ASPECTS OF IMAGERY, SYNTAX AND METRICS IN THE POETRY OF GEORGE HERBERT

Thesis

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by

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I intend in this thesis to examine some central features of George Herbert's art - aspects of his imagery, syntax and metrics. These topics have been chosen because they encompass large areas of his poetic practice, ramifying as they do into questions of theme, tone and structure. Even a partial survey of Herbert's imagery, such as the one I attempt to offer, should enable the reader to judge the range of experience that Herbert brings to bear upon a comparatively circumscribed number of themes. (The "Affliction" poems, for example, are wonderfully diverse, although they have a common thematic centre.) A brief examination of the traditions within which Herbert's manipulation of imagery falls should allow one also to judge his resourcefulness, especially in the composites of emblem and symbol he devises on occasion; while in the concluding analyses I attempt to show the structural significance of image patterns in representative poems from *The Temple*. Thus Chapter I falls into three sections: a brief discussion of emblematic and symbolic traditions together with Herbert's place in relation to them, a deliberately selective glance over some images (a full examination is far beyond the scope of this thesis), and finally some close analyses of poems in the course of which I try to show the imagery operating as a structural and coordinating device.

In Chapter II, I move on to the closely related area of syntax, examining Herbert's formulation of his material, and finding - amongst other things - that there is evidence of "grammatical" imagery, where the disposition of a sentence provides a concrete embodiment of the theme. This interrelationship

of imagery and syntax (and of imagery and metrics) is a corollary of poetry's organic nature, and in order to stress the mutual collaboration of these features, I have subjected a single poem, "The Flower", to an analysis from three different angles, assuming that each approach will further illuminate the others. All the lyrics would yield riches if treated in this way but my limits of space have naturally precluded so elaborate an undertaking. Even in the analyses of poems that are treated only once, I have been at pains to allow in a glimmering of topics other than that in hand, so as to enlarge the scope of my examination. Although the material in Chapter II is designed to highlight the structural, tonal and thematic effects of syntax in turn, such divisions remain theoretical rather than actual, for they combine almost indivorcibly into a complex whole.

Chapter III is patterned like Chapter I in that it moves from a general survey of Herbert's metrics, his rhyme and his stanzaic design, to further close analyses of his metrical procedures in particular lyrics. Both here and in the preceding chapters I have undertaken to look at Herbert's work in close detail, because, as I have already suggested, his is an art of compression, of telescoping a whole range of meanings into the neatest and most compact shape. Given the differences in mode and intention, his poetry often puts one in mind of Jane Austen's fiction – at least in the profundity it achieves within a consciously limited scale – and a critical magnifying glass seems to me to be the most apposite aid to such a study as I have undertaken.

The appendix on Herbert's sonnets theoretically belongs to the discussion of stanza in Chapter III but, proving too bulky in

that position, it has been excinded for the sake of balance, and placed at the end of the thesis.

In the course of my observations I use "the speaker", "the poet" and sometimes even "Herbert" as interchangeable terms, although I am naturally aware of the critical distinction between the poet's self and the persona he creates in the act of composition. However, I feel convinced that in the case of The Temple the poet's mask often faithfully reproduces his features, and so I supply a brief introduction to the thesis in order to throw some refracted biographical light upon the striving and submission dramatised in the lyrics. My work has sprung from a love of Herbert's poetry that extends even to its maker, and if I succeed in conveying only a fraction of this love to the reader, I shall have realised the chief of my aims.

I wish to thank Ronald Hall and Ruth Harnett for their most patient and illuminating supervision; the staff of the Rhodes University Library and the Jagger Library in Cape Town; Olive Clark, who has typed the final draft; Joyce Slattery and Margaret Turck for their help with earlier versions and finally my parents, Henry and Lilian Edgecombe, whose love and sacrifices have made it possible for me to write on Herbert in the first place.

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Note: Throughout this thesis I refer to F.E. Hutchinson, ed. The Complete Works of George Herbert (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1941), and in order to aid the reader in finding the poems more swiftly, I have supplied a page reference to the Hutchinson edition after every title: for example, "Deniall" (H.79).

INTRODUCTION

Whatever it lacks in historical accuracy,[1] Isaak Walton's Life of Mr. George Herbert must surely capture the spirit of its subject as few biographical essays have ever done. The following extract is testimony to the restrained eloquence of his account:

> In another walk to Salisbury, he saw a poor man, with a poorer horse, that was fall'n under his Load; they were both in distress, and needed present help; which Mr. Herbert perceiving, put off his Canonical Coat, and help'd the poor man to unload, and after, to load his horse: The poor man blest him for it: and he blest the poor man; and was so like the good Samaritan, that he gave him money to refresh both himself and his horse; and told him, That if he lov'd himself, he should be merciful to his Beast. - Thus he left the poor man, and at his coming to his musical friends at Salisbury, they began to wonder that Mr. George Herbert which us'd to be so trim and clean, came into that company so soyl'd and discompos'd; but he told them the occasion: And when one of the company told him, He had disparag'd himself by so dirty an employment; his answer was, That the thought of what he had done, would prove Musick to him at Midnight; and that the omission of it, would have upbraided and made discord in his Conscience, whensoever he should pass by that place; for, if I be bound to pray for all that be in distress, I am sure that I am bound so far as it is in my power to practise what I pray for. And though I do not wish for the like occasion every day, yet let me tell you, I would not willingly pass one day of my life without comforting a sad soul, or shewing mercy: and I praise God for this occasion: And now let's tune our Instruments.[2]

This passage contains a great deal of Herbert's essential quality. There is a compassionate response to suffering which shows no hesitation, and an emotional generosity which extends even to pity for the horse. Walton alludes also to his trimness

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1. Cf. David Novarr, The Making of Walton's "Lives" (New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1958), p.353.

2. Isaak Walton, The Lives of John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert & Robert Sanderson (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1927), p.305.

and cleanliness, both of them qualities that his poetry typifies. The effortless serenity with which Herbert translates the incident into metaphor, and forms from it a parable of the conscience, in some ways reflects the ease and simultaneous profundity of much of The Temple. Finally, there is the quiet authority and sense of proportion manifest in his suggestion that they tune their instruments. The tranquillity that he shows in this narrative should not, however, cause one to overlook the passionate spiritual conflicts that preceded his entry into the priesthood.

George Herbert was born at Montgomery Castle in Wales on 3rd April, 1593, the fifth son of Sir Richard Herbert. It was his mother who exerted the chief influence upon his childhood, as he dutifully attests in his poem Memoriae Matris Sacrum. Magdalen Herbert seems to have been a woman of some strength of character, who brought up her sons with an almost obsessive care for their moral and spiritual well-being, for Walton records that when Edward Herbert, George's elder brother, went to Oxford, she "provided him with a fit Tutor, she commended him to his Care; yet she continued there with him, and still kept him in a moderate awe of her self...".[3] While living at Oxford, she met several brilliant men, among them John Donne, who was later to influence Herbert considerably.

He was sent to Westminster School at about the age of twelve and there, probably, began his acquaintance with Lancelot Andrewes, Dean of Westminster. He applied himself with characteristic intensity to mastering Greek and Latin. Marchette Chute conjectures that it was at Westminster he acquired his interest in

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3. Lives, p.264.

music, since the latter was "an integral part of life in the Renaissance, and even if the royal statutes had not specified a musical training Westminster School would certainly have given it".[4] The discipline was rigorous, and Herbert's concern with employment (a topic to which he devoted several poems) might have been due as much to the ascetic life of the school (and subsequently of Cambridge) as to a temperamental disposition towards industry. He was sufficiently promising to be awarded a scholarship to Trinity College, Cambridge, and before leaving school to take it up he was cautioned to "study moderately and use exercise",[5] suggesting that he applied himself often to the point of physical exhaustion.

There was a marked continuity between university and school, for both operated on a principle of strenuous discipline. He took his studies with his wonted seriousness and, as Walton expresses it, "consecrated the first-fruits of his early age to vertue, and a serious study of learning".[6] On 1st January, 1610, he sent two sonnets to his mother, dedicating his poetic abilities to the service of God. These sonnets indicate an early preoccupation with baptising his muse, such as occurs also in "Jordan (I)" (H.56), "Jordan (II)" (H.102) and, to a lesser degree, in "The Forerunners" (H.176). When he obtained his B.A. degree, he was awarded second place in the <u>Ordo Senioritatis</u> and was subsequently elected minor and then major fellow of Trinity. In 1616 he proceeded to the M.A. degree. Canon Hutchinson surmises that early drafts of "The Church-porch" and some poems of <u>The Temple</u> were begun in the following year, when he was awarded the

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4. Marchette Chute, <u>Two Gentle Men</u> (London: Secker and Warburg, 1960), p.28.

5. Chute, p.32.

6. <u>Lives</u>, p.267.

small office of Sublector quartae classis.[7] Although his progress at Cambridge testified to his excellence as a student, his behaviour was marred by vanity and pride, the obverse of the qualities he came later so radiantly to exemplify. Walton writes that "if during this time he exprest any Error, it was, that he kept himself too much retir'd, and at too great a distance with all his inferiours: and his cloaths seem'd to prove, that he put too great a value on his parts and Parentage".[8]

He was appointed Reader in Rhetoric in 1618, and in 1620 was elected Public Orator. The previous occupants of the post had exploited it as a means of political advancement, and Sir Francis Nethersole, like Sir Robert Naunton before him, had become a secretary of state as a result of its "opportunities of approach to the king and other influential persons".[9] It is certain that Herbert entertained ideas of similar advancement at the time, but these ended with the death of his patrons, King James, the Duke of Richmond and the Marquis of Hamilton. He renewed his earlier resolution to enter the priesthood, and was probably influenced in this regard by Donne.

Herbert was ordained deacon in about 1626, and became a prebendary at Lincoln. One of his immediate plans was to restore the ruined church at Leighton Bromswold, despite his mother's misgivings about his physical and financial fitness for such an undertaking. She herself died in 1627, and six months later Herbert resigned his Cambridge post as Public Orator. His

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7. F.E. Hutchinson, ed., The Works of George Herbert (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1941), p.xxvi.

8. Lives, p.270.

9. Hutchinson, p.xxviii.

ordination as deacon prevented him from engaging in any secular pursuit, and yet he proved reluctant to commit himself finally to his priestly vocation. Canon Hutchinson conjectures that his misgivings now derived less from ambition than from the sense of unworthiness that Herbert examines in "Aaron" (H.174) and "The Priesthood" (H.160); and also from continued ill-health.[10]

His health had so far improved in 1629, however, that he was able to marry Jane Danvers, distantly related to him through his mother's second marriage. By Walton's account (which reflects an attractive, trustful naïvete), "Mr. Danvers had ... so much commended Mr. Herbert to her, that Jane became so much a Platonick, as to fall in love with Mr. Herbert unseen".[11] Mrs. Herbert proved an ideal partner for her husband, for according to Walton yet again, "there never was any opposition betwixt them, unless it were a Contest which should most incline to a compliance with the others desires".[12]

His ordination followed in September, 1630, on which occasion he prostrated himself before the altar, and set himself a rule of life. Before this, he had been inducted into the rural parish of Bemerton, not far from Salisbury, and here proved himself to be a priest of quite exceptional devotion and humility. He took pains to instruct his congregation in the significance of the liturgy, but did not limit his activities to ritual worship alone. He and his wife were generous with their alms, and frequently gave to the poor of the parish. His ideals of priestly behaviour are tabulated in his tract, A Priest to the Temple, or, The Country Parson, all of which is validated by his own exemplary

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10. Hutchinson, p.xxxii.
11. Lives, p.286.
12. Ibid., p.286.

life. As Marchette Chute points out, "the title reflects the combination of spiritual intensity and practical good sense with which Herbert approached the problems of his own life".[13] A single instance of his generosity is the willing way in which he took three orphan daughters of his sister Margaret into his household. Herbert's life at Bemerton gives proof of a self-abasement and an openness to all people, and so differs noticeably from his conduct at Cambridge. The contrast is not due only to Walton's opposition of a worldly and spiritual calling, which David Novarr isolates as a central thesis of the Life;[14] there is tangible evidence in the poetry itself that earlier moral confusion has been resolved and corrected. It is not fanciful, for example, to align the "wrong" and the "right" responses to God which are dramatised in "Affliction (I)" (H.46) with Herbert's attitudes at Cambridge and at Bemerton respectively:[15]

> When first thou didst entice to thee my heart,
> I thought the service brave:
> So many joyes I writ down for my part,
> Besides what I might have
> Out of my stock of naturall delights,
> Augmented with thy gracious benefits.
>
> . . . .
>
> Yet, though thou troublest me, I must be meek;
> In weaknesse must be stout.
> Well, I will change the service, and go seek
> Some other master out.
> Ah my deare God! though I am clean forgot,
> Let me not love thee, if I love thee not.

He lived for only three years after his ordination, during which time he continued to write poetry and appraise his earlier struggles with serene detachment. Canon Hutchinson observes

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13. Chute, p.126.
14. Novarr, p.353.
15. A reading limited to such an alignment would, however, be an impoverished one.

that the "inward conflict which had lent such poignancy to the poems written in the period of indecision and inaction was quieted when Herbert went to Bemerton, and there are only occasional echoes of it".[16] He goes on to suggest that the later poems exemplify a transfigured contentment on the part of the poet, although it must be stated here that the dating of most of The Temple is conjectural.

Herbert had never been particularly robust, and he undermined a frail health by his relentless application to study and to his calling. He weakened gradually over the years and in 1633 fell desperately ill. His courage was such, however, that on the last Sunday of his life, he sang a setting of one of his lyrics which he himself had composed. On his deathbed he entrusted the manuscript of his poems to a friend, and asked him to deliver them to Nicholas Ferrar at Little Gidding. His work was, in his own words, "a picture of the many spiritual Conflicts that have past betwixt God and my Soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my Master ...".[17] He died on 1st March, 1633, with the calmness that Walton's biographical epitaph so movingly conveys:

> Thus he liv'd, and thus he dy'd like a Saint,
> unspotted of the World, full of Alms-deeds,
> full of Humility, and all the examples of a
> vertuous life... [18]

It is to Herbert's credit that in an age of passionate and shrill fanaticism, the tolerant cast of his faith remained inviolable. Indeed, the sober but uncensorious tone of poems like "The Jews" (H.152) and "Church-rents and schismes" (H.140)

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16. Hutchinson, p.xxxvii.
17. Walton, p.314.
18. Ibid., p.319.

proves how far such crudity of vision is absent from his poetry. "The Church Militant" (H.190) is rather more polemical in spirit, and so perhaps is "The British Church" (H.109) although the sobriety of its tone once again serves to control the satire. Detachment from the controversies of the time came only with maturity, however. In his more partisan youth at Cambridge, Herbert had written a counter-attack upon Andrew Melville's Anti-Tami-Cami-Categoria (a document which had sought to expose Roman Catholic tendencies within the established church of England). Here, according to Joseph Summers, he supported the ritual of his church against the satirical onslaught, but also digressed to make fun of "Melville's Latin or of Puritan taste and nasal accents".[19] This, together with the fact that he "overlooked no opportunity for a pun or a display of verbal fireworks",[20] ought to alert one to an intention very different from that of the poems he wrote in later life. His onslaught reveals a self-regarding relish for satire, and an easy resort to scurrilous parody, quite foreign to the procedure of "The Jews", for example.

In his partial assent to Melville's doctrinal stances, Herbert displayed sympathy with some tenets of Puritanism even in his Cambridge days. Summers observes how "in the final line of 'The Watercourse' "Herbert expressed his belief in predestination in a manner that should have satisfied any Calvinist".[21] This and several other poems prove that his attack was directed not so much at the theological assumptions of Calvinism, as at its dowdiness and failure to reflect in its liturgy the majesty of God.

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19. Joseph Summers, George Herbert: His Religion and Art (London: Chatto and Windus, 1954), p.56.

20. Ibid., p.56.

21. Ibid., p.58.

Although Herbert's religious commitment was fervent, it seldom took the form of bigotry. It never does in the course of The Temple. The serenity and poise of the poetry do indeed suggest a detachment amid the "stress and din of contending creeds".[22]

Both Herbert's life and his beliefs - of which I have presented the briefest possible account in the foregoing pages - are in themselves a celebration of ideals of balance, temperance, harmony and decorum. These ideals are celebrated also in the poetry, albeit implicitly, for just as A Priest to the Temple found a correlative in Herbert's conduct as a priest, so too his poetry seems often to accord fully with his own sweet humility and mildness. I need cite only the last stanza of "Employment (I)" (H.57) in proof of this:

> I am no link of thy great chain
> But all my companie is a weed.
> Lord place me in thy consort; give one strain
> To my poore reed.

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22. This notion is however contended by T.S. Eliot in his pamphlet, George Herbert (London: Longmans, Green, 1962), p.14.

CHAPTER I

IMAGERY

Even a cursory glance through Herbert's poetry will suggest the diversity of his images, not only with regard to their range (part of which I shall examine later in this chapter), but also where their very qualities are concerned. Two major traditions, those of emblem and symbol, seem to account for the variousness of his procedures and so require some preliminary definition. Of course the topic is a vexed one, and has occupied scholars for centuries. All I can offer here are tentative and provisional findings. Anything more definitive would not only require volumes of explication, but would almost certainly fail to account for the rich and tantalising gradations of practice which make rigid theories ultimately futile. I shall attempt only some working definitions here to give direction rather than finality to my treatment of the images.

In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century emblems, one is presented with an association of pictogram and poem where the former provides a gloss to the latter, and so to some extent loses its self-sufficiency. The associated language is thus restricted, much as language set to music must not be so elaborate as to focus one's attention at the expense of the setting. While Herbert's poetry shows a debt to the material of the emblematists - for example the conventional depiction of the heart as stony matter in "The Altar" (H.26)-I believe that their influence is far more complex than this, and that it extends also to his treatment of some images. The difference between the emblematic and the symbolic

treatment of imagery is ultimately a matter of degree rather than of kind. One can however isolate certain features of the emblematic convention which do not typify the methods of symbolism.

Rosemary Freeman has observed that the central assumption underlying the emblem - by which I shall henceforth mean the totality of picture and verse - is this: that poetry is a "speaking picture, and painting dumb poetry".[1] Such an assumption marks the inter-dependence of visual and verbal aspects from the start. Almost all emblems involve a maxim, usually of a proverbial or cautionary cast, which is printed separately from the picture, either engirdling the frame or placed below it. The reader thus moves first to the central idea, whence he progresses to the picture. Here he finds a composition of varying complexity, presenting either a single item (a circle or a tree) or a more elaborate arrangement of objects. This frequently presents so mystifying an assembly of details that the reader is then obliged to consult the poem which provides a gloss to the pictogram. Obviously so intimate an association of picture and poem means a sacrifice of form to matter; a poem so rigorously concerned with explication will tend to assert rather than render its meaning.

From these brief and necessarily superficial observations, major qualities of the emblem become apparent, qualities which to a certain extent help to differentiate it from the symbol. The first of these is a tendency to explicitness. In the

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1. Rosemary Freeman, English Emblem Books (London: Chatto and Windus, 1967), p.14.

emblematic poem, whether it accompanies a pictogram or simply makes use of emblematic practices, the meaning of the imagery is carefully glossed. This explicit equation of idea and image, because it states the point of similarity, brackets off the alternatives which a looser relation would accommodate. In a sense the emblematist selects his image and connects a meaning to it.

A second feature of the emblem, its didacticism, is to some extent a corollary of the first. I have stated before how frequently the centre of the emblem proves to be a gnomic utterance of a moral or philosophical nature. It follows that such ideas are glamorised or at least given greater substance by their embodiment both in picture and poem. At the same time this enfolding of the maxim within the emblem cannot lead to confusion since the emblematist is constrained to keep his meaning clearly defined. Hence the apparent limitations of the mode - its thinness, its explicitness - are positive assets. It is small wonder that the Jesuits seized upon emblem books to propagate the Catholic faith, as Mario Praz has pointed out.[2] The picture provides a sensory enticement to the reader, who, baffled by its arcane meaning, turns to the poem for enlightenment, and so has the idea planted firmly in his mind.

The symbol on the other hand would seem to depend on very different tactics, if indeed the term "tactics" can be applied to a figure so much less preconceived than the emblem (although preconception need not spell inferiority). There is a vast literature

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2. Mario Praz, Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery 2nd. ed., (Rome: Edizione di Storia e Lettaratura, 1964), p.16.

on symbols and consequently a plethora of definitions. A representative example is that supplied by M.H. Abrams when he observes that a symbol is "anything which signifies something else".[3] The blurred nature of this account suggests not a loose grasp upon the topic but rather the indefinite nature of the topic itself. One item displaces another and thereby (in the act of displacement) suggests an equivalence between them. Seldom is a symbol actively glossed; on the contrary, it is usually the reader who must infer its meaning from its literary context. Herbert's central symbol in "The Flower" (H.165) presents us with few difficulties of interpretation, for the association of flowers and spiritual renewal is made accessible by its literary tradition. Yet it is never spelt out but rather allowed to absorb and contain its significance. Obviously symbol resembles the "dark conceit" of Renaissance allegory, and this affinity is confirmed by the fact that like the symbol, an allegory often exists on two levels - the "exposed" level of the narrative and the arcane level of the meaning. When the parallels are drawn by the writer one could speak of an "emblematic allegory"; when they are left unannotated to tremble with many possibilities of meaning, the designation "symbolic allegory" suggests itself. (Space forbids me to provide definitions more detailed and subtle than these.)

It remains for me to examine in fuller detail the dual tendency in Herbert's imagery - to the emblematic on the one hand and to the symbolic on the other. "Love-joy" (H.116) provides

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3. M.H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms 3rd. ed., (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p.168.

an instance of the first:

> As on a window late I cast mine eye,
> I saw a vine drop grapes with J and C
> Anneal'd on every bunch. One standing by
> Ask'd what it meant. I, who am never loth
> To spend my judgement, said, It seem'd to me
> To be the bodie and the letters both
> Of Joy and Charitie. Sir, you have not miss'd,
> The man reply'd; It figures JESUS CHRIST.

I have stated earlier that the methods of the emblematist involve a sober, detached relation of image to its significance. He uses imagery illustratively, clarifying his observations or *sententiae* in a diagrammatic way. In an emblematic poem, images are subordinate to their ideas and kept distinct from them, so that the process of equation can be made clearer. Yet even in an overt example such as the one above, Herbert enriches the thin texture of equation with the excitement of his guess, exultation at being proved right, and even some wry self-criticism. Although there is unquestionably an emblematic linkage of meanings, the whole poem is much more than a didactic relation of grapes to Christ as in the old mediaeval image of the *botrus mysticus*; it is a little drama, celebrating as much as any thing else the poet's initiation into truth. A personal emphasis, that is, has supplanted the public tone of the emblematist, and given it a humanity that is otherwise sometimes missing.

Another lyric that is obviously aligned to the emblematic tradition is the "The Church-floore" (H.66). Here the poet is at an apparently greater distance from his subject than in "Love-joy", and can thus show a more objective command of it. The poem begins in characteristic deixis as the speaker demonstrates to us the various features of the church floor. Such careful indexing

is, as I have said, a notable feature of the emblematic poem:

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

Herbert tempers the effect of instruction, however, by supplying a gentle interrogative where an imperative, blunt and forthright, would usually be employed. This eases the reader into the poem in contrast to the alternative method, which would tend rather to arrest him and pull him up short. "Square" and "Speckled" might strike us at first as being curiously detailed, especially if we recall that the emblematist attempts to keep his images as blank and diagrammatic as possible. The stone's squareness, however, is more than a spatial description, for it suggests also "foursquareness" and enduring solidity. So too "speckled", while it might on the one hand connote the variety of experiences in which patience is exercised, associates with "square" in defining the stone as granite. The emblematic connection of granite (a gritty, hard material) and patience, an enduring virtue, can readily be discerned, and yet we have had to proceed through the image, and make the connections ourselves. Herbert has used the pre-established framework of the emblem, but it has been complicated by the invited participation of the reader - emblem is thus verging here upon symbol. Nevertheless the equation is finally made as the poet moves from pentameter through trimeter to his succinct, conclusive dimeter. Such a progression gives the verse an effect of assured closing-in and narrowing-down - both of which processes are typical of the emblematic method.

In the second stanza, the reader is presented with a

similarly modified emblem in the patterning of the floor:

> And th'other black and grave, wherewith each one
> Is checker'd all along,
> *Humilitie*:

The perspective widens here to accommodate the pattern of the paving stones. We are given the colour and effect of the other stone, where "grave" would certainly retain its older meaning of "heavy" in addition to its modern denotation of "sombre". Even the metrics and phonetic texture here help to differentiate the qualities of the two stones, since the lighter sounds and extra unstressed syllable of "square and speckled" offset the sober breadth of the comparable sounds and syllables of "black and grave". As our view is directed along the floor, we become aware of the repetition in the pattern and the *subsidiary* function of each stone within the larger design, in contrast to the initial focussing on "that ... stone". This surely helps to justify the connection the poet is about to make between the black marble and humility. There are *many* stones, and none can aspire to special importance. Added to this is the propriety of having black suggest the restraint and self-effacement of humility itself. (The reader is thus again partly engaged in construing the emblems.)

A widening focus is apparent also in stanza three:

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

One is here able to envisage the gradual ascent of the floor towards the chancel, an architectural illusion caused by the viewer's distance from the focal point of the church. The

chancel enshrines the mystic centre of the building, and is generally approached by a flight of steps. Courage, one might implicitly conjecture, is required to make the approach to the altar. Its gentler equivalent, "Confidence", is all that is needed to cross the floor leading to the choir. Nevertheless there is in "rising" a sense of restrained aspiration, of movement toward the Godhead. To a certain degree, "confidence" is compounded both of "patience" and "humilitie", as the democratic gesture of "on either hand" suggests. Humility - lowliness - is a necessary condition for rising; patience controls the direction and renders it "gentle", or gradual. In this regard, the adverb "above" gives a peculiar immediacy to our placing within the church. Generally one would invoke a word like "beyond", signifying spatial recession on the same plane as that of the viewer. Here "above" introduces an added dimension of height, and forces the onlooker's vision upward beyond the visual rising and subsequent steps to the very centre of the church. He is thus by implication brought very close to the floor, so close indeed as to "justify" (in terms of simple verisimilitude) the minute examination which is made in the next stanza.

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

Here one examines with the poet the substance in the grooves between the blocks of marble, and then follows his gaze as he encompasses the entire building, the "whole frame". The metaphor within the emblem, conveyed by the image of ligature that "ties" it together, gives superadded unity to the experience. By

chequering the blocks of rhyme ("Patience" / "Humilitie" / "Confidence" / "Charitie"), Herbert is also able to register the floor's alternating pattern within the verse itself. It is a pattern which, like that of the church floor, leads ultimately to unity. The "sweet cement" of this stanza not only binds: it also unifies an assembly of diverse items. So absolute and necessary a function is equated with as absolute and necessary a virtue - love. The poet resorts to the hendiadys of the double noun in order to clarify his own interpretation of "Love" as an explicitly theological virtue ("Charitie"). Furthermore, the very doubling of the nouns provides an image of reinforcement and continuity which reproduces the function of cement.

At this point Herbert restructures his verse so as to reduce the capsular, demonstrative effect of the preceding tercets, and supplies instead an eight-line stanza. This gives the verse a greater mobility which matches a new dynamic phase in the poem, a phase bringing it even closer to allegory (insofar as the meaning develops through action rather than through static tableaux).

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

Given the glossy texture of marble and the consequent difficulty that anything has in "taking" on such a surface, the activity of "Sinne" becomes peculiarly disgusting. There is a wilfulness and industry implied in "staining", as opposed to a random, care-less pollution. The marble's delicacy (conveyed by "neat and curious") is thus brutally and wantonly obscured. A metaphor

of veins helps to animate what have hitherto been presented as impassive, stony blocks, an animation confirmed by their weeping in the next line, where the moist exhalations of the stone supply a metaphor for the human response of sorrow. Sorrow (of a penitential kind) is thus subtly evoked as the sole remedy for the disfigurements of sin. There is a tendency toward absolute expression here - "all is cleansed" and "all the dust" - which suggests how completely the work of Sinne and Death is expunged. The treatment of Death itself is also emblematically telling, since he never enters, but "puffs at the doore" and so fails to defile the church. This holy immunity of the building to some extent prepares for the climax of the poem, where God's handiwork is celebrated. Death's grotesque, blustering insistence is fixed by the tone of "puffing" and by the reversal of his intentions, for as he blows, he reveals the floor, hitherto coated with dust. (In Herbert, as of course in much religious verse, "dust" is an image of mortality.) Death has superficial control over the mortal and transitory disfigurements of the church, but he cannot assail the serene perdurability of God's own creation. The framing of Death by the rhyme "weep"/"sweep" enacts his subjection to God's cleansing purpose. We have thus a complicated realisation of the figures of Death and Sin, neither of them suited in this context to conventional iconographic treatment. Sinne is a mysterious, furtive defiler - nothing more definite is given in the poem. Death cannot be given his usual emblematic guise as skeleton since the verb "puff" automatically suggests the motion of cheeks - at which point one might pause to observe that there is a similar inversion of this emblematic convention in Herbert's poem, "Death" (H.185). The actions of Sin and Death while they are

clearly presented, are never explicitly tagged. There is no emblematic gloss for the ideas enshrined in each image, nor for the tissue of ideas which inheres in the action. Clearly a symbolic register is beginning to displace an emblematic one.

The final couplet marks the climax and redirection of the poem, for here the concrete emblem, the church, is suddenly equated with the heart to form a new, complex metaphor:

> Blest be the Architect, whose art
> Could build so strong in a weak heart.

Joseph Summers has shown how, by rendering the imagery personal, Herbert gives it a characteristically individual emphasis, for he "nearly always presents the institutional as a hieroglyph of the personal rather than vice versa, and the hieroglyph of 'The church-floore' has pictured primarily the marvellous art of God in decreeing the perseverance of the saints rather than His art in the construction of the church".[4] Although such an idea has a biblical precedent (as Professor Summers himself suggests), it inverts the literality of the emblem, and gives to the imagery an encompassing spiritual tenor that, short of obviously enclosing the poem within a heart-shaped frame, no emblem could fully convey. (This of course assumes that although poems can be emblematical without being associated with pictures, they tend nevertheless to produce a defined visual response - what might be termed a mental emblem.)

Similar blendings of register occur also in "Love unknown" (H.129). Like "Love-Joy", "Love unknown" is cast in a dramatic

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4. Joseph Summers, George Herbert: His Religion and Art (London: Chatto and Windus, 1954), p.126.

form. It is in the nature of a confession to a "deare friend" who supplies gnomic footnotes to all the mystifying events of the narrative. The first image the reader encounters is that of "grounds", which, as Canon Hutchinson points out, is a representation of the speaker's soul.[5]

Because the meaning of the image is at first very shadowy, and has to be arrived at by a slow process of reasoning; and because there is a narrative link between the image of "grounds" and of "fruit" (the produce of the grounds), there seems to be an allegorical element in the utterance. The absence of naked exposition and a sense of dynamic progression in the meaning both bring allegory to mind, until the poet places his heart in the fruit dish. Here one experiences a superimposition of emblem upon allegory, for the heart has not been translated into an image congruent with the story, but rather introduced with complete disregard for the visual paradox it presents. Such methods are of course entirely legitimate in the emblem, where the concept prevails over visual logic.

The servant who receives the fruit on behalf of his master then takes up the heart, and throws it into a font filled with the blood that issues from a rock. By now allegory has almost entirely been displaced by emblematic methods. Although there is an element of dynamic progression, all the events are easily contained within the compass of a single narrative frame, and do indeed have the statuesque, frozen-in-motion aspect of the emblem. There is, moreover a marked concern with ideas, to which narrative and visual coherence are sacrificed. The assembly of font, heart, blood

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5. Hutchinson, p.522.

and rock do not make literal sense in conjunction with each other: each must be translated to such an extent that only when they are rendered abstract can they be reconciled into a thematic pattern. The font (an emblem of baptism) is where the heart is purified by the blood of Christ, since it is through baptism that the redemption of a Christian is sealed. This blood issues from a rock which has been cleft like that which Moses cleft in the desert for the relief of the Israelites. Herbert here draws on a typological association of the rock with Christ's *pleura*, or side-wound, which had gained currency in Christian thought. By introducing this image, the poet departs slightly from emblem into the province of symbol and allegory once again, because he implies, rather than states, the linkage of Christ with rock, and simply allows the image to introduce its own emotional vibration without any commentary beyond the glosses supplied by the "deare friend". As the first tableau closes, one becomes aware that the heart is somehow still connected physically with the speaker, because he *feels* the "wringing", and this "enforceth tears". The imagery is once again difficult to classify, since the pain is felt without any emblematical connection of heart and speaker - by means of visual heart-strings, for example. This suggests a noetic occurrence of the events (just as the "grounds" suggest the soul of the poet), and therefore an external presentation of interior conflict such as one finds in the mediaeval *psychomachia*, the latter genre being, of course, essentially allegorical in spirit. Throughout the poem then, as my analysis of lines 1 to 18 has attempted to show, there is a subtle movement between two disparate forms of imagery. This is in no way the result of the

poet's confusion, but rather proof of his flexibility and readiness to draw from whatever source best suits his purpose.

Since the distinction between emblem and symbol hinges to some extent on the degree to which the image is entertained intellectually rather than emotionally, it is worth delaying here briefly to examine the metaphysical conceit. This species of imagery tends to display brilliance and mental agility where the symbol reveals a more resonant significance. Space once again forbids any more comprehensive definition than that supplied by Helen Gardner. She regards the conceit (more especially the metaphysical conceit) as a comparison which makes us "concede likeness while being strongly conscious of unlikeness",[6] and likens it to a spark made by two stones, which, when it expires, leaves us with two stones, the incongruous residuum of the experience. Herbert resorts to this mode far less often than his contemporaries, but when he does, the effect is usually illuminating.

Sometimes he exploits the conceit's breath-taking ingenuity to energise theological commonplaces, and so grant them new life. For instance, the reconciliation of man to God through Christ's passion is conveyed by relating the side-wound to a post-bag. This occurs in "The Bag" (H.151):

> If ye have any thing to send or write,
> I have no bag, but here is room:
> Unto my Fathers hands and sight,
> Beleeve me, it shall safely come.
> That I shall minde, what you impart,
> Look, you may put it very neare my heart.

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6. Helen Gardner, ed., The Metaphysical Poets (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), p.19.

The novelty of the conception is so sharp that the image seems to border on profanity. If, indeed, it is visualised, it becomes positively repulsive, like an extravagance in a Moravian hymn.[7] The conceit makes no such demands upon us however, for nowhere in the stanza does Herbert force us through a point-by-point equation of wound with bag. Rather, he leaves the terms of the comparison intellectual, so as to give energy to the idea without violating our sensitivities. A concordia discors of similar inventiveness occurs in "The Dawning" (H.112) where Christ's grave linen takes on the function of a handkerchief.

The shock of novelty is often more muted, however, as the conceits in the masterly poem, "Easter" (H.41), prove. This is an urgent address by the poet to himself which - after a series of swift imperatives - presents an image of Christ's death, first reducing the body to dust, and then reconstituting and transfiguring it through the resurrection. An implicit alchemical metaphor is carefully sustained in lines 5 and 6, where calcination reduces the metal to dust, only to enable it to form again, in this miraculous instance, as gold. Two alchemical ideas, those of calcination and of the philosopher's stone, are held in metaphoric tension here.

At the same time, there is in "Easter" no invitation to press home the dichotomies of the imagery. These make a swift, electrical contact, and then fall away. The reader is not required to contemplate how Christ, in dying, calcines man. Any further parallels drawn from an alchemical laboratory would be gratuitous,

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7. M.W. England and J. Sparrow, Hymns Unbidden (New York: New York Public Library, 1966), pp.7-11.

distracting and even grotesque. Similarly, one is not meant to envisage a literally golden man, but to concentrate rather on the metaphoric import of gold. The very juxtaposition of "gold" with "just" (an abstract adjective) helps to keep the former abstract as well, and so prevent too concrete a realisation of the image. Herbert has at the same time generated a strong current of emotion in the opening lines, with the result that the conceit never lapses into frigidity or unemotional cleverness. Indeed, this emotion enriches and sustains its logical dexterity.

The same ingenuity, borne on a stream of strong and generous feeling, is noticeable in the following stanza, where a conceit unites the cross and the sinews of Christ to the wood and strings of a lute. Once more, the image does not demand a detailed pursuit of the analogy, an analogy which would involve too full a focus on suffering in what, after all, is a celebratory lyric. It is rather the conceit of suffering made harmonious and thus transfigured, that occupies the reader's mind.

Herbert's use of the symbol needs still to be examined because it differs from his treatment of emblem and conceit less in kind (we have already observed the enriching modifications of his treatment) than in degree. His symbols are seldom obscure, sharing as they do to some extent the almost public clarity of the emblem. His emblematic poems, conversely, are never sterile and flatly pictographic, being rather shot through with emotion and personal significance. While the imagery in The Temple displays a continuum of these modes rather than sharply differentiated registers, it is necessary that the features of imagery at the other end of the scale from that of "The Church-floore"

be established. This can best be done by glancing at "The Flower" (H.165), a poem to which I shall return later in this chapter. Here the images Herbert forges are indeed symbolic, gaining their resonance from the personal meanings with which they are clothed.

At the start of the first stanza, a happy outburst embodies itself in an image. This comes with a fluency and spontaneity that accords well with the utterance:

> How fresh, O Lord, how sweet and clean
> Are thy returns! ev'n as the flowers in spring;
> To which, besides their own demean,
> The late-past frosts tributes of pleasure bring.

Here there is no imposition of meaning upon image such as typifies the emblematic method. Rather, the processes are reversed to the degree that the meaning depends on the image for its realisation. Neither is there any of the mental effort of the conceit, but rather an easy appropriateness of image to the poet's frame of mind. God's "returns", furthermore, are not forced into an analogy with the return of the flowers, for although parallels do exist, they are an understood part of the symbol's associations. The elusive syntax of lines 3 and 4 provides further confirmation of the poem's symbolic register. Without wishing to attempt an Empsonian analysis, I would suggest that the prose sense can be construed in a number of ways. Two of the most obvious would be, firstly "God's reassertion of Himself is as beautiful as the return of flowers, before which the poet's sense of desolation ('late-past frosts') melts into gratitude ('tributes of pleasure')", or secondly that "God's reassertion of Himself is cyclic, like the return of flowers, and is intensified in contrast with His earlier 'indifference' (the 'late-past frosts' suggesting a

condition of God rather than of the poet)". This ambiguous breadth of meaning, registered though it is by syntactic means, surely characterises the symbolic mode. Even where the analogy seems to be systematically explored in lines 5 and 7, there is less a sense of the dogged pursuit of exempla than of rhapsodic acclamation. What I think is happening here is that Herbert entertains, off-stage as it were, an archetypal parallel between spiritual and seasonal rejuvenation, and then, within the context of the poem itself, gives concrete immediacy to this in the image of the flower. The flower is a symptom and therefore a symbol of the return of spring, and hence mirrors the return of God into the poet's life. In this way, the images sustain a double meaning. On the one hand, the flower is a public symbol (of spring), and on the other a personal symbol (of spiritual renascence).

There is an unlimited fund of public symbols in Scripture and in the liturgy (which, in any case, is rooted in a matrix of Biblical teaching); and many such images can be observed in Herbert's poetry. I have already glanced at the typological symbol of the cleft rock in an earlier analysis, but further examples are legion, and some will be examined in my survey of the imagery.

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I have hitherto stressed some of the modes in which Herbert's imagery is cast, and propose now to examine some of the major images in his poetry and some of the sources from which they are derived. Since I intend to explore the relation between structure and theme, and since I have already devoted attention to the

kinds of imagery, the accent will fall largely upon the association of image and idea and what they collectively present in terms of the poet's themes. Moreover, because an exhaustive tabulation of the imagery is beyond the scope of this thesis, I have contented myself with the examination of a few major images, and within the compass of this selection, have tried to demonstrate the diversity of their application, and their considerable thematic range.

One can gain deep insights into a poet and into the scope of his experience by surveying the materials he chooses to transmute into imagery; and indeed some theorists such as Caroline Spurgeon have suggested that it is through his imagery that a poet can most fruitfully be studied, and that "it is chiefly through his images that [the poet], to some extent unconsciously, 'gives himself away'."[8] There is value in this, but also a proportionate danger of being deflected from the poetry to a study of the poet himself. Such dangers need not deter us, however, from observing those areas of life and literature from which Herbert gathers his images.

One of these areas - perhaps more peculiar to him than to Donne - is the Roman Catholic liturgy. Rosemond Tuve[9] has suggested that Herbert was familiar with this, primarily because the double images of "The Sacrifice" (H.26) - of God's treatment of Israel, conjoined with Israel's reception of Christ - have their source in the Improperia of Good Friday. For example,

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8. Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1935), p.4.

9. Rosemond Tuve, A Reading of George Herbert (London: Faber, 1952), pp.24ff.

the yoked images of the water from the rock and the vinegar of the Passion have the following liturgical expression:

> Ego te potavi aqua salutis de petra;
> et tu me potasti felle, et aceto.

Herbert complicates the image however, divorcing its constituents and welding them anew. The events of the narrative are hence given a spiritual gloss, brilliantly conveyed by the junction of "rock" and "hearts", "gall" and "malice":

> Why, Caesar is their onely King, not I;
> He clave the stonie rock, when they were drie;
> But surely not their hearts, as I well trie:
> Was ever grief, &c.

and

> They give me vineger mingled with gall,
> But more with malice: yet, when they did call,
> With Manna, Angels food, I fed them all:
> Was ever grief, &c.

The liturgy provides not only illustrative materials of this kind, but also an indirect imagery of form. Perhaps I over-extend the word "image" by applying it in this connection, but it strikes me that the visual shape of poems like "The Quip" (H.110) or "Home" (H.107) helps to focus their attitudes prayerful aspiration. To observe the mere topography of these lyrics and to foreknow the religious concern, is to expect the mesmeric iterativeness of a litany. The liturgy can often bring associated images to mind, such as the implicit image of the priest in "The Invitation" (H.179). It is difficult to refrain here from associating the speaker with a vested minister, proffering the host and chalice; and this impression is due to more than the hieratic formality of the tone. Anyone conversant with the

Book of Common Prayer cannot but link

> Come ye hither All, whose taste
> Is your waste;

with the "Comfortable Words" on the one hand:

> Come unto me all that travail and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you.

and, on the other, with

> Draw near and receive the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which were given for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

Liturgical allusions like these have the effect of defining the speaker as priest. This rôle is usually more directly realised, as Herbert often refers to his own priestly function. In "Aaron" (H.174) for example, he feels unequal to the transcendent function he is called upon to fulfil. Although the theme of the poem is a spiritual one - a moral clothing of the soul- it takes part of its power from the governing image of vestment. As in all liturgical action, the literal gesture signifies a spiritual one.

Church architecture, altars, bells - all of them liturgical "properties" - are also associated with this image of the priest. The Church opens with a shaped poem called "The Altar" (H.26), which, as Summers observes in connection with "The Church-floore" (H.66), offers an institutional hieroglyph for a personal theme.[10] What is being erected is not a cultic altar (although this is enriching the image), but an altar of the heart, the stony portions

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10. Cf. Summers, p.126.

of which are secured by the cement of remorse. The linkage of heart and stone, to digress for a moment, extends also into other poems like "The H. Communion" (H. 52), where it signifies the inflexibility and unreceptiveness of the soul:

> Before that sinne turn'd flesh to stone,
> And all our lump to leaven;

In "Sepulchre" (H. 40) stone is imaged as an imprisoning substance:

> What ever sinne did this pure rock commit,
> Which holds thee now? ...

It is this concern that is also developed in "Nature" (H. 45), where once again the poet beseeches God to assert His presence in his heart, and inscribe His commandments on its stony substance. This juxtaposition of images (that is, of heart and stone) constitutes a sort of leitmotiv in Herbert's poems of moral aspiration, of which "The Sinner" (H. 38) is one. In another indirectly "liturgical" poem, "The Church-floore" (H. 66), we have seen that stone is invoked as an image not of hard-heartedness but of immovable security:

> ... that square & speckled stone,
> Which looks so firm and strong,
> Is Patience:

On two occasions, Herbert invokes church windows to illustrate a parable about the Christian life. "Love-Joy" (H. 116) owes its visual impact to the meaning of the tendrils annealed in a stained glass window, while "The Windows" (H. 67) presents an analogy between the light's enrichment of colour as it passes through the glass, and the God's enrichment of the preacher's word.

Herbert is never in danger of confusing hieratic symbol or emblem with the realities they convey and, indeed, in "Sion" (H.106) and "The H.Communion" (H.52), he rejects the literal vehicle of a symbol as something redundant in the face of its larger meaning - a rhetorical ploy one would attribute more readily to an anti-ritualist. In "The H.Communion", for example, he dismisses all ritual accessories before examining the idea of the Real Presence:

> Not in rich furniture, or fine aray,
> Nor in a wedge of gold,
> Thou, who for me wast sold,
> To me dost now thy self convey;

while in "S i o n" he contrasts the ritual externalities of the old dispensation with the spiritual sanctity demanded by the new.

Since the liturgy has a biblical basis, allusions to scripture often filter through it, as I have already observed with regard to "The Sacrifice". Herbert frequently short-circuits these indirect channels of access, however, and searches out images in the scriptures themselves. "Sion", which is noticeable for its dismissal of formalism, is nevertheless empowered by a sensuous account of Solomon's temple:

> Lord, with what glorie wast thou serv'd of old,
> When Solomons temple stood and flourished!
> Where most things were of purest gold;
> The wood was all embellished
> With flowers and carvings, mysticall and rare:
> All show'd the builders, crav'd the seeers care.

On this occasion, the poet is <u>contrasting</u> conceptions of worship, and exalting spiritual above physical Beauty. If he contrasts Old and New Testament here, he stresses their similarities on

other occasions. The events of the one are conceived as prefigurations of the other, often along the purely traditional lines of typology. Instances of this procedure (which I shall be examining in detail later) are too numerous to catalogue and I shall have to content myself with a representative selection. In "Affliction (V)" (H.97) he refers to the ark of Noah as a foreshadowing of the Christian Church, while in "The Bunch of Grapes" (H.128), we shall see that the vicissitudes of the chosen people supply an analogue to the sorrows of the Christian believer. (It is worth observing in this connection that many of these typologies were fixed and popularised in manuals like the Speculum Humanae Salvationis and the Biblia Pauperum, whose influence upon the poet has been examined by Rosemond Tuve.)[11] "Josephs Coat" (H.159) reveals a rather quirkish use of Biblical imagery, as the coat is made to signify a variegation of joy and sorrow in the Christian life, in addition to the assurance of God's love. (The allegorical nature of this, and indeed of many a typological emphasis, is of course foreign to the source of the image - Genesis 37.3.)

The New Testament is also a fund of images for Herbert, and his usage is again far too rich to tabulate in its entirety. He alludes to the eschaton for example when he wishes to give an edge and urgency to his statements. "Vertue" (H.87) consists of a serene train of images which culminate in a reference to the Last Day, the more telling for its unruffled tone:

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11. Tuve, A Reading of George Herbert, p.29.

> Onely a sweet and vertuous soul,
> Like season'd timber, never gives;
> But though the whole world turn to coal,
> Then chiefly lives.

Here one sees the imagery of minor forms of transience give way to an image which signifies a total passing of order. In "Decay" (H.99) the stress falls upon the purgatorial effect of the Dies Irae, during which fire will devour the coldnesses of sin. Another such emphasis is manifest in "Love II" (H.54) where Herbert presents an apocalyptic purgation of evil. God's purpose is clarified in this poem when He claims creation as His own. The eschaton is sometimes presented (much less dramatically) in the image of a feast. Indeed, "Love (III)" (H.188) which might otherwise appear to be concerned with the reconciliation of God and sinner through the Eucharist, probably derives its imagery from the Messianic banquet in Luke 12.37, and therefore concerns the reception of the soul into heaven by Christ Himself.[12] This is suggested by the fact that it occurs within the sequence of eschatological poems at the end of The Church - "Death" (H.185), "Dooms-day" (H.186), "Judgement" (H.187) and "Heaven" (H.188).

Often, though, Herbert uses the feast to suggest in sensuous terms his wonder at the Eucharist. His meals are seldom convivial affairs affirming a social harmony, but rather intimate encounters between the speaker and his Saviour. In "The Banquet" (H.181), to cite only the most obvious case, the poet begins by welcoming the presence of Christ in the Sacrament, and then offers a catalogue of metaphors to convey its transcendent loveliness. Herbert also marvels at the mystical transmutation of wine into

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12. Cf. Summers, p.89.

blood, which he always savours to the full, although it is unlikely that he accepted the doctrine of transubstantiation. The ennobling sensations of the wine are registered with an almost sensuous relish, as this quotation from "The Agonie" (H.37) shows:

> Love is that liquour sweet and most divine,
> Which my God feels as bloud; but I, as wine.

Such lines as these provide a convenient transition to Herbert's imagery of blood, for his grief at the crucifixion often occasions an unrelenting focus upon the suffering of Jesus and the blood that flowed for the redemption of man. In "Good Friday" (H.38), the poet makes futile attempts at a quantitative assessment of Christ's Passion, referring to his blood as he does so:

> O my chief good,
> How shall I measure out thy bloud?

As it is only through physical experience of pain that the enormity of the Passion can be gauged, God must draw blood for its inditement from the poet's heart:

> Since bloud is fittest, Lord, to write
> Thy sorrows in, and bloudie fight;
> My heart hath store, write there, ...

Blood is also made to function as a symbolic shorthand for Christ's sacrifice as in "Church-lock and key" (H.66):

> Yet heare, O God, onely for his blouds sake
> Which pleads for me:

In other lyrics, the restorative, even medicinal, effects of blood are central to the poet's thematic purpose. It functions on one occasion as a "receit" for the "prattle" of conscience:

> And the receit shall be
> My Saviours bloud: when ever at his board
> I do but taste it, straight it cleanseth me,
> "Conscience" (H.105).

In "Church-rents and schismes" (H.140) Christ's blood is conceived as a source of health and colour for the church; and for death itself in the poem of that name. However frequently this image recurs in Herbert, it is never treated with the tasteless obsession that on occasion characterises its use in some eighteenth-century hymns.[13] Blood, as I have observed, tends to be transmuted into the "sweet liquor" of the Communion, or treated with detachment as a theological formula for the crucifixion.

There are other images of biblical provenance which speak less explicitly of their origin than the ones I have just tabulated. One could legitimately call them homiletic, for they include preaching images like the servant and master as a metaphor of man in submission to God (a metaphor invoked by Christ himself in a number of his parables). We see this in "Affliction (I)" (H.46). Another such image is that of Death rendered impotent by the fact of the Resurrection, which derives ultimately from I Corinthians 15.55. A reworking of the latter image is Herbert's "Death" (H.185) although here Death is not defeated so much as radiantly transmuted. Death personified is also treated as a figure of mortality in many poems, although this shows a debt to mediaeval commonplace rather than to specifically Biblical sources. In "Church-monuments" (H.64) the speaker confronts the imminence of death and the reducibility of man by contemplating a tomb. This leads him inevitably to reflect upon the mere dust to which the body eventually turns.

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13. Cf. England and Sparrow, pp.7-11.

The image of dust connected with this reduction of man is, like that of the tomb, ultimately Biblical in origin, but its meaning has been enriched by further accretions over the centuries. In "Church-monuments" it serves to evoke a response of humility in the face of final dissolution, of the transience of the flesh, and of the ineluctable progress of time. In "Love I" (H.54) the image foregrounds a different set of associations - pollution and sin:

> How hath man parcel'd out thy glorious name,
> And thrown it on that dust which thou hast made,

"Love II" (H.54), in many ways an antiphon to the foregoing poem, develops this still further. Dust here becomes an image of obscurity, which prevents, both literally and figuratively, the poet's perception of God, immanent in the world:

> Our eies shall see thee, which before saw dust;
> Dust blown by wit, till that they both were blinde:

Like blood, dust can also serve as a brief circumlocution for an aspect of theology - the limits of the creature in "Trinitie Sunday" (H.68) and "The Priesthood" (H.160); and his transience in "Sighs and Grones" (H.83). Its most intense and disturbing application is to be found in "Deniall" (H.79), a poem which I analyse in Chapter II.

A consideration of dust-imagery leads sideways into yet another range of images which may collectively be termed "elemental". Nature is the ultimate source of these images, which Herbert often invokes for the analogies they supply to his spiritual condition. Hence dew suggests spiritual vivification - in "Grace" (H.60) -

while frost and snow tend to signify dejection of the soul and a sense of alienation from God, as for instance in "The Size" (H.137), "Mans medley" (H.131) and, most eloquently, "The Flower" (H.165). There is evidence in this area of Herbert's eye for detail, and of his readiness to explore material beyond his self-defined compass of interests for whatever illustrations it might provide him. Nature poet he is not, and yet much of his poetry testifies to his eye for natural detail.

"Grief" (H.164) shows Herbert having recourse to springs and rivers to sharpen the effect of his hyperbolic gestures, whereas in "Businesse" (H.113) he uses rivers to illustrate purpose and direction in life. It is worth pausing here, before exploring other aspects of his nature imagery, to discuss a cognate set of images, the elemental states of hot and cold and of freezing and burning. The precedent for these images of elemental condition is almost certainly Petrarchan, for as L.G. Salingar has observed, "Sidney's Astrophel and Stella (written c.1580) was hailed as the mirror of passionate melancholy (Nashe, Preface, 1591), and its publication released a flood of Petrarchan sonnet sequences. It runs through the whole gamut of the self dramatising lover - with his ecstasies ... of 'living deaths, dear wounds, fair storms and freezing fires'."[14] It is probable that Herbert introduced these images into The Temple, and, having divested them of their exuberance, employed them to describe his relationship with God. Such a procedure would in fact accord with his principle of "baptising the muse", or, as he phrased it in

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14. L.G. Salingar, "The Elizabethan Literary Renaissance" in The Age of Shakespeare, ed. Boris Ford (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956), p.92.

"The Forerunners" (H.176), of washing with his tears the "lovely metaphors" that have hitherto known only "stews and brothels".

Cold, like stone, is obviously associated with a lack of receptivity and with sluggish indifference, as in "Sepulchre" (H.40) and "Church-lock and key" (H.66) for example. Heat is conversely, and with equal obviousness, related to the impassioned, febrile yearning found in "Home" (H.107) and "Longing" (H.148) or to the heat of sinful excitation in "Sinnes round" (H.122). In most of these cases - and I have culled only a few of many such examples - it is possible to find analogues in the conventions of Petrarchan imagery, although this is by no means their only source. Such imagery in turn has mediaeval sources, for in a work such as The Romaunt of the Rose, Cupid diagnoses the lover's malady in similar terms:

> Love, says Cupid ... engenders emotional extremes, which make the life of love 'ful contrarie' ... A lover finds he likes his own company best ..., is subject to hot and cold flushes ..., [and] occasionally inert .... [15]

Herbert's nature imagery is generally not as abstract as the imagery of condition that has just been reviewed, although his vehicles are frequently generalised rather than observed with minute particularity. His use of plant images for example, is so multifarious as to defy any easy categorization, but one might distinguish between his generalised vegetable imagery (metaphors, that is, of organic growth), and his accounts of actual plants. "Jordan (I)" (H.56) supplies an instance of the first and so does "The Jews" (H.152):

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15. R.K. Ruthven, The Conceit (London: Methuen, 1969), p.19.

> Poore nation, whose sweet sap and juice
> Our cyens have purloin'd, and left you drie:

In both of these, the nominal vehicle of the plant image has been off-staged and implied merely by the nouns in order to give sharper focus to the tenor. Sometimes Herbert's realisation of, say, his flower images is more immediately concrete, but even here, except where the rose and the orange tree are concerned, there is seldom a definite specification of the bloom, and they retain a symbolic or an emblematical generality. The strown flowers in "Easter" (H.41), for example, are a gesture of rejoicing, while in "Life" (H.94) they are made to function - in a time-honoured way - as symbols of evanescence. A darker cast is given to the image in "Repentance" (H.48) where it is solemnised into a memento mori. The same is true of "Vertue" (H.87). Flowers also aid the poet in contemplating the wonders of God's creation, while in "The Rose" (H.177), the bloom becomes an exemplum of forbearance:

> What is fairer then a rose?
> What is sweeter? yet it purgeth.
> Purgings enmitie disclose,
> Enmitie forebearance urgeth.

This sermonic application of plant imagery (albeit of a yearning, personal kind) is found also in "Employment (II)" (H.78), where the orange tree functions as a prototype of industry.

Herbert applies some of his animal imagery in a parallel way, so that in "Mans medley" (H.131), drinking birds furnish a simile for man's heavenly aspiration:

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

The poet has a considerable - though decidedly bookish - knowledge of "zoology", and he taps this for some of his more outlandish images. In "Giddinesse" (H.127) he refers to fish which change colour like chameleons and so supply a grotesque image of man's unpredictability; and in "Dooms-day" (H.186) to tarantulas, the musical cure of whose poison is likened to the vivifying sound of the last trumpet. A source for these images might well have been the bestiaries current in earlier times.

The bee occurs as an image of industry in "Praise (I)" (H.61) and in "The Starre" (H.74); the mole, associated with silent and devious processes, as an image of Death in "Grace" (H.60); while an allegorical menagerie appears in "Humilitie" (H.70). Most important, perhaps, is the imagery of birds, for these are correlated with two of Herbert's major themes: resurrection and the yearning for union with God. The lark occurs in "Easter-wings" (H.43) to suggest both lyric exultation and the poet's yearning after Christ:

O let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day thy victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

A cognate image of "wings" places the emphasis more squarely upon the theme of aspiration central to "Praise (I)" (H.61), while in "Home" (H.107) Herbert evokes the image also to suggest the soul's liberation from all that weighs it down.

The final complex of images I wish to examine under the heading of "nature" is the imagery of celestial bodies and of the cosmologies current in the seventeenth century. Among the many thematic functions that the sun fulfils in The Temple are three prominent ones: the traditional suggestion of moral radiance, with which it is aligned in "Constancie" (H.72); the conventional representation of God Himself in "The Sonne" (H.107) and finally the association of the church's growth, (the central topic of The Church Militant) with the diurnal motion of the sun. A related image of stars is also put to diverse thematic uses. On some occasions, they become the agents of purgation, and even of divine instruction. "The Starre" (H.74) is a delicate exploration of these ideas over the course of eight stanzas, of which the following with its emphasis on their sharp, purgatorial function, is typical:

> First with thy fire-work burn to dust
> Folly, and worse then folly, lust:
> Then with thy light refine,
> And make it shine:

Since stars frequently shoot from heaven, the realm of God, it is not surprising that Herbert should use them to mediate godly truths to the sinner, as he does in "Artillerie" (H.139).

Herbert makes less extensive use than Donne of the scientific knowledge of the time, but nevertheless refers to it more than once. I include under "scientific knowledge" those cosmological ideas that found in nature a perfect coordination of species, all of them attesting the control of a Creator. It is to this concept that Herbert devotes a major part of "Providence" (H.116) with its careful enumeration of items, and awed relation of each to the other:

> The beasts say, Eat me: but, if beasts must teach,
> The tongue is yours to eat, but mine to praise.
> The trees say, Pull me: but the hand you stretch,
> Is mine to write, as it is yours to raise.
>
> ....
>
> All things that are, though they have sev'rall wayes,
> Yet in their being joyn with one advise
> To honour thee: and so I give thee praise
> In all my other hymnes, but in this twice.

The "Employment" poems likewise celebrate the interrelatedness of creation, which is imaged by a chain in "Employment (I)" (H.57):

> I am no link of thy great chain,
> But all my companie is a weed.

In contrast to such all-embracing cosmological images, are those most characteristic of Herbert, which he draws from what John Keble called "the trivial round, the common task". Here his relish of the 'everyday' is displayed. It is perhaps his preacher's eye that registers objects with which his parishioners would certainly have been familiar, and which would therefore have had a greater immediacy for them. Again the range is too unmanageably large to treat with anything like comprehensiveness, for it includes imagery of pipes in "Whitsunday" (H.59), a plaster in "H.Baptisme (II)" (H.44), clocks in "Even-song" (H.63), knives in "Affliction (I)" (H.46) a rug in "Miserie" (H.100), and a handkerchief in "The Dawning" (H.112). It is to such images as these that Herbert's lyrics owe something of their distinctive flavour, for it accords with his characteristically humble tone and his concern with the immanence of God in all aspects of life. He invests the smallest object or pursuit with significance, merely by yoking it to a transcendent theme, and so becomes the

very celebrant of the "trivial round", transubstantiating minor vehicles by means of a divine tenor. "The Elixir" (H.184) illustrates this transfiguration of the ordinary;

> A servant with this clause
> Makes drudgerie divine:
> Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
> Makes that and th' action fine.

There is great diversity in the images I have assembled under this heading, but one cluster - which I shall term the imagery of enclosure - seems important above all others. Herbert's delight in the compact, apprehensible qualities of these images derives perhaps from his neat-mindedness, a neat-mindedness manifest in the perfect security of his technique and in the relish with which he observes firm interlockings, whether of nature - in "Providence" (H.116) - or language - in "The Sonne" (H.167). Boxes often feature prominently in his poetry as images of perfect repletion, which is how they function in "Ungratefulnesse" (H.82) and "Vertue" (H.87):

> Sweet spring, full of sweet dayes and roses,
> A box where sweets compacted lie;

In "Confession" (H.126) the poet metaphorically constructs a whole series of inter-fitting boxes (neatly evoked by the alternating rhymes of the stanza, with its key-like locking couplet - ababcc) in order to keep grief at bay. He later realises however, that openness to God alone can do this, so perhaps acknowledging in his preference for boxes the temperamental shortcoming, the tendency towards the reserve, that had spoiled his behaviour at Cambridge. Be that as it may, there is no denying the significance that the image has for him, especially for the sense of

revelation it makes possible. This is what he foregrounds in "Ungratefulnesse" (H.82) where the "Trinitie" and "Incarnation" are enclosed in cabinets only to be opened to the believer. The generosity of God's display is thus contrasted with man's secretive concealments later in the poem:

> But man is close, reserv'd, and dark to thee:
> When thou demandest but a heart,
> He cavils instantly.
> In his poore cabinet of bone
> Sinnes have their box apart,
> Defrauding thee, who gavest two for one.

A cognate image of locking also reveals an ambivalent attitude on the part of the poet - a compound of pleasure at being thus reassured and slight unease at being separated from the world. In "Church-lock and key" (H.66) it is the poet's sin which locks God's ears and so disables Him from responding. Nevertheless boxes do promise security albeit by exclusion, so that in "Even-song" (H.63) one finds the following restful image:

> Thus in thy ebony box
> Thou dost inclose us, ...

This emphasis on closure leads by way of a pun on "close", or "cadence", to another of Herbert's favourite images, that of music. I group it with the imagery of the everyday simply because Herbert, unlike Milton and Dryden, does not celebrate its cosmic significance but stresses rather its intimacy, especially in the making. A practising musician, Herbert seems to have loved the art almost as much as poetry, and it even affects the formal structure of his verse on occasion. In "Antiphon (I)" (H.53), "Antiphon (II)" (H.92) and "A Dialogue-Antheme" (H.169) we are presented with musical rather than specifically literary genres.

(It would be tempting to see some relationship between this preoccupation and the "musicality" of Herbert's verse, were it not for the fact that some of the greatest lyric poets - Yeats and Shelley, for example - have had next to no ear for music.) Herbert often employs music as a periphrasis for the poet's art and the celebratory ends to which it can be directed, as in "The Thanksgiving" (H.35):

> My musick shall finde thee, and ev'ry string
> Shall have his attribute to sing;
> That all together may accord in thee,
> And prove one God, one harmonie.

Another function that the image fulfils is that of harmonizing experience, or more specifically of transposing suffering into joy. In "Easter" (H.41) we find a daring but nevertheless successful instance of this, where the physical extension of Christ's sinews upon the cross is likened to that of strings upon a lute. Here the conventional exordium to the poet's musical instrument (as in Wyatt's "The Lover Complaineth the Unkindness of his Love"), is energised by the ensuing conceit. The "well-set" song of "Repentance" (H.48) illustrates the same thematic harmony of suffering and joy. In "Deniall" (H.79) conversely, the adjectives "untun'd" and "unstrung" suggest total disorder and lassitude of soul and so implicitly present the poet as God's instrument and his poetry as God's music. The whole poem is fraught with such allusions, which thus help to unify it. In "Vertue" (H.87), the image of cadence, with its effect of planned closure, gives a bitter-sweet finality to one stanza, and shows (with "Deniall") that music can be as fully aligned with sorrow as with joy:

> My musick shows ye have your closes,
> And all must die.

A special instance of this imagery may be observed in Herbert's concern with bells, the great musical summons of which sounds all through "Aaron" (H.174). Canon Hutchinson quotes Herbert Grierson as saying "Each verse of Herbert's poem suggests metrically the swelling and dying sound of a bell; and, like a bell, the rhymes reiterate the same sound".[16] This is yet another example of a musical image achieved through aural suggestion. (It is not, however, a purely acoustic image such as Poe presents in his poem "The Bells". The sense of movement contained in the pendular motion of the lines is as much responsible for the suggestion of a peal as the echoic linkage of "holiness" and "profanenesse" at the start of each stanza, and the inexorable iteration of the rhyming words.)

Tears and groans have an almost musical significance in Herbert, because they appear so frequently in conjunction with the above-mentioned imagery. One of his frequent concerns is with the "noise" of contrition as viable substitute for music itself, much as a sturdy theological phrase is sometimes considered superior to a finished poem in "Jordan (I)" (H.56) and "A true Hymne" (H.168). In "Affliction (I)" (H.46) the images of music and groan fuse directly:

> Consuming agues dwell in ev'ry vein,
> And tune my breath to grones.

This conflation of images is treated again more broadly in "Sion" (H.106) where they are paradoxically paralleled with bird-song.

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16. Hutchinson, p.538.

Images of tears, which I touch on here in relation to the imagery of complaint, have the same passionate value as signs and groans in the other poems. Herbert aligns tears with vivifying dew, and dryness with death in "Ephes.4.30. Grieve not the Holy Spirit &c" (H.135) while in "The Familie" (H.136) he ascribes to tears the same sort of articulate entreaty that he does to groans in other lyrics. In "Marie Magdalene" (H.173) tears become a hyperbolic measurement of grief, much as they do in Crashaw's poem "The Weeper", and in Marvell's "Eyes and Tears".

Lest I present too simplified an impression of Herbert's imagery as something scaled down to suit the chamber-music of his utterance, I had better close this survey with those images drawn from public spheres of life - law and commerce. It is certainly true that these images are not as frequent (and hence as typical) as those of a more concrete, more intimate cast, but they nevertheless do occur and once again give testimony to Herbert's range of allusion. What I have termed "legal imagery" doubtless derives from Christ's parables, and includes the references to tenancy that one finds in "Redemption" (H.40), to stewardship in "Sighs and Grones" (H.83) and to the procedure of antedating in "H.Baptisme (II)" (H.44). Together with a similarly dispassionate terminology derived from commerce - the purchase and sale in "Obedience" (H.104), the transference of accounts in "Dialogue" (H.114) - these images help to distance, and so to focus, the relationship that exists between God and man, and the colloquies that confirm this. Sometimes, with their worldly, commercial precision, they prove (thematically) inadequate for the vast concepts they are meant to clarify, such as that of the

atonement in "Dialogue" (H.114), where God rebukes the poet for his paltry, quantitative assessment of the incalculable:

> What the gains in having thee
> Do amount to, onely he,
> Who for man was sold, can see;
> That transferr'd th' accounts to me.

It is obvious from this partial catalogue of images and associated themes that many of Rosemond Tuve's contentions about Renaissance and Metaphysical imagery (in the book of that title) hold true of Herbert's. The images are seldom sensuous, and even when they are, their "tangible" properties derive more from their associations than from any sensory explorations on the part of the poet. The aptness of Herbert's imagery, furthermore, is unquestionable, even when the connection between tenor and vehicle is quaintly made, and a didactic, or, as I would prefer to call it, a clarifying impulse, seems almost always to be central to its use.

* * *

So far I have discussed imagery in a broad, synoptic way, and it remains for me to examine more closely its functions within the context of specific poems. These are manifold, but I wish to isolate several for their especial importance. As "objective correlatives", images give substance and hence validity to the poet's emotions; as illustrations, they reinforce the didactic intent; as a structural centre of reference, they can help to unify a poem; and in typological form, they can gather up and focus a whole tradition of religious experience.

One of Herbert's most characteristic procedures is that of encompassing disparate images in an effort both to find fitting illustrations for his points, and also to widen the applicability of the poems. Thus in "Miserie" (H.100) we are presented with the "genre" detail of a sleepy man, indolently pulling up the blanket, and then swung out to the cosmic imagery of stars through a transition both bold and exhilarating:

> Thou pull'st the rug, and wilt not rise,
> No, not to purchase the whole pack of starres:

At the same time the stars are assembled by a domestic collective noun - "pack" - which validates the metaphor of purchase and shows how man, with God's help, can achieve the impossible, and how the infinite can be rendered accessible. Many such juxtapositions occur in Herbert, and relate to his concern with translating the everyday into the sublime. A further example is to be found in "The Forerunners" (H.176), where the white hairs on the speaker's head are not given a literal identity, but treated immediately as messengers of age:

> The harbingers are come. See, see their mark;
> White is their colour, and behold my head.
> But must they have my brain? must they dispark
> Those sparkling notions, which therein were bred?
> Must dulnesse turn me to a clod?
> Yet have they left me, *Thou art still my God*.

They "dispark", scatter and neutralise his glittering thoughts and, acting as the agents of senility, become invested with malicious, independent life. The very extinction implied by "dispark" creates an interior darkness offset by the sinister whiteness without. This darkness is extended in the sequent image of the clod, which evokes the black inanimacy of the earth,

and, with that, the imminent death of the poet. This remarkable arc of images (from supernatural messengers through extinction to soil) is contained in a mere five lines. The transitions are never jumpy (controlled as they are by Herbert's subdued intensity), but rather bracing in their swiftness.

Sometimes, on the other hand, Herbert resorts to an encasing image to give order to his diverse illustrations. "Grace" (H.60) is a poem ordered in this way, as well as through the constraints of the stanza and of the theme.

A lyric might at first seem indecorous or confused if, like "Grace", it asks its reader to move from the image of stock to that of the sun, a dungeon, the dew, a mole and a blacksmith, among others. Indeed, this multifarious list has led Helen Vendler to suggest that consistency in imagery "is not so important to Herbert as is musicality".[17] In such a poem as this, however, apparent inconsistency - and it is only apparent - <u>is</u> important to Herbert, and central to his thematic tenor. His intention is to contrast the all-embracing nature of God's grace with his own fragmented experience. So hopelessly does the poet match his broken condition against the healing properties of grace that he achieves his resolution only by projecting himself into a heaven where all gives way to union with God. It is within this broad design and within the image of a plant that the other images find their context. Herbert prevents their jostling by making each image or group of images a contemplative centre, by apportioning these

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17. Helen Vendler, <u>The Poetry of George Herbert</u> (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975), p.215.

to separate stanzas, and by enfolding all of them in the generalised plant metaphor. Thus diversity is to some extent unified through the recurrence of stanzaic pattern and refrain while, on the other hand, the refrain itself shifts its meaning slightly in response to the regnant image and syntactic pattern of each verse.

The poem opens with an account of the poet's spiritual barrenness defined through an image of horticulture. Here the metaphor is presented in the manner of a parable, which is to say that its tenor is submerged, and has to be inferred from the transition into the plea for grace. (This involves the reader more intimately in the experience, since he is made responsible for its full realisation.) Herbert moves from concrete image to abstract theology in line 3 before reverting to the physical vehicle implied by the verb "drop":

> My stock lies dead, and no increase
> Doth my dull husbandrie improve:
> O let thy graces without cease
> Drop from above!

A transition like this is crucial for the poem, for it supplies, by indirection, the tenor of spiritual sterility implicit in the first three lines. The converse of grace is sin, and a plea for grace must presuppose a condition of sin in the poet. Moreover, sin and spiritual aridity produce the symptoms that find embodiment in the dead stock and in the futile efforts at grafting life upon it. Thus line 3 provides a thematic key to the imagery and gives the reader direction in construing it. At the same time the imagery strengthens the half-specific metaphor of "drop", giving abstract grace the vivifying properties

of water - water, one imagines, in the form of rain. (Such conjecture is of course supported by the governing image of the stanza.)

The syntactic structure of the next verse differs in its presentation of possibility rather than fact. One could construe "Thy" as referring to God, in which case the "house" becomes the church, a symbol of faith, and "works" either the moral conduct which Christians dedicate to God, or His own redemptive actions. Alternatively, they could be self-addressed, and refer to the poet's own habitation and his own achievements. In either case the absence of Christ, who is signified by the traditional image of the sun, gives converse meaning to the ideas of home and life: the former, which must needs allow its owner free passage to qualify as home, becomes a place of stifling constraint; the latter is incapacitated by the physical and spiritual darkness imaged in "night". In the alternative construction of "Thy" the church becomes a place of bondage rather than of release, Christ's Redemption subject to the control of evil. This conjectural notion trembles on the verge of being realised, for the adverb "still" suggests continuance out of the past. Grace is thus invoked to cancel out an imminent enslavement of the world, for if the freedom of the home is violated, or indeed if the church is denied its liberating function, what other sources of liberty exist within Herbert's universe? Thus when grace "drops" at the end of the stanza, it comes to illuminate and release. It seems significant that whereas in stanza one the phrase "without cease" gave fitting continuity to the descent of the rain, the action has here been expressed as something final:

> If still the sunne should hide his face,
> Thy house would but a dungeon prove,
> Thy works nights captives: O let grace
> Drop from above!

"Thy graces" has likewise been displaced by the singular and absolute "grace" - all of which points toward a descent of the sun or the Son, so that "drop" now seems to characterise the cycle of that heavenly body. The prevailing images of sunlight (and its opposites, imprisonment and night) have modified one's conception of the metaphor half-submerged in the refrain. Perhaps one could view the poem as dramatising the "adaptability" of grace. If the latter is a panacea for all spiritual ills, it is likely to accommodate their variable forms - God can reconstitute any disruptions and bring them into harmony with himself. The slight modifications in the meaning of "drop" suggest that this does not involve making experiences uniform so much as rendering them ideal in their own terms. While the images of stock, sun, dungeon and night have no physical inter-relatedness beyond that supplied by a governing plant image, they are all being enlisted to present a single idea, and derive their unity largely from this. Herbert's stanza helps to demarcate them and to control their relationships, while his theme gives them continuity.

The poet resorts to an organic image in the third stanza, paralleling the metaphor of rain in the first:

> The dew doth ev'ry morning fall;
> And shall the dew out-strip thy Dove?
> The dew, for which grasse cannot call,
> Drop from above.

Here the dew is presented as a phenomenon of almost ritual predictability. It nourishes and vivifies, and does this continually; its fall is regular in its reassuring daily rhythm, and it is unsummoned. If voiceless grass is regarded with such compassion, (Herbert's implication runs), should not man be treated with greater? The syntactic interpolation of a question - "And shall the dew outstrip thy Dove?" - helps to voice this assumption without forcing the tone or allowing the poet to seem too exigent. Dew is associated typologically (through Gideon's fleece) with the Incarnation, as for example in the mediaeval lyric, "I sing of a maiden". The "Dove" is likewise connected with the birth of Christ, for, in the words of the Nicene Creed, he was "incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary". Thus while the dew <u>images</u> the salvific birth of Christ, the Dove (which for a seventeenth-century Christian doubtless has a literal significance), <u>achieves</u> it. There is hence a contest between the image of a reality and the reality itself. Herbert makes no explicit reference to grace since it is here exemplified in the descent of the Dove. The inconclusive syntax of line 11 evokes a sense of half-defined musing across which the "imperative" moves like a conviction. Once again the metaphor half-realised in "drop" takes colour from the prevailing image, and suggests the swift arc which a dove describes before settling.

The focus now shifts from the Dove which is celestial and airborne, to an animal of the earth, the mole. Its blindness renders it quite explicitly an agent of the night, the night which the sun was to illumine in stanza two. But the mole is placed within a comparative framework and thus only <u>approximates</u> the more

frightening abstract of "Death". The motion of this animal counterpoints that of grace, moving through the earth where grace descends from heaven. Also, in terms of the encasing image of the plant, the mole poses a threat to the poet's very existence, as it searches for the sustaining root. God's spirit has a triumphantly direct form in contrast with Death, which has to be imaged through a simile. The sense of continuous industry connoted by "still working" is neutralised by the meaning of "work" ("take effect") in the penultimate line:

> Death is still working like a mole,
> And digs my grave at each remove:
> Let grace work too, and on my soul
> Drop from above.

"Work" here denotes mysterious passivity, the afore-mentioned sense of "taking effect", offset by the futile "busyness" of Death. The present continuous is significantly replaced by the simple present - "still working" gives way to "work" and "drop". While Death digs a grave, a grave which clearly relates back to the dungeon, grace drops on the soul, the preposition of which phrase confirms its location above the ground. It is therefore as yet, and through the grace of God likely to continue, immune to mortality. For the first time Herbert explicitly confirms the <u>spiritual</u> thirst for grace presented through the poem. He introduces the soul in such a way that "drop", hitherto bodied as a concrete action by the imagery of each stanza, is now etherealised, made abstract by the abstract noun to which it is related.

The first line of stanza five provides a syntactic parallel to its equivalent in the preceding verse. "Sinne" has supplanted

"Death" as the allegorical abstract and the verb is still in the present continuous tense:

> Sinne is still hammering my heart
> Unto a hardnesse, void of love:
> Let suppling grace, to crosse his art,
> Drop from above.

Earlier in the poem, grace has been asked to drop upon the soul, making clear the spiritual import of the concrete imagery. A similar juxtaposition of concrete verb and abstract object occurs in line 17. (Its emotional connotations tend to make "heart" abstract rather than physical.) "Sinne" thus hammers the feelings of the poet, molten, perhaps, with the heats of anger and wrong desire, and through hammering gives rigid shape to what should otherwise be malleable and fluid. Thus, with extraordinary delicacy, the image refers back to the constraint of the dungeon depicted in stanza two. Love, which is by nature flexible and responsive, is here hammered out of the heart, and so unhoused. (Before, one might observe, the house had functioned as an image of entrapment.) The vigour and insistence of "Sinne"'s pursuit is conveyed by the enjambement of the first two lines, just as earlier in the poem, the poet's heart-felt pleas in stanzas one, two and four have given rise to an impassioned enjambement between the penultimate and final lines. As his despair mounts to a climax, Herbert characterises grace in adjectival terms for the first time, and explicitly states its power of cancelling evil: Grace is "suppling" and will thus enable the heart to resume its former vital character. The development from the individual phrase, "my heart" to the generality of "a hardnesse" will be reversed by a defeat of evil's craft. Iron hardens when it cools

and can liquefy only with heat. Thus if grace is to supple the heart, it must descend in the form of fire, a variation on the descent of the sun prayed for in stanza two. In terms of ecclesiastical iconography, fire is surely also a vehicle for the Holy Ghost, whose approach has hitherto been invoked through the related symbol of the dove. From this it will be clear that some of the images do interconnect very delicately, as it were by figurative tendrils.

The "coda" of the poem shows a curious dearth of concrete imagery, perhaps because the ideal of paradise defies visual expression - in this context at least:

> O come! for thou dost know the way:
> Or if to me thou wilt not move,
> Remove me, where I need not say,
> Drop from above

The poet brings his imperative forward to the start of the stanza, and so creates a greater pulse of urgency than heretofore. Adumbrating rather than realising a metaphor of travel, he asks to be moved up to God if He will not descend. He no longer has need of his refrain once he is with his Creator, and so the latter is allowed to fall away - visually, in a different type-setting. Without any supportive image, "drop" takes on its literal, neutral meaning of "fall", and so the poem ends with a reconciliation of God and man in which language itself becomes colourless and redundant.

If in "Grace" images are ordered harmoniously, amongst other ways, by their alignment with each strophe, in "Marie Magdalene"

(H.173) the stanza form is more capacious, and accommodates a larger assembly of images within it. Such accumulations do not, however, spell the incoherence that Mrs. Vendler condemns in her analysis of the poem.[18] The entire development of "Marie Magdalene" is contained by elemental imagery of earth and water, imagery which provides accommodation for the "local" or "passing" metaphors in turn. A poet's consistency has never involved a literal-minded sustention of his images. Shakespeare himself entertains a myriad cognate images within his broader frames, and so achieves complexity within unity. A great part of the unity of "Marie Magdalene" inheres in a submerged structure of metaphors which must be articulated before its full coherence can become apparent. Pregnant, concrete verbs like "trampled", "pil'd" and "dashed" bring in with them a number of associations such as mud and earth, even if these are not explicitly mentioned in the poem. I shall attempt in this analysis to show that once these "subterranean" images are brought to the surface, the order of the poem becomes apparent.

It begins in narration, presenting the old association of Mary Magdalene with the "unnamed 'woman in the citie which was a sinner' who anointed Jesus' feet (Luke vii. 37-38)":[19]

> When blessed Marie wip'd her Saviours feet,
> (Whose precepts she had trampled on before)
> And wore them for a jewell on her head,
> Shewing his steps should be the street,
> Wherein she thenceforth evermore
> With pensive humblenesse would live and tread:

The gesture automatically sanctifies Mary, who is "blessed" <u>because</u> of her response, and so gives an achieved status to her sainthood. (Allusions made to past sins are kept literally in

18. Vendler, pp.162ff.

19. Hutchinson, pp.537-38.

brackets and figuratively in the framework of the past.) Christ's feet, by implication spattered with dirt, are cleansed of earth, through which event a purgation of earthly defilement is obviously implied. Mary, however, had trampled upon the precepts of her Saviour - the possessive clearly relates back to the figure and not to his attributes. She had thus metaphorically disfigured the injunctions of Jesus, and had reduced them to a state of worldly pollution. "Trampled" evokes an action of vengeful waywardness, and so signifies a sense of conscious destruction on her part. The implied petulance of the verb thus offsets the serene ritual action upon which the poem opens and is at the same time bracketed from it by the parenthesis. Mary's foot-washing is a supreme act of self-abasement, of cancelling her earlier sins (amongst which vanity has doubtless been prominent). She subjects her hair (and by implication her beauty), to the "trampling" of Christ as she wipes his feet. The conceit of wearing the feet as a jewel thus transmutes a gesture of proud self-beautification into one of humble submission. She is spiritually enhanced as she momentarily "wears" her Saviour's feet by placing her head against them.

Herbert now opens up the metaphor even further, and makes the "jewell" an image of attainment, the direction towards which he renders concrete as steps. If steps signify direction, they also relate back to the literal feet of Christ evoked in the first line. This does not mean only that the _feet_ of Christ are worn as a jewel (as Mrs. Vendler would have us believe), but rather that Christ's physical actions have moral significance as well. His steps contain a pattern of meaning for the believer, and thus

have an exemplary function. In line 6, the adjective "pensive" keeps us alert to the noetic, the mental register of the image, realised already through the physical proximity of "jewel" and "head". The savage verb "trample" gives way to the proportionately mild verb of "tread", which enacts the delicacy and restraint of Mary's actions after her conversion. Throughout this stanza, the focus has fallen upon images of earth and solids, implied if not stated in almost every line. In the next, an important governing image - that of water - is introduced so that the pattern of implicit and explicit imagery moves from soil and walking in stanza one, to water and weeping in stanza two, and culminates in their alignment in the activity of washing (stanzas two and three):

> She being stain'd her self, why did she strive
> To make him clean, who could not be defil'd?
> Why kept she not her tears for her own faults,
> And not his feet? Though we could dive
> In tears like seas, our sinnes are pil'd
> Deeper then they, in words, and works and thoughts.

The first two lines present an important manipulation of the image of dirt, clearly rendered metaphorical by the adjective "stain'd", and by the stress on Christ's spiritual immunity to foulness. As the stanza moves on restlessly, it becomes apparent that the poet, through the persona of a bewildered, questioning onlooker, is dramatising his own amazement at Mary's strange action, and so also at the Christian mystery of the atonement. The tears are there to convey the penitence of the weeper (as so often in Herbert), and, at the same time, they are presented as cleansing agents, their physical effect upon dirt being thus linked to their figurative effect upon sin. This occasions an

apparently sceptical observation about the efficacy of grief in such a context. According to the speaker, sin outweighs even the most hyperbolical conception of grief. Thus the fact of sin (tangibly rendered as an immeasurable mound)is counterbalanced by the fact of penitence, imaged as any number of seas. The symbolic tension that results from the alignment is so strong as to make Mrs. Vendler's observation seem slightly sophistical in the face of it. She writes that Herbert "continues the confusion, comparing tears to 'seas', which are then said to be 'piled' less deep than our sins - a verb hardly conceivable, even metaphorically, of seas".[20] The seas are there to measure the depth of the earthly pile; they themselves are not so arranged, as a close scrutiny of the syntax confirms. Our sins are piled "deeper" than they are "deep" (not "piled"). Hence the inability of sorrowful penitence finally to countervail evil is fixed in an image of scientific exactitude. There can be no solution of a solid that exceeds its liquid solvent. What fuller and more documentary treatment of the image can be conceived, especially since - in psychological terms - it is so germane to the sceptical tone of the stanza? The resolution to this impasse so eloquently endorsed by the imagery is supplied by the metaphor of the last stanza:

> Deare soul, she knew who did vouchsafe and deigne
> To bear her filth; and that her sinnes did dash
> Ev'n God himself: wherefore she was not loth,
> As she had brought wherewith to stain,
> So to bring in wherewith to wash:
> And yet in washing one, she washed both.

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20. Vendler, p.162.

Here a theological justification of Mary's deed is supplied in the quiet refutation of the doubts expressed in the second stanza. Mrs. Vendler's dislike of the word "filth" derives from her assumption that it has a sexual colour. This she bases on the occurrence of "filth" in an earlier poem about profane love.[21] Surely, however, Herbert is here reinstating the image of earth in its dual significance of literal and metaphoric pollution - filth which has a much wider application than that of sexual sin. Mary has been dirtied by her tramplings earlier in the poem, and in trampling has "dashed" and dirtied Christ himself - parabolic proof that sin must be borne by God incarnate. "Dashing" gives a liquid quality to the filth and so fuses the elemental registers of earth and water. This ingenious literality typifies some of Herbert's most telling poems. Thus Mary, in washing the implied mud off Christ's feet, is washing it simultaneously off herself in terms of the common humanity she shares with Christ. She is both defiler and purifier, as the syntactic parallelism of the following lines makes clear:

> As she had brought wherewith to stain,
> So to bring in wherewith to wash:

"Stain" partially supports "dash" with its implication of liquidity, and reminds us of the half-explicit metaphor of solution contained in stanza two. The tears are therefore seen paradoxically to remove the dirt of sinfulness in spite of the denials contained in the middle stanza. With the collaboration of Christ the cleansing becomes absolute, as is clarified by the relentless focus upon the image of ablution, syntactically rendered in

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21. Vendler, p.162.

infinitive ("to wash"), gerundival ("washing") and finite forms ("washed").

While the imagery of "Marie Magdalene" helps to unify the poem and coordinate its complex paradoxes with support from tangible referents, that of "The Bunch of Grapes" (H.128) presents the even larger structural bracketing of typology - a topic on which I have hitherto only touched. In this, the Old and New Testaments are correlated and matched through a process of elaborate reconciliation. Images (especially those established by emblematic convention) often help to condense these complex interrelations in a peculiarly vivid and universal way, as I hope to show in an analysis of "The Bunch of Grapes":

> Joy, I did lock thee up: but some bad man
> Hath let thee out again:
> And now, me thinks, I am where I began
> Sev'n yeares ago: one vogue and vein,
> One aire of thoughts usurps my brain.
> I did towards Canaan draw; but now I am
> Brought back to the Red sea, the sea of shame.

Here the opening sentiment is almost Blakean, and seems to anticipate:

> He who bends to himself a Joy
> Doth the winged life destroy;
> But he who kisses the Joy as it flies
> Lives in Eternity's sunrise.

The enclosure of Joy is an arrogant and limiting one, especially since in "Love-joy" (H.116) Herbert presents the emotion as a definitive quality of Christ. Hence, although the image of encasement is often associated with security in Herbert, here it characterises a false sense of certainty. The "bad man" (left

unspecified) is surely none other than the poet himself, unaware that his own action in attempting to fix the unfixable has aided its escape. There is pathos in this bewilderment and implicit lack of self-knowledge - pathos that is offset by the movement towards conviction and enlightenment with which the poem ends. (To construe the "bad man" as a supernatural agency like the devil is clearly unfeasible if the ordinariness of the formulation is borne in mind.) The escape of Joy results in a feeling of futility, of the dreary circular process of sin and relapse into sin that Herbert describes in "Sinnes round" (H.122). There is no certainty in the reversion, for the clause "me thinks" gives it a suppositious quality and so provides a necessary preparation for the triumphant resolution of the fourth stanza. The poet is now simply alone with his obsessive sense of loss. Inexorable alliteration ("vogue and vein"), together with the repetition of "one" and the comprehensive run of metaphors ("vogue", "vein" and "air"), all unite to register the sense of claustrophobic self-enclosure. The speaker's brain has been "usurped" - wrongfully preoccupied - and right reason has by implication been dethroned. Such incapacity and obsessiveness contrast ironically with the careful typological balances which are about to be realised. At this point he is conscious only of having been thwarted, and so realises his humiliation through images contrasting the joyful, anticipatory approach to Canaan with the frustrated return to the Red Sea. The syntax poignantly underscores this contrast. An almost automatic attraction between the poet and his ideal of spiritual fulfilment is conveyed by the verb "draw", while, in radical opposition, we are given a sense of enforcement in the expression "Brought back", an expression eloquent of the poet's

own unwillingness. Canaan and the Red Sea provide contrary metaphors of liberation and cruel enslavement. The stanza ends with a gloomy present tense acknowledgement of failure, as the shift from "did" to "am" makes clear. In this way the reader is drawn into the very anguish of realisation and self-knowledge. Herbert's struggle and submission are confirmed by the metrical virtuosity of the last line, where concentrated spondees and pyrrhics (converging to form the slanting pattern of the Ionic a minore in the second and third feet) give way to a regular iambic pulse:

Brought back | to the | Red sea, | the sea | of shame.

For as the Jews of old by Gods command
Travell'd, and saw no town;
So now each Christian hath his journeys spann'd:
Their storie pennes and sets us down.
A single deed is small renown.
Gods works are wide, and let in future times;
His ancient justice overflows our crimes.

In this, the second stanza, the poet turns hopefully to conventional types in the Old Testament and to their Christian fulfilment, finding a prefigurement of his own life in the journey of the Jews. They travel to fulfil a divine purpose - "God's command" - which is implicitly present in his own circumstances. The Christian's isolation and rejection by the world is realised in this allegory of types through the detail of "and saw no town". He measures ("spans") his situation in terms of this. "Span" also imports a sense of encompassment and surety. The believer is able to take direction in terms of the Old Testament narrative, and control his life accordingly. Such rich ambiguity is furthered in the succeeding line, where "pennes" implies both

transcription and enclosure, just as the phrase "sets us down" simultaneously evokes the act of recording and of "placing". This placing humbles the poet through its contrastive scale, as the next line ruefully acknowledges - persistent effort rather than "a single deed" is needed to achieve a fully Christian life. This is followed by another measure of human paltriness - God's entire creation, and the purpose latent in it. As C.A. Patrides has noted,[22] lines 13 and 14 "articulate the rationale of typology (let in should be read more or less in the sense of 'affecting')". Such a formulation as "let in" could be construed even more literally, though, as a metaphor of admission. "The works" span time in all their breadth, and so embrace the dual temporal reference upon which typology depends. "Future" could be taken either as an "absolute" future, which is as yet unknown to the poet, or as a future relative to the event of the Exodus. Both meanings have relevance to the final line, where God's ancient (and therefore immutable) justice helps cancel both the crimes of all mankind - where "our" is construed in its fullest, most universal sense - or those sins committed in the immediate present, where "our" is taken to have a contemporary and more personal reference.

Moving from such conviction, Herbert begins the next stanza with some Hebraic types of solace for his present woes:

> Then have we too our guardian fires and clouds;
> Our Scripture-dew drops fast:
> We have our sands and serpents, tents and shrowds;
> Alas! our murmurings come not last.
> But where's the cluster? where's the taste
> Of mine inheritance? Lord, if I must borrow,
> Let me as well take up their joy, as sorrow.

Only once does the poet gloss the realisation of the type - in

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22. C.A. Patrides, ed., The English Poems of George Herbert (London: Dent, 1974), p.139.

"Scripture-dew". The manna that sustained the Israelites is worked into a metaphor of the spiritual nourishment with which the Bible provides the Christian - an idea which is also treated in the opening quatrain of "The H. Scriptures I" (H.58). Otherwise the "guardian fires and clouds", "sands and serpents", "tents and shrowds" are left with only an implicit application, registered in the verb "we have". Despite this elusiveness, the reader can have little doubt as to the meaning of the images - "fires and cloud" signify divine assurance as clearly as "sands and serpents" suggest physical adversity. The analogues for such items in the Christian's life are almost too obvious to draw, and it is in this very obviousness that the dramatic crux of the stanza lies. This is crystallised in the rueful acknowledgement of line 18:

> Alas! our murmurings come not last.

The discontent of Israel is a just prefigurement of the Christian's querulousness, a querulousness which derives from the incapacity of human beings to perceive God's transcendent plan, and from a resulting sense of futility. After having conceded a typological fulfilment of the Jews' baffled incomprehension, Herbert proceeds to vent these very "murmurings" in the final lines of the stanza. He finds little satisfaction in the intellectual dexterity of linking past and present events, but wishes rather for a tangible, a physical authentication of the types. The syntactical massing of questions helps to achieve a tone of vexation and harassment, and to embody a tacit demand for proof of God's intentions. Here Herbert invokes the bunch of grapes picked at Eshcol (Numbers 13.23),

where a brook in the wilderness gives support to life.[23] The speaker is hard put to find any matching realisation of this type in his life, as the wistful yearning for the concrete "cluster" and "taste" makes clear. That he is aware of the continuity of God's traditions is borne out by his consciousness of an "inheritance". The reciprocity of the typological method is likewise confirmed by the use of "borrow" and of "take up" in lines 20 and 21. "Take up" is played off ironically against "set down" in the foregoing stanza, and conveys once again the reciprocal motions of reference so central to the realisation of types.

After ending with such ungraciousness and obtusity in stanza three, the poet opens his fourth and final verse on a note of triumphant acclamation:

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

The opening question here helps to fix a tone very different from that of the preceding strophe, for here its effect is one of near-incredulity and self-rebuke. Herbert has seen through the literal vehicle ("grape") to the tenor, wine, which in turn is the vehicle for the "metaphysical" tenor of God's redemptive blood. As he suddenly realises, he has access both to the type and its fulfilment (suggested by the plenitude of "more"). From this realisation there follows a logical movement to a prayer of

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23. This gloss is supplied in Patrides, p.139.

celebration encompassing an antithetical play of types. The physical fecundity of Eshcol has anticipated the spiritual fecundity of Christ's sacrifice, in terms of which the poet's churlish demand for validation falls away. In transcending the physical to reach levels of spiritual exaltation, he feels an even greater reverence for God's purpose as it is fulfilled in the New Testament. The amendment of "Blessed be God" to "much more him I must adore" makes this clear. A culminating couplet focusses the balance with delicate precision: here the typological process is conceived as one of transmutation rather than displacement. The stringent, literal apparatus of the Law is imaged as vinegar, the enrichment of Christ's revelation as "sweet wine". In the final line, Christ's suffering is shown to be the centre of the transformation, as in "The Agonie" (H.37). Once again Herbert is invoking an emblematic commonplace, that of the botrus mysticus, but he does so with great originality. Christ's perfect reconciliation of the divine and human nature makes possible the metaphoric translation of the physical into the spiritual, so eloquently revealed in the co-placement in line 28, of "God" (a more abstract appellation than "Christ") with the tangible verb "to press". In answer to the somewhat querulous demands of stanza three, the poem ends in quiet, gratified recognition - "for my sake". No small part of its complex development has been the rich manipulation of typological patterns, a form of imagery to which Herbert has recourse again and again.

The tendency of typological images is toward doubleness and great temporal range. Yet on other occasions Herbert coordinates

a similarly broad range of emotional and spiritual states through a single image, as in "The Temper (I)" (H.55), and more especially in "The Flower" (H.165), to which I now turn.

The poem opens on a note of grateful expostulation as the speaker feels a renewed sense of God's favour towards himself. His outpouring is not allowed to "hang" but is gathered up immediately in a comparative clause correlating freshness, sweetness and cleanliness with rain-washed flowers. The image seems to suggest itself, so apposite it proves, in every way, to the idea that the poet is expressing. Yet, while the flowers serve to define and substantiate what might be an otherwise florid lyricism, they also provide a point of transition into the narrative of the second stanza. Here they are made the subject of an "exemplum" enacting a change in God's apparent attitude towards the poet. Whereas before He had seemed to show indifference ("late-past frosts"), He now brings a vivifying moisture to the soul ("tributes of pleasure"). The flowers are rich enough in potential significance to qualify as symbols, and yet, as a vehicle of Herbert's illustrative purpose, they are kept clean and sharp (unblurred, that is, by any distracting details). We are confronted with the <u>idea</u> of flowers rather than the sensuous objects themselves, and this gives the statement its thematic clarity. While Herbert frequently turns to nature in his lyrics, it is a nature differing somewhat from that explored in the poetry of, say, Vaughan. In the last we can distinguish prefigurations of the eighteenth century loco-descriptive poem, for even in an allegorical lyric like "Regeneration", the landscape is rather less generalized, more sensuously observed, than the

equivalent evocations in "The Pilgrimage" (H.141) and "Love Unknown" (H.129). If for example one compares the descriptive austerities of "The Pilgrimage" with Vaughan's parallel evocations in "Regeneration", one becomes aware of a greater sensuousness in the later poet:

> My walke a monstrous, mountain'd thing
> Rough-cast with Rocks and snow

Herbert searches nature for illustrative metaphors, but takes care to ensure their clarity by keeping them as general as possible.

Returning to "The Flower", we may note an effortless blend of idea and image manifest in the opening of the second stanza, where "greennesse" serves to realise the idea of rejuvenation:

> Who would have thought my shrivel'd heart
> Could have recover'd greennesse? . . .

Although "shrivel'd" and "greennesse" are metaphorical, they have perhaps lost their edge through repetition, and so require the metaphor of the flowers to energise them by reinstating their literal basis. The transition from a potentially worn metaphor to a fresh one is thus effected with great fluency. Once again, the sterility of the heart is acted out in terms of a flower's life-cycle. Herbert deliberately invokes the symbol of a root to suggest the dormancy rather than the death of feeling, and so conveys a sense of life's continuation, despite evidence to the contrary.

The image thus preserves in itself the narrative movement (as it were) between the second and sixth stanzas, intermitted by a three-stanza parenthesis, for the possibility of flowering

is there all the time. A fugitive image of house-keeping is introduced in the last line of stanza two, enriching the flower image with further associations of warmth and domesticity:

> ... as flowers depart,
> To see their mother-root, when they have blown;
> Where they together
> All the hard weather
> Dead to the world, keep house unknown.

In stanza three Herbert purposely does not relate the imagery to that of the other strophes, because he expatiates upon the experience not from a private, but from a general point of view. The contradictoriness of appearance and reality is made into a paean to God's omnipotence and ability to reconcile opposites - "Making a chiming of a passing bell".

The next verse shows how Herbert can pick up an image (in this case of the flower) and deftly re-apply it. His overriding concern here is with a desire for permanence, most aptly, albeit obliquely, imaged in the amaranth of Paradise. The allusion is indefinite enough not to weigh down the poem with the apparatus of classical mythology, and also to allow a swift return to "mortal" flowers. Once again - still in stanza four - the image becomes the centre of a "parable", on this occasion concerned with spiritual growth. The sudden modulation from the ease of "shoot" to the laborious "growing and groning thither" conveys perfectly the first impetuosity and the arduousness that follows. Yet the idea of spiritual growth is rendered symbolically through the image and not by poetic statement, proving the richer for this indirection. What had been a simile earlier on in the poem - "<u>ev'n as</u> the flowers" - has, through the pressure of experience, become a metaphor so immediate that the general "flowers" have become

"my flower" (line 26), and that without losing their wider applicability.

It is from this point of view that the parable continues in stanza five until, in stanza six, poet and flower are distinguished once again - since writing and relishing verse are not within the flower's capacity. By opening the seams of the metaphor, Herbert makes possible an easy transition into the "moral" of the last stanza, where the reader finds himself drawn in by the inclusive pronoun "we". What has been a relatively private application of the image now becomes public in a way that is prefigured in stanza three:

> We say amisse,
> This or that is:
> Thy word is all, if we could spell.

The poem is thus a series of thematic statements wrought about a recurring image, with an effect similar to that of a passacaglia. Herbert's flower unifies the progression of ideas, sharpens and defines the emotion, and provides an illustrative centre for his instructive purpose. All this is done with a finesse and assurance that proves the excellence of his craftsmanship.

In the foregoing sections of this chapter I have attempted to assess the nature of Herbert's imagery, some of its range, some of its sources and some of its structural and coordinating functions. Throughout, the emphasis has been upon the relationship of these factors to the thematic purpose of the poetry since,

as Professor Summers so aptly phrases it, it was "by means of form that the material could be used in the service of the spiritual ...".[24]

Imagery is a major aspect of that form, and so are the syntax and metrics to which, respectively, I propose to devote the following two chapters.

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24. Summers, p.73.

CHAPTER II

SYNTAX

I was, I had, I could,
  Are wordes importing want:

Southwell, "S. Peters Remorse".

In was, stands my delight,
In is, and shall my woe,

Southwell, "A Phansie turned to a sinners complaint".

The nicety of these epigraphs, with their scrupulous appraisal of syntactic mood and tense, and the effect of these upon theme, gives emphasis to a concern that I shall be examining in this chapter. Certainly a study of a poet's syntax leads one very far into his poetry, for, as Geoffrey Leech has noted, we "generally suppose that ... literature cannot be examined in any depth apart from ... language, any more than ... language can be studied apart from ... literature. ... But there is a deeper reliance of literary studies on linguistic studies than this. Most critical discussions of literature revolve, at some stage, round appeal to linguistic evidence - that is, the evidence of words and sentences which actually occur on the printed page, in literary texts".[1]

The "linguistic evidence" to which I shall devote these observations comprises chiefly the larger, more resonant effects of syntax upon structure, tone and theme. Since my aim is not a comprehensive examination of local devices and rhetorical ploys,

1. Geoffrey N. Leech, A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry (London: Longman, 1969), p.1.

much of Herbert's syntactic practice will have to pass unmentioned. Suffice it here to say that it is so complex a topic as to warrant a separate study in itself. I must stress also that none of the features of syntax discussed here is peculiar to Herbert alone, and so must not be construed as being in any way innovative or original, except where there are tentative remarks to the contrary. A poet necessarily shows, as part of his vocation, a heightened response to the potentialities of language, and Herbert is certainly not alone in revealing a marked awareness of these.

I shall examine the subject by means of a threefold division of emphasis on the structural, tonal and thematic functions of syntax. Because these are so inextricably related, I have allowed for a fluid overlap of categories, and simply foreground one topic before the others from time to time. The first of these is the syntactic enhancement of structure.

Many of Herbert's poems are subtly argued and sustained by his manipulation of syntax. The effectiveness of _any_ argument, indeed, is related to its linguistic expression, and in Herbert their interrelationship is so complete that, as an analysis of "Miserie" (H.100) will show, one can scarcely regard them separately. A brief survey of its thematic and logical pattern is needed first to give the analysis direction. Stanza one presents the "miserie" of man and also his own specious arguments for continuing in this condition, specious arguments which are sustained in the next two stanzas. Verses four and five provide a gloomy indictment of even "the best of men", while in stanza

six the subject reverts again to the even wider generality of "Man", although the focus is still upon his unfitness for the task of praise. The formulation of line 1 ("My God, Man cannot praise thy name:") resembles the first line of the first stanza ("Lord, let the Angels praise thy name.") while the following verse (seven) anticipates through its first person plurals, the personal application of the very end. Stanzas six and seven thus serve an important transitional function, drawing the poem together with retrospective and proleptic parallels. Verses eight and nine likewise parallel one and two, in their respective concern with man's unfitness and man's foolishness; ten and eleven regretfully present man's refusal to recognise God's existence, despite his knowledge of it, and the last two stanzas contrast the ideal of man and the depraved actuality of his condition.

It will be clear from this that the main thematic intention is to contrast man as he should be and man as he is, his "miserie" inhering in his failure to achieve his ideal self. (The "vehicles" of this contrast vary however, as for example in stanza one, where man is compared with the angels; in stanza two, where man's foolishness is thrown into relief by God's forbearance; and so on.) Given this contrastive principle in the thematic organization of the poem, one comes ultimately to expect the adversative clauses and negative formulations that are revealed in the analysis.

Lord, let the Angels praise thy name.
Man is a foolish thing, a foolish thing,
Folly and Sinne play all his game.
His house still burns, and yet he still doth sing,
Man is but grasse,
He knows it, fill the glasse.

Herbert has no immediate need to signpost the progression of his argument: "Man is a foolish thing" has the force of a reason clause, for it is substantiating the tone of the first line. The implied connection between lines 1 and 2 enables him to cancel out a conjunction such as "because" as he moves into the assertions of the second line. The same phenomenon occurs in the next lines, where the clause "Folly and Sinne play all his game." supplies the reason for man's inadequacy. One of Herbert's most typical patterns of syntax - a statement immediately qualified with a "yet" clause - occurs in the following sentence, and its function here is to point man's foolish oblivion. He concludes the stanza with an assembly of hurried statements quoted as man's foolish song, which show the same syntactic elision as before. Although the pattern of logic is discernible in these lines, it is not syntactically demarcated, except perhaps by the use of "yet".

Having assembled enough material for invective in the first stanza, the poet can open his second with that fine vehicle of indignation, the rhetorical question:

> How canst thou brook his foolishnesse?
> Why, he'l not lose a cup of drink for thee:
> Bid him but temper his excesse;
> Not he: he knows where he can better be,
> As he will swear,
> Then to serve thee in fear.

Although rhetorical questions are designed to heighten feeling rather than ask for answers, Herbert's frequently introduce a passage of instruction. Here, the "instruction" takes the form of an indignant denunciation of man, sharpened by the expletive "Why". A further example of "suppressed" connectives is to be found in lines 3 and 4 where what is clearly an argument of

condition - "If you bid him" is rendered elliptically as "Bid him" (giving the verb the flavour of an imperative) and followed by a curt reply. The ironic tone is intensified by the juxtaposition of pronouns "he" and "he". In order to differentiate the sentences, one must give an added emphasis to the second "he", and this immediately hardens the tone. Such sharp intensification is produced also by the negative formulations here and elsewhere in the poem, since man is always denying his possible salvation in a way which the poet sarcastically mimics.

It is clear that Herbert generally uses his stanza as a self-contained syntactic unit, each structurally independent of the others. In a poem like "Miserie", where a single theme is kept in focus throughout, and where few distracting side-issues and exempla obscure its progress, Herbert has no need to direct the argument in the way he finds necessary in other poems, although the last four stanzas do have a fairly close syntactic connection with each other. It is true also that in "Miserie" the components of the various stanzas are firmly interlocked in such a way as to make them self-sufficient. At the same time, however, the exposition of thought is so smooth that the poem does not require obvious signals of coherence like "thus" and "therefore".

Stanza three confirms the dismissals of the foregoing strophe, pointing out man's mistaken sense of immunity from God's sight (and judgement):

> What strange pollutions doth he wed,
> And make his own? as if none knew but he.
> No man shall beat into his head,
> That thou within his curtains drawn canst see:
> They are of cloth,
> Where never yet came moth.

Opening with yet another question, Herbert both parallels it with, and differentiates it from, the start of the second stanza. A comparison of the two questions will show that the first contains a second person pronoun ("How canst thou brook his foolishnesse?"), giving it a more genuinely interrogative cast than the other ("What strange pollutions ..."), which is little more than an exclamation of disgust. (Many rhetorical questions are of course exclamatory in force.) The sentence is abridged in the second line, where the complement "as if none knew but he" is shorn of its prefatory "It is". This helps to invigorate the irony of the statement in evoking an impatient, dismissive tone.

Although the verba dicendi are omitted from the last two lines, they clearly constitute man's indirect reply to the poet's charge. This has the effect of making the speaker seem a brusque, ironic commentator for man against God, while his own values remain intact. Both here and in the first stanza, we see man misconstruing and abusing scripture in the interests of self-assurance. His secure assumption that, because the bed-curtains are intact, God cannot observe his sexual depravity, resonates ironically with Christ's words about moth and rust (Matthew 6.19), just as the "song" in stanza one alludes to Isaiah 40.6 and I Peter 1.24 only to distort their meaning.

The fourth stanza expatiates upon humanity's impotence in broad indicative statements:

> The best of men, turn but thy hand
> For one poore minute, stumble at a pinne:
> They would not have their actions scann'd,
> Nor any sorrow tell them that they sinne,
> Though it be small,
> And measure not their fall.

Man's dependence on God is aptly enacted by the insertion of a parenthetic conditional which is once again imperative in flavour ("turn but they hand"). The fact that the phrases can unite into a main clause only after the parenthetic clause is read, might be seen without undue fancy to function as a parable of Herbert's meaning: Man, that is, <u>needs</u> the intervention of God to sustain him, an idea which stanza five continues to explore. Here the cancellation of sin through the intervention of the Holy Ghost becomes the central tenor:

> They quarrell thee, and would give over
> The bargain made to serve thee: but thy love
> Holds them unto it, and doth cover
> Their follies with the wing of thy milde Dove,
> Not suff'ring those
> Who would, to be thy foes.

Herbert's characteristic mode of qualification, which before was signalled by "yet", is here formulated with a "but". These adversative clauses occur frequently in association with one main theme - God's continued love for man despite his ingratitude towards Him - and provide something like a syntactic leitmotif for the idea.

In stanza six the speaker addresses the poem more directly towards God, and hymns his glory in a series of honorific statements:

> My God, Man cannot praise thy name:
> Thou art all brightnesse, perfect puritie;
> The sunne holdes down his head for shame,
> Dead with eclipses, when we speak of thee:
> How shall infection
> Presume on thy perfection?

The thought of the final couplet of verse six is endorsed with

images of corruption in the following stanza:

> As dirtie hands foul all they touch,
> And those things most which are most pure and fine:
> So our clay hearts, ev'n when we crouch
> To sing thy praises, make them less divine.
> Yet either this,
> Or none, thy portion is.

These images are conveyed by a careful comparison that devotes two lines to the vehicle, and two lines to the tenor, each of which is neatly and firmly enunciated with "as" and "so". At the same time, the bold line of the syntax contains metaphors built into phrases like "clay hearts" and "crouch/To sing", showing that a more complex organization of ideas is contained by the swift, lucid exposition. The transition from third to first person, with its concomitant inclusion of the speaker, is also of importance to the poem here, especially in the light of the final stanza. Once again the characteristic adversative ("Yet either this ... thy portion is.") establishes the discrepancy between God's due and what he actually receives from man. A dismissal of humankind is made in the light of this in the eighth stanza, where swinish indifference is rendered literal through the imagery of pigs:

> Man cannot serve thee; let him go,
> And serve the swine: there, there is his delight:
> He doth not like this vertue, no;
> Give him his dirt to wallow in all night:
> These Preachers make
> His head to shoot and ake.

Contemptuous imperatives and vehemently ironic repetition are the chief features here. Herbert moves indeed from a mild form of the imperative ("let him") to a severer one in "Give him", which deepens the tone of condemnation. It is also possible to see in

the first form of imperative a shadowed suggestion of how man thinks of himself as being in control, quite unconscious of God's permitting presence. Once again, by collocating identical words, Herbert is able to deepen the emphasis of the second, and, with that, its irony: "there, there is his delight". As in stanza three, the last four lines convey man's petulant reply, although the verba dicendi are once again deleted. Here the form is of reported speech whereas in the final lines of stanzas one and three, there is a greater sense of the poet's attributing the lines to man. Such directness prepares for the address to man himself in stanza nine, the transition being assisted by the greater immediacy of his speech in the last lines of verse eight. The ensuing stanza thus opens with an urgent exclamation and some regretful questions:

> Oh foolish man! where are thine eyes?
> How hast thou lost them in a croud of cares?
> Thou pull'st the rug, and wilt not rise,
> No, not to purchase the whole pack of starres:
> There let them shine,
> Thou must go sleep, or dine.

Man has lost all purpose in life, and must be jolted into an awareness of greater things. His reply to this is dismissively anticipated by the speaker himself in the third and sixth lines. The most important syntactic feature - one which I have already noted - is the change in the vocative, for here the poet switches the address from God to man and so applies his indignation to proselytising. This anticipates a similar switch in the last stanza, where Herbert reverts to invoking God, and makes clear as he does so, that he himself, and not simply a generic man, is the object of his contempt. Such a "sermonic" development leads

naturally to the exemplum in stanza ten, where man's wilful rejection of God is shown to be worse than a dumb creasure's - worse because he has knowledge of his Creator:

> The bird that sees a daintie bowre
> Made in the tree, where she was wont to sit,
> Wonders and sings, but not his power
> Who made the arbour: this exceeds her wit.
> But Man doth know
> The spring, whence all things flow:

The typical "but" clause recurs here to relate the stanza to the larger thematic context of man's failure to celebrate God in his own life. The ensuing strophe continues rapidly out of this, syntactically linked to its predecessor. Herbert's linkage is not so continuous, however, as to detract from its structural self-sufficiency. It is worth observing that all three stanzas at the end of the poem tend to show a syntactic consciousness of each other (as is evident in the words "Indeed" and "But" opening the last two). This helps to secure an effect of conclusive, culminating argument, and of the vigorous denunciation which is apparent in stanza eleven:

> And yet, as though he knew it not,
> His knowledge winks, and lets his humours reigne;
> They make his life a constant blot,
> And all the bloud of God to run in vain.
> Ah wretch! what verse
> Can thy strange wayes rehearse?

Once again the poet's indignation blazes forth in a rhetorical question, another of the six that occur in the course of the poem, and fix a tone of vivid expostulation. The last two stanzas resolve the poet's vehemence by contrasting the ideal state of man with his actual debasement:

> Indeed at first Man was a treasure,
> A box of jewels, shop of rarities,
> A ring, whose posie was, My pleasure:
> He was a garden in a Paradise:
> Glorie and grace
> Did crown his heart and face.
>
> But sinne hath fool'd him. Now he is
> A lump of flesh, without a foot or wing
> To raise him to a glimpse of blisse:
> A sick toss'd vessel, dashing on each thing;
> Nay, his own shelf:
> My God, I mean my self.

The "Indeed" in stanza twelve has about it a note of resumption, the sense of re-opening a train of thought which hitherto seems to have been explored to the full. This gives the last two stanzas an integral relationship to the thought of the others. A catalogue of delights, a device which Herbert is skilled in using, follows here. Such an arrangement places the items in apposition to "man" and to each other, so as to create a feeling of richness and variety with which the drab singleness of his present condition is meant to contrast. The catalogue is revoked once again with a "But" clause, and replaced by another catalogue in stanza thirteen. Once again this is shaped from a series of appositional phrases, but the syntactic progress is far less fluent. In the last three lines, the speaker brings the meaning nearer and nearer home until, with unrelenting honesty, he suddenly equates himself with man and so acknowledges his part in the universal corruption. The "Nay" and "My God" help to mark the phases of substitution, and with that, the speaker's approach towards truth.[2]

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2. Helen Vendler has pointed out in The Poetry of George Herbert, pp.25-56, that such redirections or "re-inventions" are typical of the poet.

This then is an example of how Herbert controls the development of his argument (and indeed his tone, feeling and themes) with a careful and strategic use of syntax. His methods are too various for me to erect a paradigm from the foregoing study, but certain general points, arising out of this and out of other poems, can now be discussed.

I have said that with some exceptions the arrangement of stanzas in "Miserie" is generally clear enough not to need syntactic directives. Frequently, however, words like "then" and "therefore" can help to shape a poem, or end it with a conclusive flourish.[3] This is especially the case if the poem has a comparatively large number of stanzas, and requires some sort of summary statement to complete its architecture. "Content" (H.68) which comprises nine stanzas, has such a conclusion:

> Then cease discoursing soul, till thine own ground,
> Do not thy self or friends importune.

On occasion a temporal conjunction like "then" can take a similarly resolutive force, as it does in "Affliction (IV)" (H.89) with its anticipation of a happier future:

> Then shall those powers, which work for grief,
> Enter thy pay,

Another formula of conclusion is to be found in deictic words, used in such a way as to suggest incontrovertible discovery. "Constancie" (H.72) ends firmly on such a note, which accounts for its tone of certain discovery:

> This is the Mark-man, safe and sure,
> Who still is right, and prayes to be so still.

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3. Cf. Michael Gallagher, "Rhetoric, Style and George Herbert", English Literary History, 37 (1970), 495-516.

"The Agonie" (H.37) ends with a gesture of quiet conviction, partly contained in the demonstrative:

> Love is that liquour sweet and most divine,
> Which my God feels as bloud; but I, as wine.

Argument can also be defined by the immediate resumption of the word or thought on which the preceding sentence has finished, the rhetorical technique of anadiplosis. "Sinnes round" (H.122) renders the vicious, inexorable logic of man's fallen impulses in this way. Herbert's argument is thus propelled along in an irresistibly circular pattern, which returns the poem to its opening line . Such ineluctable gathering of clauses is apparent in this extract, but the whole poem must be scanned for the circular train of thought as well as of syntax:

> But words suffice not, where are lewd intentions:
> My hands do joyn to finish the inventions.
>
> My hands do joyn to finish the inventions:
> And so my sinnes ascend three stories high,

Of course, such formal relentlessness is exceptional, but there are also subtler forms of insistent repetition. In "The Rose" (H.177), for instance, one finds a transition effected by gentle iteration as though the poet were turning the bloom in his hand as well as in his mind:

> Onely take this gentle rose,
> And therein my answer lies.
>
> What is fairer then a rose?
> What is sweeter? yet it purgeth.

A similarly gentle propulsion of argument - termed epizeuxis - also works in "Peace" (H.124), where "grows" is repeated in the

last stanza with an enriching qualification:

> Take of this grain, which in my garden grows,
> And grows for you;

This presence of argument is a feature that differentiates the religious lyric of the sixteenth and seventeenth century from its mediaeval antecedent, where in a typical poem like "I sike when I singe" (thirteenth or fourteenth century), there is little tendency towards an infolded syntax with subordinated premises and contrastive main clauses. Additive, coordinated structures seem to be more the rule here:

> The nailles beth too stronge,
> The smithes are too sleye;
> Thou bledest all too longe,
> The Tre is all too heye; [4]

My remarks about verbal repetition lead on to another, larger form of iteration, which I shall call "structural parallelism". Its occurrence in Herbert's poetry is so frequent that I can concentrate on only a few instances.

Firstly, there is the fairly obvious method of recapitulation. This involves repeating the initial statement, but modifying it in the light of the stanzas that go before. It is a recurrent element in lyric design, and of its many fine exploitations, one has only to cite Blake's "The Tyger" and Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci", with their ritual repetitions of the first stanza (slightly modified) at the end of the poem. "Sinnes round" (H.122) is an obvious example of this circularity, used as much

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4. Medieval English Lyrics, ed. R.T. Davies (London: Faber, 1963), p.83.

for its thematic as for its structural effects. "Jesu" (H.112) likewise starts and finishes with the same word in such a way as to suggest the poet's devotion to his Saviour, and the last stanza of "Home" (H.107) repeats, in modified form, the fervent invocation of the first:

> Come Lord, my head doth burn, my heart is sick,
>
> ....
>
> Come dearest Lord, passe not this holy season,

The return, however, need not always be to the formulation of the first "subject", but sometimes to its mood and tone, just as "The Flower" (H.165) is completed by restating the gratitude and exultation of the first stanza, and the syntactic pattern of the third.

A repetition of material is typical of the litany, although there it is much more formal and rigid than the patterns I have just noted. The hypnotic iteration of a single line in stanza after stanza not only defines the contours of the thought by defining each transition; it also introduces an enriching suggestion of prayer. Repetition in the litany is after all a liturgical equivalent of the refrain which features so prominently in the lyric, although in the former it tends to be imperative, and addressed to God. "Grace" (H.60) has an eloquent example of such a refrain. It is immaterial where the repeated line occurs; it can even appear at the start of each stanza, and so impart an urgency to the utterance right away, as in "Dooms-day" (H.186).

Another form of parallelism bears close resemblance to a musical genre called the passacaglia. This consists of a melody

repeated _ad infinitum_, while all sorts of decorative patterns and counterpoint are spun around it. There is a sense in which all stanzaic poetry is analogous to the passacaglia, for variable material is passed through an invariable pattern of rhyme and metre. (This tendency, when it finds expression in parallel phrasing, is doubtless inherited from the Tudor and Elizabethan song-lyric, and seems to arise from the verbal suggestion of a repeated tune.) However, Herbert sometimes retains the same pattern of _syntactic_ disposition in each stanza, and so furthers the contrast between invariable form and variable content. "Vertue" (H.87), that most perfect and delicate expression of _contemptus mundi_, is a case in point. Each of its first three stanzas opens with a vocative (1), followed either by a series of epithets and appositional phrases or an adjectival clause (2). After this, there comes a statement of mortality (3) which recurs as an inexorable _memento mori_:

> [Sweet day,] [so cool, so calm, so bright,
> The bridall of the earth and skie:]
> [The dew shall weep thy fall to night;
> For thou must die]
>
> [Sweet rose,] [whose hue angrie and brave
> Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye:]
> [Thy root is ever in its grave,
> And thou must die.]

This sense of inevitable recurrence, of syntactic _ostinato_, can be used as foil for the subtlest nuances in the meaning. For example, by changing the conjunctions in the last line from "For" to "And" the poet is able to suggest both a coordination of

mortality with the description that precedes it, and a causal relationship between them. Thus the "Sweet rose" must die because its root is in its grave (such is the carrying force of the "For") or it must die in any case, as a fact of life, part of an inevitable sequence (evoked by "And"). By violating the rhythms of expectancy set up in the first three stanzas, Herbert invests the last with a muted vigour all the more exultant:

> Onely a sweet and vertuous soul,
> Like season'd timber, never gives;
> But though the whole world turn to coal,
> Then chiefly lives.

The effect of this stanza is not unlike the cadence which finally brakes the repetition of the bass line in a passacaglia.

"Vertue" is in a class by itself, but other poems make use of syntactic parallelism, "The Pearl Matth. 13.45" (H.88) being one. Each of its first three stanzas is initiated by a firm declaration of the pattern, "I know x", followed by a collation of noun clauses, all of which complete the opening statement. Each stanza ends with an adversative clause, dismissing all that has gone before it;

> I know the wayes of Learning; both the head
> And pipes that feed the presse, and make it runne;
> What reason hath from nature borrowed,
> Or of it self, like a good huswife, spunne
> In lawes and policie; what the starres conspire,
> What willing nature speaks, what forc'd by fire;
> Both th' old discoveries, and the new-found seas,
> The stock and surplus, cause and historie:
> All these stand open, or I have the keyes:
> Yet I love thee.

Moreover, by outweighing nine long lines with a single forthright adversative clause in stanzas one to three, Herbert <u>enacts</u> the

relative values implicit in the allusion to Matthew 13.45-46 (where the merchant, "when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it"). True values are centred in the final line and countervail the false pursuits presented in the earlier part of the stanza.

Often the repetitions are not merely single in form and serial in sequence - interesting permutations are employed to vary the structure, so that sequences of double repetition are sometimes the rule.

In "Business" (H.113), couplets provide crucial syntactic "nodes" in the design, for at lines 1 and 2 and at lines 15 and 16, the soul is catechised about its behaviour and about its salvation through Christ. The first couplet occasions a series of rebukes (lines 3 to 14), the second an exposition of the atonement (lines 17 to 28). Syntactic parallelism in these couplets provides a measure for the discrepancy between the achievement of the soul and the sacrifice of Christ:

> Canst be idle? canst thou play,
> Foolish soul who sinn'd to day?

and

> But if yet thou idle be,
> Foolish soul, Who di'd for thee?

Similarly the couplet at line 29 conveys the cancelling power of the crucifixion through a balance between "sinnes" and "Saviours death", a balance reaffirmed by the final couplet where statement answers question:

And hath any space of breath
'Twixt his sinnes and Saviours death?

and

Who in heart not ever kneels,
Neither sinne nor Saviour feels.

Between these parallel and subtly inverted chiave or "key-lines", an even more complex parallelism is at work. The syntactic pattern of lines 3 to 14 comprises two stanzas with an indicative statement (a) and a rhetorical question (b), alternating with two stanzas consisting of a conditional clause (c), an exclamatory apodosis (d) and an indicative statement (e). Here, thus diagrammed, are the first two stanzas:

(a)
[Rivers run, and springs each one
Know their home, and get them gone:]
(b)
[Hast thou tears, or hast thou none?]

(c)
[If, poore soul, thou hast no teares,]
(d)
[Would thou hadst no faults or fears!]
(e)
[Who hath these, those ill forbears.]

The second portion (lines 17 to 28) likewise features a duplication of material - answers (in the form of protasis and apodosis) (b), in response to questions (a). Once again I have rendered this diagrammatically:

(a) {Who did leave his Fathers throne,
To assume thy flesh and bone;
Had he life, or had he none?

(b) {If he had not liv'd for thee,
Thou hadst di'd most wretchedly;
And two deaths had been thy fee.

It is not fanciful to see an effect of "busy-ness" in this complex alternation of clauses, so actively do they balance and control each other. Indeed the very breathlessness of citing, questioning and conjecturing produced by this entrelacement of lines is rebuked by the couplet at line 29, where "space of breath" seems as much to imply opportunities for garrulous explication as it does the ability to live. Only after his busy self-rebukes does the speaker realise that the alternative to "idleness" is not a frantic bustle (mimetically rendered in the syntax) but a perpetual prayer of adoration and thanksgiving.

There is also a much less rigorous syntactic parallelism which occurs sporadically and locally in The Temple, and which approximates more nearly to the rhapsodic parallelism of Hebrew poetry. "The Temper (I)" (H.55) is a poem where the internal parallelism of the first two lines serves to swell the feeling, and intensify the yearning tone:

> How should I praise thee, Lord! how should my rymes
> Gladly engrave thy love in steel,

and the anaphoraic parallelism of stanza two aptly expresses the continuousness of the speaker's aspiration:

> Sometimes I peere above them all;
> Sometimes I hardly reach a score,
> Sometimes to hell I fall.

The repetitions of stanza five ("O let me"), intermitted with an adverbial clause of time, suggest an eager breathlessness in the entreaty:

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

while the omnipotence of God is conveyed through the vehement iterations of "Thy" in the last stanza:

> 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.

This sort of parallelism is thematic rather than structural in intention, and occurs too frequently in The Temple for comprehensive tabulation here. I need cite only the fervency of "The H.Scriptures I" (H.58) for which "incidental" parallelism is partly responsible. The underlinings are mine:

> Thou art all health, health thriving till it make
> A full eternitie: thou art a masse
> Of strange delights, where we may wish & take.
> Ladies, look here; this is the thankfull glasse,
> That mends the lookers eyes: this is the well
> That washes what it shows. ...

One can also note how in the third stanza of "Giddinesse" (H.127) the repetition of "now" helps to provide a temporal ground bass against which man's flightiness can be assessed:

> Now he will fight it out, and to the warres;
> Now eat his bread in peace,
> And snudge in quiet: now he scorns increase;
> Now all day spares.

Here the clauses supply a sense of giddiness which plays against the syntactic metaphor of stability contained in the sequence of "now's".

* * *

While the emphasis of this study has hitherto fallen chiefly upon the structural and coordinative functions of syntax, it has been clear that its effects extend far beyond that of ordering

sentences and poems. As I have already observed, it significantly controls tone and theme, to the first of topics which I now devote fuller attention in a close analysis of "Deniall" (H.79). Obviously syntax has many rôles, and, rather than divorce its tonal effects for study by themselves, I shall again concentrate also on structural and thematic formations in the grammar where these seem germane.

In "Deniall" Herbert expresses the feeling of futility and isolation that come to the believer when he fails to sense God's presence, and with that, to perceive any purpose in his life. He opens the lyric characteristically in the past tense, for, unlike Donne, Herbert favours narrative framing above present tense immediacy:

> When my devotions could not pierce
> Thy silent eares;
> Then was my heart broken, as was my verse:
> My breast was full of fears
> And disorder:

The polarity between the speaker and a seemingly indifferent God is realised at once in the defined possessive adjectives "my" and "thy", and in the remove at which the communication takes place. It is not the poet himself but his "devotions", not God in His infinite entirety but his "eares" that are thus metonymically foregrounded. This metonymy recurs throughout the poem, notably in line 3 and 4 of this stanza, where the reference to the speaker's heart and breast detaches the seat of his feelings for special emphasis. The temporal conjunction "When" in line 1 is answered dutifully by another (not altogether necessary) at the start of the main clause ("Then was my heart ..."), so giving the

tone a plaintive assonantal insistence. At the same time the "when" also helps more forcibly to distance the breaking of the heart, and consign it firmly to the past. The clause of comparison lamely tacked on to the main body of the sentence ("as was my verse") dramatises the fragmentation of the poet's verse through its syntactic gaucherie. (One can notice also how stanza and syntax are plaited in such a way that the first line is run on in a futile effort at breaking through to God, and the fourth enjambed in a way that suggests an inextricable fusion of fears and disorder.)

The poet moves on in stanza two to detail his state of sorrowful isolation from God, still using verbs in the aorist tense to keep the experience at a distance:

> My bent thoughts, like a brittle bow,
> Did flie asunder:
> Each took his way; some would to pleasures go,
> Some to the warres and thunder
> Of alarms.

Comparing his thoughts to an extended bow which, far from releasing arrows to their target, breaks beneath the strain, Herbert "stages" its very extension by tautening the sense over an inserted phrase of comparison and breaking the continuity as he does so. The emphatic formulation of the verb with its auxiliary ("Did flie") assists in clogging the swift motion of flight which the simpler formulation "flew" would otherwise have conveyed. Each thought is said to have taken "his" way, where "his" is an archaic form of the neutral possessive "its". However, there is also a marked animacy in the treatment of the thoughts, which gives them an uncontrollable, wilful life of their own and so

justifies the use of a personal possessive. The speaker's ideas centre either on indolent bliss ("pleasures") or on rebellion ("warres"), not on submission to God. This antithesis is carried by the careful division of pronouns ("some ... some") highlighting the alternatives that fall short on either side of the mean (in the form of the right response to God). Once again Herbert suppresses the verb in the penultimate line, producing an effect of warlike briskness.

The partial animation of the thoughts is fulfilled in stanza three, where they voice their reasons for straying beyond the poet's command. Herbert modulates into the historic present here to give an insolent immediacy to their speech:

> As good go any where, they say,
> As to benumme
> Both knees and heart in crying night and day,
> Come, come, my God, O come,
> But no hearing.

Here the tone of their utterance is at first harshly overbearing, because of the strident self-justification of their argument, and also because of the brusque ellipsis of "As good go any where". The jolting conversational tone soon yields to pathos, however, in the third line of the strophe, for here both the knees - which are physical - and the heart - which in the context is emotional as well - share the same verb "benumme", into which are portmanteaued both the loss of sensation in the long-kneeling knee and the grip of dreary hopelessness upon the heart. This elliptical structure affects the tone in an ambivalent way, evoking both the pathos mentioned above and the vigorous curtal speech at the start of the stanza. "Knees" and "heart" present a

metonymic shorthand for supplication and feeling respectively. The thoughts have been calling upon God in an invocation realised syntactically as a gerund, "crying". This is a perfectly conventional construction but it leads to - one might say it proliferates in - another gerund which, shorn of a full syntactic context ("But [with] no [conviction of God's] hearing [us]"), produces a sense of icy desolation. The desolation is the more chillingly silent for the contrastive noise of entreaty implied by "crying". Indeed it is not unlike a piece of music which has resolved on a discord and in a remote key. The very brevity of the ellipsis ("But no hearing") contrasts sadly with the fervent invitation

Come, come, my God, O come,

where the imperatives and the repetition movingly combine in an impression of urgency.

We have reached an impasse in the poem, and, true to the sense of being blocked in, Herbert begins the next stanza with an exclamation of bitter regret before moving back into the past tense in order to distance the unhappiness:

O that thou shouldst give dust a tongue
To crie to thee,
And then not heare it crying! all day long
My heart was in my knee,
But no hearing.

The exclamatory formula of regret "O that" contrasts with a syntactically similar formula of volition in the Psalms, as for example Ps. 53.7 (translated thus in the Prayer Book):

> Oh, that the Salvation were given unto Israel
> out of Sion: Oh, that the Lord would deliver
> his people out of captivity!

Any allusions to the Psalms, however faint, are tinged with irony here, especially since man's faculty of speech (and ability to praise) is close to being parodied by God's unresponsiveness. The vivid, humiliating metonymy of "dust" degrades the human shape to its most formless component. Then, with a strong clash of images, Herbert follows the reduction with proof of animation - the tongue. Such a juxtaposition is macabre (indeed, almost surrealistic) and conveys, through its bitter absolutes, the sadness of the poet's condition. The suffix of the earlier gerund "hearing" is made to resonate with the suffix of the present participle "crying", producing an antithetical tension between "no hearing" and "crying" which has already been anticipated by the gerundival form of "crying" in the middle of stanza three. Once again the verse ends with a repetition of the same bleak adversative phrase, "But no hearing", so that for two whole stanzas the contrary activities of imploring and ignoring rebound off each other again and again. The phrase "all day long" picks up the foregoing cry of "night and day" and gives a leaden obsessiveness to the poet's plea, while the knees and heart (hitherto given separate metaphoric identities) are now combined in the line "My heart was in my knee", and so unite in a singleness of purpose. This incorporation has to a certain extent been anticipated by their mutual numbness, and also suggests a literal "sinking of the heart" from its rightful place in the breast. By employing the verb "to be" ("... was in my knee") instead of one more active, the poet invests the heart with a curious passivity, as though its

simply <u>being</u> in the knee were enough to convey contrite supplication.

Having been entrapped in a cul-de-sac of spiritual desolation for two stanzas, Herbert begins now to take stock of the deadlock, a resolution signalled by the summarising conjunction "therefore". His survey is still conducted in the past tense:

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

"My soul" and "my spirit", coming as they do after metonymic emblems of the body (heart, knee and tongue) show a gradual encompassment of the whole man as the poet's vision widens in his survey. Both, however, are presented through imagery of languor and hebetude. The suppression of a coordinating word in the second line of the stanza evokes this lassitude as a sense of leaden, careless omission, while the negative prefixes give forth a muffled chime ("Untun'd, unstrung"). "Unstrung" moreover picks up the image of the broken bow in stanza two, while at the same time anticipating the submerged image of the last strophe. In this way imagery of discord (weaponry) and harmony (musical instrument) are wonderfully reconciled. The poet's thoughts are unstrung as a bow only to be restrung as a lute. The subject of the next sentence is separated from its verb ("My feeble spirit ... hung") by two descriptive phrases which break the "stem" of the syntax and thus almost literally evoke the discontented hanging of the flower, especially since the verb is made to seem a humiliating appendage to the sentence as a whole. (Herbert is making mild use of hyperbaton or rhetorical fragmentation here.) It is also

significant that after the implied continuity of the gerunds and participles of the preceding stanzas, the reader is presented with the completion of past participles - "Untun'd", "unstrung", "nipt" and "Discontented". The very impulse towards action seems thus to have been deadened.

In the final stanza, though, the poet rouses himself and implores God in strong imperatives to tune his untuned breast. With these the tense moves implicitly into the present and the future:

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

An adverbial clause of result in the last three lines potentially realises the effect of the imperatives: God's intervention tunes the poet to his "favours", and so effects a reconciliation celebrated by the fact that the last two lines rhyme for the first time.

The syntactic pattern of this last verse is very significant, for it relates the resolution to a traditional form of prayer, the collect. Since this is a case of syntax used allusively, I must pause to examine the grammatical structure of this form, evocations of which enrich the tone both here and elsewhere in The Temple with attitudes of prayer.

The collect is a liturgical formula of invocation, which, with its components of petition and deprecation, provides one of

the most characteristic structures of prayer. (Clearly it also provides an example of the structural functions of syntax, but the direction of its grammar to prayerful ends would naturally affect the tone of lyrics which approximate its design.) So powerful is its influence that even if few of Herbert's poems show a complete reproduction of its pattern, some of its syntactic features recur in poem after poem. Broadly, its design is of the following cast: invocation, petition, and a formula of mediation. This is realised as a single sentence, comprising a vocative, an adjectival clause, an imperative, an adverbial clause of purpose, and a prepositional phrase like "through Jesus Christ Our Lord".

A tabular analysis of the Collect for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity will help to bring these observations into focus:

Invocation: O God,

Adjectival clause: who declarest thy almighty power most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity:

Imperative: Mercifully grant unto us such a measure of thy grace,

Purpose clause: that we, running the way of thy commandments, may obtain thy gracious promises, and be made partakers of thy heavenly treasure;

Formula of mediation: through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

The adjectival clause is one of the variables. It is absent, for example, from the Collect for the Ninth Sunday after Trinity. Nevertheless it has an important function in the context of the prayer since it invokes that aspect of God most relevant to the petition, and so heightens one's sense of its efficacy. This clause is in fact a subtle form of the "Recordare" formula of mediaeval prayer, where the votary reminds God of his past activities, the results of which He, in His eternal changelessness, must

uphold. It finds moving expression in the Recordare of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and in this stanza from Thomas of Celano's Dies Irae:

> Recordare, Jesu pie,
> Quod sum causa tuae viae:
> Ne me perdas illa die.

The imperative of the collect form is usually followed by a careful exposition of purpose, often in the subjunctive - to suggest aspiration rather than arrogant assumption. A futurity implicit in the subjunctive also suggests fresh resolution on the part of the votary.

I have already had occasion to refer to the structural debt that some of Herbert's poems owe to the litany, although these are too various, too privately devotional to constitute true examples of the genre. If, however, one abstracts from the collect its formal stages (invocation, ascription, entreaty and purpose), the influence of this form becomes apparent in many lyrics, although it is modified in the adaptation. The poet might not consciously have felt this, however, so that the alignment of the syntax in terms of this pattern could simply suggest the inevitability with which Christian prayer tends to a collect form. I shall analyse stanza one of "Easter-wings" (H.43) with the collect in mind, not allowing Herbert's additional material to obscure the generic scheme which governs it. The first stanza certainly bears the impress of the form:

[(1) Lord,] [(2) who createdst man in wealth and store,
Though foolishly he lost the same,
Decaying more and more,
Till be became
Most poore:]
[(3) With thee
O let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day thy victories:]
[(4) Then shall the fall further the flight in me.]

Here the sequence of invocation (1), ascription (2), entreaty (3) and purpose (4) is perfectly clear, although the resemblance is only intermittent in the second stanza. In "Trinitie Sunday" (H.68) this formal line is very striking, even with the inserted confession and the lack of balance between the various constituents. (One can note also that each of the tercets addresses a different Person of the Trinity):

[(1) Lord,] [(2) who hast form'd me out of mud,
And has redeem'd me through thy bloud,
And sanctifi'd me to do good;]

[(3) Purge all my sinnes done heretofore:
For I confesse my heavie score,
And I will strive to sinne no more.

Enrich my heart, mouth, hands in me,
With faith, with hope, with charitie;]
[(4) That I may runne, rise, rest with thee.]

While these imported associations of prayer can give a liturgical flavour to the syntax, and so to the tone, Herbert also adapts syntax to less formal ends, the chief amongst which is a

colloquial manner. This tends to occur whenever his tone becomes ironical, or whenever he wishes to invest his persona with a forthright manner. The characteristics of much colloquial utterance are a loose, informal repetition, exclamatory noises, and a bluff form of elision. All of these are present in "Miserie" (H.100) as I have already shown (on p.81). They help to materialise the speaker as a direct, uncompromising figure, who will not "dress up" the truth, as he conceives it, in syntax different from that of conversational prose. Attitudes like these are of course the correlative of similar convictions in "Jordan (II)" (H.102):

> There is in love a sweetnesse readie penn'd:
> Copie out onely that, and save expense.

and in "A true Hymne" (H.168):

> Whereas if th' heart be moved,
> Although the verse be somewhat scant,
> God doth supplie the want.

Such muscular, robust syntax recurs throughout The Temple. It is seldom the consistent register of a poem, however, being used rather to make points with especial force and certitude. The last stanza of "Dulnesse" (H.115) has a flavour of informality, especially in a startling elision that forces the final questions to share a verb between them, and in the elliptical amendment in the last line:

> Lord, cleare thy gift, that with a constant wit
> I may but look towards thee:
> Look onely; for to love thee, who can be,
> What angel fit?

It is clear that "informal" syntax can serve a passionate, anguished tone as well as a firm one. This is true of "The Collar" (H.153) where expletives like "what" and "sure" give vehemence to the declamation, and ellipsis conveys the speaker's indignation, an indignation so large as to verge on inarticulacy:

> Have I no bayes to crown it?
> No flowers, no garlands gay? all blasted?
> All wasted?

* * *

Already, in my discussion of Herbert's methods of relating sentence to sentence, I have had occasion to examine the internal organization of the sentences themselves. I propose to study this now in greater detail, and to observe the effects that various devices of organization are designed to achieve. The manner in which its sentences are assembled has a significant effect of course upon the impact, and even the theme, of a poem.

Thus I shift my emphasis slightly in order to highlight the thematic function of syntax, although as I have already observed, the organic interrelatedness of its effects forbids any arbitrary divorce of one from the other.

Actual <u>techniques</u> of construction require comment only where they seem to be characteristic of the poet. Hence there is no need for a comprehensive survey of all Herbert's sentence patterns, which is at any rate beyond the scope of this thesis. One need simply remark that his sentences tend not to be elaborately periodic, for his stanzaic patterns, which act for the most part as syntactic containers, do not allow for extended syntactic

elaboration. At the same time there is little of the parataxis that characterises the syntax of the mediaeval lyric, but rather a happy - an "Anglican" - compromise between extremes of the complex and the simple. Much scholarship has been devoted to Herbert's use of the genus tenue or plain style, of which this syntactic restraint is part.[5] The restraint in fact provides a chaste and neutral background to whatever divergences Herbert might wish to make.

One method of syntactic organization which is typically, if not peculiarly, Herbertian is that of the "programmatic" bracket, a parenthesis having a thematic importance. (One must not be misled here into disregarding those inserted phrases which even if they are not punctuated with brackets, qualify and complicate the progress of a sentence.) In the first stanza of "Marie Magdalene" (H.173), as I have already noted, a parenthesis is "inlaid" in the second line to offset Mary's present sanctity by means of her sinful past. It thus functions as a footnote, but one so deftly incorporated into the stanza as scarcely to obtrude upon the flow of the meaning.

Herbert also uses a parenthesis to represent the second of two stages in perception, the first immediate and as it were un-reflecting, the second weighted with the sense of qualification and afterthought. He does this in "Church-rents and schismes" (H.140), where the first half of line 10 is structurally parenthetic, despite the absence of brackets. The shreds of the Church's beauty are made the more pathetic and vulnerable for the way the parenthesis presents a delayed perception of their tattered state:

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5. Cf. Gallagher, p.496.

... Onely shreds of thee,
And those all bitten, in thy chair I see.

One experiences a similar sense of vision suddenly enlarged at the end of "Affliction (IV)" (H.89), where the poet shifts the emphasis, in swift recognition, from heaven to God Himself:

Till I reach heav'n, and much more, thee.

Yet again in "Love I" (H.54) the parenthesis functions programmatically, suggesting that God's part in creation has been bracketed out of sinful man's conception of things:

... they together
Bear all the sway, possessing heart and brain,
(Thy workmanship) ...

These qualifying phrases and bracketings are clearly a part of Herbert's strategy of "re-invention"[6], of changing intentional horses midstream. Another correlative to these tactics is that of the adversative clause. Herbert always seems to be taking stock of alternatives, to be qualifying and enriching, to be keeping glib simplicities at bay. His characteristic adversatives invariably stand in an antithetical relationship to the preceding clauses, and often occur in those poems which play the insignificance of man against the transcendent nature of God, as this contrast between divine and human action in "Easter" (H.41) makes clear:

I got me flowers to straw thy way;
I got me boughs off many a tree:
But thou wast up by break of day,
And brought'st thy sweets along with thee.

In "Sinne (II)" (H.63) Herbert uses no fewer than three adversatives in ten lines. The first grudgingly credits the devil with some

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6. Vendler, pp.25-56.

good traits (which enable him, paradoxically, to exist, since pure evil is a negation of life and therefore self-destructive). Here the adversative evokes those weakly charitable concessions we use retrospectively to temper a judgement:

> We paint the devil foul, yet he
> Hath some good in him, all agree.

Another adversative briskly opens the second stanza, as the poet recalls God's reason for tempering the reality of sin and making of it a tolerable caricature. In this regard the clause of qualification has the force almost of cancelling the first stanza in the light of a more penetrating insight:

> But God more care of us hath had:

Finally, in the last couplet an adversative clause conveys a sturdy reality to refute the conjecture alarmingly presented in the preceding lines:

> By sight of sinne we should grow mad.
> Yet as in sleep we see foul death, and live:
> So devils are our sinnes in perspective.

The overriding impression here is one of advancing an argument by crossing out premises in order to substitute alternatives, and thus of having the carpet tugged from beneath our feet each time we think we have found purchase.

While the "but's" suggest confidence in "Sinne (II)", they can also imply hesitancy and a careful review of the situation, as in this excerpt from "Artillerie" (H.139):

> I, who had heard of musick in the spheres,
> But not of speech in starres, began to muse:

In the same poem, an adversative introduces a triumphant "volta" or resolutive turn in the argument, and sets the poet on a new course:

> But I have also starres and shooters too,
> Born where thy servants both artilleries use.

In sequence these clauses can evoke a sensation of hopelessness, where the speaker is hedged in by his qualifications, rendered impotent by the complexity of his vision. Such is the effect of the adversatives in "The Search" (H.162):

> My searches are my daily bread;
> Yet never prove.
>
> My knees pierce th' earth, mine eies the skie;
> And yet the sphere
> And centre both to me denie
> That thou art there.

On the other hand the adversative clause can be used to import positive amendments, instances of God's grace and goodness upon which the speaker hopefully depends. "Judgement" (H.187) furnishes an example here:

> What others mean to do, I know not well;
> Yet I heare tell,
> That some will turn thee to some leaves therein
> So void of sinne,
> That they in merit shall excell.

I must stress again that it is the frequency and range of these adversatives (rather than their individual occurrences) that makes for their being characteristic of Herbert. Other poets of course use the clause in very similar ways.

One of Herbert's individual quirks of syntax is the use of appositive structures.[7] These are once again by no means unique to him, but he exploits them with such aplomb as to require comment here. "Prayer (I)" (H.51) is built from a run of phrases all standing in apposition to "prayer". I discuss this poem in greater detail in the appendix; here a single quatrain will suffice to show this principle of structure, which functions as a syntactic cornucopia for the riches of the imagery:

> Prayer the Churches banquet, Angels age,
> Gods breath in man returning to his birth,
> The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,
> The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth;

No other poem in The Temple is of quite so uniform a syntactic method, but there are several lyrics in which Herbert resorts to appositional sequences for special effect. "Sunday" (H.75) opens with a similar procession of phrases, all standing in apposition to each other, and furnishing a lyrical reservoir from which the poet is able to draw material. A phrase like "The couch of time", for example, is picked up and orchestrated in the second stanza as:

> The worky-daies are the back-part;
> The burden of the week lies there,

In some poems, Herbert assembles a catalogue of metaphors which often suggest the variousness of his subject. The appositional method is not the only means of constructing these lists, which derive ultimately, it seems, from the catalogue of delights in pastoral poetry, and from the blazons of the love-lyric. One

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7. For a list of appositive sequences by other authors see E.B. Greenwood, "George Herbert's Sonnet 'Prayer': A Stylistic Study", Essays in Criticism, 15 (1965), 27-45.

possibility is simply to run phrase into phrase, so that a splendid thematic welter results. "Sinne (I)" (H.45) for example, is a poem about the insidious triumph of sin over all God's protective measures on behalf of man. In order to suggest the impossible odds over which Sin triumphs, Herbert devotes the first three quatrains entirely to God's protections while Sin's defiance of these is described in a mere couplet. The first twelve lines have a sense of irresistible conviction insofar as they consist of swift and urgent exposition:

> ... they send us bound
> To rules of reason, holy messengers,
> Pulpits and Sundayes, sorrow dogging sinne,
> Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes,

Asyndeton is largely responsible for the almost overbearing thrust of this sequence, for when Herbert uses conjunctions, the catalogue is somehow less inexorable, as in the following extract from "The Discharge" (H.144):

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

Hitherto in these observations on the thematic implications of syntax, I have been content to cite instances of Herbert's practice in isolation from their larger syntactic backgrounds. It remains for me, then, to illustrate the complete collaboration of syntax with theme through analysis of "The Flower" (H.165), a poem in which this is especially significant. Whereas in my first chapter I gave accent to the manner in which the imagery

sustained and controlled the ideas in the lyric, here I shall emphasise its grammatical strategies and the effect these have upon the poet's statement.

Herbert begins "The Flower" in a surge of grateful emotion, using an exclamatory formula which, as I have already suggested in my survey of "Deniall" (H.79), is weighted with associations of psalmody. The adverbs of degree ("How" and "how") are separated by the vocative to produce a happy rhythmical dip in the line, and also to suggest the poet's half finishing and then restarting his sentence in the excitement of recovery:

> How fresh, O Lord, how sweet and clean
> Are thy returns! ev'n as the flowers in spring;
> To which, besides their own demean,
> The late-past frosts tributes of pleasure bring.
> Grief melts away
> Like snow in May,
> As if there were no such cold thing.

Herbert enjambs the first line to form a rapid, irresistible current of meaning and ends the sentence with a plural noun - "returns" - in order to give a frequentative and therefore ritual quality to the pattern of "neglect" and reinstatement which the poet feels in his life. This sentence reaches a point of closure, however, only to be reopened for the inclusion of a comparative clause. In this sudden modification of the syntax (a mild instance of anacoluthon) we find further confirmation of the poet's joy, evoked through the faintly incoherent sequence. The comparison between the "returns" and flowers is made with a large, emphatic gesture, for the adverb "ev'n" is not strictly necessary, depicting once again the serene but strong emotions of the poet. I have already had occasion to refer (on p.26) to the complex of

implications in the next two lines. This "polysemy" is of course largely the result of the intricate syntax, a marquetry of separated phrases, an inversion and a pregnant adjective, "late-past", which contains a whole clause within itself. The effect of the mosaic is, I suspect, to evoke a rigid syntactic structure in the process of breaking up, and giving way finally to the fluid, easy syntax of "Grief melts away/ Like snow in May". That is, the very structure of the sentence provides a programme for the theme of release. One has only to observe the moving dissolution of pentameter into dimeters, and contrast the syntactic elaboration of the first comparison ("ev'n as the flowers") with the easeful phrase "Like snow" to find further confirmation of this idea. Once the dimeters have "melted", Herbert points their fluidity in a comparison which suggests that grief is no longer even there:

> As if there were no such cold thing.

The whole stanza is indeed a sequence of comparisons, showing the poet in the <u>process</u> of "versing" (for which he feels new-found relish), constructing the similes which are so much part of his craft, refocussing his universe.

The contrast between present rejuvenation and a sterile past is so marked that it can issue only in the speaker's awed incredulity. Thus the next stanza begins with a rhetorical question of disbelief:

> Who would have thought my shrivel'd heart
> Could have recover'd greennesse? It was gone
> Quite under ground; as flowers depart
> To see their mother-root, when they have blown;
> Where they together
> All the hard weather,
> Dead to the world, keep house unknown.

One's sense of the impossible miraculously achieved is underscored by the subjunctive mood of the verb "would". Likewise the perfect "have recovered", as opposed to the neutral form "recover", demonstrates that the miracle has been realised, but so recently as to have immediate bearing upon the present. What would otherwise have been an intransitive formulation ("have recovered") is made transitive ("have recover'd greennesse"), so as to render the recovery more tangible by the introduction of a "proof". In contrast to this there are the aorist verb "was gone", the relentless tug of the enjambement which sucks the line "under ground", and the absolute adverb "Quite" - all of which give a cast of ominous finality to the action. However, from his present vantage point, the speaker can see that the blighting is not a perennial but rather a cyclic event, and draws another simile (that of the plant retracting, as it were, into its root or corm) to endorse this. The strong caesura in line 10 curiously divides the comparison from its antecedent, so that we briefly feel a chilling loss before taking solace from the simile. The frequentative present tense ("as flowers depart") tempers the finality of the aorist with a promise of recurrence, while the abrupt "gone" yields to the more gracious verb "depart". Although the flowers appear "Dead to the world", they are really keeping "house unknown", in what constitutes one of Herbert's daring reconciliations of the domestic and the natural. The phrasing is remarkably capsular here: the "when" clause is placed at the end of line eleven in order that it might harmonise with the formulation of the "where" clause which follows it. At the same time the lineation of the dimeters breaks up the last-named clause into its component parts, whose metric pattern is reproduced in the

inserted adjectival phrase "Dead to the world". The main verb ("keep") is allowed to finish the sentence only towards the end of the last line, and comes thus as a revelation of continued life. Such complicated phrasing serves to mark off stages in perception as we move towards the climactic line. We observe first of all that the flowers have blown (we are implicitly invited to see the withered petals lying on the ground), after which we take momentary consolation from "together", and remind ourselves of an earlier reference to the reunion of plant and bulb. Herbert then implies a total withering of the plant during "All the hard weather", which appears to spell its death ("Dead to the world"), but such appearances prove finally to be illusory ("keep house unknown"). A mesmeric rhythm results from this compartmentation of the phrases, which, in view of their roughly similar syllabic counts, constitute a rhetorical procedure called parison.

From this life-enhancing discovery about the plant, the speaker moves on in stanza three to a rapturous acclamation of God's power:

> These are thy wonders, Lord of power,
> Killing and quickning, bringing down to hell
> And up to heaven in an houre;
> Making a chiming of a passing-bell.
> We say amisse,
> This or that is:
> Thy word is all, if we could spell.

A deictic adjective - "These" - encompasses the range of God's actions, while the second person possessive ("thy") refocusses the poem as an address to God. Here the vocative is enriched from "O Lord" to "Lord of Power", so specifying, like the adjectival

clause of a collect, the attribute of the Deity most relevant to the sense. "Wonders" is gathered up swiftly (almost breathlessly) in an appositive sequence of gerunds: "Killing", "quickning", "bringing" and "making". In this way the verbs are transmuted into a state of tenselessness from which past, present and future can be crystallised in accordance with God's plan. The giddying antithesis "Killing and quickning" is duplicated in the leaping play of the prepositions "down" and "up". Similarly the accumulation of tenseless gerunds in the fourth line is made to parallel the earlier line ("Killing and quickning, bringing down to hell") and so to freeze the rapid alternations into a state of timeless continuity which arrests even death itself ("passing-bell") and makes of it a celebration ("chiming"). The fitting response to such power is contained in the humble acknowledgement with which the stanza closes. This shift in tone is fixed by the pronominal displacement of "Thy" by "we" (with all our human incapacity), and by the fact that the vertiginous antithetical movements of God are feebly reenacted in the antithesis of "This or that", which is lateral rather than vertical in its axes of reference. God, we might recall, has been "bringing down to hell and up to heaven" in contrast to man's small horizontal gestures. "This" and "that" also have a drab singularity about them which contrasts with the collective sweep of "These" at the start of the stanza. A deliberate solecism in the syntax of the last line helps to confirm the tone of chastened resignation, for whereas the apodosis of a conditional structure is generally subjunctive in mood to convey an idea of contingency ("Thy word were all") Herbert instead uses the indicative of conviction - "Thy word is all", against which the

subjunctive of the protasis ("if we could spell") sounds weak and debile. We are presented then with a fine syntactic parable of the feebleness of man when he is measured against God's power.

Nevertheless, even in spite of these acknowledgements, the poet is moved to wish for a greater sense of permanence. A wistful exclamation thus opens stanza four, less exhilarated, more poignant than that at the beginning of the lyric:

> O that I once past changing were,
> Fast in thy Paradise, where no flower can wither!
> Many a spring I shoot up fair,
> Offring at heav'n, growing and groning thither:
> Nor doth my flower
> Want a spring-showre,
> My sinnes and I joining together.

The subjunctive of volition ("were") movingly recognizes the impossibility of its realisation (on earth, at any event), while the demarcated phrasing ("Fast in thy Paradise, // where no flower can wither") recalls the phrasal pattern of lines 11 to 14, and the affirmation of continued life contained in that. Contrasting this ideal of eternity with the sad truth of his life, Herbert employs the tense of the habitual present. Its recurrent force is enlarged by the adjective "Many", and by the strenuous participial descriptions "offring", "growing", "groning" and "joining", which resonate ironically with the timeless gerunds of the earlier strophe. The last line of stanza four is remarkably compact, for here it is the sinner's penitence after sinning that causes him to weep, and this weeping is in turn embodied in the metaphor of the spring rain. All these implications are condensed into the phrase "My sinnes and I joining together", which one might regard as the tip of a syntactic iceberg.

Stanza five presents the spiritual blight that comes with God's withdrawal, and opens on a characteristic adversative:

> But while I grow in a straight line,
> Still upwards bent, as if heav'n were mine own,
> Thy anger comes, and I decline:
> What frost to that? what pole is not the zone,
> Where all things burn,
> When thou dost turn,
> And the least frown of thine is shown?

The syntax is so disposed as to cluster the subordinate clauses of time and comparison and the adjectival phrase all at the start of the sentence, so deferring the main verb "comes" and, with that, the withering ("declining") that is the consequence of God's anger. In this is contained an implicit rebuke to the speaker for aspiring toward self-perfection without the necessary grace of God. (The subjunctive mood of the verb in the comparison "as if heav'n were mine own" shows how misguidedly false such ideas of human perfectibility are.) At the same time, the ironical placing of the limiting possessive "mine" against the illimitable "heav'n" also points to the speaker's spiritual hubris, especially since he wilts, not before God as a whole, but simply under His _anger_. The annihilating force of the full powers of God is thus rendered even more frighteningly inconceivable. As the poet "declines", the next sentence breaks into the formalised incoherence of ellipsis, through which device the verb is omitted to form a residual phrase in "What frost to that?" Then, with a typically rapid shift in imagery from the "homely" phenomenon of frost to the poles and the hellish equatorial zone, Herbert registers the inconceivable cold of the soul neglected by God (in contrast to which the icy regions seem fiery). Here the main clause precedes its subordinate members, carefully arranged to

set off the adjectival clause ("Where all things burn") against the adverbial clause of time, ("When thou dost turn"), an arrangement reminiscent of the progression by stages of lines 11 and 12. This piecemeal accumulation of qualifying clauses, because its full implications are only gradually revealed, shocks the reader into the realisation that God is turning not to succour but to devastate with His anger. The very voice of the phrase "is shown" suggests a frighteningly passive constraint on the part of God. What, one is led to conjecture, would a more active expression of His wrath lead to? Since rhetorical questions tend de facto to be unanswerable, or at any event, seldom invite answers, their positioning at the end of the stanza shows how carefully planned the grammatical tactics of the poem are. The break between the strophes functions here as a stunned pause before the poem is resumed. (Herbert is skilful in his use of fermate or musical pauses: one has only to recall the aposiopesis or breaking-off at line 215 of "The Sacrifice" (H.26), and the eloquent way in which God's quiet directive is projected upon the silence when a poem like "The Collar" (H.153) has run its course.)

In contrast, the first sentence of stanza six reinstates the mood of the opening strophe. It resumes on a coordinate conjunction, "And" (not "But"), as though the intermediate four stanzas were a nightmarish parenthesis and the syntax of the first stanza had been placed in temporary abeyance:

> And now in age I bud again,
> After so many deaths I live and write;
> I once more smell the dew and rain,
> And relish versing: O my onely light,
> It cannot be
> That I am he
> On whom thy tempests fell all night.

Herbert now picks up the plurality of "returns" in presenting the plural form of "deaths", a noun which cannot logically be ascribed to a single person in this form. This renders the "deaths" metaphorical, and suggests that the experiences, like sleep in "Sinne (II)" (H.63) are a sort of "death in perspective", horrible prefigurations of eternal separation from God. At the same time the plural gives a bland collectivity to the "deaths", which pushes them in a blank, undifferentiated body out of the immediate present, with its sensations of dew and rain. The adverbs of time also help to locate the experience in the present - "now", "After", and "once more". Herbert takes up the hendiadys of "live and write" (in the poet's life almost one and the same thing) and re-orchestrates it in the balance of "smell" and "relish (versing)", where the relatively abstract verbs "live" and "write" are given again in more sensuous detail. Then, having noted these proofs of vitality, the poet breaks into an incredulous cry ("It cannot be"), whose exclamatory nature puts us in mind once again of the question at the start of stanza two ("Who would have thought"). Here the vocative "O my onely light" projects a new-found warmth and sense of illumination in contrast to the cold of stanza five and to the night of the soul alluded to at the end of verse six in turn. The vast distance separating past sorrow from present joy is aptly realised in the contrast of pronouns ("It cannot be/ That I am he"): the external third person "he" is set against the personal "I", continuity between them being established by their mutual awareness of God, evoked in the second person pronoun "thy".

The movement into the last stanza, like that from stanza two

to three, a movement from the personal to the general, from wondering incredulity to recognition. In this way the design of the poem is steadied by a careful duplication of the pattern.

> These are thy wonders, Lord of love,
> To make us see we are but flowers that glide:
> Which when we once can finde and prove,
> Thou hast a garden for us, where to bide.
> Who would be more,
> Swelling through store,
> Forfeit their Paradise by their pride.

The very phrasing of the first line matches that of the third strophe, except that the vocative has been amended from "Lord of power" to "Lord of love" so as to make central a more "temperate" aspect of God. Here, however, instead of the swift run of gerunds which before were placed in apposition to "wonders", Herbert uses the simple infinitive "To make". This is calmer, and so accords more fully with the prevailing serenity and ease of the stanza. The use of "but" gives the tone a fitting colour of humility, as also the more resigned motion of "glide", which one might contrast with the strenuous "growing and groning" of stanza four. A general first person pronoun "we" is equated with the flowers so as to lead logically to the image of the garden. The temporal clause helps to make it clear that the state of grace imaged by garden cannot be reached until man has recognised and experienced his transience. Herbert hence ensures that the alternative to "growing and groning" is not indolent resignation but rather an active collaboration with God in the realisation of His plan. The speaker points this in his homiletic conclusion (couched in a generalising present tense) when he stresses that heaven will be denied to the proud-of-heart and the vainly self-sufficient. Instead of using a general singular,

"whoever", the poet supplies both a plural pronoun ("Who") and plural verb ("forfeit") to give an even wider applicability to the maxim. This in turn is given greater vividness by the participial phrase ("Swelling through store") which literally "fattens" the sentence in an image of greedy accumulation. At the same time the phrasing delays the arrival of the maxim which thus emerges the more forcefully in the last line. The "moral" marks a significant shift from the predominant first and second person pronouns ("Thou") to a third person form ("their"), so giving a distant, impersonal conclusion to a largely personal poem.

The syntax of "The Flower" is by no means exceptional in <u>The Temple</u>, for many of Herbert's poems yield evidence of syntactic ploys and turns, all of them doing service to the structure, the tone and the governing ideas of the lyrics. It stands to reason that a poet with a relish for "versing" and a pleasure in neat containment, should so thoroughly exploit the resources of language. Similar inventiveness and aplomb are also revealed in Herbert's metrical and stanzaic achievement, to a study of which I now turn.

CHAPTER III

METRICS AND STANZA FORMS

In this chapter I examine some features of Herbert's versification and his stanzaic composition, for it as much this aspect of his art as any other which warrants his inclusion among the best of our lyric poets. All his poems indeed testify to a high degree of metrical finesse.

In studying these questions, I have followed the accentual-syllabic method of scansion, since Herbert, like his sixteenth-century predecessors and his contemporaries, writes in metres which can best be described in terms of this method. My concern has been with metre as a structural paradigm rather than as a rhythmic or phatic graph, and I have been influenced in this respect by the tenets of C.S. Lewis,[1] W.K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley.[2] In a definitive article on metrics, the last two critics have taken issue with those methods of scansion which attempt to reflect individual performances of poetry, and suggested as an alternative that scansion is reading a line in "a special, more or less forced way, to bring out the meter <u>and</u> any definite deviations or substitutions".[3] It is only once such abstract patterns of metre have been derived from the verse that one can properly assess the tensions between them and the patterns of logical and syntactic stress. My terminology for the discussion derives from several other theoretical sources, so that I use the

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1. C.S. Lewis, "Metre", <u>A Review of English Literature</u>, 1 (1960), 45-50.

2. W.K. Wimsatt, Jr. and M.C. Beardsley, "The Concept of Meter: An Exercise in Abstraction", <u>PMLA</u>, 74 (1959), 585-598.

3. <u>Ibid.</u>, p.596.

terms "modulation" and "substitution" for the same phenomenon (that of replacing a foot with another, different from that prevailing in the line). These terms which are taken from Enid Hamer[4] and Paul Fussell, Jr.[5] respectively, and for the sake of stylistic variety in my close analyses, I have as elsewhere treated "strophe", "verse" and "stanza" as synonyms, while on other occasions I use "verse" to signify something less specific like "poetic texture". On no occasion do I take "verse" to mean "line".

Before the advent of the seventeenth century, the norm of iambic line had been evolved and perfected by a series of practitioners from Chaucer and Wyatt through Surrey to Sidney and Jonson, a development which has been traced by John Thompson.[6] Herbert's verse reveals his careful observance of the iambic pattern, and places him firmly within this tradition.[7] Even in his most irregular poems like "The Collar" (H.153) there is little substitution beyond the frequent trochees in the first foot of each line, and this, as Harvey Gross observes, is so frequent a form as hardly to warrant comment.[8] The rhythms (as opposed to the metres) nevertheless show a marked variety, and counterpoint a number of patterns over the iambic continuo. Coburn Freer has said of "The Collar" that although "the meters of the poem are

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4. Enid Hamer, The Metres of English Poetry (London: Methuen, 1966), p.6.

5. Paul Fussell, Jr., Poetic Meter and Poetic Form (New York: Random House, 1965), pp.39ff.

6. John Thompson, The Founding of English Metre (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961).

7. "Discipline" (H.178) is exceptional in being composed in a predominantly trochaic measure, as Enid Hamer points out on p.238 of The Metres of English Poetry.

8. Harvey Gross, Sound and Form in Modern Poetry (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1965), p.29.

predominantly iambic, on occasion they fall into an exaggerated lurching song, and provide gathering points for the speaker's energies".[9] There are spondees in the poetry of The Temple, but they tend to occur not so much in the central feet of the line as in terminal positions where the repeated stress and the cadence gracefully coincide. An example of this placement of the spondee is to be found in one of two possible scansions of this line from "Vertue" (H.87):

And all | must die.

Herbert's modulations are almost always disyllabic - trochees, spondees and (very rarely) pyrrhics, for he is scrupulously conscious of the syllable-count in his line.[10] This he augments occasionally not by trisyllabic substitutions but by delicate recourse to feminine rhymes. Thus, when modulations do occur, they vary the sequence of feet without in any way disturbing the linear security that a sturdy complement of syllables ensures, much as in the poetry of Ben Jonson, and other poets besides.

Before considering his stanzas, I shall look at some aspects of Herbert's rhyme. Like most stanzaic poets, Herbert is fully conscious of how rhyme can function as an agent for orderly cohesion. Almost any poem in The Temple, by virtue of its composition in stanzas, shows rhyme helping to secure and coordinate

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9. Coburn Freer, Music for a King (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1972), p.197.

10. I am aware of the controversy over the existence of spondees and pyrrhics (which is denied by the Trager-Smith school). However, since I am limiting my notation to a single sign for a stressed (–) and another (᾽) for an unstressed syllable, I cannot reproduce the subtly differentiated stresses that are advanced as an alternative to this rudimentary convention (which is serviceable none the less).

the utterance. In "The Altar" (H.26) for example, each line is related to its neighbour in the form of clear, brick-like couplets, metric images of the stones from which the structure is made. (One could note here that all Herbert's poems are indeed like altars in being erected to the greater glory of God, and that for him the act of creation is tantamount to an act of celebration.) By giving especial prominence to relations between words, rhyme can also confirm and strengthen these couplings. Herbert is once again not alone among poets in his sensitivity to the thematic rhyme, of which there are many instances in The Temple. A representative of these is to be found in the first quatrain of "Love I" (H.54), where the near synonymity of "fires" and "desires" and the antithetical tension of "flame" and "tame" are emphasised by their alignment through rhyme. Sometimes Herbert withholds a rhyme, and by leaving a stanza thus unfulfilled, creates a sense of anguished inarticulacy, as in "The Sacrifice" (H.26), where a line itself is left incomplete through the rhetorical figure of aposiopesis:

> But, O my God, my God! why leav'st thou me,
> The sonne, in whom thou dost delight to be?
> My God, my God ——
>
> Never was grief like mine.

In "Jordan (I)" (H.56), Herbert completes the stanza with a full diapason of rhyme in defiance of his critics, the converse of which procedure is to be found in "Deniall" (H.79), where he provides for a potential rhyme, but leaves it incomplete so as to denote the speaker's discomfiture and incoherence. He resolves the poem in the last stanza by means of a full rhyme, bringing with it a promise of affirmation. The very withholding or

completion of rhymes can thus take on thematic significance. Not every rhyme in The Temple has a thematic import, however, for its other duty, that of cementing a stanza, is often an important enough function in itself.

One of the most astonishing features of The Temple is its diversity of stanza forms. As George Palmer observes, "Herbert clothes each set of his emotions ... in individual garb: and only when what is beneath is similar is the same set of clothing used a second time".[11] The poet's fecund invention is such that, according to a tabulation made by Albert Hayes,[12] one hundred and eleven different stanza patterns are to be found in The Temple. A precedent for this prolific composition of stanzas is doubtless supplied by Sidney and by the Elizabethan lyrists, all of whom show a marked faculty for devising novel forms. Apart from these poets, few of Herbert's contemporaries and near-contemporaries reveal such multifariousness of pattern. Marvell, for example, despite some extraordinary virtuosity like that in "On a Drop of Dew", displays a noticeable preference for the octosyllabic quatrain and couplet, and Crashaw's originality likewise inheres less in his stanzaic inventiveness than in his dazzling deployment of imagery. Donne, indeed, explores the possibilities of strophic pattern with rich results, but his procedures of invention seem different from Herbert's. Hayes quotes the following observation by Pierre Legouis in which he attempts to characterise a tendency in Donne's use of stanza:

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11. The English Works of George Herbert, ed. G.H. Palmer (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1915), p.137. (This remark naturally does not apply to the sonnets.)

12. A. Hayes, "Counterpoint in Herbert", Studies in Philology, 35 (1938), 43-60.

> ... in the first stanza of most of the Songs and Sonnets thought and feeling are allowed to shape their metrical mould unhampered by any convention of tradition. In the following stanzas, the position is completely reversed: thought and feeling are at great pains to fit themselves into the now hardened mould.[13]

Herbert's stanzas on the other hand never give the impression of an elaborate form stretching the poet's resources, but rather one of supremely adaptable design. By this I mean that a complex first stanza will seem so intimately to reflect its materials as to defy further use in connection with other ideas, and yet prove as adaptable to subsequent developments in the poem. Herbert's stanzas, that is, seem to carry numerous thematic identities within their paradigms (much as a Rorschach Blot contains a multiplicity of visual suggestions), and these crystallise out in response to the poet's material. I shall examine this stanzaic adaptability at greater length in the final analyses of this chapter, but need briefly to demonstrate it here.

"Praise (I)" (H.61) is a lyric in which the poet contrasts the present feebleness of his adoration with its potential enrichment through the grace of God. The stanza comprises a pentameter rhyming with a dimeter and a tetrameter, while a final dimeter remains unrhymed, although its rhyming word "more" is repeated at the ends of the ensuing stanzas to form a kind of refrain, precedents for which are to be found in Wyatt and many Elizabethans. Its stanzaic motion is thus one of irregular expansion and contraction, a movement from larger to smaller lines.

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13. Hayes, p.50.

In the first stanza, where the poet contrasts human imperfection with perfection in God, the progression from longer to shorter lines suggests a cutting-back in the first half of the stanza, the generous impulse towards praise being checked and arrested by human inadequacy. Lines 3 and 4 reproduce the movement on a slightly smaller scale, since the contraction is from a four-foot rather than a five-foot line. The reduced disparity of line-lengths seems to shadow a matching reduction of the distance between states of sin and of grace. At the same time, the triple rhyme of lines 1 to 3 suggests enclosure within the limits of human possibility, out of which there breaks the final word "more". Since the rhyme remains incomplete, it is eloquent of the divine possibility that the speaker envisages here.

Herbert is able to foreground a thematic significance quite different from this in the next verse, by running his syntax <u>against</u> the grain of the stanza. Here the enjambement knits the dimeter to the pentameter and so implies not revocation but increase, so that the stress falls less on man's limitation and more on his genuine aspiration to transcend his condition:

> I go to Church; help me to wings, and I
> Will thither flie;

In this context the threefold rhymes convey onsurge rather than circularity, an onsurge advanced, not qualified, by line 8.

Lines 9 to 12 show yet another exploitation of the pattern to a different thematic end, the tone proving a compound of dismissiveness and hope. In order to reinforce the sense of contempt, Herbert aligns the dimeter (which is small of scale)

with a dismissal of earthly rulers, and this effectively reduces their stature. Conversely, as he moves from scorn to optimism, he bisects the tetrameter at line 11 (so registering the shortness of man's arm) and "augments" the final half-line with the following dimeter, thus implying a contrastive strength of action:

> His arm is short; yet with a sling
> He may do more.

The fourth verse provides an exemplum of human aspiring imaged as the ascent of vaporous distillations to the head. The braces here are mine:

> An herb distill'd, and drunk, may dwell next doore,
> On the same floore,
> To a brave soul: ...

These distillations move by dimetric stages, beginning with the second half of the pentameter (which is so phrased as to be detachable from its larger context) and moving through the dimeter to the first half of the tetrameter, sharply divided by a caesura. In this way the stanza helps to measure the gradations of movement as the distillation moves upwards, and gives a firm stanzaic location to each stage of a process.

In the final strophe the contraction into a dimeter at line 18 takes on a sharp, almost pungent quality, which seems to administer the sting of the bee, whereas the final dimeter (slowed down by the repetition of "much") expands with possibilities:

> O raise me then! Poore bees, that work all day,
> Sting my delay,
> Who have a work, as well as they,
> And much, much more.

Such responsiveness to theme (which this analysis has attempted only to sketch) shows how inventive Herbert can be in his stanzaic design.

Another feature of "Praise (I)" worthy of observation is the fact that Herbert links together disparate line-lengths by means of rhyme. This phenomenon has been examined by Albert Hayes at some length, and made the basis for a taxonomy of Herbert's stanzas.[14] Although this is in many respects unsatisfactory,[15] I have nevertheless adopted his system in this discussion because it provides a crude ordering device by means of which one can bracket off the enormous range of Herbert's designs, if only to prove their unbracketable abundance.

The first category erected by Hayes is that of the "Harmonic Stanza" where, as he terms it, "rime pattern and length-of-line pattern reinforce other".[16] Approximately one fifth of the poems in The Temple are written in this kind of stanza, which because of its congruities and trimness, tends to suit a doctrinal poem such as "Lent" (H.86). Here the pattern 5_a 5_a 3_b 5_c 5_c 3_b, with its precisely paired pentameters and interleading trimeters, reinforces the instructive tone. By means of a careful alignment of rhyme and line-length, Herbert avoids stanzaic "dissonance" which would complicate an otherwise forthright poem. As it is, the couplets aid the confident, well-adjusted progression of ideas

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14. Hayes, pp.51ff.

15. It is so chiefly because it attempts to impose uniform categories upon poems which, whatever superficial resemblance some might have to others, are nearly all individual constructs. Hence the poems finally gathered under each division prove so dissimilar as almost to parody their grouping.

16. Hayes, p.51.

while the parted trimeters help to create a tension of expectancy which relieves the "two-by-two" movement. Other stanzas of an "harmonic" nature are those of "Employment (II)" (H.78) and "Affliction (I)" (H.46), both of them poems of such disparate quality as to impair the usefulness of the taxonomy, a point which I have already made. However, since pattern in Herbert is supremely adaptable, the categories must be taken simply as descriptive compartments, any attempt at thematic fixtures being defeated by the very complexity of his methods.

Another of Hayes's divisions is that of the "Isometrical Stanza", whose <u>single</u> uniformity of line-length and rhyme can sometimes give an even fuller impression of certainty and purpose than the "harmonic" form. "Businesse" (H.113) is composed of tercets and couplets of four feet, from which a rhythm of propulsive regularity derives, to some extent administering a rebuke to the idle poet:

> Rivers run, and springs each one
> Know their home, and get them gone:
> Hast thou tears, or hast thou none?

Further instances of this patterning are to be found in "Jordan (II)" (H.102), "Church Monuments" (H.64) and "The World" (H.84), but I have not space to examine the subtle adjustments that Herbert makes to the stanza in each of these poems.

It is within the compass of "Contrapuntal Stanza" that some of the poet's most interesting and typical designs fall. These forms comprise about a fifth of the patterns in <u>The Temple</u>. Using counterpoint in his specialised sense of rhyming lines unequal length, Hayes observes that Herbert thus "defeats the

excessive expectation of rime by making its position unpredictable. As counterpoint in music stimulates the intellect of the listener, so in poetry it keeps the reader alert".[17] I believe, though, that the contrapuntal rhyming of disparate line-lengths far transcends the function of "keeping the reader alert": it is often intimately connected with thematic directions.

"Affliction (II)" (H.62) bears this out, for it is composed of stanzas patterned $3_a\ 5_b\ 4_b\ 3_a\ 5_a$. The theme of the poem is typical - God's apparent cruelty to his servant - and is intimately related to the contrapuntal formation of the stanza. One of the most characteristic effects of stanzaic counterpoint is a linear "pulling-up-short" or conversely a linear "pushing-farther-afield". Thus in "Affliction (II)" the pentameter of line 2 is arrested and the progression slowed by the tetrameter rhymed with it:

> Thou Lord of life; since thy one death for me
> Is more then all my deaths can be,

The sequence is reversed in the next two lines, since the stanza here moves from a trimeter to a pentameter. Herbert's rhyming of line 4 with line 1 provides a momentary point of consonance in the development of the design, which serves only to offset the imbalance between those and the final line (rhyming with them):

> Kill me not ev'ry day,
> . . . .
> Though I in broken pay
> Die over each houre of Methusalems stay.

The five feet here function to protract the horribly recurring "deaths" of the speaker which so inadequately "refund" God for

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17. Hayes, p.48.

his magnanimity. Enjambement in this case drags the lines on, either to a state of contraction (line 3) or cruel extension (line 5). The pairing of lines into dissonant "couplets" surely serves to convey the speaker's conflict and not merely to "stimulate the reader's intellect". Indeed, Herbert's counterpoint is a metrical extension of the "stretching and contracting" which preoccupies him in "The Temper" (H.55), for example. Further examples of the contrapuntal stanza are those in "Faith" (H.49) where the counterpoint is used to register not torment but flexible, easeful observations about the nature of belief; "Judgement" (H.187), "Mattens" (H.62) and "Employment (I)" (H.57).

Hayes' final taxonomical divisions, hold-alls for what the others cannot accommodate, are the "Off-Balance Stanza" and the "Irregular Stanza" which together comprise again about a fifth of the designs in <u>The Temple</u>. The first term applies to a pattern which has a line longer or shorter than the rest. This would naturally include those stanzas which derive from the verse-and-refrain patterns of the mediaeval and Elizabethan lyric, and also from the structure of the litany. "Grace" (H.60) is one such example:

> My stock lies dead, and no increase
> Doth my dull husbandrie improve:
> O let thy graces without cease
>   Drop from above!

The utterance is straitened by a dimeter, which thereafter becomes the vehicle for the poignantly recurring plea. It thus takes on an important structural function as line-gatherer, while at the same time it evokes a liturgical response. The stanza of "The Elixir" (H.184) is built in quite a different way, since here the

longer line (a tetrameter) is flanked by trimeters.

Where "irregular" stanzas are concerned, the most remarkable example is "The Collar" (H.153), whose intricacies I shall be analysing later in this chapter. Such a poem might almost be called "pre-stanzaic", for while it crystallises finally into a coherent stanzaic pattern, its initial movement is so much whirling of linear atoms, though skilfully controlled. With this I conclude my necessarily sketchy observations on Herbert's stanzas, a full documentation of which would take a thesis in itself.

The complexity of a stanza can often be enhanced by counterpoint of another kind, that of syntax against line-length. Enjambement and a discrepancy between line and clause are the result. In "Love-joy" (H.116) for example, the sequence of alternating rhymes is complicated by its absorption into the run of the syntax so that Herbert is able to suggest his excitement (in the pulse of the sentence) as it triumphs over formal restraint (implicit in the stanza):

> ... It seem'd to me
> To be the bodie and the letters both
> Of Joy and Charitie....

The same eagerness and aspiration is apparent in the run-on lines of "Easter-wings" (H.43), while in "Sunday" (H.75) on the other hand, enjambement generates a sense of the inexorability of God's will:

> Man had straight forward gone
> To endlesse death: but thou dost pull
> And turn us round to look on one,

The failure of line and syntactic unit to coincide has yet another function: it can convey the erratic measures of conversation. Alicia Ostriker has said of "Love unknown" (H.129), that "we barely notice the rhymes in this poem, ... because the poet overrules restrictions of line with a flow of thought which shapes its own laws".[18] The line nevertheless remains the governing unit - the multivalent element from which a dazzling array of compounds can be formed.

That these compounds themselves repay examination is borne out by G.S. Fraser, who suggests that in "looking into more elaborate stanza forms, or short poem forms like the sonnet and the villanelle, it may be useful to distinguish the bricks, couplets, quatrains, tercets, out of which the more elaborate forms are built".[19] Faced with so full a range of these "bricks" in Herbert, many of them variously textured, I am forced again to be selective.

I shall begin with the couplet, the smallest of these groupings. Couplets which occur within a stanzaic pattern are naturally very different from those occurring in continuous measures, but they still share certain qualities. The closure of the couplet rhyme often helps to enfold the material contained by lines, and so to square it off. Such encapsulation is achieved in the stanza of "The Church-porch" (H. 6) where a final pentameter couplet, like that of a Shakespearian sonnet, serves

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18. A. Ostriker, "Song and Speech in the Metrics of George Herbert", PMLA, 80 (1965), 62-8.

19. G.S. Fraser, Metre, Rhyme and Free Verse (London: Methuen, 1973), p.70.

to focus the exempla of the foregoing quatrain into a tighter maxim:

> Drink not the third glasse, which thou canst not tame,
> When once it is within thee; but before
> Mayst rule it, as thou list; and poure the shame,
> Which it would poure on thee, upon the floore.
> It is most just to throw that on the ground,
> Which would throw me there, if I keep the round.

In this way the homiletic intention of this poem is aided by the memorability of the couplet's closed rhyme. On the other hand, the couplet fails to register so strong an effect of finality if it is opened by means of enjambement into the rest of the poem, as for example in some of Shakespeare's sonnets. Such a use of the couplet is to be found in Herbert's "Affliction (I)" (H.46) where it helps to evoke a sense of abundance:

> Besides what I might have
> Out of my stock of naturall delights,
> Augmented with thy gracious benefits.

Line-length also serves to determine the effect of this unit. The couplets at the end of "Affliction (IV)" (H.89) are octosyllabic and less sonorously discursive than the pentameter couplets of the first "Affliction" poem (H.46).

The recurrent rhyming of Herbert's tercets often matches the speaker's insistence. One sees this happening in "Businesse" (H.113) and in this exerpt from "Sinne (II)" (H.63):

> But God more care of us hath had:
> If apparitions make us sad,
> By sight of sinne we should grow mad.

Sometimes Herbert isolates the tercet for emblematic reasons, especially since the number three has a mystical significance.

The tercets of "Trinitie Sunday" (H.68) are a case in point, for here the triadic structure of the stanza matches the threefold nature of the Deity - Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier:

> Lord, who has form'd me out of mud,
> And hast redeem'd me through thy bloud,
> And sanctifi'd me to do good;

Herbert's quatrains in The Temple also occur either independently or as part of a larger pattern, and have a similarly full range of functions. The variety, indeed, is considerable, given all the permutations that counterpoint makes possible. In "Mattens" (H.62) the counterpointed quatrain ($3_a\ 4_b\ 4_a\ 5_b$) has a sinuous flexibility differing from the isometrical stanza of "The Quidditie" (H.69), where the more staid formation of the tetrameter quatrain suits its tone of unruffled conviction. The quatrains from which the stanza of "Dialogue" (H.114) is synthesised likewise illustrate the diversity of which a four-line grouping is capable. Lines 1 to 4 of each stanza comprise alternating tetrameters and trimeters, employed in the first stanza to register the speaker's uncertainty as he appraises the conditions of salvation. This "irresolute" quatrain is then conjoined with one made entirely from tetrameters (cccc). Enjambement and the uniformity of the lines and rhymes here combine to create a sense of urgency as the poet moves to his first bleak (and provisional) conclusion. Such a stretta or quickening of the pace is largely due to the different patterning of the quatrains.

These, then, are some aspects of Herbert's stanzaic design. He is remarkable, as I have said, for his seemingly inexhaustible variety of forms. That he is also assured in the use of pre-

established patterns is proved by his achievements in the sonnet, which I treat in the appendix.[20]

* * *

Since metrics are best observed in action, I move now from my general survey of Herbert's metrical art to a closer scrutiny of his methods. Here it becomes clear that while the rich designs display a love of variety and vivid intricacy, almost every metric detail is being enlisted to reinforce or modify the theme of the lyric, as in "The Temper (I)" (H.55).

This is a poem of quite remarkable comprehensiveness in the course of which the poet aspires to a fuller celebration of God, tells of his spiritual life, entreats the Deity not to torture him, concedes the inscrutable rightness of His ways and submits to Him, confident in this knowledge. So large a complex of ideas and intentions is far from being confused or random in design, however, not least because of the centrality of its theme - spiritual tempering - which all the stanzas imply, even if they do not keep the idea in the forefront of the poetic action. ("Tempering" in this context is a metaphor for spiritual growth and derives from a technique of hardening steel, and also of adjusting the pitch of a musical instrument. In itself, "temper" can also mean emotional disposition.) Part of the limpid ease and clarity of the poem also derives from a careful disposition of its stanzas, for each of these to some extent encapsulates the diverse attitudes and intentions mentioned above. The stanzas,

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20. Cf. pp.174ff.

that is, organize the materials and point the transitions as they mark off the stages of the speaker's thought.

Opening with an exclamation, the poet regrets the absence of spiritual continuity in his life. The energy of the line is enhanced by the inversion of the first foot:

> How should I praise thee, Lord! how should my rymes
> Gladly engrave thy love in steel,

Similarly, the initial trochee of the second line ("Gladly") helps to focus its ardour, contrasting with the iambic regularity which follows. Enjambement similarly helps to register the eagerness of the poet's cry as the verse pushes on inviolate from the first line to the second. It is noticeable that the remaining lines display no modulation, and thus seem to evoke the very continuity and calm assurance that the poet is aspiring to. The caesurae are not as sharply defined here as in the first line, for there are no syntactic breaks to reinforce them. Yet again this helps to present the effect of a quieter, more ordered utterance, different from the comparatively vehement modulation and defined caesura of the first line.

Herbert's choice of stanza is obviously of great importance to the poem. Here in the opening statement it provides the impression of stasis gradually being achieved as it moves from a pentameter, through two tetrameters to a trimetrical resolution. This stanzaic closing-in helps to encompass the movement of the sense itself and bring it to a climax that, for all its capsular finality, is muted in effect. Not only the lengths of the lines, but also the rhymes assist in this. Herbert could easily

have rhymed the middle lines into an octosyllabic couplet, but he avoids even this temporary sense of closure by means of a sequence of alternating rhymes, abab. Thus the second tetrameter helps to counterpoise the weight of the first pentameter (because they are linked through rhyme), while the final trimeter steadies the second tetrameter in a similar way. The systole of the stanza is thereby carefully controlled. Linear groupings in the stanza are echoed to some extent by the logical pairing of lines, where lines 1 and 2 belong (in terms of the argument) to each other, in the same way as lines 3 and 4 are mutually related.There is thus a further diminution enacted through the movement from five feet in line 1 to four in line 2, and from four in line 3 to three in line 4, which shows that the length of line 3 is not arbitrary, but rather a necessary part of the pattern.

Such is the adaptability of the stanza, however, that its tapering-down is by no means limited to an effect of serene achievement. The second stanza bears this out. Here, without metrical disruption, the pentameter presents the many possibilities of happiness available to the poet while the next three lines tabulate his successes and failures in achieving them. Constriction in the stanza now suggests the converse of achievement in the form of a blank sense of failure. Hence in <u>this</u> context the trimeter takes on a grim curtness. The alternating rhymes enhance the sense of a progressive worsening in the speaker's fate and also pair off thematically vital words, so underlining the significance of their linkage. One becomes aware that "more" (with its contextual suggestion of a multitude of heavens) is ironically associated with the paltry number of "score", while

the absolute transcendence of "all" is likewise matched by the absolute degradation of "fall". In a sense the stanza provides a programme (or metrical literalism) for the fall that Herbert is presenting through it. The trochaic feet that begin lines 6 to 8 help differentiate the three main clauses from the con-sessive clause contained in line 5, and at the same time serve to link them (through an anaphoraic pattern) into a statistical catalogue. The idea of efficient tabulation thatthis metrical and syntactic order implies intensifies the rueful tone to the passage, since it is efficiency expended on listing the speaker's frequent failures, and these outweigh his success. From his transcendent "peering" above the heavens, one moves through his mediocre achievement to his dismal lapses, sadly acknowledged. Herbert's spatial imagery implies a sense of the poet racked between the poles of heaven and hell, extremes which in turn evoke the image of tempering.

In stanza three the reader is presented with the pleadings of a man who has not the stamina for these cruelly extending experiences. The lines are in regular iambics, with the possible exception of a spondee at the start of line 10, where the deictic "Those" requires stress. The urgency is supplied not by a torsion in the pattern of feet, but by the anguished imperative of the first line. Yet again the formation of the stanza takes on a thematic significance within this context, so that the "vast extent" is aptly rendered by the pentameter of line 9, and the grave that the poet finds too big by the narrower compass of the trimeter. Rhyme is yet again responsible for highlighting im-portant relationships with the result that the antithesis of

the powerful "thee" and the frail, mortal "me" is held in remorseless tension.

Two scansions are possible in the first foot of line 13, where an incredulous emphasis on "thou" or a frightened, anticipatory stress on "Wilt" both seem viable.

> Wilt thou | meet arms with man, that thou dost stretch
> A crumme of dust from heav'n to hell?

Otherwise the lines seem to be regularly iambic in this awed, questioning stanza. By running on lines 13 and 14, Herbert is able to convey the relentless extension of the "crumme of dust" in the very movement of the verse while, relying yet again on the formal curtailment of the stanza, he sets aside the small-scaled trimeter for God's appraisal of man's small stature. The onsurging pentameter of line 13 is augmented in strength by its enjambement with the following line, and so proves all the more powerful in contrast with the end-stopped tetrameter and trimeter which complete the stanza. The contrast has immediate bearing upon the theme itself, and on the opposition of God's tempestuous activity to the passive state of the speaker (rendered all the more striking by the fact that God is given the active verbs). "Meet" in this context implies not only the act of confrontation but also that of measurement,[21] and measurement in turn supplies a further thematic dimension to the lineation of the stanza, involving as it does a balance of unequal lengths.

The response to this moving passage comes in the form of eager entreaty, supported by the insistent, anaphoraic pleas of lines 17 and 18. Once again the metre is perfectly regular

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21. Hutchinson, p.494.

except perhaps in line 19, where a trochee seems to be required in the first foot to emphasise the sense of logical finality:

> Thēn ŏf | a sinner thou art rid,

Once more the stanza takes the impress of the theme it renders so that it presents not a sense of inexorable constriction but rather one of acceptance, reminiscent in effect of stanza one. The lines move gently to a point of repose in the trimeter, presenting a snug containment that accords well with a desire to "roost and nestle". Here the expansion of line 17 (referring through submerged imagery of the tabernacle to God's own dwelling) is contrasted with the desired contraction of line 20.

Stanza six confirms the suggestion of serenity in the preceding lines, for it is suffused with a tone of quiet resignation. Paradoxically, the metre is not as regular as in more vehement stanzas. There are inverted feet, for example, at the start of both lines 22 and 23. In the former, a strong imperative force (hitherto softened by an expletive, as in "O rack me not") coincides with the first syllable, while in the latter, the conclusive, demonstrative effect of "This is" is supplied by the initial trochee. The slight disturbance in these lines, followed by the regular flow of line 24, suggests the very activity of tuning and the music that follows from it. A feminine rhyme ("debter"/ "better") helps lighten and aerate the texture of the verse, and the marked caesura in line 21 and the end-stopping in lines 22 to 24 give the premises of the argument a clean, incisive definition. Since line 21 marks a turning point from pleading and complaint to total acceptance, its caesura has an important

structural function within the context of the poem.

Having thus come to terms with the condition of tempering, the speaker in the last stanza resolves the poem through acceptance rather than through the frenzied search for alternatives that has hitherto preoccupied him. Yet again the stanza endorses this sense of unruffled resolution in that, while the lines are being shortened in their usual way, the theme is moving contrapuntually to a realization of God's transcendent love. The humble trimeter, hitherto used mostly as a form of metrical enclosure, is here made the vehicle for an idea of spacelessness ("ev'ry where"). The lines, too, after the initial disturbance of a trochee in "Whether", scan with a lilting ease. Some of this lilt is due to the asyndeton of lines 25 and 27, where the caesura does service for a coordinating word. This enables the line to move more fluently, at the same time preventing any syntactic confusion the omission might otherwise have caused:

> ... flie with angels,// fall with dust,

and

> Thy power and love,// my love and trust

Such masterly lightness in the verse confirms that through the "tuning of the breast" in the course of previous stanzas, the music has indeed been "made better". Whereas in verses one and two the speaker attempts to expand to a worthiness of God and fails, in stanzas three, four and five he remains desperately contracted in his attempts to ward off the expansive processes of God himself. The final strophes show him relaxing into an expanded state by submission to the divine will. Throughout, the

stanza helps to articulate in microcosm the larger thematic rhythms that occur in the poem.

"Complaining" (H.143) is a poem more subdued in tone than "The Temper (I)", and yet it has a roughly similar pattern of argument; entreaty (stanza one), praise and self-abasement (stanza two), questioning (stanza three) and resolutory petition (stanza four). Several factors account for its muted quality. Although the disposition of the material and the themes are parallel to those of "The Temper (I)", "Complaining" has not the range of the latter poem, nor its extreme intensity of feeling. Also, a point more relevant to the tenor of this analysis, "The Temper (I)" has a stanza constructed out of gradually diminishing line-lengths and alternating rhymes, which leads the utterance on with swift continuity. In "Complaining", however, the stanza is very differently formed, and assists through this very formation in bringing out the sober pathos of the poem. The first line is a trimeter and the second a dimeter "contrapuntually" rhyming with it. These lines are followed in turn by a pentameter, a dimeter (rhyming with it in turn) and a tetrameter, the full pattern being $3_a\ 2_a\ 5_b\ 2_b\ 4_c$. The tetrameter is rhymed only with that of the next stanza, so that an arc of expectancy links the stanzas more intimately, much as the delayed rhymes link the tercets of "The Church-floore" (H.66). One can best assess the effect of this pattern by examining it in action with other metrical features in the thematic context of the poem itself.

In the first stanza, the poet presents two entreaties, and supplies his reasons for both of them: God must not mislead him for He is his "power and wisdome", nor must God humiliate him for

he, the poet, is His creature:

> Do not beguile my heart,
> Because thou art
> My power and wisdome. Put me not to shame,
> Because I am
> Thy clay that weeps, thy dust that calls.

There is a subdued, even tone here, illuminated by the calm repetitions of the syntax - a main clause and an adverbial clause of reason, both repeated. At the same time, this evenly disposed syntax is crossing the grain of the stanza: the second line is run into the third, and this in turn is broken by a marked caesura. A similar pattern is apparent in the second section, from the remaining half line through the enjambement of line 4 to the end. As a result there is a restrained sense of intransigence and dogged pleading, for stanza and syntax do not yield to, but rather neutralize, each other. The syntax is not easily accommodated by the stanzaic form, while the latter to some extent loses its pattern to the former, producing a curious sense of deadlock. In lines 1 and 2 the rhyme closes with a leaden insistence since only two feet intrude between "heart" and "art" (this insistence being of import to the genre of the poem, as I hope to show). Even the pentameter of line 3 does not open out with a new contrastive sonority. So forceful is the division of its caesura that it becomes a pentameter <u>manqué</u> - a dimeter and a trimeter only nominally making up a five-foot line. In metrical terms the first two and a half lines are otherwise regularly iambic, given that "power" is a monosyllable.

I must digress here to point out that Herbert's intention in this poem is not to present a plangent, impassioned response

to God's apparent cruelty; it is rather, as the title suggests, one of regretful lamentation. There are many mediaeval precedents for this - the planctus, "My folk, now answere me" from the fourteenth century, for example,[22] and many later versions of the genre as well. These could either be secular or divine, as is shown by Surrey's "Complaint by Night of the Lover not Beloved" and Southwell's St Peters Complaint, to take only two examples. All these are in some ways generic forebears of Herbert's poem, and tend not to be stormy so much as quietly reproachful, a feature which might account for the sobriety, both metrical and tonal, of "Complaining".

Hence in the second section of stanza one (lines 3 to 5), there is no modulation. In the final line the asyndeton accentuates the caesura, as it does in the last stanza of "The Temper (I)" (H.55); but whereas in combination with short vowels, the effect is lilting there ("Thy power and love, my love and trust"), the vowels of "weeps" and "calls" here protract the line and weigh it down.

Stanza two contrasts divine majesty and human insignificance. Two scansions of the first foot of line 1 are possible, and can be entertained simultaneously in the mind if not in the ear. (Such ambiguity of stress in the first foot of an iambic line, as I have pointed out, is so frequent that Herbert can assume its ambiguity and use it for thematic ends.) There can thus be a stress either on "Thou" or on "art", depending on whether the emphasis is placed on the person of God or on his continued being

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22. Davies, p.125.

as the "Lord of glorie":

Thou art| the Lord of glorie,

The dimeter is drawn on by enjambement into line 8, a transition eased by the light feminine rhyme ("glorie"/"storie"). Run-on lines here serve to impart an understanding of the inevitability with which "deed and storie" are due to God. Although the break is not as sharp as in stanza one, the pentameter of the second verse is again bisected by a strong caesura. Such a partition helps to separate, and so clarify the clauses of the antithesis. In the second half of the stanza, which begins, as before, halfway through the pentameter, the brevity of the dimeter helps to reflect the fly-like brevity of human life, after which it runs without break into the concluding tetrameter. The rhyme with stanza one now completed, a thematic link between the verses is reinforced, so that death momentarily seems to be the solution to the persistent entreaty of the speaker, a solution shadowed by the rhymed association of "calls" and "falls".

Whereas hitherto there has been little metrical irregularity, in the third stanza a current of strong emotion, till now carefully restrained, begins to surface in the somewhat frequent inversions of stress. Lines 11, 12 and 15 all begin with trochees, partly the result of anguished questions which invert the normal cadence of the lines. There is the same irresistible running-on of the dimeter in line 12 (which occurs also in the earlier stanzas), and the same arrest of the pentameter midway through its course. A similar fragmentation is conveyed by Herbert's end-stopping of the second dimeter (which is run on in the first

two stanzas) to provide the impression of a constricted, broken utterance. Yet again the last word of line 15 awaits completion in the next stanza, exposing "grief" in all its naked intractability.

Stanza four is also antithetical in form, for here the speaker begs God to cease his anger, or to grant relief in death. The regularity of the lines assists in investing the poem with its serene conclusion. (It must be noted here that while metrical regularity never counteracts suggestions of disturbance, in "Complaining" it can serve positively to enhance ideas of spiritual tranquillity.) Whereas in the other verses the second line was enjambed into the third, here the enjambement occurs between the first and second lines, producing what in fact reads like a pentameter with an internal rhyme. As a result, the first half of line 18 is isolated by its divorce from the preceding line (usually run into it) as well as by the marked caesura. The pathos of the poet's "inch of life" is thus conveyed in the very brevity and stanzaic isolation of the phrase. Form is put to programmatic use in line 19, where the dimeter provides a literal analogue to the contraction of the hour before the stanza expands gratefully into the final four-foot line. The rhyme is of especial interest here, for the same words ("houre" and "power") are repeated to give the verse an almost world-weary, heavy quality and simultaneously to provide a nearly identical verbal setting for the words "wrathfull" and "gracious". This gives them an antithetical clarity which is all the more striking. The rhyme of the final line, too, resolves the anguish of the preceding stanza as well as of this one, by answering "grief"

with "relief". A further thematic effect of the limited rhymes is that of reducing the situation to two figures - God implied in "power", and man, suggested in "houre". Such a situation has of course been present throughout the poem, but it is heightened by the insistence of the rhymes here.

The effects of "Complaining" are so subtle and muted that it is easy for one to pass over them. It reveals a workmanship as fine as that in "The Temper (I)", especially with regard to the subtle deployment of the run-on line, the counterpoint of syntax against stanza, and thematic rhyming. In short, within its own delicate compass, it is an exquisitely finished poem.

"The Collar" (H.153) on the other hand, is a poem of more extravert virtuosity, remarkable for its innovative structure - parallels for which do not seem to exist in the poetry of the time - and for the way in which this structure is made to convey an erratically sustained fury, moving as one might expect to a renewed sense of submission. Its title has a complex of meanings, all of which have bearing on the metrical structure of the poem. There is a punning implication of "choler", an outburst of anger, something borne out by the tempestuous onsurge of the verse; of "collar", a device used to subdue animals and lunatics; and of "collar" in the religious, emblematical sense of "yoke". These meanings are reflected in the way rhyme, stanzaic structure and ultimately language itself are all controlling the apparent freedom of the form. The speaker's emotions are much more frantically expressed than those either in "The Temper (I)" (H.55) or "Complaining" (H.143), and so are not constrained by any

formal stanzaic scheme. Nevertheless the vehement progress of "The Collar" is being controlled "at every word" by the Logos (or Word) Himself,[23] and the effect of a loose, additive sequence of lines is quite as illusory as the speaker's own sense of freedom. An examination of the way in which argument and metrical structure are linked will, I think, prove this.

Herbert opens the poem with the desecration of an altar, by which action the priest hopes to defy his master. The tetrameter used to convey this defiance is partly responsible for the abruptness of the introduction, realised also by the curt finality of the dimeter that follows it. There is an assonantal relationship between "more" and "abroad", although they are unrhymed, and a rhyme between "board" and "abroad", by which echoic device the first line is gathered and drawn into the second. After the narrowing of the dimeter, the lines expand in response to the rhetorical bravado. A tetrameter is followed by a pentameter and another four-foot line in turn (lines 3 to 5). Considerable dash and vigour can be detected in the rhythmic (as opposed to the metrical) pulse of this section, for whereas the lines tend to be regularly iambic the phrasing of line 3, for example, isolates "What" in all its vigorous indignation:

What? shall I ever sigh and pine?

The first half of line 4 is similarly regular, despite a trochaic inversion demanded by the epizeuxis of "free" in the fourth foot. Some of the pentameter's resonance and abandon derives from the repetition of the /aI/ and /i:/ sounds, here enhanced by strong stresses:

23. Cf. Freer, p.201.

My lines| and life| are free; | free as | the rode,

The combination of trochee and iamb after the caesura in this line is duplicated in the first half of the following line as well, with a curious buoyancy that gives the rhythmic pulse a "choriambic" effect, although the norm of the disyllabic foot is retained:

... free as the rode,
Loose as the winde, ...

Strophic irregularities lead the reader to a fuller contemplation of rhyme as an ordering device and delicate thematic congruities thus become apparent in the "abroad" (the goal) and "rode" (the means to the end), and "more" and "store", the last containing its seventeenth-century meaning of abundance, which the poet hopes to enjoy by serving God no longer ("No more").

The next four lines (6 to 9) continue in a vein similar to that discussed above, with the same indignant expostulation and rhetorical questioning. The trimeter can be scanned with an initial trochee, like that of the following line ("Shall I" and "Have I"), thereby enhancing one's sense of the poet's impetuosity; or perhaps regulated by a due stress on "I", which is perfectly in keeping with the selfish perspective of this section. Otherwise (with the exception of another possible trochee in "What I"), the pattern is regularly iambic in the next three lines. This, together with the swift enjambement, the central or near-central caesurae and uniform line-lengths, helps generate the effect of confidence in the sequence. "Suit" and "fruit" close yet another circuit in the rhyme scheme, and bring into

relief the apparent (and therefore ironical) opposition of service and reward.

Lines 10 to 12 assess with outrage, but also with a poignancy transcending indignation, the effect of sorrow upon the speaker's life. Herbert begins this section with a dimeter, a line-length he interjects at intervals in "The Collar" in order either to gather in passages of vehement expatiation, or to initiate them. As the eye scans the topography of the poem, it is alerted to a hectic swelling and contraction which seem to parody the surety and ease of the way lines grow and recede in other lyrics, especially "Easter-Wings" (H.43). Thus the dimeter of line 10 is run into a pentameter which itself is broken (by an emphatic caesura) and run into a trimeter. Such wild metrical careering has the semblance of a progressive slackening of control, an increasing incoherence. The metre likewise shows a greater tendency towards modulation, with an emphatic trochee at the start of line 10, and a possible spondee in the last foot, if a stress of indignation is given to "was":

> – ∪ | – –
> Sure there | was wine

The already complex tone is further enriched here by an element of despair: feminine rhyme, "drown it"/"crown it" (lines 12 and 14), has so little of its usual grace as to seem leaden. A reason for this may be that it comprises two words, the delay in whose articulation slightly fragments the rhyme. The syntax enhances the sense of turmoil by breaking across the lines: "Before my sighs did drie it" and "Before my tears did drown it" would probably, in a poem of more apparent order, have been given

lines of their own. Here the first of the adverbial clauses is placed within the pentameter of line 11, a placement which qualifies its symmetry with line 12. Herbert furthermore withholds repetition of "sure" in line 11 so as to disrupt any metrical alignment of the main clause ("there was corn") with the sequence of trochee and iamb ("choriambic" in effect) of:

Sure there|was wine[24]

The rhymes are once again of considerable importance. "Wine", after a delay of some six lines, completes a rhyme with "pine", while "corn" resonates ironically with "thorn", the former being the true, the latter the false harvest. These all have significance as images of Christ's Passion and its subsequent celebration in the Communion, so that while the speaker bewails his own suffering, the rhymes imply redemption through the passion of his master. Not only the rhymes, but also related sounds (like the phoneme /ɔ/) provide a phonetic cable through the turbulence, another "unseen", steadying force.

Lines 13 to 16 show the poet almost distraught as he reflects that he has no reward either as servant-priest or as poet or as hedonist. At line 16 a monometer does service for the dimeter that is generally employed in straitening the form, and produces an even more forceful constriction. It is not fanciful to see in the reduction of the line a metrical image of "wasting" and dissolution. The last foot of line 15 is somewhat divorced from its context in the tetrameter by a strong caesura. This highlights the parallel between it and the line 16, which is verbless

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24. This of course holds only if one discounts a possible spondee in "was wine".

and barely formed:

> ... all blasted?
> All wasted?

Taken together, these phrases are eloquent of outrage mounting beyond the point of expression. The feminine rhyme ("blasted"/ "wasted") brings this development momentarily to a close, the extra syllables creating a hopeless moriendo in the voice.

In lines 17 to 32, the speaker follows his appraisal of past disappointments with practical resolutions. His freshly confident manner is reflected to some extent in the metrical form as well. Here the irregular ebb and flow of the lines comes to suggest not so much the pulse of his angry spirit, but rather his attempts at instilling in himself a new confidence and bravado. A tetrameter and two pentameters (lines 19 to 21) are gathered again by a dimeter, which is then drawn on by the vigorous pull of the syntax into another passage of assorted line-lengths (23 to 26), the significance of whose variety will become apparent as the poem draws to a close. As is often the case when Herbert wishes to convey lyric abandon, lines 19 to 26 scan regularly, so that the tension derives rather from the tug of irregular line-lengths against the sense, and the strength with which the enjambement forces the sense over its linear barriers in turn. Examples of this vigorous propulsion are to be found at lines 19 and 20 ("leave thy cold dispute/Of what is fit, and not") where the linear interruption of the syntax does indeed convey the dismissal of an argument only partially resolved; and lines 23 and 24 ("and made to thee/Good cable) where the tension of the cable finds a fitting parallel in the tautening of syntax over a break

in the lines. The caesurae, too, are worthy of close examination. They are demarcated by syntactical breaks in lines 17 and 21, and help yet again to suggest a fragmentation of the line of thought, of "logic" disrupting harmony:

> Not so my heart: // but there is fruit,

and

> Of what is fit, and not. // Forsake thy cage,

Rhyme also plays a characteristically significant part here. "Fruit" in line 17 restates the earlier rhyme of "fruit" and "suit" (lines 9 and 6 respectively), giving the passage a closer continuity with what has gone before, and augmenting the sense of subtle recurrence both of rhyme and phoneme in the course of the poem. "Hands", highlighted by the rhyme, here provide an image of selfish materialism, for whereas the hands' proper priestly function should be that of blessing and offering the Communion, the speaker has used them in the gesture of desecration implied at the start of the poem. The "hands" also significantly rhyme with "sands" in an invitation to break these apparently futile constraints. "Fruit" is similarly thrown into relief by the rhyme and conveys the wordly remuneration the speaker plans to seize. The confusion of this "fruit" with "wine" and "corn" (properly belonging to God) thus suggests a human usurpation of the divine rôle. Rhyme itself is frequently responsible for bringing out such thematic implications within words, aiding once again the sense of purpose operant within confusion. The rhyming of "me" and "thee" (lines 13 and 23) presents further thematic possibilities. In most of Herbert's poems, there is a regnant

consciousness of God (either absent or present) so strong that in many instances the second person pronoun is found to refer to Him, in contrast to the poet's self which is expressed through first-person pronouns. Such is the solipsism of "The Collar", however, that it is only in the last two lines that God becomes a reality to the speaker. Hence "thee" when Herbert uses it, refers not to the Deity but to the poet (addressed by himself), and so becomes synonymous with the "me" linked to it by rhyme. A dreary round of self-concern is thus displayed. "See" (line 26) rhymes with "thee" in turn, and with further irony, since an apparent perception is shown to be little more than a perception of self. The irony is intensified, of course, by the fact that the poet berates himself for not seeing.

Lines 27 to 32 show an even greater sense of resolution as the speaker starts actively to make his preparations for departure. There is much vigorous inversion of feet here, with two vehement trochees in line 29 ("Call in" and "tie up"), and another in line 30 ("He that"). Yet again the caesura is syntactically emphasised in line 29 to give a purposeful curtness to each clause. Moreover, a sense of nervous tension is supplied by the hesitant repetition of line 2 at line 28 ("I will abroad"), suggesting the speaker's reluctance finally to leave, which his verbal bravado has hitherto attempted to conceal. This repetition brings the introductory lines back into focus again.

The final section is moving testimony to the renewed sense of order in the poet's life, for whereas the rhyme scheme had earlier moved by bewildering leaps and bounds (attesting, despite its capriciousness, to a controlling principle in its rhyme scheme),

the last four lines make up a quatrain. This is composed of a pentameter, dimeter, tetrameter and trimeter, all of them line-lengths which have hitherto been scattered here and there with apparently wild abandon, and which now seem to find their proper place within the confines of an ordered pattern. The expansion and sudden contraction which has hitherto constituted the movement of "The Collar" now becomes a lyrical undulation between longer and shorter lines, the dimeter providing a pivotal transition, and the trimeter a final point of repose. Metrically the lines are regular; the caesurae unemphatic. The delayed caesura of line 35 is especially beautiful in this regard, since it helps to create the lull in which the voice of God is heard. Rhymes also have a marked significance here, for "wilde" and "Child" point in conjunction to the petulant childishness of the speaker's rage, and "word" and "Lord" alert one, as Freer has pointed out,[25] to the identity of the Logos, the Word who is guiding each development through the very relation of language to Himself. Language, that is, paradoxically draws the poet nearer to God when he imagines himself to be arguing his obligations away. The versification of "The Collar" is remarkable for the fact that every one of its lines is potentially a member of the quatrain with which it ends. While the line-lengths (with the exception of the "wasted" monometer) have apparently been tumbling about in a metrical blizzard, they are each of them finally placed and pointed by the resolution into a stanzaic form. The implication is this: that the poet's disabling pride and self-reliance must be exorcised before he can realise his art,

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25. Freer, p.201.

that his God-given talent can flourish only when he acknowledges the giver. Thus the "pre-stanzaic" scattering of lines 1 to 32 constitutes a metaphor of chaos misconstrued as liberty. Only when God is heeded can order prevail - imaged in the disciplined freedom, the harmonious adjustment of the concluding quatrain.

As a metrical achievement "The Collar" stands among the best of all the marvellously finished lyrics which go to make up The Temple. Here we witness Herbert's virtuosity with a "free" rather than a contained strophic form, his acuity in treating metrics as an integral part of his meaning, and finally his thematic control of rhyme. Yet, while the versification is daringly innovative, it is so closely linked to the themes as never to become self-regarding. The same apparent unself-consciousness and accompanying brilliance is to be seen in the metrics of "The Flower" (H.165), with an analysis of which I shall close this chapter.

Like "The Temper (I)" (H.55), "The Flower" is a poem about reconciling the extremes of spiritual experience, but whereas the former lyric is written as it were de profundis and presents the poet actively pleading with God, the latter is suffused with his gratitude after such an ordeal. In Chapter I, I examined the careful deployment of the imagery and the way in which its application is both narrowed and widened in response to Herbert's purpose, while in Chapter II my emphasis fell upon the syntax and the ways in which subtle strategies of sentencing help to fix the ideas and hone them to the finest edge of accuracy. Here my concern will be the metrical ploys by means of which Herbert extends his meaning into the very "arteries" of the poem

(that is if by extending the metaphor, we take the imagery to be its skeletal structure, and the syntax to be its fleshment). I resort to this analogy in an effort to spell out the elaborate interdependence of all these features, which I divorce only in order to facilitate the analysis. The metre and its collaborative rhythms might constitute the pulse of the poetry, but they can exist only within the tissue that they support. This analysis must therefore be regarded as a sequel to the other two rather than as a self-sufficient reading.[26]

The stanza of "The Flower" is beautifully suited to the lyric expatiation which makes up its substance, and comprises a roomy quatrain of alternate tetrameters and pentameters rhyming abab, a transitory restriction through the "neck" of a dimeter couplet, cc, and then an expansion back into a tetrameter rhyming with the quatrain, b. The stanza is so patterned as to move outwards (tetrameter to pentameter) rather than inwards, to be tightened and then released again, a motion which Herbert is able to adapt (when it suits his purpose) to exposition, point-gathering and conclusion.

Itself a "tribute of pleasure", the poem opens on a note of grateful expostulation as the speaker hymns the renewed presence of God in his life. The quatrain's spaciousness derives from the linear increase mentioned above, and also from the comparative length of the lines (pentameters - which are Herbert's largest unit - and tetrameters). Alternating rhymes quietly propel the

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26. The same principle would apply of course to all the other analyses of this thesis, which without a threefold recurrence, are necessarily "filtered" in terms of the topic of each chapter.

thought forward at a serene tempo which the matching alternation of the line-lengths enhances. A trochee in the middle of line 2 ("ēv'n ăs"), works together with the emphatic syntax to produce the spirit of gratified observation so characteristic of the poem. Although the trochee commonly occurs in the first foot of the line, it is less frequently found in a mid-line position, and functions here ("ēv'n ăs | the flowers in spring") both to point the caesura (in the sense of starting the line afresh with the characteristic trochaic inversion), and also to slow the tempo. A similar rallentando is occasioned by the trochee in the fourth line ("tributes"). Enjambement in line 1 suggests the overflow of the poet's gratitude, while the inserted vocative also helps to space out the syllables and slow the line to a tempo in keeping with the expansive lyricism. Herbert employs a clear assonance ("sweet" and "clean") to enhance the phrasing of his utterance, and a subtle, diffused alliteration in "fresh" and "flowers", "sweet" and "spring". This patterning of sounds contributes to the unity of the stanza; it also provides a thematic enrichment to the extent that, in the context of the meaning, the energetic fricative /f/ suggests a vigorous freshness, the softer /z/ and /i:/ sounds, a simultaneous ease and fullness. The "late-past frosts" seem to harden the texture with /s/, /f/ and plosive sounds. The dimeter couplet conveys the insubstantial nature of the past sorrow, for the combination of linear shortness and enjambement helps to melt the lines away, as though they were the snow itself. After this line 7 comes as an affirmation, linked by rhyme with the quatrain and the affirmations it contains. Here the degree of stress, while conforming to the iambic norm, is much heavier than is usual in

"The Flower". This is partly because the words are monosyllabic and so strong as scarcely to submit to the iambic patterning: "As if | there were | no such | cold thing". Such weighting - one might even term it "deadening" - helps to evoke the past heaviness of grief, even as it melts away.

Stanza two presents a fuller account of the speaker's grief, and opens with an exclamatory subjunctive that, as I have already pointed out (on p.117 above), suggests the apparent impossibility of recovering from such sorrow. Again the metre is comparatively regular, although the rhythm moves with the phrasing against the current of the stanza. The caesura in the second line cuts into the penultimate iamb and generates a quasi-trochaic rhythm ("It was"). This qualifies the steady, regular metre with a sense of rapid dissipation (the phrasing and hence the rhythm being marked with braces above the metrical macrons):

... greennesse. // It | was gone

Both here and in the foregoing line the enjambement functions in an illustrative way - to suggest the upsurge of the speaker's pulse (lines 1 to 2) and the force which pulls the plant underground (lines 2 to 3). An initial trochee stressing the adverb "Quite", confirms that the heart has completely disappeared. This is made the more forcefully apparent through the tug of the enjambement. Indeed the whole stanza contains four run-on lines out of seven and a series of marked medial caesurae, suggesting through the "imperfect" marriage of syntax with linear unit the poet's own bewildered realisation that appearance is not squaring with reality. In this stanza the dimeters present a contraction

of metrical space which evokes the flower's snug reunion with the bulb, and at the same time tacitly denies the death presented in the preceding lines of the quatrain. The feminine rhyme ("together"/"weather") also helps to lighten the gloom with its syllabic dexterity. As I pointed out in Chapter II, the last three lines break up into four phrasal units, not only on account of the disposition of the syntax and the rhetorical parison, but also on account of their distinctly similar rhythmical pulse. Although I am aware that some ears would detect iambs where I hear trochees, I tend to conceive each phrase as a sequence of trochee and iamb which collectively supply a "choriambic" rhythm (– ᵕ ᵕ –), but without in any way deviating from the disyllabic norm of the metre:

Where they | togeth(er)
All the | hard weath(er),
Dead to | the world, | keep house | unknown.

The rhythm is generated by the syntax, and overrides the foot divisions in a pattern which might be transcribed thus:

Where they together
All the hard weather
Dead to the world, keep house unknown.

Since this rhythm (one of several that could thus be entertained) comprises a chiastic pattern of stress, it closes off each phrase in yet another image of the self-containment celebrated in this stanza.

In the next strophe the poet moves into a more general consideration of God's ability to reconcile opposites into a mystical unity beyond the conception of man. The converse activities of

"Killing and quickning" are paralleled in the movement of the stanza. This strophe (in view of the vertiginous speed of the transitions from heaven to hell) shows more activity and less poise than it has so far done. Once again there are several inversions of stress (at the start of the first, second, fourth, sixth and seventh lines), the combined effect of which is too vehement to be regarded merely as run-of-the-mill trochaic substitution. The sense of forceful onset thus occasioned is duplicated also in the rhythm of the second line where, after the strong caesura, it breaks across the iambic divisions to set up a falling motion against the ascending metrical norm:

Killing | and quickning, bringing down | to hell

Thus the rhythm reinforces the idea of descent before coinciding with the iambs in the next line to register a converse current of ascent:

And up to heaven in an houre;

The enjambement of the second line compounds the idea of movement between dizzying extremities, where we are dragged down only to be "pulled up" by the meaning of the next line. These extremes and oppositions are harmonised by the rhymes, so that "hell" is made almost musical through being rhymed with "bell", while "power" is demonstrated in the miraculously small compass of "houre" and also paradoxically measured as the infinite by a finite division of time. The dimeters and the caesura in the last line seem to emphasise the divisions of the sentence, and by thus "fragmenting" a complete syntactic pattern, present, perhaps, an image of bewilderment (albeit in a mild, formalised

way). Herbert often uses syntax and metrics mimetically, and in view of this, might have intended the phrasal breaks here to suggest that man can construe only part of God's design, the whole of which eludes him. This reading, which might otherwise seem fanciful, seems to be strengthened by the internal pararhyme in line 21. Because man cannot comprehend the totality of God's plan ("all"), the words cannot reach their full harmony (that is, "spell") and so remain a glimmering, a potential rhyme.

Herbert aspires after permanence in the fourth stanza, yearning for a condition where rapid spiritual mutations shall have become impossible. The pentameters are exploited to realise the eternal security of paradise on the one hand ("Fast in thy Paradise, where no flower can wither!") and, on the other, the protracted strivings of the speaker:

> Offring at heav'n, growing and groning thither:

The metre itself is steadily regular, except for the customary trochees at the start of some lines, so that one's sense of strenuous action derives largely from the rhythm inherent in the participial syntax. There is nevertheless a "stray" syllable (in the second line) which has to be elided for the sake of the disyllabic norm. Since it is Herbert's custom scrupulously to notate his elisions (for example "Offring" and "heav'n" in line 25), one can imagine only that he leaves the extra syllable "flowering" as it were to evoke the floral abundance of Paradise.[27] This syllabic fecundity is enhanced by the additional syllable

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27. This assumption is made on the strength that "Paradise" is trisyllabic in "Prayer (I)" (H.51).

of the rhyming word "wither":

Fast in thy Paradise, where no flower can wither!

The dimeters (lines 26 to 27) offset the following tetrameter, which, being so to speak augmented by two feet, suggests the enlarged efficacy of "sinnes and I" as they join together - a peculiarly vivid adaptation of stanzaic design to a local direction of the meaning.

Stanza five presents the poet's anguish at the anger of God, and its configuration yet again reinforces the new thematic development to the extent that the first pentameter of the quatrain is made the vehicle for the speaker's false sense of spaciousness ("Still upwards bent, as if heav'n were mine own"), while the "shrunken" tetrameter evokes the suddenness with which he is withered by God's anger ("Thy anger comes, and I decline"). Similarly programmatic moments are to be found in the metric pattern. At the end of the first line a pyrrhic precedes a spondee, its lightly bouncing syllables offsetting the duplicate heavy stress. In this way the "straight line" is realised aurally in the continuity of strength between the two syllables. The first two feet of the last line likewise scan as a pyrrhic and a spondee (which collectively make up the rhythmic pattern of the Ionic a minore). As a result the strong stresses are made to lower like an auditory frown against the foil of the unstressed syllables:

And the | least frown | of thine | is shown.

The pace is slow and sorrowfully ruminant, largely on account of

the strong caesurae; the pattern of heavy vowels ("zone", "burn", "turn" and "shown"), and the deliberation of the syntax whose subordinations (in lines 33 to 35) outweigh its main clause ("what pole is not the zone"). Given the elegiac motion of the verse, the dimeters, which dissipated so lightly and miraculously in stanza one, now become a painful stanzaic contraction, funneling and forcing the syntax forward. The rhyming word "burn" (linked thematically with the absence of God through "turn") seems to glow with an even more tangible heat in the dimetric enclosure, whose sense of spatial reality derives from a close harnessing of topography to theme.

In the sixth strophe Herbert returns to the mood of stanza one, and, gratefully hymning the rejuvenation of his soul, expresses incredulity at his past sorrow. The verse is limpidly regular. The second line apart, even the initial feet do not reveal the customary inversion of stress. In contrast to this evenness, the spondee in line 37, gives weight to the momentary recollection of sorrow, especially since it highlights the emphatic adverb of degree:

> – ∪ | – – |
> After | so many | deaths I live and write;

The caesura is sharpened only in the fourth line where it serves to mark the transition from a gradual return of sentience to a sudden realisation that present and past are both part of the same continuum:

> And relish versing: // O my onely light,

If the tone is equable and serene, it is helped to be so by the

graceful motion of the stanza, which floats back and forth between its four- and five-foot measures with an even fuller grace than in the first verse. Almost the whole sense of the stanza seems to be contained in the three rhyming words, "write", "light" and "night", for the poet is able once more to practise his vocation after his spiritual distress, with a new consciousness of God's favour. The narrowing dimeters thus help to telescope, to fold up the bitter past, and allow its existence only as a distant foil to the radiance of the present. Enjambement that connects the last three lines helps to speed this foreshortening of sorrow:

> It cannot be
> That I am he
> On whom thy tempests fell all night.

In the final stanza Herbert continues in this vein of joyful, serene wonder opening up the experience to the reader, and implicitly inviting him to "profit" from the hitherto private musings, queries and solutions. The metre of the quatrain is regular yet again, with the exception of the trochee at the start of the first line. This gives force to the gesture of demonstration:

> These are | thy wonders, Lord of love,

In the last two lines, however, there is a reversion to the grouping of trochee and iamb (in what constitutes a choriambic rhythm). The effect of this is once again to mark off a series of stages, in this case the degrees by which the proud man swells. Once more the unelided "Paradise" contrast richly with the bleak monosyllable of "pride", and makes the forfeiture all the more painful. The rhyme beautifully focusses the tenor of the stanza in linking "love" with the experience of love ("prove"); in confirming the

major antithesis of transience ("glide") and permanence ("bide"); and evoking the greedy augmentation of "more" and "store" - a rhyme which occurs also in that exorcism of selfish desire, "The Collar" (H.153). So it is that after a radiant opening the poet moves through dark memories back to a position of happy acceptance and a sense of community (implicit in the sermonic tone of the conclusion).

The malleability of Herbert's stanza is apparent throughout the lyric, its complex pattern of increase, cut-back and restoration adjusting to each development of the theme. His achievement of thematic effects through the use of the simplest modulations recalls the miraculous effects that similarly straightforward harmonic devices can have at the hands of a great composer. Yet again, Herbert's rhyme, his trans-linear syntax and his subtle deployment of rhythms are all eloquent in this, one of his greatest poems, and indeed one of the greatest in a century of fine lyric achievement.

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In this analysis, and in those that precede it, I have attempted to show how the intricacies of Herbert's workmanship frequently reveal a thematic function, and how they contribute in no small way to the fine gradations of meaning, the lyric control of emotion and the subtly differentiated tones that much of his poetry exemplifies. He is as fully and as consciously a poet as he is a Christian priest, and the poems that result from this perfect adjustment of method to material must surely have a place among the greatest religious lyrics ever written.

APPENDIX

SOME NOTES ON THE SONNETS

If one includes the sonnetary first half of "Christmas", there are fifteen sonnets in "The Temple" all told, a number which testifies to Herbert's interest in the form.[1] Perhaps, apart from exercising his flexibility and resourcefulness in the invention of his many original stanzas, he turned to the sonnet as a form which, in view of its fixities, could extend other aspects of his genius. His attainments here are never less than competent, and often very fine, but the sonnet seems not to have drawn from Herbert his very best poetry. He would appear to be more himself in stanzas of his own highly-wrought, individual architecture than in the inherited structure of the sonnet. Indeed, his best achievements in the form are slightly unorthodox, although by no means unprecedented.

In order to measure these apparent "unorthodoxies", it is necessary to review the sonnetary traditions from which Herbert departs on occasion. Two major forms of the sonnet exist in English. These are the Petrarchan, or Italian, or classical form, which comprises an octave of two quatrains and a sestet; and the English or Shakespearian form, which consists of three quatrains and a couplet. The first of these has a chiastic rhyme scheme (abbaabba) and one of many permutations of three rhymes in the sestet (cdecde, for example), while in the second the rhymes move in alternating sequence towards the culminating

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1. I leave aside those in Walton's Lives for the time being.

couplet (ababcdcdefefgg). Sonnets are very much more than quatorzains, however, and the poet who observes the decasyllabic line and complex rhyme schemes is only half way towards a successful realisation of the form. Its essential quality inheres less in its metrical features (important though these are) than in the disposition of its argument or material, which invariably presents some sort of "unequal" opposition of premises and conclusion, or first and second positions.[2]

In the Petrarchan form, such imbalance is present in the opposition of the eight lines of the octave, which are generally expository in nature, and the six lines of the sestet, which are resolutory, the modulation from the one to the other being called the volta.[3] W.P. Ker, has noted that in the Italian sonnet "there is obviously a form provided for a position in the first eight lines, and a contradiction or variation or conclusion in the last six. And that is a very common form of argument - protasis and apodosis".[4] This applies less readily to the English form, as he admits, but even here it is possible to regard the quatrains as a loose, expansive protasis, and the couplet as a proportionately summary apodosis. (In this variant, however, the second position is often stated in the third quatrain and simply condensed by the couplet). There need be no <u>conditional</u> flavour in the argument at all, but rather an aggregation of premises in the first part (be it two or three quatrains, depending on the form or variant of the form), and some sort of development, either reactionary or progressive, in the second part

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2. Cf. Fussell, p.120.
3. Although it has been suggested that the volta is a figment of the nineteenth century imagination, I believe in its existence, even as a pause for breath.
4. W.P. Ker, <u>Form and Style in Poetry</u> (London: Macmillan, 1928), p.173.

(sestet or couplet). One of the central features of sonnetary practice is that much of the argument is carried through images.

Another of the form's most distinctive features, something which it shares with all poetry but possesses in a heightened form, is its suitability for publishing the most individual and personal experiences without in any way violating their privacy. This is largely because it derives from a tradition unique in the history of lyric forms, and also because of the frequency with which its earlier practitioners speak of it as a vehicle for eternising the beloved, rendering perpetual the transient and the mortal. C.S. Lewis writes that a "good sonnet (*mutatis mutandis* and *salva reverentia*) was like a good public prayer: the test is whether the congregation can 'join' and make it their own...."[5]

The foregoing remarks must be taken as reflecting tendencies rather than fixing an absolute canon. Nevertheless, however elastic its formal precepts are, the sonnet can lose its essence in too radical a modification.[6]

I have not the space to treat all Herbert's sonnets here, and so am forced to narrow my focus upon only the most striking examples. Among his earliest poems are the sonnets printed in Walton's *Lives* (H.206) which he is said to have written at Cambridge. Their rigorous polemical tone anticipates similar, more muted attitudes in the "Love" sonnets, whose theme of

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5. C.S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1954), p.491.

6. John Fuller, *The Sonnet* (London: Methuen, 1972), p.1.

displacement they also share. It is fitting that Herbert should have employed the form for a renunciation of secular poetry and an espousal of divine verse, for in the sixteenth century, it was conceived primarily as a vehicle for themes of romatic love. These early poems by Herbert seem on the other hand forcibly to disengage the sonnet from its secular tradition and put it to Christian use.[7]

Although I do not propose to analyse these poems in depth, they have morphological features which anticipate similar aspects of Herbert's more poised realisations of the form. The first of these, as Professor Summers points out,[8] is an adjustment to the rhyme scheme of the last quatrain. Unlike Donne, Herbert never attempts the Petrarchan, but chooses for the most part to write in an amended English form. This involves reorganizing the rhymes of the final quatrain and replacing an interleading pattern, (efef), with a chiastic one, (effe). Alternatively one can sometimes conceive the last six lines as comprising two tercets (eff and egg). In the light of Sidney's more radical amendments of the form and his frequent morphological fusions, these small adjustments of pattern pale into comparative insignificance. They are of some importance in the context of Herbert's practice, however, since the manipulation of the rhyme helps to arrest the linear progression and, by means of a <u>rallentando</u> in the movement of the lines, prepare for the effect of the couplet <u>before</u> it

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7. Herbert is not however the first to use the sonnet form as palinode, since there are similar renunciations in the work of earlier sonneteers, Sidney's "Leave me, O Love, which reaches but to dust" being one example.

8. Summers, pp.179-80.

arrives. This suggests some slight individuality in Herbert's placing of the volta, which, though modified in the English form, often occurs before the couplet. (The placing of the volta ultimately depends of course on where the second position is stated.) Herbert's volta frequently precedes the twelfth line, as though he wished to retain the capsular, "finial" quality of the couplet, and at the same time to enlarge its compass so as to present a point more expansively. The chiastic rhymes of the final quatrain enable him to make this adjustment, which would otherwise sit awkwardly upon the continuities of the English scheme.[9] A blending of Italian and English forms is certainly not peculiar to Herbert, as I have pointed out, for it occurs both in Sidney and in Milton, among others.

The enjambement of the early sonnets also requires comment for its bearing on Herbert's later procedures. Here it overrides the traditional alignment of each quatrain with a logical stage. In view of this modification of the quatrain as container, the arresting chiastic rhyme, effe (in lines 9 to 12), is perhaps a necessity. It is more than this, however, for although line 9 of the first sonnet belongs logically and syntactically to the preceding quatrain, the rhymes are grouped so as to have a sense of closing in upon themselves, thus bringing forward the resolution.

The two sonnets "Love I" and "Love II" (H.54) like the Walton pieces and the two poems of "The H. Scriptures" (H.58), make up

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9. Whether the sonnets are to be regarded as having a sestet or a chiastic quatrain and couplet depends very much upon the syntax and phrasing. In the case of "Love I" and "Love II", I believe that the former pattern prevails (largely on account of the enjambement), whereas in "The H. Scriptures I" and "The H. Scriptures II" the latter seems to be the controlling design.

a sonnetary diptych. Less excitable than "My God, where is that ancient heat towards thee", "Love I" reveals a gentle continuity in its utterance which counterpoints the division into quatrains. The progression is as forceful as that of the earlier sonnets, but it is more poised. Whereas in many conventional love sonnets the speaker's complaint would be self-concerned in his bewailing the indifference of the loved one to himself, Herbert reverses this in pleading God's cause - not his own - and rebuking the indifference of man, the loved one, to God, the lover. This reversal of a conventional stance is enhanced by the contrast between divine omnipotence ("authour of this great frame") and "mortall love", a contrast which makes man's disregard look the more foolish.

The second quatrain of "Love I", having "begun" a line too late, "finishes" early, for the chiastic epigram of line 9 seems at first to have all the closural force of a couplet:

Wit fancies beautie, beautie raiseth wit:

This appears to divorce it structurally from the foregoing lines just as in the sonnet as a whole, a similar impression of containment separates the couplet from the quatrains. (What the modifications amount to is a masterly counterpoint of argument against form, since the movement of the thought overruns the quatrains, which generally otherwise act as stanzaic "ledges" for each premise of the argument. Naturally it would seem to accord with Herbert's strategy of "re-invention" for whereas the sonnet is generally regarded as a past tense form (in that the argument is resolved and "plotted" before composition), here the

movement is such as to suggest the poet's wrestling with his material as he proceeds. I would be cautious of pressing this point, however, in view of the fact that many other poets also overrun their quatrains - Sidney, Milton and Donne among them.

While line 9 seems at first to be condensing the argument in preparation for a new development as it does in the Petrarchan form, it turns out to be initiating a repetition of how man has displaced God from his thoughts, with slight modifications of the antithesis. The resolution is delayed until the following sonnet, for, despite the couplet rhyme, the last two lines have little real sense of skein-gathering and knotting. It is rather as if the couplet had been anticipated at line 9 and so defused. The resulting blend of English and Italian forms produces a hesitancy and irresoluteness which in some ways demands the firmer solution that the second sonnet supplies. In it, the thematic emphasis shifts from God's "passivity" to His future action. The vocative is changed from "Immortall Love" to "Immortall Heat" in order to stress the purgatorial rather than tolerant aspect of God's love, and the syntactic structure which before comprised regretful exclamations here takes the form of urgent imperatives. This time there is a somewhat restless counterpoint between syntactic and stanzaic units, focussed finally in a couplet which envisages a future, an apocalyptic resolution to man's present indifferance:

> All knees shall bow to thee; all wits shall rise,
> And praise him who did make and mend our eies.

Another masterly pair of sonnets is that celebrating "The H. Scriptures" (H.58). The interdependence of these is much less

complete than that of the "Love" poems, and it is at the first of the two that I propose to look, because it contains an undeveloped form of one of Herbert's most distinctive tactics. This is to assemble a list of discrete items and run it through the form of the sonnet, producing something very like an argument, with some of its transitional and mediative material excised. There are of course precedents for this in the work of earlier sonneteers. Many sonnets by Shakespeare, Surrey, Sidney and Spenser contain "blazons", the device to which Shakespeare refers in "When in the chronicle of wasted time". In these compilations, the loved one's charms tend to occupy one line apiece, with a resulting linear capsularity.[10] Since the sonnet-writer almost always argues by means of imagery, such a welter of images is less a violation of decorum than the natural result of a tendency in the form. James I wrote a sonnet "The azured vault, the crystal circles bright"[11] in which be baptises the blazon and infers the glory of God from the (itemised) diversity of creation. Bearing in mind that Herbert expressed admiration - either politic or actual - for James's Latin prose, I think it possible that he would have been acquainted also with his English verse. Could not the naïve linear mode of this sonnet then have suggested to him the possibility of richer reworkings?

In "The H. Scriptures I", Herbert assembles a rich diversity of images which he employs to render the transcendent value of these writings apparent to the reader. There is a deliberate

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10. A typical blazon is that found in Spenser's "Sweet is the rose that grows upon the brere" where a list is made of beautiful objects whose beauty the beloved shares, and whose disadvantages she lacks.

11. Elizabethan Lyrics from Original Texts, ed. Norman Ault (1928; rpt. New York: Capricorn Books, 1960), p.153.

opposition here of line and syntax to the extent that they seldom coincide, and even the culminating couplet starts half a line too late. Such contrapuntal procedure helps to peel off the metaphoric phrases from the clauses in which they occur, and gives them a faintly appositional relation to the opening cry - "Oh Book!". This sonnet thus contains within it the embryo of a method that Herbert follows more obviously in "Prayer (I)" (H.51). The latter also opens with an identification of the theme - "Prayer" - followed by a run of metaphors in apposition to it. The overarching principle of organization is difficult to adduce from the poem, but I believe that the chief controlling reference is to a Christian history of mankind.[12] There is definitely a thematic line from creation through suffering and redemption to admission into heaven. Herbert does shuttle back and forth across his chronological scheme but the broad outline still remains intact. Prayer, the implication is, puts man in contact with all the vital phases in the procurement of grace, and exerts the powers metaphorically attributed to it.

When Professor Summers speaks of the "crescendo and diminuendo" of this poem, he is implicitly referring to the sonnetary motion of the Italian model.[13] (The English form seldom has so gradual a sense of recession.) Thus although Herbert's quatrains have alternating rhymes, the grouping of images gives the sonnet

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12. Helen Vendler sees a psychological progression from the poet as "frigid reciter of theological clichés, the resentful beggar" to "the aggressive hurler of thunderbolts" and so on. However, I fail to detect either the frigidity or the arrogance which seem necessary to her reading. Cf. Vendler, pp.38-9.

13. Summers, p.182.

a Petrarchan flavour, insofar as, at line 9, these lose their violence and move away from the climactic clash of the preceding quatrain. This development in the tone, and also in the implicit argument of the sonnet, is aided by a greater sense of stasis in the chiastic rhymes ("blisse" - "best" - "drest" - "Paradise") and by the couplet of lines 13 and 14. The rhymes indeed are very important in this sonnet for they supply thematic tensions that arc through the rhyme across linear and syntactic separation and come into an even sharper focus on account of the seeming absence of argumentation.

"Sinne (I)" (H.45) is in some ways similar in mode, although the catalogue is not appositional but additive, and indeed only gathers momentum from the second quatrain onwards. The concern of this sonnet is with God's external aids to the prevention of sin, all of them foiled by spiritual imperfection in the believer. In order to suggest the superabundance of God's precautions, and the near impossibility of sinning in the context of these palpable devices, Herbert constructs a list without any coordinating conjunctions:

> Pulpits and Sundayes, sorrow dogging sinne,
> Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes,
> Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in,
> Bibles laid open, millions of surprises,

The result is a veritable onslaught of item after item, neatly - almost pertly - arrested by the couplet's pointing to a lack of internal, <u>spiritual</u> precaution:

> Yet all these fences and their whole aray
> One cunning bosome-sinne blows quite away.

Paul Fussell's rather contentious suggestions about the Shakespearian sonnet are relevant to this particular poem (if by no means to all examples of the form):

> The very disproportion of the two parts of the Shakespearean sonnet, the gross imbalance between the twelve-line problem and the two-line solution, has about it something vaguely risible and even straight-faced farcical: it invites images of balloons and pins.[14]

The deliberately deflating force of the couplet does indeed have a humorous effect here. It can achieve this sense of reversal only in the context of argument to the contrary, and this is what is present, albeit submerged, in the rapid catalogue of preventive measures.

Another feature of Herbert's practice where the sonnet is concerned, is the readiness with which, in "Christmas" (H.80) and "Redemption" (H.40), he suppresses a discursive method in favour of a narrative one. This modification is once again not peculiar to Herbert, but extends back to Sidney ("His mother dear Cupid offended late") and to Drayton ("To nothing fitter can I thee compare"), to cite only two practitioners of the "narrative" sonnet. In "Redemption" (as in the Sidney sonnet mentioned above) there is a metaphysical argument implied throughout, which together with the narrative framework, renders it allegorical in mode. Joseph Summers sees this sonnet as having "the granting of the Covenant of Grace" as its main theme,[15] a concern which is further enriched by an exposure of the speaker's false assumptions about God. It is the fabular treatment of Christian ideas which

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14. Fussell, p.128.
15. Summers, p.181.

renders this sonnet distinctive, although the method derives perhaps from, amongst other sources, the pagan allegory of Sidney's poem.

The quatrains of "Redemption" help to contain each development of the fable and give it a clear stanzaic contour until, characteristically, the final six lines divide into tercets, a division encouraged by the syntactical demarcation of the lines. This is important for the narrative fluency of the poem, since any sharp curtailment would do violence to its momentum, and this has to be sustained until the very last and most significant action, "died". The alternating rhymes of the quatrains help to advance the argument, just as the rearrangement of the rhymes in the last six lines helps to diffuse the sharp ejaculatory force of the "English" couplet into a more gradual _rallentando_. The sonnet ends on a curiously final and yet irresolute note, for whereas the last two lines generally present a clarification of the foregoing material, the couplet of "Redemption" shows rather a resolution which is only dimly apprehended. It is in the following poems, "Sepulchre" and "Easter", that a proper perspective is placed on this curt statement of death.[16]

There are several other sonnets in _The Temple_, many of them sturdy achievements, and also a poem which is haunted by a sonnetary ghost, at least where progression and treatment of thought are concerned. In "Grief" (H.164), the lyric in question, the emotion seems to overflow the fourteen-line compass, and,

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16. I had better observe once again (since I have only touched on the topic in Chapter I) that many poems of _The Temple_ benefit from being read in the context of the whole design - that is, in the order in which they occur.

buckling the form to the feeling, suggests both the exclusion of "measure, tune and time" and the uncontrollable nature of the grief. Once again, however, this is by no means unusual in the light of the elastic treatment of the "rules" by some poets in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Herbert's sonnets show a flexibility and a respect for tradition, both in his conventional realisations of the form, and in his mild "innovations". This happy balance has been aptly described by Joseph Summers in the following words:

> Lesser poets, in Herbert's day and in ours, are 'traditional'; Herbert and the major poets use the traditional and 'make it new'.[17]

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17. Summers, p.184.

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