its parts. To borrow some of the terminology of Ransom, we think of the relation within the poem of its "structure, or paraphrasable argument, and its "texture," the added particularity which is tangential to the main argument, modifying and developing the "structure" and clothing it with a rich variety. When we consider the method of propulsion, or progression, within the poem, we think of the poem as it is presented, line by line and image by image, to the mind of the reader. When viewed this way, the poem is seen as a process in time, and there is a current of meaning, logical or psychological or both, that proceeds through it from beginning to end. The reader is carried through the poem by the interrelationships of words, images, and ideas, as well as by the rhythm of the metries. A piece of music may be viewed in much the same way. When we examine the organization of a classical symphony, we see that

it has four movements, that each movement is usually divided into three or more sections, and that the work is based on a number of different musical themes. But the symphony, like the poem, must be considered as a vital, unified process which must be presented to the mind of the listener as something that endures and becomes in time. Only when we suspend our conceptions of the poem and symphony as unfolding and progressing, can we think of them as static, spacial entities.

Yeats's "Broken Dreams", for example is divided into about five sections, each dealing with a somewhat different aspect of the poet's thought, and there is a continuous rise and fall of emotion in the poem. These are significant organizational factors, but when we read the poem we do not consider each section separately, but we are carried forward by the poet's mood and emotions, the association of ideas in the mind, as well as by the underlying rhythms which affect the manner in which the poem is perceived by us, phrase by phrase and stanza by stanza.

This distinction between poetic organization and poetic progression can be illustrated in an examination of Shakespeare's 137th sonnet, one of about a dozen pieces by the poet in which striking conceits and wit are merged in a manner typical of the metaphysicals:

Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine eyes,  
That they behold, and see not what they see?  
They know what beauty is, see where it lies,  
Yet what the best is, take the worst to be.  
If eyes, corrupt by over-partial looks,  
Be anchored in the bay where all men ride,  
Why of eyes' falsehood hast thou forged hooks,  
Whereto the judgement of my heart is tied?  
Why should my heart think that a several plot  
Which my heart knows the wide world's common place?  
Or mine eyes, seeing this, say this is not,  
To put fair truth upon so foul a face?  
In things right true my heart and eyes have erred,  
And to this false plague are they now transferred.

The poem is valuable in a study of seventeenth century metaphysical poetry because in the relatively simple logic of its organization and progression it anticipates the more complex and abstract logic of Donne and his successors. Also, as in most metaphysical poetry, it is the poet's elaboration of the argument of the poem that is all-important. The argument, or structure, is quite simple. The poet is complaining in a rather rhetorical manner that his perceptions and emotions, despite his better judgment, are betraying him into love of a woman who seems to him to be most exceptional, but in reality is perhaps common and promiscuous. Constructed around this structure is a texture which brings particularity and variety to the poem. There is of course the fundamental antithesis between the eyes and the heart and the striking metaphor of the eyes anchored in the bay. Paradox is employed in such phrases as "see not what they see," and "seeing this, say this is not," and other antitheses are suggested in the contrasts between "best" and "worst", "fair" and "foul", "true" and "false", and "several plot" and "Common place." Ransom in The New Criticism and other works has discussed at length the vital importance in metaphysical poetry of this type of textural detail clothing the structure of a poem.

Returning to the organization of the poem, we see that it is altogether logical and self-contained. The logic of the poem is comparatively simple, as the three quatrains and couplet contain virtually the same statement in different terms. In the first quatrain, Shakespeare accuses Love of affecting his vision so that he takes the worst to be the best. Employing an original metaphor in the second quatrain, he asks why his eyes are "anchored" on a common promiscuous woman "where all men ride," so that his heart is ensnared on the "hooks" of his corrupted vision.

In the third quatrain he uses another conceit, explaining that he thinks of his mistress as an exceptional "several plot" while she is really only a "common place." In the concluding couplet the poet declares that his heart and eyes have probably erred, but that nevertheless he must continue to be guided by them. In three sections the poet stimulates a rhetorical complaint to love about his corrupted vision, and in the closing couplet concludes his objections logically by explaining that he is resigned to the prejudiced vision of lovers in which he really finds great happiness.

This type of organization, exterior to the psychological workings of the poet's mind, is typical of seventeenth century poetry, and it is noteworthy that the English sonnet, in which this type of succinct, logical organization is cultivated, was perfected just shortly before the full flowering of seventeenth century metaphysical verse. Matching this logical organizational form is the logical method of progression extending through the piece.

As in most early metaphysical poems, the method of propulsion depends upon a logical elaboration of a basic assumption found in some kind of learning or in a statement based on a metaphor, antithesis or some other figure. In "A Valediction: To My Name in the Window," the progression depended on the metaphorical identification of the poet and the inscribed window, and in this sonnet it depends in a large measure on the sharp and well-developed antithesis between the eye and the heart, the outer part and the inward part, the objective and the subjective. This conceit not only runs through this sonnet like a unifying current, binding together the sections of the sonnet, but appears as a theme throughout almost the entire sonnet sequence,

exerting a similar unifying influence. Growing from this important motive is a kind of chain of inter-locking ideas and metaphors extending throughout the poem. The sonnet is addressed in a conventional manner to Love, and the common conception of Love as blind leads to the conception of the "over-partial locks" and the eyes that "see not that they see." Because the eyes are over-partial and blind, they cannot wander freely with open-minded judgment, but are "anchored" securely to their object. In a rush of figures strung upon this thread of logic the poet refers to the "bay," the crooked "forged hooks," the heart "tied" to the hooks, and the "wide world's common place" thought by the hook-tied heart to be a "several plot" special to it.

It can be seen easily in a close analysis of this early example of metaphysical verse that the poem would present several inconsistencies if interpreted according to a strict logic. The second quatrain, for example, must probably be thought of as a series of association conceits rather than as an extended logical metaphor. Yet the sonnet progresses smoothly through a rather loosely connected chain of pictorial images easily grasped by the mind. In this quite early metaphysical piece there is perhaps a greater emphasis on logic in the well-balanced symmetry of the organization than in the method of progression.

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The 137th sonnet shows an early and relatively simple use of the logical mode of propulsion. The changing conceptions of the poem as process may be seen in an examination of two main types of poetic progression--the seventeenth century logical method and the twentieth

century psychological method.

Logical progression: In a highly developed form such as is often found in the poetry of Donne this method of propulsion characteristic of the seventeenth century proceeds in a refined, point-by-point logic directly from basic assumptions to logical conclusions within a framework of reason that is fundamentally exterior to the poet's mind. As in much Baroque music, there is in a logical progression an elaboration and exploration of thematic material through a precise, artistic handling of complexities of form and content. A frequently rhetorical style and the use of pictorial metaphors and other figures of speech is also characteristic of this type of progression. A strictly syllogistic mode of propulsion and a looser associational mode are the two principal variants of this type.

Psychological progression: Most typical of the twentieth century, this type of progression does not depend upon a logic exterior to the mind, but seems to express in a kind of Bergsonian flow the continual flux and changing associations and moods of the mind. This process seems to give a more sensitive consideration to actual psychological experience and to convey a much greater sense of time and duration, essentials of most human experience. There is less emphasis on rhetoric and logical figures of speech and a greater stress on connotation, nuances of mood and musical metrics. Logical elements often remain important, but become subordinate to the psychological progression.

There is, then, a fundamental, distinction between the logical, objective, denotative method of progression typical of the seventeenth century and the psychological, subjective, connotative method characteristic of the twentieth century.



Modern metaphysical poets retain some aspects of the earlier process, but their approach is influenced and modified by a familiarity with nineteenth century romanticism, including French symbolist poetry.

A brief analysis of the method of propulsion in seventeenth and twentieth century metaphysical verse will clarify the major differences between the logical and psychological modes of progression. A much more advanced type of the same kind of logical propulsion seen in Shakespeare's 71st sonnet is found in such a poem as Donne's "The Dissolution:"

Shee is dead; And all which die  
To their first Elements resolve;  
And we were mutual Elements to us,  
And made of one another.  
My body then doth hers involve,  
And those things whereof I consist, hereby  
In me abundant grow, and burdenous,  
And nourish not, but smother.  
My fire of Passion, sighes of ayre,  
Water of teares, and earthly sad despaire,  
Which my materialls bee,  
But neere worne out by loves securitie,  
Shee, to my losse, doth by her deathe renaire,  
And I might live long wretched so  
But that my fire doth with my fuell grow.  
Now as those Active Kings  
Whose foraine conquest treasure brings,  
Receive more, and spend more, and soonest breake:  
This(which I am amaz'd that I can speak)  
This death, hath with my store  
My use encreas'd.  
And so my soule more earnestly releas'd,  
Will outstrip heres; As bullets flower before  
A latter bullet may o'rtake, the powder being more.

The poem progresses logically from one step to another, each depending upon the preceding one, very much as in the scholastic syllogism. Seventeenth century metaphysical poems usually depend for their development upon some bit of erudition or a conceit, and "The Dissolution" is

quite typical in that it is based on the scholastic theory of elements, although it also includes allusions to a more modern science. As Donne and his mistress were "mutuall Elements," involving one another, and all things which die must resolve to their first elements, his lady's death, unburdening upon him a new abundance of these elements, threatens to prolong his life and his misery resulting from her death. Continuing this pseudo-scientific discourse logically, the poet explains that the greater power created by the added elements will, as in an explosion, send his soul to outstrip that of his mistress.

The syllogistic structure of the piece is quite apparent in the following excerpt in which the parentheses, of course, have been added by the present writer to indicate more clearly the logical organization of the piece:

Shee is dead; And all which die  
To their first elements resolve; (premises)  
(So she will do so;) (conclusion understood)  
And as she will do so,  
And we were mutuall Elements to us,  
And made of one another. (premises)  
My body then doth hers involve,  
And those things whereby I consist, hereby  
In me abundant grow, and burdenous,  
And nourish not, but smother. (conclusion)

This type of organization, in which one syllogism seems to grow from and depend upon another, is essentially different from the balanced Shakespearean quatrains, each merely re-developing a given idea. There is much more of a real logical progression here, because the lines are interlocking, each depending upon the preceding one and leading to the next.

There is also a subtler web of logic in the poet's method of organization and progression, as these means are apparently used to convey

a much broader interpretation of the "dissolution." The first portion of the poem harks back to an older age and older theory in both content and metaphor, while the structure has a marked syllogistic character. As the poem progresses, however, there is a suggestion of a dissolution of a way of thinking as the metaphors becomes more modern in the allusions to the powder and bullets, as the form becomes freer, and as the poet's soul is released from its heaviness. Most of the metaphors in the piece are of a scientific nature, but the latter reference seems particularly to indicate an attempt to balance, metaphorically speaking, the old against the new.

The importance of metaphor in developing and giving substance to this poem's abstract logic is easily apparent. Following Shakespeare's lead, Donne employs the four traditional elements to express his passion and grief:

My fire of passion, sighes of ayre,  
Water of tears, and earthly sad despaire,  
Which my materialls bee .....

The interdependent metaphors of the conquering kings and the bullets are also essential to the progression of the poem. These figures add a visual quality to the piece which complements in some measure the knotty abstractions and irregular rhythms which tend to retard the reader's progress.

The psychological method of progression, characteristic of the twentieth century just as the logical method was typical of the seventeenth, could be illustrated by referring to almost any of the poems of Yeats, Eliot or the latter modern metaphysicals. Let us consider a brief one by Eliot, "Morning at the Window."

They are rattling breakfast plates in basement  
 kitchens,  
 And along the trampled edges of the street  
 I am aware of the damp souls of housemaids  
 Sprouting despondently at area gates.

The brown waves of fog toss up to me  
 Twisted faces from the bottom of the street,  
 And tear from a passes-by with muddy skirts  
 An airless smile that hovers in the air  
 And vanishes along the level of the roofs.

The title of the poem suggests the scene of the poet standing at the window in the morning, and the body of the poem, growing from mental impressions called to mind by the scene and from casual observations, in a continuing, changing stream of visual and aural ideas. The reader is never completely positive what is perceived by the poet and what is imagined, for in the mind the real and the unreal, the immediately observed and the remembered, merge in an unceasing flow of changing combinations. The poem really takes place within the mind of the poet and has very little relation to the type of seventeenth century logic which is exterior to the mind. The mind creates, modifies and distorts in a psychological world poised uncertainly between reality and fantasy.

In this type of psychological progression connotation and suggestion tend to supplant the denotation and carefully formulated explication of the more logical approach. Despite their lack of logical relationship to one another, all these images are calculated to suggest to the reader's mind the disagreeable, wearisome routine of the commonplace in modern life. The feeling of gloominess and depression that the poet feels hangs over the city is reflected in his references to the rattling breakfast plates, the streets worn by a monotonous trample back and forth, the "damp souls" of housemaids at area gates, the brown fog and the muddy

passer-by who is probably a prostitute. As these images lead to one another, it seems that their connotative value is a definite part of the poem's progression. Eliot's connotative metaphorical images in this poem are of course closely related to the metaphysical emphasis on metaphor and other figures.

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A stress on a logic which has its roots in medieval thought is seen in a number of seventeenth century poems. It was Donne, however, who distilled this logic to its highest subtlety. For example, a very complexly logical elaboration of a simple, quite non-intellectual idea is the most important feature of "Lovers Infiniteness." Writing in a light amorous convention that at first seems alien to the strict logic of the poem, Donne complains that he has no more sighs or tears to bargain for his mistress' love, and therefore if she has after all only given him a part of her love he will never have it all. To illustrate Donne's method of working out such delighted little love problems in terms of an almost mathematical logic, I quote the concluding two stanzas:

Or if then thou gavest me all,  
All was but All, which thou hadst then;  
But if in they heart, since, there be or shall,  
New Love created bee, by other men,  
Which have their stocks intire, and can in teares,  
In sighs, in oathes, and letters outbid mee,  
This new love may beget new feares,  
For, this love was not vowed by thee.  
And yet it was, they gift being generall,  
The ground, they heart is mine, what ever shall  
Grow there, deare, I should have it all.

Yet I would not have all yet,  
Hee that hath all can have no more,  
And since my love doth every day admit  
New growth, thou shouldst have new rewards in store;  
Thou canst not every day give me they heart,  
If thou canst give it, then thou never gavest it;  
Loves riddles are, that though they heart depart  
It stayes at home, and thou with losing savest it:

But wee will have a way more liberall,  
Than changing hearts, to joyne them, so we shall  
Be one, and one another All.

Besides the strict, self-contained type of logical progression found in the poems just discussed, there is a looser, associational logic which provides a second important method of progression in seventeenth century metaphysical poetry. This method, suggested in Shakespeare's 137th sonnet, deviates from the self-contained syllogistic logic that seems exterior to the mind. The poem is carried forward by more casual associations, rather than by a rigid point-by-point logic of necessity. There is a freer association of words and ideas, a logical leaping from one idea to a related one, through which the poem gains a larger scope and touches upon a greater, more diverse body of material. This type of logical progression can be studied in such poems as Donne's "The Relique" and Herbert's "Artillerie." In the former well-known poem Donne thinks of someone breaking open the grave and finding,

A bracelet of bright hair about the bone ....

He wonders if the grave digger will think that a loving couple lies there who used this device,

To make their soules, at the last busie day,  
Meet at this grave, and make a little stay.

The poem concludes:

If this fall in a time, or land,  
Where mis-devotion doth command,  
Then, he that digges us up, will bring,  
Us, to the Bishop, and the King,  
To make us Reliques; then  
Thou shalt be a Mary Magdalen, and I  
A something else thereby;  
All women shall adore us, and some men;  
And since at such time, miracles are sought,  
I could have that age by this paper taught  
What miracles wee harmlesse lovers wrought.

First, we lov'd well and faithfully,  
Yet knew not what wee lov'd, nor why,  
Difference of sex no more wee knew,  
Than our guardian Angells doe;

Coming and going, wee  
Perchance might kisse, but not between those meales;  
Our hands ne'er toucht the scales,  
Which nature, injured by late law, sets free;  
These miracles wee did; but now alas,  
All measure, and all language, I should passe,  
Should I tell what a miracle shee was.

The progression seems easy and smooth, but yet there are several breaks in the continuity of thought in the poem. Opening with a reference to the grave of the poet buried with a "bracelet of bright hair," the piece proceeds by association to identify the buried lovers with buried relics. As the mention of relics suggests miracles, the poet at once enumerates the miracles of love performed by him and his mistress and ends by telling what a miracle she herself was. These associational leaps are centered in the second stanza, and the first and third stanzas, if examined separately, would seem to have very little relation to one another besides the similarity in verse form. As in "The Canonization" and other Donne poems, the unifying factor in these associations is the comparison of love with religion, the assumption that pure love is about as sacred and rare as devout worship. It will be noted that the series of visual metaphorical images is even more important to the progression in a poem of this kind than in a more strictly logical piece.

Another typical example of a logical associational progression is Herbert's "Artillerie:"

As I one evening sat before my cell,  
Me thought a starre did shoot into my lap.  
I rose, and shook my clothes, as knowing well,  
That from small fires comes oft no small mishap:  
When suddenly I heard one say,  
Do as thou usest, disobey,  
Expell good notions from thy breast,  
Which have the face of fire, but end in rest.

I, who had heard of musick in the spheres,  
But not of speech in starres, began to muse:  
But turning to my God, whose ministers  
The starres and all things are; If I refuse,  
Dread Lord, said I, so oft my good;  
Then I refuse not ev'n with blood  
To wash away my stubborn thought:  
For I will do, or suffer what I ought.

But I have also starres and shooters too,  
Born where thy servants both artilleries use.  
My tears and prayers night and day do woove,  
And work up to thee; yet thou dost refuse.  
Not but I am (I must say still)  
Much more oblig'd to do thy will,  
Than thou to grant mine: but because  
They promise now hath ev'n set thee they laws.

Then we are shooters both, and thou dost deigne  
To enter combat with us, and contest  
With thine owne clay. But I would parley faine:  
Shunne not my arrows, and behold my breast.  
Yet if thou shunest, I am thine:  
I must be so, if I am mine.  
There is no articling with thee:  
I am but finite, yet thine infinitely.

The associational chain that links together all the various strands of this poem is not difficult to follow. The entire poem develops, of course, from the poet's vision of the shooting star. From this reference grows the witty comparison of "music in the spheres" and "speech in starres," and the Lord's allusion to "good notions,"

Which have the face of fire, but end in rest.

Thinking of the shooting star as God's artillery, the poet recalls that he can reply to his Lord's fire with his own battery of tears and prayers. This brings into the poem the concept of a battle and Herbert speaks of his arrows, a parley and the possibility of "articling" with God. The battle figure leads to the word-play on finite and infinitely, light in style but serious in meaning, in which lies the core of the poem. The essential logic of the verse is seen in the poet's construction of



a complex superstructure preparing the way for the simple conclusion, as in the same poet's "The Collar," an apparent revolt against spiritual renunciation that leads to a reversal ending and a complete rededication to God.

There are a number of variations on the logical method of progression which is characteristic of seventeenth century metaphysical verse. Basic, however, are these two types--the syllogistic structure built around a series of premises and conclusions, and the associative method in which the poet proceeds by a series of logical leaps from one idea to another.

Nevertheless on some occasions these two important methods of propulsion do not extend throughout a poem completely, and the piece is really organized episodically, with the poet changing from one logical system to another. There is a mixture of these two logical modes or progression, for instance, in Donne's "A Fleaver." Identifying his mistress with the world's soul, the poet elaborates step by step upon this identification, considering her possible death. Meanwhile the cosmological concept of the world's soul introduces a series of references to the destruction of the world, meteors and firmament.

Despite occasional breaks in the continuity of seventeenth century metaphysical poetry, almost all of this verse has a system of abstract logic at its core. It is essentially a special verse, and in reading a seventeenth century poem we are seldom more conscious of a sense of time and duration than we would be in reading a lengthy proposition in geometry. The verse characteristically seems exterior to the mind in that it is a reorganization of the poet's experience in terms of refined logical forms and laws.

Modern metaphysical poetry in varying degrees presents a fusion of seventeenth century metaphysical techniques and nineteenth century romantic elements. The modern metaphysicals hark back in some cases to a pronounced emphasis on the earlier method of logical progression while maintaining an essentially modern and psychological approach. I quote from the beginning of Mrs. Wylie's "The Loving Cup," which proves a characteristic illustration of the modern metaphysicals utilization of earlier techniques:

The instrument of your reason being tuned  
To the pitch of madness and desire to wound,  
You would not drink my health save from her glass  
Who drinks my death: can such things come to pass?  
But I considered, striving to be just  
(Who strive not to be loving, for I must),  
That we, your vallals bound by every oath,  
Are thus your vessels, and you drink from both:  
That she and I, being each of us a woman,  
Taste the elixir of your lips in common;  
Though I alone am privy to the fact;  
I have your half, and lesser than exact:  
That I, having sworn I would devote my powers  
To advance her interests as well as yours,  
Am therefore chattel of yourself and her  
And so divided into share and share.  
Should I not count me more unfortunate  
If from two cups you drank my single fate,  
Than now, when both of you set lips to one  
And from its sole brim drink division?  
For you have drunk me joy and she despair  
In the same wine, that served you share and share,  
But never share and share alike: the mood  
In which you drank transformed the wine to blood.  
Although your mood was black it did distill  
Such essences as could not wish me ill;  
While she, who smiled to drink my mortal pain,  
Brewed hell itself within her smallest vein.

The poem continues in the same vein with similar finely-spun arguments, concluding with the punning figure:

The cup is loving, having kissed you once.

The poet's essentially logical approach in this poem is apparent. Even the structure of the first four lines suggests the law of cause and effect. Because your reason has been turned away into madness, you give yourself to her who would drink my death, the poet says. There follows a free poetic construction which nevertheless suggests Donne's use of the syllogism. The two premises, introduced in lines 7 and 13, begin:

That we, your vassals bound by every oath, and,

That I, having sworn I would devote my powers.

The conclusion follows:

Am therefore chattel of yourself and her

And so divided into share and share.

Because the poet says in substance, she and I are your vassals and share you in common and because I have sworn to advance the interests of both of you, I am therefore the vassal of both you and her. The remainder of the quoted excerpt is somewhat reminiscent of Donne's "Lovers In-finiteness" in its delicate web-work of pseudo-logic and mathematics. Committing the touchy problems of this relationship to the loving cup figure, Mrs. Wylie explains with subtle reasoning that she is glad her lover and her rival drank from one cup instead of two, because his drinking from the cup distills the whole into essences beneficial to her. Since her lover has a role in this relationship, it cannot really bode her ill. As in Donne's work, metaphor and word-play are vital to the meaning and progression of the poem.

Nevertheless "The Loving Cup" only partakes of a seventeenth century technique. In spirit it is wholly modern. The logic is not expounded rhetorically, as in most Donne poems, but veiled beneath an easy conversational tone, similar to that found in "Broken Dreams," which is opposed to both the rather pompous rhetoric of the sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries and the rather singsong rhythms of the nineteenth century. The underlying logic of the piece is not so obvious nor so taut as in most early metaphysical verse, but becomes the framework for a number of essentially paranthetical remarks. "The Loving Cup" is also characteristic of most modern metaphysical verse in that the poet presents a specific incident--the moment when her lover and her rival drank together from the same glass, excluding her--and treats with extreme deftness a relationship between three persons rather than showing a concern chiefly for herself.

This use of abstract logic is part of the heritage which twentieth century metaphysical verse has received from the seventeenth century. A propulsion depending upon a logical association of successive words and ideas, as in "The Relique" and "Artillerie," is relatively rare in the twentieth century, however, when such a chain of logic gives way to a psychological "stream of consciousness" progression. Even when logic plays an important role in modern metaphysical verse, it is usually subordinated to this psychological approach.

\* \* \* \* \*

The new psychological progression in modern poetry seems related to a Bergsonian sense of flow, duration and unpredictable creativity, as opposed to the more rigid construction of seventeenth century poems which develop a logical argument from beginning to conclusion. It also seems associated with the rise of expressionistic art and literature which treats a scene as taking place within the human mind. It certainly represents one phase of an effort to capture more of the living truth and reality of human experience.

This psychological method of progression has its origins in romanticism, and it probably had its most direct impact on modern metaphysical verse through Yeats and Eliot, both of whom were influenced considerably by the French symbolist poets.

A beginning of this psychological method of progression is found in passages such as the sestet from this sonnet by John Keats:

After dark vapors have oppress'd our plains  
For a long dreary season, comes a day  
Born of the gentle South, and clears away  
From the sick heavens all unseemly stains.  
The anxious month, relieved of its pains,  
Takes as a long-lost right the feel of May;  
The eyelids with the passing coolness play  
Like rose leaves with the drip of Summer rains.  
The calmest thoughts come round us; as of leaves  
Budding--fruit ripening in stillness--Autumn suns  
Smiling at eve upon the quiet sheaves--  
Sweet Sappho's cheek--a smiling infant's breath--  
The gradual sand that through an hour-glass runs--  
A woodland rivulet--a Poet's death.

The progression here is perhaps somewhat artificial, but the passage nevertheless suggests, as in "Broken Dreams", a freely roving mind operating according to its own nature processes. The entire sestet seems held together by the strongly connotative overtones of the poet's easy succession of idle, balmy visions.

This same psychological mode of progression in a higher stage of development is found in a rather similar French symbolist poem, Jules Laforgue's "Crépuscule de Dimanche d'Été," in which the poet's thoughts seem to well up at random under the influence of the moody summer evening:

Une belle journée. Un calme crépuscule  
Rentrent, sans se douter que tout est ridicule,  
En frottant du mouchoir leurs beaux souliers poudreux.

A banale rancouer de notre farce humaine!  
Aujourd'hui, jour de fête et gaieté des faubourgs,  
Demain le dur travail pour toute la semaine.  
Puis fête, puis travail, fête...travail...toujours

Par lazures tendre et fin tournoient les hirondelles  
Font je traduis pour moi les milles petits cris.  
Et peu à peu je songe aux choses éternelles,  
Au-dessus des rumeurs qui montent de Paris.

Oh! tout là-bas..là-bas.. par la nuit mystère,  
Ou donc es-tu, depuis tant d'astres, à présent...  
A fleuve chaotique, Ô Nebuleuse-mère,  
Dont sortit le Soleil, notre père puissant.

The Sunday twilight, petty noises of the street, thoughts of the weary monotony of existence, and a sense of the sublime mystery of life-- all of these merge in a psychological progression within the poet's mind.

This method, found in a far more advanced use in the stream of consciousness technique of James Joyce, Thomas Wolfe, and other, is carried to an extreme in such a piece as "The Heart's Desire" of Mrs. Wylie, one of the more important of the twentieth century metaphysicals.

The poem begins:

Anger that is not anger, but bubbles and stars  
of colour, blood in the brain beating the nerves  
into a frenzy of inner light, magnified moons and  
suns swimming in the secret understanding that  
is more the body than the mind, the soul upon the  
lips for no reason at all, or at the sound of a  
door or the tinkle of gold and silver money in  
the street, faces best known and most remembered  
estranged and a million miles away, and strange  
greasy faces passing in the dust of evening and  
now returning illuminated into godhead, cruelty  
where it cannot be, kindness where hatred is as  
inevitable as the white rising of a morning where  
morning may after all never more rise, disintegrate  
yet exquisite destruction of the heart at the mo-  
ment of waking, desire for death like the vagueness  
of a thirst for thin extravagant wine, unredeemed  
by fear, mortal and importunate screams of why,  
why, why in the extreme desolation of regained con-  
sciousness .....

Ideas, images, memories and worries float to the surface of the poet's mind in no perceivable logical order, and with only the thinnest psychological thread connecting them. The progression seems to have its basis in the semi-conscious mind of the poet, while the reader also needs temporarily to suspend his concern with logic. The poem, filled with the connotative visual imagery and easy rhythmic undercurrent typical of much modern verse, retains virtually no vestige of that seventeenth century metaphysical logic which proceeds point by point through an argument to a conclusion.

This psychological mode of progression is found in many variations and in differing degrees in most modern poetry. It should be noted, however, that modern metaphysical poetry also is characterized often by another form stemming from the romantic tradition, a narrative or semi-narrative method which is frequently seen in conjunction with a psychological progression. This narrative type of progression will be considered after an examination of the more strictly psychological types.

The kind of psychological progression seen in "Broken Dreams" and "Morning at the Window" is typical of the later work of Yeats, the earlier and more metaphysical poetry of Eliot, and of the verse of other modern metaphysical poets. This technique is illustrated very clearly in several longer poems such as Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "Gerontion" and Warren's "The Return: An Elegy." Certainly the musings, memories and fears of "Prufrock" have no actual scene other than the poet's mind, and the stream of his thought is responsible for both the breaks in the logical continuity of the poem and the juxtaposition of different times, places and actions. "Gerontion" is frankly:

Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season.

In Warren's elegy, filled with the compressed metaphors and the complex clashes of irony and sensitive feeling characteristic of modern metaphysical verse, the poet presses his face to his Pullman pane as he returns to his Kentucky birthplace, and his mind, flitting from deep emotion to flippant sarcasm, wanders over the landscape, his new learning and childhood memories. After thinking of old ladies that "cough and wake" and of his dead mother, the poet continues in part:

Pursue down backward time the ghostly parallels  
Pursue past culvert cut fill embankment semaphore  
Pursue down gleaming hours that are no more.  
The pines, black snore

turn backward turn backward in your flight  
and make me a child again just for tonight  
good lord he's wet the bed come bright a light

What grief has the mind distilled  
The heart is unfulfilled  
The hoarse pine stilled  
I cannot pluck  
Out of this land of pine and rock  
Of the fallen pine cone  
Of red bed their season not yet gone  
If I could pluck  
(In drought the lizard will blink on the  
hot limestone)

In this elegy, "Prufrock" and other poems to quote from Eliot's

"Rhapsody on a Windy Night":

The memory throws up high and dry  
A crowd of twisted things;

In a number of the shorter poems--and a majority of metaphysical poems are relative brief--are found the same emphasis on a basically psychological progression, a wide use of visual imagery and a familiar conversational style which avoids alike abstract complexities and metrical irregularities. These qualities mark such pieces as Ransom's



"Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter," the same poet's "Spectral Lovers," and Tate's "The Paradigm," I shall examine briefly the former

Ransom poem:

There was such speed in her little body,  
And such lightness in her footfall,  
It is no wonder that her brown study  
Astonishes us all.

Her wars were bruited in our high window.  
We looked among orchard trees and beyond,  
Where she took arms against her shadow,  
Or Harried into the pond.

The lazy geese, like a snow cloud  
Dripping their snow on the green grass,  
Tricking and stopping, sleepy and proud,  
Who cried in goose, Alas,

For the tireless heart within the little  
Lady with rod that made them rise  
From their noon apple dreams, and scuttle  
Goose-fashion under the skies!

But now go the bells, and we are ready;  
In one house we are sternly stopped  
To say we were sternly vexed at her brown study,  
Lying so primly propped.

With a lightness, a sophistication and a sense of humor in time of tragedy which are typical of modern metaphysical verse, Ransom is here at the peak of his own variety of "high seriousness." I shall refer to the poem again in a discussion of the complexity of experience in metaphysical poetry. It may seem a strange elegy to readers bred on John Milton and Alfred, Lord Tennyson, and some of its strangeness no doubt lies in the fact that on the whole it is based on the natural flow of the mind rather than on a more artificial form.

As in Yeat's "Broken Dreams," the actual physical scene of the

piece is realized only at the end when the poet speaks of the funeral bells and the house where the little girl is so "primly propped." Brought face to face with her "brown study" the poet is astonished and recalls how he watched from his window as the robust little girl played with the ducks; but his thoughts are stopped short, so to speak, by the tolling bells which remind him of the funeral and the prim little body. Because the poem depends upon a psychological progression, it seems quite natural--rather than out of place--that three stanzas should be devoted to her undignified playing with the waddling ducks. They are for the most part not conventional funeral thoughts, but they are the memories that come almost of necessity to the poet's mind.

Typical of the most seventeenth and twentieth century metaphysical verse is the sharp visual clarity of the remembered scene "among orchard trees and beyond," and the house where the little girl is found in her "brown study." The completely easy, unrheterical character of the metrics and the language, however, and the setting of the poem as a specific incident, suggests twentieth century practice.

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The narrative progression is another form which attained a refined development in the romantic period before finding a new importance in modern metaphysical verse. While not particularly popular with Donne and the seventeenth century metaphysicals, who favored exposition and argument, this old form regained new life in the more personal verse of the English romantics and to a lesser degree in that of the French symbolists. Endowing the narrative form with a characteristic touch of irony and complexity, many modern metaphysical poets have written a

number of little poetic narratives which might be aptly described as parable-like. Ransom's grimly amusing "Captain Carpenter" and his sonnet sequence of modern life and love, "Two Gentlemen in Bonds," are typical.

Another characteristic example is Tate's "The Paradigm". A brief narrative expounded in logical, somewhat abstract terms after the seventeenth century fashion, it is nevertheless presented through the mind of the poet, the third person who witnesses and reports the scene from his own perspective, as in Ransom's "Spectral Lovers" and other similar metaphysical poems, I quote:

For when they meet, the tensile air  
Like fine steel strains under the weight  
Of messages that both hearts bear--  
Pure passion once, now purest hate.

Till the taut air is like a cold hand  
Clasped to cold hand and bone to bone  
Seals them up in their icy land  
(A few square feet) where into stone

The two hearts turning quickly pass  
Once more their impenetrable world;  
So fades out each heart's looking glass  
Whose image is the surface hurled

By all the air; air, glass is not;  
So is their fleeting enmity  
Like a hard mirror creased by what  
The quality of air must be.

For in the air all lovers meet  
After they've hated out their love;  
Love's but the echo of retreat  
Caught by the sunbeams stretched above

Their frozen exile from the earth  
And lost. Each is the other's crime.  
This is their equity in birth--  
Hate is its ignorant paradigm.

The poem seems a little tale narrated through logical figures. Briefly, two former lovers meet, greet one another with a tense

coldness, losing all their sensitive understanding of one another. Their love becomes for the moment the "echo of retreat" and is lost. The poet concludes this little narrative, typical of a number of other brief meaningful incidents described by Eliot, Mrs. Wylie, Ransom, Warren and Auden, with a little philosophizing.

This poem, however, depends chiefly on the extension of the metaphor of the tensile, steely air. In its negative aspect this binding structure becomes the basis of a fine irony and gentle satire as the poet speaks of the lovers as though their quarrel is changing even the air about them, but in its positive aspect it is extended with strict logic on both the metaphorical and implied psychological planes. As the lovers are sealed in their few square feet of icy stares and mutual coldness of spirit their hearts are transformed into stone by the coldness, and each heart's mirror, which formerly reflected only the other heart (a Donne device) is creashed by the "surface hurled/ By all the air," and the lovers' mirrored images fade out. The pair's doting love of one another seems destroyed by this new feeling - an artificial feeling the poet intimates. The metaphors of the last stanza, as well as the use of logic, are reminiscent of seventeenth century practice.

Despite the importance of narrative and logical forms in the poem, the underlying method of progression is psychological. The reader is given the idea that the poet is witnessing the incident and interpreting it through his own personality. The physical metaphor of the "Taut air like a cold hand" is suggested to his mind by the lovers coldness of spirit. His observing of the incident leads him to a little hasty meditation on love and hate.

The poem is ostensibly an attempt to describe this psychological experience of seeing and thinking about the lovers, and the poet's subtly complex attitude, gently ironic while sincerely sympathetic, colors and modifies this experience in his own mind. In numerous other modern metaphysical poems, also, logical and narrative modes of progression become essentially subordinate to the psychological method, which is a hall-mark of modern verse and of modern metaphysical poetry in particular.

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It is seen, then, that the method of progression in seventeenth century metaphysical poetry is essentially logical, primarily abstract and syllogistic, as in "The Dissolution", or logically associational, as in "The Relique." There is on the whole a greater subtlety and variance, however, in the modes of progression in modern metaphysical verse. This twentieth century poetry retains certain logical seventeenth century forms, but in its method of progression it is essentially psychological rather than logical. This psychological approach and a greater interest in narrative are a contribution from nineteenth century English romantic poetry and French symbolist poetry, as the twentieth century concern with abstract logic is a heritage from the seventeenth century. While the conversational tone of modern metaphysical verse was suggested in the rhetorical seventeenth century variety, the easy, familiar conversational style of twentieth century metrics was not attained without example of the more musical, regular forms of the intervening romantic period--an example which Eliot, Yeats

and others revolted against, however, in attempts to arrive at a freer style and more natural conversational rhythms. It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of sharp visual imagery, metaphors and other figures characteristic of both seventeenth and twentieth century metaphysical poetry.

**CHAPTER III**

**METAPHOR**

### CHAPTER III: METAPHOR

Because critics and poets alike acknowledge the importance of metaphor as a hall-mark of metaphysical poetry, its utilization in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries deserves special attention. As I noted in the preceding chapter, Brooks asserts that the "Significant relationship" between early and modern metaphysicals lies in their "common conception of the use of metaphor." And Ransom, writing in The World's Body, explains that seventeenth and twentieth century poets have "the courage of their metaphors," proceeding from a "partial analogy" to a "complete identification" through a kind of "miraculism."<sup>1</sup>

Neither these critics nor others, however, have treated the fundamentally different functions of metaphor and other poetic figures in the metaphysical verse of both periods. This changing use of metaphor parallels very closely the changing methods of progression just discussed. Two main types of metaphor are found--reflecting the same trend from the logical to the psychological seen in the study of poetic propulsion.

Logical Metaphor: This type of metaphor, most typical of the seventeenth century, is characteristically a logical, extended interpretation of something in terms of the metaphor more vivid and understandable and is intellectually pleasing because of the aptness and ingenuity of the logical elaboration.

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1. Ransom, John Crowe, "The World's Body, p. 135

2. In discussion of metaphor I shall use the terminology of I. A. Richards who employs "tenor" to refer to the basic situation or theme which the metaphor describes and "vehicle" to refer to the figure amplifying or illustrating this basic subject. This combination of tenor and vehicle is the "metaphor."



Usually something abstract is explained in terms of something more sensate and physical. A logical metaphor often depends upon a direct predicative statement of identification in which the comparison, like seventeenth century progression, is essentially exterior to the poet's mind--logical rather than psychological.<sup>1</sup>

Psychological metaphor: In this type most characteristic of the twentieth century, the logical aptness of the metaphor becomes less important as the figure is used mainly to evoke a mood, to suggest a very subtle experience, or to express a satiric or ironic attitude.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Mario Praz in his Seventeenth Century Imagery notes the close relation between the seventeenth century metaphor and the emblem, which usually consisted of a small representation of a symbolical nature and an accompanying motto, and was in many ways an illustration of a conceit of metaphor. On the other hand, a metaphor may be described as a word picture of an emblem. In both forms the stress is placed upon concentration and the striking representation of one thing in terms of another. Probably the first English work to treat these emblems was The Choice of Emblems, by Geoffrey Whitney, a contemporary of Edmund Spenser. Besides the verse of the poets under discussion, the works of Thomas Nashe, Robert Greene, John Marston, and John Webster reflect a knowledge of these devices, Praz explains.

Praz quotes an interesting passage from a Renaissance figure, Danielle Bartoli, which is most significant because, although it was intended as a discussion of the emblem inlays, it is equally relevant as a commentary on seventeenth century English metaphysical poetry, I quote:

Is not the source of wonder, and therefore of delight, in such works the fact that one sees one thing used to represent another? The conception being all the more innocent in that in the whole composition of a false thing there is yet not one element which is not true. The same happens when we take anything from history, from fables, from nature and art, to represent something in the moral order which it is not in such a way that there should be so much appropriateness and correspondence of reciprocal relations between truth and its likeness that the whole, so to speak, should not seem to be an artifice of the brain, but the philosophy of nature, as if nature had written almost in cipher her precepts everywhere. (p. 15)

2. Metaphor plays an important role in the work of several modern

The psychological metaphor is sometimes extended elaborately, but in its most typical twentieth century form is concentrated and compressed. The metaphorical identification may be relatively vague and grow apparently from a subjective, empathetic state of mind.

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poets not treated in this study, such as Hart Crane, E. E. Cummings, and Archibald MacLeish. In "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," "Lachrymae Christi," "The Broken Tower," "The Bridge", and other pieces Crane employs a mass of ever-changing metaphors which, however, are often exceedingly subjective and expressionistic, sometimes rather intuitional in character, frequently lacking a certain precision in their interpretation of experience which tends to be characteristic of metaphysical verse. "The Broken Tower" is an extreme example of Crane's overwhelmingly intense, and rather vague subjectivism, but provides a clear illustration of the general trend of his metaphorical expression. I quote the first four stanzas:

The bell-rope that gathers God at dawn  
 Dispatches me as thought I dropped down the knell  
 Of a spent day--to wander the cathedral lawn  
 From pit to crucifix, feet chill on steps from hell.

Have you not heard, have you not seen the corps  
 Of Shadows in the tower, whose shoulders sway  
 Antiphonal carillons launched before  
 The stars are caught and hived in the sun's ray?

The bells, I say, the bells break down their tower;  
 And swing I know not where. Their tongues engrave  
 Membrane through marrow, my long-scattered score  
 Of broken intervals... And I, their sexton slave!

Oval encyclicals in Canyons heaping  
 The impasse high with choir. Banked voices slain!  
 Pagodas, campaniles with reveilles outleaping--  
 O terraced echoes porstrate on the plains:--

One metaphor is piled upon another as clear tenor-vehicle relationships and a sense of intellectual control seem to vanish in a maze of connotation. Metaphor used in this way is a potent element in an intense expression of a single viewpoint, but is not characteristic of the mixed attitudes and complex treatment of experience associated with metaphysical poetry. I wish to re-emphasize that there is no clear-cut qualitative difference between the work of the modern metaphysical poets under discussion in this paper and that of a number of other contemporary poets. The metaphysical elements are simply quantitatively most important in the verse of seven English and American poets named in Chapter I as the chief modern metaphysicals. There are a number of metaphysical uses of metaphor in the work of other twentieth century poets, such as "Landscape as a Nude" from MacLeish's "Frescoes for Mr. Rockefeller's City," but the employment of metaphysical metaphor is quantitatively and consistently most important in the work of the seven poets named.

Virtually the same process of development as was noted in the changing methods of progression can be seen in the case of metaphor. Modern metaphysical poets retain an interest in these seventeenth century conceits, including the extended metaphor, but their use of metaphor is tremendously affected by the softening influence of an intervening romanticism. As an illustration of the seventeenth century logical metaphor I quote from Donne's "Hymne to God My God, in My Sicknesses."

Since I am coming to that Holy roome,  
Where, with they quire of Saints for evermore,  
I shall be made thy Musique; As I come  
I tune the Instrument here at the dore,  
And what I must doe then, thinke here before.

Whilst my Physitians by their love are growne  
Cosmographers, and I their Mapp, who lie  
Flat on this bed, that by them may be showne  
That this my South-west discoverie  
Per fretum febris, by these straits to die,

I joy, that in these straits, I see my West;  
For though their currants yeeld returne to none,  
What shall my West hurt me? As West and East  
In all flatt Maps (and I am one) are one,  
So death doth touch the Resurrection.

Continuing to expand upon the implications of the geographical metaphor, Donne asks his Lord to find both "Adams," the Adam of Eden and the Christ of Calvary, met in him. Donne concludes in asking God to raise him from death.

Throughout the poem the development of metaphor depends upon a logical identification. In the first stanza the poet explains that he will be the Lord's music after his death, and that he must therefore "Tune the Instrument" and rehearse the celestial concert to come. Using his favorite metaphor, the maps, he then identifies himself with a flat map, and his physicians with cosmographers. Extending the metaphor syllogistically, he reasons that since he is a map, and west and

east meet on all maps, his death touches his resurrection. In a similar metaphorical identification he identifies his death and resurrection with the "South-west discoverie."

The psychological metaphor characteristic of modern metaphysical poetry can be seen to advantage in a passage from Eliot's "The Love Son of J. Alfred Prufrock," a poem in which the psychological method of progression is clearly developed:

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,  
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window panes  
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,  
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from Chimneys,  
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,  
And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

It is quite true that the poet's comparison of the fog with a huge, dirty mongrel seems quite apt, as both may be found in the evenings in streets and passageways, curled outside the doors of well-lighted houses shut against them. But it is obvious that he has no concern with a logical point-by-point comparison of the two, and merely uses the yellow fog and the sooty dog because of their psychological connotating of disgust and of the petty insignificance of modern life. It will be noted that there is no actual mention of the dog nor identification of the tenor, the fog, and the vehicle, the dog. It is probably more correct to describe both as metaphorical vehicles to which the poet's mood serves as tenor.

Just as Donne sought to clothe theological and logical abstractions in physical images appealing more sharply to the reader's imagination,

Eliot is here seeking to express the complex subtleties of a particular state of mind in richly connotative figures, employing what he terms an "objective correlative." In fact metaphysical metaphor and Eliot's device of the objective correlative are closely related, but the poet himself emphasizes the psychological elements inherent in the latter. In his essay entitled "Hamlet", he explains that "the only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative;" in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked." <sup>1</sup>

In the passage quoted above the fog itself may be considered as an objective correlative of the petty, sluggish spirit of our age, and the dog may be interpreted as representative of a tameness and domesticity—particularly the nondescript mongrel, a parasite on human society. The figure apparently carried considerable power as a psychological symbol for the poet who, like Shakespeare, seems to show a dislike for the breed. In "The Waste Land" substituting a dog for John Webster's wolf, he warns:

Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men-

Dogs apparently represented for Eliot the forces of living death, as opposed, for instance to the wolf of Webster's play or to the tiger of Eliot's "Gerontion."

A further examination of the use of metaphor in seventeenth century and modern metaphysical verse will show that despite numerous variations these two main types, logical and psychological, represent two basically different viewpoints.

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1. Eliot, T. S., Selected Essays, pp. 124-25

Herbert's "Paradise," with its ingenious metaphysical rhyme scheme, for instance, is constructed around a use of the logical metaphor only slightly different from that in "Hymne to God My God, in My Sicknesses:"

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

What open force or hidden CHARM  
Can blast my fruit, or bring me HARM  
While the inclosure is thine ARM.

Inclose me still for fear I START,  
Be to me rather sharp and TART  
Then let me want thy hand and ART.

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

Such sharpness shows the sweetest FRIEND:  
Such cuttings rather heal than REND  
And such beginnings touch their END.

Although there is no direct statement of identification, the poem depends upon the metaphorical assumption, posited at the beginning, that the poet is a tree in God's garden. From this premise the piece is extended logically through five stanzas, with references to the row of trees, their fruit, the inclosure, and the pruning knife. The poem, which is inconceivable without the metaphor, is again an extended exposition of a comparison fundamentally exterior to the poet's mind.

There is another type of essentially logical metaphor, often found at its best in the sonnets of Shakespeare and other Elizabethans, in which the poet does not quite proceed to the bold, complete identification characteristic of the full-blown metaphysical style, but only explains something in the language and terms of something else. As an illustration of this mixed metaphor, I quote Shakespeare's 87th sonnet:

Farewell! thou art too dear for my possessing,  
And like enough thou know'st thy estimate:  
The charter of thy worth gives thee releasing;  
My bonds in three are all determinate.  
For how do I hold thee but by thy granting?  
And for that riches where is my deserving?  
The cause of this fair gift in me is wanting,  
And so my patent back again is swerving.  
Thyself thou gavest, thy own worth then not knowing,  
Or me, to whom thou gavest it, else mistaking;  
So thy great gift, upon misprison growing,  
Comes home again, on better judgment making.  
Thus have I had thee, as a dream doth flatter,  
In sleep a king, but waking no such matter.

The poet is here clearly defining his amorous relations in the technical terms of finance, taking pleasure in extending the elaborate figure for its own sake. This type of metaphor is found in a complex development in a number of Donne pieces, such as "The Extasie," "A Lecture Upon the Shadow," and "Loves Progress," but in the more fully developed seventeenth century metaphysical style an entire poem is seldom based on this type of metaphor which usually only refers to the vehicle in its treatment of the tenor.

Modern metaphor, like the modern method of progression, shows the use of seventeenth century elements in a typically modern fashion. In fact Mrs. Wylie has presented in her four-sonnet piece, "A Red Carpet for Shelley," one of the most interesting and elaborate extended metaphors found in either seventeenth century or modern metaphysical verse. The figure of the red carpet remains throughout the poem as a slender unifying thread, a symbol of the real theme of the work--Mrs. Wylie's desire to express her admiration of Percy Bysshe Shelley and pay him homage. The sequence begins:

But this is nothing; an eccentric joke,  
 The slender patchwork of a year  
 Flung into muddiness, like Raleigh's cloak,  
 To ask the honour of your step, my dear.  
 Your path is printed on the atmosphere  
 Forever as a flame against the smoke  
 Of obscure vision, and I must invoke  
 Your magnanimity to make it clear.

If I might spread soft words like living grass  
 Laid smooth beneath the heavy wheels of Time;  
 If I might loose the river of a rhyme  
 Or build a pavement out of gold and glass  
 Providing Heaven for you to walk upon,  
 It would be well; it would be better done.

In the second sonnet she continues to suggest an association between the rug and her poetry, with the carpet in its actual and symbolical sense intended as homage. She "fabricates" language from spirit and "braids into speech the airy filaments of love and hate." In the third sonnet she discusses the color and design of this carpet and her verse, speaking of the talents she has to offer in tribute:

I have the proper scarlet of my veins,  
 The clean involved precision of my mind...

In the last sonnet the poet declares she will lay down her carpet,

Where you may pause, and pass, and never stay.

She then considers the carpet as a long road which leads Shelly past the rich and changing landscape which is her poetry. The poem concludes:

Here are the shocks of maize, the honey and oil,  
 The fruits like harvest moons, the fabulous land,  
 The crystal hills, the veiled prismatic plain;  
 And you will come, and you will not remain,  
 Nor leave a trace along the gilded sand.  
 So presently you will be come and gone;  
 Here's a strange road for you to walk upon.

Although the essentially seventeenth century device of the extended metaphor is carried to an extreme not often found in earlier metaphysical verse, it is not developed logically with a clear point-by-point relationship between tenor and vehicle.



There is a vagueness about both as the poet's mind shifts languidly from one image and conception to another. In the first sonnet, for instance, the "carpet", the vehicle of the metaphor, becomes closely associated in rapid succession with "an eccentric joke," "Raleigh cloak," "words like living grass," "the river of a rhyme," a pavement out of gold and glass," and Heaven. The poem also often depends for its effect upon psychological connotation, as in the completely illogical metaphor at the conclusion of the second sonnet:

I would unroll the rounded moon and sun  
 And knit them up for you to walk upon

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Modern psychological conceits are employed chiefly to suggest a mood, to express a subtle psychological experience, and to express a satiric or ironic viewpoint. Most often, of course, there is a mixture of these functions.

Metaphors conveying a sense of mood, such as the fog figure in "Prufrock," seem to have their roots in the connotative imagery of nineteenth century English romantic poetry and in French symbolist verse. The symbolists' use of metaphor to express a state of mind can be studied in "Meditation Grisatre," a sonnet written by Jules Laforgue, with whose work Eliot was quite familiar. I quote:

Sous le ciel pluvieux noyé de brumes sales,  
 Devant L' Océan blême, assis sur un îlot,  
 Seul, loin de tout, je songe, au clapotis du flot,  
 Dans le concert hurlant des mourantes rafales.

Crinière echevelée, ainis que des cavales,  
 Les vagues se tordant arrivent au galop  
 Et croulent a mes pieds avec de longs sanglots  
 Qu' emporte la tourmente aux haleiness brutales.

Partout le grand ciel gris, le brouillard et la mer,  
Rien que l' affolement des vents balayant l' air.  
Plus d'heures, plus d' humaines, et solitaire, morne.

Je reste là, perdu dans l' horizon lointaine  
Et songe que l' espace est sans borne, sans borne,  
Et que le Temps n' aura jamais... jamais de fin.

The comparison of the waves of the sea to the seemingly expiring horses adds a note of fantastic unreality to the poem that heightens the mood of meditation and dejection, and prepares the way for the rather mystic conclusion in the sestet. This figure, fairly well developed in the second quatrain, appears altogether as a product of the poet's changing thoughts as reflected in the psychological progression of the sonnet.

Modern metaphysical metaphor abounds in numerous examples of psychological metaphor utilized to evoke a particular mood. There are many pieces like Mrs. Wylie's "Nameless Song," in which the logic is completely subordinated to the emotive and connotative qualities of the metaphor:

My heart is cold and weather-worn,  
A musical and hollow shell:  
The winds have blown it like a horn,  
The waves have rung it like a bell.

The waves have whirled it round and round,  
The winds have worn it thin and fine:  
It is alive with singing sound  
Whose Voice is that? It is not mine.

And there is the effective synaesthesia in a metaphorical passage from the same poet's "Viennese Waltz."

Now falling, falling, feather after feather,  
The music spreads a softness on the ground;  
Now for an instant we are held together  
Hidden within a swinging mist of sound.

A poem filled with the compressed, connotative metaphors characteristic of modern metaphysical poetry, particularly the Southern verse, in Ransom's well known "Spectral Lovers."

In such a piece we find the rough-hewn techniques of Donne trimmed and refined to appeal to the artistic tastes of a sophisticated twentieth century Southern gentlemen intensely concerned with nuances of mood and tone. I quote:

By night they haunted a thicket of April mist,  
As out of the strange ground strangely come to birth,  
Else two immaculate angels fallen on earth.  
Lovers they knew they were, but why unclasped, unknissed?  
Why should two lovers so frozen asunder in fear?  
And yet they were, they were.

Over the shredding of an April blossom  
Her thrilling fingers touched his quick with care;  
of many delicate postures she cast a snare;  
But for all the red heart beating in the pale bosom,  
Her face as of cunningly tinctured ivory  
Was hard with an agony.

Stormed by the little batteries of an April night  
Passionate being the essence of the field,  
Should the penetrable walls of the crumbling prison yield?  
And open up her treasure to the first clamorous knight  
"This is the mad moon, and must I surrender all?  
If he but as it, I shall."

And gesturing largely to the very moon of Easter,  
Kicking his steps and swishing the jubilant grass,  
And beheading some field flowers that had come to pass,  
He had reduced his tributaries faster,  
Had not considerations pinched his heart  
Unfitly for his art.

"Am I reeling with the sap of April like a drunkard?  
Blessed is he that taketh this richest of cities?  
But it is so stainless the sack were a thousand pities;  
This is that marble fortress not to be conquered,  
Lest its white peace in the black flame turn to tinder  
And an unutterable cinder."

They past me once in April, in the mist.  
No other season is it, when one walks and discovers,  
Two clad in the shapes of angels, being spectral lovers,  
Trailing a glory of moon-gold and amethyst,  
Who touch their quick fingers like a bird  
Whose songs shall never be heard.

The poem is representative of the Southern metaphysical tradition at its best. The richly complex attitude of sympathy and satire and the numerous concentrated metaphysical figures are presented in a psychological progression in which the scene is revealed through, and in some measure is a product of, the poet's mind. The metaphors and other figures in "Spectral Lovers" achieve a variety of effects, but more than anything they create a mood and atmosphere which is in many ways the raison d'être of the piece.

Characteristic of a large body of modern metaphysical verse, the metaphors and other figures in the piece are compressed, subordinates, and far less obvious than in most of the work of Donne, Herbert, and other seventeenth century metaphysicals. The mood and subtle delicacy of the poem is sustained by the strongly connotative quality of two antithetical metaphorical systems that are such an integral part of the work that they are scarcely noted as metaphysical devices. In the first, the lovers are presented as ghosts or spirits. Ransom refers to the pair as "two immaculate lovers" or as "two clad in the shape of angels, being spectral lovers," and they "haunt a thicket of April mist." The emphasis on the mist and the night, as well as the constant repetition of the word "April", tends to add to the phantom-like impression which the lovers suggest. This rather spiritual idea is also opposed by implication to the more vital and sensual idea of sex, spring and new life. They are refined references to sexual consummation in the metaphor of the "crumbling prison" and the "richest of studies." And a concentrated figure like "a thicket of April mist" connotes an amorous affair as well as an spring evening in April. Again much is said of the sweet subtlety

of the occasion in such a one-line metaphor as this:

Of many delicate postures she cast a snare.

The mood and feelings of the lovers are suggested deftly in the youth's cry:

"Am I reeling with the sap of April like a drunkard?"

In figures such as this the compressed, psychological connotative metaphor of the twentieth century is found at its best. The sap is of course compared with a liquor, but its meaning can only be understood when it is seen in the context of the poem as symbolizing spring. Thus sap, which has something in common with both liquor and spring, is used metaphorically as a kind of common denominator to help associate the ideas of drunkenness and spring. The spring idea is further developed in the allusions to Easter and the "jubilant grass." It will be noted again that such metaphors do not depend upon a logical development nearly so much as upon the powerful concentration of connotations of love, spring and drunkenness within the context of the poem.

The nervous tempo of the whole poem is further stressed in allusions to the unclasped, un-kissed lovers, suggesting an unresolved conflict, and as the poet asks:

Why should two lovers be frozen asunder in fear?

A similar feeling is evoked by the "shredding of an April blossom," where the textural detail connotes unrest and tension. Such metaphysical devices as paradox and antithesis are also utilized to advantage in suggesting the same mood.

"Spectral Lovers," "Nameless Song" and other modern metaphysical poems reveal how a poet may create vague feelings of mood and atmosphere by employing metaphors whose appeal lies in their power of psychological

suggestion rather than in a logical understanding of them--just as a pianist may more quickly communicate a sense of mood with a shimmering arpeggio than with an intricate fugue.

\* \* \* \* \*

A second function of the psychological metaphor in modern metaphysical verse is to express a subtle experience--as though through a sudden intuitive insight--with far more sensitivity and truth than a logical explanation could afford. Yeats' "Broken Dreams", Mrs. Wylie's "The Lovine Cup," Tate's "The Paradigm," Ransom's "Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter" and other modern poems show an interest in the treatment of a specific relationship, a specific experience and a specific time--a concern particularly characteristic of modern verse. This tendency of modern poets to focus their view more closely has led most of the twentieth century metaphysicals to employ metaphor with delicate psychological overtones to give a more sensitive, more subjective account of an experience. Aesthetic aims of this kind are well achieved in a poem such as Eliot's "Hysteria:"

As she laughed I was aware of becoming involved  
in her laughter and being a part of it, until her  
teeth were only accidental stars with a talent  
for quadrille. I was drawn in by short gasps, in-  
haled at each momentary recovery, lost finally in  
the dark caverns of her throat, bruised by the  
ripples of unseen muscles. An elderly waiter with  
trembling hands was hurriedly spreading a pink and  
white checked cloth over the rusty green iron table,  
saying: "If the lady and gentlemen wish to take  
their tea in the garden, if the lady and gentlemen  
wish to take their tea in the garden..." I decided  
that if the shaking of her breasts could be stopped,  
some of the fragments of the afternoon might be col-  
lected, and I concentrated my attention with careful-  
subtlety to this end.

It is the intensity and immediacy of an experience, rather than its complexity, that the poet conveys here through the opening metaphorical device. As in a great deal of modern metaphysical poetry, the tenor-vehicle relation becomes indistinct in the play of psychological connotation, but the figure is striking in its subjectivism and in the feeling of sympathy it conveys. The poet's sexual-psychological concentration on the woman and her compelling laughter is expressed in physical terms as though he himself were drawn in by it irresistibly, even lost in her throat and bruised by her muscles. This imagery seems to express on the physical plane the poet's feeling of losing his own will and identity in the will and identity of the woman. His association of the woman's teeth with "accidental stars with a talent for quadrille" also helps stress the intense concentration that ignores a relationship to time and space.

Another attempt to a specific human experience of some delicacy in terms of a metaphor is seen in Auden's Poem XXVI, from "On This Island:"

That night when joy began  
Our narrowest veins to flush  
We waited for the flash  
Of morning's levelled gun.

But morning let us pass  
And day by day relief  
Out grew his nervous laugh;  
Grows credulous of peace

As mile by mile is seen  
No trespasser's reproach  
And love's best glasses reach  
No fields but are his own.

The metaphor of the trespassers on love's estates and other figures are used here by the poet to express an experience of love in an unsure modern society; for Auden, probably more than any other modern metaphysicals, is concerned with the inescapable pressure of modern life on

the individual. Employing modern conceits, Auden suggests with considerably psychological precision a typically modern experience. The poem opens with the rich figure of the flushing of the veins, and the implication is that something is being flushed away--perhaps the vague all-pervading twentieth century uneasiness which is inimical to love.

On the most obvious plane of metaphorical understanding falling in love is compared with discovering new lands, as in Donne's "To His Mistress Going to Bed." But the subtle delicacy of the piece depends upon an equation of the fear that attends the act of trespassing on another's property--an act which typifies the physical restraints of modern life--and the uncertainty that attends falling in love in a modern world ridden with emotional and spiritual restraints. The lovers, half cynical and half afraid, await the "flash of morning's levelled gun." They give a "nervous laugh" after safely passing the first hazard, and finally they grow "credulous of peace"--perhaps too credulous.

The success of these pieces depends in large measure upon the precision with which the metaphors express in an artistic entity the flow and intensity of the mind in actual experience. This type of subjective, psychological metaphor--so closely associated with the principle of empathy, as in "Hysteria," -- is of course in high contrast to the type of logical metaphor describing a relationship in terms external to the human mind, as in Shakespeare's 87th sonnet, ("Farewell, thou art too dear for my possessing.")

\* \* \* \* \*



A third very important and distinctly modern function of twentieth century metaphysical metaphor is to convey satiric or ironic attitude. As in Eliot's "The Waste Land," James Joyce's "Ulysses" and other characteristic modern works constructed around a framework of a so-called nobler age, comparative structural devices may be used to stress a dissimilarity rather than a similarity. In other cases the satire may be more obvious and direct. This crisp satire, often self-inclusive in nature, is a distinct characteristic of modern metaphysical verse, and apparently indicates an intellectual revolt against nineteenth century positivism and optimism. It will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. An ingenious, very deft use of this element is found in Ransom's "Good Ships:"

Fleet ships encountering on the high seas  
Who speak, and unto eternity diverge--  
These hailed each other, poised on the loud surge  
Of one of Mrs. Grundy's Tuesday teas,  
Nor trimmed one sail to baffle the driving breeze.  
A macaroon absorbed her emotion;  
His hue was ashy, but an effect of ocean;  
They exchanged the nautical technicalities.

It was only a nothing or so, and thus they parted;  
Away they sailed, most certainly bound for port,  
So seaworthy, one felt they could not sink;  
Still there was a tremor shook them, I should think--  
Beautiful timbers fit for stormy sport  
And into miserly merchant hulks converted.

Ransom uses the old "ships that pass in the night" metaphor here in a way that probably seldom, if ever, occurred to the seventeenth century metaphysical poets, and yet the device he employs is fully as bold and complex as any seventeenth century figure. The poet's satirical use of the metaphor in this sonnet is particularly interesting because he

makes it serve the double purpose of pointing out simultaneously a similarity and a dissimilarity in the relationship of the lovers and the ships, while seeming only to indicate the similarity. The comparison is obvious and conventional and has been developed many times, usually with such a sentimental approach as it found, for example, in Beatrice Harragen's Ships that Pass in the Night. But the delightful satire--and the very crux of the poem lies in the dissimilarity between the bold ships braving the high seas and the lifeless, timorous couple, these could-be lovers which are so representative of the decadent Southern society of which they are a part. Only one other figure interrupts the extension of the ship conceit as in a typical compressed, connotative metaphor Ransom remarks:

A Macaroon absorbed all her emotion.

This deft satirical touch is particularly effective not only because it describes so neatly the quality and quantity of the lady's emotion, but because it also suggests her busily nibbling a macaroon over her tea, taking refuge from the little emotional crisis by turning to a familiar pettiness.

In "Winter Remembered," a self-satirical Ransom poem teeming with a metaphysical complexity, the poet closely identifies the effect of him of his mistress's absence and the numbing cold of winter, elaborating upon the metaphor with a nice delicacy. The five stanza poem concludes:

Dear love, these fingers that had known your touch,  
And tied our separate forces first together,  
Were ten poor idiot fingers not worth much,  
Ten frozen parsnips hanging in the weather.

It is characteristic of Ransom's style than in these closing self-satirical lines, where the language appears most "unpoetic" and a little

ridiculous, he is really most tender and serious. Again the figure is of course completely illogical, but its use in the context of the poem conveys to the reader's mind a definite suggestion of sincere, deeply-felt humility.

A somewhat similar use of a self-inclusive satire developed through a fundamentally connotative metaphor is seen in Yeats's dryly humorous, yet intensely serious "Sailing to Byzantium:"

I

That is no country for old men. The young  
In one another's arms, birds in the trees,  
--Those dying generations--at their song,  
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,  
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long  
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.  
Caught in that sensual music all neglect  
Monuments of unageing intellect.

II

An aged man is but a paltry thing,  
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless  
Soul clap its hands and sing, louder sing  
For every tatter in its mortal dress,  
Nor is there singing school but studying  
Monuments of its own magnificence;  
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come  
To the holy city of Byzantium.

Continuing this self-inclusive ironic attitude in the remaining two stanzas, the poet asks that the holy sages of Byzantium be the "singing-masters" of his soul, and that he be gathered "into the artifice of eternity." In conclusion he further elaborates upon his desire for unchanging artistic and intellectual forms.

It is apparent that the metaphors of the second stanza are important not because of their logic or aptness, but rather because of their wryly humorous, ironic connotations.

This is seen as the aging poet likens himself to "a tattered coat upon a stick", and speaks of his soul clapping its hands, taking music lessons and studying "monuments of its own magnificence." The metaphors are employed to embody a deep, keen realization of deficiencies together with a quite natural pride. The introduction of the symbol of Byzantium into the piece is of course an outgrowth of nineteenth century English and French practice rather than the seventeenth century metaphysical style.

Again in "A Coat", Yeats gives a caustic, satiric twist to a metaphor that is somewhat reminiscent of Mrs. Wylie's "A Red Carpet for Shelley:"

I made my song a coat  
Covered with embroideries  
Out of old mythologies  
From heel to throat ;  
But the fools caught it,  
Wore it in the world's eyes  
As though they'd wrought it.  
Song, let them take it,  
For there's more enterprise  
In walking naked.

A similar use of metaphor is found in numerous passages from the works of Eliot, Mrs. Wylie, Auden, Tate and Warren. Eliot's well-known "The Hippopotamus," for instance, is based on a satiric metaphorical construction through which the poet seems both to praise and assail the "True Church" in identifying it by implication with the sluggish, broad-backed hippopotamus. In poem XXX from "Poems" Auden gives a biting power to his verse as he asks metaphorically for a "sovereign touch" to cure the "intolerable neural itch," and speaks

of "the lair's quincy" and the "coward's stance." And Tate in "The Paradigm," quoted in the last chapter, remarked that the hate of the former lovers who now freeze the air with their ill-feeling is an "ignorant paradigm", inferring that the pair are like ignorant pupils who, declining and conjugating erroneously, make mistakes that must not be taken too seriously.

\* \* \* \* \*

Other metaphysical devices such as paradox, antithesis and word-play, show a line of development closely paralleling that of metaphor. These figures are used much less frequently in the twentieth century than in the seventeenth, but again the stylistic changes in the modern devices indicate a shift from a logical to a more psychological viewpoint as, for instance, in a tendency for the older antithesis to be supplanted by a new type of antithesis which depends for its effect upon contrasts of mood rather than logical juxtaposition.

This can be seen clearly in comparing some of the verse of Donne and Crashaw with that of modern metaphysical poets. In a few lines, for example, from Donne's "Good Friday, 1613, "Riding Westward," there is found a powerful, concentrated use of antithesis, paradox and the pun in which the devices are employed with strict logic to accentuate the intellectual and emotional content of the passage.

Hence is't, that I am carryed towards the West  
This day, when my soules forme bends toward the East.  
There I should see a Sun, by rising set,  
And by that setting endlesse day beget.

Or again the luminous contrasts of "Crucifying," one of seven sonnets in Donne's "La Corona" sequence in which some of the poet's most beautiful and striking metaphysical word-play is found:

By miracles exceeding the power of man,  
 Her faith in some, envie in some becat,  
 For, what weake spirits admire, ambitious, hate;  
 In both affections many to him ran,  
 But Oh! The worst are most, they will and can,  
 Alas, and do, unto the immaculate,  
 Whose creature Fate is now prescribe a Fate,  
 Measuring selfe-lives infinity to a span,  
 Nay to an inch, Loe, where condemned hee  
 Beares his owne crosse, with paine, yet by and by  
 When it bears him, he must beare more and die.  
 Now thou art lifted up, draw mee to thee,  
 And at they death giving such liberall dole,  
 Hoyst, with one drop of thy blood, my dry soule.

Even a cursory examination will reveal that the piece abounds in antithesis and paradox of a logical nature. The same is true of a passage such as the following from Crashaw's semi-drama, "In the Glorious Epiphanie or Our Lord God, A Hymn sung as by the Three Kings:"

(1st King) Thus shall that reverend child of light  
 (2nd King) By being scholar first of that new light,  
 Come forth Great Master of the mystick day;  
 (3rd King) And teach obscure MANKIND a more close way  
 By the stragall negative light  
 Of a most wise and well-abused Night  
 To read more lesible thing originall Ray,  
 (Chorus) And make our Darkness serve THEY day;  
 Maintaining 'twixt thy world and ours  
 A commerce of contrary powres,  
 A mutuall trade  
 'twixt sun and MOON  
 By confederat BLACK and WHITE  
 Borrowing day and lending night.

The greatest appeal of these minor metaphysical devices, then, seems to lie in their display of intellectual virtuosity and in their power, as in the "La Corona" sonnets, to give a relationship deeper meaning by point it up logically. Again, as in the case of progression and metaphor, there is a certain logical carry-over from the seventeenth into the twentieth century, but the forms in general are softened by the intervening nineteenth century romanticism and assume a more psychological cast.

In Mrs. Wylie's "The Loving Cup," a fine example of the use of a modified logical method of progression in modern metaphysical poetry, there is also a remnant of logical antithesis as the poet opposes "division" and the "sole cup' brim," health and disease, joy and despair. A somewhat different, more typically modern use of antithesis appears in such passages as the following from Ransom's "Spectral Lovers:"

But for all the red heart beating in the pale bosom,  
Her face as if cunningly tintured ivory  
Was hard with an agony.

Or again:

"This is that marble fortress not to be conquered,  
Lest its white peace in the black flare turn to tinder  
And an unutterable cinder."

Here, however, the contrasts between "red heart" and "pale bosom," and between "white peace" and "black flare" are subordinate to the poem as a whole these figures are not the most outstanding feature of a poem, as in the case with a great deal of seventeenth century metaphysical devices. In fact this word-play in "Spectral Lovers" makes a definite contribution to the literary, moody, slightly satiric tone of the piece. The artistic effect of the antithesis is decorative, not sharply sensate in the seventeenth century manner.

Contrasting themes and moods which are perhaps related to the leit-motif system of Wagner and symbolist verse-antitheses on a larger scale--are more distinctly characteristic of modern metaphysical poetry than the more conventional rhetorical figures. The antithetical metaphorical systems of "Spectral Lovers," opposing a ghostly, ethereal mood with hints of vital life forces, were previously pointed out in the discussion of metaphor. Eliot's objective

correlatives of the "waste land" and the "rose garden" are based on a similar contrasting pattern which extends throughout his work.

Another highly sensuous, connotative use of contrasting sensations, heat and coolness, is found in Mrs. Gillie's "August":

Why should this Negro insolently stride  
Down the red noonday on such noiseless feet?  
Filed in his barrow, tawnier than wheat,  
Lie heaps of smouldering daisies, sombre-eyes,  
Their copper petals shrivelled up with pride,  
Hot with a superfluity of heat,  
Like a great brazier borne along the street  
By captive leopards, black and burning pied.

Are there no water-lilies, smooth as cream,  
With long stems dripping crystal? Are there none  
Like those white lilies, luminous and cool,  
Plucked from some hemlock-darkened northern  
stream  
By fair-haired swimmers, diving where the sun  
scarcely warms the surface of the deepest pool?

The underlying idea developed throughout the sonnet is the contrast between the heat theme, suggested in the Negro metaphor in the octet, and the coolness theme, developed in the rather vague connotative references in sestet. In the octet, even in the detail of the leopards there is a complete consistency of impression, as they not only suggest the jungle with its "superfluity of heat," but also the Negro, the original child of the jungle. The ideas of coolness is suggested just as vividly and sensitively in the sestet. The poet speaks of "water lilies, smooth as cream...luminous and cool" with "long stems dripping crystal" and of deep pools in "hemlock-darkened northern streams" scarcely warmed by the sun. It is apparent that this somewhat vague, highly suggestive type of antithesis is closely akin to the type of connotative, psychological metaphor found in "Prufrock," "Viennese Waltz" and numerous other modern metaphysical poems.



A study of such devices as metaphor and antithesis reveals with considerable clarity how modern metaphysical poetry is both similar to, and different from, the seventeenth century variety. The renaissance of the seventeenth century metaphysical spirit is seen in the extended use of metaphor and other figures in modern metaphysical verse. While seventeenth century figures tend to be precise, sharp and logical, as in Herbert's "Paradise" and Donne's "La Corona" sonnets, and are fundamentally exterior to the workings of the mind, twentieth century figures tend to be more psychological, and often depend for apprehension upon a process of empathy.

These modern devices, which show the influence of a romantic style such as that found in LaFontaine's "Méditation Grisatre," function most frequently through a process of connotation that immediately suggests to the mind certain subtle moods, complex experiences or ironic attitudes, which could not be communicated in logical terms -- even the pliable, sensitive logic of the seventeenth century metaphysicals.

CHAPTER IV

THE TREATMENT OF EXPERIENCE

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The basic raison d'etre for good poetry is probably the expression of some type of human experience. In the last two chapters, treating poetic progression and metaphysical devices, I examined poetic elements which are a vital, organic part of this expression. In this chapter I shall consider the characteristics of the treatment of human experience in seventeenth and twentieth century metaphysical poetry. A poet must almost inevitably treat experience from some special approach, some particular "angle." I am interested in finding what aspects of an experience--its dominant emotional structure, its conflicts, or its connotative overtones--are emphasized. I wish to show whether the poet is concerned with presenting frankly the complexity of an experience or with concentrating on a selective facet of the vast and varied material of experience.

Briefly, metaphysical poets from Shakespeare, the amorous sonneteer, to Auden, the ardent leftist, have tended to write with a complexity and sense for subtle contradictions that testified to their mature grasp of human experience in its many-sided aspects. In the work of these poets there is usually a fusion of the intellectual and the emotional, the "poetic" and the "unpoetic," approbation and satire. There is a full realization that there are usually at least two possibilities, two ways of life, two ways of viewing a relationship or an experience. There is often, particularly in the verse of the modern metaphysicals, a self-criticism. It must of course be noted that such a complex, integrated mode of expression is not a quality possessed exclusively by the metaphysical poets, although it is characteristic of their work in both the

seventeenth and twentieth centuries. Other schools, such as the neo-classic, romantic or Victorian, have carried to a high pinnacle of perfection a particular aspect of experience, such as the contemplation of beauty, or a particular attitude toward experience, such as satire, while metaphysical poets have tended to emphasize from varying approaches the complexity and inner contradictions of experience.<sup>1</sup>

An element of tension, growing from an opposition of wit and seriousness or irony and tenderness, is one of the chief ingredients in this metaphysical treatment of human experience. It is true that the seventeenth century metaphysical poets may often seem witty, perverse and abstruse for the mere sake of being so, but on a closer examination the antitheses, the paradoxical ratiocination, the heterogeneous metaphors and the "unpoetic" idiom will be seen to assist in expressing subtle and knotty states of mind. These metaphysical effects are often obtained by setting the intellect against the emotions, as in some of Shakespeare's best sonnets, or by setting one emotion against another.

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1. A similar complexity of experience and mixture of attitudes is found in a number of Rembrandt's works, particularly in his etchings of religious subjects. During a period extending from the artist's marriage to Saskia van Uylenburgh in 1634 to his wife's death in 1642 Rembrandt's etchings reveal a fusion of the religious and serious with a sophisticated, tongue-in-cheek irony that frequently satirizes the popular conception of an event, particularly a supernatural event. This period begins with "The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds," 1634, and perhaps reaches its high point with "Adam and Eve," 1638. Other etchings showing these rather metaphysical characteristics are "Christ Driving the Money Changers from the Temple," 1635; "The Death of the Virgin," 1639; "The Beheading of St. John the Baptist," 1640, and "The Angel Departing from Tobias and His Family," 1641." A similar serio-comic approach is seen in Rembrandt's mythological painting, "The Rape of Ganymede," 1655. There appears to be a possibility that Rembrandt was influenced by Donne. Certainly there are basic similarities in their treatments of experience, although Rembrandt in his wit and irony was more rational and modern-minded than Donne. It is also known that Sir Constantijn Huygens, (1596-1687), famous Dutch poet and diplomat and a close friend of Donne, translated many of Donne's poems into Dutch. His translation of the English poet's verse is supposed to have appeared in Holland in 1654, the year in which Rembrandt's metaphysical wit and irony first became evident. (Gosse, Edmund, "Constantijn Huygens," Encyclopedia Britannica, p. 22.)

This is true of a great deal of metaphysical poetry because in a large measure it is a poetry of mental struggle, of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual conflict. Sometimes, as in much of the work of the modern metaphysicians, it is a poetry of dissatisfaction or resignation in the face of seemingly irreconcilable conflicts, psychological and social.

Cleanth Brooks was one of the first to emphasize this complexity and fusion of opposites in metaphysical poets' attitudes in the expression of experience. He points out the irony and "wit," the essentially comic element intermingled with themes of "high seriousness" in the verse of both the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. He speaks often of a characteristic metaphysical "ironic contemplation" which tends to render a poem impervious to the destructive criticism of a different, more satiric viewpoint, and asserts that in the metaphysical medium the poet comes nearer than in most verse to expressing his experience as a complex mixture of sympathy and irony, bitterness and whimsy. Brooks explains that William Wordsworth and other early romantic poets distrusted the intellect and put their faith in a romantic simplicity, while with the progress of science in the nineteenth century Lord Tennyson and others felt the poet should offer spiritual solutions and inspirational messages, and should not play with witty images or indulge in an irony indicative of an awareness of the possible inadequacy of the solution or the inspirational message.<sup>1</sup>

Eliot refers to much the same qualities of metaphysical poetry when he speaks of the "tough reasonableness beneath a slight lyric grace"

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1. Brooks, Cleanth, Modern Poetry and the Tradition, pp. 3-35; 236-59

characteristic of the verse of Marvell.<sup>1</sup> In a very oft-quoted passage-- which is probably worth quoting again--Eliot elaborates in a slightly different approach upon this same metaphysical concern for the complexity of experience:

When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.<sup>2</sup>

It is probably the freshness, the frankness, and the completeness of these "new wholes" that concerns Eliot most as poet and critic. Declaring that poets should be simultaneously both great psychologists and great masters of diction, he explains they must look into the cerebral cortex, the nervous system, and the digestive tracts, and then form a precise and sharply communicable verbal pattern projecting their experience.<sup>3</sup>

Occasionally in metaphysical verse there are indications of a belief in this more complex view of life. In "Of the Progress of the Soule" Donne writes of Elizabeth Drury:

We understood  
Her by her sight; her pure and eloquent blood  
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought  
That one might almost say her body thought.

Again in Yeats' "Crazy Jane Talks With the Bishop;"

'Fair and foul are near of kin,  
And fair needs foul,' I cried.

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1. Eliot, T.S., Selected Essays, pp. 252  
 2. Ibid., p. 247  
 3. Ibid., pp. 249-50

The piece continues:

'A woman can be proud and stiff  
When on love intent;  
But Love has pitched his mansion in  
The place of excrement;  
For nothing can be sole or whole  
That has not been rent.'

A similar serio-comic tone is expressed in Mrs. Wylie's "Let No Charitable Hope."

Now let no charitable hope  
Confuse my mind with images  
Of eagle and of antelope:  
I am in nature none of these.

I was, being human, born alone;  
I am, being woman, hard beset;  
I live be squeezing from a stone  
The little nourishment I get.

In masks outrageous and austere  
The years go by in single file;  
But none has merited my fear,  
And none has quite escaped my smile.

The poet says in substance that life is fundamentally serious, but that its austerity is relieved by a perception of the comic and ironic lurking behind the serious and tragic.

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While this poetic complexity and sincere endeavor by poets to reveal many aspects of an experience is typical of both seventeenth and twentieth century metaphysical poetry, the treatment of experience-- as should be expected--is fundamentally different. While the categories, "logical" and "psychological," are perhaps not literally applicable in this discussion, the significant and distinct characteristics of experiential interpretation in both periods do correspond basically to a logical-psychological polarity. I shall consider these key differences briefly.

The seventeenth century logical approach: An analysis of seventeenth century metaphysical poetry, with an eye to its distinctive characteristics as opposed to modern verse, will reveal that dominant elements in its projection of serious experience are a poem-unifying, deeply felt emotion and a playful wit dancing through the gravest thoughts, as seen, for instance, in Donne's "The Dissolution" or Herbert's "The Artillerie." Also, very often the seventeenth century poet will consider and resolve some problem in human experience.

I noted that the early metaphysical poet relied upon logic and syllogism in his poetic progression and metaphor. These forms of approach are also basic in his treatment of experience. In a syllogism all the relevant facts are given objectively and freely committed to a logical pattern, and an attempt made to bring order out of a problem through reason. In a creative action that, like the syllogism, is an outstanding intellectual achievement, the seventeenth century metaphysical poet usually frankly and almost unreservedly commits the emotional elements of his experience to a logical structure,<sup>1</sup> seeking to solve his "problem" and to resolve completely his emotions

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1. Ransom in "Shakespeare at Sonnets," in The World's Body, assumes that feelings are calls to action, although sometimes too complex for resolution in action, and distinguishes between metaphysical verse which seeks to put an end to feelings through intellectual constructions and a romantic poetry, "a half-way action providing many resting places for the feelings to agitate themselves." Giving the discussion a psychological turn, he contrasts behaviorist (metaphysical) verse with associationist (romantic) poetry. (pp. 286-91)

A similar thesis is posited by Eliot in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotion know what it means to want to escape from them." Neither Ransom nor Eliot, however, consider the "behaviorist" and "associationist" approaches in relation to the distinguishing characteristics of seventeenth century and modern metaphysical verse.



in this way, markedly unselfconscious and entirely unabashed in his naturalism or sensualism. There is the same kind of controlled and unhesitant straightforwardness that is found in the syllogism. This logical treatment of experience is cathartic, proceeding straight through to a resolution of conflict and an extinction of emotion.

Seventeenth century metaphysical wit has an organic relation to this type of cathartic, "syllogistic" projection of experience. Like the seventeenth century treatment of progression, metaphor, and the material of experience, metaphysical wit bears the stamp of the intellect--a kind of controlled exploitation of the imagination. Again wit, as it appears in metaphor, antithesis, puns and similar figures, is an important element in the logical structure to which the poet commits to advantage the breadth and depth of his experience. As a fundamentally logical device it provides an added complexity through an "intellectualizing" in the interpretation of experience. The exuberance of seventeenth century wit in its playful extravagance and obscurity seems to show a positive acceptance of life similar to that indicated in the straightforward, unhesitant, "syllogistic" treatment of experience.

The twentieth century psychological approach: Modern metaphysical verse seems characterized most often by a definite avoidance of a direct treatment of human experience, by a constant flow of only partly projected feelings, and a self-inclusive negating irony indicative of a certain degree of mental turmoil and uncertainty. The subtlety and complexity of an experience is realized with a great deal of poetic finesse, but there is seldom a serious attempt to resolve a conflict or to bring a meaningful order out of contradictory attitudes. In fact there is seldom found the type of well defined "problem" seen so often in seventeenth century metaphysical verse.

In twentieth century metaphysical poetry the emotional elements are more diversified, more scattered, less concentrated in well defined powerful emotions growing out of an ordered experience. Paradoxically, there is a pervading subjectivism merged with a relatively impersonal approach. The apparently inhibited modern poet, such as Eliot or Hanson, tends to hint at his feelings in terms of variables, symbols and a general private idiom rather than to express them forthrightly in the more universal language of a poetic convention such as that in which Donne and the Elizabethans usually wrote. The extremely subjective, yet fundamentally impersonal, character of a poem like Eliot's "The Waste Land" is at once apparent.

This type of connotative subjectivism which avoids outright emotional revelation is seen in an increased emphasis in modern metaphysical poetry on what may be called mood and tone, emotive intangibles which are inherent as overtones and undercurrents in most experience, and which the modern metaphysicals have brought to their verse with a very sensitive, if quite self-conscious finesse. Poetic mood lies in the communication of the experiential mood, or kind of all-pervading emotional atmosphere which attaches itself to an experience--and is a part of that experience. Poetic tone is not actually a part of the poet's original experience, but is an expression--frequently ironic--of his attitudes toward himself and his audience in communicating an experience within the poem. The mood of a poem may be thought of as the emotive product of the entire poetic situation with its varied textural details and all its implications. The emotions induced by this situation and its connotations produce a certain state of mind in the reader who is better able to feel himself closely identified with the poetic situation. The function of poetic mood is probably primarily a process of empathy.

On the other hand, poetic tone seems to grow from the poet's attitudes, as expressed directly or indirectly in the poem, toward the reader and toward the elements of experience being treated in the poem, whether he has a role in the poem or merely seems to approach the poetic material objectively.

While a playful wit resembling that of the seventeenth century sometimes sparkles against the usually somewhat more somber dress of modern verse, a romantic irony, springing largely from the work of the French symbolists and other nineteenth century romantics, is one of the most distinct characteristics of twentieth century metaphysical poetry. As wit seems related organically to the seventeenth century logical structures, this irony seems similarly related to twentieth century psychological and romantic forms as it often suggests a mental state of indecision or vacillation, into which no logical order has been introduced. This modern irony often becomes almost synonymous with the rather unstable emotional attitude of the "disillusioned intellectual" of the twentieth century "waste land" who self-pityingly turns in upon himself. While this use of irony adds almost immeasurably to the sensitiveness and completeness of the poet's account, it basically indicates a rejection of life, or perhaps an amused, cynical tolerance of life that dallies with the stuff of human experience.

In brief, metaphysical poetry--and indeed most poetry--in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries shows an exceptional subtlety and complexity in its projection of human experience, but this expression becomes fundamentally different in the positive, boldly emotional, witty verse of the seventeenth century and in the rather negative, inhibited, subjective and ironic poetry of the modern period. These characteristics may be brought out more clearly in an examination of two basically similar poems treating a poet's wooing of his

mistress, Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" and Ransom's "Triumph." I quote the Marvell piece:

Had we but world enough, and time,  
 This coyness, Lady, were no crime,  
 We would sit down, and think which way  
 To walk, and pass our love's day.  
 Thou by the Indian Ganges' side  
 Should'st rubies find: I by the tide  
 Of Humber would complain. I would  
 Love you ten years before the flood,  
 and you should, if you please, refuse  
 Till the conversion of the Jews;  
 My vegetable love should grow  
 Vaster than empires and more slow;  
 An hundred years should go to praise  
 Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;  
 Two hundred to adore each breast,  
 But thirty thousand to the rest;  
 An age at least to every part,  
 And the last age should show your heart.  
 For, lady, you deserve this state,  
 Now would I love at lower rate.

But at my back I always hear  
 Time's winged chariot hurrying near,  
 and wonder all before us lie  
 Deserts of vast eternity.  
 Thy beauty shall no more be found,  
 nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound  
 My echoing song: then worms shall try  
 That long preserved virginity,  
 And your quaint honor turn to dust,  
 And into ashes all my lust:  
 The grave's a fine and private place,  
 But none, I think, do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue  
 Sits on thy skin like morning dew,  
 And while thy willing soul transpires  
 At every pore with instant fires,  
 Now let us sport us while we may,  
 And now, like amorous birds of prey  
 Rather at once our time devour,  
 Than languish in his slow-chaped power.  
 Let us roll all our strength and all  
 Our sweetness up into one ball,  
 And tear our pleasures with rough strife,  
 Through the iron gates of life;  
 Thus, though we cannot make our sun  
 Stand still, yet we will make him run.

Outside the poetry of Donne there are few poems in the English language in which gravity or wit, and the intellect and the emotions,

coalesce so successfully as in this piece, and it is easy to find here what Eliot in his essay, "Andrew Marvell," alluded to as "tough reasonableness beneath a slight lyric grace."

This "tough reasonableness" is seen in some measure in the strict, syllogistic logic of the poem's organization and progression. In his premises, the poet tells of his love which he would like to cultivate and express throughout the world for all time, but he hears "Time's winged chariot" and recalls that nothing lies ahead but "deserts of vast eternity." Therefore, he concludes, let us love while we may and roll all our strength and sweetness "up into one ball." The poet is faced with the "problem" of enjoying the full measure of his abundant love--considering the narrow limits of a mortal life span and the coyness of mortal women--and presumably solves the enigma in overcoming his mistress's objections in a forceful appeal to a carpe diem philosophy in the closing stanza.

Indeed the cogent logic of this organizational structure undoubtedly contributes to the deeply-felt emotional power of the poem and to the compelling conviction of the poet's appeal. A dynamic directness characterizes Marvell's address to his mistress as he refers to a love that takes on heroic proportions as he alludes to all lands and ages, and as he makes a frank plea for sensual pleasure. He mentions unabashed his own "lust," and there is an almost ruthless vitality found throughout the last stanza as he speaks of the "instant fires" at every pore, of "amorous birds of prey" devouring time, and pleads for pleasures torn "with rough strife" from the hard, unyielding exigencies of life. Particularly significant is the fact that the piece ends on a note of optimism and acceptance as the poet rids himself of his longings in presenting the forceful logic of his plea and in envisioning a completely

satisfying amorous triumph. Needless to say, the inhibited modern poet usually does not foresee a similar success.

The intense seriousness of the poet's appeal is accented by the witty levity and teasing irony in references to the worms that will destroy "that long preserved virginity" and to the fine privacy of the grave--where none embrace. There is also a certain tongue-in-cheek humor in the allusions to his coy mistress's "willing soul," and to his own "lust." More fertile wit is seen in the references to the "vegetable love," the brilliant metaphors of "Time's winged chariot" and the "deserts of vast eternity," and the closing conceit on the sun, as well as in the exaggerated gallantries of the first stanza. This use of wit and light satire increases the sense of convincing reality conveyed by the piece and provides a broader, more sympathetic basis for communication.

A quite different, twentieth century culture is seen reflected in a poem about a modern poet-wooer, Ransom's "Triumph."

Athens, a fragile kingdom by the foam,  
Assumed the stranger's yoke; but then behold how meek  
Those unbred Caesars grew, who spent their fruits of Rome  
For ever after, trying to be Greek.

I too shook out my locks like one born royal;  
For she dissolved in tears and said my barbarous name,  
And took my oath, she was so piteous and loyal:  
Vote the young Caesar triumph, spread his fame!

But oh, I find my captive was not caught.  
It was her empty house that fell before my legions;  
Of where her soul inhabits I have conquered naught;  
It is so far from these my Roman regions.

This little poem of exquisite subtlety is constructed around two interlocking psychological metaphors depending much more for their success upon a delicate web of connotation than upon a logical pattern. Although it is impersonal in tone, it is interesting as one of the few first-person poems written by Ransom. In describing his relationship

with his beloved, the poet deals in his house-occupant metaphor with the philosophical relation of the body and soul, and again with the historical relationship of Rome and Greece--indeed an ample share of metaphysical intellectualism for one three-stanza love lyric.

There is no attempt to resolve a problem, and if the poet really feels very deeply about this matter, he is reluctant to express his grief in a very forthright fashion. The piece is not characterized by a convincing deep emotion and a call to action, but by a very sensitive network of subjectivism centering around the contrasting connotations of Greece and Rome, the poem's mood of rather apathetic resignation, and its tone of self-inclusive irony. The relationship between the two lovers is not stated so directly as in "To His Coy Mistress"--but much more completely. As Rome conquered Greece and was yet unable to understand the spirit of her art and mores, so here the poet possesses the body of his mistress, but cannot feel that he touches her soul with his own. She is as Athens, a "fragile kingdom by the foam," and it is interesting to note the delicate connotations of "foam," as opposed to those of such words as "ocean" or "sea." The poet's Roman occupation is referred to in allusions to the "stranger's yoke," "barbarous name," legions, Caesar, triumph and fame. The soul of his mistress has fled, however, and now occupies a home which he cannot conquer because it is so far from his "Roman regions," so far removed from his less spiritual, less sensitive way of life. With a cultivated drawing room taste, the poet seems to dally with his feelings and to leave much unsaid. The reader is impressed by a mood of numb hopelessness suffusing the poet's meditations from the first lines to the end of the piece.

The self-conscious, ironic tone which contributes a variety and complexity to the texture of the poem is even more apparent. An attitude of tongue-in-cheek good humor is of course found in "To His Coy

"Mistress," but it becomes a much more pronounced factor in the verse of Hanson, Tate, Eliot and other modern metaphysicals as they seem to stand to the side, as it were, and keenly discern, interpret and contemplate. The poetic tone in "Triumph" is most evident in the poet's ironic, satiric treatment of himself in references to the "stranger's yoke," his "Roman regions" and the "unbred Caesars.....trying to be Greek." But there is also perhaps the faintest tinge of irony in his presentation of his mistress, like "a fragile kingdom by the foam," who, "so piteous and loyal," who "dissolved in tears" and said his "barbarous name." The poet, like a sophisticated conversationalist, seems really more concerned with the manner in which he turns a polished phrase in relating his little tale in terms of a historical parable than with a treatment of the actual emotional experience.

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Such comparisons indicate that the poetic treatment of experience in metaphysical poetry followed a line of development very similar to that seen in the transition from logical and objective progression and metaphor to psychological and subjective forms. In the early seventeenth century there was a sensitive and often introspective, yet complex and robust, treatment of experience, as in Donne's "A Valediction: To His Name in the Window." In the neo-classic period emotion was projected with a grand sweep and simplicity and an attempt was often made to titillate the senses, as in some of Dryden's verse and in Restoration drama. The poet of the romantic and Victorian eras adopted a selective, more exclusively "poetic" approach in his interpretation of experience, often emphasizing with keen insight the subjective overtones of an



occasion. Modern metaphysical verse boasts a great deal of the seventeenth century concern for the knotty complexities of experience together with an apparently romantic slant toward moody connotation and a stirring up of feelings rather than a more direct cathartic approach proceeding to an aesthetic extinction of emotions.

This bold spirit of frankness in which a poet ignored any repressions to get something "off his chest," so to speak, exists in varying degrees in the work of most of the seventeenth century metaphysicals, but pre-eminently in the poetry of Donne. It is seen in such a passage as this from Raleigh's "The Lie:"

Goe soule the bodies guest  
    uppon a thankelesse arrant,  
Feare not to teach the best  
    the truth shall be thy warrant:  
Goe since I needs must die,  
    and give the world the lie.

Say to the court it glowes,  
    and shines like rotten wood,  
Say to the church it shoves  
    whats good, and doth no good.  
If Church and Court reply,  
    then give them both the lie.

Tell Potentates they live  
    acting by others action,  
Not loved unless they give,  
    not strong but by affection.  
If Potentates reply,  
    give Potentates the lie., etc.

In the work of Donne this forceful, uninhibited approach is seen in his naturalism, his frank sensualism and his soul-baring psychological realism. There is, for instance, the realism and power of the opening lines of "Jealousie:"

Fond woman, which would'st have thy husband die,  
And yet complain'st of his great jealousie;  
If swolne with poyson, hee lay in his last bed,  
His body with a sere-barke covered,

Drawing his breath, as thick and short, as can  
 The nimblest crocheting Lusitanian,  
 Ready with loathsome vomiting to spue  
 His soule out of one hell, into a new,  
 Made deafe with his poore kindreds howling cries,  
 Begging with few feign'd teares, great legacies,  
 Thou would'st not weepe, but jolly, 'and frolicke bee,  
 As a slave, which to morrow should be free;  
 Yet weep'st thou, when thou seest him hungerly  
 Swallow his owne death, hearts-bane jealousy.

For is there much that will equal the metaphorical wit and almost startlingly frank sensualism of such pieces as "Loves Progress" and "To His Mistris Going to Bed." Comparing his examination of his mistress's body to a voyage in the former poem the poet presents this piece of unabashed writing:

There is a Creek where chosen pearls do swell,  
 The Remora, her cleaving tongue doth dwell.  
 These, and the glorious Promontory, her Chin  
 Ore past; and the streight Hollesmont betweene  
 The Sestos and Abidos of her breasts,  
 (Not of two Lovers, but two Loves the nests)  
 Succeeds a boundless sea, but yet thine eye  
 Some Island moles may scattered there descry;  
 And Sailing towards her India, in that way  
 Shall at her fair Atlantick Mavell stay;  
 Though thence the current be thy Pilot made,  
 Yet ere thou be where thou wouldst be embay'd,  
 Thou shalt upon another Forest set,  
 Where many Shipwrack, and no further get.

Another phase of Donne's unhesitant, direct treatment of complex human experience is found in a large number of his religious poems. The statement of deep feelings and mental turmoil is particularly effective in Sonnet XXX, the last of the "Holy Sonnets:"

Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one:  
 Inconstancy unnaturally hath begott  
 A constant habit; that when I would not  
 I change in vows, and in devotions.  
 As humorous is my contritione  
 As my prophane Love, and as soone forgott:  
 As ridlingly distemper'd, cold and hott,  
 As praying, as mute; as infinite, as none.  
 I durst not view heaven yesterday; and to day  
 In prayers, and flattering speaches I court God:

To morrow I quake with true feare of his rod.  
So my devout fitts come and go away  
Like a fantastique Ague: save that here  
Those are my best dayes, when I shake with feare.

Herbert's fine "The Collar" is somewhat similar in its frankness and psychological realism as the poet revolts for a few minutes against the strict demands of his service to God. The poem begins:

I struck the board, and cry'd, No more;  
I will abroad.  
That? shall I ever sigh and pine?  
My lines and life are free; free as the roade,  
Loose as the winde, as large as store.  
Shall I be still in suit?  
Have I no harvest but a thorn  
To let me bloud, and not restore  
What I have lost with cordiall fruit?

There are of course expressions of power and deeply felt emotion within and outside the modern metaphysical tradition, but there is a trend qualitatively and quantitatively toward a less outspoken, much more inhibited and precious style of writing. The modern metaphysical poet is almost always sophisticated and polished and, except for a few exceptions like Mrs. Wylie's "One Person" sonnet sequence and Warren's "The Return; An Elegy," quite impersonal. Very little in modern verse can match the forcefulness and complete frankness of the passages quoted above.

True, there is a certain realism in the work of the modern metaphysicals, particularly that of Eliot and Yeats. We find it in pieces like Eliot's "Morning at the Window," "Preludes," and "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," in Yeats's numerous homely images and in the quite sophisticated sensualism of poems like his "A Last Confession:" I quote the first two stanzas:

What lively lad most pleased me  
Of all that with me lay?  
I answer that I gave my soul

And loved in misery,  
But had great pleasure with a lad  
That I loved bodily.

Flinging from his arms I laughed  
To think his passion such  
He fancied that I gave a soul  
Did but our bodies touch,  
And laughed upon his breast to think  
Beast gave beast as much.

It is immediately evident that while a poem of this kind is cleverly amusing and highly polished, it does not boast the emotional impact or strength of personality of the Donne pieces quoted above.

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A delicate refinement, rather than robust directness, characterizes modern metaphysical verse. Many strands of experience are interwoven into an all-suffusing subjectivism as found in such poems as Ransom's "Spectral Lovers," with its comotative webwork of compressed metaphor. The poem is held together subtly by its mood and tone-little emotive effects- rather than by the unifying force of a personal emotion. Added to this subjective content is the vividly realized mood of the misty April evening and the ironic slightly condescending tone of the poem. Such a delicately complex passage as the following may be compared with the more direct and intense emotional qualities of the seventeenth century verse quoted:

Stormed by the little batteries of an April night  
Passionate being the essence of the field,  
Should the penetrable walls of the crumbling prison yield?  
And open up her treasure to the first clamorous knight?  
"This is the mad moon, and must I surrender all?  
If he but ask it, I shall."

In its general theme, sexual gratification, this poem is basically quite similar to Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" and Donne's "Loves Progress," but it is in high contrast in its lightly veiled, quite

literary approach and in its impersonal third-person emphasis. The poet's half-sympathetic, half-satiric attitude never is stated directly-- for it could not be--but it remains an integral part of the lyric. This element of fundamentally ironic tone seems chiefly a result of the poet's twentieth century inhibitions about an altogether serious expression of deep emotion. He seems to wish to participate in the emotion in some measure, yet to remain above it. This ironic approach is seen of course in the knowing references to the "little batteries" juxtaposed to the "penetrable walls" and the "crumbling prison," as well as in the stanza's three concluding lines.

In strong contrast to the seventeenth century poets, the modern metaphysicals are also very timid about expressing religious fervor. In the nineteenth century a deep, complex religious feeling was reflected in the verse of Miss Dickinson and Hopkins, but in the twentieth century the type of abstruse expression found in Eliot's "Ash Wednesday," for example, seems more characteristic of the period.

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Seventeenth century poetry usually is marked by big, intense emotions and the use of wit, while modern work is characterized by little disseminated feelings and the utilization of irony or satire. I have indicated the fundamental differences in the treatment of emotional experience in the two periods, and will now discuss the role of wit and irony in metaphysical verse.

Seventeenth century wit is a playful, intellectual element that tends to give greater meaning and depth to the more serious, emotional element in the poetry of the era. It is of course closely associated with the metaphysical love of learning, the Petrarchan-Elizabethan

regard for clever conceits in amorous verse, and with the fundamentally logical use of such devices as metaphor, antithesis, paradox, the pun and the anagram. It depends in a large measure on the presentation of ideas in a new, ingenious and pleasing way often involving the juxtaposition of abstract and concrete language. This was seen in Donne's use of the scrawled name in "A valediction: To My Name in the Window," and in Marvell's vigorous conceits in "To His Coy Mistress." A variety of wit, usually more psychological than logical in its function, is found in twentieth century metaphysical verse, but it is not--as in the seventeenth century--a distinct mark of the age.

Seventeenth century wit in its most characteristic and wittiest form sparkles throughout Donne's "The Flea:"

Mark but this flea, and mark in this  
How little that which thou deny'st me is;  
It suck'd me first, and now sucks thee,  
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be.  
Thou know'st that this cannot be said  
A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead;  
Yet this enjoys before it woo,  
And pamper'd, swells with blood made of two,  
And this, alas, is more than we would do.

O stay, three lives in one flea spare,  
Where we almost, yea more than married are.  
This flea is you and I, and this  
Our carriage bed and marriage temple is;  
Though parents grudge, and you, we're met  
And cloister'd in these living walls of jet.  
Though use make you apt to kill me,  
Let not to that, self-murder added be,  
And sacrilege: three sins in killing three.

Cruel and sudden, hast thou since  
Furged thy nail in blood of innocence?  
Wherein could this flea guilty be,  
Except in that drop which it suck'd from thee?  
Yet thou triumph'st, and say'st that thou  
Find'st not thyself nor me the weaker now.  
'Tis true. 'Tis true. 'Tis true. 'Tis true.  
Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me,  
Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee.

This striking exhibition of wit is quite typical of the seventeenth

century in the emphasis on a logical virtuosity that deftly and smoothly unites the serious--if not quite the sublime--and the ridiculous. However, the reader tends to lose sight of the nonsense couched in high-flown logic as he admires the brilliance of the poet's technique and is moved by the underlying earnestness of his plea. The working out of the poem depends on the bold, logical identification of the flea-bitten lovers and the carnivorous flea, and the piece reaches the height of its intensity as the bothersome little insect is logically identified in sublime religious terms with the "marriage bed" and "marriage temple" in which the pair are "cloister'd."

Much of the poem's distinctive appeal lies in its lively, spontaneous good spirits--so different from the literary preciousness of much modern metaphysical verse--together with its adherence to a strict logic. On a literal, broadly humorous plane the flea's biting of the lovers is used to symbolize both a corporeal, sexual union on a higher physical plane and an abstract matrimonial union on a still higher, spiritual plane. Although the poem is developed logically from the metaphor, it is filled with sprightly surprises as, at first, the fusion of the lovers' blood in the flea becomes an argument for sexual and marital union and then, at the conclusion, the lady's act of "self-murder" becomes through the poet's flexible logic an even stronger argument for this union. Such is the nature of seventeenth century wit in which the idea of the inherently poetic means virtually nothing, and the poet's essentially intellectual ingenuity in handling his material is almost everything.

In the religious poetry of Donne and other seventeenth century metaphysicals this display of playful wit attains a depth and beauty which often touches upon the sublime. Probably the most beautiful of Donne's metaphysical word-play is found in the "La Corona" sequence

of seven sonnets. There are indeed few lines more expressive than these of "Annunciation," the second sonnet of the sequence:

Salvation to all that will is nigh:  
That all which always is all everywhere  
Which cannot sin and yet all sins must bear,  
Which cannot die, yet cannot chuse but die,  
Lo, faithful Virgin, yields himself to lie  
In prison in thy womb; and though he there  
Can take no sin, nor thou it give, yet he'll wear,  
Taken from thence, flesh, which death's force may try.  
Ere by the spheres time was created, thou  
Wast in his mind, who is thy son and brother,  
Whon thou conceiv'st, conceiv'd; yea, thou art now  
Thy maker's maker and thy Father's mother;  
Thou'st light in dark, and shutt'st in little room  
Immensity, cloister'd in thy dear womb.

There is in this logical word-play a wonderful depth and clarity of thought charged with a burning emotional intensity. This question naturally arises: How can such an obviously artificial device as word-play assist the poet in conveying to his reader a more meaningful and vital sense of experience in all its barren beauty? Only a brief examination of the problem is attempted here. Donne's juxtaposition of words seems to indicate a clear understanding of the way in which certain verbal combinations may "point up" a poetic situation emotionally as well as intellectually. The word-play gives us, besides the pleasure of the neatly executed device, a deep sense of meaning and understanding. There is a near-maximum degree of empathy as the reader is able to "feel into" a situation. Donne has apparently utilized these logical devices to achieve an effect transcending the pleasure of mere ingenuity. The chief figures used by Donne are metaphor, antithesis and paradox, and paronomasia. These logical devices almost always function as a framework for the expression of rather complex ideas rather than just as an excuse for superficial word-play, as was the case sometimes during the earlier English Renaissance period.



Two functions of these basically logical figures are clear. First, because these figures are logical, their use leads to a definite and distinct statement of an idea or an experience, rather than a rather vague, more subjective suggestion of it. The reader's emotion is then not simply a sympathetic feeling of affinity for the emotion of the author--an act of faith, so to speak--but is grounded in a clear conception of the event that inspires the emotion--although of course from the poet's viewpoint. Secondly, the striking similarities or sharp contrasts stated or implied in these figures through effective juxtaposition of ideas tends to intensify the emotional content. It is, for instance, chiefly through the searching use of antithesis and paradox that the whole poignant tragedy told in the "La Corona" sonnets is made immediate and vital.

It is seen then that this wit played an important role in the cathartic expression of large-scale, deep emotions in providing appropriate logical forms and devices for a bold and direct projection of experience. These logical seventeenth century metaphysical figures afforded the poet an aesthetic control through which he could organize and channel his emotions and proceed to a resolution of conflict just as the syllogism and other similar devices provided a system for ordering his thinking and arriving at solutions to his problems. An examination of seventeenth century metaphysical verse indicates that the poet was putting an end to mental conflict through his poetry, and it is encouraging to find this aesthetic theory clearly corroborated in Donne's "The Triple Poole:"

Then as th'earth's inward narrow crooked lanes  
Do pur e sea waters fretfull salt away,  
I thought, if I could draw my paines,  
Through Rines venation, I should them allay.  
Grief brought to numbers cannot be so fierce,  
For, he tames it, that fetters it in verse.

Both Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" and Donne's "The Flea," for instance, can be thought of as logical, witty frameworks in which

the poet allayed his desire through his convincing plea for his mistress's surrender and the vicarious poetic fulfillment of his wishes. The seventeenth century poet seemed to seek this fulfillment frankly and logically while the modern poet would characteristically proceed toward this objective in a far more indirect and abstrusely symbolic fashion.

As with the use of the logical method of progression and logical metaphor, the seventeenth century logical wit is carried over in a modified form into the twentieth century. This logical heritage is often particularly evident in the poetry of Mrs. Wylie, as, for instance, in "The Loving Cup." The quite characteristic differences between the use of wit in the two centuries can be further illustrated in a comparison of two pieces, Crashaw's "An Epitaph Upon Mr. Brooke" and another Wylie poem, "To A Cough in the Street at Midnight." The two are peculiarly fit for consideration together because both deal with the theme of death and employ that witty device, the pun. The wit of the Crashaw piece is obvious:

Mr. brooke whose streame so great, so good,  
Was loved, was honoured, as a flood:  
Whose Bankes, the Muses dwelt upon,  
More than their own Helicon;  
Here at length, hath gladly found  
A quiet passage under ground;  
Meanwhile his loved Bankes now dry  
The Muses with their teares supply.

There seems to be nothing flippant or disrespectful in the ingenious extension of the combination pun and metaphor through the eight-line poem. On the contrary, the skill and appropriateness with which the poet handles the figure, particularly in the reference to the "quiet passage under ground," makes the piece a sincere tribute of considerable feeling. This complexly ordered wit, however, gives even to this death poem an element of certainty and acceptance.

Mrs. Wylie's rather serio-comic "To a Cough in the Street at Midnight"

also depends upon witty word-play for a part of its success, but its psychological emphasis on a mood is in high contrast to Crashaw's logical elaboration of an artificial conceit:

God rest you if you're dead;  
And bless, and send you safely home to bed  
If you are only old:  
God cure your cold,  
Whether it be but a cold in the head  
Or the more bitter cold which binds the dead.

The poem suggests seventeenth century technique in its use of playful wit in a serious context and in its near-frivolous treatment of a serious theme, but the most important quality of the piece is still the poet's sensitive, connotative expression of a subtle psychological experience. This poem's general vagueness and its psychological progression started by the stimulus of the overheard cough is clearly opposed to the controlled logic of the Crashaw piece. In the Lytle poem, of course, the sense of experience is less well ordered, but far more immediate.

Written in an essentially light vein, "To A Cough in the street at midnight" is especially interesting because of the poet's integration of the connotations, serious and comic, which she draws from the everyday and "unpoetic" theme of a cough and cold. In its incongruous juxtaposition of the ridiculous and the sublime the poem resembles Donne's "The Flea." The somber overtones of the poem, so typical of Mrs. Lytle and other modern metaphysicals, are suggested at both the beginning and end. But even such a fundamentally serious line as the first, "God rest you if you're dead," assumes a comic effect due to the sudden and familiar fashion in which the poet addresses one presumably dead. Such an expression as "God cure your cold" is also essentially humorous in its merging of the flippant and serious.

The most striking device in the poem, however, is the pun on "cold," which, although it is basically an abstraction in both senses in which it is used in the poem, is laden with strong sensate connotations in all its meanings. The poet's power of fusion here, suggestive of Eliot's "unified sensibility," is displayed very effectively in this juxtaposition of a snivelling head-cold with the dignity and mystery of death or approaching death. In fact it is probably the connotations of the word "cold" together with the vaguely suggested picture of deserted streets at midnight that lends the poem its awesome, somber sense of mood to which the wit and playful tone are subordinated. While the ordered figure of the Crashaw poem and its idea of death as just a continued "quiet passage under ground" suggests primarily a positive approach of acceptance, the all-suffusing subjectivism of the Lylye piece and its changing interpretations of "cold"--wavering between the sublime and ridiculous--create chiefly an attitude of uncertainty, loneliness and vague despair.

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A much more characteristic quality contributing to the complexity of twentieth century metaphysical verse is irony. Poetic irony, which often partakes of satire and is frequently self-inclusive--is chiefly a bringing into the treatment of experience an opposing attitude, a dissonant note, so that the poetic interpretation is not vulnerable, to an unsympathetic approach. In a poem marked by what Brooks calls an "ironic contemplation" a poet's mulling over a lost love might be balanced, so to speak, by an element of self-inclusive satire--somewhat as in Yeats's "Broken Dreams." Irony has in the modern period come to be an appropriate and apparently natural mode of expression of the "disillusioned intellectual" type of poet (like Eliot on occasion) who,

dissatisfied with modern society, tends to turn in upon himself self-pityingly, and of the seemingly inhibited modern poet (like Hanson and the Southern metaphysicals) who apparently blush to express a bare emotion unqualified by a sophisticated irony.

While wit, although often contributing to a projection of deep emotion, is an essentially logical and intellectual element, poetic irony, particularly in modern metaphysical verse, is on the whole a psychological and emotional quality.<sup>1</sup> Logic and wit are devices used to bring a certain aesthetic order to the projection of experience, while poetic irony more often reflects an immediate state of mind, an unordered flow of consciousness in a mind troubled with conflicts. It is usually a negating expression of emotion, however, and sometimes appears almost as an unemotional detachment because it is chiefly an expression of intumed pity or emotional suppression of some kind. Poetic tone, reflecting the poet's attitude toward himself and his poetic material, is closely related to the use of irony.

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1. Several modern critics have discussed poetic irony, although sometimes employing the term so that it includes the concept of wit as well.

I.A. Richards, explaining that impulses may be organized by exclusion or by inclusion (the ironic method), asserts that this ironic "equilibrium of opposed impulses" may be the "ground-plan of the most valuable aesthetic experiences." (Principles of Literary Criticism, pp. 247-253.)

Cleantith Brooks has followed Richards's lead and emphasized the importance of an "ironic contemplation" in artistic expression, even writing an essay, "Notes for a Revised History of English Poetry," which points out the major appearances in English literature of ironic contrasts. (Modern Poetry and the Tradition).

Ivor Winters refers to irony less sympathetically as the "double mood." He indicates that he regards the use of irony as symptomatic of confused thinking and indecision, and suggests that a poet make the necessary ironic "subtractions" before expressing himself. (Primitivism and Decadence, "The Experimental School in Modern Poetry," pp. 15-63.)

This irony has become a characteristic expression of our age, but is also found in somewhat different forms in some seventeenth century metaphysical poetry and in some work of other earlier periods. A spirit of irony, although amply relieved by wit, is rather heavy, for instance, in such poems as Donne's "Twickenham Garden," in which he contrasts his "spider love" to the garden's "true Paradise," and Marvell's "The Coronet," in which the poet discovers the "Serpent old" lurking in a chaplet of flowers intended for his savior's head in redress of old wrongs. In the eighteenth century, with a few exceptions like the poetry of Blake, there was a strong tendency toward a didacticism which avoided irony, as in Alexander Pope's "Essay on Man," or a sentimentality similarly lacking in irony as in Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Church-yard." (A comparison of Gray's favorite with Warren's "The Return: An Elegy" shows immediately and clearly the difference between an inclusive and exclusive type of poetry.)

An emotional approach unqualified by irony continued to predominate throughout the nineteenth century, but nevertheless the irony which runs as a tough-fibred thread through twentieth century metaphysical poetry and other modern verse has its roots in some of the work of the often unsure, self-mocking and self-satiric poets of the English romantic and French symbolist schools. Like the psychological, connotative method of progression and the psychological emphasis on a subjective mood, this modern irony is part of a heritage from the nineteenth century romantics. An ironic approach is evident in a rather immature form in much of the work of Lord Byron and in a more effective fusion in some of the best poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and John Keats. There is, for instance, the ironic complexity of Keats's "Ode to A Fightingale," the two closing stanzas of which I quote:

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!  
No hungry generations tread thee down;  
The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
In ancient days by emperor and clown:  
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
The same that oft-times hath  
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell  
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!  
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well  
As she is fan'd to do, deceiving elf.  
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades  
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,  
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep  
In the next valley-glades:  
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?  
Fled is that music:--Do I wake or sleep?

The passage is marked by a great sensitivity and depth of feeling attained chiefly through the fusion of a number of opposites: the seeming immortality and freedom of the nightingale contrasted with the poet's feeling of mortality and earthly imprisonment; the ethereal beauty and high mystery of the bird's song and the poet's feeling of mixed joy and sorrow and of uncertainty; the sublimity of the poet's vision and the inadequacy of his "fancy" and perplexed brain in sustaining the "waking dream," and the seriousness of the theme and the irony and wit in the poet's treatment of it. There seems to be a fundamental ironic antithesis in the vision of absolute beauty in which the poet shares and the numbing, uncertain actuality in which he dwells.

A similar union of opposing impulses is seen in the juxtaposition of the profound beauty of the song and the deep sorrow of Ruth, and in the references to "emperor and clown," "charm'd magic casements" as opposed to "perilous seas", and "faery lands forlorn." The poet's rather witty, punning use of "forlorn" as a key to the transition from the poet's vision to his rather ironic contemplation of his "waking dream" is somewhat reminiscent of the seventeenth century type of wit, but in its

present use it is a direct function of the poet's essentially psychological method of progression.<sup>1</sup>

Later in the century Corbierre, Laforgue and other French symbolists caught up and often seemed to exult in this spirit of irony. All the dissatisfactions of the period,--moral, religious, social, political, artistic and intellectual--found their way into symbolism,<sup>2</sup> and the symbolist poet used irony freely to express the disillusionment and confusion of the poet in a period of coldly scientific thought and rising industrialism. Like Gustav Flaubert in Ladame Bovary, the symbolist poet described minutely the instincts of men and women and juxtaposed the meaningful and the romantic with the petty and naturalistic. Like Eliot today, he utilized this irony to lament man's insignificance and to register his feeling of isolation and confusion in a society with which he could not identify himself. The French symbolists' concern with dream, vision and the world of the mind (calling for psychological, connotative structures) and their use of irony are closely interrelated aspects of the symbolist psychology, with its strategy of revolt and escapism. A characteristic symbolist merging of irony with a psychological propulsion is seen in Laforgue's "Noël Sceptique:"

Noël ! Noël ! J'entends les cloches dans la nuit...  
Et j'ai, sur les feuilletts sans foi posé ma plume:  
O souvenirs, chantez ! tout mon orgueil s'enfuit,  
Et je me sens repris de la grande amertume.

Ah ! ces voix dans la nuit chantant Noël ! Noël !  
M'apportent de la nef qui là-bas, s'illumine,  
Un si tendre, un si doux reproche maternel  
Que mon couer trop gonflé crève dans sa poitrine...

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1. Keats explains his pleasure in an ironic merging of contrasting impulses in "A Song of Opposites," declaring his love for "sad faces in fair weather," "infant playing with a skull," "serpents in red roses hissing," etc.

2. Martino, F., Farnasse et Symbolisme, 1850-1900, p. 141.



Et j'écoute longtemps les cloches dans la nuit...  
 Je suis la paria de la famille humaine,  
 A qui le vent apporte en son sale réduit  
 La poignante remeur d'une fête lointaine.

The ironic contrasts in this piece are more violent--perhaps more naive--than in Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale." Nevertheless the two poems present a similar pattern in their interpretation of experience. The poets almost experience sublimity for a moment, but they are suddenly jerked back--psychologically speaking--to a rueful awareness of their human limitations, imaginative and spiritual, and the inescapable grossness and pettiness of actuality. It is an experiential formula that has come to be common to much modern poetry with an ironic cast, appearing in a number of variations. A similar pattern of experience is found in Laforgue's "Crépuscule de Dimanche d'Été," in the closing passages of Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," (we linger in the "chambers of the sea"... "Till human voices wake us, and we drown") and in Ransom's "Persistent Explorer," in which a modern protagonist with a "divided sensibility" can almost--but not quite--feel the majesty of the roaring of a waterfall as Lyneer Peeperhorn feels this power in Thomas Mann's The Magic Mountain.

In such a poem as "Noël Sceptique" Laforgue seems to stand about half-way between the romantic irony of Byron--who pitied himself as a kind of great, lonely figure set apart from men--and the irony of Eliot, Ransom and Tate, who pity themselves and twentieth century man because of the mean, deadening routine of modern life. (This meaningless round of work and play, travail and fête, is stressed in "Crépuscule de Dimanche d'Été.") The poet hears the pealing Christmas bells and for a moment surrenders himself to old memories and the joys of Noël; but he feels that he is one apart and without faith, and the pleasure grows hollow.

He pities himself as an outcast from mankind--"la paria de la famille humaine." Clashing sometimes violently and sometimes subtly throughout the poem are the poet's opposing feelings of sublimity and union with men and of skepticism and apartness. The ironic contrast is suggested in the first line ("Hoël! Hoël!") and in the juxtaposition of "cloches dans la nuit" and "paria de la famille humaine", and "sale réduit," and "fête lointaine."<sup>1</sup>

It is a very short step from the irony and complexity of Laforgue and other French symbolists to the irony and complexity of Eliot and the modern metaphysicals. Ironic oppositions between the sublime and the repulsive, the romantic and the naturalistic, clash rather more sharply in much of Eliot's early verse than in Laforgue's works. Consider, for instance, the ironic contrasts in the closing passages of Eliot's "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," a psychological record of a night walk in a modern city between midnight and four o'clock in the morning:

Half-past three,  
 The lamp sputtered,  
 The lamp muttered in the dark.  
 The lamp hummed:  
 "Regard the moon,  
 La lune ne garde aucune rancune,  
 She winks a feeble eye,  
 She smiles into corners  
 She smooths the hair of the grass.  
 The moon has lost her memory.  
 A washed-out smallpox cracks her face,  
 Her hand twists a paper rose,  
 That smells of dust and eau de Cologne,  
 She is alone  
 With all the old nocturnal smells  
 That cross and cross across her brain."  
 The reminiscence comes  
 Of sunless dry geraniums  
 And dust in crevices,

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1. F. Martino writes: "Sincérité angossé et ironic, philosophic et gaminerie, grandes images et propos d'argot, C'est de ces contrastes perpetuel qu'est faite la poesie de Jules Laforgue." (Martino, F., op. cit., p. 149)

Smells of chestnuts in the streets  
And female smells in shuttered rooms,  
and cigarettes in corridors  
And cocktail smells in bars.

The lamp said,  
"Four o'clock,  
Here is the number on the door.  
Memory!  
You have the key  
The little lamp spreads a ring on the stair.  
Mount.  
The bed is open; the tooth-brush hangs on the wall,  
but your shoes at the door, prepare for life."

The last twist of the knife.

In the three poems just considered to show the line of development of modern poetic irony (Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," Laforgue's "Noël Sceptique," and Eliot's "Rhapsody on a Windy Night") there is a common pattern of ironic opposition between a spiritual or aesthetic experience partially realized and the pressure of actuality that blocks complete realization. It is important to note, however, that this curve of development reveals progressively less emphasis on the positive experience of sublimity and progressively more accent on the debunking attitude and mechanical, meaningless pace of modern life. Keats can lose himself for a while in the beauty and wonder of the nightingale's haunting song, and Laforgue is moved for a moment by the pealing of the bells of Noël. Eliot, however, can only vaguely sense the beauty of the moon through the ugly maze of city life about him.

The irony of the situation is projected sharply as the moon, which like the nightingale's song and the Christmas bells is a symbol of spiritual and aesthetic beauty, is inextricably associated in the poet's mind with the disgusting aspects of the city and the strict mechanism of modern life. The old majesty of the moon is suggested uncertainly for a moment in the French phrase, "La lune ne garde aucune

rancune," but in the next several lines, in the references to the winking "feeble eye", the "washed-out smallpox", the "paper rose" and the "smells of dust and eau de Cologne", she suggests a hardened prostitute rather than the lovely maiden of romantic lore. The lifelessness of modern life is further emphasized in the allusion to the "sunless dry geraniums." More concerned with the street light than with the moon, the poet acts only according to conditioned responses, aware of the passage of every hour, but with no feeling for time as memory and duration. The final cutting twist of irony is at the conclusion where with a bitter, self-pitying sarcasm the poet cries: "Prepare for life." Such a poem shows its kinship with the work of the French symbolists in what Tvor Hinters calls its "double mood," a continual wavering between a suggestion of the beautiful and the references to commonplace and repelling sights and smells.

Eliot's "Sweeney Among the Nightingales," which might be compared with Keats's ode, shows a still more blunt variety of irony. Here the poet does not deal directly with his own experience, but steps aside to reveal that the modern bourgeois citizen has no feeling at all for meaningful experience. There is no longer the conflict in the poet's mind between a positive feeling of sublimity and a negative pressure of life destroying this feeling. The protagonist of the poem, apeneck Sweeney, is solely concerned with his mediocre way of life and is altogether impervious to the beauty about him. To be somewhat more precise, Sweeney seems to be recreating in rather suspect quarters with some women of rather questionable character, while,

The nightingales are singing near  
The Convent of the Sacred Heart.

In Laforgue's "Joël Sceptique" and in the two Eliot pieces just quoted the poems end on a self-conscious note of irony. The irony appears

to be the main point of the poem. The poet's attitudes are key features of these examples and are expressed in the ironic "tone" of these poems--perhaps their most noticeable characteristic.

This irony appears in varying forms and degrees in the work of all the modern metaphysical poets. It conditions the poets' expression of emotion, and is a device utilized by poets who are aware of the contrasting elements of an experience and do not wish to indulge in emotional oversimplifications. This irony becomes an integral part of a poem and is often about equivalent to poetic tone in its overall psychological effect. Many times the ironic element is subtly suggested through metaphor, as noted in the last chapter in references to Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium," Ransom's "Winter Remembered," and other poems. I shall try to point out its form and function in several other modern poems and to differentiate between its use in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. It is used, for instance, to attain a very effective form of twentieth century "high seriousness" in two poems treating a death theme with an approach quite different from that found in eighteenth and nineteenth century elegies and with a seemingly franker expression of human experience. The pieces are Yeats's "All Souls' Night" and Ransom's "Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter."

Building his poem around the traditional belief that souls may return to the land of the living on All Souls' Night, Yeats in turn calls upon a number of his deceased friends and comments upon them briefly. I quote a passage which follows the scene-setting introduction:

Horton's the first I call. He loved strange thought  
And knew the sweet extremity of pride  
That's called platonic love,  
And that to such a pitch of passion wrought  
Nothing could bring him, when his lady died,  
Anodyne for his love.

Words were but wasted breath;  
One dear hope had he:  
The inclemency  
Of that or the next winter would be death.

Two thoughts were so mixed up I could not tell  
Whether of her or God he thought the most,  
But think that his mind's eye,  
When turned upward, on one sole image fell;  
And that a slight companionable ghost,  
Mild with divinity,  
Had so lit up the whole  
Immense miraculous house  
The Bible promised us,  
It seemed a gold-fish swimming in a bowl.<sup>1</sup>

A gentle affection and a whimsical irony are interwoven here into a pattern of extremely delicate and subtle connotation. The poem attains a quiet depth because the poet frankly expresses his own half-sympathetic, half-satiric attitude toward his friend's idiosyncrasies and inconsistencies. There is both a deep understanding of his friend's obsessions and a penetrating irony and satire as he makes his tongue-in-cheek comparison of God's "immense miraculous house" and "a gold-fish swimming in a bowl." The high-flown language expressive of Norton's temperament is of course set against Yeats's own homely idiom. Perhaps in some respects the most important feature of the passage are the tonal effects contributed by Yeats's all-embracing, mellow sense of humor and good will. The same qualities dominate the poet's "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" and "In Memory of Alfred Pollexfen," who was "a nobody in a great throng."

In Ransom's "bells for John Whiteside's Laughter" the irony becomes a function of the almost incomprehensible, tragic disparity between appearance and reality, the seemingly impossible and the true. The poem,

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1. Yeats's references to "a slight companionable ghost" suggest he was familiar with Shakespeare's allusion in his 86th sonnet to "that affable familiar ghost" which nightly "gulled" a superstitious rival. The attitudes of the poets toward their eccentric acquaintances are similar in both poems.

previously referred to in illustration of psychological progression, is a modern, rather sophisticated elegy full of restrained sympathy and tenderness, non-satirical and non-sentimental, and yet with a touch that is light and comfortably human.

In the Yeats piece the irony lay in the poet's ambivalent attitude toward his friend, a viewpoint that was partly satiric. But in the Ransom poem the irony lies in the great gap between the idea of death and the memory of the vital, energetic little girl. (A similar antithesis is found in the same poet's "Janet Waking" and "Dead Boy.") A deep quiet sense of tragedy is suggested through the poet's use of oblique understatement and a restrained, almost impersonal tonal approach. This impersonal tone, characteristic of the style of Ransom, Tate, Warren and often Eliot, is symptomatic of a gentlemanly suppressed emotion. It is quite different from Yeats's frank expression of mixed feelings.

It may seem to some readers bred on "Lycidas" and "In Memoriam" that Ransom is dealing with death a little too glibly in speaking of the little girl's deep death sleep as a "brown study" and in expressing astonishment and vexation rather than a more conventional grief. "Brown study" is not an expression we use when we are most serious, because it seems to connote a kind of amusement and informal familiarity as though the observer could not take the "brown study" very seriously. Indeed something of this kind is suggested in the poem. The poet, knowing the little girl and her lively ways, finds it difficult to comprehend her death. Her "brown study" astonishes and vexes her. And perhaps it would offend some to hear of a departed loved one "lying so primly propped." Rather we would say that she looks as though she had just fallen into a deep sleep. The former expression suggests awkwardness and unnaturalness; the latter, naturalness and ease. But the tragic

awkwardness and unnaturalness is precisely what the poet feels so intensely.

I have noted that wit and irony are the chief elements contributing to the complexity and maturity characteristic of metaphysical verse in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, but that, quantitatively speaking, wit is a dominant feature of the seventeenth century work, while irony holds a corresponding place of importance in modern metaphysical poetry. There is also, of course, a qualitative difference, as I pointed out in an analysis of the wit of Crashaw's "An Epitaph upon Dr. Brooke" and Mrs. Aglic's "To a Cough in the Street at Midnight." I shall try to illustrate a similar qualitative difference between the characteristic irony of the seventeenth and twentieth centuries in an examination of Donne's "Twickenham Garden," the irony of which strongly resembles the modern variety, and the concluding passages of Eliot's "Portrait of a Lady," treating a comparable situation. I quote the Donne piece:

Blasted with signs and surrounded with tears,  
Hither I come to seek the spring,  
And at my mine eyes, and at mine ears,  
Receive such balsams as else cure everything;  
But O, self-traitor, I do bring  
The spider love, which transubstantiates all,  
And can convert nanna to gall;  
And that this place may thoroughly be thought  
True Paradise, I have the serpent brought.

'Twere wholesomer for me that winter did  
Benight the glory of this place,  
And that a grave frost did forbid  
Thee trees to laugh and mock me to my face;  
But that I may not this disgrace  
Endure, nor leave this garden, Love, let me  
Some senseless piece of this place be:  
Make me a mandrake so I may grow here,  
Or a stone fountain weeping out my year.

Hither with crystal vials, lovers, come,  
And take my tears, which are love's wine,  
And try your mistress' tears at home,  
For all are false that taste not just like mine.  
Alas! hearts do not in eyes shine,  
Nor can you more judge woman's thoughts by tears,



Than by her shadow what she wears.  
O perverse sex, where none is true but she,  
Who's therefore true because her truth kills me.

The vaunted disillusion of the first stanza seems very close in many ways to a similar self-conscious expression in such pieces as Laforque's "Poël Scentique" and Eliot's "Thapsody on a Windy Night." There are, in fact, few seventeenth century poems that seem so modern in spirit. In marked similarity to the work of Eliot particularly, the ironic contrasts are pointed up sharply in the antitheses between the spring and the poet's mood, the "spider love" and the religious references to transubstantiation and manna, and "true Paradise" and the "serpent."

However, the ironic structure and disillusioned tone of the piece are almost entirely lost in a deft transition in the second stanza to a more witty and conventional type of amorous verse, and we feel that the poet did not really mean the irony very seriously--that it was a kind of foil for the witty and sincere declaration of love at the conclusion. The closing stanza presents the poet's characteristic ambivalent attitude toward women as he cynically attacks the sex as a whole while idealizing the individual--an attitude which without Donne's qualifying wit and emotional sincerity could easily appear quite sentimental. The irony appears to be part of Donne's technique of logical complexity, lively surprises, and subtle indirection. He shows an affinity for the popular Jacobean cynicism,<sup>1</sup> but his irony seldom, if ever, is the main point of a poem as it appears to be in much of the verse of Eliot, Ransom and others.

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1. Poetic irony and cynicism are fundamentally opposed rather than related. A cynical view is characteristically narrow and exclusive, while an ironic approach implies an inclusion of contrasting viewpoints. A cynical attitude, however, may be an important element in a complex, ironic contemplation of experience.

Irony assumes a much more important function, however, in such modern love poems as Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "Portrait of a Lady," a piece about the parting of two could-be lovers caught in the inhibitions and sterility of modern life. I quote the closing lines:

"Perhaps you can write to me."  
 My self-possession flares up for a second;  
 This is as I had reckoned.  
 "I have been wondering frequently of late  
 (But our beginnings never know our ends!)  
 Why we have not developed into friends."  
 I feel like one who smiles, and turning shall remark  
 Suddenly, his expression in a glass.  
 My self-possession gutters: we are really in the dark.

"For everybody said so, all our friends,  
 They all were sure our feelings would relate  
 So closely! I myself can hardly understand.  
 We must leave it now to fate.  
 You will write, at any rate.  
 Perhaps it is not too late.  
 I shall sit here, serving tea to friends."

And I must borrow every changing shape  
 To find expression...dance, dance  
 Like a dancing bear,  
 Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape.  
 Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance--

Well! and what if she should die some afternoon,  
 Afternoon grey and smoky, evening yellow and rose;  
 Should die and leave me sitting pen in hand  
 With the smoke coming down above the housetops;  
 Doubtful, for a while  
 Not knowing what to feel or if I understand  
 Would she not have the advantage, after all?  
 Or whether wise or foolish, tardy or too soon...  
 This music is successful with a "dying fall"  
 Now that we talk of dying--  
 And should I have the right to smile?

The passage is, of course, obviously modern in its allusions, idiom and progression, but we are interested chiefly in the function and implications of its ironic structure. The poet's mixed feelings are revealed as the idea of the romance is qualified by references to the "tobacco trance," the "smoke coming down above the housetops," and the

"music successful with a 'dying fall.'" The irony of this poem seems different from that of "Twickenham Garden," however, in that it has a deeper basis and motivation in the poetic situation, it is more serious and all-suffusing, and it has greater social implications. There is of course, a binding organic relationship between its various aspects.

In the Donne piece the irony was chiefly a function of the opposition between the spring garden and his own "spider love," the motivation or nature of which was never really made clear--perhaps because the irony stems from a comprehensive attitude toward life, an attitude which is dramatized and finds its "objective correlative" in "Portrait of a Lady" as well as in some similar poems. The poet desperately desires a significant experience and friends had said the couple's "feelings would relate," but the pressures and inhibitions of modern life permit only frustration and pretext, and the potentially meaningful romantic scene becomes an awkward ironic parody. In the conclusion there is a further ironic reversal as the poet realized that he might smile (with relief and at the irony of fate) at the death of the lady who should have meant so much to him.

Donne's poem is punctuated by a lively wit and humor, but Eliot can only smile ruefully and masochistically. The irony is bitter and heavy so that its complementary element--a realization of meaningful experience--is suggested only rather vaguely and hopelessly. This irony is always apparent in the poet's agonizing self-consciousness and self-pity, in the pervading tone of the piece, and--in sharp contrast to "Twickenham Garden"--becomes most serious and piercing at the conclusion. Also, while Donne's irony was a product of his own relation to a particular situation, that of Eliot and most of the modern metaphysicals is intended as a social comment with universal significance. (With Ransom and his agrarian compatriots the social irony has a particular regional significance.) In brief, in

"Portrait of a Lady" and a large number of other modern metaphysical poems, the poet's ironic statement about the nature of modern society is at the core of the poem's meaning.

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It is misleading to think of a hard and fast line of demarcation between a metaphysical treatment of experience and the projection of experience in other styles of writing, but a nature complexity and a tough-minded inclusion of contradictory attitudes in the interpretation of experiential materials is virtually a definitive characteristic of metaphysical poetry in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. Nevertheless this rather intricate expression of experience takes the stamp of the period in which it appears, and there are significant differences in the interpretation and poetic projection of human experience in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries.

These differences in the treatment of experience in the two centuries fit into and support the logical-psychological rationale suggested in the discussion of methods of progression and various uses of metaphor. The expression of experience in seventeenth century metaphysical poetry is logical, "syllogistic" and cathartic in that the poet characteristically expresses big emotions frankly and without hesitation, often proceeding directly to an extinction of emotion in freely committing all the relevant facts of an experience to a logical and sometimes witty framework in what might be thought of as a controlled exploitation of the imagination.

It is a hall-mark of this seventeenth century metaphysical verse, its most typical element of complexity. It is a fundamentally logical and intellectual device in its use of metaphor, antithesis and other figures and in its function in shaping experience to orderly frameworks.

Playful and lively, it seems to indicate a positive attitude, an acceptance of life. These underlying characteristics were seen in somewhat different dress in such pieces as Donne's "The Flea," "Loves Progress" and "The Annunciation;" Herbert's "The Collar," and Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress."

Twentieth century metaphysical poetry is psychological in that the poet is chiefly concerned with the flux and flow of experience in the mind. This verse is marked by the poet's sensitive and deft communication of little feelings, moods and subjective states and by his subtle insights into emotional and intellectual conflicts. Although in this modern verse emotional material is usually projected somewhat less forcefully than in seventeenth century work, the modern poet frequently exhibits a finer insight into nuances, shadings and overtones.

The characteristic element of complexity in this modern work is a qualifying irony, usually indicative of an ambivalent emotional attitude. It suggests a psychological wavering between two attitudes rather than a logical ordering of experience, and often reflects a dissatisfaction with life and society. These qualities were seen with varying emphases in such poems as Eliot's "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," Yeats's "All Souls' Night," Mrs. Wylie's "To a Cough in the Street at Midnight" and Ransom's "Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter."

An historical approach in the examination of the similarities and dissimilarities found in the seventeenth and twentieth century treatment of experience in metaphysical verse indicates that the modern metaphysicals share in the heritage of the seventeenth century metaphysical poets and the nineteenth century English romantics and French symbolists. This poetry usually suggests a seventeenth century regard for the inherent contrasts and complexity of an experience and the emotional penetration

associated with this approach. In addition, the influence of the intervening romanticism and symbolism, reflecting a keen and subtle perception of the more subjective aspects of experience, modifies modern metaphysical verse as the poet takes such psychological elements as mood, tone, and affective states into ample account in his expression of the complexity of human experience. The use of wit continues in modern verse, but it loses its logical accent, as seen in Mrs. Lylic's "To a Cough in the Street at Midnight," and gives way to irony as the dominant element of complexity. Irony, of course, is no new ingredient in poetry, but the ironic contemplation of modern metaphysical poetry, a reflection of the conflicts confronting the modern poet, apparently has its roots in the work of some of the English romantics and French symbolists, as noted in the examination of Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" and Laforgue's "Noël Sceptique."

There can be no absolutes, no right or wrong way, in a poet's expression of experience. It would seem that there must always be some slant or "angle" in his treatment of experience; and if he is sincere, he will write what seems true and in a way that seems natural to himself and probably to his age. Life, the stuff of experience, is always changing, and so must the poet in his interpretation of experience. Sometimes the most real and important elements in his experience will be contrasts and complexity, sometimes dreams and moods, and sometimes there may be a subtle fusion of both. In different periods the poet emphasizes different aspects of experience, and each different type expression should seem true, right and natural to him. In an analytical and historical study of this kind we cannot be concerned with the respective goodness or rightness of different poet's expressions of experience, and with this in mind I have sought only to focus attention on the changing emphases on different aspects of experience in different periods.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL VIEWPOINTS

## CHAPTER V: SOCIAL VIEWPOINTS

Poetry is not created in a vacuum. Certainly most poets, directly or indirectly, express toward their society and age some attitudes which are key features of their work. In this chapter I shall examine the viewpoints of seventeenth and twentieth century metaphysical poets-- their attitudes toward society.

For a greater clarity of terms I shall abandon temporarily the logical-psychological framework for what might be called an individualist-social rationale, suggesting that the seventeenth century poet writes as a vital, free-willing individual and that the twentieth century poet writes of himself as a rather inhibited socially-conditioned integer. Both frameworks, broadly speaking, reflect the poets' attitudes toward life and experience and correspond to one another on different planes.

Two very important elements found in modern metaphysical poetry-- and in a great deal of other modern verse--are a tendency for a poet to present a world highly conditioned by his own psychology (as seen in the use of a psychological progression, connotation, mood and irony), rather than a more objective view of reality, and a tendency to show modern society impinging like another dimension on every experience. These tendencies are not contradictory, however, but both are apparently functions of the modern poet's dissatisfaction with contemporary society. His concern with society may be thought of as the obverse aspect of his interest in psychology, or perhaps vice versa. In the seventeenth century, however, the poet is principally concerned with a logical, positive acceptance of life and with himself and his personal affairs, with society not appearing as a disturbing factor--a somber figure, as it were, standing between him and his mistress.



We may, then, set up a more complete, rather ambivalent rationale. The seventeenth century is characterized by a logical-individualistic frame, indicating a positive acceptance of life and society, while the twentieth century is marked by a psychological-social frame, suggesting a rather negative dissatisfaction with life and society, as indicated, for example, in the heavy use of irony in modern metaphysical verse. An oversimplification of the problem would give us a working concept something like this: A logical emphasis is characteristic of men who feel they are acting on society, while a psychological emphasis is typical of men who feel they are being acted upon by society.

We are also faced with another somewhat paradoxical proposition. Poets (and men generally) are usually little concerned with a society when they feel themselves well adapted to it, and very concerned with it when they feel it affects their lives unfavorably. Similarly, a man is not tremendously concerned with his right leg until it is injured or becomes diseased. I shall consider briefly these two points of view characteristic of poets in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries.

The seventeenth century logical-individual viewpoint: The principal problem facing the early metaphysical poets as a group was that of their relationship with God. The verse of Donne, Herbert, Crashaw and Marvell indicates that these poets seldom, if ever, doubted the existence of a personal, rather anthropomorphic God, but were considerably troubled about the manner in which they were identifying their lives with the Deity.

The seventeenth century poet is principally concerned with himself, and is interested in examining his relationship with his God or mistress from his own point of view. The particular character of a subtle relationship is not in itself of a great deal of interest to him, and he

seldom limns any other personality with the same clarity and force with which he presents his own. (As noted in Chapter IV, he characteristically presents his emotions intensely and directly, without inhibitions.) He customarily writes about a particular situation and particular individuals, and is not concerned with viewing this particular experience in terms of a generalization about society. He feels an intense need for a unifying system, and encounters little difficulty in discovering a satisfying "myth"--to use the term in its broadest sense. In his treatment of human experience he depends freely and frankly on the Court of Love, eulogistic and other Renaissance traditions, the decaying scholasticism, the new science, and especially his religion. The seventeenth century metaphysical poet is not a professional litterateur, and his verse is characteristically personal, uninhibited and masculine, and intended for a limited and private appreciation.

The twentieth century psychological-social viewpoint: As the seventeenth century metaphysical poet was often troubled about his relation with God and the nineteenth century poet was perplexed by a conflict between science and religion, the modern metaphysical poet is faced with the seemingly all-important problem of his relationship to the world society in which he lives and writes. The contemporary poets on the whole are apparently finding more difficulty in indentifying themselves with a modern capitalist and industrial society than the seventeenth century metaphysicals encountered in attempting to make their peace with God and themselves.

The modern metaphysical poet, like his seventeenth century predecessor, is quite concerned with himself, but he is much more troubled about the impact of society upon his personality than he is about the problem of asserting his own will in wooing his mistress or his God.

In contrast to the earlier poet, however, he does display an interest in suggesting subtle relationships between a man and a woman, an individual and society, or between himself as poet and a couple as lovers. Again, he sometimes deals with a complex poet-man-woman-society interrelationship, as in Tate's "The Paradigm" or Ransom's "Spectral Lovers." He often writes in an impersonal third-person style, presenting other personalities more clearly and directly than his own, and frequently the poetic situation is a kind of "objective correlative" illustrating a general condition existing in society. A large number of the poet's characters are types and he frequently presents himself in a typed role, while molding his material into a little modern parable about man's divided sensibility or a similar problem.

The modern metaphysical poet also feels a desperate need for a system upon which he personally can depend, but he is almost without a myth. He may turn to a kind of religiosity (as with Eliot), his own mystical philosophy and history (Yeats), or a new social ideology (Auden), but he depends primarily on the negative myth common to numerous modern intellectuals, a belief in the lifeless sterility of the modern era. This attitude of rejection, or perhaps psychology of adaptation, is seen in Eliot's waste land--rose garden polarity, Auden's metaphorical identification of capitalist society with an "ice-age," and the Southern agrarians' rueful delight in pointing out the decadence of contemporary Southern life. The twentieth century metaphysical is a professional, self-conscious artist who theorizes about his work, writes for a kind of intellectual aristocracy or a poetic clique, and is usually frank about his interest in seventeenth century techniques.

These characteristics of seventeenth and twentieth century verse are clearly apparent in most of the examples quoted in the examination of

different treatments of progression, metaphor and experiential material. The poet's concern about himself in his relation to God is the dominant theme of Donne's "Holy Sonnets" and other late verse and almost all of the verse of Herbert and Crashaw, while the more secular Marvell shows his interest in this relationship in such a poem as "The Coronet." The verse of Vaughan and Traherne tends more to a mystical glorification.

The seventeenth century poet's emphasis on himself in his relation to God is amply exhibited in Donne's 19th sonnet from "Holy Sonnets," a poem quoted in the last chapter in illustration of the direct and intense treatment of religious emotion characteristic of the seventeenth century. The "I" which is Donne is the subject of the sonnet throughout, and God is mentioned only once in the third person as the poet speaks with complete frankness of how his "devout fits come and go away like a fantastic ague." Dealing with an unrestrained psychological realism on the problem of his relationship with God, the poet declares:

I durst not view heaven yesterday, and today  
In prayers and flattering speeches I court God.

He is writing of a very personal matter with a completely trusting dependence on the religious structure, reflecting an attitude in contrast to that of Eliot, who in "Ash Wednesday" and other later poems often seems to pray to God as a social spokesman and with a world-weary will to believe, rather than a firm and abiding faith. The appeal of the Donne sonnet lies in its convincing sense of sincerity, rather than any artiness; and it was very apparently written to fulfill a private need, rather than a public demand. Such pieces as Herbert's "Artillerie" and "The Collar," and Marvell's "The Coronet" display similar characteristics.

In the field of seventeenth century amorous verse the logical-individual approach is also very evident. I elaborated upon the essentially

logical, syllogistic nature of Donne's "A Valediction: To My Mene in the Window" and "The Flea" and Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress." The most vital feature of these poems is the poet's projection of his own personality. In the valediction Donne is chiefly concerned with resolving a conflict in his own mind, and in the latter two pieces the poets are interested in enforcing their will upon their mistresses. The emphasis in the poem is individual and dynamic, as the poet seeks a personal resolution of conflict, physical or mental. The more static and social job of examining the nature of a subtle relationship does not carry an appeal of like importance for the poet. "The Flea" and "To His Coy Mistress" are virtually without any social setting, as the poet is concerned only with himself and his lady. The pieces were written in a familiar Renaissance courting convention without thought of widespread distribution.

A modern social setting, however, becomes a very significant feature of most twentieth century metaphysical verse even though it may bear important stylistic characteristics of seventeenth century poetry. This marriage of a modern social emphasis and seventeenth century metaphysical forms is clearly exhibited in Warren's "Love's Parable," in which the poet reveals his social viewpoint in both his sense of the intrusion of modern industrial life on private life and his tendency to universalize his love tale in parable form. I quote:

As kingdoms after civil broil,  
Long faction-bit and sore unmanned,  
Unlaced, unthrewed by lawless toil,  
Will welcome to the cheering strand  
A prince whose tongue, not understood,  
Yet frames a new felicity,  
And alien, seals domestic good:  
Once, each to each, such aliens, we.

That time, each was the other's sun,  
Soliptic's charter, system's core;  
Locked in its span, the wandering one,  
Though colder grown, might yet endure

Ages unnumbered, for it fled  
On light and heat flung from the source  
Of light that lit dark as it fled:  
Wonder of dull astronomers.

No wonder then to us it was!  
For miracle was daily food--  
That darkness fled through darkness  
And endless light the dark pursued:  
No wonder then, for we had found  
Love's mystery, then still unspent,  
That substance long in grossness bound  
Light bud into love's accident.

Then miracle was corner-cheap;  
And we, like the ignorant quarriers,  
Ransacked the careless earth to heap  
For highways our most precious ores;  
Or like the blockhead masons who  
Burnt Rome's best grandeur for its lime,  
And for their slattern novels threw  
Down monuments of nobler time.

We did not know what worth we owned,  
Or know what ambient atmosphere  
We breathed, who daily then postponed  
A knowledge that, now bought too dear,  
Is but ironic residue:  
As gouty pang and tarnished vest  
Remind the wastrel bankrupt who,  
For gut and back, let substance waste.

That all the world proportionate  
and joyful seemed, did but consent  
That all unto our garden state  
Of innocence was innocent;  
And all on easy axle roved  
That now, ungeared, perturbed turns,  
For joy sought joy then when we loved,  
As iron to the magnet yearns.

But we have seen the fungus eyes  
Of misery spore in the night,  
And married, of friends, the calices  
That stain, like smoke, the day's found light,  
How ulcerous, how acid, then  
How proud flesh on the sounder grows  
Till rot engross the estate of men.

And marked, within, the inward sore  
Of self that cankers at the bone,  
Content of very love we bore  
And hatred of the good once known  
--So weakness has become our strength,  
And strength, confused, can but reject  
Its object, so that we at length,  
Itching and slurwise, each other infect.

Are we but mirror to the world?  
Or does the world our ruin reflect,  
Or is our gazing beauty spoiled  
But by the glass' flawed defect?  
What fault? What cause? What matter for  
The hurled loaf where the wind was braced,  
Or matter for the pest-bit where  
What coin her virtue first beshrowed?

O falling-off! O peace composed  
Within my kingdom when your reign  
Was fulgent-full! and nought opposed  
Your power, that slack is, but again  
May stay my sullen elements,  
and bend ambition to his place.  
That hope: for there are testaments  
That men, by prayer, have mastered grace.

A mixture of seventeenth and twentieth century characteristics may be seen with particular clarity in this poem. Many of the devices that lend novelty and strength to "Love's Parable" are strikingly similar to those found in seventeenth century metaphysical verse. Significant in this connection are the extended monarchical and astronomical conceits in the first and second stanzas and the antithetical word-play on light and darkness in the second stanza.

Several passages of the poem are particularly reminiscent of Donne's style and technique. Donne, for instance, in "The Sun Rising," declared:

She's all states, and all princes I;  
Nothing else is.

It may be a comment on the greater independence given modern women and the increased interest in a relationship for its own sake that in the Warren poem each lover is a new prince to the other's turbulent kingdom. Warren continues to elaborate upon his statement of the lovers' reciprocal relations:

That time, each was the other's sun,  
Helio's charter, system's core.

It is interesting to note that there is a similar figure in Donne's "The Good-Morrow:"

Let us possess one world; each hath one, and is one.

The poet's logical extension through two stanzas of the rather erudite astronomical metaphor is also suggestive of seventeenth century practice in its fusion of complex abstraction and concrete imagery. Each lover, the poet says, is to the other as a sun which gives light and direction to "wandering" planets. The word-play on light and dark--for each lover is also a light to the other's darkness--is particularly characteristic of Shakespeare's metaphysical style, as in his delightful 43d sonnet ("When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see" etc.), and of Crashaw's work, as in "In the Glorious Epiphany of Our Lord God, a Hymn Sung as by the Three Kings." The concluding metaphor, in which love is linked with religion in opposition to mundane society, recalls a similar metaphorical identification in Donne's "The Canonization" and other pieces, while the use throughout the poem of metaphor and antithesis and the complexity of the attitude expressed are also suggestive of the seventeenth century style. In fact, the poem resembles seventeenth century metaphysical poetry much more closely than most modern verse.

Yet "Love's Parable" should never be taken for a seventeenth century poem. Not only the heavy seriousness that lurks behind the figures and the rather bitter attack on modern life and society, but also the dry, polished preciousness of the quite obviously derivative style and the quiet ironic tone pervading the whole poem point to its twentieth century authorship.

Very little interpretation is needed to see that the poet has a very pressing concern with the scientific commercial society which he feels infects every pure and happy relationship. Warren presents the crux of the poem and of the chief problem facing the twentieth century metaphysical poets as a group when he asks:

Are we but mirror to the world?  
Or does the world our ruin reflect,



Or is our gazing beauty spoiled  
But by the glass' flawed defect?

After devoting the first three stanzas to a treatment of the relationship between the two lovers, the poet in strokes both bold and subtle shows how modern society impinges on the fragile beauty of this relationship like an inescapable third dimension. Employing a metaphor both deeply meaningful and fresh with the idiom of modern life--although a little inconsistent today--the poet recalls that love was a wonder, indeed a "miracle" which was both "daily food" and "corner cheap." The opposing ironic, social element is first definitely introduced in the cold scientific reference to "love's accident," as opposed to "love's mystery," and strengthened in modernist allusions to the "blockhead masons" and the "ironic residue."

As the poem progresses, Warren's attack on contemporary life becomes more impassioned. Intimating that their love has been ruined and prostituted by the state of humanity today, he speaks bitterly of having seen:

the fungus eyes  
Of misery spore in the night,  
and marked, of friends, the malices  
That stain, like smoke, the day's fond light.

These figures, as well as that of the "proud flesh" growing on "the sounder," are associated with the "garden state" mentioned earlier in the poem, but are completely opposed to it in spirit. The references to the smoke that stains the day's light and to the "itching and slum-wise" infected populace carry the weight of a direct frontal assault upon modern civilization. The poem's protest is somewhat more didactic than that of most modern metaphysical verse, but this feeling of a powerful social impact tempering all human experience is a distinct characteristic of twentieth century verse, as opposed to the buoyant lyric grace

typical of the early seventeenth century. This feeling of the numbing pressure and restlessness of modern life is also expressed in such pieces as Eliot's "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" and "Portrait of a Lady," Hanson's "Good Ships," and Auden's Poem XLVI ("That night when joy began," etc.).

It is significant that the poet calls the piece a parable, for it is one of numerous modern parable-like poetic narratives carrying a little lesson or editorial comment on modern life. The tale is told in a first-person "we", in contrast to Donne's oft-repeated "I", but the characters are portrayed impersonally as representative of a large number of sensitive modern lovers. The conclusion of the poem is tenderly moving, but there is never any forthright expression of personal emotion such as is perceived immediately in Donne's "Loves Progress" or his 19th "holy sonnet."

Warren indicates rather directly what is implied in the work of a majority of the modern poets--his dependence on the negative intellectual myth of modern sterility. The poem acquires a great deal of added meaning through its reference to this widely accepted idea of the inadequacies of the contemporary social patterns, and indeed the parable's references to the rotting, cankering "itching and slowwise" state of man would draw very little sympathetic emotional response from a reader who did not deliberately or involuntarily accept the basic tenets of this modern myth. It seems reasonable to believe that it is the modern metaphysical poet's lack of a positive myth that prompts him, as in the case of Warren, to fall back upon the security of seventeenth century forms and to seek a certain social justification in a more literary, more public style. The more artsy, belletristic style of this piece, as contrasted with Donne's technique, is apparent from the first lines in the poet's smooth

precise, considered statements and his use of an artificial, if not narrowly "poetic," idiom. The literary character of this language is suggested in the use of such phrases as "civil broil," "faction-bit and sore unmanned," "the cheering strand," "slattern novels," "ambient atmosphere," and particularly in this four-line passage:

What fault? What cause? What matter for  
The hurled leaf where the wind was brewed,  
Or matter for the pest-bit whore  
What coin her virtue first beshrewed?

An examination of seventeenth century and twentieth century metaphysical verse indicates that a penetrating self-conscious social-consciousness is essentially a modern phenomenon, rather than a seventeenth century carry-over. It would be misleading, however, to overlook the current of social protest that runs through Donne's early satires on religious institutions, the court, attorneys and on the commercial-minded tradesman, but in these pieces Donne is only lampooning the strongholds of privilege that have been open to attack in almost every social structure. He does not lament the sad fallen state of all aspects of society and, in fact, criticizes the sour-faced citizen bemoaning the passing of an age of action in his satire, "A Tale of a Citizen and His Wife." It is even more significant that Donne and the other early metaphysicals do not show the social dimension encroaching upon their private lives and interfering with their love affairs. In Eliot's "Portrait of a Lady" or Warren's "Love's Parable" a love poem is set in the midst of an unfriendly city life which touches the lovers like a withering hand, but most of Donne's love lyrics have no specific setting or a pastoral or romantic one unaffected by any of the unpleasant aspects of the seventeenth century social pattern.

It is probable, however, that the twentieth century metaphysical poet's pessimistic attitude toward contemporary society has its roots, like the tendency toward a more psychological treatment of experience, in nineteenth century romanticism, the development of an impersonal industrial society and the disintegration of personal values. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and others voiced romantic appeals for an improvement of the lot of the common man, envisioned ideal societies, and were disillusioned in varying degrees. The seeds of the modern waste land myth are found in Keats's "Lamia" and Shelley's "Alastor," while the French symbolist movement later became a vessel for most of the social dissatisfactions of the day, reflecting men's feelings of insignificance in a modern society.

But this social concern has become of ever-increasing importance in the twentieth century--a kind of obsession with the modern poet and intellectual--and the waste land myth in some form has become basic to the thinking of most of the modern metaphysical poets and their readers. As previously mentioned, various aspects of this trend, fundamentally opposed to seventeenth century metaphysical practice, are reflected in a new emphasis on personal relationships, a pressing interest in society-person relationships, a dependence on the negative waste land myth due to the lack of a more fruitful framework, the use of impersonal, universalizing parables, and a more self-consciously literary style calculated to win the poet public approval--and probably a feeling of self-justification.

A penetrating treatment of subtle man-woman-society relationships is characteristic of a very large number of modern metaphysical poems, including such quoted examples as Keats's "Broken Dreams," Eliot's "Portrait of a Lady," Tate's "The Paradise," Warren's "Love's Parable,"

and Auden's "Poem XLVI" from On This Island. Another Auden piece, "Poem XLV" from Poems, demonstrates how impersonal modern society seems to impinge upon and ruin meaningful human experience. I quote:

Sentries against inner and outer  
At stated intervals is feature;  
And how shall enemy on these  
Take sudden raid or lasting peace?  
For bribery were vain to try  
Against the incorruptible eye  
How simply said with tears, the chin  
Has hairs to hide its weakness in,  
And proud bridge and indignant nostril  
Nothing to do but to look noble.  
But in between these lives the mouth;  
Watch that, that you may parley with:  
There strategy comes easiest,  
Though it seem stern, was seen compressed  
Over a lathe, refusing answer,  
It will release the ill-fed prisoner  
It will do murder or betray  
For either party equally,  
Yielding at last to a close kiss  
It will admit tongue's soft advance,  
So longed for, given in abandon,  
Given long since, had it but known.

The well-worn military tactics metaphor, suggestive of seventeenth century metaphysical verse, is elaborated upon with a touch of nostalgia and crisp irony as the poet employs the old witty figure to present a grave modern problem very much as modern composers change the rhythm of a gay waltz to suggest a rather leaden contemporary spirit. Auden uses the device in a self-inclusive attack on conventional amorous tactics in which he reveals both the seriousness and humor of the problem of true love in twentieth century society. Although the piece lacks the lightness of much seventeenth century work, it is marked by a brittle wit that tends, however, to be overshadowed by the poet's grave concern for the emotional-intellectual impasse characteristic of the modern temper.

The highly traditional metaphor is self-consciously chosen and de-veloped with a new application and significance to point out that modern life imposes too many restraints, too many "sentries", against a vital,

spontaneous emotional and social life. In the first several lines of the poem the terse, clipped idiom suggests the modern scientific, journalistic world that impinges on the sensitive. Both the longing for significant living and the hindrance to it are hinted at within the device of the metaphor as the "incorruptible eye," which carries a connotation of modern graft, is after all "too amply paid with tears." But the mouth will release the "ill-fed prisoner," probably to be understood as the individual's emotion-starved desires, so long repressed that they are ready desperately to "murder or betray." On its most obvious plane the poem, even as the modern world, remains witty and restrained, but the poet intimates that beneath the hardened surfaces of contemporary thought and behavior there is a hunger for significant emotional experience. This same desire to pierce the crust of modern life and discover a meaningful core is also one of the most significant themes running through the work of Eliot, Ransom, Tate, and Warren.

This new dimension of impersonal modern life which seems to the poet to bore in upon personal life, as seen in most of Eliot's early verse and in pieces like Tate's well-known "The Subway" and Warren's "Love's Parable," is pictured vividly and sensitively in the opening passages of Auden's "Poem XLVIII," from On This Island:

Dear, though the night is gone,  
The dream still haunts today  
That brought us to a room,  
Cavernous, lofty as  
A railway terminus,  
And crowded in the gloom  
Were beds, and we in one  
In a far corner lay.

Our whispers woke no clocks,  
He kissed and I was glad  
At everything you did,  
Indifferent to those  
Who sat with hostile eyes

In pairs on every bed,  
Arms round each other's necks,  
Inert and vaguely sad.

The reference to the crowded room, "cavernous, lofty as a railway terminus," suggests the densely populated void of contemporary life in which the individual becomes lost, and the picture of the couples, "inert and vaguely sad" with "hostile eyes," gives a similar impression.

Wallace Stevens, poet, critic, and business executive, is well qualified to speak of various aspects of the impact of society on modern man, and in his essay, "The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words," he discusses "the pressure of reality" in relation to a sense of nobility, which is the "imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality."<sup>1</sup>

Reality is things as they are, the jungle we live in. First there was the comfortable Victorian reality of the 80's and 90's, then the seemingly more vital reality of the social and intellectual minorities that followed. Reality became violent and so remains. Life is physically violent for millions and spiritually violent for everyone alive.<sup>2</sup>

The poet-executive notes that these violent events are "increasing persistently with increasing omen, in what may be called our presence," and suggests that the pressure is "great enough and prolonged enough to bring about the end of one era in the history of the imagination and the beginning of another."<sup>3</sup>

This sense of society impinging upon personal life is, then, shared by virtually all the artists and critics of the modern era. It is a factor that, regardless of similar treatments of human experience or the use of older techniques, stamps a work with the seal of modern doubt and dissatisfaction.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Stevens, Wallace, "The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words," in The Language of Poetry, p. 125.

2. Ibid., pp. 114-15

3. Ibid., p. 111

4. James Joyce in Ulysses shows a keen awareness of the impact of society on modern man. The clanging trams in their monotonous runs become a symbol of this pressure, and in numerous incidents Joyce shows the bustle of the city invading the personal life of his characters.

This new social consciousness is an addition to our tradition that it is impossible to ignore. It is a significant characteristic of twentieth century metaphysical poetry--and most other contemporary verse--that will distinguish it always from the seventeenth century logical-individual variety.

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It is possible to think of this new sense of the "pressure of reality" as having several corollaries, such as the modern waste land myth, the impersonal parable form, and an increased literary self-consciousness and public-consciousness. These are all aspects of the artist's greater concern with society, and are probably functions of his sense of an impersonal social order--or perhaps chaos--that is impinging upon his personal, private life.

In this discussion I use the term "myth" in a broad sense to refer to any system of knowledge or belief which is shared in common by a poet and his society and which helps to bring meaning and order to both public and private life. The social aspect of myth is its most important feature. The poet and the common man fall back upon myth in their considered thought and their passing fancies and rely upon its social aspect in their attempts at emotional or intellectual communication. In more primitive societies myth bound men together in their common wonder and awe at the mystery lying behind life; in more highly developed cultures men have depended on the spiritual and ethical myths of the great religions, and modern men, particularly the artists and intellectuals, have sought social and psychological adjustment, consolation, and companionship in misery in fashioning the modern negative myth of the



sterility and inadequacy of contemporary society.

Much mythical material in the seventeenth century was either slowly disintegrating or just emerging, but the seventeenth century poet and his society depended in common, and often as a matter of course, on several traditions and systems, including the old scholastic beliefs and methods of thought, the new scientific knowledge and methods, and most important of all despite sectarian differences of the era--the Christian religion. It is significant that metaphysical poetry came to be so called because of its learning.

Donne's verse, particularly, reveals an avid interest in the new science. In "The Primrose" and in "Negative Love," for instance, the metaphors are almost entirely mathematical; in "The Triple Poole" he becomes geological in referring to the purification of water in its passage through the earth, and in "The Funerall" the allusion to the "sinewie thread ry brain lets fall," suggests at least an elementary knowledge of the nervous system. A joy and vital interest in new geographic discoveries was manifested by both Donne and Parvell. Donne's favorite metaphor was the "flatt map," employed in such contrasting poems as "Loves Progress" and "Hymne to God ly God, in ly Sicknesse," and one of his most famous metaphors is the compass figure in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning." That the poet saw promise and took joy in the new discoveries is evident in "To His Mistress Going to Bed" as he addresses his lady ecstatically: "O my America, my new-found-land." There are of course numerous references with a scientific cast in modern verse, but they are usually ironic, as in Warren's "Love's Parable." The new science and its efforts, however, for the most part inspired Donne and many of his contemporaries with confidence and an expectation of a "brave new world," and became a system in which an increasingly large

portion of society could place faith.

The chief myths that guided Donne and his contemporary metaphysicals, however, were the twin, closely related systems of scholasticism and Christianity. Together these provided knowledge about the nature of the universe and man's place in it, methods of thinking and dealing with the world, and a certain degree of emotional stability. Donne was familiar with Tertullian, Augustine, and Aquinas, with Catholic controversy generally, and of course with the schoolmen's methods of reasoning and their use of logic. The dependence of the seventeenth century metaphysicals on this vast disintegrating system is reflected in the logical, syllogistic problem structure of pieces like Donne's "The Dissolution" and Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress," as well as in the use of the logical, essentially denotative metaphor and the direct, cathartic treatment of experience. Besides providing the basic material for metaphysical poetic structure, scholasticism provided much of the imagery and many of the figures employed by the poet in communicating his experience. A knowledge of scholastic thought, for instance, is necessary to an understanding of such Donne poems as "A Peaver," in which the poet addresses the "wrangling schools" and identifies his mistress with the "world's soul" and her fever with a predicted earth-destroying fire; "Air and Angels," comparing men's and women's love with the purity of air and angels, respectively; "The Dissolution," employing the theory of the four elements, and "The Prioresse," based on the belief that woman's "true number" is five.

Despite the religious differences of the era--and perhaps partly because of them--the most important system to the seventeenth century metaphysicals was Christianity, just as the chief problem facing them

was their relationship with God. Most of the verse of Herbert, Crashaw, and Vaughan is of a sacred nature, while a large portion of Donne's poetry is also completely religious. It was the Christian religion that provided the problem treated, the inspiration, the subject matter, the textural development, and made communication possible. As was the case with the new science and scholasticism, the importance of the Christian religious myth is further seen in the extensive use of religious imagery in secular verse. Testifying in some measure to the importance of the religious system in everyday life and everyday thought is the religious imagery of such poems as Donne's "The Flea," in which the insect is identified metaphorically with a "barriage temple" and cloisters; "The Relique," comparing buried lovers to relics and then by association to miracles, and "The Canonization," which symbolically identifies love and religion.

The immediacy and vitality of seventeenth century religious thought and feeling is also suggested in a similar metaphorical systems found in the verse of Donne, Herbert and Crashaw in which religious material is treated in terms of sexual imagery, as in the closing passage of Donne's 14th "holy sonnet:"

Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,  
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,  
Except y'enthrall me, never shall be free  
Nor ever chaste except you ravish me.

And again in the 18th sonnet:

Betray, kind husband, thy spouse to our sights,  
And let thy arorous soul court thy mild dove,  
Who is most true and pleasing to thee then,  
When she's embrac'd and open to most men.

The immense importance of the religious system to the seventeenth century metaphysicals and their contemporaries is further illustrated in the great perturbation reflected in the verse of Donne and Herbert as the periphery of their belief was pierced by the sharp impact of the

Copernican theory. In a long passage in "An Anatomy of the World" Donne mourns the passing of the old "proportion," the establishment of the "new philosophy," and Herbert, in "Affliction," cries:

Broken in pieces all asunder  
 Lord, hunt we not,  
 A thing forgot,  
 Once a poore creature, now a wonder,  
 A wonder tortured in the space  
 Betwixt this world and that of grace.

This seventeenth century mythical material, then, dealt chiefly with man's relation to the universe and provided positive guides for believing, thinking, and acting, but at the same time served a definite social function in furnishing a body of familiar learning which not only gave the poet a medium for a more subtle expression of experience, but also made possible a more precise and effective emotional and intellectual communication of experience. These systems were essentially myths of acceptance and affirmation, and comforted men with a logical picture of the universe and logical methods for thinking and acting. There was little concern with social disorder because a kind of cosmic order seemed to embrace both the individual and society. Individuals were bound together organically, without undue self-consciousness or social-consciousness, in their common everyday familiarity with and dependence upon the scientific and scholastic-religious systems.

In the twentieth century there is a sad lack of the kind of myth found in the seventeenth century. There are no trustworthy, order-giving cosmic or even social systems upon which the society as a whole depends, and it is probably for this reason that the era is marked by the rise of private myths<sup>1</sup> and the negative "waste land" myth that seeks to found

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1. The development of a number of religious and philosophical systems adhered to by small groups accompanied the rise of Protestantism in the seventeenth century, but most of these were variants or offshoots of the basic scholastic-Christian myth, while the private twentieth century systems, such as those of Eliot and Yeats, are much more personal in that they are essentially divorced from existing systems accepted by society and are in a large measure the products of individual minds.

symbolic order upon the void, so to speak, and to bind men, particularly the artistic and intellectual group, together in mutual sympathy and rationalization. These private myths and the negative social myth may be thought of as representing the two aspects of the modern psychological-social rationale.

All phases of modern literature are filled with private philosophical systems which have been painstakingly conceived by order-hungry artists for whom the seemingly sterile, disintegrating present systems are inadequate. In fact, familiarity with most modern authors implies a knowledge of their private myths so that the reader may understand allusions to these private systems and grasp, for instance, the full meaning of a perhaps seemingly chance reference to hyacinths and roses (Eliot) or Byzantium (Yeats). In the seventeenth century communication between the artist and his friends was made relatively easy because of the poet's reference to a common body of knowledge, but in the twentieth century sensitive communication between a poet and his public is often possible only after extensive groundwork by both parties. Probably one of the best examples of such a personal philosophy is Yeats's "magical" system including accounts of history, human psychology and the life of the soul after death.

His historical system, somewhat similar to Oswald Spengler's theory in its cyclical nature, is based on the twenty-eight phases of the moon, with the full moon (phase 15) symbolizing complete subjectivity and the dark of the moon complete objectivity. Setting up two subcycles comparable to the waxing and waning of the moon, he places the Justinian Byzantine civilization and the Renaissance at the midpoints of equal objectivity and subjectivity. (A knowledge of the system is necessary for any adequate understanding of "Sailing to Byzantium," "Byzantium," and other poems.)

In Yeats's framework the historical phase modifies the individual psychology, and in the poet's psychological system man possesses Will, Fask (image of what he wishes to become or reverence;) Creative Mind (all the mind which is consciously constructive), and Body of Fate (physical and mental environment).<sup>1</sup> The twentieth century, in high contrast to the seventeenth, is characterized by numerous such personal philosophies and poet-reader relationships.

Opposed to these private myths--although often closely related to them in spirit--is about the only modern system on which a large group of writers and readers depend--the myth of the spiritual and imaginative sterility of contemporary life. It functions as a communicative key in the understanding of twentieth century verse very much as the scholastic-Christian system functioned in the seventeenth century. It probably received its definitive treatment in Eliot's "The Waste Land," but a reliance on various tenets of the myth is implicit in the work of most of the twentieth century metaphysicals and in that of numerous other modern writers.

The myth is basically simple, but has numerous variants. It does not require extensive explanation because it is such a familiar assumption in reading. It holds that the twentieth century in its vitality and creativity--or rather lack of these--compares very poorly with nobler periods, and many writers apparently take a certain masochistic delight in sharply stressing these differences in works in which a contrast between two eras is implied, as in Joyce's Ulysses. Whether an historical perspective is introduced or not, there is usually a clear opposition between vitality and sterility, life and death forces. In the modern

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1. Brooks, Cleanth, op. cit., pp. 177-185

period, according to the myth, man feels himself insignificant, without dignity, and tends to have a monotonous, mechanical existence in which significant sexual or religious experience is impossible. He is the victim of a divided sensibility. Modern man rushes through his day with his eye on his watch, but has no feeling for duration nor for his cultural heritage. He is surrounded daily by crowds of people, but he establishes meaningful communication with no one.

But the sharply critical poet turns out in some measure to be a consoling philosopher as he implies that this is simply a sterile period and that the unfortunate individual is not really to blame. There are only rather vague references to a concept of a modern, industrial, scientific, capitalist, bourgeois, fallen civilization, with Auden, however, explaining contemporary conditions in terms of leftist dialectic. The poet of the period characteristically views society with rueful self-satire and a stoical resignation, recalling with nostalgia a more vital tradition and sometimes taking refuge in older systems and values, such as those offered by Catholicism. These, in brief, are the major tenets of the popular waste land myth which is alluded to in one way or another by all of the modern metaphysical poets and the majority of other twentieth century artists. Of the poems quoted in this study, Eliot's "Morning at the Window," "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," and "Portrait of a Lady," Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium," Ransom's "Triumph," and "Good Shirts," Tate's "The Paradigm," Warren's "Love's Parable," and Auden's "Poem XIV" from Poems clearly depend for their full meaning and significance upon this modern waste land myth.

It seems noteworthy and indicative of the modern poet's desperate feeling of need for a myth that in writing "The Waste Land," the most

complete statement of this modern negative myth, Eliot used older mythical forms made known to this generation through scholarship, rather than memory, in Sir James Frazer's The Golden Bough and Miss Jessie L. Weston's From Ritual to Romance. It is also quite significant, and somewhat ironic, that while in the seventeenth century allusions were understood because of their reference to a common body of knowledge, today mythical references such as those in "The Waste Land" become clear only through footnote explanations.

Variations on the modern waste land myth by twentieth century metaphysical poets are numerous. The myth is implicit in almost all of Eliot's work from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "Gerontion" to Four Quartets. Eliot's statement that in the seventeenth century "a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered,"<sup>1</sup> has been dramatized in his own verse and in that of the Southern metaphysicals and others on numerous occasions. However, against the norm of sterility Eliot has set the ideals of meaningful sexual-religious experience and significant community life and communication, ideals best symbolized in his "rose garden" imagery.

Ivan Feats's private system is analagous to the waste land myth at one point, for the poet explains that we have entered upon the twenty-third phase, an era of anarchic violence without reference to values and of technical excellence and bored impartiality in art. The poet refers to the characteristics of this period in "The Second Coming," "Blood on the Moon," "Meditations in Time of Civil War," and other pieces. His conception of the sterility of the present era is reflected, for instance, in the seventh section of the "Meditations," entitled "I see Phantoms of Hatred and of

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1. Eliot, T.S., op. cit., p. 247



the Heart's Fullness and of the Coming Eaptiness." In one passage the poet's vision of loveliness is interrupted by the impact of the social dimension:

The cloud-pale unicorns, the eyes of aquamarine,  
The quivering half-closed eyelids, the rags of cloud  
or of lace,  
Or eyes that rage has brightened, arms it has made lean,  
Give place to an indifferent multitude, give place  
To brazen hawks. For self-delighting reverie,  
For late of what's to come, nor pity for what's gone,  
Nothing but grip or claw, and the eye's complacency,  
The innumerable clanging wings that have put out  
the moon.

Mrs. Lylic, who is most inclined of the modern metaphysical poets to fall back upon seventeenth century mythical material as well as the earlier logical forms, refers to the waste land myth most directly in her less serious pieces, such as "Peregrine" and "Lugie at the Inn," but a dependence on it is nevertheless implicit in large portion of her verse.

The Southern metaphysicals accept the myth and adapt it to their own usage, suggesting a contrast between contemporary Southern decadence and the grace and grandeur of the Old South. This is seen in such poems as Ranson's "Vaunting Oak," presenting the venerable oak, like the South, as "largely cadaver," and "Here Lies a Lady," about a Southern lady, who like her homeland, was mortally infected with "chills and fever." In pieces like Ranson's "Persistent Explorer," and the sonnet sequence, "Two Gentlemen in Bonds," the modern divided sensibility is the main theme. Tate also mourns the divided sensibility of modern man, and laments his lack of memory and feeling for duration and his cultural past in "Aeneas at Washington," "Retroduction to American History," in which the poet speaks of the deadness and lack of myth in modern life," and "The Meaning of Death," in which it is concluded that "we are the eyelids of deserted caves." References to the modern myth are of course an

essential part of Warren's "Love's Parable," while in his "The Return: An Elegy," the intellectual-emotional psychological polarity is expressed most poignantly.

Auden clothes the myth in his own imagery, defining the modern era as an "age of ice," rather than a "waste land." But neither is very conducive to vital living, and the meaning is the same. Auden, however, places the principal blame for this twentieth century spiritual ice age at the door of the decadent leisure class, and sees the prospect of more fertile fields in a leftist socio-economic frame. This glacial era is proclaimed clearly in the closing stanza of "Poem XX" from Poems:

While this despair with hardened eyeballs cries  
    'A Golden Age, A Silver...rather this,  
Massive and taciturn years, the Age of Ice.'

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Another key aspect of this twentieth century literary social-consciousness, with an important organic relation to the waste land myth, is the impersonal parable style characteristic of so many modern metaphysical poems. This universalized, third-person narrative style like the negative social myth, is in high contrast to the earlier metaphysical style. In the seventeenth century when the logical-individual frame was dominant, when mythical material was held in common and the most characteristic problem facing the metaphysical poet was his personal relationship with God, the poet wrote frankly of his private life in the first person and virtually without inhibitions. In the twentieth century, however, with the psychological-social frame dominant, the poet depends upon a myth that stresses neither cosmic knowledge nor personal relationships with God, but emphasizes the sad condition of most sensitive persons, usually with split sensibilities, in an inhibited, unimaginative waste

land society. With the accent thus thrown on the contemporary society of which the artist feels himself a part, it is natural for the poet to write in an impersonal, parable style which typically refers to the modern myth or is a kind of dramatization, or objectification, of it. The modern parable-type poem presents symbolic or "type" characters, rather than the root-personalities, such as Donne, characteristic of the seventeenth century. The poet is a sophisticated narrator or tales about contemporary life, while earlier he was a dramatic protagonist in his own verse.

A large number of the poems of Eliot, Lanson, Tate, Warren and Auden conform to this parable pattern. Eliot's early verse, for instance, is marked by two important type characterizations: the decadent upper class Brufrock type and the vulgar, more vital Sweeney type. In "Portrait of a Lady," for example, the poet-protagonist, telling his own tale in heavy irony, is of the Brufrock type, while the "lady" is a kind of female counterpart of the same type. The poet presents the sterile, would-be lovers, taking the air "in a tobacco trance" in a futile attempt to communicate with each other vitally, as representative of a class and a generation. Employing an ingeniously developed and pleasing metaphor, Lanson uses a very similar kind of "type" characters and a similar type of situation in his satiric "Good Ships." In sharp contrast to seventeenth century metaphysical verse which characteristically emphasized a statement of individual, chiefly personal, experience, such parable-like pieces as "Portrait of a Lady" and "Good Ships" stress the social intener and the lack of significant emotional experience in the modern era.

Tate's "The Paradign," quoted in chapter II, provides a similar kind of commentary on modern life in its projection of type characters and situations. The poet tells us that the modern lovers, who have lost meaningful communication with each other, are sealed by the "tensile air"

in their "icy land" (suggestive of Auden's waste land imagery). The sophisticated generalizing and moralizing in the two concluding stanzas rounds out the metaphysical parable form:

For in the air all lovers meet  
After they've hated out their love;  
Love's but the echo of retreat  
Caught by the sunbeam stretched above

Their frozen exile from the earth  
And lost. Each is the other's crime.  
This is their equity in birth--  
Hate is its ignorant paradigm.

A somewhat less obvious example is Ransom's "Spectral Lovers." However, two contrasting metaphorical clusters, indicating that the lovers are torn between a rather ghostly spirituality and a spring-fresh sensualism, provides a comment on adolescence in general and particularly modern adolescence in this era of divided sensibilities. In both pieces the author, as narrator, displays a half-sympathetic, half-satiric attitude toward his characters. It is the modern metaphysical story-teller's most characteristic point of view in his conception of society and himself.

There is no fine line of distinction dividing twentieth century poetic parables employing type characters and type situations from those depending upon symbolic characters and symbolic situations. Roughly speaking, it might be said that poems like Warren's "Love's Parable" and Tate's "The Paradigm" utilize types, while such a piece as Auden's "Poem XIV," making a fresh use of the outworn military metaphor, is symbolic. The symbolic metaphysical parable reaches its fullest and clearest development in pieces like Ransom's "Captain Carpenter," "Travels of Iax," and his dramatic sonnet sequence, "Two Gentlemen in Bonds, a Tale in Twenty Sonnets." Centering around a Burger-Künstler polarity and the concept of the divided sensibility, the sequence presents two brothers: Paul, "waxing great and thirsting for the power," and Abbot, "a death's-head gilding from a tower." The issue is pointed up in the last sonnet as

the deceased father contemplates his two sons divided against themselves:

"How I remember life; and out of me  
lawfully leaping, the twin seed of my loins,  
Brethren, whom no split fatherhood disjoins;  
out in the woman's-house how hatefully  
They trod upon each other! till now I see  
my manhood halved and squandered, two heads, two hearts,  
Each partial son despising the other's parts;  
And so it is, and so it always will be."

"Yet might it be precarious to weep  
with eyes slack-fastened and shake these rusty joints;  
I am a specter, even if at some points  
A father, touched too tender by his issue;  
So weak and dusty I perceive my tissue,  
I must not crack it--I will turn and sleep."

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I have touched on three important aspects of the modern metaphysical poet's greater social concern: his feeling of a social impact upon personal life, his dependence on the waste land myth or private systems, and his use of the impersonal parable style. The degree of what might be called artiness in a poet's style is also in a large measure a function of dominance of the logical-individual or psychological-social rationale.

Seventeenth century metaphysical poetry, with its obscurity and ingenious devices, is of course not invulnerable to a charge of artiness. However, compared to most modern metaphysical work, it appears fresh, spontaneous, personal and unself-conscious. The seventeenth century poet was first a man of the world or a man of God, second a poet, and only incidentally an aesthetic theorist, while in the twentieth century the metaphysical litterateur is usually a poet first, a theorist and critic second, and only incidentally a man of affairs. It is interesting to note that about the only theory of poetry posited of Donne, besides a few references to the "marsh" masculine quality of his verse, is in "The Triple Poole," which deserves to be quoted in its entirety:

I am two fooles, I know,  
For loving, and for saying so  
In whining poetry;  
But where's that wiseman, that would not be I,  
If she would not deny?  
Then as th'earth's inward narrow crooked lanes  
Do surge sea waters fretfull salt away,  
I thought, if I could draw my paines,  
Through Rimes vexation, I should them allay.  
Grief brought to numbers cannot be so fierce,  
For, he tames it, that fetters it in verse.

But when I have done so,  
Some man, his art and voice to show,  
Doth set and sing my paine,  
And, by delighting many, frees again  
Griefe, which verse did restraints.  
To Love, and Griefe tribute of Verse belongs,  
But not of such as pleases when 'tis read,  
Both are increased by such songs:  
For both their triumphs so are published,  
And I, which was two fooles, do so grow three;  
Who are a little wise, the best fooles bee.

He would probably be not too wise, and perhaps a little foolish, to take this bit of wit as a serious, long-considered statement of poetic theory. In fact, the important thing is that Donne apparently did not feel called upon to make a serious statement of aesthetic theory. Nevertheless it is significant that the hastily defined theory of "The Triple Foole" is characteristic of the logical-individual point of view. The poet thinks of his verse as something essentially personal and private, and is interested in poetry as a medium for dealing with life situations, for allaying "griefe" through committing it logically to "Rimes vexation." He shows himself aware of the problem of communication, but is chiefly concerned with the relationship between the poet and his poetry.

In the twentieth century under the aegis of the psychological-social frame the metaphysical poet is self-consciously literary and, in a broad sense, derivative. His artiness is probably in part psychological--an escape from modern life. It is also apparently in part social, revealing the poet's desire to justify his role in society in appealing to the tastes of a special intellectual clique. The metaphysical poet is no longer at

ease in writing incidental verse for himself and personal friends; rather he characteristically seeks to conceal personal feelings as he finds himself rather poked in the public eye as a self-conscious commentator on the ugliness of modern life.

This literary preciousness typical of a great deal of modern metaphysical verse has innumerable facets, and is almost omnipresent--although tantalizingly intangible. I noted several examples of stylistic artiness in Warren's "Love's Parable," and an examination of numerous other metaphysical poems, particularly those of the Southern group, will reveal a similar arty quality in theme, idiom, phrasing, metrics, and a sophisticated, tongue-in-cheek viewpoint. The reader's feeling that much contemporary verse borders on the belletristic and possesses a "worked over" quality is probably due chiefly to "poetic tone," the subtle expression of the poet's attitudes as narrator and commentator. The parable form, an outgrowth of the poet's increased self-consciousness and social-consciousness, is also of course an aspect of this modern arty style.

This modern stress on aesthetics and style is exhibited quantitatively and qualitatively in the lengthy critical and interpretative writings of Eliot, Hanson, Tate, and others. These poet-critics are also far more interested than Donne in the relation of their work to the tradition and in problems of aesthetic communication and the reader-poetry relationship, rather than the poet-poetry relationship. This latter trend, typical of the age, has a logical culmination in such work as I. A. Richards's investigation of infra-neural impulses in his aesthetic studies.

Several of these modern poets, Eliot, Hanson and Tate particularly, frankly show an affinity for the seventeenth century metaphysicals, and apparently with equal frankness cultivate in their own verse many of the most vaunted seventeenth century poetic virtues, such as the bold extended metaphor and the clothing of abstraction in concrete imagery. Eliot, for

instance, discusses the excellences of the early metaphysicals in "The Metaphysical Poets" and "Andrew Marvell," from Selected Essays. Manson, in "Poetry: A Note in Ontology," speaks of three different types of poetry: physical poetry, platonic poetry and metaphysical poetry. Physical poetry, such as is found in much imitist verse, purports to present things in their thinginess, so to speak, while platonic verse is a poetry of ideas, chiefly moral and spiritual, in which the metaphor or imagery is employed mainly to garnish or illustrate the abstract idea. He infers, however, that the highest type is metaphysical poetry characterized by a kind of "miraculism" which arises "when the poet discovers by analogy and identify between objects which is partial, though it should be considerable, and proceeds to an identification which is complete."<sup>1</sup> Although Mrs. Gillie and Auden have not made so strong a point of praising the seventeenth century metaphysicals, their verse suggests a thorough knowledge of these poets and a conscious feeling of relationship with them.

"Derivation" and "influences," in a strict sense, are difficult to prove--and the proof is not always abundantly rewarding--but the internal evidence of the poetry and the external evidence of the criticism would indicate that most of the twentieth century metaphysicals, spurred by the needs and complexities of this era, have self-consciously derived from the earlier poets important elements in their verse, such as the extensive use of metaphor and other devices, the expression of subtlety and abstraction in sensate imagery, and the complex treatment of experience.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Manson, John Crowe, The World's Body, pp. 133-140

2. Ivor Winters deals unsympathetically with the modernists, but nevertheless makes some salient remarks apropos of literary poetry: "pseudo-traditional or 'literary' poetry is the work of writers insufficiently aware of what they have stylistically and morally in common with the best poetry of the race to master this common element and in a manner of speaking to take it for granted. The literary poet, cut off from his tradition by education, for he usually occurs in the late eighteenth, nineteenth or twentieth century, regards the tradition as something exotic, and employs it accordingly. He imitates the idioms of the traditional poet, but they are no longer for him familiar and exact; they are foreign and decorative; they degenerate into mannerism." (Primitivism and Decadence, p. 74)



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I have examined seventeenth and twentieth century metaphysical verse in the light of a logical-individual and a psychological-social frame. The former suggests a positive acceptance of life and society, characteristic of men who feel that as individuals they are acting on life. Their approach is, in a broad sense, logical and direct, for logic is their characteristic tool and weapon in thinking and acting in life situations. The latter suggests a rejection of life and society, or perhaps a new mode of psychological adaptation, typical of men who feel that they are being acted upon by society. They gravitate between a grave concern for social conditions and a psychological escapist.

In the seventeenth century the metaphysical poet is chiefly concerned with himself as an individual and with his relationship with God--and perhaps also his mistress. He realizes that there are certain social evils, but does not feel that society is encroaching upon and ruining his private life. Today, however, an all-pervading social interest taking several forms is one of the most important features of modern metaphysical verse. The modern metaphysical poet is far more concerned about his relationship with society than his identification with God. His greater social consciousness is demonstrated in several ways: in a subtler, more complex presentation of human relationships; in a vivid and persistent portrayal of the social impact on private lives; in a dependence on psychological private systems and the negative social myth of the waste land because of the lack of vital mythical material held in common; in an impersonal parable style which is usually employed to dramatize the waste land myth in terms of type or symbolic characters, with the poet acting as narrator, and a literary, derivative style which suggests the poet's desire to find significant older forms appropriate to the age.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

## CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS

The question naturally arises as to why seventeenth century poetic forms and experiential structures carry such a potent appeal for literary-minded moderns.

This twentieth century interest in the seventeenth century is apparently due in part at least to similarities found in the two periods. If we avoid seeking exact parallels, it can be seen that both the early seventeenth and early twentieth centuries occupy similar positions as transitional eras in the stream of history and that the intellectual climates of the two periods are comparable. Glancing back over recent English literary history, we see that the early years of both centuries were marked by rather sharp and somewhat similar cultural turns.

The early seventeenth century was significant for English poetry because of the transition from romantic Elizabethan (or English Renaissance) style to the metaphysical Stuart (or what might with reservations be called the English baroque) style. On a literary level the early twentieth century was characterized by a revolt against the romantic Victorian style and the appearance of the metaphysical style, a waning interest in the Renaissance and a rising enthusiasm for the seventeenth century. An impersonal industrial economy and a scientific emphasis became dominant social factors as religious and personal values crumbled and individuals tended to retire into private worlds. As in the early seventeenth century, old systems were proven inadequate and living became increasingly more complex.

The Renaissance abounded in youthful exuberance, romantic love, sweet pastoral lyricism, and sometimes spectacular characters amidst violent tragedy. In the early seventeenth century English verse tended

to lose some of its Renaissance balance and levelness as these were supplanted by a deeper intellectual penetration and a lively mental virtuosity, a more realistic sense of psychological conflict and knotty experiential complexity, and a sophisticated cynicism and satire. Renaissance verse was often like a sweet and haunting song while early seventeenth century poetry placed a premium on rhetoric and cleverness. I noted this stylistic transition in Chapter I in the comparison of Shakespeare's 71st sonnet and Donne's "A Valediction: Of my home in the Window."

In this early seventeenth century metaphysical poetry there is a merging of the Elizabethan lyrical romanticism and the more intellectual and rational approach characteristic of the century, a viewpoint in keeping with the rise of empiricism and rationalism and the interest in the new science. The importance of this new emphasis is apparent in the logical-individual framework typical of seventeenth century metaphysical poetry. The fusion of what might be thought of as romantic and classic elements was probably most successful in the verse of Donne, Herbert and Crashaw. A split is quite evident in the works of the later seventeenth century metaphysicals, however, as much of the verse of Cowley and Marvell anticipates late seventeenth and eighteenth century neo-classicism, while the verse of Vaughan and Traherne contains romantic elements suggestive of the early nineteenth century style. Metaphysical verse virtually disappeared as the late seventeenth century and most of the eighteenth, with a few exceptions such as William Blake, was bound by a fairly rigid neo-classicism.

The early nineteenth century inaugurated a period of romanticism in which Samuel Taylor Coleridge and other poets turned back to the

sweet music and subjective lyricism of the English Renaissance with an enthusiasm somewhat reminiscent of that of the Elizabethans. But there was an important difference, however, in that much of the romantic verse contained an implied rejection of society and was in part a protest against the encroachment of a modern, impersonal industrial society and an avenue of escape from its domination. The psychological social framework typical of modern metaphysical verse apparently has its roots in this viewpoint. Nineteenth century artists and readers recalled nostalgically the hearty vigor and delicate grace of the Renaissance, and in an age of highly prized, but diminishing individualism looked back with particular fascination on the sweet lyric grace of Renaissance verse and the mighty characters that stalked through Elizabethan drama.

The transition in English verse marked by the waning of the nineteenth century romantic style and the rise of the twentieth century metaphysical style showed a significant similarity to the earlier transition from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century. There was a trend away from the contemplative sweetness and sentiment of the nineteenth century toward a more sympathetic feeling for the complexity of experience, an increased accent on primarily intellectual elements, and an attitude of sophisticated disillusionment. Twentieth century literary groups, like those of the seventeenth, apparently take pleasure in the emotional-intellectual juxtaposition and in the concrete sensateness and intellectual ingenuity which characterize the metaphors and other figures typical of metaphysical verse. As with the nineteenth century affinity for the Renaissance, it must be remembered that the twentieth century literary-minded, essentially unlike those of the seventeenth century, tend to reject society, as they return self-consciously to the work of the earlier metaphysicals and write in a style that is at least in some measure derivative. The nineteenth-twentieth century transition, however, is in

no way a sharp and complete break. The modern metaphysicals' quarrel with society probably accounts largely for the carry-over into modern verse of a number of nineteenth century romantic elements, such as the dominantly psychological approach, the important role of connotation and subjectivism, and the ironic contemplation of experience. I noted this transition in Chapter I in a comparison of Miss Rossetti's "Remember" and Yeats's "Broken Dreams."

It seems apparent that somewhat similar changes in intellectual backgrounds in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries gave birth to metaphysical verse in both periods. In fact it would appear that metaphysical poetry, merging logical abstraction and concrete imagery with an expression of deep personal feeling and subtle states of mind, is a product of an era lying somewhere midway between full-blown classicism and romanticism. Revealing sincere emotion and penetrating thought qualified by each another, it avoids both extreme classical formalism and correctness and extreme romantic emotionalism and subjectivism. I have noted in this connection that the breakdown of the metaphysical tradition in the late seventeenth century produced on the one hand a predominantly classical metaphysical verse, as in some of the work of Marvell and Cowley, and on the other hand a predominantly romantic metaphysical poetry, as in the work of Vaughan and Crashaw. In the twentieth century, as I have emphasized throughout this study, metaphysical verse shows a fusion of nineteenth century romantic elements with seventeenth century forms, devices and treatments of experience.

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We find that the early seventeenth and twentieth centuries seem to play rather similar roles in the drama of history. What, then, are the

qualities of seventeenth century metaphysical poetry that appeal to twentieth century moderns, and what are the primary differences of approach in the two eras?

It is of course difficult to analyze very satisfactorily the social psychology behind the widespread contemporary enthusiasm for metaphysical verse, but there are evidently several important factors in the metaphysical style that carry a strong appeal for the present era. It would seem that the twentieth century finds, first, a varied appeal in the logical, intellectual elements of this early metaphysical verse and, second, a peculiar satisfaction in the contrasts and conflicts found in its poetic forms and experiential structures.

It seems possible, for instance, that the direct, essentially intellectual and logical organization of experience, particularly the use of the extended metaphor, affords a sense of stability, unity and certainty that is strangely attractive in a twentieth century society which seems so full of flux and uncertainty. Metaphor, particularly, which so often unequivocally identifies one thing with another and binds together heterogeneous extremes in a clear and logical structure, militates against a feeling of confusion and establishes a sense of order and control. In this respect metaphor is qualitatively different from simile, which says that something is "like" or "as" something else which is similar, and from symbolism, which frequently tends to be rather vague and highly subjective. I also previously pointed out that the logical method of progression, particularly the extended metaphor, provides an ordered and controlled framework to which the poet can commit his experience directly, seeking an extinction of emotion. While the twentieth century approach is of course different (more psychological than logical), the modern poet and reader quite possibly find that the intellectual organization of experience fulfills a certain psychological

need in an age marked by uncertainty and Stevens's unyielding "pressure of reality." The sensate, concrete quality of the imagery, metaphors and other devices found in metaphysical poetry also probably contributes to a satisfying feeling of stability and definiteness.

In addition metaphysical verse has an intellectual appeal which is less basic, but about equally important for many poets and readers. This appeal is seen in its emphasis on intellectual virtuosity, mental gymnastics for their own sake, as displayed in the art and ingenious figures which sparkle through most of the metaphysical poetry of the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. The twentieth century, characterized in many ways by a nervous striving after novelty and variety, often delights as much in the brilliance of a clever intellectual tour de force as in the deeper foundations of poetry.

Perhaps the most fundamental reason for the popularity of metaphysical poetry today is its daring contrasts and baroque-like stress and strain, qualities which have a strong appeal in our nervous, rather sensation-ridden era. It seems clear that the twentieth century does not want an art of classic repose or static balance, but rather an art of tension in which conflicts are resolved, somewhat precariously perhaps, in bringing together contrasting impulses in an aesthetic unity. As noted in Chapter IV the complex treatment of experience characteristic of metaphysical verse and the importance of such elements as wit and irony, which change and qualify the poet's projection of experience. This tension, similar to the sense of stress and strain found in the composition of a baroque painting, is a by-product of the balance achieved in much metaphysical poetry between the intellectual and emotional, the romantic and the classic. A like appeal is probably found in other aspects of metaphysical poetic structure, such as the sharp antitheses



and the bold contrasts of the tenor and vehicle of a metaphor.

The appeal to the twentieth century mind of these qualities, carefully ordered structures and sensate imagery, sheer intellectual virtuosity, and a tension and complexity in the treatment of experience, seems to account in a very large measure for the renaissance of interest today in seventeenth century metaphysical poetry and for the appearance of a twentieth century poetry which is fundamentally similar to the early verse, yet quite different in important respects.

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The differences between the seventeenth and twentieth century approaches are of course both subtle and involved, but I have sought to clarify these differences, in setting up the logical-psychological frame of reference, a rationale that suggests the existence of essentially different attitudes toward life and society in the two periods under discussion.

The logical framework suggest a strategy for bringing order into knowledge and life. It provides a direct approach for dealing with life and controlling it, and indicates a positive, confident attitude of acceptance of life. In the seventeenth century the logical approach was probably carried to its highest development in the formation of philosophical, religious or scientific systems, as the period was marked by a clash between two different systems of logic, the old syllogistic abstractions of the schoolmen and the new empiricism and rationalism of the forward-looking scientists, mathematicians and philosophers. Emphasis was placed upon the separation of truth and error, as in Sir Francis Bacon's discussion of the "idols" in Novum Organum and Sir Thomas Browne's treatment of fallacies of thought in Pseudodoxia Epidemica.

Truth and knowledge were looked upon as having an existence external to the mind of man in very much the same way as the logical method of poetic progression functioned as an experiential framework which seemed external to the mind.

The twentieth century psychological rationale provides a strategy for avoiding the problem of finding an external order in life and suggests an escape into the internal ordering of the mind. It shows an attitude of emotional adjustment to life, a kind of acceptance transcending a symbolic rejection. The dominant psychological-social approach apparently grows out of contemporary socio-economic conflicts.

Like the return to older, more ordered metaphysical forms, the new emphasis on psychological values and internal frameworks is apparently an expression of an attempted emotional adjustment to contemporary life. The psychological frame is the product of an age of violence and extreme relativism, as there is no longer a widespread belief in absolute knowledge external to the mind, and many scientific methodologies have come to be looked upon as convenient hypotheses.

While the logical framework tended to be static, rational and external, the psychological life-view emphasizes change, the irrational and the organic. Its development could be briefly charted by glancing at the basic concepts of Arthur Schopenhauer, Henri Bergson and Alfred North Whitehead. Schopenhauer, for example, with his concept of Nirvana, of the "world as idea," of the unceasing irrational force of the Will, and in his negative attitude toward free will, is one of the first philosophical representatives of the modern psychological approach. Bergson, presenting the concept of an elan vital which can at least claim kin to Schopenhauer's Will, and stressing the flux and flow of the mind and a psychological sense of duration, interprets the psychological viewpoint

in terms somewhat more complete and more congenial to the modern era. It is also important to remember the essentially human and psychological character of Whitehead's emphasis on organism, process, prehension and dyadic bipolarity.

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Two important and closely related problems are yet to be investigated. There is, first, the question of what elements in the intellectual and socio-economic backgrounds of the early seventeenth and twentieth centuries gave birth to metaphysical poetry, and there is the companion question of what are the relationships between metaphysical verse and other art forms.

It is probable that behind the complexity of seventeenth century and twentieth century metaphysical verse are certain conflicts in the socio-economic and intellectual backgrounds and that the nature of these conflicts helps to account for the logical and psychological approaches evident in early and modern metaphysical poetry, respectively. I believe that in the seventeenth century the conflict tended to appear on what might be called a cosmic level in a clash between the old Christian-scholastic view of life and the new scientific view, and it is possible to think of the conflict as symbolized in the intellectual agitation caused by the Copernican theory, as displayed, for instance, in Donne's "The Anatomy of the World." The approach to this cosmic conflict was chiefly on a logical level as men sought to ferret out and discard error and fallacy and to lay hold of absolute verities external to the mind. I believe that in the twentieth century the conflict is on a social level, as artists and men generally seem to feel that the age faces a crisis in maintaining vital life values against the increasing pressure of an impersonal mechanical civilization. An essentially psychological approach

was necessary in dealing with this problem, a conflict which can in no way be resolved by ratiocination, only by emotional adjustment. This attempted emotional adjustment has involved, first, a kind of psychological escapism and, second, a return to older, more ordered forms, characteristics clearly discernible in an analysis of modern metaphysical poetry.

The somewhat more knotty second problem concerns the relation of metaphysical poetry to music and the fine arts in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. In dealing with such a problem it is highly important to have a workable technique and framework which would make possible an objective comparison of different art forms. As the development of such an instrument of reference is beyond the scope of this study, I can only make a few rather subjective suggestions. There are, for example, the apparently significant relationship between seventeenth century metaphysical metaphors and the fine arts emblems, as noted by Praz, and a kind of metaphysical complexity in many of the serio-comic religious etchings of Rembrandt. In modern art the social problem is treated in a number of expressions of the imaginative-industrial polarity, while both impressionism and expressionism, basically opposed in many respects, show their kinship as late nineteenth century and early twentieth century phenomena in their common emphasis on psychological and subjective values.

Because of the temporal, rather than spacial, structures common to both poetry and music, stylistic and structural comparisons of these two art forms are often more rewarding than similar comparisons of poetry and fine arts. I believe a definite relation can be traced, for instance, between the elaborately logical progression characteristic of seventeenth century metaphysical verse and the complicated contrapuntal Baroque-like structures of English and Continental music in the seventeenth century. Like the poetry, the music of the past several decades shows an essentially

psychological progression, as the more rigid forms have been abandoned for so-called atonality, tonal color and variety rather than melody, and for the kind of subjective tone poems found in the work of Debussy and others. As in verse, stress is placed on mood and connotation rather than upon thematic construction. The relationship seems particularly clear between French symbolist verse, French impressionist music, and French impressionist painting. Compositions of Cesar Franck and Max Reger also appear to depend upon a mixture of older logical and modern psychological elements similar to that found in twentieth century metaphysical verse.

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In this study I have tried to present analyses that were close and objective and at the same time to employ concepts which were broad enough to support helpful generalizations. I believe this paper has answered the immediate questions concerning the similar and dissimilar characteristics of metaphysical verse in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, but I have never looked upon this analysis as an end in itself. I sincerely hope that this study may serve an heuristic function in providing a foundation for an investigation of the problems mentioned and in leading to a better understanding of the role of metaphysical poetry in the early seventeenth and twentieth centuries.

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