Herbert and Mannerism

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I

The rehabilitation of George Herbert in this century after so long a period of neglect and his eventual readmission into the anthologies as a poet worthy of regard did not at first generate, as did the rediscovery of Donne, a sense of excitement in the critical world, a conviction that here were forgotten tones, themes, and experimental patterns of writing which might reshape our understanding of the very nature of poetry. Until recently, even the warmest admirers of Herbert's art had drawn attention primarily to the serenity of his faith, the gentle lyricism of his Christian teaching, and the quiet charm of his verse, sometimes using him, as did Joseph Summers, as a counterbalance to the predominant emphasis in New Criticism on the inner tensions, paradoxes and ambiguities of poetry.[1] There was, after all, patent support for such a view in Herbert's own declarations of purpose, when in both of his Jordan poems he rejects with scorn the "winding" structures of seventeenth-century poetic wit, the "curling" metaphors whose sense could be caught only at two removes, in favor of a directness of language and imagery which should convey to his reader the uncomplicated faith of a genuine and humble belief. In line with those statements, a leading study of his work could as late as 1968 still argue that his poems are to be understood essentially in the context of the plain style, since by their eschewing ornament and convolution they lead to the victory of simple love and trust in their concluding lines.[2] From Rosemond Tuve, it is true, we learned of the web of concealed liturgical allusions in his verse, for the most part lost to the modern reader,

which, by their subtle evocation of ideas and phrases familiar from the Anglican service, had provided for the seventeenth century a poetic dimension unrecognized in our day. Yet if this more complex allusiveness seemed to question the previous assumption of Herbert's poetic directness, her study left unchanged the view that each individual poem was ultimately an ordered and integrated structure leading towards its Christianly-reassuring conclusion.[3]

The structure, as was clear even then, was not undeviatingly linear. It employed surprise elements and emotional reversals; but such abrupt changes of direction to disqualify some false assumption on the part of the speaker or to check a dangerous tendency towards the sin of pride were seen as part of the conscious plan, intended from the start to create the dramatic immediacy and often disarmingly colloquial realism of the verse. Thus, the speaker's confident assertion in "The Pearl" that he knows the way to God's love and is familiar with the price and rate for obtaining it is, at the word "Yet," when the poem moves into the past tense, suddenly swept aside by a retrospective, guilty realization of the lack of humility implicit in such self-assurance, the tone now changing in an abrupt *volte-face* to one of penitence and self-abasement for his "groveling wit":

> with open eyes
> I flie to thee, and fully understand
> Both the main sale, and the commodities;
> And at what rate and price I have thy love;
> With all the circumstances that may move:
> Yet through these labyrinths, not my groveling wit,
> But thy silk twist let down from heav'n to me,
> Did both conduct and teach me, how by it
> To climbe to thee.[4]

In 1970, Helen Vendler proffered a suggestion disturbing to critical formalists accustomed to regard a poem as the finished product of the poet's art. Those twists and tergiversations were, she argued, not part of a didactically planned structure but a series of genuine "re-inventions" on the poet's part as in the process of writing he restlessly redefines his experience, correcting an infelicitous phrase, tempering a theological assumption, revising an inadequate formulation or dubious religious stance. Where other poets expunge their false starts and discard ineffective lines in

order to replace the rejected passages by new ones so that none but the scholar laboriously editing the manuscript would ever know of the changes, Herbert, she maintains, preserves them intact in the final version of the poem as a record of his own tortuous path to the spiritual communion with the divine achieved only in the closing lines.[5]   Such a reading, by indicating the provisional and shifting quality of his verse, posits an image of Herbert at once more complex spiritually and poetically than had previously been thought: not a preacher sure of the instruction he imparts but a dissatisfied searcher, for ever tacking and veering to avoid the hidden sandbanks treacherous to faith.

Atttractive as Vendler's theory may be in sensitizing us to the subtler movements of Herbert's verse, its weakness lies in the very complexity it assumes, a complexity which can scarcely accord with Herbert's own repeated avowal of the simplicity of true faith and the artlessness of the lessons he wishes to convey: "There is in love a sweetnesse readie penn'd: / Copie out onely that" ("Jordan [II]," p. 103). In the same poem, he records how often he "blotted" what he had begun because it was not lively enough for his purpose; and to argue that he left the "blotted" sections of his poems undeleted as part of the final text would seem to contradict his own account of his customary process of composition.

With a similar respect for the thematic and structural subtleties of these poems and partly in response to Vendler's theory, Stanley Fish has recently offered two variant interpretations of these sudden reversals of direction, the first as part of a larger study of seventeenth-century poetic and the second in a form more specifically related to *The Temple*. Within the broader study, his stimulating redirecting of critical attention from the text as finished work to the activity of reading itself, the changing responses which we experience as each consecutive line or phrase interacts with our own consciousness, led him to place Herbert's work in the category of the "self-consuming" artifact—exemplified on his book jacket by Jean Tinguely's modern sculpture photographed at the moment of its planned self-destruction.[6]   With the delicacy of a critic attuned to poetic modulations, Fish argues that there is to be perceived in Herbert's poems a gradual annihilation of the poet's or speaker's self. The perceptual and conceptual categories in which the human moves are slowly eroded until the poet himself ceases to exist as an independent being. The aim of the poems is thus seen to be not

a vindication of the plain style, as had been thought, but ultimately a validation of poetic silence. Towards the close of his poems, Fish maintains, Herbert obliterates himself even as the author of the lines we are reading. The source of the lines, the very creative act of their composition, is disclaimed by him and attributed to God— not in some coy literary convention but with all the persuasiveness of genuine belief. His well-known poem printed in the visual form of an altar is offered by Herbert, we are told, not as an edifice constructed by the poet's skill but as one framed directly by nature, which in accord with biblical commandment no workman's tool has touched. If acceptable, its purpose will be to serve hence-forth as a substitute for the poet's words, becoming, as it really is already, not Herbert's poem but God's. The ambivalence resonating in the final word suggests, therefore, that it is not only dedicated to God but now His in every sense of the term, including its origins:

> O let thy blessed SACRIFICE be mine,
> And sanctifie this ALTAR to be thine.
> > ("The Altar," p. 26)

Intriguing though that theory may be, Fish seems himself to have been dissatisfied with it. Taking a leaf from Herbert's book, a few years later he also reversed direction, offering in his recent volume, *The Living Temple*—a study devoted exclusively to Herbert's verse—an alternative explanation for the supposed "re-inventions" of the poems.[7] Although the reasons motivating his change of view were never specified there, we may suspect where he felt the weaknesses to lie. In "The Altar," for example, silence is not in fact espoused by the speaker as Fish had suggested; it is merely mentioned as a casual possibility—"That, if I chance to hold my peace, / These stones to praise thee may not cease." Herbert, as we know, did reject silence, continuing to write and to produce poem after poem as part of an *opus* planned as a missionary endeavor to win others over to his beliefs. Within that collection, so far from obliterating his personal identity, he repeatedly employed his own easily recognizable self as the leading figure in the drama of human communion with the divine, with scenes from his experience, whether fictionally devised or historically based, re-enacted for the moral edification of his readers. Presumably Fish sensed the contradiction inherent in his earlier view—the positing on the one hand of Herbert's denial of

self and, on the other, of the self-confidence and assurance requisite in however minimal a form for the task of religious instruction, an assumption at whatever level of humility that the teacher possesses some experience or knowledge worthy of being imparted to others. At all events, in the revised theory he placed the poetic reversals within a new setting, not as rectifications of false starts by the poet but instead as part of a planned process of spiritual teaching.

Again focusing upon the reader as active participant in a dialogue with the text, Fish saw in the tradition of the catechism (of which Herbert was known to be a keen advocate) a strategy of spiritual pathfinding relevant to our understanding of his poems. In the chapter devoted to that educational device in his prose work *A Priest to the Temple, Or, The Country Parson. His Character, and Rule of Holy Life*, Herbert had advocated not a simple teaching or testing by rote but, in its most effective form, a leading of the pupil towards self-discovery. The catechist, nudged towards some false conclusion, catches himself in error and by self-correction attains to the truth with a more fruitful sense of personal achievement than passive learning would have provided. So, in the poem "Love-joy," the reader is encouraged in the opening lines to make the easy identification of the initials "J.C." with the name Jesus Christ (a choice made even more likely by the typological association of the grapes, on which the initials appear, with the blood of the Passion). Momentarily confounded a few lines later when the speaker identifies the initials with Joy and Charity instead, the reader is comforted at the conclusion by the interlocutor's assurance that the original answer was correct (p. 116):

> Sir, you have not miss'd,
> The man reply'd; it figures JESUS CHRIST.

By the temporary misdirection in the poem, Fish argues, the reader has not merely returned to his first assumption but has gained *en route* some valuable additional knowledge, the equation of Christ with the principles of joy and charity; and the process of perception is one in which the reader has been an active participant. Yet this theory too has its problems, for as Fish admits a little ruefully, the catechist situation is relevant only at times. The reader is not always addressed in the poems and the structural progression often does not accord with any sequence of question and answer. Fish must therefore resort finally to a vaguer framework: if not the

catechism itself, then the broader process of the reader's self-discovery.

What emerges from this recent critical debate on the nature of Herbert's "reversals," divergent as the suggested solutions may be, is a heightened awareness of a puzzling discrepancy, the realization that his poetry seems at one and the same time to suggest both security and restlessness, a planned structural unity on the one hand and yet some indication of unpredicated, dissatisfied revision on the other, perhaps intended temporarily to mislead the reader. There is, I suspect, no magic formula to resolve these discrepancies. However, I would like to propose that the problem be studied not in isolation but as part of the changing aesthetic climate in European art. To the extent that Herbert's verse engages in deliberate misdirection of the reader, it may reveal a close affinity with the contrived illusionism of Mannerist art—designed in its less serious forms simply to surprise, but having in its religious form the earnest purpose of producing in the viewer a momentary sense of insecurity or instability, a distrust of the rational, spatially defined temporal world in which he stands as a preparation for his translation into the world of ecstasy or of meditative identification with martyr and saint. To understand that aspect of Mannerism, we shall need to review some recent interpretations of the style.

II

Mannerism, that most elusive and Protean of styles, has elicited a plethora of modern definitions. Ernst Curtius, confining himself to literary manifestations, saw Mannerism as a phenomenon reappearing cyclically through history, generally towards the end of a period valuing the classical principles of order and restraint. Its main impulse he identified as a desire for liberation from imposed restrictions which finds expression in willful eccentricity, verbal pyrotechnics, and complex, convoluted argument.[8] Among art historians there developed a similar conception which, in its application to the architecture and painting of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, discerned in tandem a rejection of convention and a pursuit of visual incongruity.[9] In such works, for example Parmigianino's *Madonna of the Long Neck* from about 1535 (Uffizi, Florence), one finds columns which inexplicably support nothing, deliberate distortions of linear or anatomical proportion, and a crowding of figures to disrupt the established harmony of High Renaissance form.[10]

Challenging such a view of Mannerist style, John Shearman in an influential address to a conference on the subject in 1961 saw the distinguishing quality of Mannerism not as a negative impulse, a fretful weariness with established modes, but as a new and lively pursuit of elegance and sophistication. Shearman points out that Vasari's term *maniera*—from which the style obtained its name—was used at the time in a positive sense indicating artistic flair, only later gaining its pejorative connotation of perverse idiosyncrasy. Mannerist works thus should not be judged according to High Renaissance criteria of volumetric realism or harmonious proportion, which their creators were consciously rejecting, but as deliberately stylized artifacts. A silver salt-cellar by Benvenuto Cellini or the attenuated figures of Primaticcio are for Shearman demonstrations of virtuosity and craftsmanly skill, to be valued accordingly for bravura and elegance.[11]

At the same conference, Frederick Hartt read a paper on Mannerist art, which might at first sight appear to be diametrically opposed to Shearman's.[12] The main impetus of the movement was, Hartt argued, not elegance and wit but a mystical fervor inspired by the intense piety of the new orders then arising within the church,[13] and reflected in contemporary painting. The theme of the Pietà, which had rarely interested artists at the beginning of the sixteenth century, became suddenly popular from 1517 onwards in paintings by Pontormo, Rosso and many others, all conveying a deep sense of mystery and inwardness of vision. Pontormo's *Deposition* of 1525 (Figure 1),[14] Hartt points out, has no spatial setting, no cave, no cross, not even a tomb; but in the tradition of San Gaetano, who was known to spend many hours rapturously contemplating representations of holy scenes, it depicts that moment in Christian history as the focus for a perpetual adoration of the sacrament. Its aim is to evoke in the spectator the mood of being "amore inflammatus abreptusque."[15]

Contrasting as Shearman's and Hartt's readings of Mannerism may seem, they should be regarded, I would suggest, not as antagonistic but as complementary, describing two different manifestations—secular and religious—of the same art style. The secular form expressed its dissatisfaction with integrated and rationalized space in painting and architecture by resisting the newly discovered rules of perspective. The emphasis here, as Shearman has shown, is on a surface texture which discards depth-illusion, as in the pearly

nudes of a Bronzino canvas. The facade of the house Giulio Romano built for himself in Mantua disturbs the spectator's sense of firmness and solidity; half-windows along the base line and other details create the strange impression that the building is sinking into the ground.[16]   Alternatively Mannerist secular art offers an amusing display of wit and ingenuity, moving well beyond verisimilitude into the realm of the chimerical—as in Arcimboldo's portraits, where facial features are grotesquely composed of gnarled roots and fruit or even of piled books.[17]   As illustrations of the Mannerist love of surprise, Shearman notes the fantastic grottoes and water-gardens at Castello, at the Villa d'Este, and at Pratolino, where Palissy and Buontalenti designed elaborate tableaux to be set in motion at the turn of a hidden tap, as well as practical jokes including "wetting-stools" that sprayed unwary sitters, and a statue holding a vase in one hand and a text in the other which would empty the vase on the head of anyone stepping forward to read the text.[18]

No such frivolity or casual wit appears in the religious forms of Mannerist art, but the latter do share with secular Mannerism a tendency to question temporal rationalist authority, and a reduced confidence in the physical world. When that same Buontalenti in 1574 created in the church of Santa Trinità in Florence illusionistic altar steps which deceive the eye of the approaching worshipper,[19] it is clear that his purpose was a serious one—to make that worshipper momentarily lose confidence in the substantiality of the building around him and hence in the ultimate authenticity of the temporal world itself, thereby preparing him emotionally for prayer and meditation.

There was in this Mannerist encouragement of *contemptus mundi* a distinctly medieval quality. If Spengler was right in his theory of oscillatory movements in history,[20] then a reaction to the High Renaissance would naturally possess affinities with the Middle Ages which had preceded it. But as in all such instances, there could be no simple return to the earlier convictions. Nothing could erase the profound changes in philosophical and religious outlook in the intervening years, when geographers and explorers had made their way to unknown areas of the earth, astronomers had mapped out the heavens, and empiricists had rooted in the contemporary consciousness a new sense of the tangibility of terrestrial existence.   To recreate a conviction of "media vita in

Fig. 1. Pontormo, *Deposition*

Fig. 2. El Greco, *Resurrection*

Fig. 3. Tintoretto, *Finding of the Body of St. Mark*

morte sumus" and a renewed susceptibility to spiritual contempla-
tion demanded from the religious artist and teacher a forceful act
of uprooting, a transportation out of the Renaissance consciousness
of the physical. Medieval man had accepted unquestioningly such
contraventions of measured time and space as the artist's simul-
taneous presentation of the Nativity and the Fall: now the specta-
tor's ingrained sense of spatial and temporal sequence needed to
be shaken before he could be made to transcend earthly limita-
tions. Hence the emphasis in this period upon ecstasy and rapture,
the forcible snatching up of the soul from its bodily setting, the
enthralling and ravishing as the worshipper, often with the shock of
overt paradox, pleads for divine aid in releasing himself from the
bonds of intellect and of the actual in order to enter the luminous
world of religious paradox:

> Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
> Except you'enthrall mee, never shall be free,
> Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee.[21]

El Greco too must break through the rationalist assumptions
of his era, violently transporting the viewer by means of hallucina-
torily elongated figures defying anatomical proportion, as their
souls seem to stretch them out of shape in yearning for a heavenly
existence. The phosphorescent colors of lurid greens, blues, and
purples create a dream-like setting in which forms lose their
solidity, as in the visions induced by Ignatian meditation. El
Greco's *Resurrection* (Figure 2)[22] depicts the impact of a miracu-
lous event upon those privileged to witness it. The canvas vibrates
with the anguish, remorse, or awe of the human witnesses, revealing
by their tormented postures and outstretched arms the agony
of their own spiritual predicament. In the foreground, one figure
flung backwards to create an inverted reflection of Christ (symbol-
ically representing the fallen Adam, for whom the second Adam
has risen) seems thrust into the very lap of the viewer, thereby
compelling him vicariously to experience a similar "conversion."
There is, strictly speaking, no scriptural precedent for these
witnesses—the tomb was only belatedly discovered to be empty—
but they are included here to stimulate greater immediacy in the
contemplation of the risen Christ.[23] The painting, indeed, helps
in the conjuring up of a meditative vision, according to the method
of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* and similar programs of the time,

which encouraged the meditator to visualize imaginatively some holy scene as if he were present in person, and to strive to experience afresh the martyrdom, bliss, or shock of revelation with the sharpness of actuality.[24]   Hence it is that in such paintings the setting often shimmers away into mistiness in a dream world beyond the tactile and the quotidian, where linear, vanishing-point perspective is no longer relevant.

In the calmer but no less devotional art of Tintoretto, there is a similar rejection of Renaissance naturalism as he dramatizes the miraculous and the transfiguring. In accordance with the Counter-Reformation's renewed emphasis on the mystical sacrament, and its rebuttal of Protestant objections to reliquaries, shrines, and hagiography, Tintoretto's series of paintings devoted to St. Mark designedly carries the spectator out of the substantial world into the supernatural and the immaterial. In *The Finding of the Saint's Body* (Figure 3),[25] the moment chosen is the visionary appearance of the haloed saint himself, dramatically halting the search for his remains in the catacomb by announcing that the recently exhumed body before which he stands is indeed his own. The opened crypt from which the body has been taken glows with a weird, unnatural light, whose greyish emanations make the barrel-vaulting above appear ghostly and evanescent. To the right, an entranced figure writhes in the torment of the electrifying moment, a smoke-like wisp issuing from his mouth as he is exorcised of some spirit within. Moreover, the angle of the painting as a whole is disturbingly off-center, the hall receding sharply to a point towards the left, near the saint's hand. As Rudolf Arnheim has remarked, the "eccentricity of space" in a Tintoretto painting "indicates that the law of this world has lost its absolute validity."[26]   His scenes claim their own centers and standards in defiance of traditional norms.

For painting of this kind, the terms "caprice," "elegance," "virtuosity," and "panache" are singularly inappropriate, however well they may describe the display of ingenuity and idiosyncrasy in secular Mannerist works. If such devotional pieces share with the secular ones an anti-rationalist and anti-Renaissance impulse—moving away from ideals of harmony, proportion, and naturalism to more disruptive, paradoxical, and even grotesque depictions—they express that impulse in a profoundly serious context that demands a gravity of response from the viewer. Any attempt to

define Mannerist style without distinguishing between these secular and religious manifestations must distort our perception of its aims and practices.

III

This is not to suggest that Herbert's verse is everywhere marked by the rapturous longing, the brusque illogic, or the violently inverted perspective of devotional Mannerism in its most intense forms, as in Donne or El Greco. There is tension and anguish in poems like "The Flower," where Herbert wrestles with doubt and despair. And at times his passionate pleas envision an elasticized space like that in Donne, who contracts the universe into an eye or expands one little room into an everywhere:

> O rack me not to such a vast extent;
>   Those distances belong to thee:
>   The world's too little for thy tent,
>   A grave too big for me.
>
> Wilt thou meet arms with man, that thou dost stretch
>   A crumme of dust from heav'n to hell?
>   Will great God measure with a wretch?
>   Shall he thy stature spell?
>
> . . . .
>
> Yet take thy way; for sure thy way is best:
>   Stretch or contract me, thy poore debter:
>   This is but tuning of my breast,
>   To make the musick better.
>
> Whether I flie with angels, fall with dust,
>   Thy hands made both, and I am there:
>   Thy power and love, my love and trust
>   Make one place ev'ry where.
>   ("The Temper [1]," p. 55, ll. 9-16, 21-28)

In general, however, as this calm, submissive conclusion itself suggests, Herbert's verse belongs rather to a quieter strain of devotional Mannerism—that typified in art not by El Greco but by Tintoretto, who employs a gradual process of conversion, gently

Fig. 4. Tintoretto, *Last Supper*

Fig. 5. Tintoretto, *Nativity*

persuading the viewer to question his conventional beliefs and eventually to desert them in favor of the sacramental and mysterious.

Thus in Tintoretto's painting of *The Last Supper* in San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice (Figure 4),[27] for example, the diagonal positioning of the table disturbs, without shocking, those familiar with the standard frontal depictions of the scene in Renaissance art. Once that difference has been absorbed the luminescent elements of the scene, such as the angels swirling about the lamp and the incandescent haloes, begin to imprint themselves on our consciousness. This strategy of seducing the viewer away from terrestrial criteria into a validation of spiritual experience is particularly marked in Tintoretto's *Nativity* from the Scuola di San Rocco, Venice (Figure 5).[28] Since the viewpoint is from below, we first confront at eye level an everyday scene within the ground floor of a barn, a group of peasants engaged in passing food from a basket, the scene only distinguished by the mysterious light cast upon it from above. In search of the source of that light, our gaze aided by the outstretched arms of the peasants is drawn upwards to the attic. There the Nativity scene is depicted from an unusual angle, as if elevated above earthly affairs, with its haloed Mary, a radiant Child, and a Joseph in adoration. But dominating that scene—and the element on which we are led to look last—is the mystic red glow of the heavens shining through the broken rafters to bathe the entire setting in the unearthly light of the miraculous, with a winged chrub hovering in blessing over the Birth. Instead of being dramatically projected into the supernatural as by an El Greco painting, we are here progressively enticed into an ascent, both literal and spiritual.

This gentler technique of elevation from the concrete world to the celestial can shed light on the so-called "revisions" or "reversals" of Herbert's poetry already touched on above. In this Mannerist context, the revisions need to be seen not as the poet's correction of his own false concepts or beliefs but as a stratagem whereby he invites the reader to accompany him from an initially terrestrial reading of his speaker's condition or situation towards the sacramental and transcendental viewpoint of Christian faith.

"Aaron" may serve as a paradigm of this poetic process. The despair in the opening stanzas is rooted in the world of actuality out of which the poet speaks, the awareness of his own human

imperfection here on earth, of his mortal unsuitability to the task of priesthood. That reciprocal integration of real and ideal in the Renaissance, the mutually enriching interplay of this world and the celestial which had formed so central a motif of its thought, no longer functions here. The poet's theme is the very opposite, the dreadful disparity between the ideal priest of harmony and per-fection, serving in ancient times in the biblical sanctuary and wearing the divinely designed breastplate of Urim and Thumim described in Exodus 28:30, and the unworthy priest of flesh and blood embodied in the speaker himself—frail, sinful, and unholy.[29] Wearily he contrasts himself here on earth with the true Aaron:

> Holinesse on the head,
> Light and perfections on the breast,
> Harmonious bells below, raising the dead
> To leade them unto life and rest :
> Thus are true Aarons drest.
>
> Profanenesse in my head,
> Defects and darknesse in my breast,
> A noise of passions ringing me for dead
> Unto a place where is no rest :
> Poore priest thus am I drest. (p. 174, ll. 1-10)

With that depressing contrast established, the first line of the next stanza now functions as the pivot for the entire poem, opening out new possibilities. Although expressed with a deceptive calm, it provides a mental and emotional jolt to the reader, a stimulus to reject the authenticity of the real and to move to "another" and more amenable world. If we adopt the modern critical method of focusing microscopically on the changing responses of the reader to each successive word or phrase, it becomes apparent that at the words "Onely another head / I have," a grotesque anatomical image is momentarily conjured up, the picture of a two-headed speaker. It is an impression strengthened by the literal meaning of "head" in the two previous stanzas as the bodily member upon which the priestly mitre was placed and within which disturbing thoughts are experienced. The monstrous image it creates forces us at once to reject the anatomical meaning as absurd and to transfer with relief to the more acceptable figurative meaning—Christ's spiritual headship of the church and hence the speaker's acceptance of Christ as being his own "head" too:

Onely another head
I have, another heart and breast,
Another musick, making live not dead,
Without whom I could have no rest:
In him I am well drest. (ll. 11-15)[30]

This is the true "meta-physical" wit of religious poetry, employ-
ing ambiguity or paradox not for purposes of humor but to redirect
the reader from the physical world to an existence "beyond-the-
physical," undermining his confidence in the logical processes of
reason in favor of the impalpable principles of faith. In the contin-
uation of this stanza, the diversion to the spiritual reading is
extended from "head" to "heart" and "breast," no longer the
localized anatomical organs upon which the ceremonial garments
are to be laid or in which the speaker experiences his human
passions and fears. They have taken on a supernatural force, like
the luminescent figures of a Tintoretto painting, becoming the
heart and breast of the risen Christ in which the believer is now
mystically dressed.

With that change of focus from the corporeal to the immaterial
comes a surge of confidence to replace the despair at the opening
of the poem. Where in the previous stanza the word "Onely" had
meant no more than a mild "But," its threefold repetition, here
buttressed by "alone," expresses the growing certainty of the
speaker, now dismissing as irrelevant the physical head, heart, and
breast of his mortal self. The source of his security emanates from
the realm of Christian faith. With that new trust, death, so dreaded
earlier in the poem, has, in the Mannerist tradition of an El Greco
saint whose eyes gaze upward, away from this world to the next,
become transformed into the longed-for-release from the sinfulness
of earthly existence, from the old Adam, soon joyfully to be cast
off in preparation for the soul's union with its Redeemer:

Christ is my onely head,
My alone onely heart and breast,
My onely musick, striking me ev'n dead;
That to the old man I may rest,
And be in him new drest. (ll. 16-20)

To argue, as Helen Vendler does,[31] that by the end of this
poem the speaker's self-hatred "has turned to self-tenderness, and

the 'body of this death' has become a breast Herbert can love" is, I think, to miss the rich ambivalence achieved in the final stanza. It is not his own breast which he has come to love in self-tenderness but the "deare" breast of Christ which, as in the earlier word-play on "head," has become the speaker's because by an act of faith he has made it his. His trust is thus not self-love but self-submergence in the divine love which now clothes him. On the same principle, this transfiguration of the mortal by its participation in the celestial is extended to his priestly teachings too, where again they are eventually seen by the speaker to be "his" only in the sense that he is the instrument by which the doctrine becomes audible, its harmony and perfection having been tuned above before reaching him:

> So holy in my head,
> Perfect and light in my deare breast,
> My doctrine tun'd by Christ, (who is not dead,
> But lives in me while I do rest)
> Come people; Aaron's drest.   (II. 21-25)

The techniques employed in this poem may suggest how Herbert's reputation for plain speech has arisen.   There is indeed a deceptively simple facade, a tendency to use monosyllabic diction drawn from daily speech; but that should not mislead us into assuming that the poem itself is either plain or direct. As a learned scholar, past orator at Cambridge University, yet consciously aiming his verse at the wider Christian public, he disguises his subtleties in a form calculated to reassure the less sophisticated.   Other exponents of seventeenth-century wit or religious paradox, as Rosalie Colie has shown,[32] expressed in their verse even at their most serious moments a preference for the intellectually challenging or the riddlingly ambivalent.   We may instance as part of this preference the pun implicit in Marvell's desire to "redress" the wrong of Christ's thorns by substituting a flowery garland, or Donne's vision of Christ's hands spanning the "Poles," both the wooden spars of the Cross and at the same time the zenith and nadir of the created universe.[33]   Herbert, however, conceals his paradoxes, here as elsewhere, in such utterly simple words as *his* and *my*.   Such words comfortingly retain their outward form unchanged throughout the poem, but their implications and referents shift subtly, as we have seen, from stanza to stanza in a

manner far removed from plain speaking. The structural form of the poem, too, may appear to have the simplistic repetitiousness of a nursery rhyme, with the same monosyllabic line endings in the reiterated sequence *head, breast, dead, rest, drest*, as though to help a child memorize the order. Yet apart from the shifting implications of *head* and *breast*, the culminating word in each stanza, *drest*, undergoes a profound semiotic metamorphosis in the poem, moving from its uncomplicated meaning in the opening stanzas, the donning of the ceremonial robes for liturgical office, to the lambent force of its final appearance, representing the metaphysical clothing of the speaker's soul in the transfiguring perfection of Christ. It is a remarkable literary achievement; and the studied design of the poem, the careful exploitation of that preserved outer form, should warn us against any assumption of revisions and corrections spontaneously occurring in the course of its composition.

The gradual deflection of focus from the earthly realm to the visionary and meditational produced concomitantly in Mannerist art as in metaphysical poetry a new treatment of the natural scene. In painting of this time, nature is often absorbed into the distorting surrealistic imagination of the dreamer where, as in El Greco's *Agony in the Garden,* rocks swirl upwards out of the earth like living creatures, hollows spin dizzyingly like maelstroms and, on another canvas, the landscape of Toledo shimmers in a ghostly light.[34] The meditative writer too spurns the material world as an intrusive physicality. Donne in a touching prose passage had bemoaned the distractions of reality, how even when on his knees in genuine prayer the noise of a fly, the rattling of a coach, the whining of a door would catch at his thoughts, drawing him away from that wholehearted devotion to God for which he yearns.[35] In the Mannerist mood of ascetic withdrawal any response to the beauties of nature seemed a reprehensible indulgence in the vanities of mortal existence.

Yet the natural scene, as that passage had acknowledged, was not easily to be ignored. While the meditator, striving for divine communion within the darkened room or church, might temporarily withdraw his thoughts from the palpable world, on his emergence into the light of day the variegated freshness of spring or the rich autumnal tones of meadow and garden awaited him in their full splendor, no less than they did in other eras, and

a theological commitment to the affairs of the spirit could not blind
poet and artist to such attractions. For the more anguished of the
Mannerists no compromise was possible, and the spiritual struggle
of a figure on a canvas by Rosso Fiorentino or the tormented
speaker in a holy sonnet unable to find peace on this earth or
reach the desired haven of the next endows these works with their
compelling power. But to the Salesian meditator such as Herbert
or Vaughan, calmer and more genial in their religious quest, an
alternative response suggested itself at this time enabling them to
justify their pleasure in nature as no distraction from religious
pursuits. Nature to them was a source of moral edification, a
storehouse of ethical teachings, or to use the popular term derived
from the rediscovered Horapollo, a collection of hieroglyphs which
the Christian was earnestly to decipher in order to extract from it
the lessons concealed there by the Creator himself for man's
use.[36]   The Psalmist had spoken long ago of the heavens and the
work of God's hand as silently declaring the glory of the Lord;
but now it was not so much the glory of the Lord that was sought
there, nor what the romantic poets would later see as the
generalized impulses towards human benevolence emanating from
nature, but specific moral and religious instructions encoded in
creation as guides to Christian behavior. As Barbara Lewalski
has convincingly demonstrated, a major motif of seventeenth-
century Protestant poetic was its concern with "the Bible as word,"
its conviction that the text of the scriptures could supply generic
models and precepts for the religious lyricist.[37]   But parallel to
that veneration for the Book of Scriptures which was to be searched
through and through for its poetic exemplars was the similar
availability for exegesis of the Book of Nature, now seen as enshrin-
ing within its seasonal processes and within the individual details
or activities of flower, bird, and shrub informative models for
Christian living as well as anagrams for the Christian poet to solve.

      In his *Religio Medici*, Sir Thomas Browne summarized this
new concept of the existence of two complementary "texts."
Moses, he informs us, having been educated in the Egyptian hiero-
glyphical system at the royal court, composed the Pentateuch in
an obscure and mystical form, which required decoding to be
understood. That held true for the other "manuscript," the created
world, lying open for commentary and elucidation but rarely
studied by the Christian with sufficient diligence:

> [T]here are two bookes from whence I collect my
> Divinity; besides that written one of God, another
> of his servant Nature, that universall and publik
> manuscript, that lies expans'd unto the eyes of all
> . . . surely the Heathens knew better how to joyne
> and reade these mysticall letters, than wee
> Christians, who cast a more carelesse eye on these
> common Hieroglyphicks, and disdain to suck
> Divinity from the flowers of nature.[38]

Few poets have been as sensitive as Herbert to the beauties of
the natural scene, delighting as he does in the blossoming of tree
and field after the winter snows, or the joy of a springtime "full
of sweet dayes and roses" where "sweets compacted lie" ("Vertue,"
p. 88). Yet he too saw as his primary task the diverting of such
pleasure into morally productive channels. In "The Flower"
(perhaps the freshest and most spontaneous of his responses to the
vegetative world, expressing the poet's wonder at the renewal of
life from death), there appears a brief declaration which can be
justifiably regarded as the cornerstone of his poetic creed. The
poet's duty, he insists, is not to describe what is, but to go beyond.
It is to spell out or interpret the cryptic message concealed within
that visible text:

> We say amisse,
> This or that is:
> Thy word is all, if we could spell. (p. 166, ll. 19-21)

In the beginning was the Word, and that Word, he implies, was then
implanted in the seasonal cycles of the earth to enlighten whoever
is receptive to its teachings.

From that change in response there emerges a new artistic
perspective, and a recognition of this altered viewpoint is vital for
an understanding of the painting and poetry it produced. The
natural scene has, just as in Mannerist painting, been dislodged
from its commanding position as the authoritative reality which
the painter must copy with fidelity. The fall of light on a rounded
object, the eddying movement of water, the structure of a leaf
which had so absorbed the attention of a Da Vinci or Dürer is
dismissed here as merely what "is," as only a medium whereby
more valuable perceptions may be attained. Indeed, the very

metaphor whereby reality was conceived alters accordingly. The proponents of Albertian grid perspective had argued that the artist's framed canvas should be regarded as a window or glass pane through which reality could be both perceived and recorded. Now the focal point has moved beyond. The natural world, no longer the prime object of interest, has been demoted to the status of a window or glass through which higher truths may be discerned by artist and poet. As Joseph Hall expressed it:

> I shal so admit of all material objects, as if they were so altogether transparent, that through them I might see the wonderful prospects of another world. And certainly, if we shall be able to withdraw our selves from our senses, we shall see, not what we see, but what we thinke . . . and shall make earthly things, not as Lunets, to shut up our sight, but Spectacles to transmit to it spiritual objects.[39]

This concept of the "transparency" of the natural or physical world creates, as it had in the Middle Ages, a tendency to the reading of reality in terms of symbols or emblems; and the religious metaphysical lyric of the seventeenth century is patently linked in some way with the emblem poetry of the time, in which verbal and visual arts are suggestively combined. However, the differences which separate the two genres may be more significant than the similarities. Both, it is true, employ a scene or object as the symbolic starting point for the poem, with the elaboration of the symbol serving to yield its moral message. Thus Donne in "A Hymne to Christ, at the Authors last going into Germany" sees his immediate situation as a type or paradigm of his mood of world-weariness:

> In what torne ship soever I embarke,
> That ship shall be my embleme of thy Arke;
> What sea soever swallow mee, that flood
> Shall be to mee an embleme of thy blood.[40]

And Herbert's "The Pulley," like so many of his poems in *The Temple*, evokes by its title the picture of some familiar object from the everyday world whose relevance to the poetic theme will be worked out in subsequent stanzas. Francis Quarles in the preface to his *Emblemes* of 1635 subscribes at least ostensibly to

the same paradigmatic technique, asking: "what are the Heavens, the Earth, nay every Creature, but *Hieroglyphicks* and *Emblemes* of His Glory?"[41]   By transplanting into the seemingly unpromising soil of Protestant England the Jesuit device of combining picture with poem to convey the church's teachings, Quarles achieved in his day a popularity difficult to comprehend retrospectively.[42] Critics have experienced an understandable discomfort at associating Herbert with this tradition.   As Rosemary Freeman has readily admitted, the quality of the verse produced not only by Quarles but by such other emblemists as Geoffrey Whitney, Christopher Harvey, John Hall, and Edmund Arwaker was for the most part poor indeed; and Mario Praz, who connects the genre with the ancient epigrammatist Martial and thereby with the contemporary wit of the metaphysical poets, acknowledges that in comparison with the latter it was at best "a cheap substitute" for the real thing.[43]

In any case the distinction between emblem and metaphysical poetry was not merely one of degree of poetic competence; this qualitative difference resulted from a more fundamental contrast in artistic conception. For despite Quarles' claim that the heaven, the earth, and the living creatures within them will provide him with the paradigms he needs, a study of the pictures printed within his collection and the images elaborated in the text reveals that his paradigms have as much to do with the natural world as Grimm's *Fairy Tales*. The illustrations (all but ten of which were borrowed directly from two Catholic works—the *Pia Desideria* of Herman Hugo, appearing in Antwerp in 1624, and the *Typus Mundi* issued there three years later by the Jesuit College of Rhetoric)[44] are peopled not by natural forms but by fork-tailed demons, skeletal figures of Death, ancient Father Times and, above all, by those strange conflations of children and adults which, unique to the emblem books, are presumably intended to suggest grown people acting with the innocence or foolishness of infants. The angels too, no longer the cherubic *putti* of Renaissance art with the charm of real children, are here incongruously depicted as sturdy toddlers in the maturer poses of adults. In consequence, the entire sequence of pictures, so far from constituting emblems drawn from the natural world, is evocative of some remote realm of make-believe—as in the engraving by William Marshall for Emblem II.13 (Figure 6).[45]

That sense of an invented, artificial setting is reinforced in both picture and poem by the convenient stage props casually adopted to suit any particular local need, one instance being a globe representing this earth. It appears at one moment drawn by a chariot to indicate the swift movement of mankind toward hell, at another as a child's seat to symbolize man's temporal abode, or is elsewhere placed upon a table for purposes of contemplation, or whipped like a top to denote the scourge of earthly lusts.[46] Despite Quarles' claim, the impetus for such drawings and for the poems which follow is in no sense a reading of the moral messages encoded in nature but a reverse process—a turning away from reality to a fictitious world. The artistic weakness both of the illustrations and the accompanying verse is, moreover, their insistence upon spelling out the obvious, not least in terms of a prosaic literalizing of metaphor. Where the Psalmist pleads: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity," the emblemist must concretize the image by the picture of a winged child-angel holding its hands over the eyes of a child-adult lest the latter see the female personification of Vanity standing nearby (Emblem IV.5). No imaginative creativity is called for; and the result is poetry at three removes from the natural world, since the images are elaborations of drawings which are themselves intended to illustrate metaphors from literary texts. In the illustration to Emblem I.12, for example (Figure 7),[47] the motto from Isaiah ("Yee may suck, but not be satisfied with the breast of her Consolation")[48] is translated visually into a globular earth possessing balloon-like breasts, at one of which a human figure sucks, while from the other a second figure draws milk through a sieve into a leaking clay pipe. Lest the reader still miss the message, Quarles laboriously restates it in verse:

> What never fill'd? be thy lips screw'd so fast
>   To th'earths full breast? For shame, for shame unseise thee:
> Thou tak'st a surfeit, where thou shouldst but tast,
> . . . .
> And thou, whose thriveless hands are ever strayning
>   Earths fluent Breasts, into an empty Sive,
> That alwaies hast, yet alwaies art complaining;
>   And whin'st for more then earth has pow'r to give,
>   Whose treasure flowes, and flees away as fast,
> That ever hast, and hast, yet hast not what thou hast. . . .[49]

Fig. 6. *Post vulnera Daemon*. Engraving by William Marshall, from Francis Quarles, *Emblemes*, 1635
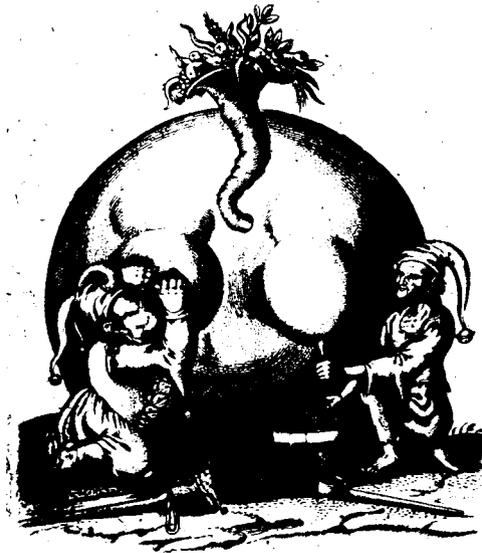
Fig. 7. *Inopem me copia fecit*. Engraving by William Marshall, from Quarles, *Emblemes*, 1635

The qualitative difference between Quarles' *Emblemes* and the metaphysical poetry of Donne and Herbert needs no comment; but the contrast in poetic strategy, which contributes in no small way to that qualitative difference, perhaps does. Where the emblemist, relying on the conventions of his literary source—with Latin captions, biblical quotations and appended lists of epigrams to buttress the authoritative effect—ignores the original natural setting of the metaphors, the metaphysical poet, however he may stretch or contract the natural world in his meditative visions, remains intensely conscious of the visible reality he longs to transcend. Donne's brilliant evocation of the bracelet of bright hair about the bone is a prelude for the aching movement of his thoughts beyond it to ponder the eternity separating the lovers. He perceives in the alchemist's study, in the movement of the planets, or the winter withdrawal of the sap into the tree's roots, evidence, often paradoxical, for his own faith in the immortality of the soul. For Herbert, too, whether he turns to the vegetative world or to the familiar structure of the country church or Temple, it is the actuality of the brittle glass window in the church at Bemerton through which the sun colorfully projects sacred stories for the congregants to see which symbolizes for him the task of the Christian preacher as a transmitter of heavenly lessons, and encourages him in the performance of his duties ("The Windows," p. 67). And Henry Vaughan, despite the unnatural emblem of a flinty heart striking out sparks which he placed as the preface to his *Silex Scintillans* and which would appear to ally him with the Quarles school of emblemists, reverts within the religious poems themselves to the sharp actualizing of metaphysical poetry, as in his visions of the cock crowing or of the mistiness of an evening shower, symbols of religious truths.[50] In "The Tempest" Vaughan echoes Herbert's plea for the deciphering of the messages encoded within nature, praying for man

> that he would hear
> The world read to him! all the vast expence
> In the Creation shed, and slav'd to sence
> Makes up but lectures for his eie and ear.
> . . . .
> All things here shew him heaven; *Waters* that fall
> Chide, and fly up; *Mists* of corruptest fome

Quit their first beds & mount; trees, herbs, flowres, all
Strive upwards stil, to point him the way home.[51]

In the emblem poetry cultivated in England from at least as
early as Geoffrey Whitney's collection of 1586, the illustration
heading the poem was largely self-explanatory, the appended verse
merely elaborating or confirming what could already have been
grasped through the visual medium. In contrast, in Herbert's
poetry the emblems of "Artillerie," "Love-joy," and "The Church-
Floore"—not offered as engravings but as verbal images in
accordance with his interest in "spelling out" his hieroglyphs[52] —
in themselves convey little to the reader. They are anagrams or
riddles needing to be deciphered or explicated in the same way as
the hieroglyphs derived from nature, and his process of decoding
frequently employs, as in Mannerist art, the exploration of a false
trail, a designed nudging of the reader into incorrect assumptions
based on rational, pragmatic, or conventional grounds, so that
the eventual discovery of the spiritual truth should come with
the force of revelation. Where Donne, particularly in his "Holy
Sonnets," often delays that moment of discovery to the final
couplet in order to create the shock of a suddenly reversed per-
spective, Herbert for the most part places it, as in "Aaron," well
before the end in order to allow for its more gradual absorption
into the reader's sensibilities and to create that quieter mood of
reconciliation for which his verse is recognized. Yet there are
poems, such as "The Collar" (p. 153), in which the unveiling of
the truth and the concomitant resolving of the enigmatic title are
postponed to the conclusion in order to produce the more dramatic
effect of newly acquired understanding.

Apart from an occasional more ingenious interpretation of this
poem's title (as being, for example, a pun on "choler"), it has
normally been accepted as an emblem of the chafing collar or
yoke of discipline, with the possibility of an additional allusion to
the clerical collar worn by the priest which the speaker in his
rebellious mood longs to discard.[53] If that were so, the emblem
would function here in a singularly limited sense, applying to the
rebellious opening section of the poem but, in contrast to Herbert's
usual practice, forgotten by the conclusion. Instead of returning
us to the initial image with renewed understanding, he would in
this reading seem here to have dismissed it as no longer relevant.
From hints in the text of the poem, however, a more specific

emblem emerges which fulfills all the requirements of the Mannerist and metaphysical forms—the deliberate leading of the reader astray in order to surprise him into knowledge, and concurrently, the initial validating of worldly criteria until their sudden overthrow at the conclusion in favor of the transcendental.

Were the poem in the hands of a Whitney or Quarles, the illustrative emblem, already revealing the conclusion, would no doubt have depicted a stag or hound racing headlong away from the stake to which it is loosely tethered, until the moment when the long rope suddenly snaps taut. The rope here too is the speaker's spiritual commitment to his God; but in Herbert's hands the full nature of the emblem is disclosed only at the end, after extended rebellion and protest, so that the totality of his submission in the final couplet is made infinitely more dramatic and compelling. By choosing a more ambiguous title than "The Leash" or "The Tether," he at first encourages the reader's incorrect interpretation of the collar as no more than an irksome restriction, thereby creating an empathy with the rebelliousness of the speaker, his natural longing for freedom and the enjoyment of life's pleasures. The speaker, unaware of his deeper commitment, boldly claims that his "lines" are free and loose as wind, that the bond of his vocation is a mere "rope of sands" which petty thoughts have made him foolishly regard as "Good cable" to "enforce and draw" (ll. 4-5, 22-24).

At the same time the world of the flesh and of bodily gratification, as in all Mannerist art, begins to be haunted by implications of the ethereal world beyond, to which the speaker betrays a subconscious responsiveness:

> Have I no harvest but a thorn
> To let me bloud, and not restore
> What I have lost with cordiall fruit?
> Sure there was wine
> Before my sighs did drie it: there was corn
> Before my tears did drown it.
> Is the yeare onely lost to me?
> Have I no bayes to crown it?
> No flowers, no garlands gay? all blasted?
> All wasted?
> Not so, my heart: but there is fruit,
> And thou hast hands. (ll. 7-18)

On the surface level, his bitter lament for the waste of the year's seasons, for the forfeiting of poetic fame on earth, results in the sighs and tears which have drowned whatever satisfaction he originally derived from his choice of a sacred calling. Yet beneath that verbal protest can be sensed in the very imagery he employs his own continuing faith. The "fruit" he craves and the hands reaching out to pluck it recall the forbidden fruit of Eden, his deeper recognition that his desires are indeed reprehensible; the wine and corn, representing the carousal and banqueting of the pleasure-seeker, by their very juxtaposition carry unmistakable allusions to the Eucharist; and the "thorn" which, he protests, has replaced the desired crown of bays reveals to the sensitive reader the speaker's as yet unacknowledged consciousness that the suffering and self-denial of which he so passionately complains in fact constitute the fulfillment of that very choice of the ascetic path of *imitatio Dei* which had originally attracted him to and confirmed him in the priestly vocation.

Despite this devotional undertow, however, the speaker's protest continues, even intensifies, in ten more lines vowing an escape to "double pleasures" in angry defiance of bondage and the silent warnings of a "deaths head" (ll. 20-29). His apparently unbreakable determination thus leaves us imperfectly prepared for the abrupt change of mood at the conclusion—a reversal evoking the situation of the infant Samuel, who hears a voice calling him to service, and unhesitatingly acquiesces (1 Samuel 3:9). That call from the spiritual world, however faintly it may sound here— "Me thoughts I heard one calling, *Child!*"—possesses, we suddenly discover, the power not of a rope of sand but of the strongest cable, halting the speaker instantly in his flight and returning him willingly and uncompromisingly to his God: "And I replied, *My Lord*" (ll. 35-36). And the call achieves its immediate acceptance on the part of the reader because of the subdued emblem of the invisible thread of faith, to which he has been led to respond subconsciously through the course of the poem. As he now perceives, a mere twitch of that thread proves, to the truly faithful, stronger than all the counter-attractions of the visible world.

Such a poetic strategy of reversal, then, has I think less to do with the technique of priestly catechism suggested by Stanley Fish —there is no trace of any teacher-pupil relationship in this poem—

than with the religious and aesthetic patterns of the European Counter-Reformation at large, whose ideas and methods were at this time filtering through in Anglican circles too, not least through the group of Herbert's friends at Little Gidding under the tutorship of Nicholas Ferrar. Within these patterns of thought, the shifting relationship between tactile and spiritual was of primary concern, the artist employing the techniques of direction, surprise, and reversal as means of enticing the viewer or reader away from his settled assumptions into an unconventional vantage point, for which the rules of empirically fixed measurement or worldly logic were seen as no longer relevant. Such, we should recall, was not the normal practice of Christian poetry in other eras. Sir Walter Ralegh's "The Passionate Man's Pilgrimage," Browning's "Prospice," or Hopkins' "God's Grandeur" are all poems of deep religious commitment accepting the dominance of the eternal over the temporal; but none possesses this Mannerist quality of a disturbing interaction or conflict between the two entities, resolved only at the conclusion.

That dynamic is central to Herbert's poetry. His habitual reading of homely detail, of the church-porch, a flower, legal renewal of tenancy, or the action of a pulley in terms of divine anagrams, and conversely, as in "Aaron," his clothing of this reality in the garb of the celestial may convey on the surface the appearance of a settled and even simplistic Christian view. But the strains and tensions between the two worlds emerge not only in his own more passionate poems "Longing" and "Assurance," with their despairing pleas for divine aid, but in these apparently calmer poems too, where the reader is surprised or at times gently lured into deserting the sphere of the homely and familiar in which the poem begins in favor of the transcendent, the mystical, and the paradoxical. Herbert leads him into a Christian experience out-reaching terrestrial limitations where, with echoes of Donne and of the surrealist landscapes of the Mannerist artist,

> Thy will such a strange distance is,
>   As that to it
> East and West touch, the poles do kisse,
>   And parallels meet.[54]

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Notes

This essay, a portion of a chapter from the author's forthcoming book, *Renaissance Perspectives in Literature and the Visual Arts*, is reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press.

1 Joseph H. Summers, *George Herbert: His Religion and Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), pp. 26-27.

2 Arnold Stein, *George Herbert's Lyrics* (Baltimore, 1968), especially the opening chapter on "The Art of Plainness."

3 Rosemond Tuve, *A Reading of George Herbert* (Chicago, 1952).

4 "The Pearl," ll. 32-40, in *Works*, ed. F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford, 1959), p. 89. Quotations are from this text, cited by page number, with line numbers in the case of longer poems. Here and throughout use of i and j, u and v has been normalized, and contractions have been expanded.

5 Helen Vendler, "The Re-invented Poem: George Herbert's Alternatives," in *Forms of Lyric: Selected Papers from the English Institute*, ed. Reuben A. Brower (New York, 1970), pp. 19-45; reprinted in her book *The Poetry of George Herbert* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975).

6 *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1972), pp. 156-223.

7 *The Living Temple: George Herbert and Catechizing* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1978).

8 Ernst R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, tr. Willard Trask (New York, 1963), pp. 273-301.

9 There is a valuable summary of the whole controversy in James V. Mirollo, *Mannerism and Renaissance Poetry: Concept, Mode, Inner Design* (New Haven and London, 1984), pp. 1-71.

10 Color reproduction in Linda Murray, *The Late Renaissance and Mannerism* [New York, 1967], p. 42, fig. 38. S. J. Freedberg, *Parmigianino: His Works in Painting* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950) discusses the artist's place in the larger movement, providing a valuable critique of Mannerism itself.

11 John Shearman, *"Maniera* as an Aesthetic Ideal," in *The Renaissance and Mannerism*, vol. II of *Studies in Western Art: Acts of the Twentieth International Congress of the History of Art* (Princeton, 1963), pp. 200-21. The lecture was expanded into a book, *Mannerism* (Harmondsworth, 1967). The style's reputation rose briefly back in the nineteen-twenties; Shearman's validation of it has again opened the way for an appreciative reappraisal.

12 Frederick Hartt, "Power and the Individual in Mannerist Art," in *The Renaissance and Mannerism*, pp. 222-38.

13 The Theatines, founded by San Gaetano in 1524, forbad their friars all requesting of alms, allowing them to accept only offers of charity; the Capuchins in 1525 insisted that members go barefoot; and the Society of Jesus, founded as a non-monastic order in 1540, demanded the most far-reaching surrender of all, a total submission of intellect (Hartt, pp. 228-29 and notes).

14 Santa Felicità, Florence. Reproduced by permission (photo: Scala/Art Resource, New York). Color reproduction in Murray, *Late Renaissance and Mannerism*, fig. 27, and Freedberg, *Painting in Italy 1500 to 1600* (Harmondsworth, 1971), frontispiece.

15 ("Inflamed and snatched away by love"); quoted by Hartt, p. 230, from a contemporary account of San Gaetano's meditation before the sacrament.

16 See Murray, *Late Renaissance and Mannerism*, pp. 38-41, fig. 20.

17 *The Librarian*, wood, ca. 1580 (Nordiska Museet, Stockholm).

18   For details see Shearman, *Mannerism*, pp. 126-33. A useful collection of Mannerist works is found in F. Würtenberger, *Mannerism* (New York, 1963).

19   See Shearman, *Mannerism*, pp. 118-20, fig. 62.

20   Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, tr. C. F. Atkinson (London, 1932).

21   Holy Sonnet 10(xiv), in *Divine Poems*, ed. Helen Gardner (Oxford, 1978), p. 11. Donne's poetry is of course central here; its connection with Mannerist art formed the main theme of my *The Soul of Wit: A Study of John Donne* (Oxford, 1974). On ecstasy see Robert T. Petersson, *The Art of Ecstasy: Saint Teresa, Bernini, and Crashaw* (London, 1970).

22   Prado, Madrid.   Reproduced by permission (photo: Alinari/Art Resource, New York).

23   However, meditators desiring to conjure up Christ's resurrection in their minds could find some assistance in Matthew 28:2-4, describing the supernatural disturbances occurring when the tomb was found empty.

24   Louis L. Martz in *The Poetry of Meditation* (New Haven, 1954) has sensitized us to the importance of the Catholic meditative tradition in seventeenth-century poetry, while Barbara K. Lewalski in *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton, 1979) has argued persuasively for a parallel Protestant phenomenon.

25   Brera, Milan (painted c. 1562). Reproduced by permission (photo: Alinari/Art Resource, New York).

26   Rudolph Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960), p. 236.

27   Reproduced by permission (photo: Alinari/Art Resource, New York).

28   Painted c. 1576-81. Reproduced by permission.

29   Herbert's rejection of classical humanism in favor of scriptural sources is a rejection shared with the religious painters of the Counter-Reformation.   Here the traditional harmony and perfection of the Renaissance ideal is diverted from Neoplatonism to the biblical Urim and Thumim (Exodus 28:30, "And thou shalt put in the breast-plate of judgment the Urim and the Thumim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart when he goeth in before the Lord").   Although biblical commentators have never identified the real significance of these two words, their meanings "light and perfections" were sufficient for Herbert. (Cf. marginal gloss, Geneva Bible.)

30   Donne, from whom Herbert may have borrowed the idea, uses the same word-play to achieve a similar sense of anatomical monstrosity in his meditation on the tolling of the bell, where he argues that a child upon baptism by the church "is thereby connected to that *Head* which is my *Head* too, and ingraffed into that *body*, whereof I am a *member*"; *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* [1624], ed. John Sparrow (Cambridge, 1923), p. 97 (Meditation 17).

31   Vendler, *The Poetry of George Herbert*, p. 119.

32   Rosalie L. Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (Princeton, 1966), notably pp. 103-41 and 204.

33   Andrew Marvell, "The Coronet," l. 4, in *Poems and Letters*, ed. H. M. Margoliouth, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1952), I, 14; Donne, "Goodfriday, 1613," l. 21., in *Divine Poems*, ed. Gardner, p. 31.

34   Respectively, in the National Gallery, London, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

35   Sermon preached at the funeral of Sir William Cokayne on 12 December 1626, in *Sermons*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1953-62), VII, 264-65.

36   Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica*, the work of a fifth-century Greek grammarian from Egypt rediscovered in 1419 and published in Venice in 1505, was a primary source for the earliest emblem book, produced by Andrea Alciati in 1531. See Mario Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery*, rev. ed. (Rome, 1964), pp. 22-25. On "hieroglyphs" see also Summers, *George Herbert*, pp. 123-46.

37 Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, especially the opening chapters.

38 Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici* 1.16, in *Works*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, 4 vols. (Chicago, 1964), I, 24-25; the reference to Moses is at I.34 (p. 45).

39 Joseph Hall, *The Invisible World, Discovered to Spiritual Eyes, and Reduced to Usefull Meditation* (London, 1652), pp. 335-36.

40 Ll. 1-4, in *Divine Poems*, ed. Gardner, p. 48.

41 Francis Quarles, *Emblemes* (London, 1635), preface "To the Reader."

42 Helen Gardner comments in her edition of *The Metaphysical Poets* (Harmondsworth, 1980), p. 317, that Quarles' *Emblemes* was by "far the most popular book of verse in the century."

43 Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books* (London, 1948), pp. 126-27, and Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery*, p. 163; both are cited by Ernest B. Gilman, "Word and Image in Quarles' *Emblemes*," *Critical Inquiry* 6 (1980), 385. The latter's essay marks a brave attempt to perceive some degree of literary and thematic subtlety in certain of the poems. For a general study of the poet's life and work see K. J. Höltgen, *Francis Quarles* (Tübingen, 1978), whose sixth chapter discusses the emblem poems.

44 Praz, pp. 158-61.

45 "Post vulnera Daemon." Reproduced by permission of the Duke University Library.

46 Emblems I.xi, I.vii, II.x, and I.v.

47 "Inopem me copia fecit." Engraving by William Marshall; reproduced by permission of the Duke University Library.

48 In fact a deliberate misquotation. Isaiah 66:11 refers in the original to the rebuilt Jerusalem and the joy of its returning inhabitants restored, as it were, to the maternal breast. Quarles, wishing to apply the verse entirely differently, to man's misuse of earth's bounty, casually inserts a negative.

49 Ll. 1-3, 25-30; *Emblemes*, pp. 49-50.

50 James D. Simmonds, *Masques of God: Form and Theme in the Poetry of Henry Vaughan* (Pittsburgh, 1972), discusses the poet's search for a knowledge of God through the created world.

51 Vaughan, "The Tempest," ll. 17-20, 25-28, in *Works*, ed. L. C. Martin, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1914), II, 461.

52 Earl Miner, *The Metaphysical Mode from Donne to Cowley* (Princeton, 1969), p. 132.

53 D. S. Norton, "Herbert's 'The Collar,'" *Explicator* 2 (1944), item 41. The usual reading is summarized in Mary Ellen Rickey, *Utmost Art: Complexity in the Verse of George Herbert* (Lexington, Ky., 1966), pp. 99-101, and in C. A. Patrides, ed., *The English Poems of George Herbert* (London, 1974), p. 161. From a passing hint in Fish's *Self-Consuming Artifacts*, p. 221, I suspect that his reading of this poem may be close to my own.

54 "The Search," p. 163, ll. 41-44.