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DONNE'S IMAGERY



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by

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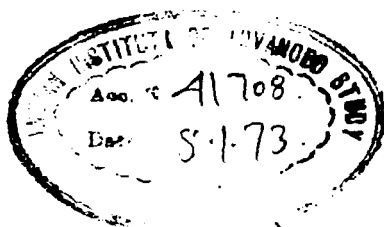


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Preface

This brief study of Donne's Imagery is different from some recent works on the poet in one particular respect. I have tried to study the images subject-wise rather than through an analysis of a few individual poems only. As such, it is not only a study of the sources of the imagery but, also, an attempt at the appraisal of the fascinating interaction of images, which is the very breath of Donne's poetry. In doing so I have tried to reconstruct a picture of Donne's character which differs from the tradition that likes to see the poet—at least in one part of his life—as a cynic and a disturber of the established social and literary values.

No claims to originality are made for the contents of this monograph. But, I hope that the theses developed here in Section II and Section VI may be found to contain some fresh points and the opinions expressed therein may not be altogether untenable. My debts, conscious as well as unconscious, are far too many to be acknowledged in detail and the foot-notes and the select bibliography may be taken as an acknowledgment of only the major sources of help. In the textual quotations, page numbers refer (unless otherwise mentioned) to Sir Herbert Grierson's monumental and invaluable edition of Donne's Poetical Works (1912). Vol. I of this work has been referred to in the foot-notes as the 'Works'.

I wish to make an acknowledgement of the encouragement and help that I received from Prof. A. Bose, Head of the Dept. of English, M. U. Aligarh and Prof. Sh. A. Rashid, Dean, Faculty of Arts of the same University. To the former I owe the benefit of stimulating discussions, edifying criticism and some valuable suggestions. To Prof. Rashid I am grateful for the keen—almost personal—interest that he took in seeing this monograph through the press in spite of his manifold engagements. I should also thank my wife who helped me in correcting the proofs and compiling the index.

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Aligarh : March, 1958

M. Hasan



D O N N E ' S I M A G E R Y

I

By the time that Donne began to write, the Renaissance theories of poetry had been, more or less, established in England and were influencing the actual literary work to a considerable extent. Creative writers were divided between the pleasure and the instruction schools of poetry and subscribed to one or the other. A few of them, like Spenser and Sidney, however, introduced a note of happy compromise by trying to combine the two functions of poetry. But the individualistic mind of the future Dean of St. Paul's was too restless and too fond of innovation to accept whole-heartedly the stock opinions. He set out in a fresh direction and, refusing to treat poetry as merely the hand-maiden of either virtue or pleasure, insisted on its function as an instrument of spiritual exploration and emotional self-appraisal. Once he confided to a friend, "I write the poems for myself" and restated this view more cogently in a verse letter:

I sing not siren-like to tempt

Surprising as these words might have sounded to his contemporaries, they provide a useful clue to the nature of his entire literary work which was unconventional in its treatment of themes and unfamiliar in tone and imagery. He disdained to write with an eye on the crowd and showed an egocentric attitude in his love poems since his primary concern was an investigation of the very passion of love and its sources rather than an exposition or mere affirmation of the established opinions and concepts. He was obliged, therefore, to use images which have been described by a modern critic as "unusual and at the first sight unpoetic."¹ These images are not mere rhetorical devices employed to make the verses more effective and ornate, but they are integral with his thinking and constitute the very texture of his thought. A study of Donne's imagery is, therefore, a study of the sources of his poetry and of the factors that made it agreeably startling.

Some important and interesting points in this study are: What are the main images used by Donne? What are their sources? Why and how were they used? And, how do they reveal the mind of the poet?

II

One of the most striking characteristics of Donne's poetry is the predominance of sex-imagery in it, a fact which may be partly ex-

1. Smith, J. On Metaphysical Poetry (Determinations ed. F. R. Leavis.)

plained in terms of the peculiar social conditions and moral standards obtaining at the time. Bennett points out that the age was fascinated by physiology and the contemporary plays abounding in unreserved and even indecent references to sex bear out as much. Another explanation may be discovered in the fact that many of Donne's poems were originally meant for private circulation among his friends whom he might have wished to amuse by being witty in the particular fashion. But these explanations fail to account for the profusion of sex-imagery in his devotional verse and in what Leishman calls the poems of earnest,² which in the light of the accepted literary theories hardly called for such images. One begins to feel that extraneous factors alone were not responsible for this kind of imagery and that there was something innate in the poet which surged up, again and again, in the form of these startling conceits and metaphors.

To Donne sex was a matter of extraordinary interest and it aroused in him feelings of curiosity and wonder very much like a myth. It became a passion with him and sex-imagery came in as a natural form of communicating his experience, perceptions and moods. He discovered that women "themselves are mystic books,"³ and that true lovers alone could dare unravel the mysteries of this wonderful world. Sex, therefore, had no immoral implications and was as worthy a subject of study as any other branch of science then known. The age was flooded with new ideas and scholars were constantly extending the frontiers of knowledge, specially in the field of geography, astronomy, physiology and medicine. The Unknown attracted the mind of man. Sex, too, being an Unknown Region, Donne undertook to study its mysteries and wanted to map the uncharted depths of this most important aspect of the human personality. It was a bold and ambitious undertaking but he was qualified for it by virtue of his varied learning; and his study of Aristotle, St. Augustine and Paracelsus further enriched his understanding of the problem involved. His acquaintance with the works of Paracelsus, particularly, helped him in formulating his theories about sex. The French physician insisted on the mutual necessity of man and woman and he had beautifully illustrated the point through the metaphor of the land and the tiller.⁴ Donne borrowed the theory as well as the metaphor and employed the image of tillage in his poems more than once. But obviously, he improved upon the original and suggested that this mutual necessity was more than a mere biological necessity and a physical pull between the opposite sexes. Woman could "put on perfection and

2. Leishman, J. B. *The Monarch of Wit*, see chapt. I.

3. *Works*: see *Elegy XIX*, l. 41.

4. Murray, W. A. *Donne and Paracelsus*, *Review of Eng. Studies*, Vol. 25, 1949
See pp. 119-120.

a woman's name"⁵ only after she had been united with man. The union was a physical juxtaposition as well as an emotional integration and made the lovers' minds "interassured". This last state alone could make the love perfect.

Lewis attributes this liberal reference to sex to the fact that Donne's mind was "baffled in its relation to sexual love by certain contemporary and highly special conditions."⁶ Some other critics also have pursued this line of explanation and in recent years Hunt has diagnosed some "strong psychological disjunctions in Donne's inner life."⁷ He even suspected the poet of playing the role of the Devil's Advocate." But neither of these versions seems to offer a satisfactory explanation. For, in spite of his apparent interest in the popular aspect of sex, Donne did not parade immorality and nor can it be said, in any fairness to him, that it was a morbid obsession with him. As has already been pointed out, sex was a mystery to him and he viewed it in a mystic's light. To begin with, he might have felt interested in it as a matter of biological necessity and might have even felt "violently the demands of his own reproductive instincts."⁸ But, if so, he must have outgrown the stage quite soon because in his poems, on the whole, sex is not as much of a disturbing factor as a source and object of wonder and delight. He felt the same wonder and joy in exploring it that Columbus might have felt in first seeing land across the Atlantic. We hear a rapturous cry of wonder and thrill of exploration break forth from him rather than a grunt of one wallowing in obscenity:

*O my America! my new-found land,
My kingdom, softest when with one man man'd,
My Myne of precious stones, My Emperie,
How blest am I in this discovering thee.*

(Elegie XIX)

About Donne's mystic inclinations there can be no doubt. This mysticism, however, did not express itself in his theological and religious pieces only. It fostered in him a mystic's attitude. Dean Inge has defined mysticism as "the attempt to realise, in thought and feeling the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal."⁹ 'Contemplation' is one of the means to realise this end and Donne in his contemplation of sex was attempting to

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5. Works. Epithalamion made at Lincolns Inn, l. 12.
 6. Lewis, C. S. Donne and Love Poetry in the XVIIth Century (Seventeenth Century Studies Presented to Grierson, Oxford—1938).
 7. Hunt, C. Donne's Poetry, pp. 14-15.
 8. Potter, G. R. John Donne's discovery of himself, Essays in Criticism. and series, California Univ.
 9. Quoted by I. Husain. "Mystical Element in the Metaphysical Poets of the XVIIth Century." (Oliver & Boyd—1948), p.23.

do it. He took sex and love as synonymous words. A realization of the secrets of the human love was, therefore, as good as realizing the secrets of man's temporal existence. Such a view induced in him a sort of sex-mysticism which beams through his works. As he was already familiar with the processes of religious mysticism, he tried to approximate this sex-mysticism with the former as much as possible. He was also conversant with the three stages of Christian mystical life—the purgative, the illuminative and the unitive—and was inclined to incorporate these stages in his sex-mysticism as well. Seen in this light, his poems of jest, in which he seems to relish obscenity, may be said to be an attempt to purge his love of its earlier base and vulgar associations. In a mood of laxity he could sing:

*I Can love both faire and browne,
Her whom abundance melts, and her whom want betraies,*
(*The Indifferent*)

or

*O perverse sexe, where none is true but shee,
Who's therefore true, because her truth kills mee.*
(*Twicknam garden*)

or

*One might but one man know;
But are other creatures so?*
(*Confined Love*)

This mood of cynicism and looseness might be found more fully worked out in poems like 'Loves Alchymie', 'Loves diet' and Elegies No. III & XVIII. These poems deal with the physical aspects of love—what was usually implied then by the word 'sex'. But, these outpourings seem to have had a cathartic effect also; and once he had written about them, he was purged of the baser passions. Henceforth, physical senses would not misappropriate all attention to themselves. The sensuous aspect, having been purged, the second stage—illuminative—set in. Now, it is a different strain in which the poet expresses himself:

And now good morrow to our waking soules.
(*The good morrow*)

or

*If, as I have, you also doe
Vertue 'attir'd in woman see,
And dare love that, and say so too,
And forget the Hee and Shee:*
(*The undertaking*)

or

Some lovely glorious nothing I did see
(*Aire and Angels*)

OR

*When love, with one another so
Interinanimates two soules,
That abler soule, which thence doth flow,
Defects of lonelinesse controules*

(The Extasie)

It is this state of illumination which ultimately revealed to Donne the divine aspects of love. Love taught him "The skill of specular stone."¹⁰ This was no idle speculation, at least, for the poet; because Love did give him an extraordinary power and made him something of a clairvoyant. Walton narrates how Donne, while staying in Paris, saw the apparition of his wife walking across his room with a dead baby in her arms which on subsequent inquiry was corroborated to have been true since Mrs. Donne at that very hour had been delivered of a still child. The feelings of frustration and cynicism disappeared, yielding place to a serener mood and a clearer vision of what was formerly all lost in confusion. A sense of mystic joy followed and the truth about love dawned upon the poet:

*This Ecstasie doth unperplex
(We said) and tell us what we love, (Ibid)*

Knowledge of Truth produces in the mystics' minds supreme indifference to every thing else. Ultimately, Donne also realized the Truth of Love and declared :

*She' is all States, and all Princes, I,
Nothing else is,
(The Sunne Rising)*

All sense of duality disappeared because 'thou' and 'I' merged into one common Entity and the true lovers could claim with some justification:

*The Phoenix riddle hath more wit
By us, we two being one, are it.*

(P. 15)

Love which began with sex, at last, transcended the regions of senses, it grew as pure as the Angels themselves :

*Difference of sex no more wee knew,
Then our Guardian Angells doe;*

(P. 63)

This complete union was not a momentary affair. It was a perpetual thing and admitted of no breach:

*Our two soules therefore, which are one,
Though I must goe, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to avery thinnesse beate.*

(P. 50)

The bliss of union is eternal and "This no tomorrow hath, nor yesterday."¹¹ Now love is supreme and the passage of time leaves it undamaged and untouched. Hours, days, months and Seasons begin to seem as mere "rags of time".¹²

We notice a definite process of evolution in the development of Donne's sex-mysticism. The latter had for him the same validity and importance as any branch of philosophy had, and like a true mystic, be conceived of sex-force as something living and active. He believed that an unravelling of the mysteries of sex awakened the human soul and led it to supreme knowledge. Such an elaborate and calculated view can hardly be called an "obsession" in the sense that Potter seems to use it. Donne was essentially a mystic. But in his earlier life, the contemporary social trappings, his adventurous undertakings and ambitious qualities did not allow these latent virtues a free play. Sex being a subject of the keenest interest to the gallants then, Donne was also fascinated by it and like the others carried this interest into practical life. But, the serious cast of his mind discovered something more—philosophical and even mystical—in it. Later on, when he came to be more intimately interested in religion, Christian mysticism replaced this sex-mysticism. However, ideas associated with the latter were still uppermost in his mind, and images derived from sex spontaneously found their way into his religious poems, Essays in Divinity and the Sermons. For this he had also a precedent and authority in the writings of holy men like St. Augustine. Thus the two aspects of Donne's life present neither a jarring note and nor a contrast. This Christian mysticism was a logical culmination of his earlier attitude of mystifying the sex. Therefore, sex-imagery employed by him is not by way of a superimposition. It was a natural mode of thought and expression for him.

In the popular opinion sex was the biological force causing mutual attraction between man and woman and was an end in itself. But Donne conceived of it in terms of a mystic force as well, having the spiritual union and emotional integration as its ultimate end. Strangely enough, the two poles of this emotional charge were not, to the mind of the poet, equilateral. He saw woman as removed two shifts from Reality and therefore lacking in divine quality:

11. Works. The Anniversarie, l. 8

12. Works. The Sunne Rising, l. 10

*Man to Gods image; Eve, to mans was made,
Nor finde we that God breath,d a soule in her,*

P. 201

She rarely possessed the 'active good'; "For Art and Nature this in them withstood".¹³ Therefore, the 'pull' exerted by her was bound to be less pure in quality than that emanating from the opposite end.

*Just such disparitie
As is twixt Aire and Angells puritie,
'Twixt womens love, and mens will ever bee.*

(*Aire And Angels*)

This seems to negativate Donne's mystical philosophy of sex. The more popular view is that he underrated the intellectual powers of women; and he made no secret of it: "Hope not for mind in women. . ." (*Loves Alchymie*, l. 23) Simpson has sought to offer an explanation by suggesting that: "In fact, Donne theoretically despised women as a sex, but in practice he loved and honoured individual women."¹⁴ Even then she seems to maintain a part of the allegation. But she admits elsewhere that the attitude in spite of "its superficial inconsistency" had an "underlying fixity".¹⁵ The correct interpretation seems to be that the element of dandyism and theatricality in him made him only pretend to be cynical and obscene. Perhaps he did so because he was, as Grierson has suggested, "eager to startle and delight his fellow students by the fertility and audacity of his wit."¹⁶ Besides, a desire to purge himself of cynicism may also have induced this wilful working up of the humour. So, at bottom, the attitude is not inconsistent as a hasty judgment might make it appear. At times he seemed to think of woman as a mere tool of enjoyment: "Open to all searchers, unpriz'd, if unknowne."¹⁷ But these are the moments when he only simulates cynicism and then they are ephemeral. The basic image that he has employed here is that of "usage." This usage was very often to be free and common; and he added a little later:

Women are made for men, not him, nor mee.

He expressed this point of 'usage' more cogently in *Elegy XVIII* and compared woman to gold, which may be valued for more than one reason; but it is loved by the worldlings for its use only:

13. *Works*. To the Countesse of Huntingdon, p. 201 see lines 10-12.

14. Simpson, E. M. *A study of the prose works of John Donne*—Oxford 1924, p. 63.

15. *Ibid*—P.62.

16. Grierson, H. J. C. *Introduction to Donne's Poetical works*, Vol. II, Oxford 1912.

17. *Works*. *Elegie III (Change)* l. 6.

*But if I love it, 'tis because, 'tis made
By our new nature (Use) the soul of trade.*

Women are again compared in another context to mines which yield gold, and in their case the yield is their enjoyment. By the same line of argument women are called "Indias of spice and Mync."¹⁸ Women, therefore, are neither good nor bad; their only use is that "All, all may use" (P. 32, l. 12). The same idea of 'usage' underlies the metaphor (used for woman) of the fruits to be tasted, eaten or left over as one chose to do; and the poet did not hesitate to proclaim: "*But they are ours as fruits are ours;*" (P. 33, l. 19) Again, the idea of 'usage' is employed in the metaphors borrowed from cultivation used in this connection. This image is repeated in some of the poet's sanest moods as well. The soul of the devotee is represented as a maiden crying eagerly to the three-personed God:

Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee

(P. 328)

This 'usage' in order to be the richest should be "open to most men."¹⁹ Thus, there is a basic consistency in his attitude towards women in spite of the apparent diversity. This consistency has been achieved through the images which have an association with 'usage.'

In his unguarded moments Donne shows a fondness for the naked beauty and even seems to have mused over the visualization. But this visualization has more of ecstasy and wondrous joy as the resultant experience than any carnal satisfaction.

*Full nakedness! All joyes are due to thee,
As souls unbodied, bodies uncloth'd must be,
To taste whole joyes.*

(P. 121, lines 33-35)

It is significant to note here that the full nakedness does not recall to the poet's mind any physical image. The first image that emerges on his consciousness is that of the "souls unbodied." This in itself bespeaks the fact that the "whole joys" are mystical in nature rather than physical. Perhaps, "rank, itchy lust" might have enjoyed the "nakedness and bareness"; but Donne was immediately reminded of the fact that

*At birth, and death, our bodies naked are;
And till our Soules be unapparelled
Of bodies, they from blisse are banished*

(Satyre I-lines 42-44)

18. Works. The Sunne Rising, l. 17.

19. Works. P. 330, No. XVIII, l. 14.

Nakedness, once again, is followed by a mention of the word "soul", and this makes it the source of an innocent, natural delight.

The Seventeenth Century English literature abounds in references to theories of microcosm and macrocosm which seem to have been taken at the time as the established truths. Donne also imbibed the taste of the age and employed the idea as a poetical conceit. He observed that

*The man is a world; in which, Officers
Are the vast ravishing seas; and Suiters,
Springs;.....
.....These selfe reasons do
Prove the world a man, in which, Officers
Are the devouring stomacke, and Suiters
The excrements, which they voyd.*

(Satyre V, 13-19)

Again, it is significant to note that Donne borrowed metaphors from the parts of a woman's body rather than those of a man, and took them as the epitome of the various geographical regions of the world. As a corollary to it, the different parts of the human body could be also best described through geographical metaphors. However, equally remarkable is the fact that, even though preoccupied with sex, Donne was concerned with its wonder-arousing quality as distinct from the sensuous aspects of the vital parts in the human organism.

It is only in three Elegies (Nos. VIII, XVIII & XIX) that he attempted an unabashed and vivid description of the woman's body and it has very little of a sensuous appeal. Forest of Ambushes, first Meridian, rosy Hemisphere, faint canaries, glorious promontory, boundless sea, some Island moles, India, Atlantic Navel—these are some of the metaphors used for the different parts of the woman's body. Here the basic idea is that of wonder and exploration. Of course, the image of the Atlantic navel may remind one of the very strong currents which are a peculiarity of this ocean. Similarly, the metaphor of 'India' used for the nether parts of the body may suggest the idea of heat and fertility, but ultimately it is the sense of wonder that is stimulated here. A little later in the same elegy he uses the image of 'Two purses' (l. 92 p. 119) and it is here only that a sensuous visual picture of the part concerned is made vivid; but the subsequent images of 'tribute' and 'Exchequer,' once more, redirect the imagination of the reader to the sense of awe and majesty. The images employed, thus, show a mood of ecstatic devotion rather than one of mere visual enjoyment of the contours of the human body.

In Elegy XIX also the basic picture in the poet's mind was that of a naked woman; but this lacks the quality of rich sensuousness which one might expect to find here. There are a few irreverent and

vulgar hints, (The foe oft-times 1.3 and Those set our hairs) but, no where do we get any full-blooded picture of a real woman. What we hear of instead is "a far fairer world" and "such beauteous state" only. This faint and intangible picture reflects the creative force behind the poem as that of an adolescent mind for which the mysteries of sex are all a wonder. The poet seems to have this sense of wonder and the revealing sight of the naked body touched him only mystically. These sensations have no suggestion of the aching nervous tension that we usually associate with such a situation. The only physical sensation produced was the desire to let the hands go about the body of the woman to explore it:

*Licence my roaving hands, and let them go,
Before, behind, between, above, below.*

This is the maximum of the physical action that he thinks of at the moment because all his senses and physical capacities are now overtaken by a flux of wonder and joy. Almost in a trance he cries out, "O my America! my new-found land," "My Myne of precious stones, My Emperic." The image of the cold and bright 'precious' stones is a very pertinent indication of the poet's physical senses being benumbed by a vision of perfect beauty. The climax has been reached and the poet feels inexpressibly blest:

How blest am I in this discovering thee

He is in the very paradise of joy. This joy, one should remember, lies in "discovering" the beauty of nakedness. The last six lines of the poem present an anti-climax because Donne could be at his best only as long as he employed the images that came naturally to him. The picture of unsophisticated innocence and perfect devotion to the object which was conjured by the image of "roaving hands," moving in abandonment "Before, behind, between, above, below," vanishes. But the image grips the reader's imagination and clearly indicates the nature of the poet's interest in the subject. Woman's body is an unmapped sea and the greatest joy consists in exploring and 'discovering' it.

So far we have discussed Donne's attitude to sex and his treatment of the physical parts and charms of the woman's body. Action is the logical end of deliberation, so a study of his attitude to sex would remain incomplete without referring to his treatment of the sex act. Here again, one notices a remarkable consistency in Donne's attitude to sex in spite of the apparent vagaries of his moods. The love-act is the act of supreme union: "I am thou, thou art me." But even under the stress of this mystifying experience Donne does not underrate the function of the body. Souls must 'descend'

*T' affections and to faculties,
Which sense may reach and apprehend,
Else a great Prince in prison lies.*

(*The Exstasie*-lines 66-68)

Woman can achieve perfection only when she has enjoyed the love act and Donne considered this experience as the prerequisite of perfect womanhood. He has argued to this effect in his "Epithalamion made at Lincoln's Inn," and even in spiritual love—between man and God—the height of joy is described through the image of the sex-act.

Nor ever chast, except you ravish me

or

*Why doth the devill then usurpe on mee?
Why doth he steale, nay ravish that's thy right?*

(P. 322)

The act of 'ravishing' is the seal of acknowledgment and acceptance and as such it is the highest form of physical activity. He even thinks of the act in terms of a delicate handling of the wounds by a Surgeon.²⁰ The basic idea at the root of the conceit is that of 'searching' and of the balmy, healing effect of a sovereign's touch. The act requires the same sense of perfect self-surrender, trust and devotion that precedes the religious worship. The love-act of true lovers is to be as "devoutly nice" as

Are Priests in handling reverent sacrifice

(P. 92, line 50)

Thus, the act is comparable to 'reverent sacrifice' and devotional service. Here one is reminded of the poet's belief, which he shared in common with the age, that each physical indulgence shortened the life by a day:

*Nature decreed (since each each such Act, they say,
Diminisheth the length of life a day)*

(*Farewell to love*-ll. 24-25)

It would hardly be wise to indulge in this fatal sport. But like all true adventurers (sailors) who must 'endamage' their lives, Donne too would risk his life to explore the truth and do something which seemed to be almost enjoined upon man by Nature. The process had therefore a sanctity for the poet and he used for it metaphors borrowed from religious worship. He imagined of the bridal chamber as the "faire Temple" with a "sacred bosome" where she was mystically joyn'd²¹ to the bridegroom. The bridegroom was accordingly described through the image of "The priest on his knees." The

20. Works. See Elegy VII, l. 51.

21. Epithalamion, p. 142, l. 39.

bride was supposed to be "an appointed lambe" ready to make "a pleasing sacrifice" on "loves altar". These images, therefore, reveal a sense of reverence which lies at the bottom of what may appear to be an objectionable and even sensual treatment of sex. Superficially, he seemed to share with his age the vulgar and licentious interest in the oppsite sex, but at heart, he had no sympathy with this attitude. He struck a note of singular modernity in his interpretative treatment of the subject.

One of his favourite images for the love-act was that of tilling. The image seemed to be convincing to him for more than one reason. Paracelsus, from whom the poet derived the basic images and ideas for several of his poems, approved of it and had actually used this metaphor²² in some of his writings. But another reason why Donne employed the metaphor was the fact that the image of tilling could fully express his philosophy of sex. The concept of tilling presupposes a deliberate, voluntary act with full foreknowledge of the result. It is not a sporadic activity. The tiller and the soil are mutually indispensable and tilling of the earth is a productive and fruitful labour. The tiller is also presupposed to have perfect health and sanity of mind. He tills the soil only as long and as often as necessary. Overdoing, like underdoing, would defeat the very purpose of cultivation. As such, it is an art and requires skilful and careful handling. Donne appreciated these peculiarities of the sex-act. This latter was in a sense a deliberate and premeditated act with a certain quality of devotion. Man and woman were mutually interdependent and would lie idle without each other. But their physical union should be a soft, delicate process and any departure from this artistic conception of the exercise would debase it into an unnatural and insane act like the tilling of the rocks. Therefore his bitterest invective against the rival in love was:

*Is not your last act harsh, and violent
As when a Plough a stony ground doth rent?*

(Elegie VIII, ll. 47-48)

Woman is, time and again, compared to "a plow-land" and the "best land."²³ These same ideas seemed to suggest the metaphor of farming" for judiciousness and prudence:

22. Murray, W. A. Donne and Paracelsus (Review of Eng. Studies Vol. 25, 1949) Paracelsus wrote: "Man and woman are one body. Just as the farmer is useless without his field, and the field in turn without its farmer, but together both are one unit, such is the whole human being, not man alone, or woman alone, but both together constitute one unit, from which is generated a whole human being." (Quoted on p. 120).

23. Works. See Elegy III, l. 17 and Elegy II, l. 36.

*Wee are but farmers of ourselves, yet may,
If we can stocke ourselves, and thrive uplay
Much, much deare treasure for the great rent day.*
(P. 186, lines 31-33)

The 'Plough' to him was the symbol of the explorer's intellectual alertness. It was a peculiarly masculine activity and the image was quite often used as a metaphor for the study of the mystical theology:

*Thou, whose diviner soul hath caus'd thee now
To put thy hand unto the holy Plough*
(To Mr. Tilman)

The other images used for the sex-act were borrowed from warfare, navigation, chemistry, astronomy and the banquets, and, sometimes rivers and seas also served as metaphors.

Since Donne conceived of perfect conjugal union as an artistic process, it was to him a methodical affair. A proper prelude to the act was highly desirable and even essential to make the activity really artistic and joy-giving. The basic image, in this connection, in his mind was that of a bridegroom gently wooing, persuading and conquering the heart and body of the bashful bride. This "masculine persuasive" force would produce the proper atmosphere and make further progress sweet and worth-enjoying. 'Kisses' were the symbols of innocent and perfect love and did "mingle soules."²⁴ Seen in this light, the "lamenting kiss sucks two soules and vapors Both away."²⁵ The image of 'kisses' has thus a direct link with the very sources of life. But, these kisses are not full-blooded and warm; they are cold and innocent like the billing of the Turtle Doves. (see Elegy VIII. l. 49)

But kisses alone do not constitute the actual prelude to the mystic experience of supreme joy. 'Embracing' is a more effective stage and Donne used this image along with the former to indicate the full process. The underlying idea in the latter is that of interlocking, 'entwining' or imprisoning:

Thyne armes imprison me, and myne armes thee
(Elegy XX-l. 31)

He used it more often than the image of kissing and felt more impassioned while talking of it than of the latter. To him an 'embrace' was the token of sincerity and jealousy in love which is the touchstone of the intensity of the passion. The lovers must always have a sense of their exclusive rights over each other. Embracing is the physical expression of this sense of property which vouchsafes against any abatement of the ardour. Furthermore, this sense of property awakens

24. Works. To Sir Henry Wotton, p. 180, l. 1

25. Works. The Expiration, l. 2

a sense of jealous watchfulness in the lovers and gives an edge to their keenness which leads one to the perfect love and makes the mutual love "mixt equally". The image of watchful wooing also supplies a clue to the poet's attitude to God. But with all his mysticism and devotion, Donne could not altogether shed off the complex "I, nones slave, of high-borne, or rais'd men".²⁶ He conceived of the mystical relationship as that between man and wife. God was the Bridegroom and the individual soul the bride to be wooed and won. The poet loved God, but it would be derogatory to his sense of self-respect to make the affair one of a single way traffic. God needed him as much as he needed God. It is obligatory on the woman to be faithful to her husband but, it is equally incumbent upon him to protect the wife and prevent her from going astray. He should rivet her attention and have her all to himself. So, God should be jealously watchful of the leanings of the devout soul. In return the 'harmonious soul' should be equally anxious to secure and keep the love of God. Reciprocity and mutual obligations are the quintessence of this love:

As thou

*Art jealous Lord, so I am jealous now,
Thou lov'st not, till from loving more, thou free
My soule: Whoever gives, takes libertie:*

(A Hymne to Christ, lines 19-22)

Thus, the devotee and the deity are interdependent and their love to be true must be reciprocal. Like the earthly husband, God should have the "tender jealousy" and secure the love of the individual soul "Least the World, Fleshe yea Devill put thee out."²⁷ Donne deified man and humanised God.

This preoccupation with the idea of 'embracing' reveals another quality of Donne's mind. The act of embracing has an association with borrowing and lending physical support: "Let our armes clasp like Ivy." (P. 102, 1-59) In spite of his participation in the Expeditions to Cadiz and Azores and his heroic endurance of pecuniary and even physical hardships that overwhelmed him immediately after his clandestine marriage, Donne had a delicate spiritual constitution. He always needed a prop to recline against. In her life-time, Mrs. Donne supplied him this much needed moral and psychological support. Later in life, his wife's death seemed to create a vacuum for him, but he tried to compensate for it through his love for God. He acknowledged it in one of his holy sonnets:

*Since she whom I lov'd hath payd her last debt,
To Nature, and to hers, and my good is dead,*

26. Works. Satyre IV, 1. 162.

27. Works. P. 330, No. XVII, 1. 14.

*And her soule early into heaven ravished,
Wholly on heavenly things my mind is sett.*
(P. 330)

The insolent rebel and the ardent cynic who coined witty conceits and spun perplexing paradoxes had, in fact, a soft and sensitive mind. Deriding, Puck-like, the human passions, perplexing their minds, often shocking their sensibilities, he even simulated an attitude of lordliness towards his readers.²⁸ He pretended to be a petty-bully in an age of bullies; but he had a heart overflowing with the milk of human kindness. Heroically he fought against the odds at his "Hospital in Mitcham," getting not what he deserved, yet helping those whom he knew to be in distress.²⁹

The Physical union to be real and perfect should be fruitful. Donne, therefore, accepted and employed metaphors derived from the reproductive process and, sometimes, even the images of the organs concerned. To him the process was a creative one and, therefore, a holy affair. The very scheme of Nature was:

Man to beget, and woman to conceive
(*The progresse of the soule* 1-216)

The function of the masculine energy was to propagate and "multiply" the "progeny" since the "Sun's hot Masculine flame

Begets strange creatures on Niles dirty slime,
(P. 317, 1-2)

The conceit of the 'masculine flame' is a striking one. The poet seems to think of the procreation as 'enkindling' and illumining that which is dark. The flame does not only illumine, but, it also burns away the impurities, as such this "masculine equal fire" is divine and "doth inspire

Into th' earths worthlesse durt a soule of gold
(P. 91, ll. 36-37)

Seen in this light, it is the noblest and happiest activity on the part of man and woman who are co-partners in this creative adventure. Conception for her is the highest honour and is "a better state" even than "virginitie."³⁰ Nature herself approves of it and even needs

28. Hunt, C. *Donne's Poetry*, (Yale Univ. Press—1954) See p. 165.

29. Simpson, E. M. *A study of the Prose works of J. Donne* (Oxford 1924) "..... at Christmas and Easter, he sent a bounty to the prisoners of London and by his gifts many who were imprisoned for small debts were released. His life was full of charity and holiness....." (p. 41). A contemporary testimony may also be noted: "His words worked much, but his example more: (Grierson. Vol. I, p. 381, l. 38).

30. Works. see Epithalamion p. 143, lines 70-80.

this process for her proper propagation. On the other hand, corruption and degeneration set in in nature only when "false coceptions fill the generall wombes." (P. 243,-386)

The wonderful decoction popularly known as 'Life' is brewed in the womb. Donne used the word 'womb' frequently and visualised it as something very much like the chemists' pot. He observed that this limbec first "Had stew'd and form'd" the "mingled bloods" of Adam and Eve.³¹ Ever since then it has been moulding the human shapes, and once even "was a strange heav'n" because it was here that

God cloath'd himselfe, and grew

(*The Litanie-V-line 42*)

The images of pregnancy and child-birth recur in Donne's poems as well as prose. Perhaps, the fact that his wife gave birth to twelve children in about seventeen years, might have had something to do with this frequent usage. The image brought to his mind some associations with the hardships, labours and pangs suffered by a woman during her pregnancy and confinement. Surely, it must have been a personal observation (of his wife) which supplied him the simile of as 'lank and thin'

As a woman deliver'd yesterday.

This birth-image was used by him for the poetic compositions also. In his verse letter to Mrs. Magadalen Herbert he called his letters "all those sons whom my brain did create": and in the Second Anniversary, he promised to come out with a similar poem every year:

Yearly to bring forth such a child as this.

(l. 36)

The image was repeated in the prose works in his letter to George Gerrard "..... so is not friendship then only to be esteemed when she is delivered of a Letter, or any other real office, but in her continual propenseness and inclination to do it."

(Hawkins, p. 414)

This fondness for the image reveals a particular aspect of Donne's nature. One cannot help noticing that an affectionate parent and a vigilant guardian alone could speak of children with so much of tenderness. This, once again, proves that, in fact, he was not the licentious young man "wallowing in" sex which he pretended to be in his lighter moods, but was rather a responsible and sociable person fully alive to the delicate aspects and values of the domestic life.

31. Works. see *The Progresse of the soule*, p. 315, stanza L

He employed the image of 'pregnancy,' invariably, in a reverential tone and also used the metaphors derived from midwifery in the same style. But his predilection for the former bespeaks a mystical attitude on his part. The image of pregnancy is represented by 'swell' or 'swol'n' which has the idea of rotundity and 'orbity.' This grows all the more significant in the light of the theory accepted by the scholastic philosophers that roundness was the symbol of perfection. Donne was in certain respects deeply influenced by them and like them conceived of the soul as a circle.³² The earth had been lately discovered to be round in shape ("At the round earths imagin'd corners, blow") but the heavens had also been considered to be so and had long enjoyed

Their round proportion embracing all.

(P. 239, l. 252)

For the medieval Scholars a circle was the emblem of God Himself. Donne also subscribed to the view³³ and passionately believed it to be true. In one of his sermons he explained:

"His Sun, and Moon and Starres (Emblems and Instruments of Blessings) move circularly and communicate themselves to all (Above all, the Church which is Christ's) chariot moves in that communicable motion circularly."³⁴

Roundness being the sign of perfection, pregnancy too could be considered as a symbol of the latter. It was the perfection of not only the woman and the fulfilment of her mission; but, it was also the consummation of man. The cycle of life was completed only in this latter state. Life came to man from the womb when he was in the embryo form and he repaid this debt by injecting new life into another womb. The very physical rotundity of contours of the body of an expectant mother was, therefore, the mark of perfection. This fondness for the visual image of roundness demonstrates the mystical pattern of Donne's mind.

III

Science and New Philosophy were the other important sources from which Donne borrowed ideas and conceits. His age experienced an unprecedented intellectual awakening and New Learning became the god of the day. An exceedingly intelligent and well-read man as the poet was, he assimilated it and was fascinated by the startling quality of this knowledge. Of this new science, Chemistry attracted him the most. This branch of science had been recently reclaimed from old

32. Works. see *Obsequies to the Lord Harrington*, p. 274, l. 105.

33. Works. *Upon the Annunciation and Passion*, p. 334, lines 2-4.

34. Smith, L. P. *Donne's Sermons* (O. U. P.-1920), No. 78 p. 134.

Philosophy by the genuine scientists and it had been set on a firm footing as an independent and respectable branch of scientific study. Some old associations, however, still lingered on. The alchemist was still considered to be the man busy in fantastically transmuting some base metal into gold. Donne was fully aware of the hollowness of the extravagant claims of such chemists and he knew that "alchymie" was mere "mimique" of wealth³⁵ and he admitted in *Loves Alchymie*, that 'no chemic yet th' Elixir got'. (1.7) But the older conception of the science had a mystic charm for him because the Alchemist claimed to purify the metals and even to change copper into gold; and it was believed that he with "one spark could make good things of bad."³⁶ It was a mysterious process and excited the poet's wonder so that he often mentioned the words 'Elixir', 'Elixir-like' and fondly toyed with the notion that the 'chemique' can transubstantiate All states to gold. (P. 244 ll. 417-418)

He was, however, equally aware of the more recent and modern function of the chemist and the utility of his work. He did feel attracted by the 'Almighty Chemics' who had "by subtle fire a soule out-pull'd" from each mineral.³⁷ This might have been done by the scientists for the sake of curiosity, but it had a utilitarian aspect too. It could also extract "from herbs the pure part" having some medicinal value. In this way Chemistry had a three-fold charm for him. It was a scientific process, it had some utilitarian value with still greater possibilities of exploitation and, finally, it gratified the mystic in the poet.

In Donne's poetry there are two basic images associated with chemistry. These are the ideas of 'melting' and 'burning' and all the other images that he borrowed from it emanate from either of these. 'Melting' was necessary for 'mixing' the substances and obtaining a new 'concoction' and 'Mixture' of things.³⁸ The idea of 'melting' brought in the ancillary images of vapours and distillation. As such, 'melting' represented purification which presupposed the agency of a melting-pot, the "still" or the "limbec". Metaphors based on the latter are fairly profuse in his verse.

The idea of burning is yet another basic image that was quite frequently employed by Donne. Burning requires 'fire' and so the 'chemiques masculine fire', 'glorious flame', 'fit fuel' and the 'furnace' came in as some other relevant images. He seems to have had a special reason for his fondness for the metaphor of burning. Impurities might

35. Works. p. 11, l. 24.

36. Works. see p. 317, lines 13-14.

37. Works. P. 97, lines 44-45.

38. Works. see *The Extasie*, lines 27 and 34.

be washed away by water; but, they could be permanently removed through fire only. Burning alone could be a permanent cure, and in the 'Good Friday,' he prayed to Christ to

Burne off my rusts, and my deformity

Physics had not yet come to its own as a separate branch of scientific study, and as such, it is not surprising to find that it did not occupy any important place in Donne's almanac of learning. But, it is interesting to note that a recurring image borrowed from this branch of science pertains to magnetism.

And thou like Adamant draw mine iron heart.

(P. 322, l. 14)

or

Toucht with a Loadstone, and as Steel dost new motions feele?

(P. 351-l. 8)

This pull exerted by the 'adamant' is a subtle force and temperamentally Donne was interested in all mysterious and subtle things. They stirred and challenged his intellect and he seemed to accept this challenge. But, he failed to unravel the baffling mysteries, partly, because of his inadequate specialised knowledge of the particular science, and partly, because he was over-whelmed by its mysterious charm. He was fascinated by the 'subtle fire' of the 'chemic' just as he felt attracted by the subtle force of the magnet, yet he could not probe deeper as he could do in the matters of which he had some specialised knowledge. This seems to be a probable explanation of the very limited range of his images derived from the natural sciences.

The Science of Medicine also provided a few images but their range is comparatively narrow. It was, perhaps, inevitable, since he had no thorough knowledge of the subject even though he seemed to have been interested in the controversy between the Galenists and the advocates of the theories of Paracelsus. He is said to have read the latter,³⁹ but he could not claim any special knowledge of the subject. Consequently, the images that he derived from physiology and medicine are rather thin in quality and limited in number. Broadly speaking, they may be classified under four heads: Images based on (i) anatomy, (ii) diseases, (iii) others concerning the therapeutic practice and, finally, (iv) images pertaining to post-mortem.

Donne was much interested in the structure of the human body and he even used the word 'anatomy' quite frequently and called one of his poems 'An Anatomy of the World' in which he tried to analyse and survey the corruption and disintegration in the contemporary

39. Murray, W. A. Donne and Paracelsus. See pp. 117-118 (Review of Eng. Studies—Vol. 25).

society. In some other contexts, he spoke of "the muscle, sinew, and vein" and "the rafters of my body." He was particularly conscious of the importance of the "sinewy thread my brain lets fall" and considered it to be the co-ordinator of the various 'faculties' in man. He used also the image of the "pitch" which "strings fast the little bones of neck, and back" as a metaphor for the spinal chord. Here again, we notice the mystic tendencies of the poet since the 'sinewy thread' was a subtle and even a wonderful thing. Donne recalled this image on a number of occasions. The metaphors derived from diseases are not however wide in range. Agues, hectic fevers, long consumption, calentures and dropsy are the common maladies mentioned in his poems. But of these, the picture of the 'hydroptique' patient occurs more than four times (this frequency is more than that of any other single disease image). It is also interesting to note that the disease did not arouse in the poet feelings of pity and compassion. On the other hand, it was invariably in a sense of contempt that he used this word⁴⁰ since the image suggested to him an association with meanness and avarice.

The clinical images are represented in the words like 'Restorative', 'cordial', 'purging', 'searching of the wounds' by the surgeons, bleeding the vein and the picture of the hospital. But sometimes, the remedies would fail and the bodies might be dissected to furnish a study of the patient's anatomy. The doctors might "cut up to survey each part" to allay the "friends' curiosity" when the physicians could not diagnose the real cause of death.⁴¹ In some cases the clinical metaphors culminated in the mortuary ones—tombs and graves.

Astronomy was another important field of study which Donne exploited for his images. In fact, he had a more intimate knowledge of the subject than of either chemistry or physiology. He was familiar with the charts and diagrams used by the astronomers who divided "The Firmament in eight and forty sheires" and studied carefully the movements of the Sun "impal'd within a Zodiack," which were restricted to the "twelve Signes awake to watch his steps".⁴² He also knew about the various constellations of stars and even subscribed to the scholastic view that every heavenly sphere had an "intelligence" which was responsible for the movement of the planet. These planets could, sometimes, interact and possessed gravitational force. But, strangely enough, Donne was inclined to accept the medieval views on astronomy and looked upon this gravitation with suspicion and regarded it as a sign of abnormalcy since the planets

40. Works. see p. 44, l. 6; P. 84, l. 6; P. 112, l. 42; & P. 275, l. 126.

41. Works. see *The Dampe*, lines 1-3.

42. Works. see *The Anatomie of the World*, p. 239 lines 258-267.

by being growne
Subject to forraigne motions, lose their owne
 (Goodfriday, lines 3-4)

This loss of intrinsic motive power in a planet would mean a catastrophe. Furthermore, he accepted the medieval theory that the heavenly bodies affected human destiny and character and the worldly objects:

On man heavens influence workes not so,
But that it first imprints the ayre,
 (P. 53, lines 57-58)

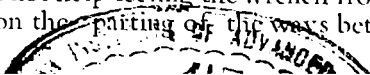
He was, however, not unaware of the latest theories of great scientists like Copernicus who proved that the earth moves round the sun. But, on the whole, Donne's attitude towards these new ideas was sceptical. He could not reconcile himself to these views and even considered them as unnatural and shocking as the subservience of the mind to the body:

As new Philosophy arrests the Sunne,
And bids the passive earth about it runne,
So wee have dull'd our minde, it hath no ends;
Onely the bodie's busie, and pretends;
 (To the Countess Bedford, P. 196, ll. 37-40)

The 'new Philosophy' and its theories had a disenchanting effect on the poet who had been brought up upon the medieval doctrines and had imbibed the mystical dogma. It created a conflict between faith and reason—between Religion and Science. He could not resolve this conflict and it grew to be an agonising perplexity for him. He could not see his way through and cried in agony:

'Tis all in peeces, all cohaerence gone;
All just supply, and all Relation;
 (P. 237, lines 213-214)

His attitude towards astronomy shows that Donne was rather conservative in matters of philosophy although, by instinct, he was passionately inquisitive. So he did not blink over the happenings around him and was in his own way sensitive to the intellectual ferment gathering around him. He could not help taking cognizance of these developments; but the conservative in him did not allow him to accept all these innovations in the face of a patent hostility from the dogmatic beliefs. At the same time, he could not suppress Reason either; it would be unlike him. His 'hunger for science' being really great, it was a painful and disturbing experience for him to feel that he could not reconcile Reason with Belief. He would stick to the latter, but, could not help feeling the wrench from the former. Intellectually he stood on the parting of the ways between the mystic faith



and Reason. He gave his heart to the one, but, the head rebelled and swung to the other side. His instinctive love for balance and order, however, seemed to resolve the dilemma by extolling Reason as against the traditional opinion; and he discovered that true joy lay in motion—and so after all, science was, true in taking the earth as a rotary sphere:

*And were the doctrine new
That the earth mov'd this day would make it true;
For every part to dance and revell goes*

(*Epithalamion*, P. 139, ll. 186-188)

Donne mentioned in his poems a few astronomical terms and names of the heavenly objects. The images borrowed from these were: galaxy, constellation, sphere, zone and eclipse. Galaxy presented the pictures of whiteness, numerousness and homogeneity. The primroses on the hill because of "their form, and their infinity," seemed to "Make a terrestriall Galaxie",⁴³ and on another occasion a view of the beloved's cheeks recalled to the poet's mind "whitenesse of the Galaxy."⁴⁴ Another allied visual image was that of the constellations and it had some underlying association with brightness and numerousness like those evoked by the 'galaxy'. But the constellations lack homogeneity. They present a conglomeration of heterogenous and luminous objects. So he invited the would-be bride to put on rubies, Pearls, and diamonds and to make "Thy selfe a constellation, of them All." (p. 128, l. 36) It was not only "their blazing" quality that charmed the poet; but, what struck him as still more important was a subtle unity at the bottom of the apparent variety. The pearls, rubies and diamonds, inspite of the difference in their composition, quarries and the processes of obtaining them, have the essential common point of being luminous. So the stars too may be very different from one another in nature and size inspite of the common characteristic of brightness. But true beauty lives only in unity and harmony since "Perfection is in unitic. (P. 116-1.9) The images of meteors and comets were also employed by Donne though only casually. But instability and vagueness were the chief associations suggested by the former:

*Who meteor-like, of stufte and forme perplext,
Whose what, and where, in disputation is,
(Verse letter to the C. of Bedford, p. 198, lines 3-4)*

So he dismissed the comets as "vagrant transitory comets" and "seldom comets" and "they are rare". (P. 201) The fact that the comets are rare and therefore strange phenomena might have attracted him, but their being 'transitory' and not round in shape, perhaps, seemed

43. Works. The Primrose being at Montgomery. P. 61, l. 6.

44. Works. Sappho to Philaenis, p. 126, l. 60.

to devaluate them for him and he did not derive many images from them.

The individual planets conjured the mental pictures of distance, beauty and intrinsic power. These three are the elements of spirituality and, thus, Donne called them celestial bodies in a richer sense than the traditional one. Like the various parts of a lovely bride's body the spheres also seemed to be beautiful. But something more interesting about the spheres was their "trepidation". This suggested the idea of the native power of the planets which lent them the quality of musical revolution rather than any sense of cataclysm and upheaval, since the "trepidation" of the stars was "innocent" and harmless. The vision so enjoyed is characteristic of Donne's mind which blended the mystic thought and mood with a realistic attitude.

The metaphor of eclipse was derived from astronomy but it is comparatively freer of the medieval trappings and was scientifically true. The basic concept involved was that of obtrusion of a foreign object and he explained the lunar eclipse in the following terms:

*Which as the Earth betweene the Moone and Sun
Eclipse the light which Guyana would give*

(*To Mr. R. W.*, p. 210, lines 24-25)

This 'obtrusion' had also an implication of imperfect disguise which interrupted and distorted the perception of Reality. A redeeming feature, however, was the fact that this dislocation of the natural process was only a temporary affair. The poet could 'eclipse' the "beams" of the "saucy pedantic wretch" or "the unruly sun" by obtruding the eye-lids between the sun and the retina of the eye, though it would be for "a wink" only. The concept of the eclipse, as explained above, obliquely suggests the image of a linear movement. It is interesting to remember that to Donne a movement in a straight line in the natural phenomena was not only an oddity, but, a mark of ill-health and corruption. In one of his sermons he argued: "His hailstones and his thunderbolts and his showers of blood (emblems and Instruments of his judgments) fall down in a direct line and affect and strike some one person or place."⁴⁵ Elsewhere, he maintained that God created everything in a round shape; and in his sermon on "God Proceeds Legally," he explained this point in these words:

"God hath made all things in a Roundness, from the round superficies of this earth, which we tread here, to the round convexity of those heavens, which (as long as they shall have any being) shall be our foot-stole, when we come to heaven, God hath wrapped up

45. Smith, L. P. *Donne's Sermons* (O. U. P.) p. 134.

all things in circles, and then a circle hath no Angles; there are no corners in a circle."

(*Hawkins*—pp. 435-436)

Mathematics was another important branch of scientific study in which scholars were keenly interested then. Certain arithmetical numerals, being accredited with mystic symbolism from the earliest times, had been the favourite subjects of school men. Now under the influence of the Renaissance the study of geometry received especial impetus and the puzzling geometrical shapes and diagrams captured the imagination of the learned. Besides, the logical method of proving the hypotheses further deepened this interest and it soon grew to be the craze of the intellectuals. Since the earlier scholars had indicated symmetry and proportion as the essential conditions of perfection, a "mathematical pattern of thought" was imposed upon "the multiplicity of reality," and again in the words of White, "more and more experience was reduced to a diagram, a process."⁴⁶ So strong, indeed, was this obsession with "mathematical patterns" that even poetical compositions were to be made in certain forms conforming to geometric figures. A knowledge of these was supposed to be essential to a proper understanding of the 'Art of Poetry' as is borne out by the painstaking illustrations made by George Puttenham in "The Art of English Poesie."

Donne could not remain impervious to this interest which had the additional charm of mysticism for him and offered to gratify his desire to explore and determine the nature of Reality and Perfection. Geometrical designs, especially the image of the circle, therefore became a passion with him and he even considered a circular pattern to be the symbol of perfection and grace. He used the image of the circle within a circle again and again. The underlying idea was that of unity in variety since all these circles of various sizes were supposed to be "concentric". In fact, the very cosmos appeared to have been made after this pattern. The spheres might move in their respective orbits, but they did "one heaven make."⁴⁷ They described circles within the circles. For the same reason he remembered the picture of eddies "stirr'd" and enlarged by a smaller circle and he used it as a metaphor to illustrate the process of the growth of love. He visualized vividly the 'tropic circles' and those that are formed on the poles, since these could be made only one within the other:

*Thou knowst, that though the tropique circles have
(Yea and those small ones which the Poles engrave,)*

46. White, H. C. *The Metaphysical Poets*, See Chap. III.

47. *Works*. see *Loves growth*, lines 21-23.

*All the same roundnesse, evennesse, and all
The endlessnesse of the equinocticall;*

(Obsequies to the Lord Harrington, lines 111-114)

The circular pattern, thus, had some mystical associations; but Donne's interest was not merely metaphysical. He was equally concerned with and aware of its scientific connotation too. The diameter also provided him a metaphor or two:

*Know that all lines which circles doe containe,
For once that they the Center touch, doe touch
Twice the circumfrence;—*

(P. 264, lines 436-438)

The image of the circle, naturally, brings in the picture of a pair of 'compasses'. It is interesting to consider how of all the other mathematical instruments only the 'compasses' gripped his imagination. One explanation seems to lie in the fact that compasses were used to draw the circle which was known to be the symbol of perfection. Moreover, the instrument had another symbolic value and was taken by him as the symbol of an inner harmony in the disparate objects. Its two legs seemed to be two separate things and the instrument could function only when these were set apart. But they were interdependent and worked in complete coordination:

*And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth come,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And groves erect, as that comes home*

(A valediction: forbidding mourning, lines 29-32)

The 'leaning' and 'hearkening' indicate a human behaviour and by implication point to some theosophic relation—the relation between the 'Mureed' and the 'Murshid' in Sufism. Then, the human soul too has "one foot of thy compass" "placed in heaven" and the other one in this world.⁴⁸ So there is an inner relationship between this world and the heaven, and the worldly life should not be discarded altogether. It was intrinsically at one with the existence in the heaven. Donne tried to demonstrate the kinship between mysticism and realism and the image of a pair of compasses served as a meaningful and cogent conceit. Of the shapes (other than a circle) derived from geometrical diagrams not many others appealed to him. Cubes might have had the advantage of being stable⁴⁹ but he did not feel happy with them. So the "many-angled figures" too might have been popular and the bracelets made after that pattern might have "enforced Nature," but

48. Works. P. 274, lines 107-108.

49. Works. See "The Progress of the Soul", I. 142, p. 235.

this fact did not please him.⁵⁰ Arithmetic had not much to offer by way of poetic images and he dealt in numbers only once in 'The Computation' and even there, he was concerned more with a sense of the passage of time rather than the actual numbers. In 'The Primrose' he used "true number five" and the number of ten to denote the perfect petals of the flower; but the number was more of a "mysterious number" rather than a poetic image.

Man's concern with the heavenly bodies was humanised under the impact of the Renaissance, and he felt impelled to study himself, his surroundings and his abode. This stimulated a passion for geographical studies. Successful voyages of the explorers and navigators enhanced the value of the subject which in its own right deserved the keenest attention of the learned men. Donne by his very nature was bound to toe the line and geography actually became a passion for him. This was also in keeping with his general philosophy since he never discarded the terrestrial existence as contradictory to the heavenly life. He did wish and strive to have a mystic vision of the underlying unity between the two. Besides, his 'sacred hunger for science' and insatiable thirst for wonder found a ready relief in pursuing the subject and exploiting it for poetic images. Metaphysics unravelled to him the mysteries of spirit and Divinity, and astronomy promised to unlock the gates of the cosmic lore, while sex unfolded to him the layers of the human personality and revealed new worlds within man. Geography also offered to discover to him strange lands, seas and climes, which had been seen by the navigators and sailors who returned home with the stirring tales of adventure, wonder and wealth in the distant countries. One of his personal friends, Coryat, was a great traveller and collector of curios and rarities; he even visited India where he died at Surat. These accounts of the new lands and strange countries stirred Donne's imagination. Afric, Guiana and India fascinated him in particular since they were the symbols of the Unknown and the strange as distinct from the known lands and peoples of the continent. India had become to him, indeed, a symbol of perfection, bliss and abundance. But, strangely enough, it was only a vague conception of India that he had and he confused it with "Th' Indias of spice and myne" which are the symbols of perfection. The ideas of perfect joy, abundance and fertility are suggested by the metaphor: "And sailing towards her India" (Elegy XVIII). India seemed to him as the coveted prize of all those who had "Lately launch'd into the vast sea of Arts." (To Mr. S. B. Page 211, line 4) India was "rather Paradise of Knowledge"; and it should be taken as an honest and unmistakable reference to the mystical legacy of the country and her cultural glory.

These countries and geographical regions, however, have been

treated in an unrealistic manner. We hear of the slimy Nile and the forests, but, we do not get any factual idea about their situation and topography. This clearly shows that the names had primarily a poetic appeal for him and the images recalled were poetic in nature. Climatic and such other details were not given at all, or were mentioned only casually. We find the phrases: "The hott parching clyme" (P. 122, l. 9) "tolerable Tropique clyme" (P. 39, l. 10), "temperate Regions" and "icy plocs" (P. 180, l. 12-13). But this was not a reference to any one country in particular. On the other hand, it was only a general classification of the climates. The ideas suggested by these references involve cutaneous sensations rather than any particular geographical fact. It is not only 'hot' but also 'parching' clime and brings a picture of a thirsty palate to the reader's mind. "Tropique clyme" is explained as 'tolerable' to the skin and the cold climate is represented realistically as causing the benumbing sensations produced by ice; hence, the factual image of the 'icy Poles'. Thus, in spite of its flights into the world of wonder, his imagination did not totally cut asunder with Reality.

Donne seems to have had a fairly good knowledge of geography and was conversant with some technical details. He did not only know what the Meridians, Parallels, Antipodes, hemispheres and the equinoc-tical were, but could also determine the longitudes; and fondly thought of gauging the height of love and the depth of sorrow caused by the beloved's absence:

*abroad I'll studie thee,
As he removes farre off, that great heights takes;
How great love is, presence best tryall makes,
But absence tryes how long this love will bee;
To take a latitude
Sun, or starres, are fitliest view'd
At their brightest, but to conclude
Of longitudes, what other way have wee,
But to marke when, and where the darke eclipses bee?*
(A Valediction: of the booke, lines 55-63)

He was also acquainted with the geographer's method of measuring distances and employed the metaphor to illustrate his view of prudence and human wisdom:

*Yet, when we come to measure distances,
How here, how there, the Summe affected is,
When he doth faintly worke, and when prevaile,
Onely great circles, than can be our scales:*

(P. 274, lines 115-118)

The basic image implied here is that of a scientist working on his charts and making maps to illustrate subtle and mysterious things—man grappling with the Unknown to wrest its secrets. Such images were bound to find ready acceptance by a bold intellectual adventurer like Donne; he adapted them and made them his own.

The phenomenon of the shadows diminishing in size with the ascending position of the sun in the sky struck his mind as something very suggestive and illuminating. He used it as the symbol of clearness and urged his sweet-heart to cast off hesitations and mental reservation and to take her cue from the sun:

*But, now the Sunne is just above our head,
We doe those shadowes tread;
And to brave clearnesse all things are reduc'd.*

(*A Lecture upon the shadow, lines 6-8*)

This image had a spiritual significance too. It symbolised man's nonentity (if shorn of spiritual potentialities) as against the Spiritual Force; and Donne realized it with a remarkable intensity:

We' are scarce our Fathers shadowes cast at noone

(*P. 235-l. 144*)

Objects from the physical geography—rivers, straits, promontories, islands and seas—supplied him images for the human body (See *Elegy XVIII*) and he found a comparison between the two quite convincing and realistic. Images of the straits and rivers came in more readily and he mentioned Magellan, Gibraltar and Hellespont to denote a number of situations and objects. He played on the pun implied in the meaning of the word (straits) and employed it as a symbol of difficult and dangerous navigation. Of the rivers, he made especial mention of Tagus, Po, Seine, Thames and Danube, of Sequan and of "Nile's dirty slime". The latter represented the qualities of productivity and strangeness. A river, in general, supplied him the metaphor for selfish and thankless men of Power in the world.⁵¹ It had not only the idea of ingratitude at its root but it was also suggestive of deceit, treachery and hypocrisy because "the gnawing kisses" of the river tended to denude the bank from below. In another context, the meandering river served him as a metaphor for the capriciousness and vagaries of the beloved's mood. A river's natural bed stood for the real lover, the poet, and the (traitorous bank symbolised the innocent-looking but dishonest rival who though himself consumed by the "gnawing kisses" of the stream (beloved) treacherously seduced her from "Her long kept course" (the poet-lover) and the poet could not help feeling self-pity:

51. Also see *Satyre III*, lines 103-108.

Then say I; that is shee, and this am I.

(P. 88, line. 34)

The geographical poles also provided him some images and were inseparably connected with the notion of a shorter sea-route to the East. The poles, therefore, were a standing challenge to the courage and the spirit of adventure in man:

*Hast thou couragious fire to thaw the ice
Of forzen North discoveries?*

(*Satyre III, lines 21-22*)

This indicates the two shifts on which Donne's imagination worked simultaneously. There is the realistic sense of cold in 'the icy Poles' and a sense of wonder and courage in discovering the passage to the alluring East.

But the most suggestive image derived from geography was that of the maps. As Donne was an explorer of Reality, a 'map' had naturally a special significance for him and he employed the metaphor on numerous occasions. The metaphor appealed to his sense of wonder and lent a tangible shape to what otherwise was too vast and almost infinite. How can one have an idea of Africa or Asia without having seen it on a map or a globe. The most wonderful thing about the maps was that they could show "worlds on worlds".⁵² So a map engraved on a globe was a unique design. The cartographer almost vied with the Supreme Maker in creating a world out of nothing:

*On a round ball
A workman that hath copies by, can lay
An Europe, Afrique, and an Asia,
And quickly make that, which was nothing, All,*

(*A valediction: of weeping*)

To Donne a map was the only adequate representation of Reality. There was even a sense of intensity and concentration underlying the process of map-making. He compared the human personality to the vast universe and felt that intense suffering and agony could be expressed through this image. So, Hell as compared to his own spiritual unrest and emotional suffering was a mere "recreation" and was "scarce map of this" inner world.⁵³ In his verse letter to Mr. T. W., however, he felt that his verse was a nearly perfect expression of his grief:

My verse, the strict Map of my misery.

(P. 206, line 8)

But Reality has always been beyond the grasp of man. A map may be the perfect representation of a given object and may give all the relevant contours and details; yet, of necessity, it was bound to be only an epitome of Reality. It was the Reality in miniature only. One must, however, admit that nothing better and nobler could be attempted,

52. Works. The Good Morrow, l. 13.

53. Works. Satyre IV, l. 4.

and no more effective means of representing the immeasurable Truth could be possible. So the image of a map as a medium of reflecting and capturing the Reality was at once logically sound and poetically delightful.

A map is the symbol of a relentless pursuit of truth. The sailors would keep their eyes on the map to steer across the boundless deep. To save their very lives, they had to pursue the routes shown in their maps, even, if sometimes the sea meant to deride their efforts. Donne was very fond of the image and used it to express some of his intensest moods and the most intimate experiences:

*Whilst my Physitians by their love are growne
Cosmographers, and I their Mapp, who lie
by these streights to die.
(Hymne to God my God, in my Sicknesse)*

The range of the images derived from the sciences is not very wide and for this reason the very quality of Donne's mind has been questioned from time to time. Only a few years ago a critic complained: "So much has been written about Donne's scientific curiosity and his scepticism that we wrap him up in our modern scientific consciousness. Throughout his poems the number of allusions to all the sciences is not large and their points of focus are not far apart."⁵⁴ This statement may serve as a note of caution against the tendency of an anachronistic evaluation because it is hardly fair to equate the scientific consciousness of a Seventeenth Century man with that of his counterpart today. But it is equally important to remember that the basic scientific knowledge in those days was not as rich and advanced as it is now. Therefore, in the case of Donne, what matters is not his scientific consciousness as compared with that of a modern man, but his progressive attitude towards science *vis-a-vis* the attitude of his contemporaries. Besides, what astounds a modern reader is not the actual measure of the poet's knowledge of the individual branches of science, but the spirit which he imbibed and, ultimately, brought to bear upon his poetry. After all, he did not claim to have set himself to the task of pleading for science. Consequently, the images borrowed from science may not be far apart in their points of focus (for that matter even the several branches of science did not happen to be so at the time) yet they have an intensity and compactness which recapitulate fully the complexity of his experience and moods. They were revealing, significant and delightful. And this is what the poetics then demanded.

The sea was a living reality for most of the Englishmen in the Seventeenth Century. Donne had an additional interest in it as he had been concerned twice with naval expeditions to Cadiz and Azores as a young man. He was deeply conscious of its vastness. But the

54. Hughes, M. Y. Kidnapping Donne—Essays in Criticism (Second series) California University.

memory of the sea did not thrill him. His naval experiences had been too unpleasant to be forgotten and they embittered his memory of the sea. To him the sea invariably aroused suggestions of death and destruction and he always associated with it the activity of 'swallowing' and 'devouring.' The basic idea here was that of a monster: "What sea soever swallow mee".⁵⁵ Again, the sea was the symbol of death and he declared in his "Elegie on the Lady Marckham: "Man is the World, and death th' Ocean."

The image of drowning was repeated a number of times so that even the 'tears' of the beloved reminded him of the Sea. Forbidding his lady-love to weep, he warned her:

Draw not up seas to drowne me in thy speare
(A valediction: of weeping)

Or in another context:

Powre new seas in mine eyes, that so I might
Drowne my world with my weeping earnestly
(Holy Sonnet V, p. 324, lines 7-8)

His mind was working on more than one idea at a time. The liquid quality of the tears and their being round in shape were not the only factors that justified the metaphor derived from the sea; but the turmoil in the poet's mind and soul also indicated an additional kinship between the human soul and a stormy sea.

It was not only the death-association that perturbed Donne in this regard, but he was simultaneously conscious of some other troubles as well. For instance, sea-sickness was an experience too poignant to be forgotten:

he's one that goes
To sea for nothing but to make him sick.
(Elegie XVIII, lines 2-3)

The sea-sickness embraces the kindred feeling of giddiness which might be caused by "the ship's sickness" when "the Mast Shak'd with this ague." (P. 177, lines 53-54) The basic idea is that of the skin sensitive to vibrations. It suggested, in one case, the irritation in the alimentary system of the voyager causing nausea and, in the other, a violent shaking of the mast which struck the poet's mind as the 'ague' of the ship. This cutaneous sensation (in the membrane) is closely related to taste, therefore, "sea waters fretfull salt"⁵⁶ and a "salt dropsy" that clogged the waist of the ship were not far-fetched and entirely meaningless metaphors. The briny taste also implies the irritating and "fretting" effect of salt which may cause nausea (sea-sickness). The metaphor has layer after layer of suggestions and sensations.

He had experienced the storm as well as the calm on the sea. But neither of these aspects pleased him. The "rash sudden storms" would devour everything and mock at the labour of the sailors whereas the

55. Works. A Hymne to Christ, p. 352, 1, 3.

56. Works. The Triple Fool, 1, 7.

tempestuous waves suggested to him the image of the sea-monsters gurgling in the waters which seems to be the picture conjured by lines like these:

*Pumping hath tired our men, and what's the gaine?
Seas into seas throwne, we suck in againe;*

(*The storme*, p. 177, lines 61-62)

This visual imagination gets mixed up with the touch-sense and the sense of pain:

*Compar'd to these stormes; death is but a qualme,
Hell somewhat lightsome, and the 'Bermuda calme.*

(*Ibid*, lines 65-66)

But the storm was too strong to allow any distinction between the various senses, and the breaking point was reached, leading to utter confusion:

*All things are one, and that one none can be,
Since all formes, uniforme deformity*

(*Ibid*, lines 69-71)

Ultimately, the resultant image is neither purely visual nor even purely auditory in effect. In the lines quoted above the basic image seems to be that of blanketing. The creeping sensation of being blanketed is produced and lingers in the memory. But the other side of the picture was equally grim and unrelieving. Donne called the calm sea "stupid," because in such a weather the ships would get stuck up and become as firm "as the Isles which we seek". It was a total fixity. Time itself ceased to function, because "in one place lay Feathers and dust, today and yesterday." (P. 178, lines 17-18)

Perhaps, the only good thing that the poet found in the sea was its vastness. For limitless vastness he always used the metaphor of the sea: "in this worlds sea," or the 'vast Sea of Arts.' But even the sense of vastness failed to inspire and edify him. On the other hand, it suggested a meek caution and friendly signal to the poet to turn into 'less Creekes'. It was no shame to do so, since it was simply "To do as Voyagers" (P. 211, line 6) did. Such a dispirited attitude to the sea on the part of Donne seems to be rather surprising. His predisposition for mysticism should have urged him to take a more inspired view; but his mysticism was interlarded with humanism. The vastness of the sea belittled man, ('Belittle' is too mild a word) it even demoralised him and made him feel insignificant:

*What are wee then ? How little more alas
Is man now, then before he was ? he was
Nothing; for us, wee are for nothing fit;*

(pp. 179-180, lines 51-53)

This sense of utter worthlessness sterilised man's power of comprehension and judgment and Donne was constrained to realize that on a calm sea:

We have no power, no will, no sense; I lye,
(*The calme*, line 55)

This inertia and psychological vacuity were incompatible with his positive mysticism and he would naturally feel disgusted with such a Force.

Voyages, however, had a different sort of appeal for him. The actual experience might have embittered his memory and compelled him sometimes to denounce "Long voyages" as "long consumptions", but, on numerous other occasions, he employed the metaphors taken from the voyages in some pleasant contexts; for example, life was comparable to a voyage. The sailors striving against the elements were the embodiments of courage and zeal, and their hardships symbolised the actual human struggle in this world:

Life is a voyage, and in our lifes wayes
Countries, courts, Towns are Rockes or Remoraes;
They breake or stop all ships. . .

(*Verse Letter to Sir Henry Wotton*, P. 180, lines 7-9)

Elsewhere also he likened the world to the sea: "in their voyage in this world's Sea". The end of the voyage was the end of life and a homeward sailing stood for the advancing age. Assuring the lady with the 'Autumnall face' of his steadfastness in love even in the riper years, he promised:

I shall ebbe out with them, who home-ward goe,
(*The Autumnall*, P. 94, line 50)

Voyages presuppose the use of ships; and Donne, on the whole, cherished a fondness for the latter. These evoked in his mind the image of a woman, not only because tradition assigned the feminine gender to them, but, also because they were the bearers of wealth and riches from abroad which reminded the poet of the productive capacity of the fair sex. In a voyage the sailors and the ship cannot exist in isolation with each other, so in the journey of life proper comradeship between man and woman is indispensable. But all the women are not alike. Some are loose in character and unpleasant to look at. So, all the ships were not to be admired. Some of them might be the 'torn ships' which were merely "ships wooden sepulchres" for the sailors to die in. These did not deserve the name and seemed to the poet as "carts for executions." (P. 123, l. 26) But the cleaner ships in the proper trim were a delightful spectacle. The poet felt the same tenderness for them as he felt for women and he used the image of the ship for women and vice versa. For example, he wrote in the "Confined Love":

Whoe'r rigg'd faire ship to lie in harbors,
(line 15)

In the "Air and Angels" he employed the image of an unsteady vessel to describe the ravishing beauty of his mistress. He even humanized it and feelingly said of a fleet caught in the Doldrums: "Languish our ships". (P. 179, l. 35) Of course, here the immediate picture

recalled to mind seems to be that of Samson shorn of his hair, pining and wasting away. But the underlying idea is that of beauty (masculine) and its depravation because of misery invited through infatuation. This last act showed that the sufferer did not possess intellect (male factor) and thus, inspite of his gender, was more of a woman (Seek not for mind in women) than a man. The resultant image, therefore, is that of feminine beauty. This subtle and quick shifting of the mental pictures in the very process of thinking is a peculiar characteristic of Donne's imagery.

The image of the "sailors" occurs, comparatively, less often. They presented none too happy a picture, since, the inclemencies of the weather and the hardships of the life on board a ship deformed them. The sailor would be "weather-beaten" and his hands "Perhaps with rude oars torn, or Sun-beams tann'd". But forces of nature alone were not unenviably disposed towards the sailor; to add to his woes, he was "a prey to leaders rage" and "to shot, to dearth." The sailor on a man-of-war was still worse off; for even if he survived the perils at sea and the risks of war the 'powder's blue stains' scattered over his skin and disfigured him beyond recognition. Even then there was something inspiring in the sailors' courage and spirit and the heroic "sea-discoverers" in search of the "new worlds" were objects of reverence and emulation rather than of pity.

Of the sailors' instruments and the nautical terms, 'compass', 'ballast' and 'over-freight' have been used, each more than once. The compass vouchsafed security on the seas. It was at once the symbol of Faith and of Reason, which collectively could be the best guide of man in the world. The sailors must have faith in the utility and accuracy of the compass since it is built on scientific principles (Reason). This was made amply clear in the elegy on the death of Elizabeth Drury (Anatomy of the world) when Donne suggested that Nature created her to guide the erring men:

When she observ'd that every sort of men

Did in their voyage in this worlds Sea stray,

And needed a new compasse for their way; (P. 238)

'Ballast' and 'over-freight' have been used in connection with women and they appealed to the poet because of the paradox implied therein. To make the vessel float (by making it balanced) a part of it has to be sunk below the water level by means of the ballast. This explains the complex—perhaps even the paradoxical—nature of life. Things are known by their contraries. But there should be a limit to this element of contrariety, or like the "pinnacle over-fraught" it may defeat the very purpose of ballasting. These images disclose the importance that Donne—in common with his age—attached to balance and due proportion of values in love and life. Over-balancing of any aspect or value (howsoever important) would lead to disaster. True success and real joy exist in true balance alone.

IV

Donne was brought up in an orthodox atmosphere and his family had the proud legacy of having suffered in the cause of their faith. He had been taught by a priest who belonged to a group of the Jesuits reputed for their deep theological studies. The fact of his having been born in a Roman Catholic family shut out all prospects of secular advancement, and of necessity, in the words of Smith, he became "much preoccupied with theological considerations." This interest must have been further entrenched in him because of his inquisitiveness and thirst for knowledge. Indeed, in later years it grew to be his chief concern and influenced his entire view of life. Hunt suggests that a sense of estrangement with his age produced by the intolerant attitude of the Protestant majority towards the Catholics might have also induced this religious-mindedness which made Donne think of the majority, rather revengefully, as the laity.⁵⁷ These factors collectively gave his mind and work an unmistakably religious stamp and one notices an abundance of poetic images and conceits of theological derivation.

An analysis of his theological images and conceits reveals that Donne was interested more in Christ than in God, and this is borne out by his sermons and essays in divinity also.⁵⁸ In his divine poems, we do not find any clear idea of the Divine Power. It is vague and not very convincing. In the other poems as well the Power and Quality of Divinity are mentioned only casually. In 'Obsequies to the Lord Harrington' we are told simply that "God knowes where every Atom lies" and that "God is the glass." Similarly, we learn from a line in 'A Valediction of the Book' that "All Divinity is love or wonder". On the other hand, it is comparatively, a clearer and even a visual picture of Christ that is conveyed in more than one poem. Of course, the dogmatic and mystical concept of Christ's being 'ALL' was not totally lost sight of since he viewed the Saviour as:

*That All, which alwayes is All every where,
Which cannot sinne and yet all sinnes must beare,*

(Annunciation, P. 319)

In some other contexts, Christ appeared to him as "strong Ram" and the "Mild Lamb" in the traditional manner. But in his more passionate poems a visual picture of Christ replaced the symbolic one. This view of the Saviour is, at least to the modern reader, more endearing and, aesthetically, more satisfying. One of the most vivid images of Christ in the poems of Donne was "the picture of Christ crucified" with "Teares in his eyes" and blood filling "His frownes." (P.328-XIII) This picture of Christ haunted his mind and, he exclaimed in one of the Holy Sonnets: *They kill'd once an inglorious man,*

57. Hunt, C. *Donne's Poetry*, see P. 170.

58. Hussain, I. *Mystical Element in the Metaphysical Poets*, see p. 103-104.

considered himself as one, since the saints of love discovered the mysteries of true love unknown to others. The uninstructed and uninitiated "dull sublunarylovers" were only the "layetic"⁶⁰ as compared to a true lover (like the poet). He believed that along with his beloved he would be 'canonized for Love' and the lovers-to-be would invoke their help and guidance. He imagined that his remains would be made the Reliques for sincerity in love and his mistress canonized "a Mary Magdalen." Miracles too were not wanting. Pure and sexless love, sincerity, self-restraint and kissing only while 'coming and going' would be recognised as the miracles performed by these saints of love. The relative image of 'relics' was used to convey the underlying image of a saint. The "subtle wreath of hair" around his arm was

*The mystery, the signe you must not touch,
For 'tis my outward soule"*

(*The Funerall*)

These also could be taken as Relics of love, therefore, he willed that they should be buried along with him. The letters exchanged between the poet and his mistress were described as the "manuscripts" and "all-graved tome in cypher writ" in which "Loves Divines may finde all they seeke". (P 30, line 29) The conceit of the saints of love, thus, seemed to him to be logically perfect.

Religious mysticism necessitates contemplation and an admittance to these subtle regions could be only through a complete purgation of the sensuous and worldly associations. This could be done through renouncing the world and practising asceticism. Therefore, images pertaining to the hermits (or some associated idea) were used time and again in his poems. A hermit symbolised the individual's preoccupation with only one thing at a time to the entire exclusion of all other things and activities in the world. Such a man, therefore, made a willing sacrifice of all the other interests in life. This could also apply to a true lover. Donne used the image of the hermit to denote the mood of exclusive love on the part of a lover. In "The Canonization" the underlying image is that of an anchorite⁶¹ renouncing the world and its gaiety, leaving them to others so that they could

With wealth your state, your minde with Arts improve

The lover reminded his vexatious advisers and idle critics that in forsaking the company of men he had in no way harmed anybody and that the tenor of the social life went on as usual. In the mood of a true hermit he appealed to the worldly-wise to do as they pleased and to leave him unmolested and undisturbed:

So you will let me love.

The same mood of renunciation (though springing from a slightly

60. Works. A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning. See lines 7-8 and 1, 13.

61. Brooks, C. The well-wrought Urn—see pp. 10-13.

different cause) seems to be the underlying idea in the first stanza of "Twickenham Garden". The basic image here is that of a frustrated man seeking refuge in a cloister and in contemplation:

*Blasted with sighs, and surrounded with teares,
Hither I come to seeke the spring,*

This solitude and the cool atmosphere of the cloister (garden), at first, seemed to offer some solace; but the unpurged inner taint "can convert Manna to gall," and so the lover felt like an anchorite whom the colourful memories of the past sins allowed but little peace of mind and soul. Donne was aware of both the types among the recluses—those whom their seclusion brought serenity and wisdom and those who continued to be bedevilled by the past. Of the former he said:

*So, reclus'd hermits often times do know
More of heavens glory, then a worldling can.*

(*Epithalamion*-P. 133, lines 48-49)

This image he used for himself. Idios (Donne) made this remark to a courtier, Allophanes, on the latter's censuring him for his absence from the court at the time of the marriage of the Earl of Somerset. The simile discloses the mind of the poet and how he felt out of tune with his times. The recurrence of the image of the hermit bespeaks Donne's psychological aloofness from his age. He felt lonely and was forced into seclusion by his circumstances.

The image of the hermit suggests the picture of cells and cloisters; and Donne mentioned "cloistral men," "vowed men from cloisters" (or phrases conveying this picture of the recluse and the cave) again and again. He employed the metaphor to express his love for "one Autumnall face." The advancing age of the lady, and the consequent diminution of her charms could not damp his zeal. Even the wrinkles on her face did not undermine his constancy in love:

*Yet lies not Love dead here, but here doth sit
Vow'd to this trench, like an Anchorit.*

(*The Autumnall*, P. 93 lines 15-16)

A cloister to him was a "calme heaven."⁶² This calm, however, was not deadening in effect. On the other hand, it was congenial to creative activity and the sea was, therefore, the deep

Where harmlesse fish monastique silence keepe

(P. 282, line 14)

Thus, the womb also seemed to him as a cloister and he complimented Virgin Mary as: 'Immensity cloister'd in thy dear womb' (*Annunciation*, line 14). The flea's body too was something like a cloister since the blood of the lover and the mistress mingled there to the entire exclusion of every other thing.

62. Works Loves War, p. 122, l. 24.

*Though parents grudge, and you, w^h are met,
And cloysterd in these living walls of Jet.*
(*The Flea*, lines 14-15)

The basic point here again is that of the womb being compared to a cloister.

Images derived from the Church machinery were used by him for different objects. "Loves clergymen", "Loves Divines" and "now your chaplain, God in you to praise" are some of the metaphors used for the lovers. The bride-groom approaching the bride on the first night is likened to the "Priest on his knees" and the bridal bed is supposed to be an altar. So the atmosphere struck the poet's mind as a diocese and he imagined of the birds and other passengers in the void as the parishioners. The lover was sometimes represented as a worshipper preparing to "call This houre her Vigill, and her Eve."⁶³ This theological phrasology was also used to describe various moods of love so that the unerlying image made Love almost a religion and inconstancy in love was called 'idolatory', 'Apostasy,' and 'Atheism'. So any unconscious attempt at vulgarising the lady-love was profane and mistaking her even for an angel was an act of sacrilege

*I must confesse, it could not chuse but bee
Profane, to thinke thee any thing but thee.*
(*The Dreame*, lines 19-20)

Nothing to speak of vulgarizing the mistress, the whole affair was so holy a mystery that even letting the uninitiated and the uninstructed know the nature of extasy would be its degradation:

*T' were prophanation of our joyes
To tell the layetie our love.*
(*A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*, lines 7-8)

Again in *Elegy VI* the act of "renouncing the dalliance" of an earthly mistress evoked the images of the 'Recusant' and the 'excommunicate' (lines.45-46) in the mind of the poet. The Church machinery and religious experience supplied poetic images for subjects of a very dissimilar origin and interest. Donne used these images as counters for a psychic revaluation of situations which threatened to grow stale and common place.

Angels because of their ethereal and heavenly existence caught the poet's imagination. Invariably, the word suggested a pun as the Angel was also a coin then in currency. The invisible angels were supposed to be the chief agents through whom God executed His plans, just as the gold coins were the means by which man could carry out his schemes. Donne was ever in need of money and the responsibilities of a growing family continued to burden him, so he felt the angelic (executive) power of the coins rather too strongly. He saw more than one point of resemblance between the coin and the heavenly being. Each

63. Works. A Nocturnall upon St. Lucies day, l.44.

derived great power from a Sovereign and wielded it under Him. The man of the world was always enamoured of the former just as the mystic might be keenly interested in the latter. Then, brightness was another common point. Besides, money appeared and disappeared in a subtle manner at the vagaries of a blind Fortune. Celestial angels, likewise, were inscrutable and unpredictable in their behaviour. Money changed hands; it was ever in circulation. Angels too were ever on the move. These common qualities gave a point and some force to the pun. The coins (angels) could bring the man physical comfort and solace and the heavenly beings could be effective in the same manner on the spiritual plane. Indeed, one seemed to be the counterpart of the other:

*Angels which heaven commanded to provide
All things to me, and be my faithfull guide;
To gaine new friends, t' appease great enemies;
To comfort my soule; when I lie or rise;*

(*The Bracelet, lines 13-16*)

The ideas, underlying this similarity around which the pun revolves, reveal the social consciousness on the part of the poet. He exposed here the misappropriation of values done in the name of finance and this shows how sound a judge and critic of the social values he was. Angels are glorious beings, no doubt. But no true mystic would like to misappropriate all importance and attention for them. At their best they are only subservient agents. So in the natural sequence of events money was to be given its proper place in life; but it should not be given more than its due. Covetousness and lure of money, however, upset this much-needed balance and even the judges came to be approached and influenced through it and men were "forc'd to them to goe, By means of Angels."⁶⁴

The image had some ancillary mystical and theological associations. The poet's concept of an angel in its purity was the one sanctioned by dogmatic mysticism since an angel was a 'lovely glorious nothing' and a 'shapeless flame.' Sometimes, a quasi human shape was assigned to them which the virtuous men could see as a 'face and wings'; but intrinsically they were bodiless and were only the images printed on the air to help men see them from time to time for the former's spiritual enlightenment. Donne had a knowledge of the various orders of the angels and made use of these (Virtues, Powers and Principalities) effectively even in contexts of purely secular interest and nature. In one of his sermons he tried to describe the angels as follows:

"They are super-elementary meteors, they hang between the nature of God and the nature of man, and are of middle condition..... the riddles of heaven and perplexities of speculation."

(Smith, *Donne's Sermons-P.* 157)

64. Works. Satyre V, see lines 57-59.

This last mentioned quality suggested to him a beautiful conceit for perfect love which was angelic in quality. True lovers could claim that

*Difference of sex no more wee knew,
Then our Guardian Angels doe;*

(*The Relique*, lines 25-26)

The whiteness of a bride's robes and the brightness of her beauty also suggested to him the image of an angel (e.g. *Elegy XIX*). But in his intensest moods the intellectual man in him got the better of the mystic and ultimately he exalted man above the angels. In a state of half sleepiness he might have mistaken his mistress for an Angel (since she loved the truth) but the next moment he was awakened to the truth—

*But when I saw thou savest my heart,
And knew'st my thoughts, beyond an Angels art,*

(*The Dreame*—lines 15-16)

and found that she surpassed an Angel and he felt it to be "Profane, to think thee anything but thee." The point of excellence in the lady lay in her being able to see the heart of the lover. Active cooperation and mutual understanding, to the poet, were peculiarly human qualities and it was in possessing these qualities that the beloved was really something more than an angel. The other point that gave man ascendancy over the heavenly beings was that the latter were barren.⁶⁵ They were incapable of creating anything and could not even 'propagate' themselves. At their best, they were passive beings and, therefore, did not deserve to be equated with the active human beings. This is a significant expression of the mind of the poet. The spirit of humanism in him could be gratified only to see man placed above the angels and the man in him with a restless intellect felt himself in little sympathy with the passive beings having no will-power of their own.

Woman was an angel to him and her body a paradise. It seemed to give him the same sense of rich softness that is usually associated with the heaven. He assured his mistress:

*Thou Angel bringst with thee
A heaven like Mahomets Paradise,*

(*Elegie XIX*, lines 20-21)

The beloved's brow, when it was 'smooth and plain,' recalled to his mind "a Paradise, where we would have Immortal stay", (P. 117, line.46). He defined paradise as a 'blissful' place where one may 'Receive such balms, as else cure everything.' Therefore, the Twickenham Garden seemed to him to be a veritable paradise. But a paradise would not be perfect without the serpent. The 'spider love' was the foreign serpent and this made the metaphor theologically sound and aesthetically effective.

65. "May barren Angels Love so." *Elegy XVII*, 1. 23.

This may bring in a mention of the image of hell. It suggested to him a sense of separation and darkness rather than feelings of torture through burning which characterise the more popular view of the hell. Separation from the beloved meant the very suspension of life for him and the feeling anaesthetized his consciousness of everything else. This loss of the very consciousness of life was the real hell:

*Shadow that hell unto me, which alone
I am to suffer when my Love is gone.*

(Elegie XII, lines 3-4)

And the real Hell was a mere 'shadow to it'. This basic image of separation and darkness used as the symbol of Hell is found in his religious writings as well. Smith has also noted this fact and observes that to the religious mind of Donne "the deprivation of God's love was in itself Hell, and no fires and tortures could add to that punishment." (Donne's Sermons—P. XXVII, Smith)

As a young man enjoying the delights of irresponsible London life, Donne had bargained with the Usurious God of Love:

*If thine owne honour, or my shame, or paine,
Thou covet most, at that age thou shalt gaine.*

(lines 19-20)

It was a promise that in later life he more than fulfilled. He felt with disturbing intensity the sinfulness of his past life and the fear of sin became an obsession with him. He seemed to find even an element of predestination in it. The original sin inherited by man from his first parents was an undying legacy and preyed upon humanity generation after generation. This sin was 'the provocation of flesh' and even the saints were liable to fall a victim to it.⁶⁶ Donne discovered a variety of sins springing from this Original one. This last one flowered in the 'sins of youth'; but every subsequent stage of life had sins peculiar to itself and thus even when one particular sin seemed to grow out of date another followed in its wake:

Oh, every age a diverse sinne pursueth.

(P. 283, line 54)

These diverse sins were ambitiousness, covetousness, pride, immoderate grief, etc. etc. He faintly anticipated the modern psychologists in considering sex as the prime force behind all the important activities of life. In his own case, he felt the sin multiplied many times. He 'wallowed in it' for a score of years and, to aggravate it, won

Others to sinne? and, made my sinne their doore?

(A Hymne to God the Father, line 8)

But it culminated in the 'sinne of fear'—the fear lest the corruption promoted by him be perpetuated. He feared so because he was fully

66. Smith, L. P. Donne's Sermons—see Sermon No. 103, p. 167-168.

conscious of the irresistible colourfulness of the sin. He had felt, experienced and tasted it and knew how difficult it was to overcome the temptation. Memories of the past continued to disturb him. His real trouble was not that he had led a sinful life, but that he could not help feeling a fascination for the colour that it possessed. He made it amply clear that 'a delightful dwelling upon the meditation' of the sin was not 'setting of the heart upon doing evil,' yet he considered that it was "the evil of the heart, by the misuse of God's grace, to divest and lose all tenderness and remorse in sin."⁶⁷ He did not "lose all tenderness and remorse in sin;" but this remorse was interspersed with the memories of the past. The irresistible charm of the happy days gone by did not let him enjoy an uninterrupted peace of mind. This repentance, in his own words (as quoted by Simpson), should be "a turning away from our sins and a returning towards God." But this return to God cannot be perfect as long as the individual's mind looks back fondly and wistfully to the past. This was one of the 'silent sins', 'sins that never tell the conscience they are sins. . . .'⁶⁸ which continued to gnaw at the very roots of his being till quite late in life. Sin was thus a living force for him and he was constantly grappling with it, though it was an unequal fight. Even "Reason," which is the 'viceroy' of God in man, failed to defend the struggling soul and "proves weak or untrue." The poet felt helpless against the past chasing and pursuing him like a hound. It was too strong for him and he applied to the three-person'd God for help:

Divorce mee, untie, or breake that knot againe
(*Divine Poems, XIV, P. 328, line 11*)

Sometimes this knot might be broken, even then, Donne would not feel reassured. His imagination would break loose and stray to the past, and so he renewed his passionate appeal: "*Take me to you, imprison me.*"

This struggle produced in him a guilt-complex, he exaggerated his own sinfulness and felt like an unholy murderer:

They kill'd once an inglorious man, but I
Crucify him daily, being now glorified.

(*Divine poem XI, P. 327, lines 7-8*)

Humiliation ("Spit in my face you Jews") and even physical torture were punishments not commensurate with the guilt. Murder for murder; that is what justice demands. So Donne demanded the deadly punishment of crucifixion ("and crucify me.") This guilt-complex was grilling in effect and shattered his nerves; and he confessed pathetically, "I have sinn'd, and sinn'd." The intensity of his mood is signified by this ominous repetition.

67. Hawkins, *Poetry and Prose of John Donne*—(Nelson Classics) See Sermon No. X, p. 446-447.

68. *Ibid* p. 445.

He had sinned once; and, sinned again involuntarily, feeling a secret charm in it, like one almost at the mercy of some supreme Force—and this was the Life Force itself, the sex. Donne was fond of the image of a recluse, and in his last days he felt himself almost like one. But the natural habitat of his imagination was this world—the world of beauty and full-blooded enjoyment. The picturesqueness of life fascinated him but unfortunately he chose to curb these aesthetic impulses through a superimposed asceticism.

The medieval mysticism and Scholastic philosophy were of living interest to him and we have already noticed while considering his treatment of sex how these served him as the sources of numerous images. Human organism suggested the metaphor of the universe and vice versa. Attempting an analysis of the passion of love and thought in terms of things resolving "to their first elements," he used the medieval concept of the elements. The belief in the phoenix-myth also supplied him a conceit for perfect love. To him true love was self-sufficient and self-enclosed like the phoenix. Incidentally, there is a hint of the quality of uniqueness in this sort of love:

*The Phoenix riddle hath more wit
By us, we two being one, are it.*

(*The canonization*)

The medieval philosophers were interested in finding out the quintessence of substances and living organisms. Donne took up the idea in a conceit and he called the true lover "A quintessence even from nothingness" since love had "wrought new alchymie" in the lover-poet. Similarly, the idea of the revelation of Truth and love recalled to his mind the image of "specular stone" which was supposed to be a transparent stone and was known only to the ancients.

The images that he employed to express his devotional moods and religious experiences demonstrate his attitude to faith and by implication, the nature of his mind. He had been brought up in an orthodox Catholic family and had connexions with the fanatical Jesuits, yet he retained a breadth of vision and liveliness of outlook even in his attitude to religion. He admitted that religion was a serious thing but added, in the same breath, that it was not a sullen affair.⁶⁹ The "cloysterall men" commanded his respect but he had one grouse against them and it was that they:

*All contributions to this life forbear,
Have Vertue in Melancholy, and only there.*

(*P. 222, lines 26-27*)

His approach to religion was that of an explorer and investigator (See Divine Poem No XVIII, p. 330) and he believed that it was no sin

to "stand inquiring right," but "To sleep, or run wrong is." His motto was: "Doubt wisely."⁷⁰ He conceived of Truth as something dwelling on the top of a hill with manifold paths leading to it.⁷¹ Reason and Faith are not essentially antagonistic to each other. They may rather be mutually complementary:

*Reason is our Soules left hand, Faith her right,
By these we reach divinity,*

(*To the Countesse of Bedford*, P. 189)

On second thought, he realised that the two could not only co-exist but that they were identical. Reason and Religion were two terms for one and the same force seen in two different manifestations:

*Discretion is a wisemanes Soule, and so
Religion is a Christians, and you know
How these are one; her yea, is not her no.*

(*To the Countesse of Bedford*, P. 129, lines 40-42)

He visualised 'good' as an active virtue rather than a mere dormant quality of the soul ⁷² and thus merged the frontiers of the physical reality with those of the mystical truth. Seen in this light, sex and spiritualism became only two different phases of the emotional and psychic life. These facts show that, in spite of the metaphysical and medieval shreds of thought, his mind had a realistic and humanistic pattern. He discovered a mysterious harmony and unity of effect between sex and religion. His was a mind deeply conscious, and even enamoured, of reality both physical and spiritual and it was ever impelled by the urge to discover the full truth.

V

Law occupied quite an important place in Donne's studies. He had studied it in his youth and even practised it; we are told, he started his career as a legal consultant, though he did not shape well in this capacity and had to give it up.⁷³ This interest in law also influenced his imagery and provided him many conceits and metaphors. He chose some legal terms as titles for a few of his poems *e. g.* The Undertaking, The Will, The Prohibition. Satires No. II & V have the administration of law and justice for their themes. The satirist was in little sympathy with the corrupt practices that had crept into these institutions and he castigated them unsparingly. Another poem—Lovers Infiniteness—is based on a quibbling on terms pertaining to the civil

70. See Satyre III p. 157, Lines 77-81.

71. Works. Letter to Mrs. Essex Riche—p. 222, l. 36.

72. See 'A letter to the Lady Carey and Mrs. E. Riche' p. 221.

73. Redpath, T. The Songs and Sonnets of John Donne p. XXI.

*You said, if I return'd next size in Lent,
I should be in remitter of your grace;
In th' interim my letters should take place
Of affidavits:.....*

(*Satyre II, lines 49-57*)

One may find numerous other legal terms and phrases used poetically in his verse. For example, he derived the following terms from the Civil Law: 'subsides', 'Dispensation', 'sue to draw a non obstante', 'annexed in schedules', 'name in entail', 'decreed', 'seals', 'controverted lands', 'Precontracts', 'Antedate', etc. etc. 'Libels', 'Interdicted,' 'Reclaim', 'Reprieve' and 'Summons' are some other technical terms taken from the Criminal Law. These instances clearly indicate the poet's deep interest in law and therefore it was quite natural for him to express himself in metaphors and images borrowed from it. The real excellence of these legal conceits lies in the fact that they are not only intellectual and witty in appeal but are vivified with emotion.

The kings and their courts have always been held in high regard and were considered to be institutions of especial interest in England in the Seventeenth Century. Ambitious men strived to win the royal favour and thereby earn some political and material advancement. Donne also longed for some political assignment abroad and waited for it for several years even in the face of persisting pecuniary troubles. He tactfully declined the offer of an ecclesiastical appointment, partly, because of this ambition. Moreover, his imagination had an element of colourfulness and the royal court was supposed to be the most picturesque of all the places in the country. He was intimately known to some important courtiers and eminent statesmen of the day and had travelled abroad in the company of at least one of them. All these circumstances made him deeply concerned with politics; and kings and their courts, powers of the former and precarious charms of the latter, dominated his thoughts.

The basic idea at the root of the conception of kingship was that of perfect order. The king was the symbol of Power—Power used to bring about a proportionate and all round progress. This progress, to be real, required perfect understanding between the Sovereign and the subjects. Therefore, consummate love evoked in the poet's mind the image of the kings and their states:

*She is all States, and all Princes, I,
Nothing else is.*

(*The Sunne Rising, 21-22*)

and he declared that true lovers are "prince enough in one another." (The Anniversary, line 14). The idea implied is that of active cooperation and mutual understanding to gain absolute self-sufficiency and indepen-

dence. A state ruled over by a just and loving king is a blessed one, indeed. This 'bliss' is mutual and reciprocal, since the true bliss of the king also lies in his receiving perfect loyalty from his subjects. This fact of interdependence and mutual necessity can be hardly overemphasized. The subjects are not mere slaves of the king. On the other hand, they are the true source of power and dignity and the sovereign only shows them where it is due:

*So from low persons doth all honour flow;
Kings, whom they would have honoured, to us show,
And but direct our honour, not bestow.*

(*To the Countesse of Bedford*, p. 218)

Just as the kings and the states are interdependent, so a lover and the beloved need each other. A king without a state would be no king; and a state without a sovereign would simply not exist. So, the lover without the beloved did not deserve the title and the beloved's charms would lie barren and idle without the lover. The metaphor of a 'state' for the mistress is logically satisfying even in a modern sense. The state must have a territory and population. Donne discovered the geography of the human body (e.g. *Elegy XVIII*) and found this vast land peopled by impulses, likes and dislikes, moods and emotions. But perfect love could exist only when the lover enjoyed the undisputed and exclusive love of the beloved. Kingship and love brook no rivals and any departure from this pattern would lead to confusion. The beloved was to the poet

My kingdome, safliest when with one man man'd

(*Elegie XIX*, line 28)

The conceit of the kings and states, used to denote the relationship between man and woman, is convincing on more than one plane of logical reasoning. In a family the house is the man's realm or castle. Thus a husband may be taken as the king, and a faithless wife may symbolise the disaffected and rebellious subjects. In such a state, mistrust, persecution and intrigues are matters of common experience which rob the people of all joy and the king of the peace of mind because of "His seely plots and pensionary spies." (*Elegie I*) The conceit is very comprehensive and lends itself to several revealing interpretations on different levels of thought.

Relationship between the soul and the body, to Donne's mind, could also be adequately expressed through the metaphor of the kings and courts. Body was the court and the human soul ruled over it and kept it in the proper order. A court without the king is merely inconceivable: "Her soul and body was a king and court." (P. 283, line 39) The human body could be described as a palace also. Mighty kings make grand palaces and these may not be pulled down even when the kings leave

them. So the souls of virtuous men are like the mighty kings and their bodies are the palaces which (in the event of the king's death) await their royal inmates' return to them in the heavens:

*As houses fall not, though the King remove,
Bodies of Saints rest for their soules above.*

(*Elegie on Mrs. Boulstred, P. 283*)

Donne used the conceit to express the spiritual relationship between God and the individual soul as well. God is the king and the human soul is His subject living in the city (body) administered by Reason who is God's viceroy in this dominion. The forces of evil and the temptations of the world are the sedition-mongers trying to seduce the loyal population which "like an usurp'd town, to another due" labours to admit the rightful owner, who should reclaim his property, free the subjects from fear and dispel the enemy who had 'captived' His representative. After having achieved this 'conquest', God might also judge the viceroy's conduct who "proves weak or untrue." Here the underlying idea is that the spiritual enlightenment should edify and reinforce the intellect if it is only weak, and dismiss it altogether if it be tainted and habitually at fault. (See Holy Sonnet no. XIV, p. 328) The idea of God's kingship is also suggested through the conceit based on the royal prerogative of authorising the minting of money. The human soul is the gold on which God's stamp is printed. But, when new coins are put into circulation, the old ones are not destroyed outright. They are temporarily withdrawn from circulation in order to stamp them afresh with the mark of the new king. These newly minted pieces may be commonly known as the new coins, but in fact they are the substance with new marks upon it. This illustration could also be used to explain a particular spiritual situation. God has crowned Christ as the king. This fact, however, does not mean that any change in the composition of the material—human soul—has been effected:

*And as new crowned Kings alter the face,
But not the monies substance; so hath grace
Chang'd only Gods old Image by Creation,
To Christs new stampe*

(*To Mr. Tilman, P. 351*)

Other images associated with royalty (court, viceroy, ambassador and treason) were also used by Donne as poetic symbols. Reason is the viceroy of God in man. But, sometimes, viceroys might prove inefficient or even disloyal in times of war, so Reason left to itself might abandon the individual in some spiritual crisis or betray him to the "enemy" of God. Similarly, the "subtle werath of haire" which "crowns my arm" was "my outward soul,

*Viceroy to that, which then to heaven being gone,
Will leave this to controule,
And keepe these limbes, her Provinces, from dissolution.*

(*The Fumerall*, lines 6-8)

Once again, the image has the basic idea of the soul's supremacy over the physical senses which suggests the excellence of the passion of love born in it.

As a young man, Donne had longed to be made an ambassador. Apart from the social distinction and political eminence attached to the rank, the very nature of the ambassador's function seemed to fascinate him. He seemed to be eminently suited for the job; and if he failed to become an ambassador of the king of England he discharged the role of an ambassador of God to his countrymen with remarkable steadfastness, sincerity and eloquence. One gathers from a study of his later poems that he was interested in this latter concept of the rank and was even attracted by it. He called learning as the ambassador of the Lord⁷⁵ and congratulated his friend, Mr. Tilman, on the latter having been ordained as a clergyman:

*What function is so noble as to bee
Embassadour to God and destinie?
To open life, to give kingdomes to more
Than Kings give dignities; to keepe heavens doore?*

Seen against this background, the image of the ambassadors of temporal powers did not arouse happy associations as it suggested to him the notions of passivity, inefficiency and selfishness. Fanciful as the images might seem, they are at bottom, realistic. When he made his fantastic will (*The Will*) he wished to bequeath 'to ambassadors myne ears.' The underlying idea is that they had not much to do and that instead of being interpreters and spokesmen of their sovereigns, they were simply tongue-tied audience, which was a travesty of their true office. This inefficiency would cause selfishness and insincerity since, sometimes

*an Ambassador
Lies safe, howe'er his king be in danger.*

The courts of the kings too did not inspire Donne. He had been disillusioned quite early in life and knew of their corruption. A king might have been the symbol of power and orderliness; but the courts were schools of intrigue and tended to corrupt the monarch. Therefore, the royal court recalled to the poet's mind the picture of flattery and falsehood—vices which had become almost proverbial and synonymous with it:

75. See "The Litanic," XXVII, p. 377.

*As prone to all ill, and of good as forgetfull, as proud, as
lustfull, and as much in debt,
As vaine, as witlesse, and as false as they
Which dwell at Court*

(*Satyre IV, lines 13-16*).

The court appeared to him as a place with a rank atmosphere and unhealthy climate "which is not vertues clime". (P. 191, line 7) A courtier, accordingly, was the embodiment of hypocrisy—outward cleanliness, but spiritual ill-health; since he was a "brisk perfum'd pert courtier." It is a picture of effeminacy flanked by insolence. But the worst fault in a courtier was his intellectual insipidity. He lacked independent judgment and will-power and had a blunt conscience. A courtier ceased to be a man since at the court "all affections do assent unto the Kings, and that, that Kings are just!" (Eclogue, p. 134) This devitalization of the human personality at the royal courts and a superimposition of a uniform but unnatural and inane pattern of behaviour on the people disclosed to the poet's eye their kinship with the actors on the stage. A courtier's life seemed to be as hollow and unreal as the actor's strutting on the boards.

*.....Me seemes they doe as well
At stage, as court; All are players;.....*

(*Satyre IV, lines 184-185*)

The whole atmosphere there was contaminated and even the princes were morally depraved. They were as far away from Truth as the theatre was from Reality. It was all pretension—an immense pretension:

*And Courts are Theaters, where some men play
Princes, some slaves, all to one end
and of one clay.*

(*To Sir Henry Wotton, p. 181, lines 23-24*).

This view of the court-life and the images employed for it reveal the independent and truth-loving nature of Donne. He considered an independent will-power as the noblest attribute of man. This power emanates from strong common sense and Reason which is God's viceroy in man. To sterilise this power was, therefore, a grave moral evil and intellectual crime.

Since mutual royalty was the conceit used for perfect love, the ancillary metaphor of 'treason' was used for inconstancy in love. The royalty of love was superior to and more secure than the power of the temporal kings and queens.

*Here upon earth we' are Kings, and none but wee
Can be such Kings, nor of such subjects bee.*

*Who is so safe as wee? where none can doe
Treason to us, except one of us two.*

(*The Anniversarie, lines 23-26*)

He used the metaphor frequently in his love poems. The intrigues and conspiracies between the beloved and the rivals were referred to as 'treason' just as Atheism was described as the spiritual treason. This metaphor of treason suggests a sort of superiority complex in matters of earthly love. Others might have whined and groaned over the faithlessness of the mistress; but not so Donne. He was too masculine in his outlook to shed even these 'manly tears'. He affirmed that inconstancy on the part of the beloved (too) would amount to treason, and warned her against such an unnatural act. It was a sublime sense of love, indeed! He was not only the Monarch of Wit, he was—and he knew it—the Monarch of Love as well.

VI

The Elizabethans enjoyed a respite from external threats and wars, yet battles and fighting continued to be the matters of common experience to them in some form or the other. The chronic political unrest in Ireland culminated in the uprisings of 1599 in which Spenser had suffered so heavily. Maritime rivalry with Spain and the other Catholic Powers compelled the people to be war-minded and called for a state of perpetual preparedness. At home, the persecution of the Jesuits and the Roman Catholics and some sporadic risings engineered by them aggravated the situation and deepened the gloom. Donne's personal experience of the two naval battles sharpened his sense of the perniciousness of wars. He disliked them and felt that only the 'ignorants' could love them.

To Donne war was a symptom of political and social ill-health. It was 'Like to an Ague' and necessitated purging and bleeding. War-activity did not inspire him with feelings of national glorification or heroism. On the other hand, it was a repellent thing to him and he made no secret of this fact. His poem, "*Loves War*," is a travesty on the actual wars and fighting. A reference to war presented to his mind the picture of complete destruction and he described the "massacre" of lovers made by a cruel and heartless god of love through an image from the battlefiled:

By him, as by chain'd shot, whole rankes doe dye.

(*The broken heart, line 15*)

But he never approved of such ruinous activities and deprecated the victories of war as "Poor victories".

Donne often used in his poems the metaphor of a town besieged and stormed by an unrelenting enemy. The image had the underlying

sense of struggle—struggle of the weak and the innocent against the tyrant. Perhaps, this was the only ennobling picture of war that the poet could visualise since it aroused feelings of sympathy for the weak and a sense of the inequity of the wrong-doer. But even this redeeming view of the struggle was clouded by the gruesome memories of “small towns enforced by great shot”. In several poems he likened the human body to a besieged town. For instance, in “Loves Exchange” the poet imagined himself to be a small town withstanding the attacks of the mistress till, at last, the “great shot” of her irresistible charms smashed all his fortifications of scruples and caution. This metaphor was used for the mistress as well. She was a city offering stiff opposition to the lover who, like a determined foe, “hop’st her stiffness by long siege to bow.” (The Blossom) A more liberal mistress, therefore, was a “fair free city” and could be won without any stiff resistance. The image could fit in in some spiritual contexts also. Man could be rightly compared to a town which should owe allegiance to the Supreme King, and is, normally, governed by His viceroy (Reason). But this town would, sometimes, be ‘usurped’ by the enemy, though all the time it laboured to admit the rightful master. The master must not only besiege and reclaim it, but He should also “overthrow”, “bend” and even “batter” the unlawful defences of the rebels. At times, the poet thought of the world as a huge ‘garrison’ in which every virtuous man is a ‘sentinel’ appointed by the Lord.⁷⁶

Wars—attacks and counter-attacks—cannot be carried on properly without gathering some secret information about the enemy. This can be done only through the spies. Donne must have witnessed in his own day much of spying against the Jesuits. This sneaking activity was something like the sneaking of the serpent and required extreme cautiousness and alertness of the nerves. He spoke of the secret agents as the ‘pensionary spies’, who seem to have pestered him in a personal way also. In the war-fare of love where he might be making love to a young wife or a daughter under the very nose of a jealous husband or an over-cautious father, he felt “ambush’d round with household spies (p. 101, line 41) This, however, did not cow down his spirits and it only made him practise more adroitly the art that he otherwise detested. He invented the code language in the “alphabet of flowers” and thus, did “with speechless secrecy deliver errands mutely like” the agents working in hostile areas. He would act “like spy on spy,” and so prove the war-fare of love to be realistic. It might be sordid; but then he did not initiate it and had to resort to it only as a defensive measure. Apparently, this does not reflect happily on his mind and character. But it is only just to bear in mind the fact that he was given to jest, exaggeration and theatricality; and the element of wit should not be underrated.

76. See Satyre III, lines 30-31.

Actual battlefields and fighting also served him as the sources of some very vivid images used by him. He compared the devastating effect of love to the scene in a battlefield where "by chain'd shot, whole ranks do die." It was, however, not only the sudden and sweeping death overtaking the soldiers in the field that he visualised. He had a very clear idea of the actual combat, struggle, throwing down and killing and he described it as:

Assail'd, fight, taken, stabb'd, bleed, fall, and die.

(P. 113).

It was a graphic account of the activity of the fighters who 'batter, bleed, and die,' and the image recalls to the reader's mind the very picture of the battlefield.

The weapons of war also suggested the idea of struggle and he used these images in his love poems, since love was a warfare, a long siege and the use of these weapons tended to make it all the more realistic and effective. The 'battery' was something indispensable in wars and so in the war of love, for an inconstant and covetuous woman the wit and wealth of a fresh lover would be the 'battery' to smash her bastions and conquer her heart. The weapon suggested to him the underlying idea of the surest conquest of the target and, as such the items achieving undeniable conquest in love could be compared to the 'battery'. The bullet strangely enough, did not produce any sensation of pain (Yea bullets hurt not here, p. 123) but it suggested the idea of speed. Just as by adding to the measure of powder used, a bullet "A later bullet may O'ertake," so the more intense and deeper passion of the bereaved lover could make his "soul more earnestly realeas'd" and "outstrip hers."⁷⁷ But a cannon struck awe because of the sweeping and unsparing destruction made by its shot which suggested the idea of a tempestuous movement and loud vibrations made in the air:

*At every stroake his brazen finnes do take,
More circles in the broken sea they make
Then cannons voices, when the aire they teare:*

(*The Progresse of the Soule*, XX XII, P. 307)

It was the audio-visual image of the whole process of the cannon's shot travelling in space. The image seemed at once to strike awe in him and fascinate him. The image of the "dread mouth of a fired gun" because of its heat, smokiness and pungent smell could be used only to express a feeling of burning loathsomeness. The visual sense and the sense of smell, thus, were at the root of the simile. Some other weapons of war mentioned by him had also a visual quality. 'Swords', 'Rams', 'Slings', 'pikes' and 'Pistoles' bring some definite pictures to

77. See "The Dissolution", lines 22-24.

our mind. But the action most vividly recapitulated in these metaphors derived from war is that of sweeping destruction (by shot) and "thrust" "stab" and "batter".

Here we may consider some other images borrowed from warfare. The heartless mistress 'killing' the lovers by her indifference and scorn was like a Goth or Vandal and did

Deface Records, and Histories

Of your owne arts and triumphs over men,

(The Dampe, 14-15)

"Legions", "Squadron", "muster up", "foreign conquest" are other significant metaphors that he used to describe the vicissitudes and various stages in love-making. Even the mystical mood of perfect joy and true communion between the souls of the lovers was described through the image of the armies standing in full trim in the battlefield, awaiting orders from their respective officers, who were busy in the last minute negotiations; and no one knew what the end would be:

As 'twixt two equall Armies, Fate

Suspends uncertaine victorie,

Our soules, (which to advance their state,

Were gone out,) hung 'twixt her, and mee.

(Extasie, lines 13-16)

It is, however, significant to note that the images derived from war and the battlefield were used rather sparingly in his divine poems even though he was battling with the fear of sin and his colourful imagination. In his secular poems he used the martial images because his experiences and memories of the two expeditions must have been fresh and vivid; but they faded as he advanced towards the ministry and actually took the orders. Moreover, in the heat of his passion for seeking the truth with the simultaneous struggle going on in his mind he must have been interested in and preoccupied with a positive view of life and must have been trying to discover an inner harmony and serenity in the very variety of life so that the images and conceits derived from war, which is the antithesis of concord and inner unity, must have seemed to him rather incongruous; and they thinned away in his later poetry. A study of the war imagery reveals that a battlefield suggested to him the idea of two equal armies. But a besieged town was essentially an affair between two parties of unequal strength. In his youth, exploring the sex, love and other earthly objects, he might have felt equal to the forces that he was contending with, but the spiritual problems, particularly, the problems of sin and repentance and redemption (in spite of the inspired moments when Donne made God almost an equally anxious partner in the affair of love between man and Divinity) made him feel that it was an unequal fight. Therefore, in the divine poems the image of a usurped town was more in keeping with his mood and state of mind at the time. In such a psychological situation images from battle-field (the picture of armies

standing face to face, as yet unexhausted and hence anxious to try their strength) would be out of place.

VII

Death was a common phenomenon in the Seventeenth Century and haunted the minds of the people. In addition to the wars, plagues, fires, famines and diseases aggravated the miseries of mankind. Donne felt the deprivations of death in his own family quite early in life. When still a child, he lost his father; his younger brother also died very young. One of his uncles was executed for the offence of being in league with a Jesuit priest. A few years later, the Earl of Essex who was personally known to Donne met his unfortunate and lamentable end in a most abrupt manner when he was at the height of glory and fame. The poet himself lost five of his twelve children and, at the top of all other misfortunes, he was bereaved of his loving wife at a time when he needed her the most. All these events, combined with the medieval legacy of the fear of death, made him acutely conscious of the latter and even determined the character of certain images and conceits.

As a young man he had made a clever defence of suicide in the book '*Biathanatos*' and he wrote in April, 1619, to Sir Robert Carre about it:

".....it is a book written by Jack Donne and not by Dr. Donne: Reserve it for me if I live, and if I die, I only forbid it the Presse, and the Fire: publish it not, but yet burn it not;" (Hawkins—Poetry and Prose of Donne—p. 416). He admitted that the views expressed in the book were those of a rash young man, though Donne, the priest and the maturer man, disowned them. Nonetheless, the true Donne, lurking behind 'Jack' as well as the Doctor, cherished some fondness for the arguments and he hastened to add anxiously, "yet burn it not". A discussion of death (particularly, death at one's own hands) might not be relished by the common man yet it was of particular interest to him. An awareness of death became even an obsession with him and influenced the trend of his thought. The very titles of at least half a dozen poems have the idea of death as their pivotal point: 'The legacie', 'The Funerall', 'The Will,' 'The Dampe,' 'Dissolution', and the 'Expiration.'

Donne conceived of death as the absence of knowledge and to him the mere suspension of the physical powers and actions did not mean death because this happened in sleep as well. But, while asleep, one retained a partial consciousness of 'living', and sleep could be taken as a 'shadow' of death. True death implied an utter loss of consciousness and so existence in the mother's womb could not be called life in this sense of the word:

".....for in our mother's womb we are dead so, as that we do not know we live, not so much as we do in our sleep." (Hawkins P. 455).

Thus, the physical birth into this world is a mere "exitus a morte", and this physical life is a passage from "death to death". The

child bears the taint of mortality from the very moment of its entry into the world. This earthly life only exposes him to "the manifold deaths of this world", which continue to hound him through the course of his life:

"We have a winding sheet in our Mother's womb, which grows with us from our conception, and we come into the world, wound up in that winding sheet, for we come to seek a grave". (Hawkins, p. 457) This macabre view of death was essentially medieval. It belittled man, reduced him to nothingness and struck terror in the heart of the poet. He wanted to reconcile himself to the concept and to accept it realistically. To achieve this end he sublimated this fear and turned it into a longing for death which, according to the Christian belief, reawakens the virtuous soul into heavenly regions, where it would have eternal consciousness and, hence, eternal life. Seen in this light, death became only "one short sleep" and it forfeited its terror-stricking quality. Man had his revenge upon his greatest enemy. He read triumphantly the writing on the wall:

And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die.

(*Divine Poem X*, p. 326)

Knowledge and consciousness triumphed, at last, over Darkness and Ignorance.

Death, to Donne, was a two-fold process. On the spiritual level, it was an absence of consciousness of living; and, on the material plane, it meant a dissolution of the things "To their first elements". This separation of the soul from the body could be effected through violent means, or, "by preparing sickness," or "by raging and frantic fever."⁷⁸ Of these the violent means of death suggested to him the action of devouring and swallowing. Drowning also evoked the same mental picture; therefore, Death and destruction which the Goths and the Vandals brought in their wake were described by him as an inundation:

*Should againe the ravenous
Vandals and Goths inundate us,*

(*A Valediction: Of the booke*),

A mishap in love and an ungrateful, heartless lady conspire to kill the lover. Evidently, this is not a common, quiet death. It is violent because unfortunate love "can ten in less space devour." This kind of love is a monster and

Hee swallows us, and never chawes:

By him, as by chain'd shot, whole rankes doe die,

(*The broken heart*)

He imagined death as "gluttonous".⁷⁹ Devouring and swallowing are processes which indicate an undignified haste, greediness and unhealthy hunger. To the artistic sensibilities of Donne nothing

78. Hawkins. Poetry and Prose of J. Donne, See p. 470.

79. Divine Poems—VI, p. 324, l. 5.

could be more ungainly and unseemly than this precipitation. Man was "a little world made cunningly" and an abrupt end of such an interesting and arresting organism would be as ill-mannerly (even shocking) as swallowing the delicacies at a gulp. It suggested the image of a beast and a monster blind to beauty and the finer aspects of life.

A mention of death naturally brings in the picture of dead bodies. In this connection it is interesting to note that Donne did not refer to the graves very often as these could allow but little scope for the play of the sensory organs. On the other hand, the corpse and the carcass, with the worms eating them away, set in motion a chain of sensory reactions beginning with a visual one. A carcass breeds worms and feeds them. Worms, as such, are the dirtiest things born of putrefied objects. The very picture produces a creeping sensation. The carcass poisons the worms eating into it and this suggests the idea of unnatural killing of the child by its parent.⁸⁰ The worms living upon the dirtiest carrion might recall to one's mind the human embryo living upon the dirtiest food in the mother's womb, which would justify the man being compared to the worm. Donne spoke of the "corrupt worms", "spider love," "parasites" and "worm-eaten" bodies, any number of times. These were the symbols of decay. The image of the carcass gnawed by the worms seems to have reminded him of the pathetic anticlimax that the life of man presented: Howsoever noble, mighty and ambitious a man might be in his life time; but once the soul departed, he would be reduced to a mere worm-eaten trunk. Donne affirmed in one of his sermons (no. 7; LXXX Sermons): "Man is so much less than a worm." This presents the student of literature with a problem since the idea of the insignificance of man is peculiarly in contrast with the spirit of the Renaissance which glorified Man, and it is in the direct medieval tradition. It is astonishing to note that the mind of the poet so very modern and progressive in certain regards was deeply steeped in mediavalism in some other respects. Donne's was a complex mind, indeed! With its roots fast in the medieval learning and beliefs, it was grafted on to another stem and bore flower and fruit which partook of the qualities of both.

This obsession with worms and dead bodies was indicative of the deeper sense of decay and corruption in the world. Leishman has summed up this medieval view in the following words:

"Again, another characteristic medieval conception, extending far back into classical antiquity, was that the world was decaying; that it was running down like a clock; that the seasons were becoming more and more unfavourable, that men were becoming smaller in stature, weaker in health, more wicked in their ways."⁸¹

80. Hawkins, D. Poetry and Prose, p. 455.

81. Leishman, J. B. Metaphysical Poets, p. 62.

Donne, certainly, did not subscribe to every point of this belief. But in the two elegies—Anatomy of the world and the Progress of the Soul (Second Anniversary) he elaborated these common beliefs. He found the “worlds whole frame quite out of joynt” and noticed that

Corruption entred, and deprav'd the best:

(P. 237, line 194)

The world had turned into an ugly monster and corruptions entered the brains and hearts of the people “Poisoning the fountains, whence our actions spring”. The world had become a “rotten world,” and was “but a carcass,” and “corruptions sinke.” (P. 184, line 30)

The idea of corruption had the underlying sense of decay and decomposition; and it was a sense of smell that caused loathsomeness by way of the desired reaction. Poisons kill by decomposing the organisms, and, therefore, one finds in Donne's verses quite frequent reference to “poisons”, “poisonous minerals,” “envenomed” and “poisoned”. Once decomposition set in, it would cause rankness, putrefaction and foul smell. “Waters stink”, if they be shut in one place, and are more “putrefied” in the vast sea (Elegy III). The world itself was “putrefied” because her “intrinsic balm” (Elizabeth Drury) could not be renewed. Thus the sensory perception involved in the idea of corruption is a matter of smell. Sickness is “death's herald, and champion” (P. 323, (2 line. 2)

Death robs one of all consciousness and the sickness is a prelude to it since it makes the individual oblivious of his normal self. It is, thus, more terrible than all the accumulated miseries of the world. He explained in his sermon no XLVIII:

“Put all the miseries, that man is subject to, together, sickness is more than all . . . In poverty I lack but other things; in banishment I lack but other men; but in sickness I lack myself”. (Smith, P. 84)

He had a personal experience of all these miseries in some form or the other. He was constantly troubled by want and penury and had been banished from the society of his friends during his imprisonment. He himself suffered “per fretum febris” and saw his own near and dear ones suffer so frequently that in one of his letters he called his house at Mitacham a hospital. All these factors made him deeply concerned with sickness, so it was quite natural for him to have derived many conceits from diseases.

Conceits based on diseases pertain to one of the five focal points—sense of wasting, immoderate thirst, inflammation, incision and mental derangement. In some cases, the sensory reactions caused in the reader by these several diseases may overlap one another, but at bottom it is only some one particular sense called into action.

Fever evoked in Donne's mind, primarily, the sense of wasting and he wrote one whole poem about the fever that had overtaken his mistress. The disease had also a suggestion of burning, and consuming. The sudden rise in the temperature was termed by him as "these burning fits which did "seize" her like fire. The idea of "seizing" has the suggestion of violence being used in the process. Fevers, therefore, were to him "hectic fever," "Ague" or "Calenture". The burning and violence brought in the idea of a dry, thirsty palate of the patient "parched with fevers violence." The poet had a personal experience and vivid memory of the illness which was almost a regular feature in his life. He wrote to Mrs. Cockain: "I am come now, not only to pay a Fever every half-year, as a Rent for my life; but I am called upon before the day, and they come sooner in the year than heretofore". (Hawkins, P. 422).

Plague also supplied some metaphors. But, strangely enough, the disease in spite of its high rate of incidence and mortality did not present any sensory image to him. It made him think only of the improbability of the survival of a patient who had suffered from the disease. The sudden and almost violent death caused by plague was like the sudden blast of a "flash of powder." But in some other contexts it lost even this blasting effect and was spoken of simply as "a deeper plague" (p. 54) and "In plaguing him, let misery be witty". (p. 109).

"Wasteful consumptions" or "long consumptions" is a disease indicative of a sense of waste and burning away and these provided him metaphors for "long voyages". In some pessimistic moods the very life in this world seemed to be a consumption, because:

*Our births and lives, vices, and vertues, bee
Wastefull consumptions, and degrees of thee.*

(*Elegie on Mistress Boulstred*, P. 282)

The consumption had the suggestion of slow wasting, languishing and pining away. So, unrequited love was really a consumption which made the unhappy lover, languish

*For some one
That will none,
Or prove as false as thou art now.*

(*The Message*, lines 21-24)

In *Elegy XI* he described the 'Crownes of France' as "so pale, so lame, so leane, so ruinous." Slow and sickly movement of the ships also brought in the image of consumptive wasting away:

*Or like slacke-sinew'd Sampson, his haire off,
Languish our ships.*

(*The Calme*. P. 170).

Donne seems to have been specially struck by the image of slow wasting and he upheld the medieval view that the world itself was

slowly decaying and wasting away. So a burning taper appeared to him to be an appropriate symbol of the process. The taper seemed to have several characteristics in common with life. It gives light, fascinates the fly to destroy it, wastes itself, is short-lived and weak, (a puff of wind can blow off the flame). Life is, according to Donne, consciousness and knowledge of living and it is a passage between two deaths. The taper's light stands for consciousness and the duration of its flame is the interim between its two deaths—states of being inactive, (one) before it is lit and (the other) after it is put out. A taper draws the amorous fly to its end:

*the tapers beamie eye
Amorously twinkling beckens the giddie flie,
Yet burnes his wings;*

(Elegie VI, lines 17-19)

So the colourful worldly life attracts man and eventually destroys him. The flame of the taper is short-lived and can be blown off by the gentlest breeze which applies to the human life also:

Lifes Taper is a snuffe

(The Dreame, line 24)

Thus the "wasting candles" were the symbols of fast decaying life and man was only a "dark short taper"⁸² melting away and sometimes meeting even an abrupt end.

He employed this conceit to express also the moods of love and the details of analogy seemed to him to be logically correct. The "tapers beamie eye" attracted the "giddie flie" (lover), and destroyed him. But nature would not allow any treacherous dealings to thrive—far less a treachery in love. Therefore, retributive Nature devised it so that the taper would consume itself too while burning the fly. Even true love could be properly described through this metaphor. Excessive true passion was like fire and consumed the lover and the beloved equally. This mutual destruction was the mark of complete union and perfect love:

*Call her one, mee another flye,
We' are Tapers too, and at our owne cost die,*

(The canonization, lines 20-21).

The image of the melting taper reminded him again of consumption. Thus, the wax stood for the physical life and unfavourable circumstances represented the fire or the flame. He employed this conceit to describe the human desire to possess the unknown things⁸³ and used it also to denote unrequited love:

82. An Anatomie of the world, P. 244, l. 448.

83. See 'Farewell to love'—lines 9-10.

*Onely thine image, in my heart, doth sit,
But that is waxe, and fires environ it.*

(*Sapho to Philaenis, P. 124*)

The melting of the wax reminded the poet of wasting diseases and he was obliged to call it the "sick taper." (P. 48)

But sickness does not only mean a "melting" away of the body. There are some diseases which seem "to fatten" the body whereas they actually undermine and weaken it. These bring out a striking association between the inflammation of the human body and the swelling human desires and covetuousness entailing pain and sorrow. On a higher plane, the latter symbolise mental and spiritual ill-health. Hydropsy was one such disease and Donne had a special dislike for it. He used the word "hydroptique" about a dozen times in his poems and, invariably, in a sense of loathsomeness rather than one of pain. It suggested unnatural covetuousness and immoderate desires. He found the earth as "the "hydroptique earth" in the winter. The Dutch were "spongy hydroptique", and so was the "hydroptique father", who had detected the secret meetings of his daughter with her lover because of the perfume used by the amorous gallant. In "The Progresse of the Soule" he found that this corrupt world had only a semblance of health and was in fact hydroptique. Conceits derived from the disease signify the poet's habitual liking for moderation and balance in life. They also indicate his aversion to covetuousness and reveal his generous and charitable nature.

An unhealthy fattening of the body was yet another aversion of Donne's. The sight of such a "burdenous corpulence" jarred on his aesthetic sense and seemed to him as "combersome unwieldinesse"⁸⁴ because it was false abundance and did "nourish not, but smother."⁸⁵ The underlying idea of swelling and inflammation reminded him of the gout and the cramps which made the joints ache and rendered them unsightly. He taunted his rival for his deformity and the worst points of deformity were "The short swolne fingers of thy gouty hand". (P. 91) These images caused not only disagreeable aesthetic reactions, but also suggested the distension of the skin reddened by pain. In the social affairs flattery and misplaced pride also resembled this unhealthy corpulence which the bulkier it grew, the nearer it brought the patient to his grave:

*If thy Prince will his subjects to call thee
My Lord, and this does well thee, thou art than,
By being greater, growne to be lesse Man.*

(*Of the Progresse of the Soule, P. 265, lines 474-476*).

84. Loves diet—l. 1.

85. Works. P. 64, line 8.

On the spiritual plane, sins were associated with the image of painful swelling and the poet cursed the unknown thief who had stolen the angels from the Lady's bracelet in these words:

*and at thy lives last moment,
May thy swolne sinnes themselves to thee present.*

(Elegie XI, lines 109-110)

A wound or sore also produced a feeling of loathsomeness because it implied some sort of infectious filthiness. The rival's kisses printed by him on the mistress' lips were filthy and conjured the picture of a "worm sucking and envenom'd sore." So the waters lashing at the river banks seemed to him, as the "often gnawing kisses". The general decay in nature was also described in terms of a wound:

*For the worlds subtilst immateriall parts
Feele this consuming wound, and ages darts.*

(An Anatomie of the World, lines 247-248)

Life to him was a "dangerous Apostem" which might be broken up by "a joyful casual violence" and thus "strangle" man himself.⁸⁶ This sense of incision and corrosion may be noticed at the root of the metaphor of "lust-bred diseases" and the itch. Desires and lust were to him 'itchy desire', or 'rank, itchy lust' and one who succumbed to these temptations was an 'itchy-Lecher.' The itch suggested an excess of lust and so immoderate boastfulness could also be adequately described as "an itch of bravery." (p. 107, line 42)

Mental ill-health supplied Donne with some effective images. But the picture of a mentally deranged person found in the poems is not that of a violent man indulging in irresponsible deeds. It is rather a quiet melancholy that the man is shown to be suffering from—it is lunacy. The basic fault with the "vaine lunatique", as Donne found it, was that the latter seemed to suffer from a swollen conceit of himself. This self-conceitedness made the patient mentally shut in to the things which he (or she) did not choose to see. So the inconstant woman felt proud of her wit in jilting the honest lover; but it was a misplaced and undue self-conceitedness on her part.

*Vaine lunatique, against these scapes I could
Dispute, and conquer, if I would,*

(Womans Constancy, lines 14-15)

Donne noticed that the French also suffered from this inflated conceit and because of this superiority complex hated England and her Church, which was hardly tenable.

86. Of the Progresse of the Soule, p. 265, see lines 478-481.

*France in her lunatique giddiness did hate
Ever our men, yea and our God of late;*

(Elegie XX, lines 9-10).

Sometimes a truly wise man might pretend to be unhinged in his mind and show an eccentricity which might appear as "madness" to the people in general. Such a "great Lunatique" was Thomas Coryat who compiled a book of crudities. But, in fact, the fault did not lie with him. It lay, rather, with the common people who were "the half-pint wit". In his poem, "The Will", the poet pretended to be such an eccentric and abnormal man. He offered to bequeath his various senses and faculties to men who did not need them, or even already had them in abundance. This looked like an act of a mad man—absolute foolishness—but the poet under the licence of folly makes a slashing attack on some cherished objects of social interest. Thus, in this medley of folly and wisdom, the lover wanted to hint to the woman who neglected both the lover and the God of Love that in reality it was her action which was as mad and fantastic as the will made by the dying lover seemed to be. From time to time either of the above-mentioned causes of the so-called lunacy would alienate the lunatic from the world since the people of the world refused to tolerate a flouting of their conventional values and a censure of what they considered to be the norm. But to the penetrating eye of the 'lunatique' these appeared as fripperies and matters of giddiness. The dismembering of the individual from the society might make him "unseasonable man, statue of ice" so that "the countrys solitude" would "entice him". This seclusion on his part might appear as "fantastic" to the worldly-wise (as it did seem to Allophanes) but it was some kind of a seclusion that the hermits enjoy; and it makes them wiser and more knowledgeable. Unfortunately, these "lunatiques" were misjudged and unmet remedies of "scourging for madness" and whipping were prescribed for them.

In the light of the preceding discussion we find that the image of a lunatic, who seemed to suffer from mental ill-health was, in reality, not a part of Donne's sickness imagery. By implication it suggested, on the other hand, the intellectual bankruptcy and short-sightedness of the age which failed to distinguish between the lunatic (as visualised by him) and the really "stark mad". Donne, in using the image of the lunatic, was playing Puck-like pranks on his readers; and derived pleasure from these sleights of wit.

VIII

Architecture and horticulture also supplied some expressive images to Donne. Sometimes, he conceived of the human body as a house with the bones for its rafters and "the muscle, sinew, and vein" as its

tiles.⁸⁷ The eye-lashes seemed to him to be the latticed windows while the ears appeared as the labyrinths (P. 259-260). In 'Infinitati Sacrum' the huge fish was represented as having ribs vast like the pillars and it had a "high arch'd roof of bark that blunts best steel" (Stanza XXXII). Besides, 'build', 'tower,' 'erect', 'furnish forth materials enough', 'base' and 'foundation' are a few other metaphors used by him to express man's ceaseless endeavours to seek joy in the world.⁸⁸ The excellence of poetry as a means of honouring and perpetuating the memory of the dead was also admitted obliquely through the conceit of many-storeied mausoleums:

*We'll build in sonnets pretty roomes;
As well a well wrought urne becomes
The greatest ashes, as halfe-acre tombes,
(The Canonization, lines 32-34)*

Flowers and the terms pertaining to gardening were, sometimes, used to convey some deeper sense. The Violets and Primroses were the flowers that he seems to have been fond of. The richest mood of love (ecstasy) needed a physical background of flowers and this would be of "The violets reclining head". The basic idea underlying the visual image of the flower was that of tenderness, innocence and freshness conducive to serenity. The blossom that "now dost laugh and triumph on this bough" suggested to him the idea of the inevitable and fateful end of all beauty and this was a hint to the unkind mistress to assess her own position and re-examine her attitude towards the lover. The Primrose "with thy true number five" did "represent" a woman "with this mysterious number" and was the symbol of perfect womanhood. In another poem the body of the unconquerable lady suggested the conceit of "a forbidden or forbidding tree" and the anxious lover's heart was like a bird "hovering" over the tree "to get a part" in order to take shelter there. (See *The Blossome*)

Technical names of certain processes in gardening also supplied some rich metaphors. The joining of hands by the lovers suggested to him the image of grafting and its wonderful effect:

*So to'entergraft our hands, as yet
Was all the meanes to make us one,
(Extasie, lines 9-10)*

Transplantation is an old and tried device to promote a plant's growth and improve the quality of its produce. Donne employed the conceit to describe the enkindling effect of Love on the soul and compared it to the transplantation of a violet. It was this image again which was at the back of his mind when in one of his verse letters he advised Sir

87. See "A Valediction: Of my name, in the window", St. V.

88. Works: See P. 203. lines 417-424.

Henry Goodyere to undertake journeys for the enrichment of his soul: *then yourself transplant*

Awhile from hence.

(P. 183).

The idea of 'vegetating' also found an echo in his poems and he conceived of love as something growing like a tree. That is the basic image implied in the poem 'Loves growth'. Since love grew like a plant, to complete the analogy, it must bear some fruit as well. This fruit was tenderness and kindness in love:

*Gentle love deeds, as blossomes on a bough,
From loves awakened root do bud out now.*

(*Loves growth*, lines 19-20)

An essential factor underlying this budding and growing is the element of natural health and spontaneity. Growth is a natural but much longer process, whereas budding is a shorter but a more delicate one. It covers a far shorter period of time than that required in the growth of a plant. But, no 'budding' can take place without a long process of growth preceding it. This interaction applies to poetry as well. The feelings of the poet, his reactions, likes and dislikes grow and vegetate over a long period of time and the poet unconsciously nurses them and feeds them till at last the flash of inspiration comes to him and the essence of his long-growing experiences is crystallised into poetry. Donne observed this interaction and relationship between the two and this suggested to him the conceit: "These verses bud, so these confessions grow". (P. 220)

Donne had a taste for music. He got one of his devotional poems set to music and used to hear it very often. We find in his poems some images derived from music itself. Music was, and still is, a symbol of perfect harmony in the variety of notes. This idea of unity in variety had a peculiar appeal for him. Musicians can make different but perfect songs by a single gamut. It is true of Reality also and the poet apprehended essential goodness through the metaphor of 'Gamut':

*When by the Gamut some Musitions make
A perfect song, others will undertake
By the same Gamut chang'd, to equall it.*

(*Elegie II*, lines 19-21)

Falling in line with the medieval mystics, he imagined God's Presence as the Holy room where music is played by the Quire of Saints, and the highest heavenly joy that the individual soul could aspire to was to be made "thy Music". Once again, the underlying idea here is that of perfect mingling and fusion of tunes produced by the instruments.

But nothing can be more unpleasant than an instrument not properly tuned or even over-done. The pestering courtier, whom the poet 'once going that way' happened to meet, seemed to be like "a high-stretched lute-string" for his chattering. So the corrupt and "dead world", as it seemed to have become after the death of Elizabeth Drury, was comparable to a damaged lute:

*Or as a Lute, which in moist weather, rings
Her knell alone, by cracking of her strings:*

(P. 251, lines 19-20)

Donne borrowed some other stock metaphors also from the traditional ones. For instance, the stage metaphor used for the world was employed by him in the true Renaissance manner and in his lamentations over the dissolution of this world in the second elegy on the death of Elizabeth Drury he did see that "This world was but a stage". In one of his Holy Sonnets (No. VI) also he found the human life comparable to a play and its scenes; and this suggested that life is a mere imitation of something else and is an empty show. Even the princes and courtiers were false players and he exposed their false dignity in some of his satires. Metaphors derived from sports, angling and falconry were also used in the traditional manner. The basic conceit in one whole love poem (The Baite) has been taken from angling. The latter also supplied him with some visual images like the "silken lines", "silver hooks", "angling reeds", "strangling snare, or windowy net" and "sleeve-silk flies bewitch poor fishes" and he used them to express the moves and vicissitudes of love. Falconry provided him the basic image for another love poem. The poet felt in the poem (Loves Diet, lines 25-30) that his excessive amorousness was too wayward and strong for him almost like the "buzzard" falcon for the amateur sportsman and could be "reclaim'd" only through persistent efforts. As a result of this, his amorous fancy had to be trained and brought under his control so that he could make it

.....*flye*
At what, and when, and how, and where I chuse;

The lover thus became a perfect 'Fawkner' who could "spring a mistress" at his pleasure. He grew into a practical and worldly-wise lover not too intent on the love of the particular lady but amenable to commonsense and willing to take it easy.

And the game kill'd or lost, goe talke, and sleepe.

Knitting and embroidery are popular pastimes of the fair sex. Donne's deep concern with women and his abiding attachment for some of them is a matter of common knowledge to the students of literature and therefore it is not surprising to find in his poems metaphors based on the arts so dear to them. The soft exchange of loving glances between the lovers made him think of some subtle pattern made by twisting the threads together:

*Our eye-beames twisted, and did thred
Our eyes, upon one double string;*

(The Extasie)

Spinning served him as the metaphor for life and its ceaseless activity. He spoke of death in the terms: "when I have spunne my last thred". (A Hymne to God the Father) Similarly, in an amorous scene the most appropriate material token of love was a "riband wrought with thyne owne hands".

Knitting was a more subtle process and, therefore, of greater interest to him. The very being of man was a subtle pattern woven and knit by the soul

*Because such fingers need to knit
That subtile knot, which makes us man:*

(The Extasie)

The tokens of love exchanged between the lovers were also meant

*To knit our loves in the fantastick straine
Of new-toucht youth;*

(The Token, lines 6-7)

Even the links of the lady's bracelets were described by him as 'knit' rather than joined. The intermingling and intertwining, which activity the process of knitting involved, symbolised an inseparable union. Besides, the "fantastick straine" and "subtile knot" were the patterns pleasing to the semi-mystical mind of Donne. Indeed the very process of knitting has some tacit association with mysticism and this resemblance between the two charmed him.

IX

Minted money, a mark of human civilization, has ever since its inception dominated the life of man diversely—relieving his misery, adding to his joys, vitiating them from time to time and, not infrequently, leading him to ruin. Donne observed all this and his own monetary needs made him all the more concerned with it. The monetization of metals through the sovereign's impressure on it was an inexplicable process and invested it with the romance of mystery. Besides, the very denomination of some coins, like the Angels, aroused some thought-association with the heavenly beings of the same name. This made the coins still more interesting things and furnished him with some revealing poetic images.

The lover-poet was to go abroad and he went to take leave of the beloved; but he could not contain himself there and the sense of the impending separation filled his eyes with tears. These tears were comparable to the coins for more than one reason. Roundness and the glittering quality are characteristics common to both. Then, just as the coins

bear the effigy of the king so the tears "thy stampe they beare". Coins are the "soule of trade" and tears, likewise, are the "soule of the trade" of love. But, above all, there is an implied association with royalty and majesty. Kings alone could authorise the minting of coins and those minted without their sanction would be counterfeit and would have no legal value. So also, the queenly Beauty alone could cause those tears in the eyes of the lover and weeping on the part of the latter in any other situation would be unnatural and illegal. Again, the impression of the king's stamp on the metallic pieces monetized the less valuable material and turned them into the legal tender. Similarly, the tears in themselves might have been worthless; but "by this Mintage they are something worth."⁸⁹ Tears, thus, were like the coins valued and demanded frequently in the realm of love and the idea was logically convincing on more than one level of meanings.

The stamp which the coins bear also suggested the image of a medal. The poet imagined a lover as a medal since the lover's heart bore the image of the beloved and conveyed, by implication, the assurance of constancy and firmness in love. This could be deduced from the fact that the impression of some image on the metallic medal was constant and unchanging. But a lover could also be taken as the coin itself (a medal is very much like a coin and shares with it the characteristic of bearing the king's stamp). Kings loved the money because they needed it for themselves as well as for the state expenses. In its simple analysis, however, it would mean that the kings loved the metallic pieces which but for the value given to them by their own stamp might have been useless. This whim of the kings might appear strange; nonetheless, it explained why the beloved loved (and should love) the lover:

*and makes her love mee,
As kings do coyne, to which their stampe impart
The value.....*

(*The Dreame*, lines 3-5)

The idea of the 'image' or the 'stamp' on the coin struck Donne's mind as something mystifying and he felt amused and even charmed by it. Again and again, the conceit was employed by him as: "Image of her whome I love" or "whose fair impression in my faithful heart", or "to which their stampe impart" or "rich beautie lent mintage to other beauties", etc. In the spiritual contexts too the conceit could hold good. Man, in the worldly love, was taken as a coin; in spiritual love also the individual was likened to a coin bearing the stamp of God.⁹⁰ So the reversion of man from the worldly pursuits to the love and study of God

89. A Valediction : of weeping, l. 4.

90. Works. See p. 266, lines 521-523.

could be adequately described through this metaphor. The human soul is the material on which the stamp of Devil or God (as the case may be) is printed. In the case of a revolution (conversion) old coins are not destroyed altogether; the metal remains the same, only a fresh stamp is impressed upon them. Donne wrote in the poem, "To Mr. Tilman after he had taken orders",

*Thou art the same materials, as before,
Only the stampe is changed; but no more.
And as new crowned kings alter the face,
But not the monies substance; so hath grace
Chang'd only Gods old Image by Creation,
To Christs new stampe, at this thy Coronation.*

(p. 351, lines 13-18)

Donne's coin-imagery is not visual in appeal. The visual image of the 'stampe' and the 'impression', no doubt, recurs; but he is concerned with the value that the "stampes impart" rather than the stamp itself. He was acutely conscious of some subtle force behind this monetization. This mystical strain gives the coins and mintage a far deeper value and significance. As for their monetary value, he could, in spite of his great need, dispense with them and talk of them scornfully as long as the worldly-wise and the money-minded people did not meddle with his love:

*Or the kings reall, or his stamped face,
Contemperate, what you will, approve,
So you will let me love.*

(*The Canonization*, lines 7-9)

From coins to the gold is not a distant journey. The alchemists' interest in inventing some formula to make gold, its colour (which was "like thy hair") and its great monetary value must have impressed Donne. He even referred to it:

*But if I love it, 'tis because 'tis made
By our new nature (Use) the soule of trade.*

(*Elegie XVIII*, lines 15-16)

He was conscious of its subsidiary values as well. "Wholesomeness," "ductileness" and, particularly, its being "From rust, from soil, from fire ever free" were qualities that deservedly made it the most valuable and wonderful of all the metals. For the greedy, however, it had a corrupting power too, and the bribes were described by Donne as the "golden bridges"⁹¹ between officers of justice and the petitioners. In the romantic affairs a rich "lovers gold" could "melt" the loyalty of the

91. Satyre V, l. 54.

maid and corrupt her to place his letter beneath her mistress' pillow. For the needy "Gold is restorative" and "'tis cordial". But to Donne its malleability seemed to be its most striking property. Under the impact of pressure it would "endure not yet a breach"; it would simply expand and thus remain all one piece. Souls of the parting lovers—forced into the situation by circumstances—were therefore like the two ends of a gold bar. It would not break, but was only "Like gold to aery thinness beat." The fact that a solid piece of metal could be transformed to "aery thinness" (resembling the soul) suggested a subtle unity between the otherwise contrary qualities of solidity and "aeriness". This was a mystifying discovery and Donne was delighted to put it to poetic use.

As a result of the growing sense of security from external threats and the increasing naval power of the nation, trade and commerce received special encouragement in the later half of the Sixteenth Century in England. Already trade with the East had been established and a trading company—The Muscovy Company—had been formed to carry on trade with countries as far off as India across Russia and Iran. The nucleus of the Royal Exchange had been formed (Donne refers to it in his *Elegy XIV*) and commerce became an important vocation. Along with many other branches of human activity, trade also served Donne as one of the sources of his imagery. The very process of love-making sometimes seemed to him a business-transaction. As in the commercial dealings it is a two-way traffic (buying and selling) so in love, the lovers' treasure ("Sighs, teares and oaths and letters") would "purchase thee". The rivals too dealt in this "stock" and could "out-bid" the lover, thus making love unmistakably a "bargain".⁹² He even desired to enter into a contract with the "usurious God of Love" and chose "Loves Usury" as the title of one of his poems. Knowledge of rarities recalled to his mind the picture of merchants who "do unhoop voluminous barrels" and "Tons of currants, and of Figs"; and the leaves of Coryat's book of *Crudities* did

Convey these wares in parcels unto men.

A book to him was like a ship bearing a variety of wares and cargo. Worldly joys also could be described through this conceit and in his letter to Mr. E. G. he advised the latter to store joys in the countryside and return to London only in the proper season:

*As Russian Marchants, thy selves whole vessell load,
And then at Winter retaile it here abroad.*

(P. 209)

Pursuit of spiritual knowledge and study of theology in preference to secular learning also seemed to him to be comparable to the commercial expeditions to India:

92. Lovers Infiniteness—See lines 5, 6, 8 and 16-17.

*Or, as a Ship after much paine and care,
For Iron and Cloth brings home rich Indian ware,
Hast thou thus traffiqu'd, but with far more gaine
Of noble goods, and with lesse time and paine ?*

(*To Mr. Tilman, p. 351*)

The idea of the corruption found in the world suggested the metaphor of a small shop, which brings in the implications of selfishness, greediness and mercenary motives and he informed the Countess of Salisbury in a verse-letter that "Court, city, Church, are all shops of small-wares." The Court was the shop where fashionable courtiers—men and women—traded in mutual and reciprocal praise and "Their beauties; they the mens wits; Both are bought." (*Satyre IV, line 191*) The courtier, accordingly, was "like a needy broker." This applied to the spiritual affairs as well. In the traditional manner the world appeared to him as the earning-place and the Day of Judgment was "the great rent day."

X

Donne adopted images and metaphors from foods and banquets also. He chose 'Loves diet' as the title of one of his poems and assiduously explained how he cured the "combersome unwieldiness" of his love through regulating its diet. In the field of knowledge, sobering and enlightening experience received through "Schools, Camps, and Courts" recalled the image of wholesome food and he strongly advised his friend, Sir Henry Goodyere, in one of his letters in verse (p. 183) to acquire the "manlyer dyet" of intellectual attainments. Of the edibles, fruits and meat served him as some elegant metaphors. In a lax mood, the neutral quality of women, who were created by Nature so "That we may neither love nor hate" them suggested the simile: "they are ours as fruits are ours." Meat, to him, stood for the usual physical attraction and women were like the different dishes prepared from meat: "Chang'd loves are but chang'd sorts of meat". He felt disgusted with the courtier who spread scandals and paraded the courtly vulgarities and "with home-meats tries me." (p. 163, l. 109) The poet detested plagiarism as the meat misappropriated from its rightful consumer but only "rankly digested" by the third rate poet who claimed "Wits fruits" of others as his own:

*and they are his owne'tis true,
For if one eate my meate, though it be knowne
The meate was mine, th' excrement is his owne:*

(*Satyre II, lines. 28-30*)

A woman armed with true virtue was "all spices." Spices were the best and the richest gift of rich India; and so a really virtuous and beautiful lady would be the richest gift of rich womanhood.

Donne used the metaphor of 'appetite' for the natural capacity in man to realise the truth and do good; and he termed intellectual curiosity as the "sacred hunger for science." He urged one of his friends to gratify this craving for realising the Truth:

*The noble Soul by age grows lustier,
Her appetite and her digestion mend,*

(P. 183, lines 13-14)

In the same strain he reassured the Countess of Bedford that God would clear her doubts, reveal true knowledge to her

And so increase your appetite and food;

(P. 200, line 40)

The image of the banquet pleased him because of the variety and deliciousness implied in it. It had a hint of excess as well—excess not bordering on immoderation—and a sense of ceremony. He used the metaphor for the delightful first physical union between man and wife when the bride must to the husband "a new banquet grow."⁹³

Kitchen and objects associated with it also provided a few images. The restlessness and pangs of a lover crossed in love reminded the poet of the process of frying and the cruel God of love seemed to be a Pike:

He is the tyrant Pike, our hearts the Frye.

(*The broken heart*)

Donne seems to have had a vivid memory of the miserly maid drudging in the kitchen. False poets reminded him of this picture of the "thrifty wench" who "scrapes kitchen stuff" and is always seen "barrelling the droppings and the snuff of wasting candles." (P. 153, lines 81-83) So, uninspired and second-rate poetry was mere "kitchen stuff". The various animal instincts found in man reminded him of the process of "kneading" of the flour. His letter to Sir Edward Herbert at Julier's opened with the startling metaphor:

Man is a lump, where all beasts kneaded be.

The human personality thus being a lump of kneaded flour, it produced the conceit of its getting leavened when it was inspired by some noble cause. This leavening is indispensable for making good and delicious bread and even for its inflation in the process of baking. Similarly, inspiration is essential for the highest intellectual achievement and spiritual perfection. The leaven puffs up the bread, and so inspiration stimulates the soul. In his poem, "Upon Mr. Thomas Coryat's Crudities," he fondly questioned the latter:

*Oh to what height will love of greatnesse drive
Thy leavened spirit, sesqui-superlative?*

Most of these images, however, are either visual in effect, or suggestive of some pet concept of the poet's and do not pertain to the sense of taste.

Popular beliefs and superstitions may also be discovered at the root of some of the conceits in Donne's poetry. The popular interest in the mandrake and superstitious associations with it lent it a charm and wonder too irresistible for the poet to be ignored. The root of this plant was commonly believed to be human in shape and it was even supposed to be sentient. Donne was fascinated by it and he introduced the image in his poems in different contexts. Tracing the origin and evolution of life on the earth he wrote about the life-force in one particular stage as "This living buried man, this quiet mandrake" (P. 301, line 160) Again, the popular opinion attributed the human reproductive system to the plant, which was fantastic and the poet challenged his audience to "Get with child a mandrake roote". A mandrake plant was also supposed to produce human sounds of sorrow and, therefore, could be a befitting poetic symbol of the unfortunate lovers. In *Twickenham garden* the lover-poet wished to be turned into such a plant:

Make me a mandrake, so I may groane here,

Another common belief was that the Devil had cloven feet. No one could ever explain why it was so. Therefore, an attempt to solve the enigma seemed to him to be fruitless and impossible.

*Tell me where all past yeares are,
Or who cleft the Devils foot,*

Another common belief then very popular was that the birds chose their mates on St. Valentine's Day. This also provided Donne a poetic idea and he exploited it effectively in his Epithalamion on the marriage of Lady Elizabeth and Count Palatine. The popular superstition that a litter of seven could be possible (since "nature do admit seaven to be born at once") "but the seaventh hath still some maim" found an echo in his letter to the Earl of Dorset; and in keeping with the belief he sent only six Holy Sonnets to the nobleman.

Donne took a few poetic images from magic and witchcraft. One of his love-poems bears the title "Witchcraft by a picture". The practitioners of the black art were credited with the power of killing one by drawing a picture of the intended victim and uttering some imprecations over it. The poet put the notion to a poetic use in one of his love poems and suggested to his beloved that she possessed great powers like a magician. The lover's picture caught in the eye of the scornful mistress was sure to kill him through burning (with love). By the same kind of argument the reflection caught in her tearful eye would mean his death through drowning because the very forces of Nature might be charmed by the lady and they might take a hint from

her flooded eyes to drown the lover. But luckily for him the mistress did not know the black art in its thoroughness:

*Hadst thou the wicked skill
By pictures made and mard, to kill,
How many wayes mightst thou performe thy will ?*

In Elegy XI (The Bracelet) we find the popular notion that an unknown thief could be traced through the help of the conjurers. (lines 59-65) Indeed, love itself was as powerful as magic and could even tamper with the laws of nature. Distant objects and persons could be summoned to the lover's presence in no time through "loves magic":

*But all such rules, loves magique can undoe,
Here you see mee, and I am you.*

(P. 26, lines 11-12)

XI

Donne did not possess a keen sense of colour perception. As Redpath remarks, there is very little of colour in his songs and sonnets. Though this colour sense is a little richer in his Satires and Elegies, it offers a very limited variety in the love poems.⁹⁴ The poet did not seem to have an eye for rich colour schemes. It is astonishing that in spite of his being a man of fashionable ways of life in his youth and a frequent visitor of ladies (as one of the contemporaries affirmed) he had no liking for the rich and riotous colours. The perfect colour scheme that he could imagine of was of "white, and red, and blue" since these were "Beautys ingredients;" and their 'lustre' impressed him:

*Whose composition was miraculous,
Being all colour, all Diaphanous,*

(P 242, lines 365-366)

Another important colour scheme visualised by him was that of "Marble, Jeat or Porphyric."⁹⁵ Casually, he could also make a study in contrast between the white and the black. The contrast between "Ivory and Jeat" (Elegy II, line 4) and whiteness and the Moors (Elegy II, line 46) was a visual experience that he could vividly and distinctly reproduce. He assembled the "Pearls and rubies" and even diamonds together; but these failed to give any definite pattern of colour. All these, put together, made a constellation and the final impression produced is that of lustre which seemed to be the only natural 'colour' to him. Time and again, he used the image of 'Pearls', 'Diamonds', 'silk', and

94. Redpath, T. Songs and Sonnets of John Donne—(Methuen 1956) see p. XXX.

95. Works. A Funerall Elegie, p. 245, l. 3.

showed a perception of radiance in visualising the 'glistening zone,' 'glorious flame', 'jewels lustre', 'radiant hair', and 'radiant eyes.' He was equally interested in transparency and employed in his poems the images of the specular stone, and the "Chrystal brooks". He was, indeed, more at home in thinking of light and brightness than in visualising any individual colour. This, after all, was as it should have been. He tried to have a mystic vision of things and there is in his poems, as Redpath discerningly observes, a "feeling of inwardness".⁹⁰ To a mystic the visual experience of colour could be "light" and "lustre" only. And, since Donne tried to develop some kind of a sex-mysticism, there is plenty of lustre and brightness but so little of 'colour' in his love poems.

From among the individual colours, he seemed to have a clearer perception of the red, white and yellow. Red was the colour of the sin; it was also the symbol of sacrifice. This antithesis fascinated him. To add to this fascination, it was also the colour of 'blushing'. This triple alliance made it the most vivid and picturesque of all the colours. "Rubics," red hair, "blushing", "cheeks red outwear the scarlet dye" and "So, in His purple wrapp'd receive me Lord" are some memorable colour images employed by him.

White was yet another colour that Donne visualised in abstract. It was the colour of beauty, innocence and purity. He imagined of innocent pleasures as "silken lines and silver hooks." "Ivory," "white Alps," "white robes," "snows," white of the Lady's cheeks outwearing "the whiteness of the Galaxy," etc. had a special charm for him. He also mentioned the "virgin Squadron of white Confessors," "white truth", "white sincerity" and "white integrity." But these have a touch of cold and are damping in effect. This fondness for the white colour bespeaks the essential purity of his mind which is apt to be misread because of the predominance of sex-images in his poetry.

Golden colour also suggested to him a sense of beauty. It had something to do with 'lustre' and maturity, since in the Autumnal beauty he saw the ripeness of wisdom and a serenity and calm that are foreign to the nature of youth. The "golden sands," "silk and gold," "saffroned tin" and "golden harvests" are some vivid images of the colour. So amber also pleased him because of its colour :

This, as an Amber drop enwraps a Bee,

(P. 219, line 25)

Senses of smell and taste provided a still more limited variety. Donne wrote a poem about 'The Perfume,' but it tells us rather of the consequences of being detected through the "loud perfume" than of any sensory perception of some particular odour. He remembered "muske and amber" for their sweet smell since

96. Redpath, T. *Song and Sonnets* (Methuen, 1956) see p. XXXI.

*In buying things perfum'd, we aske; if there
Be muske and amber in it, but not where.*

(*Elegie II, lines 13-14*)

Some other pleasant smells revived in his poetry were those of the "sweet sweat of Roses in a Still" and the juice "that from chaf'd muskat pores doth trill." Even the fleshy thigh of the bride was "balm breathing." But it is interesting to note how the visual and the olfactory senses intermingle here. Of the unpleasant smell, "rank" and "stinking" were the only varieties that he remembered. Dung was rankness itself and the pungent smell of garlic caused unpleasant nasal sensations because how "Can dung and garlike be' a perfume" (P. 180, line 17)

Not many images based on the palatal sense are found in these poems. He had a taste for honey and begged his mistress for such a token of love: "Send me some honey to make sweet my hive". But the taste-sense is overpowered by the visual one and in another context, it is the colour of the honey rather than the taste at the root of the mental picture intended: "as an Amber drop enwraps the Bee." Strangely enough, conversely, Amber pleased his taste sense ("A little spice or Amber in thy taste." (p. 113, line 58) Fruits and meat suggested indistinguishable and diffused palatal sensations. For the latter he seemed to have a special liking, since "home meats" would irritate the palate and the alimentary system, and made him feel sick: "I belch, spue, spit, Looke pale, and sickly, like a Patient." (Satyre IV, lines 109-110).

Donne's sense of touch was, however, richer and more alert than his sense of taste. He seems to have been sensitive to soft touch and this always suggested some kind of warmth as against a sense of cold suggested by the hard objects. He felt the softness of the tongue ("Her tongue is soft and takes me with discourse" (p. 114, line 31) and vividly remembered the soft touch of the kisses and embraces and the moments when lovers "intergraft hands." The touch of the mistress' body in full glory excited him beyond measure and he wished to feel the softness and warmth of the body in full:

*Licence my roaving hands and let them go,
Before, behind, between, above, below.*

(*Elegie XIX, lines 25-26*)

As against this, the touch of "The diamonds of either rock," jet and pearls and the rubies was not only hard, but also cold and had a numbing effect. In a marriage song the poet advised the bride to put on "thy Rubies, Pearles, and Diamonds forth, and make

Thyselfe a constellation of them All."

(*Epithalamion, P. 128, lines 35-36*)

Here, even though the matrimonial context calls for warmth, yet it is ultimately, a 'constellation' that she is to turn into. Donne left the reader in no doubt about it and added "That a Great Princess falls, but doth not die". The feeling of coldness introduced by mentioning the various precious stones culminates in the coldness of death—the image conjured by the words "falls" and "die."

This sense of touch embraces the cutaneous reactions to moisture and temperature. Donne found fault with the "sweaty froth" on the brow of his rival's mistress and expressed the universal sorrow supposed to have been experienced by the world on the death of Elizabeth Drury (First Anniversary) through the image "in a common bath of tears it bled." (line 12) In each case, a sense of humidity is implied. He was, however, still more sensitive to its opposite quality—dryness. In his letter to the Countess of Salisbury he complained of the loss of freshness in the atmosphere. It being the month of August, he felt that "all is withered, shrunk, and dri'd." (p. 224, line 9) This sense of dryness is closely connected with the sense of temperature; and sometimes, Donne fused the two senses. He compared the tanned skin of the rival in love to the "Sun-Parch'd quarters on the city gate" and felt pity for the statesman "parch'd in the court." (p. 180, line 15) The "torrid and inflaming time" and "these burning fits" signify a cutaneous sensation. He could feel the "tolerable tropic clime" as well as the cold. The precious stones that he mentioned—marble, rubies and diamonds—were cold to touch. The picture of the faithless mistress, horrified to see the revengeful lover's Apparition, called forth the vivid image of "Bathed in a cold quicksilver sweat." But here, once again, the cutaneous sensory reaction was combined with the visual aspect of the woman lying drenched in sweat. On the whole, a sense of cold predominates in his temperature-sensation and the images of "snow" or "Statue of ice" and the "white Alps" have a suggestion of freezing. These are primarily cutaneous reactions. Similarly, physical irritation is to be found at the bottom of images like 'itchy desire,' 'itchy lust' and so forth. A creeping sensation in the skin is suggested by the image of the hair bristling up because of fear:

Those set our haire, but these our flesh

(Elegie XIX, line 24)

Donne did not employ many auditory images. He was not very sensitive to the sensuous qualities of sound and it was a very limited range of auditory sensations that he reproduced in his poetry. In his brilliant introduction to the Songs and Sonnets, Redpath has pointed out the fact that in these poems there is "scarcely any reference to sound at all." With a slight modification this may apply to the remaining bulk of his poetry also, which does not offer a variety in cadence. Softer strains are expressed through auditory images of the whistling of the

silks ("I taught my silkes, their whistling to forbear", p. 85, line 51) and the sighing of the wind. (p. 175, line 13) It is quite significant, however, that in each context the soft candence forebodes some impending distress. Another sound-image embracing this plaintive association is that of 'cracking' of the strings of the lute:

*Or as a Lute, which in moist weather, rings
Her knell alone, by cracking of her strings:*

(Second Anniversarie, P. 251, lines 19-20)

In a joyous context a happier aural sensation was evoked by the image of the "chirping Choristers", whereas the "grave whispering" of the Dove suggested a rather melancholy variety of the same. The squeaking of the "high-stretcht lute string" (p. 161, line 73) and the low-squeaking cryer (p. 98, line 55) suggest a sound a note higher. Louder sounds are suggested by the conceit of "Articulate blasts" (p. 211, l. 14) and "blow your trumpets, Angells." (p. 325) But the sensations caused by these are too vague to conjure any distinct auditory image. Similarly, a medley of noises in the storm on the sea was translated simply as:

*Thousands our noyses were yet wee 'mongest all
Could none by his right name, but thunder call:*

(P. 176, lines 41-42)

It is a tumultuous scene rather than any particular sound-sensation that one gets here. Indeed, so limited was his auditory imagination that even the image of a cannon shot failed to elicit any sound-reverberations. He could imagine the vast destruction made by it and did appreciate the sense of horror that it might cause; but as regards the sound, it seemed to have been a noiseless process since he remembered only that by the "chain'd shot whole ranks do die." In *The Storme* also he visualised this scene: "Like shot, not fear'd till felt, our sailes assaile." (line 30) But strangely enough, this havoc done by the cannon did not stir any sound-pattern at all and seemed to be as noiseless an affair as electrocution.

Although Donne did not care much to produce sound-sensations through the images, he tried to compensate for them through other devices. He was, as Grierson has pointed out, the only first-rate English poet who was an orator as well.⁹⁷ This made him primarily interested in rhetorics and he employed rhetorical tricks to make amends for the poverty of his auditory imagination. He superimposed a sound pattern upon his poems. This was achieved through an artistic choice of sounds, repetition of these sounds and words and a deft manipulation of metric schemes.

*At the round earths imagin'd corners, blow
Your trumpets, Angells, and arise, arise
From death*

97. Grierson, H. J. C. *The Poems of John Donne.* (Oxford) See Introduction.

Here the blowing of the trumpets suggests no clear pattern of sound; but the word 'round' and the repetition of the verb 'arise,' lend a certain sensuous quality to the contents and the emergent scene of hurly-burly ends on a musical note.

*Up, up, my drowsie Soule, where thy new eare
Shall in the Angels songs no discord heare;*

(P. 261, line 339-340)

In these lines the "Angels songs" fail to suggest any distinct pattern of sound. But the repetition of the word 'Up' and the liquid sound of 'l' introduce a sense of softness and music which harmonises with the contents and tends to make the 'songs' with no 'discord' sensuously articulate. Furthermore, the words, "Up, up" in close proximity with the "drowsie Soule" indicate the inspiring effect of these songs. Thus, even though originally, no sound-sensations emerged from the actual words, a pattern has been artistically superimposed on them which, in some measure, compensates for the defect referred to above. Donne was interested more in the manipulation of suggestive sounds of words rather than in the auditory images springing directly from the words employed. To make his verses more argumentative, more logical—and, therefore, more forceful and convincing—he tried to weave an over-all sound pattern that "made the meter and rhyme accent"⁹⁸ and compensated for the absence of auditory images. Therefore, it would not be correct to say that he had absolutely no ear for sounds; but in the words of a modern writer, he had "a particular taste for sound and a definite voice of his own."⁹⁹ The only trouble was that it was peculiar to himself and was very much different from the concept of the sonant structures then in vogue.

Donne sometimes used two-dimensional images. These had something more than a perceptive sense as the basic points of interest. The intensity of his experience fused different—and even dissimilar—senses and such a complex mood could be expressed only through the images which involved an over-lapping of the senses. It would be either the auditory sense fused with smell perception, or the visual one intermingled with taste or with some abstract idea. The visual sense, however, predominated over other senses making the resultant complex images lively and fresh.

These two-dimensional images may be classified under two categories. In some of them the points of focus are only different, or at best, dissimilar. But there are others wherein these focal points are not only different, but even antithetical. To the former category belong

98. Miles, J. *The Language of Donne Tradition* (Kenyon Review, Winter, 1951)

99. Stein, A. *Structures of Sound in Donne's Verse* (Kenyon Review, Winter, 1951.)

the images of "Loud perfume", "her body thought", "Eloquent blood", "balm breathing thigh" and "Amber in taste". "Perfume," primarily, involves nasal sensation, whereas "loud" has an auditory effect. The two are totally different human senses, though not antithetical. But the two senses are fused together to make a new image. The pungency of the perfume aroused an auditory association as the pungent perfume had betrayed the lover to the 'hydroptique father' of the amorous young mistress. A sense of distance is implied by the words "at my entrance cried", and this sense of crying accentuates the quality of pungency. Thus, the two senses act and interact and enhance the revealing quality of the image. The same is true of the sense conveyed by "eloquent blood spoke in her cheek" wherein the auditory sense overlaps the visual aspect of the flushed cheeks. The blood mounting to the young virgin's (E. Drury's) cheek was expressive of ever so many noble things—qualities and feelings. The incandescent imagination of the poet did not only perceive them, but, could even feel those noble things as if they were declaimed by the cheeks. What lends an additional charm to the image is the accuracy of observation. The movement of the blood is aptly suggestive of the vibration of the tongue in eloquent speaking, and therefore, the richness of the conceit "blood spoke in her cheeks" is almost overwhelming in effect.

In some other images the visual or olfactory senses were fused with some abstract things. Body is a visual object. It can be touched, and felt, and, in its turn, may feel and touch the things. But thinking is a faculty absolutely unknown and foreign to it; and yet the excellence of the perfect virgin (Elizabeth) was "That one might almost say, her body thought." So the visual and the non-optical senses are merged together to make an image which may be predominantly visual in appeal, but at the same time, is something more than optical in effect. The images of "White sincerity", "my mind's white truth", "virgin white integrity" etc. do not only convey the colour-perception of 'whiteness,' but, they tell of something much richer behind it. Sometimes, the senses of touch and smell and those of smell and taste were mixed up to produce a few comprehensive images. Cutaneous sensitiveness to temperature and the nasal alertness on the part of the lover made the young bride's thigh (Epithalamion at Lincoln's Inn) "warm balm breathing thigh." So, Amber is primarily pleasing to the sense of smell or even to the eye; but, Donne could discover in it a pleasant taste as well: "Amber in thy taste" (p. 133 line 58) Images derived from the opposite reactions of a perceptive sense (basically involved) are multi-layered and operate on several planes of logical reasoning. This contrast causes a tension which, on being resolved, releases a peculiar imaginal energy with a tremendous effect. He called the perfume "bitter-sweet". The basic sense involved is that of taste, yet the over-all sense is that of smell which makes the reader exercise his imagination at two levels. He has, on the one hand, to explain the hiatus between the 'tenor' and

the 'vehicle' in the metaphor, and, on the other, to resolve the antithesis between the two shifts of the 'vehicle'. The smell was sweet, but the end which it entailed was unhappy and unpleasant because the subsequent developments were disagreeable to the lover. The perfume in the beginning might have pleased the mistress and might have softened her heart; it was a sweet effect. But this very perfume, indirectly, proved to be the cause of a forced separation; hence, it was bitter. The perfume reminds one of its base and bitter origin¹⁰⁰ and thus, the blending of the bitter and the sweet was, logically speaking, not inaccurate. For yet another reason as well, it was justifiable to call it "bitter-sweet", and this additional reason reveals the real mood of the poet. The lady concerned was a source of sweet and pleasant experiences to him as long as he could meet her; but the separation made him feel 'bitter.' Her absence was the cause of this bitterness whereas, formerly, she was the symbol and harbinger of 'sweetness.' It would be, therefore, quite correct to call her "bitter-sweet" and it was equally correct to qualify his mood by the same epithet. In the present moment were concentrated the sweet memories of the past and the anticipation of bitterness in the beloved's absence. It is, thus, layer after layer of implicit ideas embraced by this innocent looking but otherwise dynamic image. The past, present and future all are rolled into one image—'bitter-sweet', thereby fusing the senses of smell and taste.

This quality of the focal points involved in the 'vehicle' makes the resultant image tremendously revealing in effect:

*The passage of the West or East would thaw,
And open wide their easie liquid jawe
To all our ships*

(*Epithalamion*, P. 135)

The two constituents of the 'vehicle' here are the image of a 'liquid' (water) and the image of solidness (jaw). Of course, one may find some connection between the two as the latter helps in gulping the liquid. But, how can a jaw be liquid? Water suggests the feeling of moisture, softness, cold and an idea of transparency. The jaw presupposes a quality of hardness, firmness, opaqueness and, comparative warmth. Water is something to be gulped whereas the jaw represents the munching and chewing activity. But the picture of the "West or East" (suggesting the two jaws), the thawing straits and the ships steering through them combine the images of the 'liquid' and the 'solidness'. Here the basic image is that of thawing and this establishes a relationship between the solid object and the liquid one. The over-all visual pattern lends them unity and makes the 'liquid jaw' more a matter of sight than one of touch. This overlapping and subtle shifting of the different

100. As you like It (Shakespeare) III. II, see lines, 56-60.

planes of experience is a peculiarity of Donne's imagery that makes him startlingly modern. The characteristic may be observed in his prose as well. We have the testimony of Smith to this effect:

“ we find them a curious modern note or quality which we find almost nowhere else in the literature of that age.

(*Smith, Donne's Sermons, P. XXXI*)

Donne believed in the efficacy of intergrafting and transplanting to improve the quality of fruit and flower because of “That abler soule, which thence doth flow.” (p. 52, line 43). He employed the process (intergrafting) in the choice of his poetic images. Images belonging to one particular area of human experience were intergrafted with those belonging to other areas, and sometimes were transplanted and shifted to even the non-aligned areas of thought and sense. He dovetailed dissimilar (sometimes even antithetical) points of focus. This device calls for an intellectual exertion on the part of the reader. Donne seemed to forestall the French aesthetes of the Nineteenth Century and his practice and technique of choosing metaphors and conceits may, in the words of Williamson, be described as the “early symbolist imagery.”¹⁰¹

XII

The early Seventeenth Century poetics emphasised the logical quality in verse at all the three planes of decorum, significancy and delight, which were then supposed to be the requisites of all good poetry. Donne took up a stand which, on the face of it, seemed to be inconsistent with the accepted literary theories. He chose ‘unpoetic’ themes and employed the conceits which were not only new, but also perplexing to the reader brought upon the traditional metaphors and images. His conceits were derived from alien and diverse regions, and, on the surface at least, there appeared to be an inherent discord between the image and the object. His poetry, therefore, seemed illogical and his paradoxes appeared to be irrational. But his true mastery lay in springing a surprise by manipulating them in such a way as to dispel all sense of discord and make the images compatible with Reason. He served, at once, two difficult masters—logic and poetry. Sometimes, he even enhanced this difficulty by choosing his conceits from areas of experience far removed from the object under immediate study. In his earlier poems he seemed to do so wilfully in order to show off his skill and wit. But it was not merely a matter of theatricality and parading of learning, because the practice had struck deeper roots. He had a scientific-cum-mystical mind and this enabled him to discover a pattern of unity even in the

101. Quoted by J. Miles. *The Language of the Donne Tradition* (Kenyon Review, Winter, 1951).

incognate objects and disparate things. To him all knowledge and sensations were coherent and co-related phases of the total flux of his experience. As such, he saw an essential inner unity and harmony in the diverse objects and aspects of life and his irradiating imagination rendered this coherence logically perfect. His poetic images were richly leavened with logic, and he has been deservedly acclaimed as "the strictest poet logician."¹⁰²

His vision of a mystical coherence in all experience leads one to believe that Donne was primarily interested in making a study in contrast and that the subjects fascinated him only for their being mutually antithetical. But the qualities of contrariness and antithesis served him only as a handle to set in motion the mystic mechanism of his mind which revealed to him a natural coherence in all experience. Strangely enough, he did not depend on any mystic vision in the matter, but exercised his thinking and rational faculty to grasp the Truth. This dialectical process of reasoning, however, was not cold and anaemic. It stirred his mind and thrilled his soul. His whole being was animated by it and made common cause with his imagination which in the words of Herbert Read, "struck fire in the very process of reasoning."¹⁰³ His images are vivid in impression, revealing in quality and multiplex in composition. They have a rhetorical effect and it was for this very reason that Grierson called his poetry "packed but imaginative logic." This applies to his imagery as well.

The stream of Donne's imagery had a variegated and vast catchment-area. The major sources of his conceits are sex, religion, law, philosophy, geography, chemistry, astronomy, coins, voyages and the divers interests and objects of contemporary life. The best poetic images employed by him are two-dimensional and operate on more than one plane. They are manipulated in such a way as to demonstrate the co-existence of manifold focal points and indicate a plurality of regions of primary interest. The images, thus, represent a combination of exaggeration and Realism, or Realism and Mysticism, as the case may be. They have a tendency to allow the sensory reactions to overlap one another. There seems to be an apparent dichotomy between the idea and the image. This creates a tension in the mind of the reader since he is required to be constantly on the alert to explain this cleavage between the two. As he succeeds in resolving this tension, he finds himself up against a fresh disjunction between the idea and the image in some subsequent conceit. Sometimes, this tension begins with the very opening line which seems to break away altogether from the image suggested by the title of the poem. Since Donne habitually used sensuous images

102. Tuve, R. *Metaphysical and Elizabethan Imagery*-p. 354.

103. Read, H. *The Nature of Metaphysical Poetry* (Collected Essays in Literary Criticism).

for abstract and intangible things (and vice versa) this "recurrent tension and relaxation"¹⁰⁴ grew into a regular pattern of his imagery. This tension, however, is only a means to an end and should not be mistaken for the aesthetic end itself. The process contributes towards a fuller apprehension of the main thought or feeling and enriches the poem as a whole. His images, thus, are not dormant; they are dynamic and have a life of their own, which retaining their independent existence harmonises with the theme and texture of the poem. This interaction between the constituents of an image, on the one hand and between the individual images themselves, on the other, imbued his imagination with a quality of illumination and "tense incandescence."

Some modern critics have tried to discover an archetypal pattern of imagery in his poetry. Harding thinks that the fantasy-perfect image of the mother is responsible for the element of apotheosis in the elegies on Elizabeth Drury.¹⁰⁵ But Donne's attitude towards women in general and his bold and psychological exploration of the theme of sex do not support this view. His serious concern even with physical passion and his perception of its close relationship with spiritual love demonstrate his truly mystical philosophy of sex. He portrayed Elizabeth Drury as a perfect Virgin not because he unconsciously wished to see the image of a fantasy-perfect mother in her, but because the opposite sex at its best tended to mystify him. He called one of his women-friends a "Mary Magadelen" and imagined himself as being canonized a saint of love along with his beloved. In the same strain he could deify Elizabeth Drury too. Besides, in assessing and interpreting his poetry the element of conscious exaggeration should not be underrated. This note of dramatization affected his imagery in a manner equalled only by the influence of his learning. He borrowed many images from some great masters of the past¹⁰⁶ and exploited for poetic purposes some opinions and ideas common in his own day. But, even when he borrowed these, he made them definitely his own. His witty reasoning and clever handling of individual images in the context of a poem, as a whole, added to their freshness and delightful quality.

This study of his imagery reveals the untold story of the man. Clay Hunt has branded him as a "theatrical" man showing a lordly attitude towards the reader. Another scholar has found him preoccupied with the "discord gnawing at his roots" (Lucas), whereas, some others have attributed the intensity of his poetry to the fact that he felt his

104. Lewis, C. S. See *Seventeenth Cent. Studies* presented to Grierson p. 67.

105. Harding, D. W. *Coherence of theme in Donne's Poetry* (Keuyon Review, Summer, 1951.)

106. See 'Monarch of wit' (J. B. Leishman) for Donne's debt to Ovid. For his debt to Paracelsus see 'Donne and Paracelsus' by Murray.

own reproductive instincts too strongly (Potter), ¹⁰⁷ and so on. He was all these and yet something more. Human personality is too deep, vast and complex to be adequately defined through labels and phrases. Donne was, certainly, not a one-note man.¹⁰⁸ He had a passion for knowledge and truth and combined shreds of medievalism in outlook with a modern and scientific attitude to life. He was fond of mystifying; and yet he was a man of the world and was fully alive to the physical aspects of Reality. He felt the force of dogma but he was equally sensitive to the charm and authority of Reason. He had been a lover and, at times had been irritated, cross, and cynical. On the other occasions, he could be equally sweet. He was an affectionate father, a tender husband and a passionate preacher, with the singular wisdom and humility of preaching to himself first. He was generous and charitable by nature, had a keen sense of social consciousness and although circumstances conspired to shut out the great world to him, his imagination continued to dwell on its lively objects. He wanted to help and be helped, but this help he failed to receive in the proper measure. He often felt lonely and cast away, and ineffectively retaliated by simulating cynicism and superiority. But this was an act of spiritual self-immolation; and few may realise the pangs of emotional torture that he must have suffered in thus misrepresenting himself to the world at large. He was humane—tender and sensitive. His poetry is a faithful record of his joys and sorrows; perhaps more of the latter:

My verse, the strict Map of my misery

(To Mr. T. H., p. 206, line 8)

And his imagery supplied contours, reliefs and colours to this Map. The lines in a map are not merely ornamental; they are not lifeless either. They are the symbols of immense reality and direct the intelligent reader's attention to the full life pulsating through the land under the cartographer's study. This is true of Donne's poetic images also.

107. See "Donne's Poetry" (Hunt) p. 143, 163 & 165—Lucas "Authors Dead and Living". Also see Potter: John Donne's Discovery of Himself".

108. Leishman, J. B. Monarch of Wit, Chap. III.



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