IMAGERY, PROSODY, AND MEANING IN HENRY VAUGHAN'S SILEX SCINTILLANS

ROBERT A. BETTS

13650

c. 1

IMAGERY, PROSODY, AND MEANING IN HENRY VAUGHAN'S SILEX SCINTILLANS

By

ROBERT ALWIN BETTS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of English Language and Literature, Memorial University of Newfoundland, March, 1968.

ABSTRACT

Henry Vaughan's Silex scintillans (1650 and 1655), a collection of 129 devotional poems, is essentially an imaginative account of the poet's spiritual regeneration. Vaughan lived at a time when traditions were threatened by the rising tides of rationalism and materialism; an authoritarian and hierarchical pattern of life was shattered by the tumultuous Civil War in the 1640's. Inspired by the example and guided by the poetry of George Herbert, Vaughan abandoned secular verse and chose to counter the mutiplicity and confusion of an increasingly godless age with the unity and order of his own private world of religious poetry, a world fully imbued with the divine presence. Although the influence of Herbert's The Temple may explain much about Vaughan's predilection for certain formal characteristics and something of his partiality for homely imagery and highly Biblical English, it is in the very finest achievements in Silex scintillans--such as "The Morning-watch", "The Night", and "Unprofitablenes"--that Vaughan stands most firmly upon his own considerable poetic abilities.

Vaughan's personal afflictions and the collective misfortunes of the unsettled times moved him to action only after his sensitivity was sharpened by the dawn of religious consciousness. The extreme tension between the worlds of matter and of the spirit, revealed to Vaughan by

his new awareness, provides not only a fruitful subject but also appears in the contrasting nature of the symbolism of light and darkness, which in almost every poem modifies the imagery. Vaughan's important images are taken from external nature and are in themselves constant throughout Silex scintillans. But because a poem is a composition of images which stand as a manifestation of the poet's subjective impressions of reality as perceived at a particular time, the metaphorical implications of Vaughan's images grow proportionately to his developing attitudes.

A study of the relationship of imagery, prosody, and meaning in Silex scintillans suggests that Vaughan's collection has perhaps a more subtle but certainly no less valid unity than that in The Temple. As a work entire and sufficient in itself, Silex scintillans owes its continuity to a configuration of images ordered about the central metaphors of the divine spark, the spiritual pilgrimage, and the ultimate union with God who is Light. A careful consideration of representative pieces in Parts I and II (originally published, respectively, in 1650 and 1655) indicates that the greatest of Vaughan's poetic achievements, when he attains it, is the felicitous articulation of sound and meaning which produces a whole so very much more grand in the experience of it than the sum of contributive elements seem to warrant. Part I is the product of an immutable faith in battle with a recalcitrant will; in Part II, Vaughan's state of mind is such that there is no doubt that the conflict is finished and that the city of palms is in sight.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

One of Henry Vaughan's major concerns (and one of the basic problems of the seventeenth century) is the place of the individual in relation to all earthly and spiritual society. In Vaughan's formative years, Parliament and Puritan, crown and church, began the struggle for powers that would inevitably affect the status of all men; the Copernican revolution and the new science generally threatened by implication the old inherited Elizabethan political and social concepts of degree, order, and continuity. The rise of the commercial middle classes introduced an economic and social individualism, in reaction to the paternalism of the earlier Stuarts, which was to have far-reaching repercussions. In his Latin verses prefixed to Olor Iscanus (1651), translated by Edmund Blunden, Vaughan explains:

> This was my shaping season; but the times
> In which it fell were torn with public crimes;
> When schism had scattered England in the storms
> Of Presbyterian hate and Rebel swarms.
> Through happy field went these demented foes,
> And the coarse rush beat down the holy rose;
> They fouled the fountains, peace died gasping there.[1]

Vaughan was a staunch Royalist of the rural gentry, thoroughly Anglican in sympathy, and very decidedly a believer in authority and tradition in all things. The long conflict between King and Parliament in the

1640's, the final defeat of the Royalist cause in Wales, and the subsequent rule of the Parliamentary faction in the 1650's were surely factors serving to dissociate Vaughan from faith in any form of earthly felicity. One of the most pernicious effects of the civil ferment, in Vaughan's opinion, was the danger it posed to morality and religion. It was, he wrote, "A sad age"

> . . . when Warr and open'd Hell
> Licens'd all Artes and Sects, and made it free
> To thrive by fraud and blood and blasphemy.[2]

Vaughan laments the plight of such institutions as "The Brittish Church" under the new regime:

> The soldiers here
> Cast in their lots again,
> That seamlesse coat
> The Jews touch'd not,
> These dare divide, and stain.[3]

Even in the earliest published poetry (1646), Vaughan is quick to level sharp verbal assaults at "Damn'd Usurie" and the agents of other forms of social oppression; for instance, in "To Amoret Weeping," an otherwise conventional effort in the amatory mode of the Cavalier poets, Vaughan describes and rigorously attacks those who "eate Orphans, and sucke up/A dozen distrest widows in one Cup."[4] The little poem entitled "Idle Verse" (in Silex scintillans, 1650) is an objection to the disruption of traditional values manifest in self-seeking vanity:

Blind, desp'rate fits, that study how
To dresse, and trim our shame,
That gild rank poyson, and allow
Vice in a fairer name;

The Purles of youthful bloud, and bawles,
Lust in the Robes of Love,
The idle talk of feav'rish souls
Sick with a scarf, or glove.[5]

The recollection of several passages in Vaughan's secular verse may cause one to wonder if the last few lines above are not an implicit repudiation of some of his own early themes. In one of the young poet's gayest celebrations entitled "A Rhapsodie/ Occasionally written upon a meeting with some of his friends at the Globe Taverne . . . " (1646), the young poet urges:

Drink deep; this Cup be pregnant; & the wine
Spirit of wit, to make us all divine
That bid with Sack, and mirth we may retire
Possessours of more soules, and nobler fire.[6]

The weight of political affliction and crises of personal experience were soon to exert a sobering influence upon Vaughan's outlook, culminating in the devotional poetry of Silex scintillans (1650 and 1655).

Of the Civil War, Vaughan cooly states that "In this great ravenous heat I had not part." He offers the following explanation: "My mother's pure and patient pattern showed/ How best with weeping I should bear my load."[7] But aside from opinions to the contrary of such notable scholars of Vaughan's life and works as Edmund Blunden and E. L. Marilla,[8] there are sufficient indications in the poetry itself

to suggest that the poet did in fact take up arms for the Royalist cause. In "An Elegie on the death of Mr. R. Hall, slain at Pontefract, 1648", Vaughan's speaker expresses real contempt for "Wool-sack souldiers" and "discreet Cowards" who did "sometimes peepe at death."[9] Blunden believes that the use of military imagery in the poem "Peace"--in which the soul's "fortresse" is guarded by a "winged Sentrie" and "Beauteous files"--"is evidently the outflash of war experience."[10] Perhaps the line in Vaughan's poetry most difficult to dispute as evidence of the poet's military service is that in the light-hearted piece "Upon a Cloke lent him by Mr. J. Ridsley" in which Vaughan speaks of the time "when this Jugling fate/ Of Soulderie first seized me!"[11] Whatever the degree of Vaughan's involvement in the actual fighting, it is certain that the conflict was the beginning of an unfortunate series of disappointments. In 1645, Vaughan's friend "R. W." was slain at Rowton Heath;[12] in 1647, his twin brother Thomas was evicted from his local parish for alledged Royalist activities;[13] in the summer of 1648, his beloved younger brother William died unexpectedly, followed within a decade by Vaughan's first wife, Catherine Wise;[14] and Vaughan himself was stricken with a serious illness in 1653.[15] All these occurrences, and the repeated victories and final triumph of the Parliamentarians, were major reasons behind Vaughan's life-long yearning for a peace secure from the noise and contention of worldly life.

The troubles of the times and influences within Vaughan's

personal experience combined to hasten the development of the seriousness of attitude which alone can explain the fact that, although never anything other than a layman, he turned from secular verse to exclusively religious poetry and devotional prose near the middle of the century. There have been several theories advanced about Vaughan's "conversion", but to avoid conjecture and undue emphasis upon one factor or an other, it is perhaps best to look for clues in the writing itself. In "The Authors Preface" to the second edition of Silex scintillans (1655), Vaughan makes it clear that the proper motive of the poet is the praise of God: he calls the individual poems "Hymns". Julian's Dictionary of Hymnology lists a number of the Silex pieces which are used for public worship, including some of Vaughan's finest, such as "Joy of my life!," "Peace," "The Knot," and six others.[16] The function of poetry, as described in the "Preface", is the ministration of "grace and life."[17] A poem, for Vaughan, is the flower of Grace; it is, in fact, a pitiable analogue of Christ the Redeemer, to whom the verses dedicatory to Silex scintillans (1650) are addressed:

> My God! thou that didst dye for me,
> These thy deaths fruits I offer thee;
> Death that to me was life and light,
> But dark and deep pangs to they sight,
> Some drops of thy all-quickning blood
> Fell on my heart; those made it bud
> And put forth thus, though Lord, before
> The ground was curst, and void of store.
> Indeed I had some here to hire
> Which long resisted thy desire,
> That ston'd thy servants, and did move
> To have the murthred for thy love;
> But Lord, I have expell'd them, and so bent,
> Beg, thou wouldst take the Tenants Rent.[18]

Political defeat and personal misfortunes were the scourges that "curst" Vaughan's heart. But it seems to have been the inward realization of grace ("thy all-quickning blood") which turned self-seeking despair to an active quest for a new Eden. Silex scintillans is the imaginative account of Vaughan's search; it is at once a record of the poet's spiritual renewal and a representation of the personalized vision with which he countered his own unsettled age.

Vaughan's sensitivity provided a wealth of subject material. The question of form for devotional poetry led him to Mr. George Herbert, "whose holy life and verse gained many pious Converts", "of whom", Vaughan assures us in the 1655 "Preface", "I am the least."[19] It is a tribute to Vaughan's considerable poetic skill that, admitting even the commonly leveled charges of excessive borrowing from The Temple and occasional lapse of inspiration, an impressive number of the finer poems in Silex scintillans offer a total aesthetic experience somehow more felicitous in sum than contributions of sound and sense appear to warrant. Perhaps the most viable explanation for the disproportionately striking effect, when it occurs in such poems as "The Morning-watch","Unprofitablenes", or "The Night", is that the reader's impression of Vaughan's whole visual world creates expectations which in many particular instances provide the touch of magic that transforms an ably articulated coalition of prosody and meaning into an unforgettable poetic experience.

CHAPTER ONE: NOTES

[1] Henry Vaughan, Poetry and Selected Prose, ed. L. C. Martin (London, 1963), p. 456, ll. 11-17.

[2] Vaughan, "To the pious memorie of C. W. Esquire", p. 402, ll. 50-52.

[3] Vaughan, p. 240, ll. 6-10.

[4] Vaughan, p. 14, ll. 29, 27-28.

[5] Vaughan, p. 278, ll. 9-16.

[6] Vaughan, p. 12, ll. 63-66.

[7] Vaughan, "To After Ages," p. 456, ll. 20, 23-24.

[8] Edmund Blunden, On the Poems of Henry Vaughan, (London, 1927), p. 27, and E. L. Marilla, "Henry Vaughan and the Civil War", The Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XLI (1942), pp. 514-526.

[9] Vaughan, p. 62, ll. 41, 32, 44.

[10] Blunden, p. 29.

[11] Vaughan, p. 56, ll. 85-86.

[12] Vaughan, "An Elegie on the death of Mr. R. W. slain in the late unfortunate differences at Routon Heath, neer Chester, 1645", pp. 52-54.

[13] Helen C. White, The Metaphysical Poets (New York, 1962), pp. 243-244.

[14] White, p. 250.

[15] Vaughan, p. xvi.

[16] (New York, 1957), II, p. 1205.

[17] Vaughan, p. 218, l. 40.

[18] Vaughan, p. 223, ll. 1-14

[19] Vaughan, "The Author's Preface to the Following Hymns", p. 220, ll. 20-22.

II. HERBERTIAN INFLUENCE

Certainly the greatest single influence upon the formal aspects of Vaughan's Silex scintillans is George Herbert's devotional volume The Temple (published posthumously in 1633). Twenty-six of Herbert's poem titles are used in Silex, and no less than fifty pieces bear the unmistakable impress of The Temple's spirit and themes, if not of its ideas, phrases, and stanzaic forms. Vaughan goes so far as to borrow Herbert's subtitle for the 1650 edition of Silex scintillans, "Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations". L. C. Martin believes that Vaughan's poetry owes much to The Temple; he writes that

> . . . the influence of Herbert was both powerful and far-reaching, confirming Vaughan in his religious orthodoxy, stimulating him to explore the possibilities of devotional poetry, and supplying him with countless ideas, phrases, and formal patterns which he sometimes took over with little or no modification.[1]

F. E. Hutchinson adds that "there is no example in English literature of one poet adopting another poet's works so extensively."[2] Of the many striking examples of Herbertian formal influence throughout Silex scintillans, there are a far greater number of echoes from The Temple in Vaughan's first edition (1650).

Both Herbert and Vaughan rely heavily upon a basic and flexible four-line stanza usually rimed abab, but susceptible to a number of variations. Approximately one quarter of the poems in The Temple and Silex respectively are in quatrains. Herbert, perhaps having learned from Donne, apparently taught Vaughan how to make the opening of a poem an arresting and memorable occasion, as it is in "The Collar": "I struck the board, and cry'd 'No more;/ I will abroad.' "[3] Some first lines from

the Silex poems indicate that Vaughan took the lesson to heart; he is master of the provocative statement, the rhetorical question, the impassioned apostrophe, and the colloquial turn of phrase: "I saw Eternity the other night", "Praying! and to be married? It was rare", "Iesus, my life! how shall I truly love thee?", "Death, and darkness get you packing", and many others. Vaughan occasionally indulges in some of the quaint devices that seem to delight Herbert, such as the use of complex and unique rime structures. Herbert's "A Wreath" is a little twelve-line poem beginning with these verses:

> A wreathed garland of deserved praise,
> Of praise deserved, unto Thee I give,
> I give to Thee, Who knowest all my wayes,
> My crooked winding wayes, wherein I live. [4]

Vaughan's "garland" piece is also a dozen lines long (following two conventional introductory quatrains in his poem "The Wreath") and begins thusly:

> But a twin'd wreath of grief and praise,
> Praise soil'd with tears, and tears again
> Shining with joy, like dewy days,
> This day I bring for all thy pain. [5]

In Herbert's passage, the rime pattern abab becomes locked into the poem by a somewhat less than subtle repetition of the end-words of each line in the internal progression of the next; and no wonder the occasional charges of "false wit." In Vaughan's poem, however, each of the repetitions serves to modify and advance instead of merely to echo the thought.

He frequently transmutes what he plunders.

Vaughan may have learned to use rime more purposefully by observing Temple poems such as "The Quip", in which linkage by rime serves to consolidate the central four of six quatrains and to underscore their distinct position in the poem's meaning structure. Each of Herbert's four stanzas presents a personified worldly distraction--"Beauty", "Money", "Glorie", and "Wit and Conversations"--to lure the dreamer from thoughts of higher realities; but each of the quatrains ends with the same refrain ("But Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me") which rimes with a line within each stanza. The effect emphasizes the speaker's single-minded rejection of temptation and his resolve to answer all by saying "I am Thine."[6] In Vaughan's "Retirement", the first and second stanzas are linked by their riming first lines, as are the third and fourth stanzas; these first four verse paragraphs--presenting aspects of a single argument for the speaker's "resolv'd Retreat", his removal from the "follies" of the world--have at least two lines in each which rime with at least two other lines in any of the other three stanzas. The fifth and last stanza has no rime links at all with the preceding four stanzas and is, then, conspicuously set apart from the others (all of which have identical patterns of rime and line-length, and of course, look the same); it is in this final and separated stanza that the narrator decides in favor of retirement and answers his God "I will."[7] But in a Temple poem such as "Deniall", it is desirable for the last stanza to stand as a representation not of retirement but rather of the speaker's achievement of harmony between himself and God. The first five five-line stanzas are about the

"devotions" which "could not pierce" God's "silent eares" because of the narrator's own spiritual reluctance and discord, suggested in each stanza by the last line which rimes with no other. In the final stanza, the riming and choice of end-words illustrates the poet's hope of concord with his Maker:

> O, cheer and tune my heartlesse breast,
> Deferre no time;
> That so Thy favours granting my request,
> They and my minde may chime
> And mend my ryme. [8]

Similarly, in Vaughan's "Disorder and Frailty", the first three long stanzas compare the weak and shrinking nature of Man with the steadfastness of the heavens; the irony is the more pointed by the failure of the fifth and last lines of each stanza to join the others in rime. The note of discord is sounded three times until in the last stanza all lines rime in what is now a restored pattern; the narrator gives himself up to God:

> And for his sake
> Who died to stake
> His life for mine, tune to thy will
> My heart, my verse. [9]

Sometimes the use of rime becomes rather heavy-handed. "Love,and Discipline" affords an example of Vaughan's acquired virtuosity carried to an extreme degree:

> Since in a land not barren stil
> (Because thou dost thy grace distil,)
> My lott is faln, Blest be thy will!

> And since these biting frosts but kil
> Some tares in me which choke, or spil
> That seed thou sow'st, blest by thy skil! [10]

The use of rimed triplets is not without precedent in The Temple; indeed, one of Herbert's stanzas in "Businesse" is so close in form and content to one of Vaughan's in "Love, and Discipline" that there can be no doubting the latter's close attention to the master's every effort. Herbert writes:

> Windes still work--it is their plot,
> Be the season cold or hot:
> Hast thou sighs, or hast thou not?"

Vaughan's tercet is remarkably similar:

> Thus while thy sev'ral mercies plot,
> And work on me now cold, now hot,
> The work goes on, and slacketh not. [12]

Vaughan's use of rime in "The Bird", on the other hand, is much more subtle and effective than in "Love, and Discipline"; the first two stanzas introduce and develop the controlling metaphor of "The Bird", announced in the title (very much in the manner of George Herbert). The opening stanzas are bound to a single purpose by lines in the first stanza of six verses riming with the exactly corresponding lines in the second.

In her article on "Vaughan, The Temple, and Poetic Form" (1962), Mary Ellen Rickey attributes the popularization of the use of "contrasting stanzas within a single poem" to Herbert.[13] In "An Offering", Herbert's speaker describes the long and painstaking preparation of his offering--

"one pure heart"--[14] in an extended series of slow pentameters; but upon the presentation, the narrator's joy swells into a lively hymn of dimeters and other quickly moving verses. Herbert uses the double structure to produce similar effects in "Good-Friday", "The Church Floore", and the "Holy Communion". Vaughan puts the technique to good use, for example in his poem "Praise". It begins with stanzas metrically identical to Herbert's in his second of three Temple pieces with the same name; both of the poets rely upon weak feminine rimes in the second and last lines of each quatrain, presumably to make the impact of the important masculine rimes such as "heaven", "strength", and "life", the more outstanding. But after eight stanzas, the initial enthusiasm of the opening apostrophe--"King of Comforts! King of Life!"[15] --has been all but dispersed by the narrator's gradual understanding that the true praise of God requires self-sacrifice and humility; an abrupt change to a very different stanzaic form introduces an appropriately quieter and more submissive mood. Perhaps one of the most effective uses of mixed form in Silex scintillans is in "The Search": using one of his standard and favorite forms, octosyllabic couplets, Vaughan describes the narrator's night-time pilgrimage and "roving Extasie/ To find" his "Saviour". But the worldly "Quest is vaine" for "Hee'le not be found, where he was slaine", and finally (echoing the speaker in Herbert's "The Collar") he is brought to a halt; "Me thought I heard one singing thus":

Leave, leave, thy gadding thoughts;
Who Pores
and spies
Still out of Doores
descries
Within them nought. [16]

The sudden change to lyrical form signals a complete withdrawal from the more prosaic world of nature and--continuing through two further similar stanzas and a final couplet--puts forth the central theme of "The Search", which is the idea that God dwells and may be found only within the pilgrim's heart. Incidently, it is interesting to note that in some anthologies, such as The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse (1916), "The Search" is represented only by the little lyrical ending which was by no means intended to stand alone.[17] Vaughan's "Dressing" begins with an invocation in three pentameter quatrains to him "Whose glorious conquest nothing can resist". Then the narrator turns to a more involved stanza form in petition for divine consideration; the tempo of the now shortened verses quickens and suggests the motion of elevation, as the speaker asks for the clothes of "beames, and brightnes" and "thy grace" so that he might "Live, die, and rise with thee".[18]

In "Dressing", the twofold structure involves the purposeful addition of "shaped" verses to fairly conventional ones. The famous Herbertian precedents are "Easter Wings" and "The Altar", in which some part of the subject is represented by the actual typographical disposition of the poem on the page. The device of a sudden narrowing and quickening of lines within a body of predominantly decasyllabic couplets is an inte-

gral feature of Vaughan's "The Water-fall" (discussed below p. 90) and "Ascension-day", in which even the diction of "Easter Wings" is recalled; the speaker knows himself to be a "sharer" in Christ's "victory":

> I soar and rise
> Up to the skies
> Leaving the world their day,
> And in my flight,
> For the true light
> Go seeking all the way. [19]

Writing on "The Poems of Henry Vaughan" in The London Mercury (1926), Edmund Blunden points to the opening passage of "Abels Blood" as an example of the eloquence afforded by the occasional use of a shortened line:

> Sad, purple well! whose bubling eye
> Did first against a Murth'rer cry;
> Whose streams still vocal, still complain
> Of Bloody Cain.

He remarks: "What a vehemence is in that ending!" [20] Certainly one of the finest examples and most effective uses of shaped prosody in Silex scintillans is the end of Vaughan's "Distraction"; the speaker asks rhetorically "I grieve?" and then gives his emphatic answer:

> O, yes! thou know'st I doe; Come, and releive
> And tame, and keepe downe with thy light
> Dust that would rise, and dimme my sight,
> Lest left alone too long
> Amidst the noise, and throng,
> Oppressed I
> Striving to save the whole, by parcells dye. [21]

The subject of the lines is the burden of worldly distractions weighing upon the narrator; the pentameter, the pair of tetrameters, and the double trimeters arranged in descending order form a ponderous inverted pyramid,

the point of which rests heavily upon the lone dimeter, "Oppressed I". The lines form a vivid pictorial representation of the poem's meaning.

The examples offered above illustrate several of the more apparent poetic devices and techniques in Silex scintillans which have well-established precedents in The Temple. There are in addition, of course, a great number of less significant instances of Herbertian influence in Vaughan's religious poetry, especially in the echoing of single words, of individual phrases and ideas. The best of the Silex poetry, however, seems to be that which is most obviously Vaughan's own. R. A. Durr discusses the significance of Vaughan's and Herbert's respective collection titles as an indication of the distinctive qualities of each man's poetry:

> For Herbert it is The Temple, the church and its sacraments and symbols; his is the record of a devout churchman who had had to struggle to attain and hold his piety against the pull of the world. Therein lies the central tension of his poetry. But it is as though by the time his experiences reached poetry they had first gone through the formulating discipline of the church ritual; all is distanced, secure, and quiet. The texture of his poems is as smooth as an aged altar-stone.... Vaughan's poems, however, are sparks from the flint; they are quick with immediate desire, joy, or grief. In them we are outside the church, in the bare little room of man's heart. We are back in the perennial individual experience from which churches grow. [22]

Louis L. Martz, in The Paradise Within, reminds us that "By 1650 Vaughan's earthly Church of England had in fact vanished." [23] Edmund Blunden agrees with Durr: Herbert's God--"God according to vestry arrangements"--is admittedly

> . . . a noble ideal, far finer than the blurred unvision of many of us, but narrow in comparison with Vaughan's solar, personal, firmamental, flower-whispering, rainbow-browed ubiquitous, magnetic Love. [24]

Perhaps the most important lesson learned by Vaughan from The Temple is that a good poem provides a valuable aesthetic experience insofar as it becomes a well articulated structure of content and form, of meaning and of sound. But finally, as Durr suggests, the art of the two men are the products of very different experiences and for that reason involve means which, though comparable in certain rather secondary formal particulars, are in essence quite dissimilar. It would be difficult indeed to find a more appropriate comment on the relationship of the pair than the one offered by Joan Bennett in her book, Four Metaphysical Poets: "Herbert may have made Vaughan a poet, but he did not make him in his own image."[25]

CHAPTER TWO: NOTES

[1] Vaughan, p. xvii.

[2] George Herbert, The Works of Geo. Herbert, ed. F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford, 1941), p. xli.

[3] George Herbert, The Poems of George Herbert, intro. Arthur Waugh, (London, 1913), p. 157.

[4] Herbert, The Poems, p. 192.

[5] Vaughan, p. 376, 11. 9-12.

[6] Herbert, The Poems, pp. 111-112.

[7] Vaughan, pp. 295-296.

[8] Herbert, The Poems, p. 80, 11.26-30.

[9] Vaughan, p. 278, 11. 57-60.

[10] Vaughan, p. 296, 11. 1-6.

[11] Herbert, The Poems, p. 114-11. 9-11.

[12] Vaughan, p. 297, 11. 13-15.

[13] Mary Ellen Rickey, "Vaughan, The Temple, and Poetic Form", Studies in Philology, LIX (January 1962), No. 1, p. 167.

[14] Herbert, The Poems, p. 151, 1. 5.

[15] Vaughan, p. 286, 1. 1.

[16] Vaughan, pp. 235-237, 11. 4-4, 49-50, 75-80.

[17] ed. D. H. S. Nicholson, and A. H. E. Lee (Oxford, 1916), p. 56.

[18] Vaughan, pp. 287-288, 11. 11, 31-32, 16.

[19] Vaughan, p. 315, 11. 8-14.

CHAPTER TWO: NOTES

20 XV (November 1962), p. 74.

21 Vaughan, p. 243, 11. 27-34.

22 R. A. Durr, p. 11.

23 Louis L. Martz, p. 13.

24 Blunden, p. 75.

25 Joan Bennett, Four Metaphysical Poets (Cambridge, 1934), p. 85.

III. THE MAIN POINTS OF EMPHASIS IN VAUGHAN'S VISUAL WORLD

Don Cameron Allen notes that "the three larger images that are the major centers of Vaughan's poetic theology" in Silex scintillans involve the divine spark or seed sown by the Creator in Man's heart, the germination and development of the plant, and finally the supreme moment of union when the Maker receives the fully formed flower.[1] In writing two years later On the Mystical Poetry of Henry Vaughan, (1962), R. A. Durr follows Allen closely in suggesting that the imagery of Silex is derived from the major metaphors of the "growth of the lily", the "dark journey", and the "spiritual espousal".[2] It is perfectly obvious that recurrent images of seed and biological inclination, physical and imaginative pilgrimage, and natural life-in-death can be seen to symbolize the divine spark, spiritual growth, and eternal life in divine communion; but underlying these is one motif which informs even the most apparently disparate images with a singular significance, ever tending to reinforce the single theme of Silex scintillans which (as indicated by the title of the first poem in the work, "Regeneration") is spiritual renewal.

There is absolutely no important image pattern in any of the 129 poems in Silex scintillans which does not stem more or less directly from Vaughan's intense fascination for the phenomenon of light. The entire work, from the title page emblem of the flashing flint to the "new worlds new, quickning Sun!" of "L'Envoy", is characterized most fundamentally by antitheses and correspondences involving images of

illumination or the problem of its presence in insufficient degrees. Even so incidental a fact as the occurrence of the "light" and "night" end rhyme in more than one of every four Silex poems suggests that imagery based on light and darkness has indeed the position of eminence in Vaughan's poetic scheme; it is used twice in "Silence, and stealth of dayes!", "The Dawning", "The World", "Cock-crowing", "The Night", and in three lesser pieces.[3] The following passages from the poet's brother Thomas's Aula Lucis offers an explanation of the psychological validity of light as a symbol for all that is positive and desirable:

> 'We see there is a certain face of light in all those things which are very dear or precious to us. For example, in beauty, gold, silver, pearls, and in everything that is pleasant or carries with it any opinion of happiness--in all such things I say there is inherent a certain secret concomitant lustre, and whiles they last the possessors also are subject to a clearness and serenity of mind. On the contrary, in all adversity there is a certain corroding, heavy sadness, for the spirit grieves because he is eclipsed and overcast with darkness. We know well enough that poverty is but obscurity, and certainly in all disasters there is a kind of cloud, or something that answers to it.'[4]

Goodness and perfection, in their most purely spiritual and ethereal states, are often described by Vaughan in terms of light modified by the addition of the adjective "white" to indicate the highest degree of excellence. The color white, according to Thomas Vaughan, "is the very emblem of one in being the confusion of all"[5] and seems, therefore, to be an unusually appropriate symbol of harmony.

Eden in Silex scintillans is "white dayes", the "early dayes!" when the speaker "Shin'd in . . . Angell-infancy" and fed his soul with "ought/ But a white, Celestial thought";[6] then he

> Within the line
> Of Eden could
> Like the Sun shine
> All naked, innocent and bright,
> And intimate with Heav'n, as light.[7]

But Man has sinned and lost his original home; he has been driven out through the gates of birth-and-death into the world of sin and decay where the white light of "goodness quickly fades."[8] Like the rooster in "Cock-crowing", in which God the "Father of light!" planted the "Sunnie seed",[9] Man, too, possess an innate spark of "light" or divinity and "knows he hath a home", but since the Fall, "he hath quite forgot how to go there."[10] As Thomas Vaughan suggests in the passage from Aula Lucis, "in all disasters there is a kind of cloud"; one of the basic images in Silex scintillans is that of the cloud or of the obscuring veil of flesh drawn between Man and God who is light.

The seed-journey-union configuration is readily apparent in the movements of many poems on diverse subjects in Silex scintillans; but what lends to them all a direction towards the one goal of Vaughan's unified vision, that of inward regeneration in Christian terms, is the underlying symbolism of light and darkness. Consider, for example, the shades of light in Vaughan's "Vanity of Spirit":

> Quite spent with thoughts I left my Cell, and lay
> Where a shrill spring tun'd to the early day.

I beg'd here long, and gron'd to know
Who gave the Clouds so brave a bow,
Who bent the spheres, and circled in
Corruption with this glorious Ring,
What is his name, and how I might
Descry some part of his great light.
I summon'd nature: pierc'd through all her store,
Broke up some seales, which none had touched before,
Her wombe, her bosome, and her head
Where all her secrets lay a bed
I rifled quite, and having past
Through all the Creatures, came at last
To search my selfe, where I did find
Traces, and sounds of a strange kind.
Here of this mighty spring, I found some drills,
With Ecchoes beaten from th' eternall hills;
Weake beames, and fires flash'd to my sight,
Like a young East, or Moone-shine night,
Which shew'd me in a nook cast by
A peece of much antiquity,
With Hyerogliphicks quite dismembred,
And broken letters scarce remembred.
I tooke them up, and (much Joy'd,) went about
T' unite those peeces, hoping to find out
The mystery; but this neer done,
That little light I had was gone:
It griev'd me much. At last, said I,
Since in these veyls my Ecclips'd Eye
May not approach thee, (for at night
Who can have commerce with the light?)
I'le disapparell, and to buy
But one half glaunce, most gladly dye.[11]

The impulse of some morning's mental unrest impells the speaker to journey from the dim confines of the "Cell"--his bodily self--out into the larger perspective of nature. The ostensibly visual image of the "Clouds" spurs him to ask about the maker of physical beauty in terms of the thoroughly abstract "glorious Ring." He attempts in vain to discern God's "great light" by searching outwardly till at last he turns and finds "Traces" of that light within himself; this

"mighty spring"--or divine spark of immense potential--is no "shrill spring", but a powerfully aural sensation of "strange" sounds perceived as intimations of the eternal rhythms of life. The impression of the "Ecchoes" is confounded with the memory of dimly visible "beames, and fires" which are recognized as "part of his great light"; like the reflected brilliance of a "young East, or Moone-shine night", these are metaphors for divine illumination that reveals the fragments of the mystery of existence in a "nook cast by" of the speaker's heart: The "Hyergliphicks quite dismembred// And broken letters scarce remembred" are indeed of "much antiquity" because they are remnants of the speaker's shattered innocence. But the light fails and the soul's window, the "Eye", is "Ecclips'd" once again by the heavy veil of spiritual darkness (the "night") which stands in stark contrast to the time of day described in the opening of the poem as "early". The speaker comes to see that only by casting off the affections of the natural body, that garment of the soul or divine seed, will he be able to rend the veil of vanity of spirit; "I'le disapparell" and grow to re-union with God the prime source of light and life.

To unite the"Hyerogliphicks" and "broken letters" is to regain a fresh vision of innocence (of the Eden-like state) long obscured by Man's incarnation (his virtual incarceration in the "Cell" of clay) and by the dimming effect of Time itself; in "The Day of Judgment", Vaughan writes "all other days"--save the final one--"are but veils".[12] Fallen Man in "The Tempest" is described, in one of

Vaughan's more ingenious images, as "groveling in the shade, and darkness": he

> Sinks to a dead oblivion; and though all
> He sees, (like Pyramids,) shoot from this ball
> And less'ning still grow up invisibly,
>
> Yet hugs he stil his durt.[13]

For all his rhapsodical effusions upon the joys intimated by Nature, Vaughan never once forgets that the terrestrial world--the "whole frame" of which was cursed and "Crackt"[14] by the very unfortunate Fall of Man--is, for him, an immense analogue of Man's own frame,, "Cast/ Here under Clouds, where storms, and tempests blast".[15] In "Church-Service", the speaker implores God in these words: "Thy hand alone doth tame/ Those blasts, and knit my frame."[16] In "Chearfulness", he begs:

> O that I were all Soul! that thou
> Wouldst make each part
> Of this poor, sinful frame pure heart![17]

The concluding couplet of "The Search" echoes the dominating sentiment of "Vanity of Spirit": "Search well another world; who studies this,/ Travels in Clouds, seeks Manna, where none is."[18] The speaker in "Distraction" understands that the attainment of a child-like and single-minded vision necessary for spiritual regeneration depends upon the grace bestowed by Christ; only grace can dispel the darkness of the world and "keepe downe with thy light/ Dust that would rise, and dimme my sight."[19]

Vaughan's world of nature is a stage, a highly artificial construct, built solely for the reenactment of the orthodox Christian schema of sin, repentance, and spiritual regeneration. We enter the work in media res: Eden is but a dim recollection and the light of Heaven is a reality only fitfully apprehended in "gleams" and "rays". Since nature is fallen--and Vaughan never suggests any other possibility--the "letters" are indeed "broken" (those in "Vanity of Spirit") and, of course, cannot be read as if they were whole. Vaughan refers to the world of nature on two occasions as "murtherer"[20] and "murd'ring;"[21] on two others he speaks of dead flowers as being "medicinal"[22] and useful "for salves and syrups."[23] Nature in Vaughan is, on one hand, the very principal of destruction because it is the home of change and decay; but it is also the mere "skinne and shell of things/Though faire"[24] and so, as E. C. Pettet suggests in his study of Silex scintillans entitled Of Paradise and Light (1960), "we must entirely separate his (mainly hermetic) conception of the Divine in Nature from Wordworth's pantheism and belief in the possibility of spiritual communion through the medium of Nature."[25] In the "Mount of Olives" (I), Vaughan warns against mistaking the shadow for the substance:

> Sweete, sacred hill! on whose fair brow
> My Saviour sate, shall I allow
> Language to love
> And Idolize some shade, or grove,
> Neglecting thee? such ill-plac'd wit,
> Conceit, or call it what you please
> Is the braines fit,
> And meere disease.[26]

There is, then, no way to move directly from an appreciation of nature to the experience of union or contact with the Creator.

But on the other hand, flowers, though spiritually"dead" even when alive and flourishing, are useful as emblems; trees, herbs, darkness, and light are "shadows of his wisdome, and his Pow'r"[27] in the poem "I walkt the other day (to spend my hour)"; the speaker notes that:

> . . . in these Masques and shadows I may see
> Thy sacred way,
> And by those hid ascents climb to that day
> Which breaks from thee
> Who art in all things, though invisibly.[28]

In "Mount of Olives" (II), the glories and grandeur of nature "did only paint and lie" but they do in fact become metaphorically significant when the speaker's rational intelligence--that seed of divinity--is "warm'd" by an outflowing of grace described as a "Ray of thee"; the spontaneity of his inner illumination and consequent spiritual growth is described in natural images suggesting the fructifying powers of the sun's own light and warmth:

> I have known some beauteous Paisage rise
> In suddain flowres and arbours to my Eies,
> And in the depth and dead of winter bring
> To my Cold thoughts a lively sense of spring.[29]

The following dozen lines are the mainspring of "The Tempest" because, being built around images of nature anthropomorphized, they serve not as an explicit statement but rather as an emblematic illustration:

When nature on her bosome saw
Her infants die,
And all her flowres wither'd to straw,
Her brests grown dry;
She made the Earth their nurse, & tomb,
Sigh to the sky,
'Til to those sighes fetch'd from her womb
Rain did reply,
So in the midst of all her fears
And faint requests
Her Earnest sighes procur'd her tears
And fill'd her brests.

The speaker draws the applications:

O that man could do so! That he would hear
The world read to him! all the vast expence
In the Creation shed, and slav'd to sence
Makes up but lectures for his eie, and ear.

Sure, mighty love forseeing the discent
Of this poor Creature, by a gracious art
Hid in these low things snares to gain his heart,

All things here shew him heaven; Waters that fall
Chide, and fly up; Mists of corruptest fome
Quit their first beds & mount; trees, herbs, flowres, all
Strive upwards stil, and point him the way home.[30]

"Nature", or Man's capacity for rational understanding, proves to be insufficient in herself; she cannot bring true life to the earth (analogous to man's body of clay) and she cannot support that spark which she possesses. But by turning her limited resources heaven-ward, in shedding tears of repentance, "nature" on her own initiative and through her own faith can in fact bring prodigious bounty to every part of her being. The lesson is the same as that of "Vanity of Spirit": the world of nature provides but intimations and signs of the regeneration

that comes only when divine grace descends to revivify the soul for her eventual ascent and re-union in the realms of light.

The aspiration of the seed--or the journey of the soul--is towards the Light; but rebirth always involves the harrowing and the night. Much of the extreme sense of sin and personal loss that pervades Vaughan's religious poetry can be attributed to the startlingly effective use of plant symbolism to render the spiritual states of the speaker. For example in the first poem of Silex scintillans (the theme of which is the primary concern of the entire work), the progress of the soul is described in terms of the flower image: there was "frost within,/ And surly winds/ Blasted my infant buds, and sin/ Like clouds ecclips'd my mind."[31] At the end of the poem, the aspirations of the pilgrim are metaphorically expressed in the heliotrope image, the flowers "broad-eyed/ And taking in the Ray". In "Unprofitablenes", the speaker laments his spiritual unworthiness in the doleful image of "bleak leaves hopless hung/ Sullyed with dust and mud" and calls himself "a thankless weed".[32] But in "Disorder and Frailty", the flower metaphor is developed at length for the first time:

> I threaten heaven, and from my Cell
> Of Clay, and frailty break, and bud
> Touch'd by thy fire, and breath; Thy bloud
> Too, is my Dew, and springing wel.
> But While I grow
> And stretch to thee, ayming at all
> Thy stars, and spangled hall,
> Each fly doth tast,
> Poyson, and blast
> My yielding leaves; sometimes a showr

Beats them quite off, and in an hour
Not one poor shoot
But the bare root
Hid under ground survives the fall.
Alas, frail weed! [33]

The "fire"--the most "divine" of the four elements of the terrestrial world--represents the divine spirit; the martyr Christ's "bloud/ Too, is my Dew"; these are images suggesting the spiritual ministrations which germinate and nurture the divine spark or seed which buds forth from the cold Earth--the basest of the elements--to escape the "Cell/ Of Clay", the tomb that is the physical body. Afflicted with parasites and overwhelmed by the normally beneficial effects of the "Showr", only the "bare root"--that part still possessing the regenerative qualities of the seed--can survive "the fall". It is enlightening to note here, incidentally, that Vaughan's habitual use of imprecise and ambiguous words, like "fall", adds a dimension of implication to the imagery otherwise unattainable. In poems such as "Love, and Discipline", the single unifying concept is that of the soul as a flower in the garden of the world; inclemencies of weather interpreted as manifestations of divine grace and love, become agents of purgation; it is important to notice that even Vaughan's titles are very often an integral part of his image structures: "biting frosts but kil/ Some tares in me which choke, or spil/ That seed thou sow'st, Blest by thy skil!" [34]

Nature, then, although lacking inherent spiritual reality (it "nothing hath/ Worth love or wrath"), can serve to reveal the "hid ascents" leading to the "day", to a union with God who being "invisible" is manifest only in his emanation or "light". That spiritual truth seems to have rendered inevitable Vaughan's constant dependence upon visible/invisible, light/obscurity analogies all through the world of Silex scintillans. As Francis Quarles suggests to the reader of his Emblems,

> Before the knowledge of letters God was known by Hieroglyphics. And indeed what are the Heavens, the earth, and every creature, but Hieroglyphics and Emblems of his Glory?[35]

"Nothing," Vaughan might answer, but "Meere stage, and show".[36]

Fallen nature is merely a convenient analogue of Man's own ruined "frame" in the time-realms of the terrestrial world. But Vaughan's vision in Silex scintillans includes and transcends both nature and time. In a recent article about the metaphysical elements in Vaughan's religious poetry, James D. Simmonds explains Man's position in the geocentric conception of the cosmos that persisted for aesthetic reasons in some of the finest seventeenth-century poetry, even after the confirmation of the Copernican system. Man is at the very highest point in the hierarchy of the natural creatures:

> He possesses not only all the faculties of other earthly creatures, but, also rational understanding, which links him with the angels. Thus man is a reflection of the whole universe, a little world or a microcosm, because he shares some faculty with every other class of creature.[37]

Man is an inhabitant of two worlds. In "The Pilgrimage", he is compared with those "birds rob'd of their native wood".[38] As Milton in Paradise Lost, so Vaughan adopts the larger perspectives of a cosmology that is thoroughly Ptolemaic. The order and consistency of the Ptolemy's scheme, and the fact that it seems to have been endorsed by such venerable authorities as Aristotle and the scriptures themselves,[39] suggests that it is particularly well-suited as an expanded theatre for the re-enactment of the Christian mysteries; it offers a convenient explanation for existence at various stages ranging from that of absolute etherality to rude and gross materiality. As Raphael explains to Adam in Paradise Lost (V, 469-482), the entire universe can be viewed as an emblem of spiritual growth:

> . . . one Almighty is, from whom
> All things proceed, and up to him return,
> If not deprav'd from good, created all
> Such to perfection, one first matter all,
> Indu'd with various forms, various degrees
> Of substance, and in things that live, of life;
> But more refin'd, more spiritous, and pure,
> As nearer to him plac't or nearer tending
> Each in thir several active Spheres assign'd,
> Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
> Proportion'd to each kind. So from the root
> Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves
> More aery, last the bright consummate flow'r
> Spirits odorous breathes.

The celestial spheres--the realms of Vaughan's "great Ring of pure and endless Light"[40] contain the essence of divinity in its purest proportions and are presumably the most nearly perfect imitations of prelapsarian Nature. In "Man's fall, and Recovery", the speaker, in a radical departure from Vaughan's usual manner, sings a complaint in the name of mankind collectively: "Two thousand yeares/ I sojourn'd thus" as "slave to passion and my fate":

> . . . I've lost
> A traine of lights, which in those Sun-shine dayes
> Were my sure guides and only with me stayes
> (Unto my cost,)
> One sullen beame.[41]

Although images drawn from terrestrial plant and animal life (especially the former) are useful to Vaughan, his most supreme examples of constancy to the divine will seem to be derived from the celestial spheres of the highly idealistic Ptolemaic scheme.

It is characteristic of Vaughan that he uses the world farthest away (the celestial one) to describe the correspondingly immutable and spiritual world deepest within. "With what exact obedience do you move" cries the speaker in "The Constellation" to the "Fair, order'd lights" which in "vast progressions overlook/ The darkest night, and closest nook!" But on earth--"the darkest

night"--there is strife and contention: "here commission'd by a black selfe-wil/ The sons the father kil,/ The Children Chase the mother."[42] These are visible manifestations of spiritual discord in the "closest nook" or human heart--that "nook cast by" harboring the "Hyerogliphicks" and "broken letters" in "Vanity of Spirit" (above, p. 25)--in which, aided by divine illumination, the answers to the mystery of existence can be found. The Ptolemaic scheme serves Vaughan particularly well because it provides a framework for the logical development of what are often rather conventional images of spiritual pilgrimage which seem, in any other light, to be little else than variations and permutations modified by the usual symbolism of light and darkness.

Far from urging virgins to make much of time, Vaughan is very much aware that the end of time will be the beginning of real spiritual life:

> . . . Heav'n
> Is a plain watch, and without figures winds
> All ages up; who drew this Circle even
> He fils it; Dayes, and hours are Blinds.
> Yet, this take with thee; The last gasp of time
> Is thy first breath, and mans eternall Prime.[43]

Time, the tyrant of the terrestrial world, is a source of agony for Vaughan: In "Rules and Lessons", he cries "There are set, awful hours/ 'Twixt heaven, and us";[44] in "Come, come, what doe I here?", he laments that "Each day is grown a dozen year"[45] in "Silence,

and stealth of dayes!", he has marked "Twelve hundred houres" since the departure of a loved one.[46] But there is hope because Time "finds his house/ Sickly, and loose."[47] An unusually arresting image in "Buriall" is the following one:

> Tyme now
> Is old, and slow,
> His wings are dull, and sickly.
> . . . . . .
> O come Lord Jesus quickly![48]

The speaker in "The Day of Judgement" cries"Descend, descend!/ Make all things new! and without end!" because "Sin every day commits more waste"[49] and is in itself a sign that the Second Advent and the death of Time is near at hand. The world is a "vale/ Of sin," and Time is the veil of death which must be rent if Man is to be spiritually reborn:

> Onely this Veyle which thou hast broke,
> And must be broken yet in me,
> This veyle, I say, is all the cloke
> And cloud which shadows thee from me . . .
> O take it off! make no delay,
> But brush me with thy light, that I
> May shine unto a perfect day.[50]

Man at birth is thrust through the gates of life-and-death. Possessing the spark of divinity which links him with the Angels, he exists as an alien in the world of nature; he dwells at the intersection of two spheres of existence (a fact which may account in part for Vaughan's predilection for dawn and twilight). But in the Christian perspective, it is Christ who is the true Mediator

and bond between life and death, between Time and everlastingness.

> . . . while time runs, and after it
> Eternity, which never ends,
> Quite through them both, still infinite
> Thy covenant by Christ extends.[51]

A study of Vaughan's imagery of "spiritual espousal" (the term is R. A. Durr's, above p. 22) indicates that Man's real problem lies herein:

> . . . Thy bow
> Looks dim too in the Cloud,
> Sin triumphs still, and man is sunk below
> The Center.[52]

Justus George Lawler, in his studies in religious art and poetry entitled The Christian Image, suggests that the "bow" is a reference (in "The Agreement") to that "covenant by Christ" extended:

> . . . the fundamental temporality, or better
> "temporariness", of the Old Testament
> is completed in the New Testament through
> Christ who comes in the "fulness of time" . . . . the
> sign of the covenant in the Old Testament is
> the rainbow, is that refracted broken light
> which in the New Testament becomes the unified
> brilliance that conquers the darkness.[53]

The darkness of the world's short day is precisely that which clouds and dims the memory of the covenant's significance. In "The Tempest", Man sleeps "at the ladders foot".[54] The image ties in felicitously with the chain of being metaphor described by

Milton's Raphael (above, P.34), but regeneration is not in fact an ascent; it is rather a retreat, a return to the "Center" in virtual imitation of Christ. Consider these verses of Vaughan's from Thalia Rediviva (1678), a collection of miscellaneous poems written by the poet and his brother Thomas:

> The Circle, Center and Abyss
> Of blessings, never let me miss
> Nor leave that Path, which leads to thee:
> Who art alone all things to me!
> . . . . . .
> But in the narrow way to thee
> I observe only poverty,
> And dispis'd things: all along
> The ragged, mean and humble throng
> Are still on foot, and as they go,
> They sigh and say; Their Lord went so![55]

For Vaughan, the term "Center" is a divine "link", very much like the "Sunnie seed" in "Cock-crowing", or a representation of Man's God-given potential for divine union, for "spiritual espousal". So "murthered man"--slain spiritually by a murd'ring" world of nature--"keeps in the Center still/ Some secret sense".[56] In the "Retirement", the speaker "went quite astray" till the Lord showed him the right way home; God reminds him that "when thou wouldst fall/ My love-twist held thee up, my unseen link."[57] In "The Knot", God's Virgin Spouse" and mother of Christ is

> . . . the true Loves-knot; by thee
> God is made our Allie,
> And mans inferior Essence he
> With his did dignifie.

For Coalescent by that Band
We are his body grown,
. . . and him in us
United keeps for ever.[58]

The idea of the wedding band as a symbol of spiritual marriage is explicit in the closing verses of "The World": "This Ring the Bride-groome did for none provide/ But for his bride."[59] In "The Queer", the speaker asks about the way to regeneration and joyousness of the soul, the "Bride-groome's" betrothed:

> O tell me whence that joy doth spring
> Whose diet is divine and fair,
> Which wears heaven, like a bridal ring,
> And tramples on doubts and despair?[60]

Joy springs from the "Center"; as explained in one of Vaughan's favorite books of the Bible, St. Luke (xvii.21): "Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." Rings, circles, bands, roundness and circling motions become notably predominant in the imagery and diction of at least twenty of the Silex scintillans poems, especially when the paradoxical nature of Vaughan's meaning forces him to rely almost entirely upon the eloquence of metaphor. During the Renaissance, and indeed long before, God's omnipresence is described in terms of the circle, the emblem of perfection; Sir Thomas Browne explains his preference for Hermes Trismegistus's definition of the Deity ("Sphaera cujus centrum ubique, circumferentia nullibi") over the ones put forth by the metaphysicians:

> . . . where there is an obscurity too deepe for our reason, 'tis good to sit downe with a description, periphrasis, or adumbration; for by acquainting our reason how unable it is to display the visible and obvious effects of nature, it becomes more humble and submissive unto subtilities of faith.[61]

The Son, God's effective power in Paradise Lost (VII,225), wields the "golden Compasses" and imposes order on Chaos; in Proverbs viii.27, the Creator "set a compass upon the face of the depth"; so in "Vanity of Spirit", the act of creation is described in terms of circumscription: it is the Maker "who gave the Clouds so brave a bow,/ Who bent the spheres, and circled in/ Corruption with this glorious Ring."[62] In Vaughan's "Psalme 104", Chaos is tamed on earth:

> For thou to them a bound hast set, a bound
> Which (though but sand) keeps in and curbs whole seas:
> There all their fury, fome and hideous sound
> Must languish and decrease.[63]

Man's "False life!" is a "dark contest of waves and winde;/ A meere tempestuous debate"; the true "life is a fix'd, discerning light"; it is "a knowing Joy;/ No chance, or fit; but ever bright,/ And Calm and full".[64] God is order and perfection, harmony and direction. But straying Man "is the shuttle, to whose winding quest/ and passage through these looms/ God order'd motion, but ordain'd no rest."[65] After presenting the portraits of various

popular vices in "The World", Vaughan tells of "some who all this while did weep and sing,/ And sing, and weep, soar'd up into the Ring."[66] The syntax is an imitation of the divine circling motion and may suggest a technique of transcendence. Similarly, the speaker in "The Search" spends all night "in a roving ecstasie/ To find" his "Saviour"; he has no success until he comes full circle to the "cleare day" when he sees Christ, the Rose of Sharon, that fresh "Rose/ Bud in the bright East."[67]

"In all this Round of life and death", cries the pilgrim in the poem "Repentance", "I am the gourd of sin, and sorrow/ Growing o'r night, and gone to morrow."[68] The "gourd", a mere shell--the lifeless, excavated, and dried out remains of the once flourishing fruit, the form of which yet survives--may be seen to represent all that is external to innermost and essential Man; it is the dross of all that clouds and obscures the divine illumination. In "Thou that know'st for whom I mourne", the speaker observes:

> . . . thou plac'd in man's outside
> Death to the Common Eye,
> That heaven within him might abide,
> And close eternitie.[69]

Physical man is beyond the perimeter of the "close eternitie", for it is God (in "Repentance") who "is the Center of long life,

and light,/ I am but finite, He is Infinite."[70] Christ had to embrace death to overcome its might. The door to the "Center", for Man too, is death: in "Rules and Lessons", the pilgrim is urged to "spend in the grave one houre/ Before thy time".[71] Alluding, perhaps, to ideas associated with the Ptolemaic system or to the Platonic ladder metaphor, the inward search in the "Ascension-Hymn" is described in terms of upward progression::

> Souls sojourn here, but may not rest;
> Who will ascend, must be undrest.
> And yet some
> That know to die
> Before death come
> Walk to the skie
> Even in this life; but all such can
> Leave behinde them the old Man.[72]

"Old Man" must "die" daily through a continual remission of sins; he must withdraw step by step to that dimensionless point at the center, farthest from the bounded "gourd of sin" that is Man's fallen nature and from the corruption of the world. The frailties of the body serve as a reminder--"I will be my own Deaths-head" cries a pilgrim in an other piece[73]--that the "narrow way" involves breaking through the birth-death barrier, either figuratively or in fact. In "The Mount of Olives" (1652), his least derivative prose work, Vaughan states that "the business of a Pilgrim is to seek his Countrey". But he knows well that "the land of darkness lies in our way".[74]

His impatience with false, "exterior light"[75] and his longing for the true "world of light" is expressed most eloquently in the following light images of radiance, containment, and joyous release. Another of Vaughan's favorite verses is from the gospel according to Saint Matthew (xvi.25): "whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it".

> Dear beauteous death! the Jewel of the Just
> Shining nowhere, but in the dark;
> What mysteries do lie beyond thy dust;
> Could man outlook that mark!
> . . . . . .
> If a star were confin'd into a Tomb
> Her captive flames must needs burn there;
> But when the hand that lockt her up, gives room,
> She'l shine through all the sphaere.[76]

The idea that "he that is dead is freed from sin" (Rom.vi.7) figures explicitly in "The Timber" and "Fair and yong light!", and implicitly in many other poems, but it is only one of the metaphorical ways to the innocence necessary for spiritual regeneration.

As explained in "Childe-hood", Man indeed must keep his soul's light from the diminution that may result from proximity to what the "wordlings call/ Business and weighty action":

> How do I study now, and scan
> Thee, more than ere I studyed man,
> And onely see through a long night
> Thy edges, and thy bordering light!
> O for thy Center and mid-day!
> For sure that is the narrow way.[77]

In the poem "Retirement", the "narrow way" to the"Center"--God's "seat"--is pointed out:

> If then thou would'st unto my seat,
> 'Tis not th'applause, and feat
> Of dust,and clay
> Leads to that way,
> But from those follies a resolv'd Retreat.[78]

"Happy those early dayes!", exclaims the pilgrim in "The Retreate", when "I/ Shin'd in my Angell-infancy":

> O how I long to travell back
> And tread again that ancient track!
> That I might once more reach that plaine,
> Where first I left my glorious traine,
> From whence th' Inlightned spirit sees
> That shady City of Palme trees;
> But (ah!) my soul with too much stay
> Is drunk, and staggers in the way.
> Some men a forward motion love,
> But I by backward steps would move,
> And when this dust falls to the urn
> In that state I came return.[79]

Louis L. Martz, in The Paradise Within (1964), suggests that "The Retreate" contains "the essence of the Phaedo, as qualified and developed by Christian Platonism" and offers the following passage from Plato; Socrates asks:

> And were we not saying long ago that the soul when using the body as an instrument of perception, that is to say, when using the sense of sight or hearing or some other sense . . . were we not saying that the soul too is then dragged by the body into the region of the changeable, and wanders and is confused; the world spins round her, and she is like a drunkard, when she touches change? . . . . But when returning into herself she reflects, then she passes into the other world, the region of purity and eternity, and immortality, and unchangeableness, which are her kindred.[80]

Of the Platonic theory of reminiscence as it appears in "The Retreate", A. S. P. Woodhouse asks: "Is this belief or merely an elaborate metaphoric embodiment of Vaughan's nostalgic craving for innocence?" He answers, "I do not know."[81] There is good reason, however, to maintain that any suggestion of the preexistence of the soul, or any idealization of Man's collective or individual past in Vaughan's poetry, is fundamentally a metaphor of spiritual innocence. The mere fact that the Platonic notion is so obviously Christianized by the allusion to Jericho ("the city of palm trees" in Deut. xxxiv.) suggests that Vaughan tailors his source material extensively to make it fit his own poetic world, his own interpretation of the unquestioned realities of his religion. The Platonic doctrine of reminiscence (itself an extended metaphor) works well in the context of "The Retreate", not because Vaughan necessarily "believes" it, but because it explains the impermanence of worldly existence, the inevitability of corruption, and ultimate "salvation" by reunion in the realms of "purity" and "immortality". The expression of such characteristic themes are readily apparent in Vaughan's canon even before Silex scintillans; consider, for example, several of the striking syntactical, structural, and metrical parallels between the passage from "The Retreate" and the one from his verse translations (ca. 1647) from Boethius, De consolatione philosphiae (Lib. 2, Metrum 5):

Happy that first white age! when wee
Lived by the Earths meere Charitie,
No soft luxurious Diet then
Had Effeminated men.
. . . . . .
Their beds were on some flowrie brink
And clear Spring-water was their drink.
The Shadie Pine in the Suns heat
Was their Coole and known Retreat.[82]

The childhood and retreat motifs in Vaughan's poetry seem to be little more than various literary machinery used to translate sincere and profound religious conviction and experience into images of visual and physical sensation. Vaughan is always trying to make "mule unruly man" see what is invisible by choosing images (usually involving light, that common-denominator of all vision) which tend to minimize the only fancied reality of what is commonly seen.

CHAPTER THREE: NOTES

[1] Image and Meaning: Metaphoric Traditions in Rennaissance Poetry (Baltimore, 1960), pp. 157-158.

[2] (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1962), pp. 31, 60, 74.

[3] There are thirty-six "light" and "night" rhymes in the 129 poems of Silex scintillans.

[4] Quoted by E. C. Pettet in Of Paradise and Light (Cambridge, 1960), p. 162.

[5] From Anima Poetae, quoted by I. A. Richards in Coleridge on Imagination (London, 1950), p. 73.

[6] Vaughan, p. 249, 11. 2, 5-6.

[7] Vaughan, "Ascension-Hymn", p. 316, 11. 20-24.

[8] Vaughan, "Righteousness", p. 361, 1. 3.

[9] Vaughan, p. 322, 1. 1.

[10] Vaughan, "Man", pp. 311, 11. 19, 21.

[11] Vaughan, pp. 248-249

[12] Vaughan, p. 367, 11. 7, 9.

[13] Vaughan, p. 294, 11. 41-45.

[14] Vaughan, p. 271, 11. 15, 16.

[15] Vaughan, "Man's Fall, & Recovery", p. 241, 11. 1, 2.

[16] Vaughan, p. 257, 11. 15-16.

[17] Vaughan, p. 260, 11. 17-19.

[18] Vaughan, p. 237, 11. 95-96.

[19] Vaughan, p. 243, 11. 29-30.

[20] Vaughan, "Fair and Yong Light! my Guide", p. 350, 1. 40.

[21] Vaughan, "The Obsequies", p. 374, l. 31.

[22] Vaughan, "Childe-hood", p. 357, l. 16.

[23] Vaughan, "Death", p. 271, l. 23.

[24] Vaughan, "The Search", p. 237, ll. 81-82.

[25] (Cambridge), p. 93.

[26] Vaughan, p. 244, ll. 1-8.

[27] Vaughan, "Rules and Lessons", p. 270, l. 96.

[28] Vaughan, p. 312, ll. 50-54.

[29] Vaughan, p. 310, ll. 18-21.

[30] Vaughan, p. 293, ll. 5-28.

[31] Vaughan, p. 226, ll. 5-8.

[32] Vaughan, p. 273, ll. 2-3, 17.

[33] Vaughan, p. 277, ll. 16-30.

[34] Vaughan, p. 296, ll. 4-6.

[35] W. J. Courthope, A History of English Poetry (New York, 1962), III, 205.

[36] Vaughan, "Regeneration", p. 226, l. 10.

[37] J. D. Simmonds, "Henry Vaughan and the Great Chain of Being", Studies in English Renaissance Literature, 22 (1962), pp. 150-151.

[38] Vaughan, "The Pilgrimage", p. 297, l. 17.

[39] John Milton, Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York, 1957), p. 189.

[40] Vaughan, "The World", p. 299, l. 2.

[41] Vaughan, p. 241, ll. 15-16, 8, 9-13.

[42] Vaughan, pp. 302-303, ll. 5, 1, 37-39.

[43] Vaughan, "The Evening-Watch", p. 256, ll. 11-16.

[44] Vaughan, p. 267, ll. 8-9.

[45] Vaughan, p. 250, l. 3.

[46] Vaughan, p. 256, l. 3.

[47] Vaughan, "Resurrection and Immortality", p. 231, ll. 39-40.

[48] Vaughan, p. 259, ll. 33-35, 40.

[49] Vaughan, p. 368, ll. 45-46, 28.

[50] Vaughan, "Cock-crowing", p. 323, ll. 37-40, 43-46.

[51] Vaughan, "The Agreement", p. 366, ll. 49-54.

[52] Vaughan, "Corruption", p. 272, ll. 33-36.

[53] Justus George Lawler, The Christian Image: Studies in Religious Art and Poetry (Pittsburgh, 1966), p. 30.

[54] Vaughan, "The Tempest", p. 294, l. 39.

[55] Vaughan, "The World", p. 445, ll. 64-67, 72-77.

[56] Vaughan, "The Timber", p. 333, ll. 22-23.

[57] Vaughan, p. 295, ll. 8, 21-22.

[58] Vaughan, p. 342, ll. 6-11, 15-16.

[59] Vaughan, p. 301, ll. 59-60.

[60] Vaughan, p. 377, ll. 1-4.

[61] Sir Thomas Browne, Religio Medici, ed. Jean-Jacques Denonian (Cambridge, 1955), pp. 14-15.

[62] Vaughan, p. 248, ll. 4-6.

63 Vaughan, p. 329, 11. 25-28.

64 Vaughan, "Quickness", p. 375, 11. 1, 7-8, 9-11.

65 Vaughan, "Man", p. 311, 11. 26-28.

66 Vaughan, p. 300, 11. 46-47.

67 Vaughan, p. 235, 11. 3, 5, 1, 2.

68 Vaughan, p. 281, 11. 73, 71-72.

69 Vaughan, "Thou that know'st for whom I mourne", p. 274, 11. 29-32.

70 Vaughan, p. 282, 11. 83-84.

71 Vaughan, p. 270, 11. 121-122.

72 Vaughan, pp. 316-317, 11. 5-12.

73 Vaughan, "Sure, there's a tye of Bodyes!", p. 261, 1. 21.

74 Vaughan, p. 134, 11. 15-16.

75 Vaughan, "Righteousness", p. 361, 1. 24.

76 Vaughan, "They have all gone into the world of light!", p. 318, 11. 17-20, 29-32.

77 Vaughan, pp. 357-358, 11. 27-28, 39-44.

78 Vaughan, p. 295, 11. 29-34.

79 Vaughan, p. 250, 11. 21-32.

80 (New Haven), pp. 29-30; Martz quotes from The Dialogues of Plato, trans. B. Jowett (3rd ed.; Oxford, 1892), II, 222.

81 A. S. P. Woodhouse, The Poet and His Faith, (Chicago, 1965), p. 85.

82 Vaughan, p. 88, 11. 1-4, 11-14.

IV. TOWARD A TRANSCENDENT VISION

On several occasions, in the naturally more memorable of Vaughan's pieces, the speaker seems to celebrate the imaginative attainment of his dominant aspiration: he triumphantly rends the veils of sense and physicality and gains, if only for a moment, a glimpse of the radiance that lives within him from that time on. These are not mere exercises in description or analysis, but are instead symbolic representations, reenactments of apparently transcendent experience expressed with genuine power and aesthetic validity. The following passage in "Regeneration" pictures a condition of mental transport and of spiritual insight which certainly seems to indicate that "consciousness of illumination" which William James posits as the "essential mark of 'mystical' states" in The Varieties of Religious Experience.[1]

Full East, a faire, fresh field could spy
Some call'd it, Jacobs Bed;
A Virgin-soile, which no
Rude feet ere trod,
Where (since he stept there,) only go
Prophets, and friends of God.

Here, I repos'd; but scarse well set,
A grove descryed
Of stately height, whose branches met
And mixt on every side;
I entred, and once in
(Amaz'd to see't,)
Found all was chang'd, and a new spring
Did all my senses greet.

The "Virgin-soile" in the "East" (the daily birthplace of sunlight) is the "faire,fresh field" of the pilgrim's heart. R. A. Durr suggests that the heart--the individual's "Center", that "awful Cell/ That secret Ark, where the milde Dove doth dwell"[2]--is analogous to Christ's mother (hence deserving the epithet "Virgin") because "it is the womb wherein the Father eternally begets His Son."[3] The fact that the speaker "repos'd" indicates passage into a state of relaxation and passivity, a peaceful sinking towards quietude of consciousness and death-like abeyance of the will leading to the "grove descryed" whose "stately heights" and orderly circumscription ("on every side") by "branches met/ And mixt" reminds us of the "Center of long life and light" in the poem "Repentance".[4] Upon crossing the threshold into the cathedral-like and supernatural grave, it is not surprising that "all was chang'd"; a "new spring" or heightened awareness embraces the speaker's higher faculties because the very accomplishment of penetration seems to initiate a total transformation which can best be described as a spiritual rebirth, a "dying" of the "Old" man in Man.

The moment of imaginative and ecstatic renaissance is recounted, so characteristically of Vaughan, in his fundamental paradisial image of burgeoning light:

> The unthrift Sunne shot vitall gold
> A thousand peeces,
> And heaven its azure did unfold
> Checqur'd with snowie fleeces,
> The aire was all in spice
> And every bush
> A garland wore, Thus fed my Eyes
> But all the Eare lay hush.[5]

Vaughan uses the figure "A thousand peeces" (the greatest number)[6] to represent the reward of faith ("being much more precious than . . . gold" in I Peter i.7) lavished upon the way-faring Christian in the superlative degree by the "Sunne" or Deity. A concomitant of the pilgrim's illumination is the unfolding of the heavenly "azure" in this first poem of Silex scintillans, to afford the seeker a glimpse of God in nature; it is interesting to note that the folding image is used in reverse in the very last piece, "L'Envoy", when the speaker prays for the Apocalypse and the final destruction of nature: "And like old cloaths fold up these skies."[7] The "Sunne" is radiant, unobscured light and the "snowie fleeces" are pure whiteness, the two basic attributes of the heavenly in all of Vaughan's representations. The sweetness of the air suggests the proximity of the Divine; as in "Christs Nativity", the "Sun doth shake/ Light from his locks, and all the way/ Breathing Perfumes, doth spice the day."[8] The presence of holiness is powerful enough to inform even the bushes with life, and they wear garlands in His honor. The awful silence and noiseless motion of the insistently visual imagery reminds one of the account of a vision in "Mount of Olives" (the second poem of that title):

> When first I saw true beauty, and thy Joys
> Active as light, and calm without all noise
> Shin'd on my soul, I felt through all my powr's
> Such a rich air of sweets.[9]

These instances of divine illumination are of but brief duration. Yet images based on the diffusion of light (which play so essential a part in the few examples mentioned here) can be seen to permeate the entire range of Vaughan's religious poetry.

Two of the Silex poems which are most obviously the products of ecstatic experience, "The Night" and "The Morning-watch", are among Vaughan's finest: the complementary pair represent double aspects of a single beatific vision. Although "The Night" has no explicit imagery of rings, circles, and bands, as often found in poems describing the more immediately apprehended--and thus more ineffable--states of transport, its general movement is implicitly circular; the frequent dependence upon paradoxical phrasing and suggestion indicates a significance beyond the range of straightforward expression.

The Night

John 2.3

Through that pure Virgin-shrine,
That sacred vail drawn o'r thy glorious noon
That men might look and live as Glo-worms shine,
And face the Moon:
Wise Nicodemus saw such light
As made him know his God by night.

Most blest believer he!
Who in that land of darkness and blinde eyes
Thy long expected healing wings could see,
When thou didst rise,
And what can never more be done,
Did at mid-night speak with the Sun!

O who will tell me, where
He found thee at that dead and silent hour!
What hallow'd solitary ground did bear
So rare a flower,
Within whose sacred leafs did lie
The fulness of the Deity.

No mercy-seat of gold,
No dead and dusty Cherub, nor carv'd stone,
But his own living works did my Lord hold
And lodge alone;
Where trees and herbs did watch and peep
And wonder, while the Jews did sleep.

Dear night! this worlds defeat;
The stop to busie fools; cares check and curb;
The day of Spirits; my souls calm retreat
Which none disturb!
Christs progress, and his prayer time;
The hours to which high Heaven doth chime.

Gods silent, searching flight:
When my Lords head is fill'd with dew, and all
His locks are wet with the clear drops of night;
His still, soft call;
His knocking time; The souls dumb watch,
When Spirits their fair kindred catch.

Were all my loud, evil days
Calm and unhaunted as is thy dark Tent,
Whose peace but by some Angels wing or voice
Is seldom rent;
Then I in Heaven all the long year
Would keep,and never wander here.

But living where the Sun
Doth all things wake, and where all mix and tyre
Themselves and others, I consent and run
To ev'ry myre,
And by this worlds ill-guiding light,
Erre more then I can do by night.

There is in God (some say)
A deep, but dazling darkness; As men here
Say it is late and dusky, because they
See not all clear;
O for that night! where I in him
Might live invisible and dim.[10]

As indicated by the Biblical reference, "The Night" finds its inspiration in the story of the Jewish ruler Nicodemus's conversation with Jesus at night. The Pharisee learns what is meant by that perhaps most fundamental of Christian truths: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (St. John iii.3). The speaker seeks spiritual renewal and cries, in effect, with the persona of

"Regeneration" to "dye before" his "death!"[11] Nicodemus' revelation, like the pilgrim's in "The Search" (above, p.14), comes not in the "meere stage, and show" of any spring day of the senses, but rather at that time described by Wordsworth, in The Prelude (V, 595-605), when "we are laid asleep/ In body, and become a living soul", when

> Visionary power
> Attends the motions of the viewless winds,
> Embodied in the mystery of words:
> There, darkness makes abode, and all the host
> Of shadowy things work endless changes, -- there,
> As in a mansion like their proper home,
> Even forms and substances are circumfused
> By that transparent veil with light divine,
> And, through the turnings intricate of verse,
> Present themselves as objects recognised,
> In flashes, and with glory not their own.[12]

The "night" in the first stanza refers not to what Vaughan calls the chains and "dead oblivion" of spiritual ignorance and sin but instead to the "blindness" of Milton's Samson or of the poet's truly pious man in "Righteousness" who, having regained the clearer perspective of Eden's "bright dayes","sees Invisibles"; he

> . . . walks not by his sight:
> Whose eyes are both put out,
> And goes about
> Guided by faith, not by exterior light.[13]

Nicodemus perceives the divine light "by a new and living way"--through the "pure Virgin-shrine" (l.1)--"Which Christ hath consecrated

for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh" (Hebrews x. 20). In literary usage, "noon" means "midday" or "midnight"; in Vaughan's expression "glorious noon" (1. 2), the word means both: it is a verbal paradox suggesting the nature of Christ, who in "The Incarnation, and Passion" is the "God Enclos'd within your Cell,/ Your maker pent in a grave,/ Life lockt in death, heav'n in a shell."[14] The gloriousness of Christ's "noon" stands in sharp contrast to the spiritual gloom that obscures men's heaven-given sparks of divinity till they shine only weakly as "Glo-worms" do (1. 3). Nicodemus's conversation with the "Sun" (Son) at "mid-night" is, itself, of so paradoxical a nature that it serves particularly well as the poem's keynote. "Wise Nicodemus" could see in "that land of darkness" (1. 8) because he lived in a day nearer the race's childhood and his faith had not yet yeilded to corruption; for him, a "blest believer" like the persona in The Prelude (VI, 600-602), the "light of sense/ Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed/ The invisible world".[15] As E. C. Pettet suggests, "Thy long expected healing wings" (1. 9) refers to an Old Testament prophecy which prefigures the revelation of Christ's divine nature granted to the Pharisee Nicodemus in the New Testament:[16] "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings" (Malachi iv. 2). But now in the land of "blinde eyes", a directly personal revelation "can never more be done" (1. 11).

The question asked in the third stanza--"O who will tell me where/ He found thee . . . !" (11. 12-13)--is central to the larger

meaning of Silex scintillans; where might spiritual renewal be effected? Where might union be achieved? The answer has already been put forth in "Regeneration" (above, p. 53). It is the "virgin-soile" of the heart, that "hallow'd solitary ground" (l. 15) which bears "so rare a flower,/ Within whose sacred leafs did lie/ The fulnes of the Deity". Vaughan's diction is often characterized by a profundity of implication: the "sacred leafs"--besides being a natural part of the divine blossom--can refer to the Scriptures by metonymy. In "The Agreement", the Bible ("O beamy book!") is God's "bright minde exprest in print" and appears as "healing leaves,/ Blown from the tree of life".[17]

The fourth stanza shows precisely where one ought not look for Christ; he is to be found neither in artifact nor in ritual, for he abides invisible in "his own living works" (l. 21). As in "Regeneration", in which even the bushes are decked in garlands of adoration, so here the "trees and herbs did watch and peep/. . . while the Jews"--spiritually oblivious, though of creatures most in need of and best endowed for spiritual aspiration--"did sleep". The way to see Christ, the epitome of contradictions, is to enter into the realm of the unseen. The "Dear night!" of the fifth stanza is the "day of spirits" (l. 27). Vaughan's "Admonitions for Morning-Prayer", opening The Mount of Olives (1652), exhorts the reader to imitate Christ in his nocturnal meditations:

> When all the world is asleep, thou shouldst watch, weep and pray. . . . the tears we shed in the night, make the soul fruitful. . . . Christ himself in the day-time taught and preach'd, but continued all night in prayer.[18]

Night is "this worlds defeat" (l.25) because it rescues the soul from the commerce and distraction of daily life.

E. C. Pettet suggests that Vaughan's image of Christ as wooer of souls (stanza six) comes from The Song of Solomon (v.2):

> I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

As in "Resurrection and Immortality", "The seed growing secretly", and the "Jesus weeping" poems, the Biblical allusion is so well integrated into the poem's fabric that it comes to be, as Pettet suggests, virtually "transformed into a new whole."[19]

In the seventh stanza, the speaker narrows the attention to his own longing for respite from Man's "loud" and "evil" daytime of wandering which stands in marked contrast to God's purposeful "silent, searching flight" at night. Waking from his revery, the speaker sees that the "Sun" is no longer that of "righteousness" -- the one once able, as mentioned in "The Shepheards", to make even the brightness of days seem "dark, and dim"[20] -- but it is rather "this worlds ill-guiding light" (l. 47). Even light, Vaughan's most important symbol for the Divine, can in this world of corruption and decay (where "all mix and tyre" l. 45) served to mislead benighted man. And not all things invisible

partake of a spiritual nature: the "loudness" of the speakers "evil days" (l. 37) seems very like the noisy Babel described in the poem "Distraction": "The world/ Is full of voices; Man is call'd and hurl'd/ By each, he answers all."[21]

Even if we consider the final stanza, as one critic does, "the most touching statement in our language of this longing for mystical absorption",[22] it is well to note that the parenthetical qualification "some say" (l. 49) suggests that the sincerity of the speaker's aspirations is no guarantee that he will realize a genuinely transcendent experience. What Vaughan does achieve, with characteristic power and decisiveness, is an imaginative re-creation of that instant when "blinde eyes" are permitted the briefest glance into the realm of the unseen. In the first stanza, Nicodemus came to "know his God by night"; in the last, the speaker begins to see that the center and essence of God <u>is</u> "The Night:" there is in God "A deep, but dazzling darkness" (l. 50). Vaughan's phrase and Milton's describing God as "dark with excessive bright" (<u>Paradise Lost</u> III, 380-381), who can "dazzle Heav'n"[23] are paradoxical representations of a single aspect of the Godhead, that of Christ as fusion of alpha and omega, used to express the whole inexpressible concept of Divinity. "Dazling darkness" is an understatement in which a grand affirmative is expressed by the negative of its contrary. The speaker cries "O for that night!" (l. 53) but what he means is suggested in "Resurrection and Immortality": "Would it were Day!/ One everlasting Sabath there shall runne/ Without Succession, and without a Sunne."[24]

Finally, to "live invisible and dim" (l. 54) is the heart's dream of the soul's espousal by a voluntary submission of will, through a merging and reintegration and release into the boundless center.

"The Morning-watch" seems to be Vaughan's only sustained celebration of the imaginative experience of a direct and intimate union with the divine. The speaker looks not to another revelation, as in "The Night", but rather to the attainment of his own spiritual aspiration.

O Joyes! Infinite sweetness! with what flowres,
And sh00ts of glory, my soul breakes, and buds!
All the long houres
Of night, and Rest
Through the still shrouds
of sleep, and Clouds,
This Dew fell on my Breast;
O how it Blouds,
And Spirits all my Earth! heark! In what Rings,
And Hymning Circulations the quick world
Awakes, and sings;
The rising winds,
And falling springs,
Birds, beasts, all things
Adore him in their kinds.
Thus all is hurl'd
In sacred Hymnes, and Order, The great Chime
And Symphony of nature. Prayer is
The world in tune,
A spirit-voyce,
And vocall joyes
Whose Eccho is heav'ns blisse.
O let me climbe
When I lye down! The Pious soul by night
Is like a clouded starre, whose beames though sed
To shed their light
Under some Cloud
Yet are above,
And shine, and move
Beyond that mistie shrowd.
So in my Bed
That Curtain'd grave, though sleep, like ashes, hide
My lamp, and life, both shall in thee abide.

The ecstatic opening lines of "The Morning-watch" are certainly Vaughan's most lyrical expression of the exhileration and delight that transports the way-faring Christian when his soul shows the first signs of regeneration. As we have seen, the night of the spirit is a voluntary abstention from the world as destroyer of innocence. The soul's transcendence of the merely sensuous affords the seeker intimations of eternal life; the process is described in "They are all gone into the world of light!":

> And yet as Angels in some brighter dreams
> Call to the soul, when man doth sleep:
> So some strange thoughts transcend our wanted theams,
> And into glory peep.[25]

The morning vigil is rewarded not with a flash of illumination but with the beginning of a spiritual rebirth. The phenomenon is described in much the same imagery used in the childhood poems and especially in "The Retreate": before the speaker dulled his rational understanding by teaching his "soul to fancy ought/ But a white, Celestial thought", he was able to see "shadows of eternity" in the commonest objects and to feel "through all this fleshly dresse/ Bright shootes of everlastingness."[26]

Childhood is the morning of a man's life (Man is a "Summers day", writes Vaughan in "Rules and Lessons").[27] And morning is both night and day; it is the banishment of darkness and the renaissance of light; mornings are indeed "new Creations": "Mornings are Mysteries; the first worlds Youth,/ Mans Resurrection, and the futures Bud/ Shrowd in their births."[28][29]

The images of springtime and renewal in the first ten lines of "The Morning-watch" all have reference to the "Dew" (l. 7) as a symbol of life-giving divine grace. "Dew" is the "souls bright food"[30] that effects the "sacred Incubation"[31] of the seed of "everlastingness." "Dew" is "Soul-quickning rain" shed in the poem "Jesus weeping", in which the "living water" revivifies men's "dead hearts" after they spend their own tears of repentance. The "long houres/ Of night" (l. 3-4) are the time of preparation; the morning is when the "shrouds" and "Clouds" (ll. 5-6) are cast by Vaughan's use of a concrete noun as a very ("O how it Blouds", (l. 8) creates a striking impression of the association of dew and the blood of Christ. God's sacrifice "Spirits" (l. 9) or literally breathes new life into Man's "Earth" or body of clay. The magnificent "Rings,/ And Hymning Circulations" (ll. 9-10) can evoke an idea (as in "Palm-Sunday") of a "joyful Symphony" of "Heaven and earth".[32] Or on a less grand scale, the "Circulations"--immediately following the reference to blood--may be taken as an allusion to William Harvey's discovery.[33] Dew, rain, tears, and blood (all essential to life and growth) are symbols of divine nourishment.

The "rising winds" (l. 12) suggest both the animation of the soul's waking world and also the influx of the divine presence that causes it. "Falling springs" (l. 13) are another reminder of the "dew" (God's sanctifying grace descending from heaven; the syntactical parallel with "rising winds" evokes an idea of the harmonious interdependency of the hierarchy of creatures, the rhythm of the living heart, and the mutually complementary natures of God and Man. "The great Chime/ And Sym-

phony of nature" is a popular notion in seventeenth-century poetry; in Milton and The Christian Tradition, C. A. Patrides explains the theory of musica mundana:

> According to this, the universe (in Isidore of Seville's words) "is held together by a certain harmony of sounds, and the heavens themselves are made to revolve by the modulation of harmony". The theory is of great antiquity, going back to Pythagoras and to Hermes Trismegistus, who claimed that God is "by nature a musician . . . and not only works harmony in the universe at large, but also transmits to individuals the rhythm of his own music". [34]

"Prayer" indeed "is the world in tune" (ll. 18-19). In "The Tempest", Vaughans underscores the idea of correspondent and hermetical "influence": "seeds a kindred fire have with the sky." [35] The speaker's "bloud in "The Storm"

> Is not a Sea
> But a shallow, bounded floud . . .
> Yet have I flows, as strong as his, [36]
> And boyling stremes that rave.

The business, then, of the creatures -- "Birds, beasts, all things" (l. 14) -- is to adore God according to their individual natures and to the extent of their capabilities. "Prayer" is a celebration, a recognition of a higher order of reality manifest in the visible world; prayer is a response evoked by the intuited presence of the unseen "spirit-voyce" (l. 20) or divine spirit infused in nature, whose "Eccho is heav'ns" own "blisse" (l. 22) or answer, on the other hand, to the creatures' "vocall joyes". The form of the passage is very like that of a litany.

The line "O let me climbe/ When I lye down!" (ll. 23-24) is another example of the frequent descent/ascent juxtaposition. To "climbe"

is to grow spiritually through prayer and retirement, through inward retreat from finitude and selfhood. In the beginning of the poem, "still shrouds/ Of sleep" (ll. 5-6) are shaken off by the waking soul. These are the curtains and mistie shrowd" (l. 30) that cloud the "Pious soul by night" (l. 24). The "Bed" (l. 31) is a very appropriate image in the context because it suggests not only the narrowness and confinement of a finite world but also because it is associated with world-sickness, sleep, or night-time retirement, and descent into otherworldliness. "My Bed/ That Curtain'd grave" (ll. 31-32) brings to mind the funereal gloom of "Death: A Dialogue":

> I'Lewish my Curtaines off to free
> Me from so darke, and sad a bed;
>
> A neast of nights, a gloomie sphere,
> Where shadowes thicken, and the Cloud
> Sits on the Suns brow all the yeare,
> And nothing moves without a shrowd. [37]

In "As time one day by me did pass", the bed is associated even more pointedly with the death of the world, that last event in time or its imaginative counterpart, after which the speaker in "The Night" longs to abide, "invisible and dim".

> O calm and sacred bed where lies
> In deaths dark mysteries
> A beauty far more bright
> Then the moons cloudless light
> For whose dry dust green branches bud
> And robes are bleach'd in the Lambs blood. [38]

The tone of assurance in these lines evidences a more mature and settled

outlook than that expressed in poems such as "Unprofitablenes", "Begging", or "They have all gone into the world of light¾" in which the speaker laments the fact that he "alone sits lingring here".[39] But the last few verses of "The Morning-watch" (ll. 31-33) stand as a genuine affirmation of Christian faith; the tenuousness of other moods has passed; with child-like simplicity the speaker states what now for him is a certainty: "So in my Bed/ That Curtain'd grave, though sleep, like ashes hide/ My lamp, and life, both shall in thee abide." In "Cock-crowing", Vaughan observes "To sleep without theee is to die".[40]

The essence of one's lingering impression of the Silex poems is a curious amalgam of intensely energetic and diffuse diction. The major images, like those in Shakespeare's sonnets, are conventional enough to require no conscious effort to perceive their various significations: "with what flowres,/ And shoots of glory, my soul breakes, and buds!" ("The Morning-watch", l. 2) means spiritual re-generation. But what does a "shoot of glory" look like? "I saw Eternity the other night": but how does one conjure a visual representation of that perhaps most famous and enigmatic of verses? It would indeed be difficult to locate a less precise or more unforgettable line. Therein lies something of Vaughan's very con-siderable power.

Vaughan is not really a maker of images but is rather a maker of poems. His imagery is not fundamentally of a descriptive sort and it contributes very few details to the visual world of Silex scintillans. The relatively small number of basic images will be observed to undergo

little or no change from the beginning of Silex to the end. Indeed, every important image Vaughan uses in Silex can be found in his first published work (Poems, with the tenth Satyre of Iuvenal, 1646). Consider, as just one example, the following passage from the highly conventional exercise "To Amoret gone from him":

> Fancy, and I, last Evening walkt,
> And, Amoret, of thee we talkt;
> The West just then had stolne the Sun,
> And his last blushes were begun:
> We sate, and markt how every thing
> Did mourne his absence; How the Spring
> That smil'd, and curl'd about his beames,
> Whilst he was here, now check'd her streames. [41]

Like most of the Silex poems, these lines involve images of darkness and light. They seem to progress by a process of random association rather than by a rigid argumentative structuring: the title suggests a mood of gloom; the "Evening" is a logical time for brooding; "Evening" is dark and dreary because, not unexpectedly, the "West" had "stolne the Sun"; the object of the poem is (again, quite naturally) she who is "gone", or that which, in terms of the imagery, can be no other: it is the "Sun". In parts of a Silex poem published nearly a decade later (second ed., 1655) entitled "The Starre", there are, of course, the fundamental images of light and darkness, a similar mood of pathos and unrest, the same sort of hermetic conception of "sympathy" or "magnetism", and even a striking parallel in diction:

> Whatever 'tis, whose beauty here below
> Attracts thee thus & makes thee stream & flow,
> And wind and curle, and wink and smile,

Shifting thy gate and guile:
. . . . . .
. . . there's in it a restless, pure desire
And longing for thy bright and vitall fire.
. . . . . .
This is the Heart he craves; and who so will
But give it to him, and grudges not; he shall feel
That God is true, so herbs unseen
Put on their youth and green. [42]

The images are very much alike: in "To Amoret", the amatory aspirations of the cavalier-speaker are directed towards the heavenly body (the "Sun") which is his "lovely foe"; the "starre", on the other hand, is the Deity courting the "Heart" of the pilgrim who yearns for spiritual regeneration. The images in Silex scintillans do not change; but their implications grow and burgeon with the development of their meaning for the poet, until they cease to be mere significations and take on genuinely symbolic functions. R. A. Durr once observed that:

> Vaughan's poems--the great ones, those that are uniquely his--are symbols: I mean that insofar as they are not descriptions of, or signs pointing to, his mystical life, but poetic transformations of that life, they are themselves the only satisfying formulation of the reality they represent, and they partake of that reality. [43]

It is possible for the reader accustomed to Vaughan's poetry to make an enjoyable experience of the most colorless of poetic efforts by bringing to its particular configuration of basic images a body of acquired significancies.

CHAPTER FOUR: NOTES

1 William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (New York, 1929), p. 399.

2 Vaughan, "Jacob's Pillow, and Pillar", p. 364, 11. 27-28.

3 R. A. Durr, On the Mystical Poetry of Henry Vaughan (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1962), p. 88.

4 Vaughan, "Repentence", p. 282, 1. 83.

5 Vaughan, "Regeneration", pp. 226-227, 11. 27-40, 41-48.

6 Durr, p. 163.

7 Vaughan, p. 379, 1. 8.

8 Vaughan, p. 273, 11. 4-6.

9 Vaughan, p. 310, 11. 1-4.

10 Vaughan, pp. 358-359.

11 Vaughan, p. 228, 1. 82.

12 William Wordsworth, Selected Poems and Prefaces, ed. Jack Stillinger, (Boston, 1965), pp. 254-255.

13 Vaughan, p. 361, 11. 21-24.

14 Vaughan, p. 245, 11. 10-12.

15 Wordsworth, VI p. 268, 11. 600-602.

16 Pettet, p. 150.

17 Vaughan, p. 365, 11. 13, 24, 20-21.

18 Vaughan, p. 107, 11. 9, 13-14, 15-16.

19 Pettet, p. 150.

20 Vaughan, p. 305, 1. 54.

21 Vaughan, p. 243, 11. 11-13.

22 James Roy King, Studies in Six Seventeenth - Century Writers (Athens, Ohio, 1966), p. 147.

[23] John Milton, p. 267.

[24] Vaughan, p. 255.

[25] Vaughan, p. 318, 11. 25-28.

[26] Vaughan, pp. 249-250, 11. 5-6, 14, 19-20.

[27] Vaughan, p. 270, 1.113

[28] Vaughan, "The Day-spring", p. 437, 1. 13.

[29] Vaughan, p. 268, 11. 25-27.

[30] Vaughan, "The Seed growing secretly", p. 346, 1.6.

[31] Vaughan, "I walkt the other day (to spend my hour)", p. 313, 1. 45.

[32] Vaughan, p. 337, 11. 25-26.

[33] Pettet, p. 122.

[34] C. A. Patrides, Milton and the Christian Tradition (Oxford, 1966), p. 42; Patrides quotes Oliver Strunk, Source Readings in Music History, 1952), p. 94, and Walter Scott, ed.,Hermetica (Oxford, 1924), pp. 274-277.

[35] Vaughan, p. 294, 1. 36.

[36] Vaughan, p. 254, 11. 2-3, 5-6.

[37] Vaughan, p. 229, 11. 9-14.

[38] Vaughan, p. 348, 11. 31-36.

[39] Vaughan, p. 318, 1. 2.

[40] Vaughan, p. 323, 1. 25.

[41] Vaughan, p. 8, 11. 1-8.

[42] Vaughan, pp. 323-324, 11. 1-4, 17-18, 29-32.

[43] Durr, p. 12.

V. IMAGERY, PROSODY, AND MEANING IN *SILEX SCINTILLANS* PART I

Silex scintillans, in its second and final edition of 1655, is an intimate and imaginative record of Vaughan's spiritual development; as such it must be considered a work entire and sufficient in itself. Silex and The Temple are unified first, of course, by the devotional nature of their poetry, and secondly by their respective imagery: The Temple depends largely on images related to the physical appointments and spiritual rituals of the church of the temple metaphor announced in the title; Silex owes its very considerable unity to images of light and darkness and to the related metaphors of seed, journey, and union (as discussed in Chapter II above). But the 1650 edition ("Part I") and the additional material ("Part II") making up the 1655 edition of Silex scintillans, seperated by five years between their dates of publication, rather naturally present the spiritually regenerative process in two stages or aspects which consitute a single poetic vision. The mental states evidenced in the attitudes and forms of part two will readily be seen as developments of those in part one. A good way to study each part and its relation to the whole and to the other is to examine, in this and in the next chapter, their very different introductory materials as keys to each section's prevailing moods. A deeper understanding of how states of mind are engendered in poetic form can be gained by studying selections and whole poems particularly representative of each edition.

The first edition of Silex scintillans, published in 1650, consists of an engraved title page (presenting the emblem of a flaming

and bleeding heart of flint), a Latin poem explaining the emblem, a fourteen-line dedicatory poem, and seventy-three "Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations". Here follows Louis L. Martz's literal translation of Vaughan's "Authoris (de se) Emblema":

> The Author's Emblem (concerning himself)
>
> You have often touched me, I confess, without a wound, and your Voice, without a voice, has often sought to counsel me; your diviner breath has encompassed me with its calm motion, and in vain has cautioned me with its sacred murmur. I was deaf and dumb: a Flint: You (how great care you take of your own!) try to revive another way, you change the Remedy; and now angered you say that Love has no power, and you prepare to conquer force with Force, you come closer, you break through the Rocky barrier of my heart, and it is made Flesh that was before a Stone. Behold me torn asunder! and at last the Fragments burning toward your skies, and the cheeks streaming with tears out of the Adamant. Thus once upon a time you made the Rocks flow and the Crags gush, oh ever provident of your people! How marvellous toward me is your hand! In Dying, I have been born again; and in the midst of my shattered means I am now richer.[1]

The little parable, an allegorical account of a stormy and sudden spiritual illumination, helps to establish the pervasive atmosphere of unrest in Silex scintillans Part I. The "Flint"--the pilgrim's obdurate heart--is that "Rocky barrier" entombing the soul and hindering the ministrations of God's quickening love. It is only the steel, that even stronger "Force" in God's right hand (pictorially represented on the title page), which can release the potential energies of the heart, represented by the fiery flash. The newly revived capacity for repentance and sacrifice is suggested by the falling drops, the "tears out of the Adamant." We are reminded of Moses in the wilderness who "smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly" (Numbers 20.xi). Images suggesting resistance

and struggle and the need for affliction and repentance are important elements in the emotional tenor of part one. "The Tempest", a key piece in the 1650 edition, ends with this quatrain:

> Lord! thou put a soul here; If I must
> Be broke again, for flints will give no fire
> Without a steel, O let thy power cheer
> Thy gift once more, and grind this flint to dust![2]

Vaughan's short 1650 dedication (quoted and discussed above, p.5) seems to be a restatement of the illuminative experience described in the emblem poem, but with several interesting additions which help explain something of Vaughan's conception of the formal nature of his religious verse. Vaughan is very sincerely a believer in the notion that a good poem can be written only by a morally good man. Every true poem is a paean to God, sprung from the once "curst" ground of the human heart since reclaimed through Christ's "all-quickning blood". Vaughan's poems are God's "deaths fruits" like those of Herbert's in "The Dedication" to The Temple: "Lord, my first-fruits present themselves to Thee".[3] Vaughan's devotional poems are sparks from the flint struck by God: they are generally brilliant, intensely passionate, deeply personal, and uniformly of brief duration (the average length of the poems in Silex 1650 is thirty lines).

The "Author's Emblem" poem and the dedication both emphasize Vaughan's most intense recognition of the fact of personal sin: in the former, the narrator confesses "I was deaf and dumb: Flint"; in the latter, the speaker's heart before regeneration was barren, "curst, and void of store".

Herbert's poetry is that of humble submission and quiet faith; as R. A. Durr points out, "he tells us he pounded the board, but it was a long time ago and he smiles to think of himself then."[4] But Vaughan's poetry is an entirely different matter: he is painfully aware of the Fall, mortality, and all their concomitants, especially that of the absolute necessity of purgation to span the awful gulf between man and Deity, to prepare the way for the rebirth of God in his heart. The writing of Silex 1650 seems to have been a method of devotion not without purgative value in itself. The task of the imaginative re-creation of the process of spiritual regeneration required of Vaughan that he select the most appropriate "moments" from a vast reservoir of religious experience and then submit them to the rigorous discipline of poetic art. Vaughan's most notable poetic achievements occur when form and meaning, prosody and content coalesce to form a viable projection of his unique vision.

One of the poems most indicative of Vaughan's general frame of mind in Part I, (Silex scintillans, 1650) is the richly lyrical "Unprofitablenes", a delightful wedding of sound and sense:

How rich, O Lord! how fresh thy visits are!
'Twas but Just now my bleak leaves hopeles hung
Sullyed with dust and mud;
Each snarling blast shot through me, and did share
Their Youth, and beauty, Cold showres nipt, and wrung
Their spiciness, and bloud;
But since thou didst in one sweet glance survey
Their sad decays, I flourish, and once more
Breath all perfumes, and spice;
I smell a dew like Myrrh, and all the day
Wear in my bosome a full Sun; such store

Hath one beame from thy eys.
But, ah, my God! what fruit hast thou of this?
What one poor leaf did ever I yet fall
To wait upon thy wreath?
Thus thou all day a thankless weed doest dress,
And when th' hast done, a stench, or fog is all
The odour I bequeath.[5]

The dominant mood of self-deprecation in this poem is a larger characteristic of Part I, but the mode--the sustained and nearly total identification of the narrator's subjective personality with the metaphor of the plant--is not at all common in Vaughan's work because Nature is usually used by way of illustration and amplification. When suddenly the reader notices that it is the flower who is speaking, he is stricken with the incongruity of the notion and shocked into full attention. The voice of the flower is in fact the voice of man's supranatural and immortal part crying out against the limitations of corporeal existence.

But the pilgrim is sustained by the reassertion of grace, not hypothetically, but rather an an article of faith claiming a validity equal to and even surpassing that of scientific "fact": "How rich, O Lord! how fresh thy visits are!" (1.1). The very first verse and the title itself provide the fundamental and wondrous antithesis out of which the eighteen-line poem is born: the elect who are also the "unprofitable", are the recipients of wholly undeserved grace, the Lord's "visits". The poem is an imaginative representation of an experience of spiritual illumination which involves the elements of doctrinal statement, experiential fulfillment, and final volitional assent corresponding to the three sestets, each of which are sharply distinguished from the others by tone, intensity,

and they use different rimes. The poem progresses in the logical manner of argumentation, through theses, antithises, and synthesis.

The content of "Unprofitablenes" finds expression in remarkably responsive prosodic features, especially in the poem's "music". But any consideration of the relationship of sound and meaning should be prefaced by a warning, such as contained in Saintsbury's historic note about the "'sound-echo-to sense' principle":

> This curious degradation of what is essentially a true and all-important doctrine was, it is well known, a particular favourite of the Neo-Classic times, and Vida, in this as in other instances, deserves the not wholly unmixed glory of being their first teacher of it. That the sound may, and in really great poetry always will, harmonize with the sense--that the sound can often be made to add, almost independently of the sense, an accompaniment of music in word and letter superior to anything that the sense itself can give--this is true enough. But the doctrine that a verse describing swiftness must be crowded with short swifty flowing syllables. . . . is at best a very infantine and rudimentary expression of this truth.[6]

One of the most outstanding features of Vaughan's prosody in "Unprofitablenes" is that it not only harmonizes with the sense, but that it also enhances it with an added dimension of coherency by further appealing to the reader's emotions through the imposition of features sympathetic to the poem's foundation of visual imagery.

The first line's joyful unimpeded drive is checked and broken in the middle of the next verse by the ponderously spondaic and dolefully resonant effect of the double long e sound in "bleak leaves". There is

everywhere--in verse, in speech, and in prose--a natural tendency to manufacture rhythms by causing a "weak" or "light" syllable to follow immediately after a "strong" one, and vice versa; the introduction of "bleak leaves" frustrates a perfectly natural anticipation, and so, of course, the rhythm staggers markedly. The reader is thus confronted the more forceably with the discrepancy between the first line's assertion and the recent memory of spiritual desolation, when barren foliage "hopeles hung"; after the explosive stops in "bleak leaves", the audible friction of the heavily aspirate h-sounds transfixes the phrase: its haunting impression lingers in the reader's imagination while the u sound echoes on into the third verse's "Sullyed", "dust", and "mud". An acceleration and intensification of language in the next three lines (3-6) serve to disperse the impression of motionless created in line 2 as the violent and onomatopoeic "snarling blast shot through" the speaker's frame in a paroxysm of destructive energy. The paralyzing and deadening effect of the "Cold showres" (as opposed to the freshness of God's "visits" in line 1) is underscored by the abruptness of "nipt" and the rime of "wrung", which recalls the immobility of "leaves hopeles hung". The use of the word "bloud" where we would instead expect "sap" (if it were not for the established rime-pattern), or some other word in keeping with the flower metaphor, is a reminder that the speaker's extensive subjective identification with the flower is never more than a formal device, to point up the awful disparity between the passive and helpless flower, which rightfully abides in Nature, and Man, whose heavenward aspiring soul is entombed

in spiritually inert matter quickening benificence of God in hostile environment.

The second sestet, like the third, opens with the conjunction "But" (1. 7) which implies contrast and opposition and thus signals a turn to thoughts of divine benefaction. Again, the speaker makes an important distinction between his essential being and his external and accidental corporeal form; he relates that God did "in one sweet glance survey/ Their sad decays", but then in a position metrically prominent and set off by pauses before and after, the speaker stresses the fruits of surrender to God's husbandry: I flourish" (1. 8). As in Vaughan's "The Sap", fallen Man is a "sapless Blossom" unable to grow to heaven unless he receives Divine nourishment or "sap" (the Saviour's blood): " . . . who but truly tests it, no decay can touch him any way".[7] The "perfumes, and spice" that the flower breathes in the garden reminds us of the invocation in Song of Solomon (iv. 16) to the Divine presence, the spiritus:

> Awake, O North wind; and come, thou south;
> blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof
> may flow out. Let my beloved come into his
> garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

Regeneration is the result of the influx of spirit into the soul, that very essence of God the divine seed or spark planted in Man at creation. The speaker continues in lines 10-11: :I smell a dew like Myrrh, and all the day/ Wear in my bosome a full Sun. It is interesting to note that Vaughan's occasional use of italics, often dismissed as mere eccentricity, has in almost every case a definite purpose: sometimes italicized words indicate an esoteric significance, at other times they mark allusion

(especially to Biblical passages). In "Unprofitablenes", the word "Myrrh" brings to mind again the rich garden imagery of the Song of Songs, in which the soul--Christ's "spouse"--is a "garden inclosed" containing myrrh and other aromatics (iv. 12), Occupying so central a position in both the poem's meaning and typography, Myrrh (emphasized even to a greater degree by capitalization) is a particularly well-chosen symbol of the unseen sweetness of God's grace, which, though invisible, in forms and alters every aspect of the entire garden of the soul. The "full Sun" (l. 11) in the narrator's "bosome" is another figure describing the soul's infusion with grace, but now in terms of the sun's rays ("one beame from thy Eys") giving heat and life to the flower. God, as in Dante, is the "Eternal Gardener" (Paradise, xxvi. 65).

In the final section of "Unprofitablenes" (ll. 13-18), the full import of the memory of God's unbounded munificence (described in section two, ll. 7-12) and of his own unworthiness confounds the narrator: "But, ah, my God! what fruit hast thou of this?" The repeated interruptions and the rhetorical question serve to introduce again the halting self-deprecation of the poem's beginning; the choice of the word "fruit" reinforces the idea expressed in the dedicatory verses to the 1650 edition) that poems for Vaughan are God's "deaths" true "fruit". Similarly, the use of the word "leafs" seems rather inevitable because of the plant symbolism, but there is reason to suspect that the term carries also an implicit reference to the product of the poet's pen, since published poetry

is a collection of bound leaves. Not even the narrator's song is of quality sufficient to add anything at all to "thy wreath" or praise of God's glory. The speaker no longer thinks of himself as a flower at the mercy of an alien and contentious world; instead he is a "thankless weed", stricken with anguish at the realization that his "unprofitablenes" stems from no source other than his own corrupted nature: "stench, or fog is all/ The odour I bequeath." "Stench" and "fog" are monosyllables in metrically stressed position; their prominence serves to recall the perfumes, and spice" of Providential beneficence and to render a sad parody all the more pitiable. That the notion of the unprofitable servant (presumably derived from the "Parable of Talents", Matt. xxv. 14-30) occupies a central position in Vaughan's thinking about his own relationship to God is indicated by the epithet he chose for his gravestone in the churchyard at Llansantffread: "Servus Inutilis".[8]

The conflict and anguish expressed in the argumentative form of "Unprofitablenes" is a product of Vaughan's intense awareness of Man's postlapsarian vileness. Finding voice in many of the Silex Part I poems, such as "Mans fall, and Recovery" and "Corruption", the darker themes of mortality and painful separation from God and departed loved ones are prominent. Seven of Vaughan's ten elegies for the dead are in Part I, but these are more the complaints of the bereaved than genuine laments for those who are gone. In "Thou that know'st for whom I mourne", a piece probably inspired by the untimely death of Vaughan's younger brother William in 1648, the event seems to be noteworthy only insofar as it can be supposed to offer direction to the speaker himself:

. . . 'twas my sinne that forc'd thy hand
To cull this Prim-rose out,
That by thy early choice forewarn'd
My Soule might looke about.[9]

The first lines of two other pieces in the same vein suggest a similar preoccupation on the narrator's part with his own spiritual condition: "Come, come, what doe I here?" and "Joy of my life! while left me here".

A majority of the Silex 1650 poems are poetic representations of Vaughan's private experience of a long and agonizing conflict between faith and a rebellious will. In "Death: A Dialogue", the formal structure itself implies a struggle within the speaker's mind for an assured faith; the peace and harmony of the "Fair, order'd lights" of "The Constellation" are observed to be terribly distant ("Some nights I see you . . . / Some others . . . / I cannot see, yet do you shine").[10] The romping rhythm of Part I's "Day of Judgement" piece (caused by the complete absence of end-stopping or other interruption) is less a celebration of the Second Advent than it is a joyous anticipation of the destruction of all nature:

When thou shalt spend thy sacred store
Of thunders in that heate
And low as ere they lay before
Thy six-dayes-buildings beate.[11]

The speaker's heart of flint--"The Author's Emblem (concerning himself)"--must be smitten with the steel of affliction before it can respond to God's love. But as we have seen in "The Morning-watch" (above p.63), Vaughan does record occasional moments of joy in Part I, when the upstart will is subdued long enough to experience intimations of a higher reality.

There are critics who believe that Vaughan's sometimes brilliant and unsustained outbursts of poetic power are either a sign of an erratic genius's failing inspiration or of a lesser writer's undeveloped potential. But perhaps the real reason is to be found in the evanescent nature of the poet's illuminative experience itself. Helen C. White notes that "The World", which begins with the justly famous and striking verse "I saw Eternity the other night", soon declines to a "curious tameness and flatness" in the description of "Time" driven beneath the "great Ring" of "Eternity"; she attributes the apparent lapse not to any deficiency in poetic facility but rather to Vaughan's state of mind, his feeling towards the subject: what follows the spectacular opening

> . . . is quite surprisingly coherent and logical and on its own level a rather well-sustained picture of the world as seen from that vantage point of vision . . . . After all, if when he has eternity open before him, a man will look down upon time, it is not surprising if his verse looks down, too, and abashed marches along in much flatter and more conventional terms.[12]

In later Part I poems like "The World" and "Man", as opposed to earlier pieces like "Regeneration" and "The Search", there are signs of the more settled personal state of mind, of the greater concern for the spiritual well-being of mankind in general, and of the increased dependency upon the conventionalities of poetic form which are generally characteristic of Silex scintillans Part II.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1 Martz, pp. 5-6.

2 Vaughan, p. 294, 11. 57-60.

3 Herbert, The Poems, p. 7, 1. 1.

4 Durr, p. 11.

5 Vaughan, p. 273.

6 George Saintsbury, The Earlier Renaissance. (New York, 1901), pp. 286-287.

7 Vaughan, p. 309, 1. 1.

8 Vaughan, p. xii.

9 Vaughan, 247, 11. 9-12.

10 Vaughan, p. 303, 11. 9, 10, 11.

11 Vaughan, p. 232, 11. 9-12.

12 White, pp. 286-287.

VI. IMAGERY, PROSODY, AND MEANING IN *SILEX SCINTILLANS* PART II

The second edition of Silex scintillans (1655) consists of a reissue of the 1650 edition (without the engraved title page and the "Emblema" poem) known as Part I, plus a new printed title page, an enlarged dedication, three verses from Revelation I, the "Vain Wits and eyes" prefatory verses, a preface dated 1654, supplemented by the addition of Part II (fifty-six new poems). Martz calls the 1655 edition a "religious miscellany" and claims that Part II presents a "modified outlook, a less consistent fabric, and a weaker body of poetry" when compared with Part I.[1] The charges are true--save the last--but also quite irrelevant. It would be a very strange case indeed if the writings of a man of Vaughan's sensitivity did not show a "modified outlook" when resumed after nearly half a decade, especially when there is excellent reason to believe that he suffered a dangerous illness at one point during those tumultuous years. In the epistle dedicatory to Flores Solitudinis (1654) entitled "To The Truely Noble and Religious Sir Charles Egerton Knight", Vaughan writes: "The incertainty of life, and a peevish, inconstant state of health would not suffer me to stay for greater performance."[2] A year later, in the preface to Silex scintillans, Vaughan mentions that he has been "prepared for a message of death"; he writes: "(indeed) I was nigh unto death, and am still at no great distance from it."[3] Although the poet's prediction missed the mark by more than forty years (he lived to be seventy-four), there can be little doubt that Vaughan's serious illness accounts in some measure for the awful sense of austerity, the pervading atmosphere of calm and peace, and the yearning for the heavenly home which seems to fill Silex scintillans Part II.

The answer to Martz's second charge--that the new material in the 1655 edition comprises "a less consistent fabric" than that of 1650--can be found in a consideration of Vaughan's ideas about the nature of poetry, (put forth in the preface) for the purpose of deciding whether or not Part II does in fact offer "a weaker body of poetry" (Martz's third complaint). Vaughan's preface to the second edition, like Herbert's "Jordan" poems, rejects verse of the courtly and ingenious kind. His first book of secular verse entitled Poems, with the tenth Satyre of Iuvenal (1646), written under the influence of the Sons of Ben, is full of those kinds of "idle Poems" now called by Vaughan "Parracides" and "soul-killing issue" which like "Vipers survive their Parents, and for many ages after (like Epidemic diseases) infect whole Generations".[4] Indeed, as in a piece from Part II entitled "Anguish", Vaughan complains "O! 'tis an easie thing/ To write and sing;/ But to write true, unfeigned verse/ Is very hard!"[5] If the poems of the second part seem to be of "a less consistent fabric" than the others, it is because they are the products of a faith which has gained ascendancy over reason. The second group of poems is no longer unified by the drive and drama of the intellectual quest that impelled those of Part I. Instead, now being secure himself, Vaughan becomes more overtly didactic than before and chooses to ramble to various commonplaces of Christian piety and to considerations of the life hereafter; in these poems of Part II, thought

seems to dominate form. The true poet is a good man; Vaughan explains

> . . . to give up our thoughts to pious Themes and Contemplations (if it be done for pieties sake) is a great step towards perfection; because it will refine, and dispose to devotion and sanctity . . . . he that desires to excel in this kind of Hagiography, or holy writing, must strive (by all means) for perfection and true holyness, that a door may be opened to him in heaven, Rev. 4.1. and then he will be able to write (with Hierotheus and holy Herbert) A true Hymn.[6]

Part II can be called "a weaker body of poetry" than Part I only if we demand formal variety and experimentation among our criteria; but if instead we accept Vaughan on his own terms and recognize good poetry to be sincere devotional themes embodied in "true, unfeigned verse", then the new poems must be judged as strong as the earlier ones because the work of both parts has as their common principle decorum of form and content.

One of the best known pieces in Part II, "The Water-fall", reveals with particular lucidity a poetic structure sensitive to thematic content. "The Water-fall" is typical of Silex Part II because it embodies several of Vaughan's most insistent motifs in their latest stages of development; the poem is demonstrably a product of the man's world view.

If we accept the Aristotelian criterion of poet as image-maker, then an answer to the complaint that more than half of the poems in Silex Scintillans show a decided Herbertian influence can point to an

important methodological difference between the two poets; the distinction can show that Vaughan's success (in those poems where he best achieves it) is due rather to his own imaginative faculties than to an appropriation of Herbertian quaintness or ingenuity of form and phrase. Both L. C. Martin and E. C. Pettet agree that "The Water-fall" is among the finest of Vaughan's efforts; they make the point that the best of his poetry savors least of Herbert's influence.[7] Professor H. J. C. Grierson provides a well-considered reason for distinguishing between what Vaughan's chief biographer Edmund Blunden calls "the master's ingenuity and the pupil's genius".[8]

> The difference between Herbert and Vaughan at his best, is the difference on which Coleridge and Wordsworth dilated between fancy and imagination, between the sensitive and happy discovery of analogies and the imaginative apprehension of emotional identity in diverse experiences, which is the poet's counterpart to the scientific discovery of a common law controlling the most divergent phenomena.[9]

The image of the falling water in "The Water-fall" derives its force and effectiveness from the deeper truths that run beneath the superficial constructs and unreal inventions that a lesser poet might have conjured up by the power of fancy alone. Vaughan's choice of the image as a symbol of the soul's spiritual nature becomes as essential modifier of the poem's prosody; it provides both theme and structure. The mechanics of the waterfall and the activity of spiritual things bear an analogous relationship in the poem; Vaughan takes a further step and fairly well bridges the expanse

between logical association and the true imaging process: he sees the falling water as an example (one of many in his poetry) of the constancy of the created world to an immanent and divine will, as a reflection of divine law working inexorably behind the thin facade of the material universe. This is not to suggest that Vaughan subscribes to Wordsworthian pantheism: on the contrary, nowhere in Silex Scintillans does the poet imply that a communion with the higher planes of spiritual existence can be achieved directly through the medium of nature. What Vaughan does seem to recognize in "The Water-fall" is that the created world, as a naturally imperfect extension of the Creator, everywhere offers glimpses and intimations of the perfection of which it partakes.

Vaughan's manner of interpreting phenomena of the natural world as having a clandestine correspondence with those of the spiritual environs, and his handling of abstract ideas as if they were visible and tangible, make a good case for Rosemary Freeman's contention that his treatment of the waterfall resembles the method of the English emblem book writers. She notes that "The Water-fall" follows the structure of an emblem with precision; it is divided into three sections, each readily distinguishable by their respective functions (description of the emblem, interpretation, and application) and by changes in form and rhythm.[10] It is important to remember that the controlling image of the waterfall is the major constructional feature of the poem; as E. C. Pettet

points out, the "mode of evolution" in Vaughan's greatest poems, a category in which "The Water-fall" certainly finds a place, is through images ordered by association rather than by logic.

The first section of the poem serves as a visual, aural, and verbal presentation of the falling water image that is the vehicle of the basic metaphor (the implied analogy which imaginatively identifies water and the soul of man):

> With what deep murmurs through times silent stealth
> Doth thy transparent, cool and watry wealth
> Here flowing fall,
> And chide, and call,
> As if his liquid, loose Retinue staid
> Lingring, and were of this steep place afraid,
> The common pass
> Where, clear as glass,
> All must descend
> Not to an end:
> But quickned by this deep and rocky grave,
> Rise to a longer course more bright and brave.

The first and most obvious example of prosodic structure serving the expectations aroused by the content--announced in the title--is the typographical representation of the waterfall in the first twelve lines. The use of shaped verse is not at all new: George Puttenham uses the word "artificiality" as a term of praise in his Art of English Poesy (1589) and goes so far as to advocate the practice of constructing pictorial stanza patterns;[13] as recent a poet as Dylan Thomas uses the device in "Vision and Prayer". Herbert's "The Alter" has a line arrangement

alternately lengthened, shortened, and extended again to form a typographical altar, but--to carry a distinction made earlier a little further--his poem only looks like an altar (it cannot sound like one); But Vaughan's image of the "The Water-fall" is no mere decoration, it remains (to use T. E. Hulme's phrase) "the very essence of an intuitive language".[14]

The sound effects of the initial section are so expertly modulated that the action described in words is acted out aurally: the first long, graceful iambic pentameter moves with austere gravity and becoming slowness because of the weight of the many consonants provided by the inordinate number of monosyllables (the closely alliterated s's, the continuous mellifluence of the l sounds, the internal r's in the word "murmurs" tend to produce a sound suggesting sluggishness very appropriate to the context). The absence of punctuation after the first line overcomes the inertia; growing momentum allows the thought to merge swiftly into the second pentameter. Enjambement for Vaughan is no mere visual or syntactical continuity, but appears to be a genuinely rhythmic feature: the forcing of thought and rhythm across the regularity imposed by strict couplet rhyming gives the lines an insistently urgent restlessness. The "cool and watry wealth" (1.2) nears the more animated part of the stream above the waterfall; the double dimeters suggest the beginning of the "flowing fall" (1.3) in an abrupt and comma-chopped rhythm two lines long.

The start of the descent is described in short, rough verses full of active and dynamic verbal forms ("flowing fall", "chide", and "call"). Another pair of run-on pentameters are impeded by an extremely heavy pause caused by the unusual position of the comma after "Lingring" in line 6; the effect is to create rhythmical interest and to afford a welcomed rest in a drawn-out line. A ponderous and emphatic spondaic foot, "steep place", provides a similar sound effect near the end of the same verse. The rising pressure of the arrested rhythmic flow seems to be relieved as the next double pair of four-syllable lines present the sound of the dropping, rushing water (l. 7-10); the flowing verses lead the reader's eyes rapidly down the page till they come to rest at the decisive end-stopping colon, which calls for a longer pause than any previous punctuation in the poem. Another two sweeping pentameters (ll. 11, 12) point up the stark contrast between the rigid metrics of the dimeters and of the decasyllabic verses; the pairs of long and short lines throughout the first section picture the water above the falls, its growing restlessness, the hesitation, the inevitable plunging and crashing to the "deep and rocky grave", and the stream below the falls rising again. The first section is, then, one long sentence draped over a frame of twelve structured lines, like a rug unrolled from the top of a staircase. Vaughan manages to orchestrate his sound effects to create a dynamic and vivid image that remains the very heart of the poem, borne on by language ("quick store", "deep streams!", "streaming rings", and so on) till the very last line in the piece.

The second section of ten lines, mainly interpretative in purpose, is readily distinguished from the initial section by the dramatic and sudden change from the long, impassioned sweep of pentameters to a more relaxed and convivial tetrameter pace. The eight-syllable couplets (iambic with almost no significant variations), "a measure of which he is a master", according to Edmund Blunden, serve Vaughan for the remainder of the poem and convey "the majority of his finest ideas":[15]

Dear stream! dear bank, where often I
Have sate, and pleas'd my pensive eye,
Why, since each drop of thy quick store
Runs thither, whence it flow'd before,
Should poor souls fear a shade or night,
Who came (sure) from a sea of light?
Or since those drops are all sent back
So sure to thee, that none doth lack,
Why should frail flesh doubt any more
That what God takes, Hee'l not restore?

The thoughtful speaker-observer derives a renewed inspiration and a sense of joy in contemplation of the waterfall, an example of accord with divine laws: as every "drop" is separated from the living "store" in its fractional state, it retains a portion of the essential natural properties that will enable it to return to the skies by a physical change from liquid to the gaseous state.

Similarly, the souls of men are blessed with the memory or at least idea of the essential paradisial quality of "light" (l. 18) that Vaughan uses in many contexts as a metaphor for innocence, either native or regenerative. The rhetorical effortlessness of the generally regular iambic octosyllabic couplets is enhanced by the strong internal pauses demanded by both punctuation and syntax. In the four couplets above, the sense of the first line is carried over into the second, but the thought in every case required punctuation before the couplet itself is decisively closed by a comma or question mark. The effect is to help produce a speech-like meter, a pattern of rhythm not usually dominated by formal requirements of the line or by the inflexibility of the rhyme scheme. Vaughan's choice of such a meter for the section interpreting (not describing) the poem's basic image of the waterfall is a further example of his fine sense of prosodic decorum.

The third and final section of "The Water-fall"--the application of the interpretation of the emblem--finds the speaker turning his vision inward, away from the noise and contention of the world, to discover what Louis L. Martz calls "the Image of God within".[16]

O useful Element and clear!
My sacred wash and cleanser here,
My first consigner unto those
Fountains of life, where the Lamb goes?
What sublime truths, and wholesome themes,
Lodge in thy mystical, deep streams!
Such as dull man can never finde
Unless that Spirit lead his minde,

Which first upon thy face did move,
And hatch'd all with his quickning love.
As this loud brooks incessant fall
In streaming rings restagnates all,
Which reach by course the bank, and then
Are no more seen, just so pass men.
O my invisible estate,
My glorious liberty, still late!
Thou art the Channel my soul seeks,
Not this with Cataracts and Creeks.

The direction Vaughan's search for a "Golden Age", for a paradise, was to take can be seen in the transposition of the controlling water imagery from its terrestial activity in the first two sections, to the wider implications of water or soul in terms of cosmic processes. To understand how extraordinarily appropriate Vaughan's choice of the waterfall image is as a metaphor expressing the relationship of man and Creator, one need only remember that in Vaughan's decidedly Ptolemaic cosmology containing the sublunary sphere composed of the four elements, water (lying upon the surface of the Earth, which is itself the grossest and heaviest of elements) possesses "no more than the merest spark of divine likeness".[17] Pettet points out that the term "O useful Element" (l. 23) becomes charged with a greater significance because of its hermetic implications; he quotes a few lines from Thomas Vaughan's Euphrates to suggest the meanings the poet may have had in mind: "This element is the deferent or vehiculum of all influences whatsoever. For what efflux soever it be that proceeds from the

terrestial centre the same ascends and is carried up in her to the air".[18] Vaughan's connection of Man's soul and water, then, is a rather bitter comment about Man; even the senseless drops of a waterfall aspire upwards--along with the heliotropes, birds, trees, mists, and other natural things emblematically portraying the God-inspired yearning elsewhere in Silex scintillans--but "dull man" (l. 29) cannot see the "sublime truths, and wholesome themes" (l. 27) inherent in the example of the waterfall. How then can man cast off his grossness? The answer lies in the water image: water is the universal solvent, the "vehiculum" of the major processes in the universe, the effective agency in the spiritual sacrament of baptism, the link between earth and skies, and the grace bestowed from heaven into the souls of men increasingly corrupt since the Fall. Man can shed his "dullness" only when that "Spirit" leads "his minde" (l. 30), that is, his rational faculties; the "Spirit", like the "Word" in "Genesis", is a creative force, it is the power that "hatch'd all with his quickning love" (l. 32) by moving over the waters ("thy face" in l. 31). The Spirit of the waters, the inner spark and touch of the divine in man, can enable man--like the "streaming rings" that go in the wrong direction but still retain a glimmer from the source "sea of light"-- to repossess his lost innocence (the seed of which still dwells within him) through a recognition of the emblematic reality of nature.

The total prosodic structure of "The Water-fall", as suggested in the paragraphs above, seems remarkably sensitive to the poet's theme. In a

way similar to the manner in which, for example, the sound effects in the first section tend to mime the falling water, the whole prosody of the poem acts out the journey described in terms of imagery: the more the drops of water become dissociated from the tumbling cacophony of the waterfall, the more refined and heaven-aspiring they become, exhibiting an ever-increasing dominance of the quality of purity and "light", till at last the essence of the drops are apotheosized and absorbed into the "glorious liberty" of the "sea of light". The speaker in "The Water-fall" turns from the blind disharmony of civil life to contemplate the falling water that becomes an emblem for him (in the first section); then he exercises his "light" (traditionally associated with the God-given intellect) and interprets the emblem as a metaphorical expression of the heaven-ordained fact that souls, like the water, will be restored to their original estate by God (second section); by applying the lesson of the waterfall inwardly, by taking the "wholesome themes" into his heart through his reason, he finds himself much closer to the "Channel" sought by his soul (final section) by the very act of meditation. Nature, then, in its observable tendency to aspire upward (where God dwells in the Ptolemaic system) may be seen as a representation of man's (right) reason, as opposed to earth (the "rocky grave" in line 11) and to the gross and dull physical body of man. The entire construct of "The Water-fall" is an illustration and celebration of the speaker's newly earned, strong and firm faith in resurrection and immortality.

Many of the Silex 1650 poems--like "Distraction", "Vanity of Spirit", "The Storm", "The Relapse", "Unprofitablenes", "The Tempest", "The Mutinie", and "The Search"--are, as suggested above, the poeticized records of an anguished soul's struggle with the rebellious will which hinders this quest for true and sustaining faith. But in Part II, and for example in "The Water-fall" there is no longer a search. In one of the new 1655 poems entitled "The Ass", the pilgrim explains that he has come to see that "perfect liberty" lies only "Within those bounds set by" God's "love". He prays for the strength to remain worthy of his new treasure:

> Grant I may soft and lowly be,
> And minde things I cannot see;
> Tye me to faith, though above reason,
> Who question power, they speak treason:
> Let me thy Ass be onely wise
> To carry, not search mysteries.[19]

Most of Vaughan's favorite themes in the first edition find very different interpretation in the pieces added to the second. Perhaps the most obvious examples are those poems in Part II having titles and themes similar to ones in the first section. "Death" is no longer a dialogue and contention between "Body" and "Soule", as it is in Part I; it is now a single-minded narrative expressing the most serene assurance about the end of human life. The pilgrim comes to know that true freedom lies in obedience to the will of God. To die, with the "harmless violets" in

Part II's "Death" piece, is to "Calmly disappear,/ And neither grieve, repine, nor fear:/ So dye his servants; and as sure/ Shall they revive."[20] The speaker no longer stands contemplating the prospect of death looming before him; in Part II he speaks as one who has already imaginatively spanned the dark abyss, one who knows in his heart that the night is neither so terrible nor so void as he had once supposed.

The "Fair order'd lights" in Part I's "The Constellation"aare signs of the highest perfection, but they are set at an awful distance from the world; the speaker complains of earthly authority: "Our guides prove wandring stars". He pleads for what is certainly missing:

> Settle, and fix our hearts, that we may move
> In order, peace, and love,
> And taught obedience by thy whole Creation,
> Became an humble, holy nation.21

But in "The Starre" of Part II, the speaker's prayer seems to have been answered, for there is now a "close commerce" between heaven and earth; stars "are the Magnets which so strongly move"[22] and guide creatures of the terrestrial sphere; suddenly the world of the spirit is at no great remove from the one of nature. Similarly, in the first piece celebrating the impending doomsday, entitled "Day of Judgement", the emphasis rests very pointedly upon the need for affliction and repentance in this life:

Prepare, prepare me then, O God!
And let me now begin
To feele my loving fathers Rod
Killing the man of sinne.

The speaker adds "Three things I'de have, my soules chief healthe!"

A living FAITH, a HEART of flesh,
The WORLD an Enemie
This last will keepe the first two fresh,
And bring me, where I'de be.[23]

In Part II, the tension between earthly impiety and heavenly perfection relaxes to such a degree that there are abundant signs of rapport. The speaker in the second section's "The day of Judgement" has indeed attained "a living FAITH"; with enlarged sensibilities he shifts his consideration away from his own spiritual condition and cries out to his Lord against that "highest sin and shame/The vile despight done to thy name". The imaginative restoration described in the first edition's "Emblema" verses has been accomplished; the speaker's inner realization of God's power is that which breaks "through The Rocky barrier of my heart, and it is made Flesh that was before a Stone."[24] In most of the Part II poems, the "WORLD" is of no further consequence as a provider of trials to foster spiritual growth; it is no longer "an Enemie" to be annihilated but instead a temporary phenomena soon to be superseded by the absolute reality of God's eternal kingdom. The speaker in this second "Judgement" poem sings what is less

a plea than a joyous anticipation of that imminent and glorious new "day of life, of light, of love!":

> A day so fresh, so bright, so brave
> Twill shew us each forgotten grave,
> And make the dead, like flowers, arise
> Youthful and fair to see new skies.[25]

If there remain any strains of the tormented consciousness in Part II, it is to be found in those few poems like "Begging", "Tears", "Love-sick", and "Anguish" which are, generally, complaints about the hollowness of worldly existence and the slowness with which time passes rather than expressions of distress over the facts of personal sin. In "Anguish", the speaker-poet bows his "troubled soul" to God and cries that his "foul heart" be racked with affliction, not for the benefit of his own spirit, but rather for that of his fellow men who might profit from a fine and true poetry tempered by adversity; he pleads "give my spirit leave/ To act as well as to conceive!"[26]

The quest for spiritual certitude and regeneration in Silex scintillans Part I is characterized by the pilgrim's intellectual restlessness and wandering speculation; the intense and fitful nature of the poet's own states of mind are matched by a notably diversified mixture of poetic forms, not all of which can be attributed to Vaughan's early emulation of Herbert's poetry. But in Part II, themes of childhood and Eden (set over against the Fall and human perversity) give way to productions less contentious in

content and prosody. The poems of the second part, being the fruits of an assured faith, are quite significantly longer than those of Part I--an average of fifty lines as opposed to thirty--and generally of lesser conceptual complexity. There is far greater reliance upon conventionally pious topics, as in such poems as the two opening pieces on the Ascension, the uninspired renditions of Psalmes 104 and 65, the trilogy in praise of the Virgin ("The Knot", "The Ornament", and "St. Mary Magdalen"), and the nine consecutive poems[27] at the end of the book dealing with general themes of Christian death and resurrection. The calmer mood and less involved subject matter in Part II, viewed in relation to Part I, corresponds to the increased use of simpler forms, the most basic of these being the octosyllabic and decasyllabic couplet. Forty percent of the Part II pieces are written in couplets, compared with barely thirteen percent in Part I; the next most frequent form in Part II is the quatrain. Part I has three odes ("Resurrection and Immortality", "The Holy Communion", and "Affliction"), sixteen poems of 8-or 10-line stanzas, and abundant evidence of Herbertian inspiration; Part II has none of the first two forms and very few echoes from The Temple.

[1] Martz, p. 4.

[2] Vaughan, p. 160.

[3] Vaughan, p. 221.

[4] Vaughan, p. 217, ll. 8, 9.

[5] Vaughan, p. 362-362, ll. 13-16.

[6] Vaughan, p. 220-221.

[7] Pettet, p. xvii.

[8] Edmund Blunden, "The Poems of Henry Vaughan", The London Mercury, IV (November 1926), 75.

[9] Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of The Seventeenth Century, ed. H. J. C. (Oxford, 1921), p. xliv.

[10] Rosemary Freeman, English Emblem Books (London, 1948), p. 189.

[11] Pettet, p. 154.

[12] Vaughan, p. 374.

[13] Albert McHarg Hayes, "Counterpoint in Herbert", Studies in Philology, XXV (January 1938), 49.

[14] T. E. Hulme, Speculations (London, 1924), p. 134.

[15] Blunden, p. 74.

[16] Martz, p. 18.

[17] James D. Simmonds, "Henry Vaughan and the Great Chain of Being", Studies in English Renaissance Literature, XXII (1962), p. 150.

[18] Pettet, p. 74.

[19] Vaughan, p. 354, ll. 10, 16, 17-22.

[20] Vaughan, p. 371, ll. 21, 24-27.

[21] Vaughan, p. 304, ll. 46, 53-56.

[22] Vaughan, p. 324, ll. 5, 21.

[23] Vaughan, p. 233, ll. 19-32, 41-44.

[24] Martz, p. 5.

[25] Vaughan, p. 367-368, ll. 34-35; l. 3-6.

[26] Vaughan, p. 362-363, ll. 3, 4, 17-18.

[27] "The Throne", "Death", "The Feast", "The Obsequies", "The Water-fall", "Quickness", "The Wreath", "The Queer", and "The Book".

VII. CONCLUSION

As we have seen in parts of the early secular verse, Vaughan viewed civil unrest as a real and present threat to the political and religious traditions of his fathers; he interpreted social oppression and contention among factions and sects as further signs of a deeper malaise, associated with the self-seeking vanity which tends to lead the wills of men astray. Public and private hardships including the triumph of the Parliamentarians, the deaths of his wife and brother, and his own failing health seem to have brought Vaughan and others to the conclusion that the day of the Last Judgment and the end of Time was near at hand. In turning from the frivolity and ephemerality of secular verse to poetry of a deeply religious temper, the poet acted according to his new understanding that the fundamental obligation of the way-faring Christian is ever the praise of God; the creation of poetry--he called his pieces "hymns"--was to be for him the highest form of worship. Vaughan found direction for his poetic aspiration by the emulation of Herbert in The Temple.

The Herbertian influence in Silex scintillans is mainly of a formal nature, but it extends from the identical poem titles and subtitles of both poet's collections, through striking similarities in rime and stanza patterns, to a number of devices such as the use of emblematic prosody, arresting opening lines, mixed stanza forms, and others. Both Herbert and Vaughan go far beyond the basic quatrain, which seems to be the staple of their respective prosodies, and devise (or borrow)

many elaborate stanzas of varying line-lengths and rime schemes; but Vaughan, to a very much greater extent, relies upon his considerable ability in the use of octosyllabic and decasyllabic couplets. But even when his poetry seems to echo most clearly with reminiscences of The Temple, Vaughan will be seen to maintain his distinctive and individual touch. Perhaps the greatest lesson that Vaughan learned from the devotional poetry of George Herbert is that a poem can never be a suitable monument to the glory of God unless it is born of a fine rapport between content and form. Whether the technical basis of quality afforded by the rapport is apparent to the casual reader or not, each of the most memorable of Vaughan's poetic efforts in Silex scintillans will be discovered to partake of the magic wrought by the accord of meaning and sound.

As the sustained intimacy and devotional nature of the Silex poems so readily attest, Vaughan believed with all his heart that the elect are endowed with life-giving grace through the death of Christ and that grace is the sole precondition and initiator of faith. Faith moves men to love and praise God by exercising their intellects to perceive and to understand the nature of the higher, immaterial reality already known--or remembered--intuitively, in order to subdue the treacherous might of their rebellious wills. For Vaughan and many of his contemporaries, faith was an incontestable fact in need of neither logical persuasion nor demonstration. The tendency of seventeenth-century thought was to dissociate Creator and creation; Vaughan's religious poetry is a symbolic enactment

of the reunion of the orders of nature and of grace.

The process of regeneration leading to the reconciliation of Man and God is described in metaphors of seed, growth or journey, and union or marriage. Transcendence of self and reunion with the deity is inevitably figured in images of light; Vaughan uses light to represent all that is desirable, such as innocence, divine illumination, heaven, and eternal life. Vaughan's visual world is an analogue of Man's mind, an entity of two worlds; perhaps it is the ambiguity of the human condition that makes the pervasive symbolism of both light and darkness so remarkably appropriate. The celestial part of the Ptolemaic universe adopted by Vaughan is the supreme example of constancy to the divine will in Silex scintillans, for it is the realm of light and timeless order and harmony. Man knows the way to his rightful home because he is endowed with the divine spark (rational intelligence) and with the grace necessary to distinguish false lights from the true. Although childhood and retreat motifs suggest the doctrine of reminiscence, they are in fact but metaphors of renewed innocence. By depreciating the supposed reality of the visible world through constant suggestions of a higher order of existence and divine proximity, Vaughan tears down the facade of the seen and offers glimpses into the world beyond the sway of corruption.

The fresh vision of innocence in Silex scintillans leads to an imaginative attainment of union with the divine. In "The Night",

discussed in Chapter IV, the consummation of the spiritual pilgrimage is seen to involve a virtual retreat from selfhood and physicality. But the most lucid representation of the experience of transcendence is put forth in "The Morning-watch", in which the evanescent flash gives way to a more substantial state of mind. By treating even spiritual and psychological occurrences in concrete terms, Vaughan asserts that they are, for him, of greater reality than things susceptible to quantitative consideration. The poems in Silex Part I deal with faith in conflict with will; in Part II, the battle is done and faith reigns victoriously. The point of the comparison of Parts I and II in Chapters V and VI is to suggest that what develops in Silex scintillans is not the images (which are very similar in all of Vaughan's work) but rather the spiritual nature of the speaker. The world remains the same; it is the maker of hymns who grows into a new awareness, which is the true beginning of the life eternal.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, D. C. Image and Meaning: Metaphoric Traditions in Renaissance Poetry. Baltimore, 1960.

Blunden, Edmund. "The Poems of Henry Vaughan", The London Mercury, XV (November 1926), 59-75.

Browne, Sir Thomas. Religio Medici. Edited by Jean-Jacques Denonain. Cambridge, 1955.

Courthope, W. J. A History of English Poetry. Vol. III, New York, 1962.

Durr, R. A. On the Mystical Poetry of Henry Vaughan. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1962.

Freeman, Rosemary, English Emblem Books. London, 1948.

Grierson, H. J. C. Cross Currents in English Literature of the XVIIth Century. London, 1929.

_____, ed. Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of The Seventeenth Century. Oxford, 1921.

Hayes, Albert McHarg. "Counterpoint in Herbert", Studies in Philology. XXXV (January 1938), 43-60.

Hulme, T. E. Speculations. London, 1924.

James, William. The Varieties of Religious Experience. New York, 1929.

King, James Roy. Studies in Six Seventeenth Century Writers. Athens, Ohio, 1966.

Lawler, Justus George. The Christian Image: Studies in Religious Art and Poetry. Pittsburgh, 1966.

Marilla, E. L. "Henry Vaughan and the Civil War", The Journal of English and Germanic Philology, XLI (1942), 514-526.

Martz, Louis L. The Paradise Within. New Haven and London, 1964.

Milton, John. Complete Poems and Major Prose. Edited by Merritt Y. Hughes. New York, 1957.

Pettet, E. C. Of Paradise and Light. Cambridge, 1960.

Richards, I. A. Coleridge on Imagination. London, 1950.

Simmonds, J. D. "Henry Vaughan and the Great Chain of Being", Studies in English Renaissance Literature, XXII (1962),149-167.

Vaughan, Henry. Poetry and Selected Prose. Edited by L. C. Martin. London, 1963.

Woodhouse, A. S. P. The Poet and His Faith. Chicago, 1964.

Wordsworth, William. Selected Poems and Prefaces. Edited by Jack Stillinger. Boston, 1965.